

Distribution Agreement

In presenting this final project as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my final project in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known, including display on the world wide web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this final project. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the final project. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this final project.

Signature:

Brian Cash

Date

Model for Implementing Intergenerational Ministries in Traditional Single Generation Churches

By
Brian Cash
Doctor of Ministry

Candler School of Theology

Dr. Beth Corrie
Project Consultant

Dr. Jennifer Ayers
Director of DMin Program

Abstract

Model for Implementing Intergenerational Ministries in Traditional Single Generation Churches

By Brian Cash

The research focuses on traditional single generational churches that have one generational as the total representations of leadership in the church seeking to engage younger generations. I argue that traditional single generational churches can critically address the generational crisis within their congregation through incorporating three stage approach to connecting generations within the church called the Intergenerational Story Telling Model as a method to cultivate mutual reliant relationships between every generation. My project will provide church leaders, pastors, youth workers and other persons seeking to bridge the generational gap within their church, a practical approach to cultivating an intergenerational congregational culture through integrating a three-stage story telling approach in the small groups of the church.

Model for Implementing Intergenerational Ministries in Traditional Single Generation Churches

By

Brian Cash

Master of Divinity Degree
Vanderbilt University '16
Bachelor of Arts
American Baptist College '13

Project Consultant: Dr. Beth Corrie

A Final Project submitted to the Faculty of the
Candler School of Theology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry
2021

Growing up, our elders often reminded us that we children should be “seen and not heard,” and that we should “stay out of grown folks’ conversations.” Such rules defined the boundaries between adults and children. The adults were not particularly interested in engaging in extensive conversations with children unless they were teaching, disciplining, or giving clear but cumbersome instructions. We children were told to remain in a child's place and learn to “bide our time.” We understood to stay out of grown folks’ conversation and commit ourselves to peer-related discussion only, unless expressly invited. Consequently, a “be seen and not heard” and “stay in a child's place” culture encouraged the increasing disconnect between the generations in our families.

The tragedy of being reared in an intergenerationally disengaged culture was that we lost the desire to seek substantive relationships with older family members beyond the regular family gatherings. We did not show any interest in learning about the family’s history or pivotal life-changing events that were important to our family’s narrative. Neither did I see my cousins engage my grandparents or other adults about our family's history because, like me, they became disinterested in anything to do with the adult world. Essentially, in our minds, the adults were on one side of the world, and we existed in another.

We felt this disinterest in older adults seep into our local church community, and this only increased the distance between us. Our church comprised many older members, and they resembled the adults in our family—indeed our extended family was the church's largest family. Increasingly we avoided any unnecessary engagement with church adults, having been taught well that we did not belong in that space. The prophetic scripture of Deuteronomy 6:20, about

children maturing to the stage in life at which they inquire about their history, seemed far-fetched to us. We at least were not asking about our history.

Ironically, a connection with my grandfather changed my outlook on intergenerational relationships forever. My grandfather's strong commitment to the church as a deacon, his ability to dress nice, and more importantly, his talent at captivating audiences with his stories fascinated me. My grandfather could tell stories like nobody's business. When he started talking from the floor about his life in the fields of Union Springs, Alabama, about feeding the hogs and milking cows, the people in the congregation would be shouting and going crazy. People would jump in excitement about the stories of walking up and down Benham Kentucky's railroads, and about sneaking into the coal mines where his daddy labored to earn their daily bread by the sweat of his brow. I wanted to know more. I wanted to know the man behind the stories.

How to do that? I figured out that if I showed an interest in him and his stories, he'd start telling me the same stories. Storytelling's power enabled me to establish a mutually reliant relationship with my grandfather. Our story time nurtured an intergenerational relationship that in time encouraged me to talk with him about my story of being called into the ministry and about the immense pressure I was feeling as a teenage preacher while still in high school.

Our experience is what Joanne Banks described the power of storytelling, when she stated that, "storytelling is an interactive process in which individuals share stories with others, and ... the practice also provides a way of expressing hopes, fears, and dreams."¹ Indeed, our

¹ Banks-Wallace, JoAnne. "Talk That Talk: Storytelling and Analysis Rooted in African American Oral Tradition." *Qualitative Health Research* 12, no. 3 (2002): 410–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129119892>.

story time transformed our grandfather-grandson relationship from a one-dimensional interaction to a mutually reliant connection.

As our relationship progressed, I felt encouraged to share with my grandfather stories of my call into the ministry and the various struggles of my journey. I would rush home from college to talk to my grandfather about scriptures on which I needed clarity or to explain to him how I interpreted those same texts. When my grandfather was diagnosed with clinical depression, our relationship of sharing became the very therapy that encouraged him to maneuver through the down moments. Amazingly, my grandfather and I cultivated a mutually reliant bond initiated through the power of storytelling.

But as I said, it hadn't always been so. And as I grew, I realized that generationally disconnected family contexts like mine mirror what's going on in most traditional churches across the country, where older adults are disengaged from the congregation's younger generations. Like my cousins, the younger generations in church typically lack any desire to foster relationships with their elders because of a culture that perpetuates the idea that they do not belong. However, the church's very future and hope is imaged through the type of intergenerational relationships I came to have with my grandfather, relationships that allow previously divided generations to grow together through mutually reliant connections. Like most of my family's elders, the church's older generations are typically baffled about how to invite and attract younger people, and typically hire a young and vibrant pastor to take on that task. That is not the solution. The solution, I suggest, lies in changing traditional churches' culture.

What do I mean by traditional churches? I mean congregations comprised of older members who maintain the traditions without much participation from the younger generation. Traditional churches are typically overwhelmingly comprised of a single, older generation whose

members are also the church's key leaders. They perpetuate the religious traditions of the past, considering them to be sacred—also meaning untouchable. Joshua Mitchell who recently published a book around the disconnect between millennials and older adults in the church describes one such church as having “great people who operated via traditional black Baptist church standards—for example, the Deacon Board led devotions and congregants wore suits and ties.”² Such traditional churches led by members of the older generation uphold the traditions of the past as the standard for today, lack intentional relationships with members of the younger generations within their church and, because they fail to create space for younger members to become involved, they typically rather quickly become single generation churches.

