For Every Generation:
Benefits of Engaging Intergenerational Volunteers in the Local Church Worship Ministry

by

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Introduction

- The worship ministry team is a microcosm of the church at large: the individual parts come together to form one body.[1]

- The local church worship ministry serves as a paradigm for the broader scope of church life.[2]
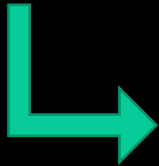
1 Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

2Jim Merhaut, "Intergenerational Faith Formation Today: Its Impact and Sustainability," *Lifelong Faith Journal* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 28-37.

Introduction

The generational makeup of the worship ministry...
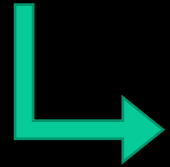
Impacts the generational makeup of the ministries of the church...

Which affects the relationship development and spiritual formation of the people.[3]

3 Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic), 77.

Introduction

- **Multigenerational Christian settings** – multiple generations are present, but interaction is not assumed or encouraged [4]

- **Intergenerational Christian settings** – "authentic, complex, *formative* environments, made up of individuals at various stages in their faith journeys, teaching some and learning from others as they participate in their community of believers" [5]

4 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 19.
5 Ibid., 102.

Introduction

- Age segregation
  - Successful church growth strategy
  - Easier to appeal to a specific age group
  - Offers people what they want, the way they want it, when they want it
  - Often results in numerical growth

Introduction

Problem: Reflecting the worship practices of many evangelical churches today, intergenerational models of worship ministry have commonly been replaced by age-segregated models.

- Relational impact
- Musical impact
- Spiritual impact

The generation most impacted by the shift to age segregation is the youngest generation – Generation Z

Significance

- This study is important for church leaders and worship pastors to consider when making decisions regarding the implementation of either an intergenerational worship ministry model or an age-segregated worship ministry model.

- Implementation of either ministry model has implications for:
  - Church growth [6]
  - Church health [7]
  - Generation Z [8]
    - New generation of worshipers
    - Fewer who identify as Christian
    - Spiritually needy

6 Brenda A. Snailum, "Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches: Maximizing Influence for Adolescent Spiritual Development," (Ed.D., Biola University, 2012), 17.

7 Allan G. Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 124; Howard Vanderwell, ed., *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 24.

8 Robert Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains through Crises," *Philosophy Study* 7, no. 6 (June 2017): 288; James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 24.

9 Pendergraft, 32.

10 Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (2018), 64.

Significance

"Perhaps the most defining mark of members of Generation Z, in terms of their spiritual lives, is their spiritual illiteracy…. They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know the basics of Christian belief or theology. They do not know what the cross is about. They do not know what it means to worship." [11]

-James Emery White

11 James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 131.

Findings

Generational engagement in worship ministries in the local church:

- Age segregation is the norm in many of today's churches [18]
  - Worship ministries of these churches reflect homogenous structure and ideologies of the churches in which they serve [19]
  - Service-provider model of ministry is also evident in many age-segregated churches [20]
  - Musical expressions of worship are limited to the musical preferences, or "heart music," of each age demographic [21]

18 Glassford and Barger-Elliot, "Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era," 365; Snailum, "Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches," 16; Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 30-31.
19 Keeley, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship" in *The Church of All Ages,* ed. Vanderwell, 147.
20 Sharon Galgay Ketcham, "Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution." Ph.D., Boston College, 2014. 7-26.
21 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 196-197.

Findings

Generational engagement in worship ministries in the local church:

- Some local churches are organized according to generational cohorts
  - Characterized by generational homogeneity
  - Corporate worship is organized and segregated into groups which reflect the perceived stylistic preferences of the various generational cohorts
  - Worship ministry teams reflect the specific cohorts they are charged with leading
  - Corporate worship, ministry, and relationships are limited to peer-to-peer engagement

22 Howard Vanderwell,, ed. *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008. xiv.
23 Christine Ross, "A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry," Ph.D., Saint Louis University, 2006, 140.

Findings

- Interest in returning to intergenerational corporate worship is experiencing a resurgence. [24]

24 Allen and Barnett, "Addressing Two Intergenerational Questions" in *Intergenerate,* ed. Holly Catteron Allen, Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018, 17.

Findings

- What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church?

