



Sabbath Practices Ministry Kit for Intergenerational Gatherings

Hospitality, Prayer, Service, Storytelling and Retreat

introduction

The 5 sabbath faith practices we have focused on in this toolkit project were chosen as practices that form a communal life of faith and therefore using practices in an intergenerational community is highly encouraged. This ministry kit will highlight some ways to use the practices in intergenerational gatherings. Use this ministry kit alongside the essential tools for each practice as you teach and guide your faith community into becoming an intergenerational community of faith. Each of the 5 practices in this ministry kit have a section of things to consider, ways to engage and a resource list is provided at the end of the kit. The kit is meant as a guide and a launch pad for leaders.

Practicing Intergenerational Hospitality

Churches that practice acts of hospitality both inside and outside of the church show that all people, regardless of their generation, are worthy of God's hospitality.

things to consider

Remember that hospitality is about giving of yourself for the sake of another person, especially the stranger.

Practicing hospitality includes engaging in anti-racism and inclusion work across generations. Include discussions of hospitality and welcome in your conversations about anti-racism and being inclusive.



Be mindful when practicing hospitality, or other acts of the Christian life, that the attempt to do so intergenerationally often begins with younger people being the instigators.

When practicing hospitality intergenerationally try and make sure that there are opportunities for hospitality to be given to specific generations, but also intergenerational populations.

engaging in hospitality

Church Greeters: Greeting teams are a great way to practice hospitality. Intergenerational greeting teams show a church's commitment to being intergenerational, while also offering the opportunity for the generations to offer hospitality to anyone who darkens the church doors.



Practice Virtual Hospitality: For your virtual services, classes, and fellowship opportunities, make sure you are paying attention to welcome all generations into the space just as you would a physical space. Have extra zoom hosts, someone to monitor and comment on Facebook live and have technology helpers.

Meals: If your church shares a regularly scheduled meal, either at church or in someone's home, make sure to include all generations in details such as the seating arrangements and preparing of the meal. Be intentional with acts of hospitality that include all generations, like greeting people as they arrive, setting up/cleaning up and in conversation starters.

Committee: If your church has a greeting/hospitality/usher committee, try to make sure that the committee is made up of various generations to show your commitment to offering hospitality intergenerationally.

Meal Ministry: If your church has a meal ministry, consider having intergenerational hospitality teams for each meal. Families with younger children particularly enjoy meal preparation or deliveries to older members or others in need. Put together intergenerational groups that can coordinate meals to church or community members in need. This group can meet in person or virtually to share recipes, prepare meals and organize deliveries.

Caring for Immigrants: Caring for immigrants is an important part of Christian practice. Look for an organization that encourages relationships between generations and long-term relationships. Learning about one another is an act of hospitality.

Intergenerational Book Groups and Story Time: Books are a powerful way to learn and share the importance of hospitality and welcoming the stranger. Name the practice of hospitality as you engage in book studies. Include older elementary children and youth in an intergenerational study. For young children, consider an online story time where different generations (including children) read stories about hospitality and welcoming the stranger.

New Members: Most new member classes and teams are made up of adults. Children and youth are an equally important part of the life of the church. Incorporating them into this process shows them hospitality, as well as giving them the opportunity to be hospitable to new members.



Practicing Intergenerational Prayer

Prayer offers an opportunity for people in all generations to simultaneously connect with God and with others. This is true whether or not you are in the presence of the person(s) you are praying for, or simply in prayer for them.”

things to consider

Move beyond the classic image of prayer always happening with hands folded and eyes closed. A focus on a variety of styles of prayer including spoken and written prayer, but also prayer through music, art, body poses, and meditative practices is helpful in connecting individuals with a style of prayer that is in line with different learning modalities.



If considering prayer partners, connect people from the different generations that might not normally interact. Fellowship is an important part of forming intergenerational relationships, so give space for this interaction as part of your prayer partner practices.

In opportunities for public prayer, remind all participants that there is no “right way” to pray. In public prayer, young people are often afraid to pray aloud in the presence of older adults. Prior to praying, encourage everyone that this is a safe space to pray, no matter your age.

In a communal setting where prayer is to take place, make sure that the prayer time is planned so that it includes all ages. Think about those that don't yet read, those who need larger print or have a hard time hearing or those that might engage better in tactile methods of prayer. Doing this on a regular basis encourages intergenerational prayer.

engaging in prayer

Prayer Partners: Create yearlong prayer partners between a young person and an older person, being sure to create fellowship opportunities for the partners. You can also partner up households with and without children.

Secret Prayer Partners: During Advent, create secret Prayer Partners where a name is drawn and a person from one generation commits to praying for a person in another generation. You can reveal partners after the new year.

