

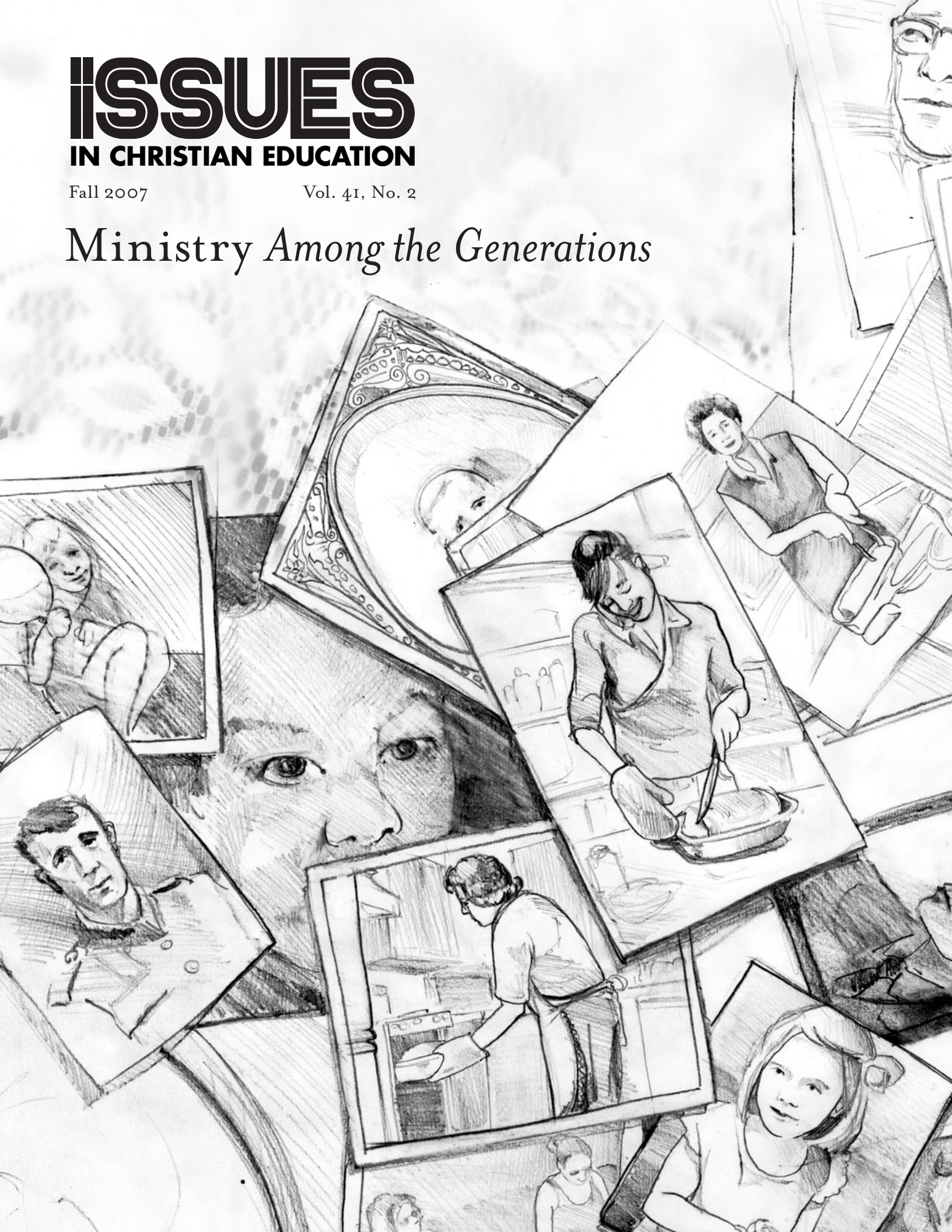
ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall 2007

Vol. 41, No. 2

Ministry Among the Generations



Fall 2007
Vol. 41, No. 2

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A PUBLICATION OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, SEWARD, NEBRASKA

Ministry Among the Generations

3 Reflections

Brian L. Friedrich, President

4 Editorials

8 Ministry Among the Generations: Challenges and Opportunities

Terry Dittmer

16 What Unites the Generations: Biblical Perspectives

Michael Middendorf

24 Being an Intergenerational Congregation

Christine Ross

34 Book Reviews

Editor

Marvin Bergman, Ed. D., Ph. D.

Editorial Committee

Editorials

Russ Moulds, Ph.D.

Book Reviews

Rebecca Fisher, Ph.D.

Associate

Daniel Thurber, A.D.

Associate

Brian L. Friedrich, M.Div., Ph.D.

Graphic Design

Paul Berkbigler, M.F.A.

Copy Editor

Marlene Block, B.A.

Printing and Circulation Coordinator

Holly Matzke

CIRCULATION POLICY — *ISSUES* . . . in *Christian Education* (ISSN0278-0216) is published three times a year by the faculty of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska 68434. *ISSUES* is sent free to each church, school, district and synodical office in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Copies are also sent to high schools, colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod.

Individuals wishing personal copies may obtain them as follows: Single copy @\$5.00 each; Subscription @\$12.50; 10 or more copies mailed to the same address @\$2.50 per copy. Call 800 535-5494 ext. 7279 or email hmatzke@cune.edu

Readers are invited to reprint portions of *ISSUES* materials provided that the following credit line appears: "Reprinted from *ISSUES in Christian Education*, Volume 41, No. 2, Fall 2007, a publication of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska." This edition is on Concordia University's Web site at www.cune.edu/issues.





reflections

Among is a powerful preposition. Its derivation is the word "crowd" and is close to another word meaning "to mix." The first definition entered in *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (11th ed.) is "in or through the midst of: surrounded by." The definition certainly applies to this edition of *Issues*.

We live among more generations than at any time in our nation's history, and the church "*is probably the only place where the potential for four, five, even six generations to be together under the same roof exists.*" (Ross) With that said, there appears no end to the challenges and opportunities facing those who live and serve among the generations. One statistic is illustrative of 21st century generational ministry challenges and opportunities. Consider the number of cases of Alzheimer's disease which will quadruple worldwide by 2050 (*Lincoln Journal Star*, June 10, 2007).

But what is *the* challenge and opportunity? Various generations raise varied challenges: health care costs, globalization, environment, technology, urbanization and poverty only extend the list Terry Dittmer enumerates. To identify *the* challenge and opportunity may be so obvious that we tend to look beyond it. From my vantage, *the* challenge is alienation from God, first experienced by the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Their disobedience began the aging process and destroyed forever the harmony, oneness, community and perfect condition into which we were created to live and serve (note Michael Middendorf's article on the body of Christ). By abandoning a perfect relationship with God who walked among Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, the world's first generation sought a better knowledge, a better relationship and a better view of God within themselves. From then on the need to understand sinful people by stereotype and generality and to adorn one generation by degrading another rather than to live and serve "in or through the midst of" the generations became the norm.

Thus, *the* opportunity in this edition of *Issues* and far beyond is to identify the malady and to consider how we, the church of Jesus Christ, through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, might serve and live among those of every generation in order to proclaim *the* answer to *the* challenge each generation from first to last faces. St. John said it this way: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." May your ministry be graced by the One who has come and is among us always.

Brian L. Friedrich, President



CONCORD DESIGN STUDIO
A Student + Faculty Design Collaborative

Illustrations by Seth Boggs. Layout and design by Paul Berkbigler, director of the CONCORDesign Studio of Concordia University, Seward, Nebraska.

TYPEFACES USED IN THIS PERIODICAL
Titles set in 22 point Mrs. Eaves Roman (Emigre of Sacramento). Tracking normal.
Subheads set in 13/13 point Mrs. Eaves bold.
By-lines and author information set in 13/13 point Mrs. Eaves small caps.
Footers and folios set in 11 point Mrs. Eaves.
Feature articles set in 11/13 point Mrs. Eaves.
Three column text set in 9/10 point Mrs. Eaves.

"Carving Out" Ministries

The story is told of the family who gathered for Sunday dinner. As the eight-year-old daughter watched the preparation of the various dishes, she noticed that her mom did something unusual with the roast. Mom proceeded to hack off each end of the roast before placing it in the pan. Curiously, the daughter asked why she had done that. Her mother responded that this was the way that Nana had always prepared it, and so she thought that it was best to do likewise.

Not satisfied, the little girl had to investigate further and walked into the other room where her Nana was seated. She asked the reason why she had prepared the roast in such a fashion. Similarly, she had cut off the ends of the roast because that was the way she had seen her mother prepare it. More intrigued, the girl went onto the porch where her great-grandmother was relaxing on the swing. When asked the same question, her great-grandmother responded, "I don't have any idea about the other two, but I had to cut the ends in order for the roast to fit into my pan."

With similar reasoning, we start and form ministries in the manner by which "we have always done it that way." We carve out our ministries to the various children and youth groups in our churches, placing them within the precise boundary of their appropriate age group. There is a special nursery and classroom for toddlers and preschoolers. We develop a children's church for the elementary age. Let us not forget each of the specialized ministries for the middle and high school students, just like the Walther League days. Then, in our growth, we might even consider ministries to reach out and impact young adults, parents, empty-nesters, retirees and older adults. We separate each age group for their opportunities of worship, education and service in the church. We claim to be creating "community," but have we lost the flavors found in a greater community? In doing so, we "hack off" each group into its separate entity and place it into its separate location.