    - Relational connection
        - A sense of belonging [31]
        - A sense of unity and understanding among the various generational cohorts [32]
        - Mentoring [33]

31 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 195; Prest, *From One Generation to Another,* 25, as quoted in Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 194; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young,* 175; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young,* 107.
32 Ross, "Four Congregations That Practice Intergenerationality," 143.
33 Ketcham, "Potential Ecclesiology," 102-103; Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church," 287-288; Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts;* Van der Walt, "Sharing an Integral Worldview with a Younger Generation," 5.

Findings

- What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church?

  - Musical development
    - Seasoned musicians offer teaching and training in musical skills [34]
    - Younger musicians bring new ideas and a new level of enthusiasm [35]
    - Opportunity to develop young worship leaders [36]

34 Keeley, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship" in *The Church of All Ages,* ed. Vanderwell, 150-152.
35 Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts,* 160.
36 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 201.

Findings

- What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church?

  - Spiritual formation
    - Participation in intergenerational corporate worship contributes to healthy spiritual formation
      - For the younger generations [37]
      - For the older generations [38]
      - All generations play a load-bearing role [39]

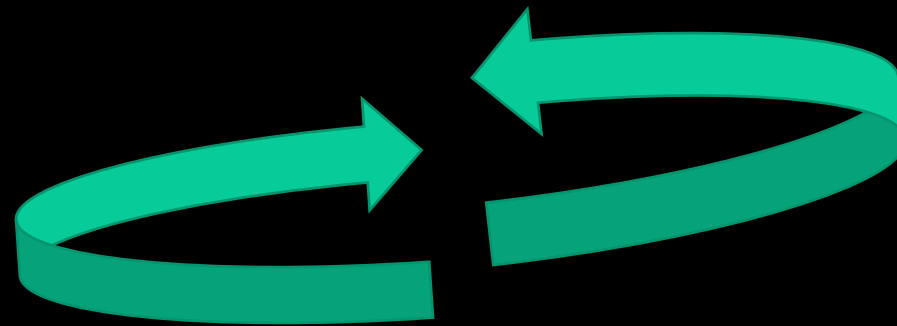37 Kara Powell, Brad Griffin, and Cheryl Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition,* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011),75.
38 Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young,* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 40-42.
39Ibid., 209-210.

Findings

- What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church?

  - Spiritual formation
    - Intergenerational relationships contribute to healthy spiritual formation [40]
      - An "edification spiral" occurs [41]

40 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 73, 82-97; Fay, "Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation," 71-72; Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundaitons," 124; Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me,* 203-205; Nelson, *Where Faith Begins,* as referenced in Allen and Ross, 65; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages,* 24; Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?,* as referenced in Allen and Ross, 66.
41 Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 124.

Findings

- What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church?

  - Spiritual formation
    - Intergenerational relationships contribute to healthy spiritual formation [40]
      - An "edification spiral" occurs [41]
      - Affirmed by developmental psychology [42]
      - Pattern found in Scripture
      - Ecclesiology = the church consists of members of all generations, from the youngest to the oldest [43]
        - An intergenerational surrogate family where all contribute [44]
        - The Body of Christ [45]

40 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 73, 82-97; Fay, "Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation," 71-72; Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundaitons," 124; Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me,* 203-205; Nelson, *Where Faith Begins,* as referenced in Allen and Ross, 65; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages,* 24; Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?,* as referenced in Allen and Ross, 66.
41 Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 124.
42 Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society,* 2nd ed.. New York: Norton, 1963.
43 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 87; Ross, "A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry," 24; Fowler, *Stages of Faith.*
44 Allen and Ross, 82-84; Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church," 436-437. 45 DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry,* 157.
45 Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

Findings

Why focus on Generation Z?

- 2014 survey by Pew Research Center revealed that 35% of Millennials were religiously unaffiliated, compared to 23% of Gen X and 17% of Boomers [46]

- Current research indicates that Generation Z is the most religiously-unaffiliated generation in American history [47]

- Only 41% of Generation Z attends a weekly worship service of some kind [48]

- Fuller Youth Institute researchers have concluded that "40 to 50 percent of kids who are connected to youth group when they graduate high school will fail to stick with their faith in college." [50]

46 Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America,* 164.
47 Jean Twenge, *iGen,(* New York: Atria Books, 2017), 120-121.
48 White, *Meet Generation Z,* 49.
49 Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z,* 25.
50 Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition,* 15.