Prayer Groups: Many churches have prayer groups that regularly meet. Consider having one of those groups become intergenerational or begin a prayer ministry that has an intergenerational group. You might already have small groups that meet



regularly—consider making some of these intergenerational groups that also pray together.

Intergenerational Prayer Walks: Consider doing prayer walks both among each generation and intergenerationally. This can be done simply around your church, neighborhood, schools, and retirement communities.

Prayer in Worship: Create an opportunity for intergenerational prayer in your worship service. Think about doing your prayers of the people conversationally between people of different generations. Give space for illustrated prayers to be lifted up. When holding up an illustrated prayer simply say, “this is Sue’s prayer” or hold the drawing up saying nothing, giving time for contemplation. If worshipping online or live streaming your service, make space for sharing prayers across the platform by using comment section, chat or breakout rooms. Consider sharing prayers of people at home with the in-person worshipers.

Written Prayer Resource: Create a prayer resource for your congregation in which prayers are written by those of various generations. This resource will be not only enriching for the writers, but also for the multitude of generations that read them. Young children can draw and then dictate prayers for the resource.

Prayer Writing: Think about creating an opportunity for older generations to write prayers for children, youth, and college age people. Then have the children, youth, and college age people write prayers for those in older generations and those who are homebound.

Prayer Quilt Ministry: Many churches have prayer quilt ministries. Consider making your prayer quilt ministry intergenerational. This offers the opportunity for prayer, relational engagement, and learning between the generations.



Practicing Intergenerational Service

People from all generations are called to serve, and people from all generations need other people to serve and care for them. When the generations come together in the act of service, we live out the truth that Christ came to serve all people.

things to consider

Intergenerational service can happen in your community as well as out of the state or country. Not every opportunity to serve needs to be a trip. Have a variety of options in your church so that more intergenerational groups can come together to serve.



Certain service organizations have age restrictions. Develop long-lasting partnerships with organizations so that you can create an atmosphere of trust that allows for creative thinking around age restrictions. Make sure your church is considering some partnerships where age is not a restriction to be involved.

During service opportunities that might involve labor or construction, there can be teaching moments between older generations and younger generations. However, be mindful that those “teaching” opportunities can sometimes feel demeaning and prohibitive. Help facilitate language and interactions that are positive.

Opportunities where your service team can serve a younger generation, an older generation, and the multi-generational offer each generation a way to be “seen” and to serve alongside one another.

engaging in service

Service Groups: Many churches have standing groups that serve specific mission partners. Consider making one of those groups permanently intergenerational. This group can meet regularly and can create projects and learning opportunities together. Create a culture of service even for the littles that are benefiting from the intergenerational engagement before they understand what service is.

Virtual Service Groups: Consider having a virtual service group that is intergenerational. These groups can especially practice service as a household. They can encourage one another with ideas and engage in teaching one another. This can be a great way for school-aged children and youth to share the service they are engaging in at school or in clubs. Be sure to make the connection to why we serve as Christians in our communities.

Mission Council: Mission councils and committees are often made up of adults. Could households or youth serve? Think of this as not only an opportunity for intergenerational



community and service to the church, but also the opportunity to further intergenerational service opportunities.

Youth Mission: Youth mission experiences are often in need of adult leaders. Encourage older adults to volunteer to be a leader on a trip. Not only will they be serving the youth but serving alongside them.

Church Clean Up Days: Church clean up days are easy to organize and offer an intergenerational service opportunity in a comfortable environment for all generations.

Walks/Races for Causes: Many cities have various walks and races for different causes. These offer opportunities for intergenerational service and they do so in a way that is not intimidating. They offer ample time for relationship building while learning about and supporting different organizations.

Community Garden: Serving a local community garden is a great way to practice intergenerational service. This opportunity creates space for conversation, working together, and education around food scarcity and accessibility.

Blessing Bags and other collection projects: Consider a regular pattern of collection and assembly projects that can be done after church, in homes or in neighborhoods. These projects are great for intergenerational interaction and contribution. All ages can shop and help assemble.

Community Meals: Community or shelter meals can be an opportunity for all ages to serve together. Look for an organization that serves smaller numbers or is specific to families experiencing food insecurity or homelessness, as to not overwhelm young children. Be creative about how to involve everyone with activities such as coloring placemats or making center pieces, pair up younger children with a youth to pass out drinks or a dessert and remember to encourage eating with guests after all have been served.



Practicing Intergenerational Storytelling

Stories evolve in the presence of other stories. Storytelling in an intergenerational setting is a wonderful way to help both young people and older adults better understand their own story.

things to consider

Be mindful that some people are more private than others. In offering opportunities for intergenerational storytelling, be upfront that you do not have to share certain things if they make you feel uncomfortable or unsafe.



