INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY

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For

Effective Ministry

RESEARCH PAPER
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- BRIEF SUMMARY -

If you knew that a large proportion of your congregational membership were to leave in the next 10-15 years and not go to any other church, what would you do? Yet, this is happening in churches right now, right across our country, not so much with adult members (though they also contribute to statistical drop out) but with our *youth*.

Research indicates that one factor that can help mitigate this loss is a greater emphasis in our churches on recapturing the importance and strategic place of '*intergenerational ministry'*.

Research indicates that not only do youth and children benefit socially, emotionally, practically and spiritually from increased intergenerational engagement, but young adults, adults and seniors do also. In fact, the whole body of Christ is only diminished in its potential when the opportunity for **mutual disciple making** that flows from intergenerational *influence* and *accessibility* is limited.

This paper is an attempt to present the core issues relating to the importance of intergenerational ministry, through evidence based research, combined with theologically sound practice, and make **eight key proposals** for churches and individuals to consider as they seek to realign their ministry focus around growing this important ministry.

- A Brief Note On the Following Research Material –

The following research paper is the result of a core literature review and theological and practical analysis of more than 60 books, articles, blogs and websites in the area of *intergenerational ministry*. The research literature was primarily sourced from Australia, the United Kingdom and North America. Statistical data documented in the paper was drawn from a number of sources both secular and Christian, including *NCLS, ABS, McCrindle Research*, the *Barna Group* and the *Transitioning Children Survey*.

It's important to understand that this research paper on Intergenerational Ministry is the second support paper aimed at following on from our primary research piece addressing - '***Youth and Children's Ministry'***.

The first support paper from that research focussed on addressing the problem of ***'Retention and Transition'.***

Those who may have read both papers will recognise the natural re-inclusion of some of the corresponding data and information that is also relevant to the topic of this particular paper. For new readers, in order to fully appreciate the contextual contours of the research outlined in this document it's worthwhile to supplement the research by also reading the previous two research pieces.

This paper is by no means designed to be an exhaustive analysis of the subject under question, but has been deliberately kept concise for the purposes of this project.

Effective Ministry (E.M) seeks to build effective disciple-making ministries, through evidence-based research combined with theologically sound practice, therefore the following material has been an attempt to integrate both *orthodoxy* and *orthopraxis* in the area of *intergenerational ministry.*

 We hope you find this working paper, its findings and its proposals helpful to your ministry.

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(A) INTRO:

*"We must ask ourselves whether our churches and parishes are providing the rich environments that a **relationally oriented generation** needs to **develop deep faith**…I believe we need a new mind to measure the vibrancy and health of the **intergenerational relationships** in our faith communities"* [1]

*"I think the main hindrance has been the lack of understanding that intergenerational relationships are **crucial to spiritual growth and maturation**. If leaders understood how important intergenerational experiences are for growth and development, they would pour enormous amounts of energy into creating these experiences"* [2]

If you knew that a large proportion of your congregational membership were to leave in the next 10-15 years and not go to any other church, what would you do? Yet, this is happening in churches right now, right across our country, not so much with adult members (though they also contribute to statistical drop out) but with our *youth*.

Research indicates several statistical facts around this concerning issue, three of which are of particular significance to this paper on '*Intergenerational Ministry*':

1. There's a *youth retention* problem
2. Youth and young adults are not always *transitioning* well
3. Adult church members who *ignore* children and their *doubts and concerns*, or have mainly *negative contact* with them, are likely to be contributing to their decision to leave the church

There is also good news – the research data unearthed several factors that can reduce the chances of youth drop out. In particular, research found **three core issues** connected to youth drop-out that appear to have direct implications for a need for greater development in intergenerational relationships in our churches.

1. Intergenerational '*serving'* and '*discipling'* appear to help mitigate drop out
2. There are positive effects when children and young people are able to *see adults practising their faith,* and also *participate in adult services* in a genuine way
3. Children benefit from connecting and engaging with adult church members in inter-generational settings *outside the Sunday services*

Both E.M's earlier papers on '**Youth and Children's Ministry'** and **'Retention and Transition'** also address and respond to factors related to the 3 concerns raised above; however, this paper will investigate, and expand upon, the data and the solutions proposed in both of those papers; that is – the need to create greater *intergenerational contact* and the significance of disciple making *across generations*.

The following paper will briefly outline the data mentioned and attempt to propose possible ways forward.

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[1] Kinnaman's research discovered that most young adults do not recall having a meaningful friendship with an adult or adult mentor through their church. That Churches are failing to provide the rich environments that this relationally oriented generation needs to develop deep faith. Kinnaman believes that this is a critical 'gap' in the disciple-making process that must be addressed if we are to adequately respond to youth drop out in our churches. David Kinnaman: You Lost Me: *'Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church…And Rethinking Faith'* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011) p.120.
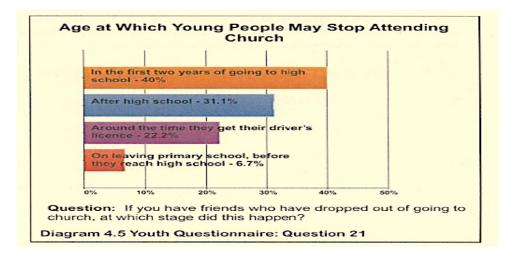
[2] B. Snailum: '*Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry Within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?'* (Christian Education Journal, Series 3, Vol. 9, No.1, 2012) p. 171.

(B) IDENTIFYING THE ISSUES: WHAT THE DATA IS TELLING US

1. A youth/young adult retention problem:

Recent research called the - *'Transitioning Children Survey'* has indicated a concerning youth and young adult retention problem across our churches.[3]

* Fig 1:

Age at Which Young People May Stop Attending Church

- In the first two years of going to high school - 40%
- After high school - 31.1%
- Around the time they get their driver's licence - 22.2%
- On leaving primary school, before they reach high school - 6.7%

Question: If you have friends who have dropped out of going to church, at which stage did this happen?

Diagram 4.5 Youth Questionnaire: Question 21
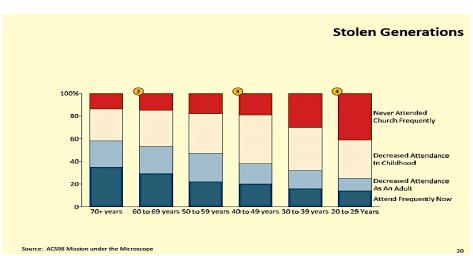
Table 4.11 Children Who No Longer Attend Church

Question 'Can you think of any children you went to Sunday School or Children's Church with on a Sunday, that are no longer attending church?'

	Response	Number
At least one but not more than three that does not attend church today.	21.7%	46
At least four but not more than five that does not attend church today.	27.8%	59
At least six but not more than ten that does not attend church today.	16.0%	34
More than ten that do not attend church today.	25.9%	55
None - as far as I know they are all in church today.	8.6%	18
Answered question		212

Transitioning Children Survey Question 17

Table 4.13 Why Children Stop Coming

Question: 'Why do you think they stopped coming?'

Answer Options	Not a reason	Part of the reason	The 'deal-breaker'	Not known	Answered question
Church did not have a good enough youth group.	28.5% (53)	48.4% (90)	4.8% (9)	18.3% (34)	186
Peer pressure led them away from the church.	4.8% (9)	57.4% (108)	26.1% (49)	11.7% (22)	188
They lost faith or belief in the Bible.	8.2% (16)	57.7% (113)	18.4% (36)	15.8% (31)	196
They did not feel accepted by the church.	21.5% (39)	44.2% (80)	14.4% (26)	19.9% (36)	171
Total respondents who answered this question					205

Transitioning Children Survey Question 19

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[3] David Goodwin: Transitioning Children Survey: *'Lost in Transition: The 'Church Related Factors' that Help or Hinder Children Make the Transition from Children's Ministry to Adult Church'* (Thesis: Tabor College, Adelaide, Nov. 2012) p. 91.

As mentioned in past E.M papers, NCLS Data has likewise indicated a significant attendance dip of congregation members in the post University/beginning workforce age (20-40)

* Fig 2: Years 20-40: [4]

Stolen Generations

Source: ACS98 Mission under the Microscope

"The ages eighteen to twenty-nine are the black hole of church attendance; this age segment is "missing in action" from most congregations" [5]

As well as a high drop out rate in secondary and immediate post school years (year 10 or year 12)

* Fig 3: Secondary/Post High School years: [6]

Dropout Rate	Secondary / Post School	Left Home
Anglican	33%	43%
Lutheran	13%	19%
Reformed	5%	13%
Adventist	9%	29%
Baptist	20%	32%
Presbyterian	29%	33%
Uniting	37%	45%
Methodist	8%	29%

Notably, of all denominations, Anglicans performed *least well* in post high school transition stage retention rates. (Note here the significance of the critical transition point when young adults leave home and simultaneously, the church).

A similar study conducted in the United States uncovered identical concerns, with some interesting conclusions: [7] According to their research, between 40 - 50% of American high school students graduating

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[4] '*Church Life Profile':* NCLS: 2006 p.20, 23, and '*Building Church: Mission Under The Microscope':* NCLS: 1991 p.121.

[5] Kinnaman: *Lost,* p.22.

[6] '*Church Life Profile':* NCLS: 2006 p.20, 23, and '*Building Church: Mission Under The Microscope':* NCLS: 1991 p.121.

[7] Dr. K.E. Powell & Dr. C. Clark: **Sticky Faith:** (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) p.16.

from church or youth group were *failing to stick with their faith* in college. Of the 50%, 80% of these young adults never planned to disengage from their faith before leaving home. [8]

This raises the question…did youth here in Australia plan to leave the church, or are there critical issues that need addressing that might preclude the exodus?

2. Not always transitioning well:

"I confess…I hadn't given much thought to what we do to our graduates. Yes, I knew and had taught for years that we in youth ministry should be preparing kids for the "real world" and to take their faith into their next phase of life (e.g. college, work)…I not only was wrong as I unwittingly cast ill-prepared students into the wilderness of individual and simplistic faith, but I had participated in systemically abandoning them to (hopefully) find for themselves the next community that felt like a fit. I realize now that even in our best programs we leave students hanging, and our ministries are the losers" [9]

"We have to face the reality that the college-age years are the biggest disconnecting point for people. Church leaders talk about this problem, but few have developed a strategy that bridges the disconnection" [10]

Research tells us there are several critical ***'transition stages'*** in the movement of children and youth towards adulthood and independence, particularly the transition from: [11]

1. Primary to high school
2. Year 10 to senior high or work
3. High school to university
4. University to work
5. Teenagers/young adults leaving home for the first time [12]

These significant moments of 'life change' and 'stage change' can generate constant flux, adjustment and recurring upheaval for children, youth and young adults. They come with all the attendant personal and social challenges of change - not just *physiologically, emotionally* and *psychologically,* but *spiritually* as well. The force of these changes to potentially confuse, disorient, disrupt or derail an individual's confident transition to adulthood, independence and maturing faith cannot be underestimated.

Sadly, from the research already outlined in the statistical data (*Fig 1-3 above) we do not appear to be negotiating these transition points well. Yet, we're confronted with significant youth drop out rates post high school, and also appear to have difficulty retaining our young adults through the challenging university and early working years as they transition from youth to university, or university to work; a time when making new friends, building new contacts, developing support bases and facing unfamiliar environments (including new church contexts) become particularly challenging.

The '*Transitioning Children Survey'* interviewed participants asking 'what transition process was put in place as they moved up from one life stage to the next'. These were the results: [13]

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[8] Important to note in this research is that those in the sample taken tended to have higher grade-point averages, were more likely to come from in-tact families and from churches that had f/t youth pastors. Also important to note is the drop out rate for college and non-college age students was not significantly different. Sticky Faith: p.16.

[9] C. Clark: '*Strategic Assimilation: Rethinking the Goal of Youth Ministry'*, (Youth Worker Website: March 2011) p.1.

[10] R. Joiner: Think Orange: *Churches and Families Joining Together for More Effective Ministry* (Colorado Springs: David Cook Pub. 2009) 9.3.

[11] Other important moments of transition or 'life change crisis' where the likelihood of drop out, or drifting, may increase are 1.The birth of the first child 2. Marriage to an unbeliever, 3. Divorce or separation, 4. Death of spouse, 5.Loss of employment 6. Major moments of personal change or crisis 7. Moving from work to retirement etc. These all afford important ministry opportunities for intentional disciple growth and concentration on retention.

[12] Of Australians aged 15-34 years, more than a third (36%) still live at home with their parents (ABS, 2002a).'*Young adults 20-29 year olds*': (NCLS Research article) 2004.

* Only 20.9% said there was a graduation process, such as a ceremony or prayer initiated by the church.

* 79.1% said there was *no particular method used* to acknowledge their transition from Children's Ministry, either to the youth program, or the adult church.

In the same survey:

* Fig 4: [14]

Table 4.10 Graduation Process, Rite of Passage		
Question 'What did you do after you left Sunday School or Children's Church?'		
Answer Options	**Response**	**Number**
Went straight to youth service or program that was held during the Sunday service.	34.1%	75
Immediately started attending the adult service.	44.5%	98
Left Sunday church but attended a midweek church-based youth program instead.	3.6%	8
Left Sunday church and did not attend any church-run program for more than one year.	17.8%	39
Answered question		220
		Transitioning Children Survey Question 14

And again, the same survey indicated: [15]

* Almost 80% of the churches in the survey had no strategy to transition the children from Children's Ministry to either adult service or youth programs

* Children who were not assisted in their transition to adult church often experienced difficulties

* The timing of the transition was important

Research also found that youth often felt isolated from their parents and felt lacking in rich mentoring relationships with other Christian adults.

Collectively, this research, and others, have indicated a greater need to provide more intentional **relational support structures,** and encourage **intentional disciple-making relationships** across parents, peers and older Christian adults in order to make effective and appropriate relational support during transition stages happen. [16]

Implications for intergenerational ministry: each transitional life stage comes with vast differences in emotional, social and spiritual need and therefore requires thoughtful attention, intentional preparation and *broad based supportive contact* (from peers, parents, adult friends and ministry staff) in order to collaborate and structure best methods in securing a more helpful transition, particularly in managing the challenging transition from youth group into adult life and 'adult' church.

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[13] Goodwin: Transitioning Children Survey: P. 72.

[14] Goodwin: Transitioning Children Survey. p. 72.

[15] Ibid. P. 73.

[16] Lost: p29.