It seems more like cooking the roast without the potatoes, carrots and onions—missing out on the aromas and flavors that are enhanced by the combination of the various foods. We might consider the addition of a "Sunday Dinner" style of ministry to enhance the fullness by which we taste and see that the Lord is good and grow as the body of Christ. With a "Sunday Dinner" ministry, a church will create the opportunity for multiple generations to join together to learn, to serve, and to grow alongside one another. There will be some time in the kitchen—serving side-by-side and providing examples that model and teach. There will be time spent on the porch—relaxing together and sharing conversations of laughter and tears of life. There will be time spent in the yard—playing on teams, using and blooming the talents and gifts of the various members.

With the separation and scattering of generations in today's society, we need to recreate this sharing by generations in our church families. Begin to make it happen as you take something that is already being done and add some new spices to it.

- Potluck meals that are not attached to voters meetings.
- Work days with jobs for even the youngest hands which are paired with an older, non-family member.
- A confirmand and parents that invite another church member to be his/her spiritual guide during their faith journeys.
- Older members mentoring the younger ones in handyman or reading skills. Younger members mentoring the older ones in computer and electronic knowledge.
- Adopt-a-grandparent programs for families that are separated by distance from their biological families.

In these various places, the divergent converge for a moment in time as they linger over their plates, share their various stories, and groom new ideas in sharing the Gospel and their lives.

The Rev. David Wesche

Pastor, Timothy Lutheran Church
Woodstock, Georgia
davewoohoo@sbcglobal.net





Ministry Among Generations

Ministry among generations is not a new topic, but rather something that continues to reoccur. History shapes generations' attitudes, assumptions and outlooks. These affect each generation's self-understanding and religious assumptions. (Eeman, 2002) How to minister to succeeding generations has always been an issue as each generation reacts to the previous one and responds differently to religion and the institutional church. My purpose is to outline some of the challenges and opportunities that arise as we consider ministry among generations.

Our concerns are often with the institutional church and the external behaviors associated with traditional religious practices. Yet, Jesus came to challenge the institutions of his time and especially the religious establishment. So, is it any surprise that these are issues we still confront today? Generation X wants new forms of religious expression that are authentic and life changing, while Generation Y detests routine and desires practical, meaningful ways to express their faith. (Howe & Strauss, 2000) This desire is not new, but falls outside traditional religious practices. (Perrin, 2002; Finke & Stark, 1992)

Studies by Wink, Dillon and Fay found that religiousness and spirituality are positively associated with caring and concern for the welfare of others. (2005) Individuals who combine both elements of religiousness and spirituality have the strongest and most balanced expression of concern for future generations. So, the rise of the therapeutic is not incompatible with spiritual engagement. (Wink et al., 2005) Commitment can be an outcome of either spiritual seeking or participation in institutionalized religion. Much spiritual expression occurs in a social context, often within organized religion. Spirituality represents the functional, intrinsic dimensions of religion so it fits with the relational focus of Generations X and Y. (Marler & Hadaway, 2002)

Whatever age, religious leaders need to be aware of changing needs and find creative ways to keep worship meaningful. (Carlson & Seicol, 1990) Carlson and Seicol are speaking about older adults, a group needing attention and study. Spiritual well-being for many older adults is related to their participation in worship experiences. Physical, cognitive, psychological and social changes can create a need for adaptive worship. With increased age comes a need to find meaning beyond the immediate experiences of physical aging

and its associated losses. (Dalby, 2006) The desire for meaning is evident for younger generations, too, and we must adapt to make religious experiences meaningful for all. Wesley Black cautions that we need to attend to the gap between high school and young adulthood because no one seems to be addressing it. (Black, 2006)

Yet, there are many gaps we need to be conscious of and address. One study found that among churchgoing tweenagers their attitude toward church becomes less positive between the ages of 8 and 14. (Francis & Craig, 2006) Tweenagers like to feel part of the group, and they do not want to be separated out and catered to by services specifically designed for their age group. They are best served by services designed for all ages, with some special provisions for age-related activities for their ages. This could be applied to all age groups. Rather than offering separate services for different ages, all ages should be taken into account.

Only a small minority of churches have responded to the changes and challenges of our contemporary American families in terms of the ministries offered in their congregations. A study of traditional and non-traditional family programming in conservative Protestant, Catholic and mainline Protestant congregations found that conservative Protestant churches offer more non-traditional ministries than Catholics or mainline Protestant churches. (Wilcox et al., 2004) Our white and black churches are still ministering primarily to married couples with children, which is a demographic group in decline. (Chatters, Taylor & Lincoln, 1999) Men and women who divorce are more likely to drop out of organized religion altogether or to switch to a conservative Protestant church. (Sherkat, 1991) The apparent inability of American congregations to minister to adults in unconventional family situations helps explain why as the number of traditional families has declined so has the membership in most mainline denominations. (Chaves, 1991)

In conclusion, the need for intergenerational ministry is reflective of the need for our religious institutions to adapt to the needs of our changing families—young and old, traditional and non-traditional forms. The institutions that do are thriving. Much of this adaptation comes in the form of communication, education and training, to help all ages connect to and live out their faith in meaningful ways.

(Continued on next page)

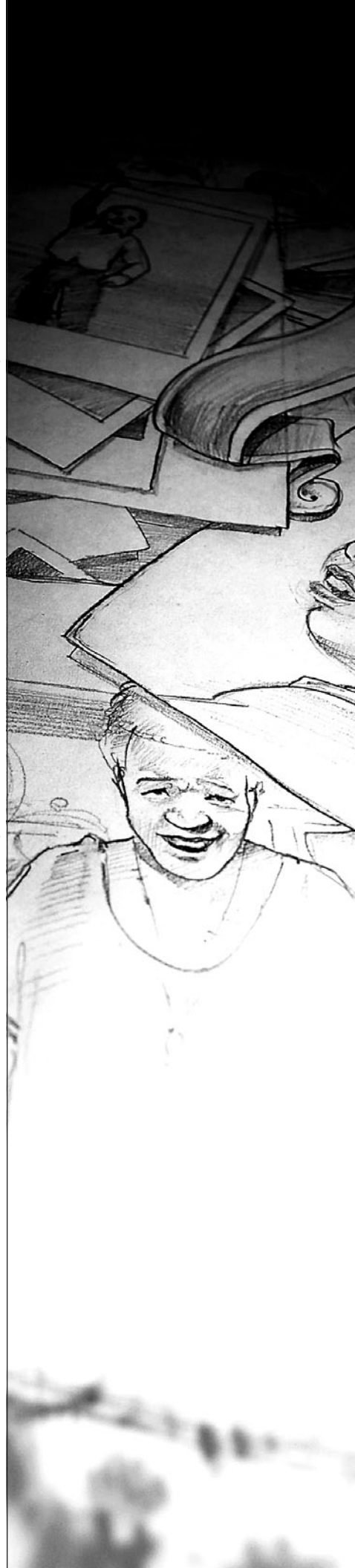
(Howe & Strauss, 2000; Black, 2006) Wade Clark Roof comments that the "quest culture" can be found both inside and outside the churches, and that it influences organized religion greatly. According to Finke and Stark, it is this dynamic aspect of faith that gives religion in America its vitality. (Finke & Stark, 1992) Thus, our challenge is also our opportunity for ministry.

References

- Black, Wesley. "Youth Ministry that Lasts: The Faith Journey of Young Adults," *The Journal of Youth Ministry*, 4:2, pp. 19-48, 2006.
- Carlson, Dosia; Seicol, Sam. "Adapting Worship to Changing Needs," *Generations*, Vol. 14:4, pp. 65-66, FALL 1990.
- Chatters, Linda M.; Taylor, Robert Joseph; Lincoln, Karen D. "African American Religious Participation: A Multi-Sample Comparison," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38:1, pp. 132-145, 1999.
- Chaves, M. "Family Structure and Protestant Church Attendance: The Sociological Basis of Cohort and Age Effects," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 30:4, pp. 329-340, 1991.
- Dalby, P. "Is there a process of spiritual change or development associated with ageing? A critical review of research," *Aging & Mental Health*, 10:1, pp. 4-12, 2006.
- Dillon, Michele; Wink, Paul; Fay, Kristen. "Is Spirituality Detrimental to Generativity?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 42:3, pp. 427-442.
- Eeman, Carl G. *Generations of Faith*. Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002.
- Finke, Roger; Stark, Rodney. *The Churched of America 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992.
- Francis, Leslie J.; Craig, Charlotte L. "Tweenagers in the church: an empirical perspective on attitude development," *Journal of Beliefs & Values*, 27:1, pp. 95-109, 2006.
- Howe, Neil; Strauss, William. *Millennials Rising*. Vintage Books, 2000.
- Marler, Penny Long; Hadaway, C. Kirk. "'Being Religious' or 'Being Spiritual' in America: A Zero-Sum Proposition?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:2, 289-300, 2002.
- O'Connor, Thomas P.; Hoge, Dean R.; Alexander, Estrela. "The Relative Influence of Youth and Adult Experiences on Personal Spirituality and Church Involvement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:4, pp. 723-732, 2002.
- Perrin, Robin D. "GenX Religion," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 41:1, pp. 186-187, 2002.
- Sherkat, D.E. "Religious socialization and the family: An examination of religious influence in the family over the life course." Dissertation, Sociology Department, Duke University. Durham, North Carolina, 1991.
- Singleton, Andrew; Mason, Michael; Webber, Ruth. "Spirituality in Adolescence and Young Adulthood: A Method for a Qualitative Study," *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 9:3, 2004.
- Wilcox, W. Bradford; Chaves, Mark; Franz, David. "Focused on the Family? Religious Traditions, Family Discourse and Pastoral Practice," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 43:4, pp. 491-504, 2004.
- Wink, Paul; Dillon, Michele; Fay, Kristen. "Spiritual Seeking, Narcissism, and Psychotherapy: How Are They Related?" *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 44:2, pp. 143-158, 2005.