What to do? I suggest that traditional single generational churches can address the generational crisis within their congregation by incorporating an Intergenerational Story Telling Model to cultivate mutually reliant relationships between the generations. My model provides church leaders, pastors, youth workers, and other persons seeking to bridge the generational gap within their church with a practical approach to cultivating intergenerational relationships by integrating a three-stage storytelling approach into small church groups.

Why implement such an intergenerational storytelling model? Let me tell you about my pastoral context, the East Mount Zion Baptist Church, an aging single generational church. The East Mount Zion Narrative will briefly highlight the determining factors that led to East Mount Zion Baptist's significant though gradual decline from a thriving multigenerational church to an

² Mitchell, Joshua. *Black Millennials & the Church: Meet Me Where I Am*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018. P 139

aging single-generation congregation. Following the description of my context, I broaden the conversation beyond East Mount Zion to explore the larger issue of churches identified as a traditional single-generation church dominated by older leaders. After examining the issue of aging single generation churches, I critically review these churches, which is to become intergenerational quite intentionally. I argue that aging single-generation congregations' only chance at a sustainable future is through transitioning their congregations to become intergenerational and to cultivate mutually reliant relationships between all generations.

Lastly, I will introduce the *Intergenerationally Relevant Storytelling Model* that traditional single-generation churches can implement in their congregations through small group ministry.

The first stage of this model is to *Foster the Connection*. Fostering connection provides church leaders with practical methods to identify the generational participants for the storytelling session and to establish intergenerational connection. I detail the steps in this stage from the start of the conversation until the discussion is completed.

The second stage is to *Evaluate the Connection*. I detail a step-by-step approach by which leaders can evaluate the overall success of the storytelling experience. I equip leaders to identify relevant topics that are likely both to connect two or more generational representatives and to lead to an intergenerational bond. This evaluation stage will advise leaders on whether and how to implement the intergenerational connection into existing ministries in the church or to do so by establishing new ministries.

The third and final stage is to *Implement the Integration*. I make practical suggestions on how leaders can either infuse newly cultivated intergenerational relationships into existing church small group ministries or how they can do so by creating a new ministry in the church.

During this stage, I show leaders how East Mount Zion Baptist Church integrated the intergenerational relationships created through the storytelling model into existing traditional ministries to reimagine that ministry.

History of East Mount Zion Baptist Church Context

In 1906, hard-working black southerners who migrated to the north for opportunities for a more prosperous life established East Mount Zion Baptist Church (EMZBC) in Cleveland, Ohio. The church saw its most significant numerical increase during the 1950s and '60s as the African American community flooded the surrounding neighborhoods in search of a welcoming and friendly congregation. By the 1980s, the church had grown to an organization comprised of several generations totaling approximately 1500 members.³ Rapidly outgrowing its small building, the increase in membership prompted the congregation to acquire an enormous cathedral to accommodate its members.

Under the leadership of the late Pastor William Downs, EMZBC focused on a “community first” mission, which centered its attention around building up the community and becoming the church where no one was a stranger. Building on the foundation laid by Pastor Downs, Pastor A. Charles Bowie assumed leadership and collaborated with other leaders from the church to establish a community ministry called Lifeline that distributed food in the community, provided a clothing store for those in need of clothes, and shoes for families that fell on hard times. As the aforementioned encyclopedia article notes, “East Mount Zion has been actively involved in the community by sponsoring a wide range of outreach programs. Launched

³ “East Mount Zion Baptist Church,” *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*: Case Western Reserve University. (May 31, 2019). Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://case.edu/ech/articles/e/east-mount-zion-baptist-church>

in 1982, the Lifeline Ministry has provided temporary food aid to families in need, supplying some 300 area families with a four-day supply of food once a month."⁴ Essentially, East Mount Zion Baptist Church was a mission-driven church with the focus of serving the community's needs.

Since EMZBC embraced the “community first” mantra, the church could attract large families from all over Cleveland, particularly black families migrating from the south who found in this church a place that cared. Amidst all the racial tension of the 1950s and '60s, black families searched for a place that affirmed them and provided something the entire family could enjoy. The EMZBC Sunday School ministry cared for the families that attended, offering Sunday school classes for all ages, and adult volunteers dedicated to providing practical Christian education at all levels, including educating and training youth through summer camps, vacation Bible school, Bible study, lock-ins, and a host of other youth activities.

When I arrived at the church in February 2020, people from all over the community told me stories of their parents bringing them to EMZBC for the youth programs, even though they were members at other churches.

Perplexed about how a multigenerational 1500-member church could dwindle to a single-generation 300-member church of almost exclusively elderly persons, I started asking questions. I asked several of the older members who had been young people during EMZBC's glory years what had happened. How did they go from being a multigenerational church to a church predominately filled with older members? The answer that stayed with me centered around the

⁴ “East Mount Zion Baptist Church,” *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*: Case Western Reserve University. (May 31, 2019). Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://case.edu/ech/articles/e/east-mount-zion-baptist-church>

church's leaders' lack of ability to engage all generations together. Essentially, the younger generations were in the church but did not feel a part of the church.

Unfortunately, as time progressed, those vibrant and exciting youth programs faded away. After the committed volunteers grew old and sick, and for one reason or another could no longer lead as before, their replacements were not sufficiently engaged with the community to step up. When I arrived at EMZBC, we had ten Sunday school classes, and three of those classes were dedicated to children and youth. In the classes for children and youth, there were no more than five children in each classroom. The other seven classes were exclusively of members roughly sixty-five and over in age. Consequently, the once vibrant and massive Sunday school ministry that had attracted younger families had become a place for older members.

Reflecting on the what caused EMZBC to transition from being a thriving multigenerational church to a single-generation church coincides with why children and working adults did not have a place in the new building. Historically, our church was blessed to have several generations in the church, but it never had real cross-generational connection. As a result of the spoken and unspoken themes of "bide your time" and "children should be seen and not heard," the relevance of fostering generational relationships had become nonexistent but generational isolation had become a valued priority.