Findings

- In what ways can the local church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

    - Use of technology
        - Digital natives [51]
        - Continual technology usage has changed the way they learn, process information, and interact socially. [52]
        - Visual generation
            - Take in much of their knowledge through video formats such as YouTube, Netflix, and Hulu [53]
            - Emojis are a natural part of Gen Z's language [54]
        - Preferred means of communication are text messaging and social media [55]

51 Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z,* 15.
52 Ibid., 15-24; Twenge, 69-91.
53 White, *Meet Generation Z,* 118-119.
54 Ibid., 120-124.
55 Ibid., 124-127.

Findings

- In what ways can the local church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

  - Relationships
    - Gen Z is isolated, lonely, and lacking a sense of belonging [56]
    - Systemic abandonment is a defining characteristic for Gen Z [57]
    - Intergenerational relationships help to counteract their deep sense of isolation [58]

56 Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young,* 106-107; Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners," 179; Twenge, *iGen,* 76.
57 Bonner, "Understanding the Changing Adolescent" in *Adoptive Youth Ministry,* ed. Clark, 37-38; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 106-107.
58 Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation,* 49.

Findings

- Insights from Millennials
  - A 2014 study found that emerging adults who stayed connected to the church after their teenage years were twice as likely to have a close relationship with an older adult in their church than were those who walked away [59]
  - 7 out of 10 Millennials who walked away from the local church did not have a close relationship with an older adult in their faith community [60]
  - Lifeway Research found that "teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school" [61]
  - Fuller Youth Institute research reveals that teenagers who were studied were more likely to feel connected to a church when adults made an effort to form a personal relationship with them [62]

59 Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials,* 48.
60 Ibid.
61 Lifeway Research, "Lifeway Research Uncovers Reasons 18 to 22 Year Olds Drop Out of Church," as quoted in Bradbury, "Sticky faith: What keeps kids connected to church?," *Christian Century* (May 29, 2013): 24.
62 Powell, Giffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition,* 77.

Findings

- In what ways can the local church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

    - Mentoring
        - Generation Z receives little spiritual and emotional direction from their families, thereby rendering them a leaderless generation [63]
        - More Gen Zers are being raised by religiously unaffiliated parents than were members of any previous generation [64]
        - In White's words, Gen Z has "endless amounts of information but little wisdom, and virtually no mentors" [65]
        - One study shows that nearly nine out of ten Millennials who walked away from the faith after high school never had a mentor at their church [66]

63 White, *Meet Generation Z,* 65.
64 Twenge, *iGen,* 121.
65 White, 65.
66 Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials,* 48.

Findings

- In what ways can the local church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

    - Mentoring
        - Essential for raising up worshipers
        - Fuller Youth Institute research indicates that the most effective model of worship ministry involves kids and adults leading worship together

67 Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains through Crises," 288; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition,* 85-89.
68 Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 87.

Findings

"There is no more important truth for Christian adults to pass to children than what it means to become a worshiper. When children are kept separated from adults, those adults miss the opportunity to pour into the children's lives by action and example…. The legacy of adults in the church is a new generation of worshipers to continue worshiping even after the older adults are no longer there." [69]

69 Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains through Crises, 288.

Implications

- Implications for Practice
  - The findings of this study have implications for
    - Church growth
    - Church health
    - Generation Z

Implications

- Research indicates…
  - Best model for short-term church growth = age-segregated model
  - Best model for long-term church health = intergenerational model
  - Best model for positive impact on Generation Z = intergenerational model

Implications

- Top contributing factors to whether youth and emerging adults remain connected to the church after high school:
  - Regular participation in intergenerational worship [70]
  - Regular engagement in service and ministry [71]
  - Involvement in multiple intergenerational relationships within the faith community [72]

70 Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition,* 75.
71 Chap Clark, *Adoptive Church,* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2018), 146-148; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 75.
72 Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials,* 48; Lifeway Research, "Lifeway Research Uncovers Reasons 18 to 22 Year Olds Drop Out of Church" as quoted by Bradbury, "Sticky faith; What keeps kids connected to church?," 24; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 77; Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate,* ed. Allen, 181-183.

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