Dr. Kathy Miller

Associate Professor of Sociology
Concordia University, Nebraska
Kathy.Miller@cune.edu



Three Challenges of Intergenerational Ministry

Take a peek into a staff meeting at Our Father, Centennial, Colorado, and you'll note a spectrum of ages. There is the Wise Patriarch of white hair and beard (that would be me), two other part-time geezers (oops, I mean "patriarchs"), three younger women in their 40s and 50s, and two under-30 male church professionals—a pastor and youth minister-DCE. It is a wonderfully effective, mission and vision-driven staff that accomplishes much, and what's very important, we really do like, even love, and respect one another.

The make-up of our staff also presents some interesting insights into collegial ministry across the generations. As I reflect on three challenges across the generations, see whether some chords are not struck for you in your staff and ministry.

The Wired Ones

The most obvious generational gap for me has to do with technological sophistication. As a devoted DayTimer[®] user for well over 20 years, I wince when our younger colleagues' Palm Pilots[®] appear on the table to register future meetings. Yes, it takes me less time to note that the Ministry Council meets in two months, but my younger colleagues register those meetings in two-month intervals into the year 2015. In addition, they have the names, e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, and perhaps even birthdays of all the members of the Ministry Council. Oh, the wonders of the digital age! I have learned much from the younger guys about the possibilities inherent in the rapidly exploding high-tech world. They push and challenge me, and if I catch them on a good day, they may take the time to teach me a thing or two. I am grateful.

But there is a seductiveness to such technology, and perhaps a less technologically sophisticated generation as mine might raise a caveat or two. Laptops at meetings are not always helpful. While the PC or Mac can record information and provide wireless resources, it also can act as an impediment to relationship. I can't see you behind your laptop barricade. I want to know you and what you are thinking.

Yes, e-mails and text messages are a cheap, efficient way of communicating, but the sound of a voice on a phone, or better, the human presence across a table can work incarnational wonders that digital bytes will never accomplish.

Power-point sermons and film clips in the classroom or sanctuary can be great communication aids, but the witness from the heart of a preacher or teacher who lets the word come through their very human presence is even more essential to the communication of the Gospel.

In short, the lure of the digital age needs balance. The generational dialog is essential and ultimately enriches the whole community of Christ.

Boundaries

Here's a tricky one. We older church worker types somehow absorbed the notion over the years that being "professional church worker" meant allocating not merely 40, but 50 or 60 hours a week working at church. Family, of course, would have to adjust—it was the work of the Lord, after all, and if Mom or Dad didn't make the soccer game because of Education Board, well, we'll just have to acknowledge how terribly indispensable we are, and make the best of it.

What I sense in my younger colleagues, however, is a healthy reluctance to consistently sacrifice family time to the never-ending work of the church. They are much better than I at setting limits to their time at work. Perhaps they've seen the toll that the never-ending work week has taken on their elders. They work very hard on duty, but know when to say "no." This challenge of intergenerational ministry is that of negotiating, as much as possible, how to distribute an infinite work load across a finite staff. Forty-hour work weeks have seldom been possible for church workers, but if we can agree on expectations and hold one another accountable, we may even be at the son's soccer game. Or my grandson's.

One Big Family

Family Systems theory tells us that we tend to replicate family of origin conflicts in our network of relationships over the course of a lifetime, and I've had to be aware of projection issues in working with younger staff. After one dicey conflict episode many months ago, my associate and I took time to understand that I had stepped out of a collegial into a parental role, and he not surprisingly reacted as he would have to his parent. Oops. We could later laugh about it and agree to watch for future infractions. Though I'm old enough to be his father, I am not, and a healthy professional relationship is aware of that dynamic.

Energy

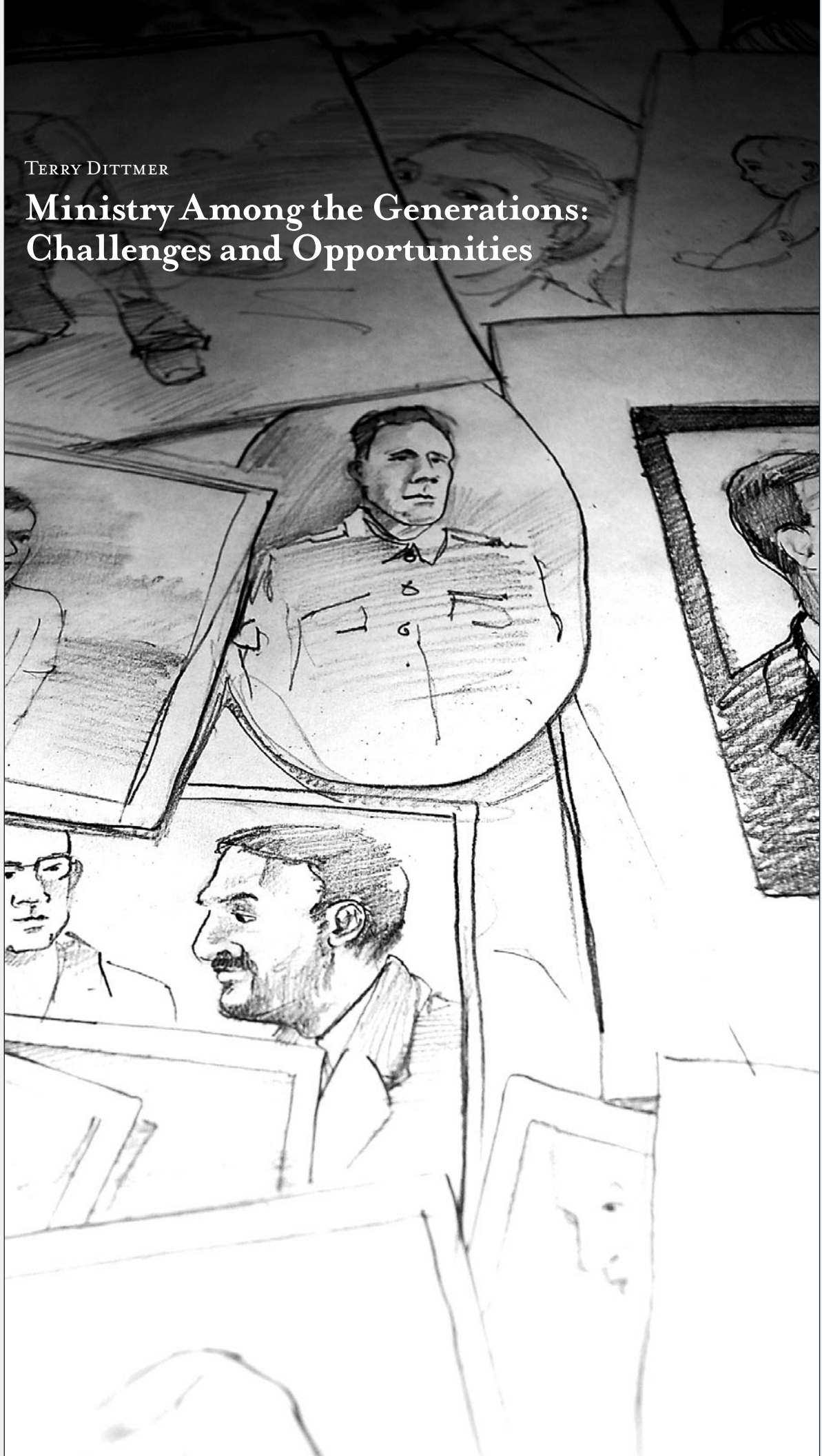
At its best, transgenerational ministry is symbiotic. We older types have experience and hopefully, wisdom. You young professionals have energy, new paradigms and tools for ministry. We need one another and through it all, recognize that together we have the Gospel and that baptismal bond transcends the years.

The Rev. Don Hinchey

Pastor, Our Father Lutheran Church
Centennial, Colorado
Dfhinchey@aol.com

TERRY DITTMER

Ministry Among the Generations: Challenges and Opportunities





"Now, to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." Ephesians 3:20-21

(Caution: This article includes lots of stereotypes and generalizations. It's the nature of generational theory. While they may largely hold true for the population as a whole, individual communities could be illustrations of great exceptions. The generalizations are provided as a measure and should not be considered as law or always true.)

I remember in youth confirmation class when the pastor said that a generation was roughly 20 years long. The assumption was that every 20 years the generational stereotypes would change, and that the things the generation held in common would be significantly different. The differences in generations would be fairly obvious. At any given time, back then, there could be three to four generations alive in the nation/church/community. These days, right now, because of great gains in life expectancy, there are at least six and possibly seven distinct generations alive, and who they are has an impact on any institution or organization with which they are connected.