A pivotal example of the narrow focus of the membership causing the younger generation to leave happened in 2001 when the church decided to build an educational building for the community. The three-story multi-purpose facility included ten classrooms, administrative space, a banquet hall, and music studio space. However, when the building was finished older members grumbled about the disturbing presence and sound of children in the building; they feared the children would somehow destroy the new building. Furthermore, all of the classrooms were

designated for Sunday school class use only and the office space was for prominent mature leaders in the church. Unfortunately, because Millennials and Gen X'ers did not typically attend Sunday school and were not allowed to occupy key leadership roles in the church, they did not have a place in the building.

To appease the small group of frustrated (older) members, the church responded by keeping the children away from the new building and continuing all youth activities in the basement of the 112-year-old building. This separate and unequal designation of space established several unhealthy dynamics, including a separation of generations, which led to what author Peter Menconi identified as ships passing in the night. In his book, *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Www.com*, Menconi states,

“While many churches are multigenerational and seemingly healthy on the surface, in reality, the generations act like ships in the night that pass by one another but rarely have meaningful contact and interaction. This lack of meaningful communication and relations between generations must be addressed if churches are to thrive—not merely survive—now and in the future”.⁵

Menconi notes that the generationally separatist attitude of traditional churches leads to lack of connection, which inevitably perpetuates the misunderstanding between generations. Furthermore, one generation will always feel empowered and entitled to have the loudest voice, silencing the younger generations' voices and making them feel unwelcome, which eventually results in them leaving the church.

⁵ Menconi, Peter. *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Www.com*. Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage, 2010.

The decision to keep the children and youth activities secluded in the ancient basement sent the message to their parents that there was no place for them either and effectively reduced EMZBC to a single-generation church without the presence of younger generations except on Easter, Christmas, and Mother's Day. The once established East Mount Zion Baptist Church full of extended families and renowned for its engaging youth ministry had turned into the old East Mount Zion Baptist Church where the elders controlled everything. Although the church was comprised of several different age generations, unfortunately the church's vital leading voices were only older voices.

Single-Generational Churches and Church Decline

Unfortunately, many traditional churches that historically could have been identified as multigenerational congregations have now dwindled to single-generation congregations. East Mount Zion Baptist Church's problem of being a single-generation church is part of a broader issue that many other traditional churches are enduring. Duke University professor Mark Chaves, in an article about the changing demographics in American Christian congregations, states,

In the average congregation, 30 percent of the people are older than 60, compared with 25 percent in 1998. And while the average person still attends a congregation in which one-quarter of the adults are younger than 35, only 20 percent of the people in the average congregation are that young, compared with 25 percent in 1998. Older people are, of course, over-represented in American congregations, and young adults are under-represented, but congregations are aging somewhat faster than society as a whole. This

shift probably reflects a combination of increasing longevity and declining participation in congregations by young adults.⁶

Chaves states that traditional congregations are increasingly getting older, while younger members seemingly have left the church (or at least such churches). East Mount Zion Baptist Church's predicament of being an aging congregation is not unique. Traditional churches across the country are suffering similarly. Not only are these older members numerically stronger, they also have stronger voices and are given much more air time, effectively preventing younger members' from developing their voices and participation, let alone leadership.

Consequently, older generations pursuing the church's historical traditions without meaningful intergenerational connections leaves the church vulnerable to the inevitable reality of generational mass exodus. Traditional churches without such generational cross-connection will ultimately only seek to serve themselves or people like themselves, instead of cultivating a culture that serves every generation's needs in the church and beyond. The authors of the book *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities* state, "Churches and ministries that fail to take into account the distinctions among the generations run the serious risk of being niche congregations only—serving, at best, one generation well."⁷ Blomberg argues that many traditional churches with one older leader with

⁶ Chaves, M., and S. L. Anderson. "Continuity and Change in American Congregations: Introducing the Second Wave of the National Congregations Study*." *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 4 (2008): 415–40. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/69.4.415>. P 424.

⁷ A., Nesbit Sbanotto Elisabeth. *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016. P 194

the loudest voice become self-serving. Sadly, when a church caters only to one generation's needs, the other generations do leave.

Like East Mount Zion Baptist Church, traditional churches will continue to attract the older crowd due to their lack of generational engagement. Although many churches say they want all ages to exist in the church, the church's culture, mission, and activities illustrate something else. Gary McIntosh, renowned author on building multi-generational churches and founder of the largest growing church in Tulsa, Oklahoma the Transformation Church states, "Some churches today specifically target Boomers or Busters, but for most existing, traditional churches, this kind of narrow focus is not possible. Most pastors and church leaders know that they must work with all generations in the same church without ignoring any of them."⁸ Such traditional churches face a dilemma in pursuing their mission as a church. Most traditional churches face the dilemma to create ministry opportunities that attract and target all age groups without making one group feel abandoned. The root of the issue stems from their ministry approach and must be reevaluated to attract all generations.

Churches that focus on only one group within the congregation (in this case, elders) completely dismiss the mandate of Jesus to his disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus stated, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."⁹ In Matthew, Jesus critiques the disciples for trying to prevent children from being in his presence. Jesus reminds them that children should never be shunted away but should be welcomed invited into a space of belonging and encouraged to know they are just as

⁸ McIntosh, Gary, and Gary McIntosh. *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002.

⁹ Matthew 13:14 NIV.

important as any other person. Essentially, Jesus modeled for the disciples how the church should interact with and interact with younger folk. Jesus rebukes the disciples for refusing to engage with the children and indeed shunting them out of his presence.

Analyzing traditional churches that are single-generation congregations through the lens of Jesus and his disciple's narrative clarifies the ongoing tension between the church's generations. Older leaders are too busy shunning the younger generations away into segregated classroom spaces or out of sight into the church basement to realize these persons' need to be in Jesus' presence, and how they can enrich the church's life, now as children, and later as adults, in a multitude of capacities. At the same time, many of these younger generations grow up to work in professions that can be used for the church's continued future. However, due to their age the younger generations are not invited to share their gifts until they have reached retirement. Jesus reaches forth to embrace the children because Jesus understands that the church's present and future depends on welcoming and making space for every generations.