3. Adults ignoring children, their doubts and concerns, increase the risk of drop-out:

"Young people interviewed who have left church, consistently said, they felt little or no connection with adults in the church when they were children and had often felt judged by them…When children only feel wanted and accepted when they behave in ways that do not disturb the adult members, it can add to their feeling of being disconnected to the church" [17]

Research indicates the way adults treat children and teens in church can have a long-term impact. Many older church members may not be aware of the impact – for good or bad – that they can have on children, teens and young adults in the church.

Data indicates adult church members who *ignore* children, fail to *adequately address their doubts* and concerns, or have mainly *negative* contact with them are likely to contribute to their decision to leave the church.

In regards to doubts and concerns, the 2007 *Francis and Richter* study found the following to be a preventative to attendance drop out: [18]

* Creating a safe space for people to **share doubts and struggles** in the faith:
(16% of general church leavers felt no one at church would understand their doubts, 29% felt questioning their faith would not be acceptable)

In regards to contact with adults, the *Transitioning Children Survey* found: [19]

* Only 4.9% of those surveyed said adults in the church were their heroes and examples of how to live for God

* 10.4% learnt a lot of negative things from adult Christians

* 33.6% felt adults hardly ever connected with them except the Children's Ministry team and family. They felt adults mainly ignored them

* 44.2% indicated their friends stopped coming because they did not feel accepted by the church

As mentioned previously, a study conducted in the United States uncovered similar concerns, with interesting conclusions: [20] According to research, between 40 - 50% of American high school students graduating from church or youth group were failing to stick with their faith in college. Of the 50%, 80% of these young adults never planned to disengage from their faith before leaving home. [21]

In an attempt to stem this 'exit' tide, the *Fuller Youth Institute* (FYI) conducted, what became known as - the **'College Transition Project'** in an effort to identify what *relationships* and *best practices* might better

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[17] D. Goodwin: Lost in Transition – or Not?: *Addressing the Problem of Children Leaving the Church as they Make the Transition from Childhood to Youth* (North Richmond: Kidsreach Inc. 2013) p. 24.

[18] Francis L & Richter P: *Gone for Good? Church–Leaving and Returning in the 21st Century*, (Epworth: Peterborough, 2007).

[19] *Transitioning Children Survey:* P. 70, 71, 76 & 113.

[20] Dr. K.E. Powell & Dr. C. Clark: Sticky Faith: (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011) p.16.

[21] Important to note in this research is that those in the sample taken tended to have higher grade-point averages, were more likely to come from in-tact families and from churches that had f/t youth pastors. Also important to note is the drop out rate for college and non-college age students was not significantly different. Sticky Faith: p.16.

set youth on a trajectory of lifelong faith and service i.e. Interesting to reflect on as we consider our own situation here in Australia: [22]

> "[The aim was] To better understand the dynamics of youth group graduates' transition to college, and to pinpoint the steps that leaders, churches, parents, and seniors themselves can take to help students stay on the Sticky Faith path"

Just like the Australian Francis and Richter study, the FYI study found the following to be true:

* Kids who left the faith report having questions about faith in early adolescence that were ***ignored by significant adults*** (parents, pastor, teachers) [23]

* Students who feel the freedom and have opportunities to ***express their doubts*** tend to have more sticky faith. (But less than half of those surveyed shared their doubts and struggles with adults or friends) [24]

In this regard, one study indicated that '***hearing from adults'***, in church and around them, that life-struggles and faith-struggles are a normal part of life in a fallen world helps prepare children and youth for spiritual questions and life challenges ahead:

> *"Children need to see more of the life-struggles of adult Christians- They need to hear the questions of adults, for example; those who can't have kids; or whose children are constantly ill; or who are struggling with doubt themselves. They need to hear the prayers of the church going up for those who suffer. The Christian life is too often presented as SANITISED which allows the 'superbugs' of doubt and hypocritical living to fester"* [25]

Parents particularly play a significant role in presenting to their children an authentic living faith that is real about the challenges of life and what trusting God through those challenges may look like.

Research found the way parents expressed and lived out *their own faith* before their children was profoundly important in presenting 'real faith, living faith': [26]

> *"They were probably the biggest influence. And I know that if my parents hadn't shown me through example what it was to be a Christian, I probably would have had a very difficult time doing it"* [27]

> *"Where did we go wrong? We never shared what WE had learned in church. We were interviewing our kids instead of having a mutual conversation with them. Now when we ask our kids to share about what they learned in church, we talk about what we learned too"* [28]

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[22] Research Release: *'What Makes Faith Stick During College?'*, Sticky Faith Website (Sept, 2011). See also the outcomes of this study in the books '*Sticky Faith'*, and Dr. K.E Powell, B.M Griffin & Dr. C.A Crawford: '*Sticky Faith Youth Worker Edition'* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).

[23] Sticky Faith: p.72.

[24] Sticky Faith: p.73.

[25] Lost in Transition – or Not?: Quote by J. Dixon. p.47.

[26] Sticky Faith: p.21. In their research, participants were asked to rank five groups in terms of the quality and quantity of support received (friends inside youth group, friends outside, youth leaders, parents, adults in the congregation). The number one ranking was 'parents' p.23.

[27] Sticky Faith: *Youth Worker Edition:* p.115.

[28] Ibid p. 124

> *"The best discussions about faith happen when parents don't just ask questions, but also share their own experiences…in other words, parents shouldn't merely interview their kids; they need to discuss their own faith journeys, including both ups and downs"* [29]

The research also indicated that a parent's role is particularly to help children learn to *trust* God, and to understand that true faith is not all about 'doing' but primarily about *faith* in Christ and obedience as a *response* to that trust (Gal 5:6, Jn 6:28-29). This can be demonstrated as parents proceed to live out and model their own faith and unswerving trust in God amidst all the disappointments, discouragements, changes and challenges of life:

> *"The greatest gift you can give your children is to let them see you struggle and wrestle with how to live a lifetime of trust in God…as you faithfully hold on to the God who has taken hold of you, the life you live and model will be a beacon of hope and direction that no sin management faith can hope to achieve. As you trust the gospel, and the Lord who saves, your Sticky Faith will help your children discover their own Sticky Faith"* [30]

Modelling this kind of 'mature' faith helps children, not only understand and 'see' that process in action, but they also come to understand that growth and transformation in Christ is never instantaneous, but a lifelong *process* for everyone.

In helping their children gain a concrete image and experience of God's love, there's a need for parents to model to their children an *unconditional, non-judgmental, ever-embracing* love across the challenging circumstances of life. [31]

Implications for intergenerational ministry: The church needs to better prepare children for the challenges to their faith that will inevitably come during their time in high school, university and work. This research indicates the critical need for greater integration and support *across-generational relationships* with the aim of *disciple-making intentionality*, and attending to *faith concerns* as a means of promoting spiritual growth and guarding youth retention.

4. Intergenerational serving, mentoring and discipling mitigate drop out:

> *"The first arena where there is a disciple-making gap is relationships…Twenty-somethings frequently feel isolated from their parents and other adults in the realm of faith and spirituality. Many young people feel that older adults don't understand their doubts and concerns, a prerequisite to rich mentoring friendships; a majority of young adults interviewed reported never having an adult friend other than their parents. Can the church rediscover the intergenerational power of the assembly of saints"* [32]

As mentioned above, the *Francis and Richter* study found the following factors to be a helpful preventative to attendance drop-out. Both factors have a close relationship to a need for more effective discipling and closer spiritual connection with those older in the faith. [33]

> *   Creating a safe space for people to **share doubts and struggles** in the faith:
>   (16% of general church leavers felt no one at church would understand
>   their doubts, 29% felt questioning their faith would not be acceptable)

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[29] Ibid p.118

[30] Sticky Faith: p. 46-47.

[31] Sticky Faith: p.37.

[32] Lost, p. 28-29.

[33] Francis & Richter.

* Opportunities for children and youth in the church to see adults **practising their faith**: (39% of leavers had considered church to be a "childhood activity" which they outgrew)

Likewise, when survey participants were asked 'what might have been done better in youth group that might have helped their friends attend church as adults' - the *Transitioning Children Survey* found: [34]

* 38% indicated 'more discipleship'
* 44.2% indicated 'better emphasis on growing in faith'
* 48.2% indicated 'a mentoring program'
* 54% indicated 'more emphasis on mentoring by leaders'

In regards to serving at church, the same study also found: [35]

* A large number of young people who were involved in youth group were also involved in music at church (67.7%) with 54.2% saying it was a reason why they kept going to church

* Those who spoke positively about their time in adult church also spoke about their involvement in areas such as music, singing in the choir, serving and being part of the welcoming team

Similarly, the American *Fuller Youth Institute* study (and a parallel 2003 *Barna* study in the same research space) found the following contributing factors to be true: [36]

* **Segregating kids from adults:** A factor causing kids to shelve their faith is - the *segregation of kids and adults in church*. Kids who attend church-wide services were more likely to keep their faith [37]

* **Relationships with younger children:** Students who *serve* and build relationships with *younger children* the more likely they are to hang on to their faith [38]

* **Preparation essential:** The more students' felt *prepared for college,* the more likely their faith was to grow [39]

A further study conducted by the *Barna Group*, this time focusing on Protestant 18-29yr olds, (and explored in detail in David Kinamman's -*'You Lost Me: Why Young Christian's are Leaving the Church')* found the following: [40]

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[34] *Transitioning Children Survey:* p. 83.

[35] Ibid. p. 91,112.

[36] A summary of the Barna data research can be found here: http://www.youlostmebook.org/. See also -Research release: *'What Makes Faith Stick During College?:* 'Sticky Faith Website (Sept, 2011).

[37] Sticky Faith: p.97.

[38] Ibid: p.98.

[39] Ibid: p.151.

[40] Note: this research data came from individuals who identified as Christian before the age of 18. Kinnaman describes this age group as the 'black hole' of church attendance, as 'missing in action' from most congregations. The problem is not that this generation has been less churched than those before them; the problem is that much spiritual energy fades away during a crucial decade of life —the twenties. Kinnaman outlines 3 general patterns in those that drop out of the church, he labels each using 3 broad terms: *'Nomads'* - those who walk away from church engagement but still consider themselves Christians. *'Prodigals'* - lose their faith, describing themselves as "no longer Christian" and *'Exiles'* — those that are still invested in their Christian faith but feel stuck (or lost) between culture and church. Kinnaman notes that the majority of these dropouts are not walking away from the faith, but putting involvement in the church on hold. That 'prodigals' are the most rare of the dropouts; most are either 'nomads' or 'exiles'. Most young Christians are struggling *less* with their faith in Christ than with their *experience of church.* Lost: p. 22-27.

* 61% - of those with Christian background reported having dropped out
    after going regularly
* 58% - said they are less active in the church than they were at 15
* 41% - said they have gone through significant 'doubts' in their faith
* 35% - describe a period they felt like rejecting their parents' faith

Interestingly, of those that stayed:

* 42% - said they're very concerned about their generation leaving the church
* 41% - describe a desire for "more traditional faith, rather than a hip version
    of Christianity"
* 30% - said they're "more excited about church than at any time in their life" [41]

From their research data (combined with detailed individual interviews) Kinnaman went on to outline 6 core *'themes'* to describe reasons around why youth today have shifted away from the church (and for some, the Christian faith). [42]

The six 'themes' posited were…that the church can be:

1. Overprotective and unwelcoming of creativity and involvement in culture [43]
2. Shallow in its teaching
3. Anti-science
4. Repressive- particularly in regard to sex [44]
5. Exclusive in a way that conflicts with the open-mindedness, tolerance and acceptance of the surrounding culture
6. Doesn't allow the expression of doubt

Kinnaman believes what we ultimately uncover from this research is:

> *"The Christian church…has a **shallow faith problem** because we have a **discipleship problem**. Moreover, diagnosing and treating shallow faith among young adults is urgent because we have a shallow faith problem among all adults"* [45]

This diagnosis that current youth drop out rates are closely linked to the issue of shallow faith is strongly underlined in Brian Cosby's - *'Giving Up The Gimmicks: Reclaiming Youth Ministry From an Entertainment Culture'.* Cosby proposes that one of the reasons teenagers are leaving the church, purposeless and disillusioned with the gimmicks is because they've not been adequately *nurtured* and *established* in the faith. [46]

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[41] Lost: p.27.

[42] Kinnaman found there was no single reason that young adults disconnect from the church, but a wide range of perspectives, frustrations, and disillusionments that compel the disconnection. The research findings were compiled into 6 themes that best captured the overall 'drop out' phenomenon. Lost: p.92.

[43] Kinnaman found that 'helicopter parenting' and the overall cultural fixation on 'safety and protectiveness' is having a profound effect on the church's ability to disciple the next generation. Kinnaman notes that this overprotectiveness can lead youth to look for excitement outside traditional boundaries e.g. sex, drugs, thrill seeking etc. or other forms of spirituality. Lost: p.98.

[44] Kinnaman notes that many youth today are skeptical about the reliability of the original biblical manuscripts; reading the Bible through a lens of pluralism and are less likely to believe the scriptures have a claim on human obedience. Lost: p. 31 & 52. From their research, the authors of *Sticky Faith* discovered that more than 2/3rds of those surveyed would say that being a Christian was all about 'doing' the faith e.g. loving others or following Jesus' example (more than 1/3rd did not even mention Jesus) and about 'sin management' i.e. go to church, don't do drink, drugs, sex etc. Sticky Faith: p.33.

[45] Lost: p.120.

[46] Cosby notes that we've locked into entertainment driven models of youth ministry, and by numbers driven church-growth success where we've often become more concerned about numbers than spiritual depth. The consequences are - high youth drop out post high school, as well as a spiritually and theologically shallow worldview amongst our teenagers. We've left teenagers hungering for meaningful answers to life's questions and youth leaders burnt out and dissatisfied with ministry. In response, Cosby believes there needs to be a counter to current entertainment and moralistic driven models of youth ministry. The church must reclaim the ground of Christ-centered gospel focussed, 'means of grace' youth ministry. Brian H. Cosby: Giving Up the Gimmicks: *Reclaiming Youth Ministry from an Entertainment Culture* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2012) p.17f.