Broadly, these generations are identified as "The Lost Generation" (1883-1900—obviously not many of these folks are still living, but there are some); "The G.I. Generation" (1901-1924); "The Silent Generation" (1925-1942); "The Boomer Generation" (1943-1962); "The 13th Generation" (also known as Generation X, 1963-1982); "The Millennial Generation" (also known as "Generation Y" and which George Barna calls "Mosaics," 1982-2002'ish); and a generation yet to be named born since 2002'ish. These seven generations fall into four generational types, each with needs and energies that don't always work together. This is a challenge for any institution seeking to work and, in the church's case, to minister to diverse populations.

Neil Howe and William Strauss have done landmark work in what they call generational history. It is their belief that there are four generational types. Each generational type appears in the population routinely and cyclically. One generation follows the other in the same order. Each generation has a task to accomplish at each of its life stages which Howe and Strauss call "turnings." There are four turnings to a cycle. They have tracked their theories through the history of the United States and make a very strong argument for the validity of their research and conclusions.

THE REV. TERRY DITTMER IS
YOUTH MINISTRY DIRECTOR, THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH—MISSOURI SYNOD.
TERRY.DITTMER@LCMS.ORG

The four generational types are identified as "Hero," "Adaptive/Artist," "Idealist/Prophet," and "Reactive."

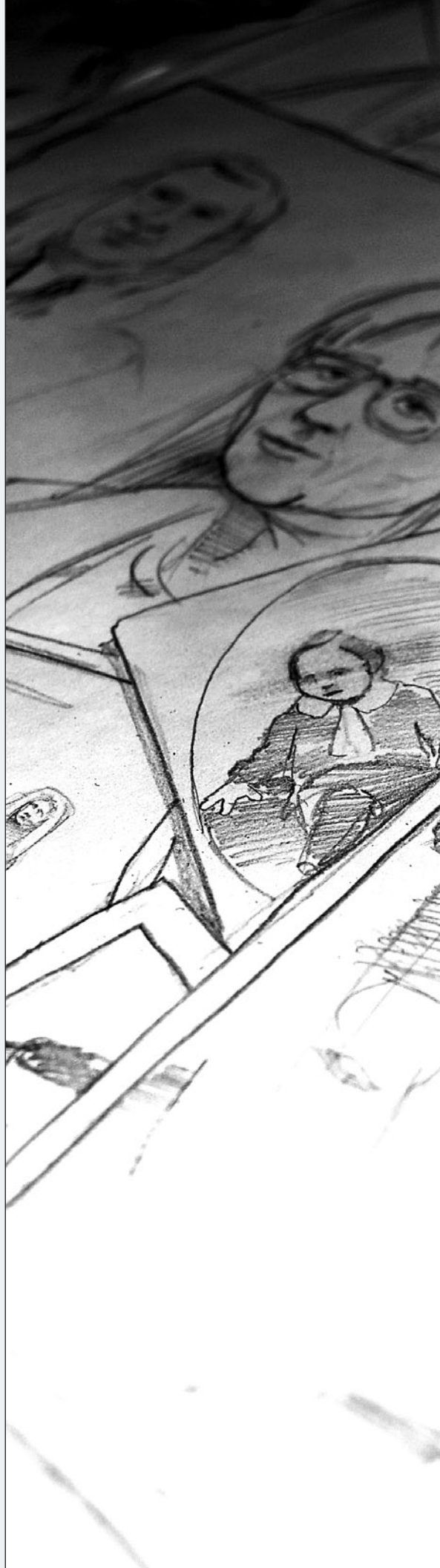
The "Hero" is also identified by the word "Civic." They are defined by words like conventional and powerful, with a profound trust in authority. These people are loyal to institutions, nations, causes and the like. They are the ones on the front lines of any battles. Howe and Strauss show how this generation's population was on the front lines during the Revolutionary War, World War II and now in Iraq. They are basically the nation's back-bone during any crisis. After World War II, the "G.I. Generation," which Tom Brokaw termed "The Greatest Generation," built the country into the superpower we became. They moved to the suburbs, built the nation's industry and commerce, and enjoyed the nation's prosperity. The G. I. Generation reflected its institutional loyalties even in the churches they built, often through great monuments of brick and stone and steel, and supporting denominational programs, including great overseas missions. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, John Kennedy and Ronald Reagan were all "heroes." These generations are marked by economic prosperity and public optimism. Another term you often find to define "heroes" is "social discipline" which they often tried to impose on their children.

After the "Hero," comes an "Adaptive" or "Artist" generation. In our current population, the generational name is "The Silent Generation." It can be said that this generational type is mostly about flexibility and consensus building. Words used to define this generation include subtle, cautious, unadventurous, indecisive, compromising, sensitive and empathetic. This generation is not about to rock the boat or take up a major social cause or initiative. In some respects, it can be said that they often serve the role of "the conscience of the nation" in the sense of amelioration. They are loyal to institutions, but again in the sense that they are not about to rock the boat. They like things "normal." It is said that they are model social technicians, advocates of fair play and

political inclusion. There have been many "silent" political advisors but there has not been a "Silent" American President.

On the heels of the Artists comes a "Prophet" generation. What we have come to know as "Baby Boomers" are the quintessential Prophets. Prophets are known for their coming-of-age passion. They are values-driven, moralistic, and willing to fight for what they believe in. Just witness the causes Boomers took up in the 1960s. Boomers were on the front lines with a spiritual direction and passion for all the social causes of the age from sexism to racism, social justice and anti-war (not a cause they believed in). The energy Boomers brought to those causes grew into a serious passion for economic prosperity in the 1980s and 1990s. Now in the 2000s, Boomers are all about retirement and the opportunities to self-indulge in the last third of their lives. Boomers can be very "me" focused. They can be very self-centered and selfish, and they are often prone to ignore the realities and needs of other generations. If they find a cause, they can bring the same passion to it as they committed in their youth. The "cause" of global warming and environmental responsibility could be the next great cause of the Boomers ... could be because at the same time, Boomers might have to give up some of the comforts of their accumulated prosperity. If they have to give up too much, they may rather decide to just let the ice caps melt.

After a Prophet generation comes a "Nomad" generation. Boomers often find it difficult to get along with "nomads." Nomads are pretty much a no-nonsense generation. They can be "picaresque," not a word heard often these days, but one that means and identifies this group as edgy and roguish, rascals who want to take charge. They are sometimes described as ratty, tough, unwanted, diverse, adventurous and cynical. They can be irritating but, to their credit, they are a "just do it" generation. They have little patience for process. If there is a job to be done, do it. Don't sit around talking about it. Boomers coined the term "Generation X" as a less-than-kind moniker



for this group. Howe and Strauss called them "The 13th Generation," meaning they were the 13th generation in the U. S. since the Revolutionary War.

In the life of the church, there remain five primary generations. The "G. I. Generation," the hugely loyal group, has begun to die in large numbers. The church often finds itself pursuing their wealth. It is said that several trillion dollars will be passed from their hands into the hands mostly of Baby Boomer heirs. Institutions are looking at how they can secure some of those funds for their endowments. Baby Boomers are not expected to be the generous givers that their parents were. "The Silent Generation" continues loyal and true, generous in spirit and gifts. "Boomers" are self-indulgent, yet they speak with a prophetic passion as if they knew what they were talking about. Gen X has largely disassociated itself from the institutional church. It can be very spiritual but often in terms of independent churches or alternative spiritual expressions. The latest generation to begin making its mark in the church and society is the "Millennials," which generationally is another civic or hero generation. And in the last three or four years, the newest "artist" generation has begun to be born.

Put all these people in a church and you can have quite a challenging ministry. Involve them all and you will demonstrate St. Paul's words in Ephesians quoted earlier. Miss a generation along the way and you will likely lose that generation. Let's take a look.

Worship

It can be argued that the church has been embroiled in the so-called worship wars going all the way back to the 1960s. Frankly, the worship wars are a Boomer issue. A lot of Boomers have been fighting for "contemporary" worship since they were in high school back in the mid-1960s. The church needed to get real. Worship needed guitars and drums to be real and relevant to the young. Get rid of the hymnal and lock up the organ. Those on the front line of the contemporary movement continue to mostly

be Baby Boomers. Look at the praise bands in many churches. They are made up of graying 40 and 50-year-olds still playing guitars and drums with added amplification.

When one looks at the reaction of other generations, you are likely to see “Heroes” tolerant of the contemporary. This is probably due to the fact that in the early days of the “contemporary” movement, many “spiritual” songs, favorites of the “heroes,” were included in the repertoires, such as “In the Garden,” “How Great Thou Art” and “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord.”

Gen X, if it’s at church at all, would prefer worship that is both edgier and more mystical. This group can really get into darkness, incense, candles, icons—things that emphasize the mysteries of the faith. Gen Xers are also among the most tolerant of other spiritual expressions and less inclined to hard and fast worship rules. They are as likely to like Gregorian chant as Chris Tomlin or David Crowder. Their generational cynicism doesn’t work well with anyone that says, “Thou must ...”

On the other hand, the Millennials seem to be moving back towards a more traditional sense of worship. Worship should look and sound like church, and for many that means hymnbooks and organs—like their great-grandparents’ church.

When it comes to worship, churches need to be sensitive that there isn’t one way to worship these days. Boomers, especially, assume that the best way to reach everybody is by using worship styles that they like. They assume that by amplifying praise music, you will attract young adults, teenagers and children. And that generalization simply cannot be made.