Having explored how this critical issue of integrating persons of all ages into the body of Christ negatively affects traditional churches, I now turn to propose a solution: the intergenerational storytelling model. However, before I unpack the storytelling model as a creative method for altering the traditional church's culture, I want to break down the term "intergenerational" as it relates to churches. In particular, in light of my experience of engaging our members through the storytelling model, I want to address the pivotal role that addressing the crisis of generational disconnection within traditional churches can play in the twenty-first century.

Among the many definitions of "intergenerational churches," I lean on that of James White, the author of the book *Intergenerational Religious Education*. He defines

intergenerational churches as "two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith through in-common experiences, parallel learning, contributive-occasions, and interactive sharing."¹⁰ White defines an intergenerational church as two or more different aged generations in a religious community learning from each other while building intentional relationships conducive to continued organizational growth.

church as two or more different aged generations in a religious community learning from each other while building intentional relationships conducive to continued organizational growth.

Churches that have become single aged-generational congregations should not be contemplating the question of how to get back to being *multigenerational* congregations; rather, the question single generation congregations should ask is how do to intentionally grow to be an *intergenerational* congregation.

Multigenerational churches that include teens, Millennials, Generation X'ers, and Boomers are sprouting everywhere. Yet history shows us that even though a church may experience multigenerational success, that does not mean that the church is actively trying to reach every generation within the church. What is the difference between *intergenerational* and *multigenerational* churches? Allen Holly, who has produced several resources to do with connecting generations within the church, observes that the term "multigenerational...may not reflect intentional cross-age experiences. Multigenerational may mean that the church honors all

¹⁰ White, James W. *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988. P 18.

generations and has programming for all generations,"¹¹but it says nothing about how they interact. The EMZBC *was* multigenerational. But it shunted the younger generations off into their own building, meaning there was little to no interaction between the generations, no cross-fertilization of faith.

Intergenerational congregations are intentional about generational connection. Intergenerational relationships are pertinent to the present and future overall formation and growth of every generation collectively in the church. More significantly, the intergenerational connection within the church speaks to the image of the family of God. David Kinnaman, the president of Barna Group, a leading research and communications company that works with churches and nonprofit to cultivate meaningful growth reminds us that, "Intergenerational relationships matter on earth because they are a snapshot of Zion, a small but true picture of the majesty and diversity of God's people throughout the ages, who are citizens of the new reality God inaugurated in Jesus Christ."¹² Kinnaman argues that intergenerational relationships are not just some tactic for growth but a biblical principle of the inclusivity of the church. Jesus connected people of different ages and backgrounds to come together to learn from each other to grow the future of the church. The church as we know it today was built on precisely such intergenerational connections.

Traditional single-generation churches that embrace an ethic of becoming an intergenerational congregation not only mirror the image of Christ's work on earth and of the

¹¹ Ross, Christine Lawton, and Holly Catterton Allen. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. IVP Academic, 2012.

¹² Kinnaman, David, and Aly Hawkins. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016. P. 74

household of God, such churches also have the opportunity to weave all generations together. Churches suffering from the lack of diverse generational presence can cultivate a space where all generations with different gifts and talents can learn from and grow with each other. Daphne Kirk, the author of the book *Heirs Together* argues for intergenerational connection by stating,

It is deliberately called intergenerational because it is precisely that! It is not just about including children—a very patronizing view that adults might adopt. It is not just about families, for there are many who have no family, yet are part of this wonderful flow in which God has set us all. This is about all of us appreciating one another, giving and receiving from the generations around us, without compromise and without losing our identity, that we “may be one.”¹³

Kirk confidently describes how the intergenerational model can help churches bridge generations and become one as they learn and grow together in God.

One of the significant problems with not implementing an intergenerational effort within single-generation dominated traditional churches is that it disconnects the future of their church from the possibility of merging the essential gifts and talents of every generation growing together spiritually and relationally for the sustainable future. Allen Holly writes, "An intergenerational outlook acknowledges that the gifts every generation brings to the spiritual formation of the other generations strengthen the whole church.... A faith community that practices intergenerational ministry will use these gifts, creating frequent opportunities for various generations to communicate in meaningful ways, to interact on a regular basis, and to

¹³ KIRK, DAPHNE. *HEIRS TOGETHER: Establishing the Intergenerational Church*. S.l.: FORTRESS PRESS, 2020.

minister, worship and serve together regularly."¹⁴ Holly illustrates the opportunities available to churches who transition their congregations toward an intergenerational ministry approach. Moreover, intergenerational ministry and life exposes the traditional single-generation congregation to experiences and abilities that it could use both to reach a broader spectrum of people or to make the existing church healthier, a truer household of God.

I recently had an opportunity to bring an intergenerational group together to discuss the church's vision and mission. The session comprised people aged from the teens to the eighties. Toward the middle point of the meeting, I incorporated an ice breaker to discover everyone's career experiences and their passion for living. To our amazement, we noticed that the individuals' passions and gifts were vital to the success of the new vision for the church. Sadly, most of these people had been church members for years without the church knowing about or drawing on their particular expertise and gifts. Our intergenerational conversation finally enabled us all to see one another's gifts but more importantly to see how, used together, they could build up the body of Christ, the Church, not just the entities for whom they worked or had worked.

Implementing Intergenerational Ministry Through Story Telling

One of my pastoral goals in 2020 was to discover creative ways of bringing different generations together and of cultivating new relationships of mutuality. Furthermore, another personal goal as a twenty-nine-year-old pastor of a 112-year-old church newly married to a twenty-eight-year-old wife was collectively and individually to foster mutually reliant

¹⁴ Ross, Christine Lawton, and Holly Catterton Allen. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. IVP Academic, 2012. P 20

relationships with members who were three times our age. I found the most effective approach to achieving such relationships to be sharing relatable stories.

Historically, the church has used storytelling to build community, grow personal knowledge of the Bible, and connect generations. Peter Morgan, the author of the book *Story Weaving* a book that illustrates how storytelling can be used as a method to build new encounters for overall growth for communities in the congregation reminds us that "the church is a story-formed community."¹⁵ In short, the church has used storytelling to form the church community as a whole. Whether through children's Sunday school lessons, Sunday sermons and sermon illustrations, or the church Christmas play, storytelling has long been a rich and richly used component of church life.

