Presbyterian Mission
Office of Christian Formation

Matthew 25 and Intergenerational Community

Has your church committed to the Matthew 25 invitation? Are you considering how you might engage? The Matthew 25 vision depends on passing down our faith to each generation and engaging all ages in the message of ministry with those living in the margins. Consider including the whole faith community in this message. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Building congregational vitality

The very nature of being an intergenerational faith community is the essence of congregational vitality. Every young person needs unrelated, faithful adults in their lives. Adults have a richer faith life when they can engage with young people. Engaging the whole body in your ministries is essential in congregational vitality.

- Look at the 7 Marks of Congregational Vitality and discern how all ages are engaged in each mark.
  - Do you have opportunities for worship leadership from all ages?
  - How are all ages engaged in lifelong discipleship?
  - Engaging in intergenerational mission is certainly a reflection of an outward, incarnational focus.
  - With the "7 Marks" as your guide, consider a Bible study or intergenerational event for studying and exploring each mark as a congregation.

- Sabbath Faith Practices for the Intergenerational Community is an excellent tool for engaging in practices as a faith community. There is an essential tool for each of the practices and ministry kits for each age, including one specifically for intergenerational ministries.
  - Consider exploring a different practice each week or month as a church.
  - Engage in the practices during your gatherings and give resources for households to engage in at home.
  - Incorporate practices into mission experiences, especially storytelling.

Dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty

Vital congregations engage in their neighborhood and in the world. Dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty begin with teaching our youngest the message of God's vision of equity and justice for our world. If you are engaging in intergenerational mission, chances are you are also engaging in one or both focus areas. Here are some things to consider:

- Adopt a 21-Day Racial Justice Challenge to engage all ages in your congregation. Choose a different resource listed on the Matthew 25 Dismantling Structural Racism website to read/listen/watch each day. Youth should be able to easily participate. Plan to offer some suggestions to families for younger children. Here are some ideas for adaptation.
  - You might consider having a couple of activities for a week instead of something daily. Have a check-in each week in small groups with a devotion and a time to share.
  - Include books for all ages in the challenge. Flyaway Books has good options for young children.
  - Offer open-ended questions to households with younger children where they explore how diverse the world is and how they are good neighbors in their own community.
  - Challenge households to assess their own homes for diverse artwork, music and books. Offer ideas for expanding exposure to more diverse mediums. Consider a lending library for a period of time.

- Look at the photographs, artwork, books and language that your church building has displayed or is using in your day-to-day gatherings and worship services.

- Make sure you are using inclusive language as well as photographs and paintings that are from diverse artists.
- Look for artwork from your community that is representative of its cultures and demographics.
- Develop an assessment for your church library based on a diversity of images and inclusive language. Look at the books that teach the history of the United States. Make sure they tell the accurate history of indigenous peoples and people of color.
- Consider a library cart that has books for all ages about anti-racism and diversity.
- Don't forget about adding children's books that address poverty and racism.

• Engage in healthy partnerships in your community. Rather than having mission experiences that are singular, discern what organizations in your community are doing work around racism and poverty and partner with them.
  - Choose some organizations that have opportunities for most ages to engage, at least with their parents or guardians.
  - Choose organizations that have opportunities for households to engage in on their own time as well as with the faith community.
  - Have children and teens tell you about the organizations they are engaged in through school or scouts. This may lead you to engaging in organizations that they are already invested in!
  - Make sure you are having mission fairs yearly in your congregation that introduce these organizations to all ages. Work with organizations to have them engage in storytelling as a method of sharing their work with all ages in your congregation.
  - Consider having a Mission Center in your church — possibly a new use for an old classroom or a library! This can be a place where photos, information and regular hands-on experiences are offered.

• Language is important. Help all ages learn the importance of not using "savior" language when talking about doing ministry with those experiencing poverty and struggles in relationship to systemic poverty.
  - Hold parenting classes where parents and guardians can learn about language to use at home with children and youth.
  - When engaging the congregation in the practice of storytelling, after engaging in a service activity, make sure to give a template that reminds them to use the appropriate language of partnership.

Engaging in the Matthew 25 invitation as a whole church community is how we can begin to effect change on a systemic level. We must have the next generation involved in this work. While small children may not understand everything that is being addressed, and sometimes community activism reveals some ugly truths that can frighten small children, they will begin to understand that the gospel message is about justice and equity just by watching how the adults in the church engage in an active faith. The resources and ideas found in the Intergenerational Mission Toolkit from the Office of Christian Formation will guide you into the rich experiences of engaging in intergenerational mission as a Matthew 25 community.

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July 2021