

Ten Ways

TO STRENGTHEN INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP



Intergenerational worship is . . . intergenerational! It is the cultivation of worship where people of all ages are not only allowed but also enfolded as active and needed participants in the church. This happens when churches make intentional choices week after week to include young and old and everyone in-between in worship leadership and support.

Here are 10 ways to build intergenerational worship practices at your church, one week at a time.

1. REDISCOVER

Invite intergenerational feedback. Begin with a posture of listening and invite a conversation with a variety of age groups. Host listening parties and make them fun! Find out who is engaged in worship and why. Who might feel excluded, and what can be done? Starting with listening not only informs you; it also communicates that people of every age matter.

2. REIMAGINE

Share your listening feedback with everyone. It is important for worshipers of all ages to listen to each other and seek to better understand how they feel valued in worship. Host a “heart song” hymn sing in which people share their favorite church song and why it is meaningful to them. Practices like this help us listen and build empathetic worshipping communities.

3. RECOGNIZE AND IDENTIFY

There is no end of things we “could do” to make worship more intergenerational. Rather than trying something new right away, start by recognizing and identifying several things your congregation already does well in worship, and consider how you might intergenerationally deepen those practices that are already bearing fruit. For example, think about ways to make your congregational prayer more intergenerational with concerns that relate to children and teens as well as adults. Use sermon illustrations that will resonate with all ages. How might you deepen what you already do to become more intergenerationally mindful?

4. REQUEST

Many churches send out a “participation” survey to find out people’s gifts and how they might use them in service for the Lord and his church. These are usually targeted at adults only. Consider adapting surveys to include all ages, from young children to elderly members. And remember to invite all ages when soliciting volunteers verbally or in print.

5. REMEMBER

Remember intergenerational milestones. Some churches do a “blessing of the backpacks” at the start of the school year, offering prayers for teachers and students. Are there other significant milestones that you can mark for other age groups in your congregation? What about prayers for specific vocations during busy or important times of the year? Blessings when someone retires? Consider creating an annual calendar to help you remember milestones, lifetime events, and other occasions in the life of your congregation, and incorporate them into your worship and preaching.

6. REARRANGE

Does your worship space communicate that all ages and abilities are welcome? Think about accessibility beyond providing wheelchair and hearing-loop access to ensure that your space can be a worshipful place for everyone. Could you include small tables and chairs for children? Sections for people who need to move around rather than sit still during worship? Adjustable seating like office chairs for those who need additional back support? Our worship space communicates our theology of inclusion and belonging.

7. REPETITION

Repetition is not lazy when it is done intentionally. Repetition is formational, intentionally putting words on lips and songs on hearts to reflect the Spirit-filled soundtrack of our lives from cradle to grave. Repeat important elements of worship often, occasionally explaining why.

8. REGROUP

Mentoring works well to encourage lasting intergenerational relationships—connecting youth and young adults with spiritually mature members of the faith community. You can start these relationships from a young age. Consider pairing a child with a trusted older adult who is willing to connect regularly with them at church gatherings and perhaps sit with them in times of worship and engage with them during the service.

9. RE-TELL

Make time in worship and fellowship for people of all ages to tell stories of how God has been working in their lives. Children’s stories open our minds to wonder and curiosity. Teenagers’ stories can help us recognize God’s presence during the rapidly changing years of adolescence and prompt opportunities to profess faith. Senior adults’ stories remind us of God’s faithfulness through life’s many seasons. Storytelling helps to situate all of our stories within God’s greater story.

10. REST ASSURED AND RECOMMIT

Intergenerational worship practices may not come easily or naturally to many congregations. What works in one church might not work in another. It’s okay to try something and find that it will not work. Rest assured that when God gathers his people, the Spirit is at work in ways we are not able to see. Recommit to faithful, formational changes that draw all ages into worship as active participants and beloved members of Christ’s community.

For a library brimming with intergenerational-ministry resources, check out the [Intergenerational Church Toolkit](#).

This resource has been developed by Thrive. If you have questions or would like support in ministry, please email thrive@crcna.org.