Furthermore, in the biblical foundation of the Christian church we see the significance of using storytelling to bring families together. Throughout the Hebrew Bible, we hear clear instructions by God to Israel's children to share their stories with the next generation. In Deuteronomy, God is recorded as stating, " In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the Lord our God has commanded you? Tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand."¹⁶ Later in the book of Joshua, after crossing the Jordan river Joshua instructs the people to place stones of remembrance and in so doing tell their children their deliverance narrative. Essentially, a biblical mandate for Israel's children was to bring every generation together through storytelling.

¹⁵ Morgan, Peter M. *Story Weaving: Using Stories to Transform Your Congregation*. St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1986. P 11

¹⁶ New American Standard Version, Deuteronomy 6:20, 21

Throughout the gospel narratives, we see Jesus using the storytelling method to explain the hidden mysteries of God's kingdom through the telling of parables to a multitude of people. Our Scriptures record Jesus being followed by thousands of people for healing and to hear the message that Jesus was teaching. To capture many people's attention for hours daily, Jesus employed a storytelling method that reached them at their needs. In her book *Short Stories by Jesus*, Hebrew Bible scholar Amy-Jill Levine argues that he used parable stories to address his audience's needs. Levine states,

The idea of Jesus having a set of three-by-five note cards or an iPad (for Jesus, better an 'I-am-pad') on which were inscribed the Good Samaritan or the Pearl of Great Price [stories] and from which he read the same story, verbatim, under different circumstances is unlikely; rather, good teacher that Jesus was — that we can be certain [that] stories by him and of him would not continue to be told [the same way over and over again] — he would have adapted his stories for the needs of each new audience.¹⁷

Levine's argument illustrates Jesus' methodology of reaching the people through intentional storytelling. Jesus mastered the art of storytelling through parables because although all the people's needs were different, bringing them together around relevant stories that address everyday needs became the most effective tool to form the entire multitude simultaneously. Each person could access the parable in the way that was helpful to them.

¹⁷ Levine, Amy-Jill. *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2015. P 14

Since then, the Church has continued to employ the art of storytelling to reach all people at the core of their needs. In the context of EMZBC and the African American church community more broadly, professor of Christian Education Anne Wimberly reminds us that:

“Our African American forebears in slavery were cognizant of the Bible as a storied document with which they could link their own stories and from which they could find direction and hope in the hard trials and tribulations of their circumstances. Their storytelling continued a revered African ancestral manner of relating in the community. It allowed them to reveal the depth of their own experiences and pose tough questions about life. It connected them to God's guiding, sustaining, and transforming story in the Bible, to resources from the past, and led them to decide how they would act amid the realities of life as moral and accountable beings.”¹⁸

Indeed, the African American community used the storytelling strategy inspired by biblical narratives as a venue to express the conditions of their experiences with each other. Storytelling became a method for unmasking the hurt of everyday perils and a means to find healing in a hurting community. Essentially, the people in the community could find hope from their ancestors' stories as they faced ongoing obstacles while existing in a world that perpetuated their sorrow and oppression. Storytelling for the African American community became an opportunity for an entire community to find wholeness in each other's stories.

Even beyond the African American church or Christian community, the African American community has used storytelling or oral tradition to bridge generations within their

¹⁸ Wimberly, Anne Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005. P 4

families. Each generation in the family thrived by and survived through the stories passed down from older family members. Chanee Fabius, Assistant Professor, Department of Health Policy and Management, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in her work on the significance of African American stories in the developing of relationships between the generations within the family, argues that storytelling plays a pivotal role in the generational connection. Fabius uses the word "generativity" to describe the older generation's commitment to leaving a legacy for the next generation and providing the necessary mentorship that will ensure future success for their family. Chanee states,

One important component in generativity is intergenerational relationships, which have been particularly instrumental in preserving and strengthening among African Americans, storytelling has been a method of intergenerational communication and connectivity for centuries, as well as a way in which younger generations can learn about cultural and family values, and methods of resilience specific to the African American experience.¹⁹

Chanee illustrates the power of establishing intergenerational communication through the art of sharing stories. Younger generations are invited into new connections with their older loved ones by using the stories that speak to the history of their families. Storytelling ignites conversation between the generations that encourages the overall health of the entire family's relationships. Peter Morgan once said, "stories inspire stories."²⁰ The power of transparent narratives create space for others to share their story despite generational gaps.

¹⁹ Fabius, Chanee D. "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity, Generativity, and Storytelling in African American Elders." *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 5 (2016): 423–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934716638801>. P 428

²⁰ Morgan, Peter M. *Story Weaving: Using Stories to Transform Your Congregation*. St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1986. P 11

Although we recognize and know for ourselves the power of storytelling and how effectively it has been used in the Christian church, in the gospels through the work of Christ, and in the African American Community, how in particular can the church use storytelling to bridge the divided generations within a congregation? Is there any working model for storytelling that nurtures intergenerational relationships? These two questions guide the remainder of our conversation.

Working Storytelling Models

In San Francisco, California, during the 2019–2020 school year, the Voice of Witness non-profit organization, whose mission centers on amplifying unheard voices, sought to build a model that would cultivate intergenerational relationships between seniors living in an assisted living facility and high school students. To accomplish this task, the organization partnered with the Sequoia Living facility, an organization that focuses on offering affordable housing and senior services to residents in the San Francisco area. After building relationships with those at the senior assisted living facility, Voices of Witness and Sequoia Living Facility initiated a collaboration with the Ida B. Wells High School, a local high school in the area, to connect high school students with senior citizens.

On a weekly basis, leaders from Voices of Witness would facilitate storytelling sessions between high school students and senior citizens to cultivate intergenerational relationships. The leaders used story art, oral history, paintings, and a variety of other creative methods to bring different generations together to learn each other's stories. Lisa Thyer, a local English teacher, stated, "Students saw the larger importance and power of storytelling and felt a great sense of connection to their oral history work. Besides, the support provided by Voice of Witness has also

furthered the sense of community created in the classroom."²¹ As expressed in this quote, the students engaged with the seniors, whose narratives empowered them to see their own stories and a part of a community from whom they were typically disconnected.