Church Membership and Institutional Loyalty

Now there are two generations active in congregations that are oriented towards institutions: the Great Generation and the Millennials, people in their 70s and 80s and people in their teens. The heroes always were joiners. They joined churches, civic groups, men’s clubs, LLL, LWML and card

clubs at church. So did the Silents but with less enthusiasm.

Boomers are not joiners. To join something means that you subscribe to its agenda. Boomers largely want to march to their own drummers. So, historically speaking, in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, youth ministry moved from the heyday of the Walther League, something people had been joining since 1893, to abandoning any notion of a youth organization. Even when the Synod adopted a new youth organization in 1977 called Lutheran Youth Fellowship, Boomer leadership never had much energy to join or invite others to join. Boomers still don’t join many things unless there is a specific benefit for them.

Into this mix, add Gen Xers. Among them, there seems to be a natural suspicion of institutions and organizations, particularly if somebody is trying to recruit them. Again, it’s their cynicism that makes them hesitate. But, should they find something that they truly value, they’ll jump in totally. If they do make their way through the front door of an average Lutheran church—and that can be a huge “if”—they need to feel welcomed. You can’t automatically assume that they want to be there, or that they will come back. The welcome needs to be genuine. If that’s the case, and they see that the church is doing something of value, they may make a connection.

Doctrine

Doctrine is a major concern for Lutherans to be sure. We’ve always treasured our confessions as a true exposition of God’s Word. We believe God’s Word is true and inerrant. It doesn’t make mistakes, and it’s real and relevant for every generation. The G. I. Generation has no problem with this at all. They love their church, and they love what their church believes. Millennials promise to be very much the same. Theirs is a world without much truth, so when their church proclaims the truth, they are likely to sign on because their church stands for something. Boomers are likely to test the truth but also to be defenders. At this point in their

lives, Boomers don't want a lot of spiritual arguments (unless it's about worship). (And, by the way, because of their inclination to institutional loyalty, confirmation classes with Millennials and the new artists should be a breeze for the next 20 years, which is good news for pastors who never liked Boomer or Xer confirmation classes.)

But, then there are the Xers. These folks live in a world without absolute truth, and they don't really mind it. If they are Christian, they are likely to say they value what Christianity teaches. They are likely, in large numbers, to say they believe in God. But they may be very reluctant to subscribe to any definition of who God is or what He actually expects. In a world without absolute truth, every person is entitled to one's own spiritual expression. So, I might be a Christian, but in my Xer world my friends are entitled to be Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim or to create their own spiritual system. In the 21st century, everyone can be spiritual without being religious. Religion implies a system of beliefs and creeds. That's not necessary in the young adult world.

It should also be noted that the Millennial world is also one without absolute truth. And Millennial young adults may be very loyal to their own church, but they won't turn that loyalty into an absolute for their friends who might be dabbling in all kinds of spiritual things.

It is not a surprise that there is a so-called "emerging church" movement among Christians that is attracting large numbers of young adults in their 20s and 30s. These churches, like Mars Hill in Granville, Michigan; Vintage Faith Church in Santa Cruz, California; Solomon's Porch in Minneapolis, Minnesota; and Gateway Community Church in Austin, Texas; attract thousands of young adults, many on a spiritual journey. Rob Bell and his wife and a small group of friends started the Mars Hill Church in Granville. They didn't know what to expect, but 1,000 people showed up on the first Sunday. There are now nearly 10,000 people, mostly young adults, in church on a typical weekend.

One of the key elements in this movement is that doubt is welcome. You don't have to buy the creed to be a part of the church. You can have questions, concerns and doubts galore. But the church will still love you. Bell tells the story of a service they held in which people were invited to share their doubts. They wrote them down and put them in a box, and he pulled out a question and responded. He told them what he believed, but I'm not sure he would ever suggest that they had to believe what he said. This kind of system can be very uncomfortable for Lutherans where sound doctrine is a primary touchstone for the community. Some might even be so brash as to suggest that real Lutherans don't have doubts. Still, these "emerging" churches are attracting thousands of young adults, and for a church body that sees fewer and fewer young adults in its ranks, the good Lutheran must ask, "What does this mean?"

Service

Gen Xers like to serve. They like to be involved. They love to make a difference, and it doesn't make a difference whether that difference is around the world or around the block. Nike coined the password for this generation: "Just Do It." If Grandma Schmidt's house needs painting, then paint it. "Just do it."

Boomers like to think they are serving but really what they like is the process. If Grandma's house needs painting, let's talk about it. First, does painting Grandma's house fit within our purpose/mission statement and does it help meet our goals and objectives? Then, brushes, rollers, sponges or sprayers? Ladders? Colors? Time to meet? What's for lunch? We can use up a lot of time "planning" and never get the house painted.

G. I. Generation members have always been workers, especially when connected to church, and when as young people, which Millennials are now, they thought that they could make a difference.

One caution about the whole concept of service, though, is what is communicated when a service opportunity is presented. It is not unusual to hear people say that the



reason we serve is because it feels so good, which seems to be true across generational lines. We might paint Grandma's house, and she's very grateful, but the real reason we did it was because it makes us feel so good about ourselves.

Another caution, particularly when working with youth, is to take care not to make service a requirement. A service component has been added to many school and college curricula. In order to graduate, a student must fulfill a service requirement. This is no way to teach altruism. It turns service into slavery.

Passion

The question is "Does the church really believe what it says it believes and would it do anything to share that truth?" Young adults and youth look at their churches and often feel there is no energy or enthusiasm for the Gospel or for much of anything else. Why go to church if church doesn't really care and is not passionate? An aging Silent won't have much enthusiasm for somebody that wants the church to break out of its lethargy, although they and their G. I. friends may long for the excitement they knew in their own youth when the church was packed with people. The energy of the young may find no room for it in a church where most are tired, retired or just plain bored (and in some cases happy to be that way).

The emerging church referenced earlier is passionate, first about God and then about people. And their love for people is for all people, believers and non-believers. They love each other and respect each other even if they have differences. Relationships are key. George Barna notes the growing house church movement as evidence of a relational focus. The growth of small groups in traditional congregations also gives evidence of this relational focus. When looking at the generations, relationships were and are also key for the G. I. Generation and for the Millennials. That's why they joined groups and organizations. Relationships are probably less important to the self-absorbed Boomer (and I say that even though I am one) if he or she is honest.

So What?

We've made a lot of generalizations and shared a lot of stereotypes. We admit that there are exceptions to everything said here. But what is the bottom line? What have we learned?

I heard recently of a small town church whose mission statement included words to the effect that everybody felt important because "everybody knew their name." Sound familiar?

First, of course, the church is a community that knows God's name. It knows who God is and what He does and how He has accomplished our salvation. It shares the



love of Christ with everyone that is a part of the community and seeks to extend that community beyond the church walls out into the neighborhood.

It would be so easy if everybody in your church were the same—the same age, same generational type, same interests, same perspectives, same worship style. You'd never have to argue. And it would be so boring, really.

The church is such a God-blessed place because God puts all kinds of people into the mix. Churches should include everybody from the very young to the very old. And how wonderful it is if "everybody knew your name." Nobody ever has all the answers, and so, everybody is there as a resource to everybody else. Need some wise advice? Talk to an older adult. Need the house painted or gutters cleaned? Talk to a teenager or young adult. In the church, no one tries to dominate or run things. Everyone is welcomed. All are connected regardless of their faults or foibles. Leadership is shared. Energy is shared. Love is shared, and the church is filled with all kinds of people who confess, "To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen."

Sources and Resources

Contemporary Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus. Mark Yaconelli. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2006.

Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584–2069. Neil Howe and William Strauss. New York: Quill, William Morrow, 1991.

Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives. Robert Webber. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007.

Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation. Neil Howe and William Strauss. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 2000.

"Millennials Rising: The Next Generation," *Generations and Archetypes.* Neil Howe and William Strauss www.millennialsrising.com/generations.shtml.

Revolution: Finding Vibrant Faith Beyond the Walls of the Sanctuary. George Barna. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House, 2005.

"Strauss and Howe" from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

The Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations. Dan Kimball. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003.

Fourth Turning: An American Prophecy. Neil Howe and William Strauss. New York: Broadway Books, 1997.

The 13th Generation: Abort, Retry, Ignore, Fail? Neil Howe and William Strauss. New York: Vintage Books, a division of Random House, 1993.

Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith. Rob Bell. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005.

MICHAEL MIDDENDORF

What Unites the Generations: Biblical Perspectives



Context in Corinth

Many of you probably use a tour book to plan a vacation or during your travels. In the second century A.D., long before the *American Automobile Association* published such resources, a man named Pausanias wrote a travel journal titled *The Description of Greece*. On his visit to Corinth he described the temple of Asclepius, the Greek god of healing. Pausanias noted that when people received healing at the temple, they often responded by placing a terra cotta figure of the particular body part that had been healed on a wall dedicated to the god. Archaeologists have confirmed this by finding numerous sculpted pieces of various body parts there.¹

St. Paul's favorite way to describe the Christian community is to compare it to the human body. Paul uses that analogy in Romans 12, in 1 Corinthians 12, throughout Ephesians and in Colossians. In Romans and Corinthians, the emphasis is on the functioning of believers within a local community; Ephesians and Colossians speak of the church in a more universal sense and stress, respectively, how the one body is joined together and joined to its head, Jesus Christ.² 1 Corinthians is generally regarded as the earliest of those letters. It is also the one that expounds upon the analogy in detail. As a result, it will be the main focus of this article.