Like Cosby, Kinnaman believes the drop out problem is, at its core, a **faith-development problem** i.e. a **disciple-making problem**, that these ministry shortcomings are indicators of significant 'gaps' in *disciple-making,* and in particular, Kinnamen notes **three critical areas** where these gaps are in evidence, areas where the church has a God-given opportunity to rethink its approach to youth retention and to disciple-making: [47]

1. In the area of *relationships* - the church needs to reconsider *how* we make disciples

2. In rediscovering Christian *calling* and *vocation* [48]

3. In reprioritizing *wisdom* over *information* - as we help teenagers seek
to *know* God not just be *informed* about him [49]

Kinnaman also proposes that older Christians, parents, peers, church leaders and organizations must **'corporately'** respond to these concerns, and they need to do that by finding more effective means of **'personal disciple making'** and by the recovery of '**genuine relationships'** within the body of Christ. [50]

> *"Taking our cues from public education, among other sectors of society, we have created a conveyor belt of development that industrializes the soul formation of young people - who eventually become adults with inch-deep, mile-wide faith. The outcome is adult Christians who were not transformed by their faith as children, as teens, or as young adults. How can we expect more after they turn forty?...Some are tempted to believe that spiritual effectiveness is connected to the size of our institutions and the sophistication of our content, but nothing could be further from the truth...does this infrastructure yield more and better discipleship automatically? Our research says no"* [51]

Kinnaman believes the recovery of *genuine relationships across all ages* is central to effective disciple-making. Without returning to personal, relational disciple-making as its focus, the current Church will fail to adequately prepare the next generation to follow Christ faithfully in a rapidly changing culture.

Important to note here is the '**intentional intergenerational'** nature of **'disciple-making'** we find depicted in both the Old and the New Testaments. For example: Gen 18:19, Deut 6:4-9, 11:18-21, Prov 22:6, Eph 6:4, I Tim 5: 1-3, 2 Tim 1:5, 3:14-15, Titus 2:3-5.

Interestingly the environment in which we see children learning about God from others in the scriptures is set within the context of sharing everyday life together, of questioning and enquiry, of first hand experiences within significant events of salvation history in which children are present and involved, and within the context of rich and broad relationships within the extended family of God (Joel 2:16-17, Josh 4:4-8, 21-22, Acts 16:31-34, 21:5). Here, children, youth and adults learned, observed and experienced together the great God who is faithful, both to them and to his promises, and they did so as 'one family' of believers in the household of God.

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[47] Lost: p. 28-30.

[48] Kinnaman believes we need to help youth connect spiritual wisdom with real world knowledge, that we make little effort to help disciples connect the dots between their vocation and their faith, not only in the area of science and education etc. but especially so in the creative arena (music, art, film, writing etc.) p.30, 127.

[49] Lost: p. 201.

[50] Kinnaman's analysis argues that blame for the current youth crisis cannot be laid exclusively on any one group of people, neither will the solution come from the efforts of only one group…*"Relationships grow out of conversations and conversations need more than one voice."* Interestingly, Kinnaman lists 'organizations' (i.e. publishers, schools. businessmen, churches, ministry organizations) as important influence stakeholders in this process. Lost: p.35.

[51] Kinnaman's conviction is that in order to address this issue the Christian community must rethink its efforts to make disciples. Kinnaman believes that we've built our work with young people on a method rooted in modern, mechanistic, and mass production paradigms, but disciples cannot be mass-produced, disciples must be handmade, one relationship at a time. What's now needed, are new architects to design *interconnected approaches to faith transference*, a renewal of catechisms and confirmation, and to recognize that here, we have both individual responsibility and an institutional opportunity. Lost: p.12-13, 119-121.

It's clear the church is intended to have intergenerational fellowship in shared and mutual learning. For older members to take responsibility for the spiritual oversight and nurture of the young, and for the young to encourage, respect and learn from the old.

Helping children, youth and young adults both understand and 'experience' the church as the "body of Christ" (1Cor 12:27, Eph 4:12), the "family of God" and the "community of faith" is not to be neglected as we seek to live out life and faith as 'one', mutually growing, maturing and persevering 'together' as God's kingdom people.
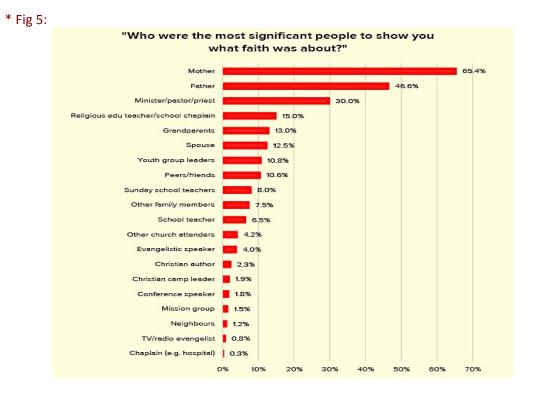
Implications for intergenerational ministry: From this we can see that the challenge that lay before us in securing adequate life and faith transitions in our youth and young adults is to ask how adequately our ministry is going about the task of personal *disciple-making*, *faith formation*, and intentional *intergenerational connection* amongst our members where children and young adults are given effective opportunities to 'see adults practicing their faith'?

To make this sort of ministry happen would require a willingness to modify existing structures and address our traditional 'demographic driven' culture to make this kind of intentional relationship and intergenerational disciple making possible.

5. A connection to adult church and the need to see adults practising their faith:

Data indicates there are positive effects when children and young people are able to **see adults practising their faith** and to **participate in adult services** in a genuine way.

We already know from *point three* above, and from the E.M research paper on '*Youth and Children*' that the **primary adult roles of influence** in a child's life are the parents. [52]

* Fig 5:

"Who were the most significant people to show you what faith was about?"

Mother	65.4%
Father	46.6%
Minister/pastor/priest	30.0%
Religious edu teacher/school chaplain	15.0%
Grandparents	13.0%
Spouse	12.5%
Youth group leaders	10.8%
Peers/friends	10.6%
Sunday school teachers	8.0%
Other family members	7.5%
School teacher	6.5%
Other church attenders	4.2%
Evangelistic speaker	4.0%
Christian author	2.3%
Christian camp leader	1.9%
Conference speaker	1.8%
Mission group	1.5%
Neighbours	1.2%
TV/radio evangelist	0.8%
Chaplain (e.g. hospital)	0.3%

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[52] E.M research on Youth and Children found all sources agree the *primary* influence, and therefore training ground, for the discipleship and spiritual formation of children is within the Christian family rather than the local church. Scriptures teach that the core responsibility for raising children in the Lord belongs to families, and that fathers must take particular leadership (Gen 18:19, Deut 6:4-7, Prov 1:1-9, Eph 6:1-4, Col 3:20, 2Tim 1:5). In this regard youth and children's ministers (and their ministries) must be careful not to usurp that primary role but rather, partner with parents in a supportive role in helping parents disciple their children (download the Effective Ministry research on '*Youth and Children*' on our website: effectiveministry.org).

The role of parents in shaping their child's faith is critical in both faith conversion and discipleship growth and therefore must not be underestimated. Children need to see their parents **practising their faith** and *living out* their spiritual walk. The role of the church therefore, is to ensure parents are encouraged and equipped in their spiritual task as primary disciplers and disciple makers of their children. [53]

Beyond parents, research also indicated the importance of being able to see not only parents, but also **other adults practising their faith,** and being able to **participate in adult services** in a genuine way.

The *Transitioning Children Survey* found: [54]

> * 33% of adults surveyed said they hardly ever attended or experienced any
> part of an adult service as a child

> * 30.4% had felt little or no connection with the adult church as a child

As previously cited in section three and four above, the *Francis and Richter* study found the following factor to be a preventative to youth attendance drop out: [55]

> *   Opportunities for children and youth in the church to **see adults practising their faith**: (39% of leavers had considered church to be a "childhood activity" which they outgrew)

Similarly, as mentioned, the American Fuller Youth Institute study (as well as a parallel 2003 *Barna* study in the same research space) found the following to be true: [56]

> *   Segregating kids from adults: A factor causing kids to shelve their faith is the *segregation of kids and adults in church*. Kids who **attend church-wide services** were more likely to keep their faith [57]

Research indicates that not only do youth and children benefit socially, emotionally, practically and spiritually from increased intergenerational engagement, but young adults, adults and seniors do also. In fact, the whole body of Christ is only diminished in its potential when the opportunity for **mutual disciple making** that flows from intergenerational *influence* and *accessibility* is limited.

Most of the recommendations that flow from this paper will focus on the importance and responsibility that adult members (beyond parents) of the body of Christ have in including, engaging and disciple making amongst younger members in the faith, and visa versa.

6. A need for intergenerational engagement outside church settings:

To be explained in section D to follow, data indicates that children and teens also benefit from engaging with church members in inter-generational settings outside the Sunday services.

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[53] Figure.5: McCrindle Report: *'Social Shifts, Spiritual Trends, 4 Decades of Change: Christianity in Australia Today'* (Christian Venues Association).

[54] Transitioning Children Survey: p. 68 & 70.

[55]   Francis L & Richter P: *Gone for Good? Church—Leaving and Returning in the 21st Century*, (Epworth: Peterborough, 2007).

[56] Barna Study: A summary of the Barna data research can be found here: http://www.youlostmebook.org/. See also -Research release: *'What Makes Faith Stick During College?: '*Sticky Faith Website (Sept, 2011).

[57] Sticky Faith: p.97.

(C) INTERGENERATIONAL, TRANSGENERATIONAL OR MULTIGENERATIONAL

"As many churches are finding though, simple proximity doesn't equal relationships. Being in the same room does open the possibility for relationship, but it's not the whole answer to the problem of the adult-kid divide many of us experience in our congregations" [58]

"…the question of integration has far more to do with relationships than coinciding in a particular place" [59]

Clarifying Terminology:

Much of the terminology surrounding this topic is often used interchangeably, creating confusion around both principles and practice. For the purposes of this paper it's important to begin by establishing terminology usage and clarifying distinctions, as well as attendant strategies that necessarily flow from it.

(1) Defining intergenerational terminology:

Although each of these three terms indicates an interest in many generations, the terms are not synonymous.

Christine Ross makes a clear distinction between the terms 'intergenerational' and its oft-confused counterparts - 'multigenerational' and 'transgenerational' this way:

*"Most congregations are multigenerational or transgenerational in that they have **more than one generation** engaged in **worship** and **ministry** activities…However, a congregation focused on intergenerational ministry will enable the various generations to **communicate in meaningful** ways, to **interact** on a **regular** basis, and to **minister** and **serve** together **regularly**"* [60]

Similarly, Feliciano Villar's defines the term *'intergenerational'* as:

*"Involvement of members of **two or more different generations** having some degree of **relationship** developed through **co operative interaction** to achieve **common goals** and **mutual influence**"* [61]

Intergenerational ministry includes the key components of *intentionality* and *interaction* amongst the generations. It is important to emphasize here that **mutual** *and* **influential** relationships**,** and a degree of **consistent regularity of engagement** are the crucial characteristics that distinguish a truly intergenerational community in comparison to multigenerational, or even transgenerational settings wherein several generations may be in *proximity* with each other, but not necessarily in intentional relationship. [62]

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[58] *'Intergenerational Ministry: Beyond The Rhetoric'* (Fuller Youth Institute, April 2011).

[59] Alison Mitchell: FAQs: *'Biblical Answers to Youth and Children's Leaders' Questions'***:** (Surry: The Good Book Company, 2006) p.120.

[60] Kara Jenkins: *'Intergenerational Ministry In The Church, Becoming An Intergenerational Church: What Does This Mean?'* (Ministry To Children Website, May?)

[61] F. Villar: '*Intergenerational or Multigenerational? A Question Of Nuance':* (Journal of Intergenerational Relationships, Vol 5 (1), 2007) p.115-117.

[62] The distinction made by 'intergenerational' means an *intentional proactive engagement* across generations, as opposed to the practice of 'multigenerational' or 'transgenerational' contact where there may be a co-existence of various generations alongside one another without necessarily being proactive in the pursuit of intentional ministry or influence towards one another. Note the word 'intentional' indicates a commitment to a philosophy of ministry that seeks to purposefully bring generations together in meaningful dialogue. See: Snailum: '*Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry Within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?'*, p.166.

(2) Defining intergenerational Strategy:

Intergenerational ministry is a **philosophy of ministry** rather than a program. It's more than simply adding activities in to the church calendar; it's a **mindset** from which flows an attempt to strategically build in significant and purposeful interactions between the generations.

Harkness states:

> *"It is more than adding orange juice at the greeting table, more than allowing children to sit in 'big church' for a few minutes at the beginning of worship, more than letting the preschool class present a song during corporate worship. It involves how Christians **define** themselves, **see** themselves, and **live together** as community"* [63]

Allen and Ross:

> *"Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation **intentionally** brings the generations together in **mutual serving, sharing** or **learning** within the **core activities** of the church in order to live out being the body of Christ to each other and the greater community"* [64]

(D) DEVELOPING AN INTERGENERATIONAL MINISTRY (IM)

> *"It's the 16 year old that has relationships with 66 year olds and 6 year olds who is more likely to stay involved in a faith community after she graduates"* [65]

> *"Every church can become **intentionally intergenerational**! Most churches are intergenerational or multigenerational by membership. Some churches are intentionally intergenerational. They make their intergenerational character a defining feature of their community life, ministries, and programming. These churches make it a priority to foster intergenerational relationships, faith sharing, and story telling; to incorporate all generations in worship; to develop service projects that involve all ages, and to engage all generations in learning together. For these churches, being intergenerational is a way of life. It is an integral element of their culture. It is who they are!"* [66]

The assumption from most of the research material was that now more than ever, generations **need one another**. Alongside surrendering discipleship and disciple-making to professional ministers, over time church programs have become so radically age segregated there's now often little *intergenerational contact*, *broad disciple-making interaction* or *intentional cross engagement* within our faith communities.

All sources were clear in their conclusion that this significant 'gap' in the life and spiritual health of our Christian communities needed some redress. All indicators note that strong '**intergenerational disciple-making relationships'** were critical to child, youth and young adult maturity, to faith development, to youth retention and to longevity across all life stages (also important to note here, findings also indicated the social, relational and spiritual benefits for *adults* and the *elderly* from establishing stronger intergenerational connection and richer engagement across generations). [67]

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[63] Jenkins: *Biblical Support for Intergenerational Ministry.*

[64] Allen and Ross: p. 17.

[65] *'Is The Era Of Age Segmentation Over?'* (Leadership Journal, Sept. 2009) p. 3.

[66] John Roberto: *'Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational: Models And Strategies'* (Lifelong Faith, Spring, 2009) p.33.

[67] Having said that, researchers indicate there's no 'one sticky faith bullet', there's no single reason why kids leave, and no single reason that will make them stay. The belief is that young people are complex and their faith is influenced by a host of factors. Ultimately, the core of building any 'sticky faith' is helping

Though certainly not exhaustive, the following proposals put forward *eight preliminary suggestions* on how a church might begin to rethink and redress this important area of church life, growth and health, and do so to the greater spiritual health and benefit of all believers.