The project was a success; the Voices of Witness leaders creatively joined the older generation with high school students through the art of storytelling. Following the initial connection through storytelling, both generations cultivated relationships, allowing the older generation to be a part of the students' lives and to encourage the high school students to be empowered to share their own stories. Relationships of mutual bonding and building were created due to the intentionality of shared stories. Students returned to the classroom with a new sense of self-determination to live out the principles and ways of being garnered from their intergenerational encounters.

Intergenerational Storytelling Model

Reflecting over this storytelling model established by the Voices of Witness and my passion for storytelling connected with my relationship to my grandfather, how then can this method of connecting generations be contextualized in a traditional black church or any other single-generation dominated congregation? Over the past eight months since arriving at the East Mount Zion Baptist Church, I have been trying to figure out the answer to this question. I wondered how to bridge these generations effectively so that members of each generation were convinced they belonged and that their voice mattered. Therefore, I created the Intergenerational Storytelling Model that seeks to help single-generation dominant churches cultivate

²¹ "SHARING HISTORY INITIATIVE – Voice of Witness." Voice of Witness, February 26, 2021. <https://voiceofwitness.org/education/sharing-history/>.

intergenerational relationships between older generations and younger within their congregations.

At first, the intergenerational storytelling model was only about bringing different generations together for a storytelling retreat to share their stories and hopefully build relationships. However, halfway through conceptualizing the retreat's logistics, COVID-19 struck, causing our church to shut down, eliminating all opportunities for in-person interaction. I had no idea how I would execute the plan to bring young people together with older people during the worst pandemic of our time. Even before the pandemic, I questioned how, practically, to encourage these members of different generations to engage with each other because of the group's vast differences.

Then, amid the ongoing pandemic, the world came alive around the lynching of George Floyd at the hands and knee of a vicious police officer. Young, old, and in-between started to converse about George Floyd's death and how it affected their lives and those to whom they were connected. While I was still attempting to engage diverse generations during the pandemic, the light bulb went on: bring the generations together to talk about being black in America!

I held two sessions, one with a group of women/girls from the church, and one with men/boys—both groups comprised of at least four different generations with diverse life and career backgrounds. I included a high school student, a retired vocational director, a college administrator, and a speech pathologist in the women's group. The men's group included retired teachers, city council officials, high school teachers, and a high school basketball coach. Essentially, I was able to bring all of these voices together to talk about a relatable topic that was on everyone's mind, regardless of age.

After these initial sessions, I thought about a practical way to take these newly cultivated intergenerational relationships and reimagine the current ministries in the church that indirectly would help alter the church's culture from being dominated by a single (older) generation to being intergenerational. Around what ideals, topics, or concerns did everyone galvanize? How can I evaluate the commonalities from their discussions and use those ideas creatively to reimagine individual small group ministries in the church or create new small groups? I concluded I could encourage participants to reimagine the traditional ministries within the church through the lens of the shared experiences because those commonalties were a bridge to cultivate the intergenerational connection.

As a result, I created a three-step process. The first step became to foster the connection between the generations through relevant storytelling. During this step, the storyteller facilitator finds a topic that connects every generation, in order to engage everyone in critical conversation. The second step was to evaluate the connection between the generations to gauge shared concerns, topics, or ideas relevant for reimagining small groups within the church. The third and final step was to integrate the intergenerational connection established by the storytelling time into the ministries to reimagine and repurpose the ministries through an intergenerational lens. In short, once the group of differently aged persons has begun forming and nurturing intergenerational relationships based on shared interests or values, it is then possible to integrate the new fostered connections into traditional ministries or create new ministries with the goal of shifting the church's overall culture to becoming more welcoming to all generational voices and presence.

Both sessions were recorded for a weekly Bible study called the "Living Room Bible Study." Our congregation watched each interview live through a virtual source called premiere,

which allowed them to share their comments. Every participant provided their consent to be recorded and for their responses to be written down. Both sessions were in a safe environment following all COVID-19 regulations and assuring each participant's comfort.

First Step: Foster the Connection

The goal of this first step is to connect differently aged generations. As a facilitator, I learned that choosing a topic to which everyone can relate makes people willing to share in the conversation. Jeff Baxter, a Christian author who has dedicated his scholarship to aiding youth leaders and churches with practical approaches to integrating youth into the life of the church writes, "One of the beautiful things about stories is that the best ones function across generations."²² As Baxter argues, the compelling stories or narratives that will capture all generations' attention are those to which every generation can relate in some way. Therefore, if the facilitator desires to have a successful experience of bringing differently aged generations together, they should keep their ear to the ground for "hot" topics. At the start of my process, I was racking my brain, thinking about bringing the different generations together. Being new to the church, and therefore relatively ignorant of relationships between people in the church, the conversation with a group of differently aged members could have been very difficult. However, following George Floyd's murder, the topic of "Being Black in America" seemed to fit the bill.

Having chosen the topic, I then moved on to identify the participants. Operating through the lens of White's intergenerational definition of two or more generations growing in meaningful relationships together, I wanted to select a small group of people that included three

²² Vanderwell, Howard. *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008. P 101

different generations. I chose persons who would have the most to contribute to the discussion and people who could learn from each other. The idea of bringing the generations together centered on mutual learning between generations. White writes in *Intergenerational Faith Formation*, "It is important to note that the Center for Intergenerational Learning supports mutual learning and growth in intergenerational experiences. It is not just elders providing wisdom to naïve young people. It is different generations together striving to be 'community' in the best possible way."²³ The author argues that a successful intergenerational encounter occurs when everyone commits to learning from each other. Therefore, a part of my decision to choose participants was to identify people who were likely to be willing to listen and learn from one another rather than needing to dominate every conversation.