It is impossible for us to discern specifically what prompted Paul to utilize this picture repeatedly. Acts 18 tells us of his 18-month stay in Corinth prior to the time he wrote multiple letters to that community. This means that he certainly knew of the temple described years later by Pausanias. I would suggest the temple's memorial wall, full of single and separate body parts, provided the negative visual image Paul used to characterize the Corinthian community in his first letter to them. They were behaving like the dismembered body parts on the temple wall they had all seen. But, once turned positive, the image of a whole and

healthy human body was so vibrant and effective that Paul continued to use it in three later letters.

The image of dismembered body parts unfortunately described the Corinthian church all too well. Paul's opening words reveal how they were divided by allegiance to various teachers (1:12, the topic of 1 Corinthians 1-4). Later, he indicates there were also factions between rich and poor (11:21-22), largely determined by whether one was slave or free. Chapters 12-14 reveal that the Corinthians were further segmented by their attraction to the more ostentatious spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues.

In response to this, Paul uses the image of the human body to make these points:³

- For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it (12:13,27).
- Now the body is not made up of one part but of many As it is, there are many parts, but one body (12:14,20).
- In fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be (12:19).
- God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (12:24-25).

These truths are then applied to relationships within the Christian community. As the human body has many different parts, so believers have a variety of spiritual gifts (12:11-12). Each one is needed for the body to be whole and healthy. Individual believers should not look down on others (12:21), neither should they deprecate or exclude themselves (12:15-16). Instead, the marvelous words of 1 Corinthians 13 illustrate how believers should receive and use any and all of these gifts in love (12:31).

Paul's overall message is this: "There are *many parts*, but *one body*" (12:20). So, which is it, unity or diversity? For Paul the answer is an

DR. MICHAEL MIDDENDORF IS PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT, CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY, IRVINE, CALIFORNIA. MIKE.MIDDENDORF@CUI.EDU

emphatic “both/and,” and he insists that both poles be properly balanced.

This kind of paradox may seem uncomfortable, but it should also feel very familiar to Lutherans. We speak of the polarities of Law and Gospel, saint and sinner, left-hand kingdom and right-hand kingdom, body and bread, wine and blood, and so forth. Indeed, this lively vitality is in many ways the genius of the Lutheran expression of biblical theology. But it also leaves us with unresolved tension in trying to maintain and properly balance both sides of the equation.

Diversity

What does all of this have to say about ministry among the generations in our day and culture? On the one hand, diversity was and remains a vital aspect of the Christian community. As with the diverse parts of the human body, so the congregation has different parts, different roles, different gifts and different functions. All of these are needed for the body to function in a healthy, God-intended manner.

It is interesting that one of the dominant forms of segmenting done in congregations today involves an area Paul does not even mention, that of age. The issue is addressed at some length in two of his pastoral letters, and we will return to it shortly. However, here are the areas specifically identified by Paul:

Paul points out that all those in the Corinthian congregation were baptized into one body, “whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free” (12:13). The *first* distinction he notes formed the dominant theological issue of the first century. Paul resolves it by revealing “the mystery of Christ ... that through the Gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body” (Ephesians 3:6; cf. Acts 15; Galatians 2; Romans 2-3). The *second*, “slave or free,” was dictated by place in society. Paul had earlier asserted that it was good if slaves could win their freedom (7:21). But remaining an earthly slave should not be troublesome (7:20-24). Instead, “each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has

called him” (7:17). It is important to note that even within the unity of one body, these two distinctions largely remained. People were still ethnically Jew or Greek and, for the most part, stayed slave or free.

In Galatians 3, Paul makes a parallel statement about unity and diversity in Christ. There he adds a *third* area: gender. “For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (3:27-28). The addition reinforces the point. People remain male or female even as they are one in Christ. Similarly, we are Hispanic or Caucasian or African or Asian; there are rich and poor among us, bosses and employees, and so forth. All this diversity is to be celebrated because it strengthens the body and enables it to function in God-pleasing ways.

Due to the context in Corinth, a *fourth* area, spiritual gifts, is discussed throughout chapters 12-14. On the one hand, Paul makes some distinctions among them. He elevates the priority of gifts that share and spread the word (apostles, prophets and teachers; 12:28). Chapter 14 asserts that prophecy is particularly valuable because it builds up or edifies the church (14:3-4, 12).⁴

In spite of distinctions among various gifts (*charismata*), Paul’s main emphasis is revealed when he uses the body metaphor briefly in Romans. “We have different gifts according to the grace given us” (12:6). Indeed, “all these are the work of one and the same Spirit” who baptized each and every member into the one body (1 Corinthians 12:11; cf. 12:4, 13). Whatever gifts are given to whomever, they are all to be “exercised” within the body in a way which seeks to build up others.

While describing all this diversity, Paul points out how different parts of the human body are cared for differently. “The parts that we think are less honorable, we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty” (12:23-24). As a result, it is altogether appropriate to have special activities that target and, in that sense, treat different parts of the body differently.



This brings us back to the topic of generations. All that has been said thus far applies. Just as with different ethnicities, genders, and social or economic classes, all age groups are to be welcomed and cherished because the Spirit baptizes them all into the one body. Whatever gifts are given by the Spirit, these should also be freely exercised within the body regardless of age.⁵ At the same time, distinctions between generations continue to exist within that unity.

Is it then appropriate to segment a congregation's focus or activities toward particular age groups *within* a congregation? On the one hand, the answer is obviously affirmative. While not directed specifically at generational distinctions, Paul's words about treating different parts of the body differently lend support to a positive response. Paul further illustrates this in the pastoral epistles when he tells Timothy, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Paul himself goes on to direct how elderly widows should be treated in a manner different from younger widows (cf. 1 Timothy 5:3-10 with 11-16; see also Titus 2:3-8).

As a result, having various activities aimed at caring for and nurturing certain parts of the body in ways most beneficial to them is in keeping with Paul's words. A second grade Sunday school class is one example. But rather than age being the sole criterion, levels of maturity and reading ability are perhaps more significant. And even there, the teacher is not a second grader (hopefully!) and, as such, intergenerational work is going on in the class. A junior high ministry, senior citizen activities, youth gatherings, a group for mothers of young children and so forth are all good. But, once again, one may question whether age should be the sole criterion. Furthermore, each of these examples tends to involve a wider span of ages than the specifically targeted group (for example, youth group counselors or babysitters for children at a young mothers' Bible study).

At the same time, many activities within the body can target those with special interests, gifts and abilities, regardless of, or precisely because they *transcend, any specific age group*. These multi-generational activities are outstanding illustrations of what the body is, a community into which all ages have been incorporated by the work of the Spirit in baptism. For example, all Christians are called to serve as we have been served (Galatians 5:13); we are able to do so in a wide variety of roles with our various gifts regardless of age. Servant events like mission trips typically draw together a wide range of ages due to common interests and abilities. Music groups (e.g. choirs, handbells, praise teams) draw in people from a variety of generations. If any age restrictions are placed upon participation in these activities, aside from legal issues, those should be re-examined.

On the other hand, is it proper to adopt certain practices because they will attract those of a particular generation *who are outside of the body* to come in? Is it appropriate for a congregation to target its outreach, worship or teaching style, social activities and, in essence, its entire ministry toward reaching a particular age group? To some degree this is also probably inevitable due to the demographic makeup of a community (such as a college campus, new housing developments occupied by young families, and retirement communities). It is certainly positive when a particular body of believers is reaching out into the context where they have been placed. A congregation should also be willing to continually evaluate and adapt its outreach as the "neighborhood" changes.

Whatever targeting is done, whether this be in terms of race, ethnicity, place in society, spiritual gifts, or age, it should be in a manner that shows the same concern for all those present in a given location. Can you imagine, for instance, Paul deliberately and specifically targeting the gathering of a congregation which was dominantly Jewish or slave or male? Instead, he earlier told the Corinthians, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (9:22). To be sure, he modified





his behavior to reach certain groups (9:20-22). But in doing so, he did not ignore or disregard those outside one targeted group. On the contrary, he sought to reach "all" whom he encountered; his goal was to bring them together into one body.

A ministry may target Millennials, for example, and the body of believers in that place may come to be dominated by those of that generation. But if those of other age groups are present, they should receive "equal concern" (12:25). In the same way, a congregation ought not be dominated by "the old guard." Instead, all those present should receive the opportunity to have an equal voice and role.

The major caveat in all this is that once various members are present within the body of Christ at a particular place, they ought not to be favored or neglected because of ethnicity, gender, social status or age. In describing how body parts are treated differently, Paul explains why God arranged the body with all its various parts as he did. It was "so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

Unity

Some in our society assert that there is unity in diversity. Paul contends that this order is backwards. In the body of Christ, unity does not come from our diversity. Instead, there is diversity in unity. Unity is the determining factor. "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body" (12:13). But, yes, within that unity we find diversity.