Note: The bibliography at the end of this paper provides more extensive resources on how churches might strengthen and develop this important ministry within their context.

The eight core suggestions are:

      1. Manage age segregation
      2. Build social capital
      3: Create structures that span life stages
      4: Develop intergenerational serving ministries
      5: Rethink the place of church wide services
      6. Make a philosophical paradigm shift in core values
      7. Begin where you are
      8. Keep intergenerational values in balance with age-specific ministry

1. Carefully manage Age Segregation

*"There are many forces in our society and within our congregations that make the (re) establishment of intergenerational faith formation and relationship-building countercultural. **We live in a society defined by age-segregation**, in which adults and children have minimal contact and activities. On a daily basis children and young people experience very few settings that are truly intergenerational; and this is also true for older adults in our society.*

The architecture and design of communities and neighborhoods tend to isolate individuals and families, and virtually every program and institution is organized to meet age-specific needs at the expense of the richness of intergenerational community" [68]

"Simply put, we do teens a disservice when we segregate them from the life of the church. When we build youth ministries that don't fold students into the life of the congregation, the unintended consequence is a future of empty pews" [69]

Research suggests that although there are both *important* and *necessary* benefits in targeted age segregation for the nurture and discipleship of children and youth (without in any way suggesting its disbandment), that just as partnering with parents is critical for **optimal** growth and spiritual maturity of children and youth, so too is the vital necessity for some kind of *regular*, *consistent* and *intentional* intergenerational engagement with **other mature Christian adults**. [70]

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children; teens and young adults (and adults for that matter!) develop clear and honest understandings of the gospel and biblical faith, and using every means at our disposal, intergenerational relationship strategy included to achieve that aim. 'Sticky Faith' authors rightly reminds us that as they are lead into an awareness of their significant role in the kingdom of God demonstrated through scripture, they are given the best chance of discovering a faith that is compelling, life giving and life following. Sticky Faith: p.18.

[68] John Roberto: '*The Importance of Intergenerational Community For Faith Formation':* (Lifelong Faith: Spring 2012) p. 27-28.

[69] Establishing intergenerational community does not mean eradicating age-specific ministries. As important as it is to embrace intergenerational values at a core level, it's also important to keep that in balance with age-specific ministry. As the Fuller Youth Institute states: "*Age-specific ministry has been "working" to varying degrees, but has not proven sustainable for ongoing transmission of faith among young adults who have grown up exclusively in youth ministries. At the same time, all ages still need their own space to grow and develop at their own pace. Everyone need to be part of a web of relationships that includes their peers AND members of other generations".* See: *Beyond the Rhetoric,* p. 3, and D. Wright: '*Don't Segregate the Youth'* (Gospel Coalition Website: Sept 17th, 2013)*.*

[70] Most researchers are not suggesting that the answer was to completely disband all age specific ministries or programs, but programs needed to be *re-evaluated* and *revamped* where necessary to make intergenerational relationships a *priority*.

The problem for the church today is we've neglected to recognise and implement a **'complementary balance'** of age-specific ministry with the critical need for intergenerational engagement in the faith formation process (of all ages):

> *"Age-specific and intergenerational faith formation are **not either-or choices**; they are **complementary**. Lifelong faith formation balances age-specific and intergenerational programes, activities and strategies. Throughout the lifecycle there is a need for age groups (and interest-centred groups) to gather because of age-related differences in development and age-related learning needs. Each congregation needs to determine the balance that is appropriate"* [71]

Research found that entire dependence on a 'silo' children's and youth ministry to do the job of *discipleship* and *maturation*, resulting in a *disconnect* from the broader spiritual community, means that children's, youth and young adult ministries are far less likely to be **healthy** or **effective**.[72]

> *"The assumption that only the young can reach the young must be questioned…The popular concept is that young people are best served by enjoying virtually exclusive contact with their peers while at church needs rethinking. The effective isolation of children and young people into peer groups means that their identity ends up being significantly shaped by the peer group…by encouraging minimal or insignificant contact with mature adults, there is the distinct possibility that young people will not grow up as quickly as they could or should…exposure to the life and gatherings of the rest of the church is essential, not optional"* [73]

> *"We have to be sure that we don't segregate the youth for our sake and theirs. They are part of the body of Christ too, and no part of the body can remain healthy if one of its members is cut off and put to the side. If we segregate the youth, not only do we lose all they have to teach us, but we also inadvertently teach them that the church is really only for adults - those who are married and have families of their own. And then we wonder why they don't get involved in church as college students or young singles, when in reality, we've been telling them all along that the church isn't yet for them"* [74]

Likewise, Joiner notes:

> *"A mother and father are **not** the only adult influences my children need"* [75]

And Clark and Powell:

> *"Other adults are often able to speak into your kids' lives*
> *in a way that **you cannot** as their parent"* [76]

Joiner firmly believes in the importance and significance of **'Christian community'** in shaping the lives and investing in the growth of believers of all ages and stages. Joiner believes children (and especially teenagers) need adult *voices, coaches, leaders,* and *mentors* in their lives who will say things a Christian parent would say. That it takes **multiple influences** to guard the faith of a generation. Therefore it's

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[71] Roberto: *The Importance of Intergenerational Community For Faith Formation'.* p. 28.

[72] '*Asking The Unasked Questions: Examining How Local Churches and Youth Leaders can Create Environments for Retaining Youth Leaders and Facilitating Enduring and Mission-Shaped Youth Ministries'* (Published by Churches of Christ in Australia in Partnership with Youth Vision Australia, 2009) p.8.

[73] FAQ's: p.19.

[74] Mark Howard: '*Youth Need the Church and the Church Need Youth'* (Gospel Coalition Website: April 30th, 2012).

[75] Reggie Joiner: '*Think Orange: Imagine the Impact when Church and Family Collide…'*(Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publisher, 2009) p.44.

[76] Sticky Faith: p. 105.

imperative that parents and churches **widen the circle of influence** for the sake children's spiritual, relational and emotional growth. [77]

Interestingly, Gunhild Hagestad, in her United Nations report, raises similar concerns regarding the regretful impact and loss of intergenerational contact currently prevalent at all levels of society today:

> *"Solidarity between generations at all levels—in **families, communities** and **nations**—is **fundamental** for the achievement of a society for all ages"* [78]

Hagestad warns that the implications of our modern age segregated lifestyle, reflected in both living arrangements and in production/education settings, *"may breed ageism and rob **all age groups** of valuable **socialization** experiences and **support**."* [79]

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas echoes this belief with a rebuke:

> *"…providing ways for **senior adults** to build meaningful relationships with **teenagers** allows those seniors to reach their full kingdom potential….when people age they cannot move to Florida and leave the church to survive on its own. For Christians, there is no 'Florida'- even if they happen to live in Florida. That is, we must continue to be present to those who have made us what we are so we can make future generations what they are called to be "* [80]

Likewise Kinnaman:

> *"Flourishing intergenerational relationships should **distinguish the church** from all other cultural institutions...many churches and parishes segregate by age-group and, in doing so, **unintentionally contribute to the rising tide of alienation that defines our times**. As a by-product of this approach, the next generation's enthusiasm and vitality have been separated from the wisdom and experience of their elders"* [81]

In the article: '*Moving Beyond the Shock Absorber: The Place of Youth Ministry - Past, Present and Future*', Stuart Crawshaw suggests part of the answer is a movement away from the 'homogeneous unit principle' of the past, to the development of a much more '***congregationally integrated model'*** of ministry in the future: [82]

> *"The next revolution needs to discover ways to include **the whole congregation in the bringing up of young people**, giving them continuity, helping them to read the Bible for themselves, but also encouraging them to live it out more interdependently as servants in mission together (not as consumers of targeted ministry) as they reach out to non-*

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[77] Joiner also believes that children teenagers and young adults need not only the solid Christian influence of parents, leaders, coaches and mentors but also a consistent group of solid peer relationships. Orange: p.73.

[78] '*Young People in a Globalizing World':* (United Nations World Youth Report, 2003) Chapter 15, p. 397.

[79] Ibid. p. 402.

[80] Sticky Faith: p. 121.

[81] Lost: p. 203.

[82] Crawshaw defines the homogeneous unit principle as 'designing ministry styles for different culture groups within a congregation', a ministry practice that evolved as a consequence of seeking to be relevant to an increasingly pluralistic culture. Crawshaw believes that an unlooked for consequence of this development was an emphasis on individualism in the church, with Christians growing up with different ministries for different generations, mirroring the growing consumerism in Western society. While a sense of community was eroded in the secular world, the church was seeking to emulate its appeal to plurality. For his short history of the movement to age-segregated ministry see -Stuart Crawshaw: '*Moving Beyond the Shock Absorber: The place of Youth Ministry – Past, Present and Future':* (The Briefing: Sept 2008). Allen and Ross suggest that many recent church-growth strategies have unwittingly re-enforced age-segregation and the homogeneous unit principle. Claiming church growth experts have been offering "how to build a better church" advice for several decades. The unintended consequence has been the systematic separation of congregations into generational cohorts. Some church growth specialists in the 70's & 80's promoted homogeneity (around ages or stages of life) at the small group level and even the macrochurch level, having the effect of sorting faith communities by generation. See: H. Allen & C. Ross: '*Why Churches Tend To Separate Generations':* (Intergenerational Faithfulness: The Journal of Discipleship & Family Ministry: Spring/Summer, Vol 3. Issue 2, 2013) p. 8-14.

church youth. It may look a bit more like what we lost over the last few hundred years while trying keep up with secularism" [83]

Crawshaw is not a lone voice in calling for greater integration and interaction by specialized ministries within the life and ministry of the broader congregation, as well as an increased need for strategic and intentional intergenerational engagement. [84]

As indicated in the Francis and Richter, Fuller Institute and Barna studies, researchers and practitioners all agree, an important factor in mitigating youth drop out rates and attending to faith concerns, is not *continually segregating* kids from adults in the life of the church, but *intentionally creating opportunities* that allow them to see adults '*practising their faith'*. [85]

2. Build Social Capital

"Build 'social capital' into your child's life, creating a network of caring believers who will pray for, mentor, and bless your children with their presence over the course of their lives" [86]

As mentioned, research clearly demonstrates that children, teens and young adults today have lost important '**social capital'** in their lives. Each of these age groups are missing a handful of ***involved proactive adults*** who care and are willing to pour themselves into their lives without a self-serving agenda.

Life in the 21st Century is a far from easy place to grow up for children and teenagers. Salier rightly argues from research that today's children are far more *immersed* and *vulnerable* to the surrounding culture than previous generations were; and with that immersion and influence comes all the attendant anxiety, confusion, concern and questions associated with such a challenge. [87]

To illustrate, Salier quotes recent research on fear and anxiety by John Hopkins University: [88]

> 30 years ago, the greatest fears of grade school children were:
> 1. Animals   2.Being in a dark room   3. High places   4. Strangers   5. Loud noises
>
> Today, kids are afraid of the following:
> 1. Divorce   2. Nuclear war   3. Cancer   4. Pollution   5. Being mugged

Quite a significant difference in the weight and breadth of issues, notably, a radical shift from personal fears to a more parental, social and global anxiety. This statistic is a confronting reality that must naturally provoke some fairly profound and weighty questions in the hearts and minds of our children and youth about life, and about faith.

Salier notes:

*"We know the answer to every question is God, Jesus and the Bible but **what are the questions** for our young people?"* [89]

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[83] *Beyond the Shock Absorber:* p.15.

[84] For example: The likes of Timothy P Jones, Reggie Joiner, Graham Stanton, David Kinnaman, George Barna, Chap Clark, K.E Powell and others, all challenge the traditional 'programmatic ministry model' where children or youth ministries are almost exclusively organized around separate 'silos' with little consistent intergenerational interaction, genuine parental partnership, or broader congregational engagement. While the homogeneous unit principle is attractive and can lead to numerical (quantitative) growth, it is restricted and even prohibitive of qualitative growth. Without cross-generational fellowship and discipling it is harder to foster life long discipling, mentoring and growth in Christian maturity.

[85] See section B, point 1 of this paper.

[86] Sticky Faith: p.59.

[87] Dr B. Salier: '*What does the Word teach us about Children's and Youth Ministry'?* Effective Ministry Forum, 2015.

[88] Salier:' *What does the Word teach us about Children's and Youth Ministry'?*

[89] Salier:' *What does the Word teach us about Children's and Youth Ministry'?*

And from - *Think Orange:*

> *"Growing up in this generation requires some pretty significant relationships. Children and students need the skills to navigate through some pretty difficult obstacles and the right voices to give wise direction"* [90]

We've already learnt from the *Francis and Richter* study found that creating a safe space for kids, teens and young adults to share their significant **questions, doubts** and **struggles** in the faith is an important preventative to drop out. [91]

Both the comments of Salier and others are reflected in an assumption held by most of the research material, that this generation is vulnerable, and now more than ever, **the generations need one another**. It's never been more important for our youth and children to have the loving input, support and influence of multiple trusted, mature Christian adults in their lives.

> *"The reality is when it comes to programming, many churches act as if* truth *is the most important part of discipleship. Teaching and content become the most important things that happen in every environment. We begin to think that discipleship is a class or curriculum…Children learn in the context of relationships, when their lives intersect with the lives of others. While the most significant relationships in a child's life are the relationships at home, children have a better chance of understanding and interpreting life-changing truth when multiple influences in their lives are all saying the same thing"* [92]

Sadly though, alongside surrendering discipleship to professional ministers, church programs have become so radically age segregated that there's now little *intergenerational contact* or broad *disciple-making interaction* within the faith community.

Sticky Faith (among others) argues, in a number of different ways, that meaningful '*intergenerational relationships'* are essential to children, teens and young adult's feeling welcomed by older adults in the church, to feeling part of the church, as well as improving longevity of faith and enhancing overall spiritual vitality.

Sticky Faith notes:

> *"By far the number one way that churches made the teens in our survey feel welcomed and valued was when adults in the congregation showed an interest in them. More than any single program or event,* **adults' making the effort to get to know the kids** *was far more likely to make the kids feel a* **significant part** *of their church"* [93]

John Roberto of '*Lifelong Faith'* believes intentionally bringing generations together within the church provides unique **benefits** and **blessings** through greater social interconnection and integration: [94]

Roberto argues greater intentional social integration:

> * Reclaims God's intent for faith to be shared in community and across generations
> * Affirms each person's value in the total community (regardless of age)
> * Fosters a foundation of support of each other's concerns, interests, and activities

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[90] Reggie Joiner: **Think Orange: Church and Families joining Together for More Effective Ministry**: (Colorado Springs: David C Cook Pub. 2009) p. 186.