Think about the different ways that specific generations can share their story. Technology, cultural artifacts, art and music are excellent tools to help people share.

If you plan to have people share their story in worship or another public forum, be sure that those who are sharing their story have permission to talk about other church members who may be a part of their story.

Storytelling between generations is an important way to get to know one another. However, be sure that in such an instance that the stories being told by older adults are appropriate for a younger audience.

engaging in storytelling

Storytelling Groups: Storytelling in small groups can be a powerful act of testimony. If you already have intergenerational small groups, consider adding a weekly storytelling portion or an opportunity to share your group's collective story. If you do not already have small groups, consider creating one or two with this function in mind.

StoryCorps-like Project: NPR has a wonderful project called StoryCorps. It offers a venue for people to simply share their story. Consider creating a space such as this to video and/or audio record those of different generations sharing their story with one another and with your congregation.

Sharing in Worship: Worship is an intergenerational space, so what better place to offer the opportunity for people of different generations to share their story of faith. This can be done in person but also consider having this as a video.

Post-Retreat/Mission Storytelling: Retreats and mission experiences are great ways to expand your story and to learn about others. Consider creating an opportunity for sharing after an intergenerational retreat or mission experience. This can be done in a worship service, Sunday School class, or standalone event. Make sure that prompts are



used so that participants are really sharing about their faith rather than just talking about “what they did.”

Listening to Stories Class: Sometimes the hardest part about storytelling is being the listener. It’s easy for us to want to interject rather than simply listen to someone else. Consider creating a Sunday school class where the sole purpose is to listen to other people’s stories of faith.

Confirmation Statements of Faith: Writing a statement of faith is a great example of storytelling. What we believe has meaning and a history. Invite the entire church to join your youth in writing statements of faith. Consider pairing up a youth and an older adult to share their statements of faith and faith story together.

Storyboard: Create a board/wall at your church and every few weeks add a question or prompt to it. Have pens and pencils available and allow people of all ages to share about what they think and who they are.

Stories of the Bible: Consider encouraging your senior pastor to do a “stories of the bible” preaching series where they look at the storytelling done in the bible and connect it to modern day and personal stories. This invites those from all generations into God’s story.

Coffee/Story Hour: Many churches have coffee or fellowship hours after their worship service. Think about changing this to story hour. Offer a question or prompt and encourage people to share their thoughts and story with someone from a different generation. This works especially well with zoom breakout rooms if you are worshipping online. Have someone host the breakout rooms and make sure they include several generations.

Stories of Faith: Consider doing a “Stories of Faith” Sunday school series where you invite the generations of a family, e.g., children, parents, grandparents, to share their individual and family story of faith.



Practicing Intergenerational Retreat

Intergenerational retreats offer the ability for each generation to be out of their comfort zone and come together to share in a new experience of rest and renewal.

things to consider

Retreat is both an event AND a practice. Time away to practice retreat is impactful but it is also important to engage in the practice of retreat in your everyday life, especially when going away isn't an option. Explore both with your faith community.



The practice of retreat, whether as an event or a set-aside time of the day, will naturally include many other faith practices such as a prayer retreat or a service retreat. Storytelling is often an important part of weekend retreats with all ages. Look at all sabbath practices when exploring how to engage in retreat.

Think about how to encourage the practice of retreat in a virtual way. Consider an online retreat where participants check-in online and then log-off for a time of practicing retreat.

When planning retreats consider:

- Be mindful of planning too many events that require physical exertion. Although this might be advantageous for children and youth, it may be difficult for older adults.
- Starting each day and end each day at a time that is suitable for both younger people and older adults.
- Having a time of "quiet" each day. Many children need nap/quiet time, as do many older adults, and even if undesirable for youth, it is good for them.
- Be clear about what parts of the retreat are optional and which parts are highly encouraged for all to participate in.

engaging in retreat

Intergenerational Retreat: Start a yearly all church retreat that is intentional about having every generation actively and equally participate. Look at all retreats that your church currently has. Could the women, men and youth retreats all be included in an all-church retreat? Intergenerational retreats can have time for age/stage related activities and a time for all to be together. Prioritize worship being inclusive of everyone on the retreat.



Retreat from technology: Consider having a retreat from technology. This can be an actual weekend intergenerational retreat in which everyone retreats from technology or a commitment to do so for a weekend. In order to make this intergenerational for single generation households, have a time to plan for and debrief this retreat online or in-person to talk about how it felt to retreat. Consider encouraging 2 or 3 households to have a retreat together at a retreat center or by camping together. Provide materials for them to engage with as they intentionally practice retreat.