Can one target a specific age group within a congregation? Of course, but this must be balanced with the other pole, which is the most essential for Paul. The body of Christ is a place where unity does not dismiss distinctions, but it is a community where they are transcended. The fact that a community of believers is one body is the very essence of the church. "Now you are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it" (12:27). In Corinth, this was a fact in spite of their behavior because their oneness was based upon God's action and the work of his Spirit

in baptism (12:13; cf. 1:27-28). The body of Christ "is what it is," and it is comprised of all baptized believers in the community.

This aspect needs the most stress in our consumer-driven culture of individualism and choice. In response to individualism, whenever Paul talks about "you" as the body of Christ, the "you" is always plural in Greek. In other words, "you" (singular) are not the body of Christ; rather, as Texans say it, "y'all" or, even better, "all y'all" are collectively and corporately (cf. 12:14-16, 21, 26-27). American society also treasures its freedoms. Thank God we have the freedom to choose in many areas of life, including freedom to gather as the body of Christ. Culturally, this extends to the freedom to choose denominations, to choose a particular congregation within that denomination, and to choose to join or withdraw as one wills. The Corinthians did not have such a choice. There was one Christian community in Corinth, and if you were baptized, you were part of it.⁶ Nevertheless, the words of Ephesians 4 still ring true in our day: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Ephesians 4:4-6).

So how do we "keep the unity of the Spirit" (Ephesians 4:3) and express this oneness in our day? At least within a congregation, it would seem best for all parts of the body to be welcomed at worship together. In contrast to the first century, the size of many congregations today makes this physically impossible, though the "welcome" should always be there for all. The presence of different language groups within a worshipping community presents another legitimate reason to consider separate services. In our day we have commonly chosen to further segment into worshipping groups called "traditional" or "contemporary," as well as a number of other labels. Studies have shown that the majority of growing churches offer multiple formats from which worshippers are free to choose. This suits our cultural context of choice, but does it support the body picture? If it is an effort to nurture

separate parts of the body differently because they need special care, this may be appropriate. But does it not also tend to segment a community, often predominantly by age? If so, are the two poles properly in balance?

At least we can say that heaven will be a wonderful mix of "both/ands" where those "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (and age) are present (Revelation 7:9). I doubt separate traditional and contemporary services will be held there. And those labels largely present a false alternative even in the present age.⁷ "Blended, but not like from a blender" sounds more like the body of Christ as depicted by Paul. Various parts retain their identity, but act together as one under their common head. We are certainly free in Christ to worship "in many and various ways," but I think we are called to worship together as the body of Christ. This may mean some compromise within a Christian community where all parts of the body say, "I seek to be nurtured by that which feeds and edifies me most effectively, but I will also joyfully participate in some of what I may not prefer for the benefit of other parts of the body. In so doing, I may even be reached and grow in ways I did not expect." This attitude sounds like a "1 Corinthians 13" love which does not insist on its own way.

Finally, 1 Corinthians 12 and the image of the body flow straight out of Paul's use of the term in the last half of 1 Corinthians 11.⁸ There he uses "body" in a couple of different, but interrelated, ways. This is evident already in Chapter 10 where Paul writes, "Is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf" (10:16b-17). In those two sentences Paul uses the term "body" in two senses. The first refers to the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper; the second describes the many who shared together as one body in that meal. They were one body because the Spirit had baptized them into the body of Christ (12:13). The one body was then invited to receive the body of their one Lord together as one. As it was in Corinth, so it is today.

Conclusion

In response to issues which sought to divide the Corinthians of old and amidst the challenges of ministering to different generations today, the final words of 1 Corinthians 12 move us forward: "And now I will show you the most excellent way" (12:31). The original context of 1 Corinthians 13 speaks directly to the issue at hand. The chapter also uses the metaphor of age to contrast spiritually childish behaviors with those of a mature believer (13:11).

How do the many parts properly function as one body? Even "grown up" intellect will not provide all the answers. Paul reminds us that we now know only "in part" (13:12), and that knowledge tends to puff up self; love, on the other hand, strives to build up others (8:1; cf. 14:12). "The most excellent way" for all generations is to live out the self-sacrificial *agape* love depicted so powerfully in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 and, most importantly, by Him who first loved us, Christ our Head. That is how His one body, with all its diversity, "grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:16).

Footnotes

1 See *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepieion*. Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977.

2 See Ephesians 1:23; 2:16; 4:12, 16; 5:30; Colossians 1:18, 24; 2:19; 3:15.

3 Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version* (NIV). Zondervan, 1984.

4 Unfortunately, confusion regarding the definition of this term has led us to devalue it in our churches today. Just who is a prophet and who prophesies according to the definition given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 14? The application is certainly much broader than simply predicting the future. I would suggest it entails all the ways God's Word and will are applied to people in their particular setting. Thus it happens regularly from the pulpit, but also in Sunday school classrooms, through music ministries, at home, and in many and various places where Christian education and edification occur.

5 In this regard, it has always seemed a little odd that confirmed members of congregations are often restricted from certain activities or roles until they reach the age of 18. Is there any Scriptural basis for this?

6 The Roman Catholic parish model is more illustrative of what it means to be the body of Christ in a particular place, but our culture militates against it so much that it is difficult to comprehend how it could be implemented.

7 See Michael Middendorf, "False (?) Dichotomies in Worship" in *Crosstalk*, Volume 5:3, Concordia Publishing House, July 2000. For example, a new WOW CD of "contemporary" Christian songs is comprised of all hymns (WOW Hymns: EMI Christian Music Group, 2007). A "contemporary" service I recently attended was led by a typical praise band, yet four of their songs were *Hark the Voice of Jesus Calling*, *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*, *Children of the Heavenly Father* and *All Hail the Power of Jesus Name*. This mix of "traditional" hymns together with a number of other "contemporary" songs was presented within the basic liturgical structure most Lutherans would readily recognize.

8 As a result, what we see in our Bibles as a new chapter, 1 Corinthians 12, flows very logically from the discussion that concludes Chapter 11 (remember, chapter divisions were added long after Paul wrote). In 11:27 Paul speaks of sinning against "the body and blood of the Lord." This refers to a misuse of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper. But, as 1 Corinthians 12 makes clear, he also envisions the believers in Corinth as one body of Christ with many members. The problems identified by Paul in 11:17-22 are more relational than doctrinal. Thus, their failure to discern or recognize "the body" in verse 29 refers to their lack of regard for one another within the body of believers as they come to share in the body and blood of the Lord.



CHRISTINE ROSS

Being An Intergenerational Congregation



*One generation shall commend Your works to another
and set forth Your mighty deeds. Psalm 145:4*

When a young Director of Christian Education (DCE) received a call to her second congregation, the congregation's leaders expressed concern that the present youth group philosophy created a separation between youth and adults. They hoped that the new DCE could close the gap between the younger and older generations within the church.

Soon after she began her ministry, the pastor of adult ministry asked if the youth could serve dinner at the annual birthday party for members 75 years and older. Her excitement was quickly quenched by the responses of the youth, such as "The adults ignore us until they want to use us"; "We aren't their slaves!" The DCE realized that bridging the generation gap and enabling the generations to work together as one body, united in Christ Jesus, was going to be more difficult than anticipated. The youth did not serve at that dinner, but the DCE began leading Bible studies and retreats on the topics of the body of Christ, the priesthood of all believers, and the unity of faith. She recruited council members, elders, and other adult congregational leaders to teach Sunday morning junior and senior high school Sunday school, to be involved in the confirmation program, to lead small group games and spiritual discussions on retreats, and to start a gym night for youth. As adults moved from being unknown to becoming friends, youth began to say "yes" when an adult friend asked them to join the choir, help out at the all church rummage sale, or to work together to create the best ever birthday party for senior adults.

DR. CHRISTINE ROSS IS ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND DIRECTOR OF THE DCE PROGRAM AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY IN IRVINE, CALIFORNIA. CHRISTINE.ROSS@CUI.EDU

I was that DCE, and those ministry years introduced me to the term "intergenerational ministry." This perspective on ministry so intrigued me that I pursued the study of its merit as a congregational philosophy of ministry in my dissertation work at St. Louis University.

Research Synopsis

Since the content of this article stems mainly from my dissertation research,¹ a brief overview of the qualitative research methodology would be appropriate. As the focus of qualitative research is to obtain in-depth answers from a few sources regarding involvement in the phenomenon of interest (in contrast to quantitative research which typically entails a survey with specific questions aimed at a larger audience), the research focused upon four congregations that described themselves as intergenerational. These congregations are referred to by their location: Rocky Mountain, Southwest, Midwest, Canadian. The denominational affiliations were The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Canadian Lutheran, and Presbyterian. The churches ranged in size from a two-point parish of less than 100 members in each congregation served by one pastor to a 2,600 member congregation with 15 staff members. I spent two to four days at each congregation, interviewing a total of 15 people, observing worship services and intergenerational activities, and reading through bulletins and newsletters to determine each congregation's understanding and implementation of intergenerational ministry.

The research revealed 21 similar characteristics of intergenerational ministry. Many of these characteristics help define intergenerational ministry, describe why a congregation would implement intergenerational ministry, and provide ideas regarding how to implement intergenerational ministry in a congregation.



Intergenerational Ministry

"The church is probably the only place where the potential for four, five, even six generations to be together under the same roof exists. So, churches need to be intentional about making intergenerational communication and meaningful activity happen; rather than dividing us, to unify us."