[91] Francis L & Richter P: *Gone for Good? Church–Leaving and Returning in the 21st Century.*

[92] **Think Orange: p 188 & 191.**

[93] Sticky Faith: p. 99.

[94] Roberto: *'Becoming Intentionally Intergenerational'*, p. 33.

* Provides "up close and personal" formation in faith as children, teens, young adults, middle-aged and older adults in sharing faith, teaching, learning, and praying for one another
* Teaches us to care for one another
* Provides role models for children and youth
* Teaches us to value older adults
* Allows us to pass on the traditions of family and faith
* Enhances people's identification with their congregation and integration within the community
* Encourages greater faith in all generations
* Creates special relationships between adults and youth
* Fosters leadership regardless of age or stature
* Utilizes the strengths (the wisdom, experience and knowledge) of one generation to meet the needs of another generation
* Promotes understanding of shared values and respect for individuals in all stages and ages of life
* Utilizes the creative talents of younger and older generations to provide service to the church and community
* Overcomes the age-segregated nature of our society, taking a pro-active, counter-cultural stance in the face of the countless ways society separates and pigeon-holes into age-specific groups

FYI's David Fraze makes the added point that youth ministry in general has done a fairly good job with youth who come from "strong, intact and engaged" families, but the real question for the church is - *"how to nurture students whose families are scattered, unsupportive and disengaged."* [95]

Fraze's solution is:

> *"…to implement intergenerational strategies, that is, "practices designed to create opportunities for spiritual growth across generational lines." These strategies call the community of faith to offer hope not only to youth, but also single parents, divorced persons and others who have been hurt by family relationships, "by **providing a family** in which healing and acceptance are found"* [96]

In order to redress this loss of social capital, and regain the many benefits and blessings that intergenerational reconnection can provide; the church must begin to re-explore ways to intentionally rebuild social capital into its ministry activity and into congregational life. Parents likewise, must seek to intentionally build broad based intergenerational social capital within their relational circle, as an important extension to today's isolated nuclear family life.

Research has suggested one basic starting point for both churches and families is rethinking the place and importance of mentor figures for teens and Millennials, and intentionally increasing the adult-child ratio for kids.

Mentor Figures for Older Teens and Millennials:

> *"While our children need to be with their peers they also need mentors that are at least five years older than them and are someone they adore, and they also need 'grandmothers' and 'grandfathers' that they can hang out with to keep them feeling*

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[95] Allen & Ross: p. 15.

[96] Ibid: p. 15.

connected. Sadly though, most churches have an 'isolation ethos' that keeps generations apart from each other" [97]

It's not only children and who are feeling the *'generation interaction'* gap, older teens and the 'twentysomething' group are also feeling more isolated from parents and other older adults in the realm of **faith** and **spirituality**. Many feel older adults of the next generation do not understand their doubts or concerns, and the majority of young people in this age bracket reported never having an *adult friend* other than their parents. [98]

As already noted (section B point 4), when survey participants were asked the question - 'what might have been done better in youth group that might have helped their friends move on to attend church as adults' - the *Transitioning Children Survey* found: [99]

* 38.0% indicated 'more discipleship'
* 44.2% indicated 'better emphasis on growing in faith'
* 48.2% indicated 'a mentoring program'
* 54% indicated 'more emphasis on mentoring by leaders'

This Millennial age group in particular, appears to relish, not only *diversity of ideas* but also much greater *diversity of relationships*. Because of their post teenage stage, there's both a yearning to be mentored on the one hand, yet also the desire to have that carefully and thoughtfully balanced out by allowing them the freedom, independence and scope to be able to make it on their own. [100]

Research indicates the **third strongest felt need** Millennials have is for *guidance* or *direction* in their life that is **trustworthy**. This generation craves mentor figures, but mentoring where the guidance, encouragement and support offered is in the form of a **navigator**, not a street directory...

"…they[Millennials] are seeking direction from someone who knows them, their situation, and has even travelled that way themselves. They are looking for real life role models and mentors who not only know the way, but also go the way, and can show the way" [101]

Clark and Powell note, that with the advent of Facebook, Skype and other new technologies, even distance need not be a barrier for adult mentors and older aged friends to play a significant and ongoing role in building a 'sticky web' of stable and influential relationships with teens and young adults taking the form of an 'extended' family in their lives. [102]

5:1 Ratio For Kids and Young Teens:

In response to research on the needs of children and youth, Clark and Powell suggest what may be needed is a new **5:1 ratio** of contact and engagement.

Instead of thinking **one** leader for every **five** kids and early teens, churches and parents need to start thinking:

*"5 adults to every 1 kid, adults **of all ages** whom **we recruit to invest** in each child in little, medium or big ways, building a **'sticky web of relationships'** for our children"* [103]

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[97] D. Goodwin: Lost in Transition: Quote by T. Tolman. P. 25.

[98] Lost: p.29.

[99] *Transitioning Children Survey:* p. 83.

[100] Kinnaman refers to this dual desire as the 'me-and-we' contradiction. Lost: p.29.

[101] Mark McCrindle: 'Understanding Generation Y' (*The Australian Leadership Foundation*).

[102] Sticky Faith: p.98f.

[103] Ibid: p.98.

Nieuwhof reiterates this gaping need for more adult contact for children in her article -*"Why Your Kids Need Five Other Adults in Their Lives"*:

> *"I dream of a culture in which every child has five adults, other than their parents, they can talk to about the important stuff. Like school. And girls. And parents. And the future. And God. And faith. And their problems…"* [104]

The suggestion is that each child, each teen, each young adult has access to at least:

* Five people who know their hopes and dreams

* Five people who know their quirks and good points

* Five people they can talk to honestly about what's really going on in their lives

* Five people who can offer wisdom when life gets confusing

* Five people who care about them and pray for them

Nieuwhof suggests it should be possible to secure at least five Christian, committed and reliable adults from amongst our small groups, family friends, coaches and extended family, with whom a child can build a trusting relationship, that might be willing to spend one-on-one time with that child periodically.

She concludes by extending this challenge and vision:

> *"My question is simple: who are your kids' five? Who will they text and who will they call when they don't know what to do?...If every child and teen ends up with five adults on their phone's favorite list, we might indeed be raising a wider, more secure, more grounded, more Christ-centered, more joyful generation than we've seen in a long time….If you're still not convinced, I have a simple question. Don't you wish there had been five other adults in your life growing up that you had a great relationship with, trusted, and could talk to?"* [105]

One family created a 5:1 ratio this way:

> *"Two years ago, Dave and I decided to follow their example by starting an intergenerational group of families to walk through life together. We invited three families to join: one that was in **our life stage**, one with **a newborn**, and one **couple in their sixties** who has nurtured us since we were engaged…even if you can't develop a 5:1 from one cohesive group, you can create a cluster of relationships that form your own 5:1 constellation"* [106]

3: Create Structures that Span Life Stages

> *"The best way to be formed in Christ is to sit among the elders, listen to their stories, break bread with them, and drink from the same cup, observing how these earlier generations of saints ran the race, fought the fight, and survived in grace"* [107]

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[104] Carey Nieuwhof: *'Why Your Kids Need Five Other Adults in Their Lives':* (Orange Parents Website: Oct 4th, 2013).

[105] Nieuwhof: *'Why Your Kids Need Five Other Adults in Their Lives'.*

[106] Sticky Faith: p.103 -104.

[107] Holly C. Allen & Christine L. Ross: Intergenerational Christian Formation: '*Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship'* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2012) p. 17.

"…intergenerational faith experiences uniquely nurture spiritual growth and development in both adults and children" [108]

The most telling time in a young adults life is when teenagers move from high school to university, or work. Research suggests intergenerational mentors and adult friends can help this difficult transition period by the creation of natural relational avenues or inbuilt discipleship structures that allow continued contact with teenagers post high school.

> "*There are churches that truly engage college-age people. These churches have a structure that's strategic, **beyond a separate service**. They've developed **a lifelong discipleship process** by intentionally connecting people of all generations. Because college-age people stay connected to the people in the church, the outcome is a continuous flow of growing believers*" [109]

Research indicated that contact with **at least one** adult from the congregation **outside** the youth ministry during the first semester of college is linked with the likelihood of stickier faith. [110]

Hearing from an adult mentor from their home church, whether by text, email or phone helped students take their faith to college with them, and that contact would continue to make a difference three years later.

Research suggests that for greatest effect, these intergenerational mentor relationships are best started long before teenagers exit a church and where established relationships may more naturally flow on to the next stage.

One pastor suggested that what's needed to ease the transition process is - '*college friendly churches*'; that people cannot become spiritually mature unless they stay *intimately connected* to other believers, therefore we must strategically develop church structures that promote greater intimate connection. The first step is making sure church and congregation structures are effectively supporting members through all the life stages. [111]

He goes on to suggest that churches that truly engage college-age people have a structure that's strategic beyond just creating a separate service; they've developed a ***lifelong discipleship process*** by intentionally connecting people of all generations.

Such churches embrace at least **seven** crucial characteristics:

1. Leaders place a high priority on *cross-generational relationships*

2. Leaders cultivate a heart in older mature believers for *discipleship of younger believers*, and *hold them to the standard* (2Tim 2:2, Tit 2:3-4)

3. Student ministry leaders *express respect* for older adults in church. There's mutual respect between ministers of children and ministers who work with the adult congregation

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[108] Holly & Ross, p. 47.

[109] Orange: Concentrate 9.3.

[110] Sticky Faith: p.100 & 178.

[111] The Pastor's belief is that some leaders have attempted to build a bridge for this disconnection by developing another church service. But even if this attracts hundreds of college-age people, it doesn't necessarily solve the core problem. From a college-age student's perspective, this approach could only just contribute to further disconnection. This model actually exposes the differences between people, not the similarities. Therefore, in order for true connection to take place another approach is needed. Think Orange: 9.3.

4. No leader is considered an island. Rather, they view themselves as a *small part* in the *lifelong discipleship* of people

5. Leaders *work alongside parents* and strategically do so from the nursery through the college-age years

6. College-age individuals have a leader who works in an *assimilation role* to connect college-age people with more experienced believers

7. College-age individuals have a leader who understands the natural search for *identity, intimacy, meaning, pleasure* and *truth* during the college years, and is able to disciple people toward *biblically mature conclusions* in each area

4: Develop Intergenerational Serving Ministries

*"Teens should not only be the **objects** of ministry;*
*they need to be the **subjects** of ministry as well"* [112]

*"I wish that more youth ministry was aimed at connecting students to the broader life of the church than simply having thrilling activities targeted at their generational desires. If students had **greater connections to an intergenerational church ministry**, their transition into college would be more widely guided and followed by others. This would help students to view their spiritual lives as less individualistic and more community-oriented. They would see that their spirituality is not about them alone, but about finding their place within the body of Christ"* [113]

a. By broadening leadership teams

Both the literature and specialist interviews discussed in our *'Retention and Transition'* paper raised the value of including **parents** and **older adults** on children's and youth leadership teams:

"You need a variety of age groups involved in the kid's ministry leadership (not just uni/school age group). For example, parents have a vital role in bringing experience and maturity, and they play a crucial role, not only with the kids but also with the younger leaders. Maturity is needed to give balance, and breadth of age helps the growth of young leaders.

The ideal is to have older and younger leaders paired in partnership with each other. They become 'mentors' for the kids and mentors for the leaders. And not just mentors in relation to children's ministry but also in how to be a husband/wife or father/mother, which is so vital for young people and makes their leadership experience fuller. It helps them grow in godliness and wisdom.

It also needs to be a 'family' experience so that kids can see people of all ages following Jesus. Otherwise what the child sees is that you stay Christian until you are about 21 and then it drops off, and that Christians older than 30 have nothing to contribute. This is a bad model to see. They need to see there can be a passion for God, people and others their whole life" [114]

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[112] *'Is The Era Of Age Segmentation Over?'.* p. 3.

[113] Evan Hunter: *'Preparation for the Journey'* (Youth Worker Website).

[114] Bruce Linton: (Children's Minister, Sydney).

Likewise, Moser and Vernon also believe it's important to have youth leadership teams that span generations, not just the immediate age above:

> "Some of the best leaders around are actually a lot older than the norm. We often fall into the trap of thinking that a good leader is a young leader because they "can relate so well to the young people." This is often misguided. Young people need leaders who will love them, listen to them, and show them Christ. Your age may be a minor detail. Besides, most kids can't tell the difference between 25 and 55. If you are over 21, you are ancient!" [115]

The belief here is that something is seriously wrong if all leaders and mentors of children and youth are only ever drawn from within the late teen or twenty-something age bracket. The Bible itself often couches discipleship in *multigenerational terms* (e.g. Titus 2:1-8), suggesting that a **network** of *spiritual* grandparents, couples, college students, single adults, empty nesters, and widowers all provide the richest and most effective context for discipleship outside a biological family unit.

b. By cross generational serving in congregational life:

> "We were welcomed not just in youth group; we were welcomed into other parts of the ministry of the church, whether it be in the worship or the praise team on Sunday mornings, or whether it be teaching Sunday school to kids or helping with cleaning or serving…all these other types of things really just brought the youth in and made them feel like they had a place and even feel like they were valued as individuals" [116]

Research suggested that another important way of bridging the intergenerational gap is that we must find ways to actively and intentionally *include* children, teens and young adults in **serving within the congregational life of the church**, rather than relegating them to back rooms, or passively sitting in the back pews. [117]

> "Children **need to contribute** to the church. We need to recognize children's gifts, skills and the ability to model the Christian faith to each other and us" [118]

Re-enforcing faith commitment means children, teenagers and young adults today need more **public faith engagement**, meaningful 'rites of passage' (such as confirmation, inclusion in praying, serving and bible reading in church) as well as given *specific disciple-making responsibilities* such as visiting the sick, teaching children by caring for, training, mentoring and discipling those younger in the faith than them. [119]

> "I learned how to effectively model and shape a biblical view of the church for the youth. What was so different? To start, students were part of the church. Rather than a token "Youth Sunday," we regularly had students serving as ushers, greeters, choristers, music volunteers, and Scripture readers. Some of our older teens were teaching Sunday school, and when the church gathered for various functions, teens joined in the mix. This was an intergenerational church family where relationships spanned decades and **all ages served side by side.** Sure, we had youth Bible study groups and other activities

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[115] Ken Moser: Changing The World Through Effective Youth Ministry (Vancouver: Changing The World Press, 2004) p.100.