After selecting the people, how to lead the actual conversation was the next most significant learning curve. I learned from my initial conversation with the first group that once individuals start talking and opening up, the conversation can go all over the place. I recognized that it was essential to ask key questions connected to the general topic, and to lead the group toward possible intergenerational connection. With that in mind, after asking each group about being black in America, I asked them to tell me a story of an experience in which race negatively affected their lives. The experience question led me to a pot of gold. Once they started sharing, it was a domino effect, because other people in the room connected with the shared experiences and began sharing their stories too. As Brenda Snailum a leading scholar around the implementation of intergenerational ministry in the church states, "the end goal [of intergenerational ministry] is not just to have generations rub shoulders . . . but the goal is

²³ Martineau, Mariette, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald. *Intergenerational Faith Formation: All Ages Learning Together*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008. P 12

maturity in Christ while fulfilling the 'love one another' commands together."²⁴ Snailum argues that bringing generations together should always be about fostering a mutual connection, and for the church it should more specifically be about generations maturing in Christ together.

Therefore, my overall goal for asking questions had to do with the expectation that two different aged people would grow in a relationship with one another, and in their shared faith.

An example of how the intergenerational conversation created opportunities for different age generations to share similar experiences occurred in the men's session around the subject of racial discrimination at a local Cleveland historical black college called Central State University. The youngest man in the group started sharing a story about being pulled over by a police officer, who sent him to the local traffic court. The young man shared his trepidations of going to this particular court because there was a rumor around campus that the judge had a reputation of racial bias in her rulings toward African American males at this particular courtroom. As he talked about his experience in that courtroom and feeling racially profiled by the judge and police officers, one of the older men who had attended the very same school before, shouted in affirmation of having had just such an encounter with this particular judge. The older gentlemen and the younger man talked about similar scenarios of finding themselves at the mercy of the same judge and of dealing with this town's racial climate.

Second Step: Evaluate the Connection

²⁴ Snailum, Brenda. "Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?" *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 9, no. 1 (2012): 165–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131200900112>. P 172

After my conversation with the two groups, I examined all of the stories shared and looked for intersectional moments. I wanted to find topics or issues to which more than two people from different generations related as a means of discovering intergenerational connections. Many concerns, ideas, and topics were derived from the conversation, but I noticed a special connection between two women after listening to the recording. Our only teen participant in the women's discussion shared her experience of being the only black girl in a predominately white high school. Following her narrative, two other women shared their stories about times at which they likewise were the only African American woman in an all-white space. One lady in particular, who grew up in a predominately white neighborhood and attended a majority white high school, started to talk about her struggles. So, I took note of this newly established intergenerational bond.

After I noticed three women's shared experiences representing three different generations and two similar high school experiences, I evaluated their connections. How well did they connect after sharing similar experiences? Two of the women connected immediately. Even after the conversation, they continued having discussions around their high school experiences. A bond between the two was so strong that they subsequently thought of each other as big sister/little sister through the church's youth ministry. Such fostered relational connections are significant to the storytelling model's overall goal because new relationships can be the catalyst for the overall change.

After thinking about the connections fostered through relatable topics between two or more generations, I wanted to start reflecting on possible placements. However, I knew that placing these new cultivated relationships into traditional ministries would need the assistance of influential voices. In our church, we have several small group ministries such as deacons,

trustees, Sunday school, youth ministries, usher ministry, courtesy committee, community feeding ministry, and other small groups. However, culture shifts typically are successful only if respected members of the congregation stand behind the initiative. Allen Holly offers helpful advice about integrating intergenerational ministry in the church when he states, "raise the subject with interested people and decision makers."²⁵ So as I evaluated the relationships, I sought to discover that possible decision-making or influential members among the group that are respected in the congregation, and who I thought might be useful to promote particular members' integration into particular ministries or roles.

Of course not everyone selected for the storytelling activity was an influential member of the congregation. Helpfully, this reality provided space for unheard voices to be heard and the potential to create new innovative ministries in the church. Furthermore, the unheard voices contributed fresh perspectives to issues and concerns on which our church had lost its way. For example, the conversations challenged our church's lack of attention to African American girls' plight in predominately white high schools, to the tension black boys encounter in gentrified urban areas, and to other realities not on traditional church leaders' "radar." Essentially, including previously unheard and non-influential voices in the group allowed us the opportunity to reimagine truly new church ministries.

Third Step: Implement the Integration

Following the connection and evaluation stage, I had to consider the best approach to integrating the fostered intergenerational connections into the church's ministry. I discovered two

²⁵ Allen, Holly Catterton. *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018. P 94

main routes to integration. The first centered on drawing on the church's existing structure and encouraging a current leader to bring on new intergenerational partners. The second method for integration looked at creating a new ministry form that allows the old structure to expand and make room for individuals previously excluded from traditional or existing leadership roles. In my context, the small groups of the church maintain and preserve the culture of the church. Ministries such as those of the deacons, trustees, Sunday school, and women reflect the single generational crisis in our church because only older people lead these ministries. However, if we can integrate intergenerational relationships into these ministries, and where needed, create new ministries, we will give voice to unheard generational voices, shifting the culture in the entire church.

In pondering the ideas for implementation following the conversation with the men about being black in America, I identified a common concern around which at least three men connected. One of those men held a very influential position in the church. The influential voice and decision-maker in the church was the chairman of deacons, and he established a relationship with a young man in his thirties and another in his forties. The intergenerational connection was developed with an influential voice attached to an essential ministry that already existed but that needed reimagining. It was simple to integrate them into the deacons' ministry and allow the influential voice to assist with the culture changing and the expected resistance.

A few months ago, I called a meeting with our chairman of deacons to talk about the ongoing problem with our aging deacons and their dwindling physical ability to fulfill the duties of being a deacon. During the meeting, I mentioned the idea of bringing into the deacons' ministry those two men with whom he had forged new relationships through our storytelling. After I explained the idea, the chairman was excited about inviting the younger men to join the

deacons' group. Although Covid-19 regulations prevented them from meeting physically, the brothers planned a Zoom call to discuss ways to reimagine the deacons' ministry by incorporating intergenerational voices.

My conversation with the chairman of deacons about reimagining the deacons' ministry by adding the younger men with whom he had established a connection through the storytelling was essential for integrating the deacons as an intergenerational group. Although the deacon was an influential voice in the church and represented the older paradigm for ministry, his newly cultivated relationships with the other men opened the door to critical dialogue for change. The deacon did not dismiss the younger men simply as men who did not yet have his wisdom and age, but as men whose point of view was essential to the church's present and future and to the deacons' ministry.