Retreat with technology: If you're unfamiliar with technology, it can cause stress and anxiety and be anything but a retreat. At the same time, overuse of technology is often attributed to young people. Consider retreating into/with technology by having a day in which younger people can help older adults with their technology. They can use this time to help them with their computers, iPads, and cell phones, and can show them how to download prayer, meditation, and mindfulness apps. At the end of the time, everyone can use a specific app to practice with together.

Intergenerational Walking Groups: When we walk, we are reminded that we are not running. Consider creating intergenerational walking groups that foster relationships and allow people to take time to think, reflect, talk, and slow down.

Service Retreat: Consider planning a day of service as a way of practicing retreat and reordering our lives toward serving God and others.

Small Groups: Consider simply the creation of intergenerational small groups as practicing retreat. This requires saying yes to a group of people who will encourage each participant in living faithfully and practicing retreat as a rhythm of living. These could be already existing small groups and retreat could be a focus for a season or part of a plan to engage in all practices.

Retreat Challenges: There are many ways to practice retreat. Consider creating an all church challenge where each church member is challenged to inhabit one practice weekly. Offer an opportunity for the different generations to reflect and share their experience. Consider creating a wall at your church where each week people can post the ways in which they have practiced retreat that week.



Where can I learn more?

Books

Faith at Home: A Handbook for Cautiously Christian Parents by Wendy Claire Barre. Morehouse Publishing, 2016.

99 Ways to Raise Spiritually Healthy Children by Kathleen Long Bostrom. Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

Making a Home for Faith: Nurturing the Spiritual Life of your Children, revised edition by Elizabeth F Caldwell. Pilgrim Press, 2007.

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

Sabbath in the Suburbs: A Family's Experiment with Holy Time by MaryAnn McKibben Dana. Chalice Press, 2012.

Families at the Center of Faith Formation by Leif Kehrwald, John Roberto, Gene & Jolene Roehlkepartain. LifeLongFaith Associates, 2016.

Toxic Charity: How the Church Hurts Those They Help and How to Reverse It by Robert D Lupton. HarperOne, 2012.

Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God. By Sybil MacBeth. Paraclete Press, 2007.

Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love, 2nd edition by Lonni Pratt Collins. Paraclete Press, 2011.

Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home by Traci Smith. Chalice Press, 2017.

New Life through Shared Ministry: Moving from Volunteering to Mission by Judith A. Urban. Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

Curriculum

[*Coming Home to the Table: An Intergenerational Peacemaking Resource.*](#) Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, 1999.

[*Home Grown: Handbook for Christian Parenting*](#) by Karen DeBoer. Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2010.

[*Resources for the Home.*](#) Peace and Global Witness Resources. PC(USA) Special Offerings.

[*Table Topics: Questions to Start Great Conversations.*](#) Ultra Pro International, LLC.

[*Word Teasers: Faith Edition.*](#) Big Ideas in Youth Ministry.



Online Resources

[“Blessing Bags for the Homeless.”](#) Dallas Hope Charities.

[“Building a Neighborhood Together: An Intergenerational Peacemaking Project from Family Communications.”](#) Presbyterian Peacemaking Program, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[Ceaseless Prayer.](#)

[d365 devotions.](#) Passport, Inc. Co-Sponsored by the Office of Christian Formation, PC(USA).

[Daily Prayer app.](#) Office of Theology and Worship, Presbyterian Mission Agency.

[“Faith5.”](#) Faith Inkubators.

[“Families: Resources for the Home.”](#) Illustrated Ministry.

[Hate Has No Home Here.](#)

[“Home Practices.”](#) Building Faith. Virginia Theological Seminary.

[“8 Solid Tips To Bring Back Family Worship.”](#) By Darby Jones. Resource UMC.

[Let’s Be Neighbors.](#)

[Praying in Color](#) by Sybil MacBeth

[“Pack a Care Kit to Help Someone Who is Homeless.”](#) Portland Rescue Mission.

[“Creating a Prayer Space at Home.”](#) by Sharon Ely Pearson. Building Faith. Virginia Theological Seminary.

[Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network.](#)

[StoryCorps.](#)

[The Network of Biblical Storytellers International.](#)

[The Turquoise Table.](#)

[Traci Smith: Faith+Family+ Spirit.](#)

[“Holy Hikes with the Psalms.”](#) by Noah Van Neil. Building Faith. Virginia Theological Seminary.

[Dixit.](#) Libellud. 2008 (Board Game)

[Rory’s Story Cubes.](#) Zygomatic. (Dice sets used to create stories)