[116] Sticky Faith: p. 99-100.

[117] Lost: p.122.

[118] Tim Beilharz: *'Developing a Theology of Children'* (Youthworks Website: Oct 11th, 2013).

[119] Slater makes the point that we need to allow young people and children to make a contribution to the life of the church. That when Paul writes of the gifts of the risen Jesus has entrusted to the church, there's no indication that the works of service produced by these gifts are restricted to those over eighteen. The use of gifts is also a great way to cultivate right attitudes and maturity in the young. FAQ's: p.122. Likewise Fields believes that the sign of a healthy church is one that helps *all* Christians, regardless of age, to discover their gifts and express them through serving in ministry. Our role as leaders is to follow the pattern set in Eph 4:11-12 and to help prepare *all* God's people for *works of service*. Doug Fields: Purpose Driven Youth Ministry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan) p.177.

specifically for students, but that never precluded their involvement in the gathered church" [120]

Joiner believes that the spiritual formation of children and teenagers is closely connected to the act of *serving* in particular. That if we fail to help kids make a practical investment of time and energy into serving others, their hearts will never mature in learning to care for, and serve others (particularly as they transition towards high school and college). [121]

> *"It's important to understand how closely spiritual formation is connected to the act of serving. If we fail to help kids make a practical investment of their time and energy in serving others, their hearts will never mature to care for others…Too many churches teach as if students should sit and listen instead of actually experiencing hands-on ministry"* [122]

> *"By not only teaching me about the Bible, but **allowing me to serve and lead**, high school provided me with the necessary views of Christianity to really begin to seek my relationship with Christ on my own as I set out from home"* [123]

Both children and teenagers need consistent **practical opportunities to develop their faith**, and guided **hands on** encounters with ministry that give them a personal sense of God's mission, and opportunities to influence others growth in the kingdom. [124]

These practical opportunities could be anything from serving as ushers, welcomers, bible readers, prayers, musicians, crèche assistants, kids Sunday school teachers, art or digital creative etc..through to simply performing everyday tasks together with adults.

One church decided to offer all children who graduated to adult church, what they called a - 'Service Opportunity', which meant that for at least a year they had a specific serving ministry in the church:

> *"These are the same ministry opportunities that adult members are offered, and include things like ushering, collection taking, sound desk, taking around communion, assisting with the younger children in Children's Ministry and being part of the worship team. Being involved in this 'Service Opportunity' offers the children an informal mentoring process with the individual adults with whom they work alongside in the church for that year. The children are seen by the adults to be apprentices and their role also to build relationships and offer affirmation as well as working with the children"* [125]

In this way, children learn alongside adults, that the call to serve God's church, to serve the body, is a call made to every believer, great or small:

> *"Churches have the potential to turn a generation around by handing them the keys to ministry and saying, "Guess what? Not only do we need your help, but God designed you and God created you for this very reason. You were called to use your gifts as much as the Pastor was called to use his. Each one of us has a personal responsibility to be the church, and if you recognise that, it will revolutionize your life"* [126]

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[120] D. Wright: '*Don't Segregate the Youth.'*

[121] Orange: p.206.

[122] Orange: p.206.

[123] *Sticky Faith: Youth Worker Edition*: p. 97.

[124] It is important to note here that some of the marks of being a true follower of Christ are the call to a life of obedience, sacrifice, servanthood and suffering (Deut. 10:12, Matt 16:24-25, 28:20, Mk 8:34-35, Lk 14:25-27, Jn 14:15-24, Eph 4:12, 1Pet 4:9 - 11, Phil 1:29, 2Cor 1:5) as well as the command to specifically demonstrate love to the brethren, and to obey the 'one another' commands (1Jn, 3:21-24,4:7, Gal 6:10). Therefore it is important to instil, not only this understanding, but also its practice, in our children from the earliest age.

[125] Lost in Transition: The example of Baldiv Church of Christ, Western Australia. P. 27.

[126] Orange: p. 218.

Apart from serving the body of Christ, as every disciple is called to do, doing simple serving tasks together with adults breaks down the 'awkward' age barrier like little else might:

> *"I don't meet any adults who want nothing to do with kids, but I meet a lot of adults who are intimidated by teenagers and don't know how to talk with them.* **Serving together levels the ground**. *When we've got a hammer in one hand and a paintbrush in the other, all of a sudden we've created a shared experience, and age is irrelevant"* [127]

c. By youth serving and building relationships with those younger in the faith:

As already mentioned, research found that intergenerational contact and engagement for youth and children with those **younger than themselves** was also very important in faith development and longevity. [128]

Research suggests that teens and young adults who **serve** and **build relationships** with children younger than themselves were also more likely to hang on to their faith. [129]

Perhaps by sharing their faith with those younger, answering younger children's doubts and questions enabled them to reinforce their own faith, or perhaps serving in the church made them feel more part of church life and community, or giving them an opportunity to explore their own spiritual gifts and abilities enabled them to make a contribution to the body of Christ? Whatever the reason, research indicates that serving and building relationships with those younger than themselves had an impact that **solidified faith**.

5: Rethink the Place of Church Wide Services

> *"Those who have been sitting at the youth ministry 'kids table' don't know church. They know youth group, not church"* [130]

> *"Teenagers don't leave the church; the church and teens were never introduced!"* [131]

> *"In a culture that has severed ties between the generations, we need to include meaningful and intentional co-mingling of the generations at church"* [132]

Research found that although the answer to the problem of youth drop out and retention was clearly multifaceted, the element that came closest to any definitive 'silver bullet' in acting to help youth grow and retain their faith was discovering an important relationship between **attendance at church wide services** and having '**stickier faith.**'

Several contemporary authors and researchers have asserted that children and teenagers need to have **meaningful participation with adults** in their worship for them to feel **connected** to the church.

In his 'Growing Faith' article - '*Should Your Kids Stay in the Church Service? Six Reasons Why Being Present for the Full Service Can Be Good For Children?'*, Helopoulos notes:

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[127] *Is The Era Of Age Segmentation Over?'* p.4.

[128] See section D point 2 of this paper on - *'Build Social Capital'.*

[129] See Sticky Faith: p.98 for more on the Fuller Youth Institute study. See also - Research release: *'What Makes Faith Stick During College?'* Sticky Faith Website (Sept, 2011).

[130] Sticky Faith: p.100.

[131] Roberto: '*The Importance of Intergenerational Community For Faith Formation'.* p. 28.

[132] Timothy P. Jones: Perspectives on Family Ministry: *3 Views:* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009) p.49.

"As the church, let's be open to the idea of inviting our children into worship again. Let's be patient, deliberate, and wise, but let's encourage families to have their children in worship as soon as they are able…Even if our children cannot understand all that is happening, struggle to sit still, and even are bored at times during the service they are still benefiting from being in the midst of this divine meeting between God and His people (Mk 10:13-16)" [133]

Helopoulos proceeds to outline six reasons why he believes that children should attend worship services:[134]

1. Children are members of the covenant community (the church):
Corporate Worship on Sunday morning is the primary activity the covenant community engages in together (Acts 2:42; Eph 10:24-25). Therefore, our children as members of this community should be included in this crucial aspect of covenantal life.

2. Children will be present in the midst of the means of grace:
Children benefit by being where the Word is preached (Rom 10:14), the sacraments are administered (Matt 28:19-20), and corporate prayer is practiced (Acts 2:42-47). These are the chief means by which God pours out grace upon His people. Why knowingly rob our children of this blessing?

3. Children will be present in the midst of the entire congregation:
Children benefit greatly by being in the presence of Christians of various ages. They are able to see that the faith of their parents is not a faith that they own alone, but is a faith that is important to all of these people who are gathered around them on Sunday morning. This only reinforces what Mom and Dad are modeling and teaching when they see this incredible gathering of people reading the Word together, praying together, confessing together, and singing together (Deut 31:9-13). They need to see the body in action.

4. Children will be present with their parents:
Worshipping together as a family helps to counter the current trend in our society of fragmenting our families. If our children join us in worship from four years of age until they are eighteen they will worship with their parents in 780 Sunday morning worship services! Think about the cumulative effect of a family worshipping together, in the midst of the means of grace, meeting with God for 780 Sundays in a row.

5. Children will witness their parents worshipping:
It is the Biblical role of parents to disciple their children in the faith (Deut. 6; Ps 78; Eph. 6). What a benefit there is when children witnesses their mother or father singing with conviction, praying in reverence, listening intently to the sermon, or receiving the Lord's Supper in joy. In these moments a child witnesses the importance of faith and worship. There are few greater encouragements to a child's faith then seeing their parents worship God with reverence and joy (Ex 12:1-28; Deut. 4:9-11; 6; Ps 78; Ez 10:1; Neh 12:43; Joel 2:12-17; Acts 16:33).

6. Children will learn the rhythms of church life:
Teenagers in our culture often balk at attending corporate worship. But how many of our teenagers have we setup for this reaction, because we did not consistently include them in worship until they were a teenager? If attending church for years has always meant coloring Bible pictures, singing songs to a cd, playing games, and doing crafts—

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[133] J. Helopoulos: '*Should Your Kids Stay in the Church Service? Six Reasons Why Being Present for the Full Service Can Be Good For Children':* (Growing Faith Website: Feb, 2015).

[134] '*Should Your Kids Stay in the Church Service?'*

then we should not be surprised that our young people find worship to be odd, uncomfortable, and even boring.

I love good children's songs—they ring through my house. I love good children's Christian crafts—they decorate my study. But if this alone is the rhythm of church life we have set up for our children week in and week out, we have done them a great disservice. They must see, know, and learn that the singing of the great hymns of the faith, the preaching of the Word, reading of confessions, corporate prayers, etc. is anything but boring. It is the gathered life of the community of faith. It is our weekly rhythm—appointed by God, designed by Him, established for the ages—this is what we want them to know, because we want them to know and worship Him.

Similarly, the Australian research piece - *'Lost in Transition: Addressing The Problem Of Children Leaving Church As They Make The Transition From Childhood To Youth'* makes this sobering point for consideration:

"The church is raising a generation of potential church dropouts. Most children in children's church have never experienced a multi-generational worship service. They have not had opportunity to become acculturated to the adult worship mode. All elements of a children's ministry program should be working toward the day when a child graduates into sixty or seventy years of adult worship. Children need to be encouraged to minister and participate" [135]

Affirming the belief that children benefit significantly from participating in adult church early, the Francis and Richter's study found:

* Allowing children in the church to *see **adults practising their faith*** to be a ***preventative*** to attendance drop out, with 39% of church leavers considering church to be a "childhood activity" which they outgrew. [136]

And again, the *2007 FYI study*:

* A factor causing kids to shelve their faith is – the ***segregation of kids and adults in church***. Kids who attend church-wide services were more likely to keep their faith [137]

Further, Allen and Ross note:

"Embracing intergenerational worship is more complex than simply including the children…Being intergenerational in outlook means that all generations, from toddlers to seniors, will feel welcome and included when the body of Christ gathers together; they will be intentionally received; they will belong" [138]

Interestingly, Allen and Ross note that one of the attitudinal barriers often preventing churches from fully embracing the possibility of church wide services has been the cultural rise of *'consumerist individualism'* and the generational *'stylistic worship wars'* that have resulted:

"As churches have faced increasingly unpleasant generational conflict, one solution that seems to ameliorate the problem is to offer separate-but-equal opportunities. For

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[135] D. Goodwin: Lost in Transition: Quote by D. Gruber, p. 8.

[136] See (section B point 2) Francis L & Richter P: *Gone for Good?*

[137] See (section B point 2) Sticky Faith: p.98.

[138] Allen & Ross: p. 198.

example, in regard to the worship wars, churches might provide separate worship hours, encouraging each generation to shape it's own worship to shape its own worship tastes.

Thus the youth group can enjoy loud music, flashing lights and cool videos; the Millennials can pull into their intimate settings, Gen X'ers can have the contemplative yet technologically savvy style; Boomers can choose old-rock-style praise tunes using guitars and drums; the older generation can sing traditional hymns; and the children get to sing "Father Abraham" as often as they wish.

*All in all, a very amenable solution- except it is a perfect recipe for generational isolation. This solution arises from an individualistic outlook that **emphasises personal needs**, rather than **communal needs**. And "when the needs of the individual are preeminent, generational fragmentation is inevitable"* [139]

Sadly, a major obstacle in attempting to include or integrate children back into adult church is often the adults themselves who've gotten used to children no longer being present:

"They prefer, in many cases, to being able to worship without the distractions children bring. There are instances where adults deliberately arrive at church late in order to avoid being there while children are present. It seems that many have forgotten what church is meant to be" [140]

We must ask ourselves, is this the message we want the smallest and most vulnerable in the faith to receive? It appears that older church members may not be aware of the impact, for both good and bad, they can have on children and young people in the church. More training and input needs to be given to the adults on the significance of how they relate to young people and children in the church and the enormous opportunity there is to influence their faith development and understanding of their place and importance within the body of Christ.

6. Make A Philosophical Paradigm Shift in Core Values

*"The area of greatest caution…deals with the failure to fully embrace an intergenerational paradigm at the **core philosophical level**. Too many times churches try to **do** intergenerational rather than **become** intergenerational. So often churches fail to keep momentum going as a result, "intergenerational" is only a temporary emphasis or strategy, rather than **a culture shift**"* [141]

*"If churches try to take on a new **model** for intergenerational ministry without a new **mindset**, intergenerational ministry will not be fruitful…it needs to be part of the church's DNA"* [142]

The article *'Intergenerational Ministry: Beyond the Rhetoric'* makes the crucial point that "intergenerational is not something churches **do** - it's something they **become**". [143]

To become truly intergenerational requires churches to make a **paradigm shift** where intergenerational ministry is embraced as a core philosophical value across the *whole church community*.

[139] Allen & Ross: *'Why Churches Tend To Separate Generations'*: p. 11.

[140] Lost in Transition: p. 25.

[141] Beyond the Rhetoric: p. 4

[142] Snailum: '*Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry Within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?*', p.175.

[143] Beyond the Rhetoric: p. 2.

Likewise Snailum reiterates the point:

> "…transitioning from a predominantly age-stratified ministry mindset to an intergenerational culture requires a paradigmatic shift in philosophy and core values, and efforts to create intergenerational community need to be an integral part of the whole church's vision, mission and purpose" [144]

That is, inter-generationality is **not** a new *model* of ministry, but rather a **new mindset**.