Interestingly enough, the most exciting moment in the integration stage happened with the non-influential intergenerational connections. The non-influential intergenerational connection occurred between the sixteen-year-old teenager and a twenty-nine-year-old Millennial. Neither has a particularly significant voice or position in the church. However, they bonded over the issue of African American women's experiences in predominately white schools.

However, I was uncertain how to integrate this connection into an existing ministry similar to the deacons' ministry. The only ministry into which I thought this bond could be integrated was the youth ministry. Unfortunately, our church's youth ministry had declined in numbers and participation over the last ten years due to a lack of ministry efforts that sought to minister to the entire family's needs. As the ministry efforts decreased, along with the participation, so too did the budget for youth ministry. When I arrived at the church, the youth's

budget only permitted them to attend an annual Baptist congress meeting. For the remainder of the year, youth activities were restricted to Sunday school and singing on youth Sunday. The youth leaders were disgruntled and frustrated because of the cut in their budget, and the entire church felt that the youth ministry needed revamping.

As I continued to evaluate whether to create a new ministry or integrate them into the existing youth ministry, I wondered how successful the transition would be. The church's youth ministry was not accustomed to outsiders, so integrating the new bond between the student and the Millennial into the existing ministry without an influential voice backing up the move would not have been successful. Therefore, I decided to create a new ministry opportunity separate from the existing youth ministry within the church. However, this experience exposed how those deemed non-influential or lacking the power to make decisions should be just as influential or significant as anyone else. Moreover, I believe that creating new ministries without the accustomed influential voices will breathe new life into the church and give relevance to previously unheard voices.

So, as I contemplated the possible conflicts of integrating the newly formed connection between the Millennial and the high school student into the youth ministry, I came up with the idea of creating something new. The moment to create a new ministry with these previously unheard, non-influential voices would, I thought, bring a new ministry to the church, introduce the people to a concern unspoken about in the church, and illustrate a successful intergenerational connection within the church.

My hunch was right. Through their leadership, they are working on establishing an intergenerational ministry lead by Millennials that will mentor and develop teens in high school. This ministry's first effort will be to empower African American teen girls and, more

particularly, teen girls attending majority-white high schools. The new ministry will illustrate the power of intergenerational leadership in the church and address an issue rarely discussed in our church. Furthermore, this ministry will engage more Millennials who have been isolated or non-existent in ministry, empowering them to feel respected and wanted.

Following these stages of fostering the connection, evaluating the connection, and implementing the integration enabled me to foster intergenerational relationships in a traditional church. Beyond that, creating moments to expose our members virtually during a pandemic to the importance of narrative sharing among different generations has inspired more congregants to share their stories with younger generations. I have established new relationships with different aged generations with whom I thought the pandemic would limit such connections. The people now actually use the word intergenerational more than they have ever used it before.

Conclusion

Due to Covid-19, the model I have described here still has some areas that need to be explored more fully to understand what it means to foster intergenerational relationships in traditional churches to change an entire church culture. When the time is appropriate for the members to return in person, I will create more in-person opportunities for people to share their stories because bonds between people are more adequately cultivated in human space than in the virtual space. However, I will continue to seek to develop the intergenerational relationships initiated this previous year and contemplate more ways of integrating them into existing ministry or new ministries.

Bibliography Page

A., Nesbit Sbanotto Elisabeth. *Effective Generational Ministry: Biblical and Practical Insights for Transforming Church Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.

Allen, Holly Catterton. *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018.

Banks-Wallace, JoAnne. "Talk That Talk: Storytelling and Analysis Rooted in African American Oral Tradition." *Qualitative Health Research* 12, no. 3 (2002): 410–26.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129119892>

Chaves, M., and S. L. Anderson. "Continuity and Change in American Congregations: Introducing the Second Wave of the National Congregations Study*." *Sociology of Religion* 69, no. 4 (2008): 415–40. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/69.4.415>. P 424.

"East Mount Zion Baptist Church," *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History: Case Western Reserve University*. (May 31, 2019). Retrieved February 2, 2021, from <https://case.edu/ech/articles/e/east-mount-zion-baptist-church>

Fabius, Chanee D. "Toward an Integration of Narrative Identity, Generativity, and Storytelling in African American Elders." *Journal of Black Studies* 47, no. 5 (2016): 423–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934716638801>. P 428

Kinnaman, David, and Aly Hawkins. *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church ... and Rethinking Faith*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016

KIRK, DAPHNE. *HEIRS TOGETHER: Establishing the Intergenerational Church*. S.I.: FORTRESS PRESS, 2020.

Levine, Amy-Jill. *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*. New York, NY: Harper One, 2015.

Martineau, Mariette, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald. *Intergenerational Faith Formation: All Ages Learning Together*. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2008.

Matthew 13:14 NIV.

McIntosh, Gary, and Gary McIntosh. *One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002.

Menconi, Peter. *The Intergenerational Church: Understanding Congregations from WWII to Wwww.com*. Littleton, CO: Mt. Sage, 2010.

Mitchell, Joshua. *Black Millennials & the Church: Meet Me Where I Am*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2018.

Morgan, Peter M. *Story Weaving: Using Stories to Transform Your Congregation*. St. Louis, MO: CBP Press, 1986.

New American Standard Version, Deuteronomy 6:20, 21

Ross, Christine Lawton, and Holly Catterton Allen. *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship*. IVP Academic, 2012.

SHARING HISTORY INITIATIVE – Voice of Witness.” Voice of Witness, February 26, 2021. <https://voiceofwitness.org/education/sharing-history/>.

Snailum, Brenda. “Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?” *Christian Education Journal: Research on Educational Ministry* 9, no. 1 (2012): 165–81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131200900112>.

Vanderwell, Howard. *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*. Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008.

Wimberly, Anne Streaty. *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2005.

White, James W. *Intergenerational Religious Education: Models, Theory, and Prescription for Interage Life and Learning in the Faith Community*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988.