In our current age segregated and age demographic churches, such a paradigm shift will not be achieved overnight, nor will it be achieved by occasional 'ad hoc' or tokenistic gestures towards increasing intergenerational contact. Rather, *'making such shift requires overcoming the individualistic mindset that is so strong in our culture and developing a community mentality in which all generations and ministry departments are valued and involved with each other in significant ways throughout the church body.* **Cross-generational valuing must become an integral part of the congregation's collective story***'.* [145]

Like many others, Kinnaman believes this lack of consistent, intentional intergenerational engagement has become a significant gap in the current *disciple-making process*; in order to bridge this gap a radically new approach is needed in the way we *structure* and *develop* our church ministry:

> "We must ask ourselves whether our churches and parishes are providing the rich environments that a relationally oriented generation needs to develop deep faith…I believe we need a new mind to measure the vibrancy and health of the intergenerational relationships in our faith communities" [146]

Kinnaman's desire is to see older Christians, parents and peers recognize their *collective calling* to love, accept, partner with the next generation, and find new ways to make disciples among this generation. [147]

To that end, Kinnaman and others have suggested the following:

1. Rethinking 'generations'
2. Rethinking how to more effectively engage and include older Christians
3. Think 'family of families'

a. Rethink 'generations'

> "The first step is simply grasping the concept that **"the church is all generations"**. From the…infant to the home-bound, aged widow –all are members of the faith community…And all are members of the body" [148]

Kinnaman believes the Christian community is one of the few places where those who represent the full scope of human life (from cradle to grave) come together with a *singular motive* and *mission*.

Kinnaman believes that a misguided following of public school instructional models has meant churches allowed themselves to become internally segregated by age, unintentionally contributing to the *rising tide*

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[144] Allen & Ross: '*Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship'.* p.178

[145] Beyond the Rhetoric: p. 2.

[146] Kinnaman's research discovered that most young adults do not recall having a meaningful friendship with an adult or adult mentor through their church. That Churches are failing to provide the rich environments that this relationally oriented generation needs to develop deep faith. Kinnaman believes that this is a critical 'gap' in the disciple-making process that must be addressed if we are to adequately respond to youth drop out in our churches. Lost: p.120.

[147] Lost: p.34.

[148] Allen & Ross: p. 198.

of alienation that defines our times, as well as resulting in our youth's *enthusiasm* and *vitality* being segregated off from the *wisdom* and *experience* of their elders. [149]

Timothy Paul Jones echoes this sentiment:

> *"**Social or generational similarities are not what define Christian fellowship**. The people of God are shaped and defined by Jesus Christ himself, who unites individuals that the world would never dream of bringing together-but not by clustering them in categories of age or special interest or musical preference. Oneness based on such fleeting demographic categories is the same sort of pseudo-unity that the world already offers in the form of tightly niched television programs and marketing campaigns"* [150]

Kinnaman suggests we therefore need a new way of thinking about relationships, generations and generational relationships, that the church must recapture the biblical concept of 'a generation', and one that more adequately reflects the *living organism* called the church and its heavenly reality (Heb 12:22-24):

> *"I have come to believe that we in the church must recapture the biblical concept of a generation…you assume the church is a collection of separate generations, with the older generations given the responsibility of raising young people…but there is a much bigger reality.*
>
> *A generation is every living person who is fulfilling God's purposes…everybody in the church at a particular time make up a 'generation', a generation that is working together in their time to participate in God's work…The church is a partnership of generations fulfilling God's purposes in their time"* [151]

The belief here, is that rather than assuming the church to be a collection of 'separate generations', with the older generations given the responsibility of raising young people, the Bible's view is that everybody in the church at any particular time, together make up a 'generation', a generation that's called upon to *work together* to participate in God's work.

Rather than assuming the church exists to prepare the next generation to fulfil God's purposes, the church should be a *'partnership of generations'* fulfilling God's purposes in their time i.e. with *one* single motive and mission.

The suggestion is that Churches may not do away with separate children's or youth ministry, but these programs should be re-evaluated and revamped to make intergenerational relationships a priority.

Kinnaman, like others in this space, believe that 'flourishing intergenerational relationships' should distinguish the church from the other cultural institutions of our time where this important aspect of social and educational interaction has now been lost.

b. *Rethink how to more effectively engage and include older Christians*

> *"Imagine they knew people in every stage of life who were living out their faith against all kinds of challenges: the widowers and divorcees; the childless and the tired parents; the recovering addict and the recent college grad, still resolute in his faith"* [152]

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[149] Lost: p.203.

[150] Timothy Paul Jones: Family Ministry Field Guide: *How Your Church Can Equip Parents To Make Disciples:* (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011) p. 129.

[151] Lost: p.203.

[152] Wright: '*Don't Segregate the Youth'.*

Across the literature, the critical place and importance of relationships with older Christians (beyond the home) for the spiritual nurture and maturity of children, teenagers and young adults was repeatedly emphasised.

Fields' believes that relationships are the key draw card for teenagers and young adults and therefore need to take high priority, especially relationships with adults who - *"make building relationships with students a high priority, these relationships quicken the ministry's effectiveness and enhance students' spiritual maturity".* [153]

Likewise, in his book *'Youth Ministry on the Front Foot',* Veron notes: *…rather than working hard at helping youth make the transition, work hard at having genuine overlap between the life-stages by knocking down the paddock fences. Encourage rich relationships across the multi-generational people of God"* [154]

Veron suggests there may still be different programs for different groups but with more cross generational *connection* and *engagement* e.g. bringing teenagers and adults together for socializing, camps, final terms of transition, enabling youth involvement and engagement in evening services etc. thereby enabling the breadth of adult contact, interaction and support to act as an extended spiritual family to that of the home.

c. Think 'family of families'

> *"We have all failed our kids by training them to think that faith is more about homogeneous safety and independent faith commitments than communal living and intimate cross-generational relationships with the family of faith"* [155]

What is being emphasised here is that we must always remember that the Church exists, not as separate biological family units, but primarily (and more significantly) as a spiritual home, a ***family of families***, where each one is a brother, sister, mother or father, and as such, each has responsibility ***to*** and ***for*** the nurture and discipleship of one another:

> *"As a family, or the Family of families, the church community is where teenagers can see models of godly decision making in the young adult 'older brothers and sisters'; where they can learn from models of long term faithfulness in the elder 'grandparents in the faith'; where young people from broken and divided homes can find role models and advocates in spiritual parents"* [156]

Chap Clark believes one of our responsibilities in this regard is to regularly *remind* and *call* the whole church back to the ***baptism promises*** they made as a congregation to care and to nurture children through ***all of life's stages***, and especially as they transition from youth to church or out of one congregation to another:

> *"In most church communities, when an infant or child is baptized or dedicated, the adults and families publicly promise to care for and nurture that child throughout his or her life. This shift to seeing the end goal of youth ministry as assimilation is a call to your entire congregation to follow through on the promise they made. Make sure the entire body is aware the church is expected to receive with open arms the full partnership and participation of the graduating seniors into the life of the church. The key is to hammer away so often at this message that it'll become part of the continuing story of the church"* [157]

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[153] Fields: PWDM, p.195.

[154] Graham Stanton (Zac Veron (Ed): *Youth Ministry on the Front Foot* (Anglican Youthworks, South Sydney, 2012) p.138.

[155] Clark: *'Strategic Assimilation'* p.3.

[156] G. Stanton: *'Mickey Mouse Youth Ministry'* (Sydney Anglicans Website: Feb. 22nd, 2010).

[157] Clark: *'Strategic Assimilation'*, p. 4.

Likewise, Beckwith believes the **biological** family; the broader **church family** as well as individual **peers** all play a vital and necessary role in the spiritual formation of children, teeenagers and young adults. All 3 spheres have the potential to powerfully nurture faith formation.

The Church's challenge is to find creative ways to bring that potential to fruition. Beckwith espouses the need for *bringing the* generations together *as a family*, and congregations as places where life can be shared, relationships grow, experiences shared, and a visible and tangible means of tempering the prevalent cultural separation and ageism. [158]

d. Be Intentional

Intentionality is critical to culture change. To transition from an age-stratified ministry focus to an intergenerational community will not happen without consistent intentionality in order to initiate and sustain such a paradigmatic shift. Leaders and individual ministries must have complete 'buy-in' and support, not only to sustain the intergenerational shift but be purposeful and strategic in it.

> **Note:** For two examples of church models that have attempted to address the intergenerational issue, read – '*Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views'* in the appendix section of this paper. More particularly, note the *'Family-based'* philosophy and *'Family equipping'* model.

7: Begin Where You Are

> "*The leadership need to prayerfully and honestly assess current ministry practices and motives, including examining how deeply age-stratified ministry is valued among the leadership and members of the congregation and how open the church will be to change"* [159]

a: Begin at the beginning:

Though the task of rethinking or re-working the way we might go about our ministry structures, activity or congregational life may feel daunting initially, it mustn't cause this important aspect of community life and growth to be dismissed as unachievable.

If this paper, and the research outlined are right, then the enormous and significant benefits of such an important and necessary change far out-way the difficulty or challenges in making them.

With careful and considered thought, developing an intergenerational ministry can be achieved gradually, sensibly and accessibly.

The best beginning is to start by **assessing** all current individual ministry *structures* and *practices* and evaluate where there may already be opportunities to create greater intergenerational engagement, introduce intergenerational ministry serving, or potential for cross generational disciple making leverage.

Analyse the church's *broad* intergenerational strengths and weaknesses. Assess whether the church's activities (from Sunday services to ministry structures to social events) to determine if they are *welcoming*

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[158] Formational: p.131f. Interestingly, Kinnaman makes the observation from his data that young adults' ability to grow in faith withers when they persist in narcissism, entitlement, and out of proportion self-confidence. His belief is that many youth have an unrealistic self-assessment that's aided and abetted by a culture that glorifies youth as inherently beautiful, valuable, and wise. The marketing media obsession with youth and young adults has lead to two negative consequences: 1. It reinforces the very modern notion that the next generation must be catered to before all else. 2. It fuels the damaging misperception that older people don't have much value to offer younger generations, thereby increasing generational fragmentation in our cultural imagination, and contributing to the shallowness of the generation. Lost: p.117.

[159] Beyond the Rhetoric: p. 2.

and *accessible* to all generations. Consider church life, ministries, specific intergenerational programs, projects and events, and identify areas for *growth* and *improvement*.

It's also important to start by making adults aware of the need and importance (even in small simple ways) of interacting with children and teens at every natural opportunity:

> *"Have you ever thought to acknowledge or engage with the children or teenagers when standing chatting to their parents at church?...How often have you had a child, or an awkward impatient teen standing alongside their parents at church waiting for the conversation to end and made no reference to them during that time?... or had the child wander off around the church to find entertainment while mum and dad were caught up in conversation that never included them?*
>
> *As we have found, 33.6% of children/teens felt adults hardly ever connected with them except the Children's Ministry team and family. They felt adults mainly ignored them at church...Yet, increased 'intergenerational' contact has proven to be one of the important factors that keep kids from dropping out of church.*
>
> *There are lots of ways we can make a bigger effort to include and engage with children and teens in our gatherings. Simply making a practice of acknowledging and engaging with kids as you chat with their parents is a good start...or say hello to kids/teens as you pass them in and out of church ...in the car park...coming out of kids club...at the morning tea counter...say hi even if you don't know them...it all helps kids feel welcome, important and included...so let's work at being more intentional in how we include the smallest in the kingdom...why not start this Sunday!"* [160]

The next step would be to move on to develop a specific **plan** of action:

The aim should be to start small and develop clear and concrete plans to make incremental changes over a set time period, evaluating and adjusting as you go.

* Identify strategies the church can initiate that will bring an intergenerational focus to *existing* ministries and programs (including Sunday services)

* Identify *new* initiatives and the church can launch to bring the generations together

* Identify *long-term goals* (3-5 years) for the church so that becoming intentionally intergenerational is an integral element of the culture of the church

* Work out an *education process* to teach the church body (from young to old) on the value and importance of intergenerational ministry

The aim should be to start in *small ways* and keep the *momentum* going; using every opportunity to keep **casting the vision** and **engaging more people in the process**. Move gradually and intentionally from ministry to ministry, assessing how each ministry may utilise or create appropriate structures or opportunities within 'their particular space' to build-in an intergenerational ethos and practice. As you do so, keep working out 'what steps might take things gradually to the next level'?

It's helpful not to overlook enlisting those who may *already have this mindset* to assist in making culture change and practice happen. Continuously share positive stories as the benefits of intergenerational ministry begin to have an effect. This helps build culture shift and motivation to continue.

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[160] Sarie King: Effective Ministry Facebook page.

It's important to be aware that moving forward with programmatic or structural changes *too quickly* can potentially derail the process by causing uncertainty and confusion. Correspondingly, there's also a need to persevere with commitment, patience and endurance to fully reap the benefits of pushing towards change with a view for the long term. [161]

b: Keep casting the vision:

It's critical whenever a church attempts to make change (particularly culture change) to keep casting the vision. The leadership, the congregation and all ministry heads need to be thoroughly on board with the common goal if such a culture shift is to be achieved and effectively maintain longevity.

The senior leadership particularly need to take an active, and proactive, role in helping both the congregation and ministry teams through the transition process.

As teams and ministries get underway with making gradual change, each ministry leader should be encouraged to make sure they consciously - *'pass everything through an "intergenerational filter", and regularly ask themselves how their plans can be made in such a way as to keep the church moving toward being an authentic intergenerational community'*. [162]

Ministry leaders should be encouraged to share their ideas and intergenerational innovations with one another to ensure well-integrated thinking and creative problem solving.

c: Teach a clear Biblical ecclesiology:

For this ministry to truly be effective, first and foremost it must be theologically driven. If the church has not had its teaching undergirded by a clearly exegeted Biblical ecclesiology affirming the doctrine of the '*body of Christ'*, the '*priesthood of all believers'* and individual spiritual responsibility towards each other as '*disciple-making disciples'*, then a culture shift to make intergenerational relationships and ministry central to what we do becomes far more challenging.

It's solid Biblical teaching that should drive older (and younger) generations to recognise and embrace the importance, necessity and responsibility of investing in one another as part of our spiritual obligations towards each other, and in building Christ's church (see section B, point 4: '*Intergenerational serving, mentoring and discipling mitigate drop out'*).

d: Be prepared for common barriers:

The movement toward inter-generationality is not easy. Intergenerational experiences do not always meet the immediate felt needs of everyone present. Ministry leaders can become discouraged reframing and readjusting existing programs to make room for intergenerational ministry to be embraced and taken advantage of. The youth group may not want parents present or congregation members want children present etc.

To transition successfully it is crucial that the members of the congregation learn to love and value other generations, and intergenerational principles must become an integral part of the congregation's collective story. [163]

Snailum believes we must come prepared for all the challenges that come with 'cultural shift':

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[161] Roberto: *'Intentionally Intergenerational'.* p. 34.

[162] Beyond the Rhetoric: p. 6.

[163] Snailum: *'Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry within Existing Evangelical Congregations'*, p. 168-169.

> *"Making a shift requires overcoming an individualistic cultural mindset and developing a community mindset wherein all generations and ministry departments are valued and deeply involved with each other in significant ways throughout the church body"* [164]

Half the battle is being prepared for the challenges ahead and adjusting expectations, utilizing teaching opportunities and engaging in persistent encouragement and communication at all levels across the congregations' ministry.

In this regard, Snailum's study on churches that attempted to transition to an intergenerational culture found there were several common barriers, challenges or hindrances in creating an intergenerational faith community:

The most common challenges were: [165]

* Failure to *transition* to an intergenerational *paradigm*
* Lack of understanding of the *basis* and *need* for inter-generationality
* Self-centredness (a focus of some age cohorts on their *own needs* and *desires*)
* Lack of available *resources* to assist ministry leaders
* Lack of *perseverance* (leaders must maintain the patience needed to fully transition the congregation to a new ministry mindset)

8: Keep Intergenerational Values in Balance with Age-Specific Ministry

As mentioned in section D point 1, it's critical that any intergenerational ministry philosophy also be married with maintaining the value of an *age-specific ministry*. These two values are not opposed to each other, nor designed to be mutually exclusive, but *complementary*.

Some ministry discipling flourishes better in age appropriate settings, and at times, gender appropriate settings. This is true for all ages. Certain age or gender appropriate needs must be carefully considered and weighed against appropriateness of setting and content, and all age-segregation activities should be naturally *interwoven* within the fabric of an overarching intergenerational ministry philosophy and approach.

Allen and Ross describe the maximising careful balance this way:

> *"Churches that embrace an intergenerational culture also deeply value the unique and important place of age-graded learning settings, the appropriate bonding fostered in youth groups, and wonderful blessings of fellowship with those in shared seasons of life. "Everyone needs to be part of a 'web' or network of relationships that includes peers as well as members of other generations." It is a **both/and** proposition, not **either/or"*** [166]

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[164] Ibid. p. 168.

[165] Ibid. p.135-47.

[166] Allen and Ross: p. 186.

(E) SIMPLE IDEAS TO GET GOING

1: Events:

* Inviting and encouraging senior high schoolers to *attend special men's and women's events* over the year. Have it locked into the youth calendar so these events are seen as a priority. Ensure these events are 'user friendly' across the generations. Invite youth representatives to assist in both the planning and execution of these events as a way of serving in intergenerational ministry together.

* At 'all in' church retreats encourage participants to find one person from a different age group and strike up a conversation and keep it going across the weekend. Have participants of all ages involved in planning the retreat and running certain components of the retreat together.

* Have one generation provide *hospitality* at parish-wide events for all of the other generations.

* Intergenerational mission trips made up of teens, young adults, older members and seniors.

2: Sunday Services:

* Involve different generations in ushering, welcoming, music and drama ministry, developing digital media and technical support such as serving on the sound system or media desk, setting up the service area, helping on the bookstall, giving prayers, bible readings and testimonies in church, helping with the young children's 'kids spot', have different generations interview each other etc.

* Having 'user friendly' music selection that incorporates all generations in all age services. Helping church members learn to become more 'flexible' and 'adaptive' about music style preferences in order to incorporate others more easily.
* Recruiting older and younger greeters to serve on welcoming together as a team

* Foster cross-age drama and media

* Encourage Father/son and Mother/daughter leading prayers

* Interview different generations about their faith story

* Encourage cross-generational worship leaders and music teams at each service

3: Practical initiatives:

* Linking different generations by matching up those who may have specific *practical areas of need* with those who may have *expertise* or *experience* e.g. money management for new workers or those on the edge of retirement, tips for seeking home owners on buying a house, helping the elderly navigate email, Facebook or how to search the internet, mowing lawns etc. helping new parents, youth and young adults applying for scholarships or job interviews, writing a CV…etc.…

The church community carries a wealth of experience and expertise in all kinds of areas; competent members, of all ages, sitting in the pews week by week just waiting for their abilities and multifaceted competencies to be utilized. How might this be a good opportunity to using the gifts of the body, combined with increasing intergenerational serving and engagement?

* Intergenerational teams carrying out community service initiatives together (collecting and delivering food parcels, mowing lawns for the elderly, homeless shelters, 'Toys and Tucker' etc.)

* Youth and adults visiting the elderly together or visiting new comers to the neighbourhood.

4: Within age-segregated ministries:

* Structure age group programs with an intergenerational connection, such as an educational/bible program that includes interviews, panels, storytelling with people of different ages.

* Incorporate intergenerational dialogues into existing programs. Provide opportunities for children, youth and young adults to experience the wisdom, faith and interests of older adults through presentations, performances and discussions. Then *reverse* the process and provide opportunities for the older adults to experience the wisdom, faith and interests of children or teens through presentations, performances, and discussions.

* Honouring older adults by getting them to share their faith stories at different services or in children's, teens or young adults groups…

5: Within leadership structures:

* Have the IM in the church's mission or vision statement to encourage all church staff and committees to constantly consider how to implement the IM in their respective ministry areas.

* Point four in this paper on - '*Intergenerational Serving Ministries'* has already addressed the need to build leadership teams in the children, teens and young adult ministries that '*span the generations'*; where these teams don't just consist of leaders from the immediate generation above.

* Have a couple of young adults (who may also lead within the youth or children's program) serve as a representative member on the church council. Invite members of the youth team, or leaders in the children's ministry, to come and present interesting updates on those ministries throughout the year rather than the Senior minister.

* Build a *Ministry Training Scheme* (MTS) leadership apprenticeship scheme (or a non full time version of it for younger leaders) where young leaders can hone their leadership and ministry skills under the mentorship of an experienced older leader. [167]

6: Utilizing Milestones:

John Roberto highlights the importance of utilizing faith and everyday *milestones* in member's lives as an opportunity to celebrate growth and change, as well as an opportunity for the generations to gather together around important moments in member's lives. Roberto places celebration milestones into 3 broad categories. [168]

* *Congregational Milestones*: such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages, funerals, mission trips, leaders moving on, inducting new leaders, church centenaries etc.

* *Lifestyle Milestones*: such as graduations (e.g. the movement from junior high group to senior high groups, from senior high to young adult groups etc.) students moving away to college, or families moving overseas or interstate etc.

* *Annual Milestones*: seasons of the church year, mothers and fathers day etc.

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[167] For information on the Ministry Training Scheme see: http://www.mts.com.au.

[168] Roberto: *'Importance of Intergenerational'.* p. 31.

More Ideas:
For more ideas see Allen & Ross - 'Intergenerational Christian Formation' listed in the bibliography.

One Final Word To End

*"Intergenerationality is the **mindset** of congregational leaders as they implement church ministries, as opposed to adding programs to existing activities of a congregation.*

*A church becomes intergenerational when there is **consistent intentionality** in placing all ages together in various settings, when children and teens look up to the older adults in the congregation as fellow believers on the journey of faith, and when the adults and elderly see the blessing of youthfulness and all that they can learn from the younger generations.*

It occurs when age is no longer a boundary or a frightening thing to integrate.

*Becoming intergenerational encompasses becoming one in Christ under His headship and authority as His body, **serving, learning**, and **growing** together"* [169]

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[169] Jenkins: '*Biblical Support for Intergenerational Ministry*'.

~ APPENDIX ~

Perspectives on Family Ministry: 3 Views:
Timothy P. Jones (ed): [170]

Thesis: Families must resume their role as the primary disciplers of children:

Jones belief is that the missing ingredient in the discipleship of children today is the family. The church has often operated as the primary means of spiritual development of youth and children, and therefore parents have gradually relinquished their role. [171]

The book adheres to the scriptural belief that parents (and especially fathers) should be the primary discipleship-makers of children, and that the church should therefore rethink and redevelop its 'family ministry' to support, encourage and foster that role.

Jones goes on to make the case that every church is called to some form of family ministry. [172] That although there's no widespread agreement on what family ministry should look like — what's meant by true "family ministry" isn't simply one more program, but a fundamentally different way of doing church, it requires refocusing '*every church process'* to engage *parents* in the process of discipling their children. [173]

Jones defines 'family ministry' as the following:

> *"The process of <u>intentionally</u> and persistently <u>realigning</u> a congregation's <u>proclamation</u> and <u>practices</u> so that <u>parents</u> are acknowledged, trained, and held accountable as the persons <u>primarily responsible</u> for the discipleship of their children."* [174]

Aim:
Jones argues that most children's/youth ministry models operate on the 'programmatic ministry model' where ministries are organized around separate 'silos' with little consistent intergenerational interaction. Family Ministry', when it exists is just one more program. Jones aims to help individuals and churches think through family ministry, firstly by presenting the historical contexts and foundations for family ministry and then outlining three of the most prominent models of family oriented models seeking to reverse this trend.[175]

All 3 models/philosophies/methodologies outlined share the same values but approach the process differently. Each claim to base their approach on scripture, all 3 aim to draw the home and the church into a life-transforming partnership.

The three approaches are identified as - *family integrated*, *family-based* and *family-equipping:*

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[170] Timothy P. Jones: Perspectives on Family Ministry: *3 Views:* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2009).

[171] On page 16, Jones references a Nationwide Barna Study conducted in 2003 indicating parents had largely given over the responsibility for the spiritual nurture and development of their children to the church, a responsibility that was impossible for the church to achieve alone -*"Unfortunately no matter how hard the church tries, it's incapable of bringing a child to complete spiritual maturity: that is the job of the family. The more willing churches are to play the co-dependent role in this drama, the less likely we are to see spiritually healthy families and a generation of young people who grow into mature believers"* (Parents Accept Responsibility for their Child's Spiritual Development but Struggle with Effectiveness) http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/5-barna-update/120-parents-accept-responsibility-for-their-childs-spiritual-development-but-struggle-with-effectiveness

[172] Perspectives: p.46.

[173] Perspectives: p.41.

[174] Perspectives: p.40.

[175] All three philosophies would agree that - "*the primary training ground for discipleship and spiritual formation is the nuclear family rather than the local church."* All three also agree on three basic assumptions: (1) God has called parents (and especially fathers) to take personal responsibility for the Christian formation of their children; (2) Scripture is the supreme and sufficient standard for how to do ministry; and (3) the generations need one another. However, each system maintains distinct perspectives on philosophical and methodological matters. Perspectives: p.46-47.

(a) The Family integrated model:

The family-integrated (or family-driven, family discipleship) model is the most radical and is distinguished by its insistence of 'integration' as an ecclesiological principle…it eliminates all age-segregated, peer-oriented ministry. Nearly all programs and events are '*multigenerational*' with the delivery method of discipleship primarily in and through the home, with parents the primary disciple-makers, and families seeking to evangelize other families through hospitality evangelism in the home. [176]

This model considers the purpose of the church is to equip parents (and primarily fathers) to evangelize and disciple their children and to equip families to evangelize other families: *"Our church has no youth ministers, children's ministers, or nursery. We do not divide families into component parts. We do not separate the mature women from the young teenage girls who need their guidance. We do not separate the toddler from his parents during worship. In fact, we don't even do it in Bible study. We see the church as a family of families".* [177]

(b) The family-based 'philosophy':

Here, the children's programmatic structure remains unchanged, but the key is a philosophical or 'focus' shift, where programs are refocused and events, as well as '*intergenerational curriculum,*' are utilized within the already existing structures. They are not activity based, nor uni-generational, but retain age-segregation for missional reasons. [178]

The expectation is that every ministry will intentionally include intergenerational, multigenerational and family-focused events, contact and mentoring, drawing families and generations together and actively encourage parents' engagement in the discipleship process. [179]

Their aim is to equip Christian parents to become primary disciplers and to *partner intentionally* and *dynamically* with families in the discipleship process. [180] *"We are not suggesting a radical change in programming. What we are suggesting is a fresh mindset—parents and family are crucial to faith development in every area of a ministry's program".* [181]

(c) The family equipping model:

This model is a hybrid, representing middle ground between the two. It operates on the belief that the path of spiritual formation is built on the foundation of strong families (with parents the primary disciple-makers) and strong faith communities working together i.e. *discipleship through partnership*. [182] Each aspect of congregational life is reconstructed to consciously 'co-champion' the church's ministry and the parent's responsibility. [183]

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[176] Perspectives: p.42f.

[177] Perspectives: p.55.

[178] Family-based philosophy believes that age-organized programs function, not only to address cultural ills in relevant and practical ways, but more importantly, as a vital missiological tool to reach the hearts of those that might otherwise not hear the gospel. Family based churches recognize the evangelistic opportunity of the church extends beyond the doors of Christian homes p.107 & 114-116.

[179] The belief here is that something is seriously wrong if all mentors of children and youth are only within the twenty-something age bracket. The belief is that the Bible couches discipleship in multigenerational terms (Titus 2:1-8), suggesting that a network of grandparents, empty nesters, young couples, college students, single parents and widowers provide the best context for discipleship outside an intact family unit p.109.

[180] Perspectives: p.43 & 106.

[181] Family-based ministries do not see themselves so much as a ministry 'model' but a philosophy of ministry. The two core values undergirding this philosophy being flexibility to operate across different church cultures, and focus balance on both church and unchurched family units p.98.

[182] Perspectives: p.144.

[183] Strother uses the term 'emerging generations' to describe the emphasis given to the restructure process. Indicating that children and youth are not only vital for the future church but also the present, and as such they should be called to responsibility and maturity as full participants in the community of faith. Perspectives, p. 144.

Age-segregated ministries remain but their aim is to find ways to use those ministries to train, involve, and equip parents. A high premium is placed on *intergenerational* interaction: *"Family-equipping churches retain some age-organized ministries but restructure the congregation to partner with parents at every level of ministry so that parents are acknowledged, equipped, and held accountable for the discipleship of their children".* [184]

Rather an additional ministry – this particular model is a philosophy of ministry that shapes the way *every ministry* within the church relates to families.

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[184] The aim is twofold: 1. Engage and equip parents as the primary disciplers 2. Partner with parents to develop a definite plan for their children's Christian formation. p.145.

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