Rocky Mountain church leader

Multigenerational,² transgenerational,³ and intergenerational are all terms used to describe a recent trend of deliberately considering the various generations within an organization. Using Church Growth terminology, one might say that the trend is moving away from focusing on homogeneous outreach to focusing upon the natural heterogeneous make-up of a congregation. Although each of the three words indicates an interest in many generations, the terms are not synonymous. Most congregations are multigenerational or transgenerational in that they have more than one generation

engaged in worship and ministry activities. Leaders of a congregation with a multi- or transgenerational philosophy may intentionally create ministries for children, for youth and for adults in order to meet the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of these different age groups. However, a congregation focused on *intergenerational* ministry (IM) will enable the various generations to communicate in meaningful ways, to interact on a regular basis, and to minister and serve together regularly. In a congregation based on an intergenerational philosophy, congregational leaders create opportunities for people of various generations to share their lives in regular and meaningful ways.

Proponents of IM are adamant that IM is a philosophy of ministry rather than a program.⁴ Programs are added to the existing activities of a congregation, while IM is the mindset of congregational leaders

as they implement church ministries. This mindset encourages leaders to ask, "How can we enable various age groups to interact within the Sunday school program, confirmation, worship, evangelism, service or fellowship activities?" Not one of the congregations which were researched had an IM committee or board, but all had the word "intergenerational" or the idea of bringing generations together in a mission or vision statement. Having IM in the church's mission and vision statements encouraged all church staff and committees to constantly consider how to implement IM within their respective ministry areas.

An example of this mindset of IM as a philosophy was seen in a Rocky Mountain church, a 2,600-member congregation with 15 staff members. One might think that a church with a Children's Minister, Junior High Minister, High School Minister, Director of Women's Ministry and Director of Men's Ministry would be a multi-generational rather than an intergenerational congregation. Yet, during weekly meetings, staff members discussed how to work together on various activities. Thus, mission trips planned by the High School Minister included an invitation to all church members to attend. The Director of Women's Ministry invited junior and senior high school girls to the Women's Advent Dinner. The Director of Men's Ministry created mentoring partnerships involving junior high youth and men of all ages. The leaders planned quarterly fellowship events for all ages, such as a barbeque dinner and square dance, with each leader encouraging people within one's ministry focus to attend. This intentionality of considering various generations within each ministry demonstrates this definition of IM:

Intergenerational ministry occurs when a congregation intentionally combines 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 (Ross, 2006).

Why Consider Intergenerational Ministry?

"I really think it's better to have people of different ages working together; it brings more experience and different views."

Intergenerational Ministry is biblical. The term "generations" itself is often used in Scripture, but more importantly, Scripture reveals God's desire that people of one generation would tell of His works to the next generation, and that people of every generation would unite to share the Good News of Jesus Christ (Psalm 145:4; Isaiah 51:7-8; Joel 1:3 and 2:16-17; Ephesians 3:21). Other biblical themes that point toward IM include "the family of God," "the body of Christ," and "the community of believers" (Romans 8:14-17; Romans 12:4-6). We know that Jesus welcomed children and told adults to learn child-like faith from them (Matthew 18:1-6). Paul shared his concern for all generations when he instructed Timothy to care for both older and younger men and women (1 Timothy 5:1-3), taught how children or grandchildren of widows must care for their parents and grandparents (1 Timothy 5:4); and explained the role of older women in the training of younger women (Titus 2:3-5). Paul and Timothy also provided a positive example of inter-generational mentoring which also is seen in the lives of Samuel and Eli, Elijah and Elisha, Naomi and Ruth.

Even the Lutheran baptismal liturgy highlights the importance of inter-generational relationships. After a baptism, the congregation responds, "We welcome you into the Lord's family. We receive you as a fellow member of the body of Christ, a child of the same heavenly Father, to work with us in His kingdom."⁵ Here, members of intergenerational congregations are encouraged to consider that an infant is our "fellow member ... working with us." God has given children the gift of making people smile and of being able to teach others about a child-like faith. IM leaders within the congregations which were researched believed that IM provided an opportunity for their members to both better understand and live out these biblical themes.

Intergenerational Ministry supports family ministry and includes the whole "faith family." Over the past two decades family ministry has become an important component of youth ministry. Youth leaders came to understand that our society had changed. No longer were home, school, church and neighborhoods working together to support the faith development of young people. Instead, the church had become the place where children and youth were brought to learn what often was not taught or modeled elsewhere. Urie Bronfenbrenner, best known for working to formulate the government-sponsored Head Start program, was one of many psychologists who pointed out that children's healthy development occurs best when the various systems in a child's life are similar. If the teachings of home and church are similar, children will more likely live out those teachings. Thus, youth leaders set out to include, rather than separate, families in church activities and to teach parents how to "train up a child in the way he should go ..." (Proverbs 22:6). In the process, youth leaders of the research congregations came to understand that families are better supported when surrounded by the "family of faith."

It also was recognized that parents need to communicate and learn from other Christian adults who have raised faithful Christian children. The importance of children and youth having Christian role models outside their families became more clear. That family ministry can isolate youth whose parents don't attend church, as well as single adults, or adults who do not have children in the home was another concern. On the other hand, an IM mindset brings the whole "faith-family" together to be part of a community. IM provides an opportunity for families to learn, serve and grow together, and in the process connects these families to other congregational members.



Intergenerational Ministry helps support the emotional needs of church members. The psychosocial development theory of Erik Erikson is well known among persons working in educational or care professions. Erikson's theory highlights activities that each age group needs to promote emotional health. Children need interaction with adults who can be trusted role models as well as with adults who will both teach children about the faith and live out their faith among children. As teenagers disengage from parents in preparation for adulthood, they need non-familial role models to show them the variety of ways that Christian adults live out their faith. Young adults need older mentors, older Christian friends who will walk with them as they move into adulthood and whose enthusiasm for life can be shared as they begin mentoring younger persons. Middle adults need to teach, and older adults need to share life experiences with younger generations. As IM leaders work to bring the various age groups together to work, learn, play and serve within the activities of the church, opportunities for role models and for sharing expand. A unique way in which one of the research congregations supported emotional needs was through the implementation of both a preschool and an adult day-care. Common activities brought joy to the older adults and helped children to be comfortable around older adults. They also provided young children with opportunities to learn music or games that they might not otherwise know. Although the original goal was building healthy relationships between the youngest and oldest generations, leaders discovered that elementary youth through adults could also volunteer in the preschool or adult day-care, resulting in even more intergenerational relationships being built than originally intended.

Intergenerational Ministry helps bridge the "generation gap." Bronfenbrenner asserted that a society in which the generations do not relate to one another will experience social discord and eventually its demise. He also wrote that parents need to be supported in raising children, and that

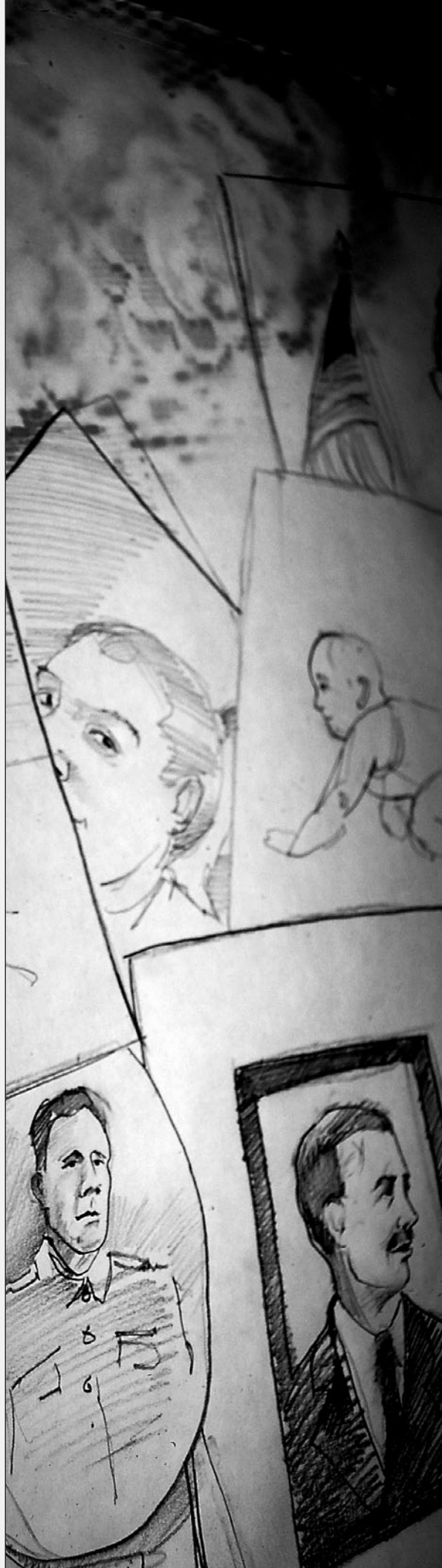
children and youth need opportunities to serve the community.⁶

An IM mission trip to teach Vacation Bible School in Alaska provided an activity that supported parents, gave youth an opportunity to serve, and helped bridge the generation gap. This specific trip included a family of five, a grandmother and her grandson, two older adult couples, two single women and seven high school youth.

The quote that follows the preceding heading reflects the thoughts of a formerly skeptical teenager after she attended the week-long trip. Other comments about this trip indicated that participants believed that adults brought needed structure and wisdom to the trip while youth provided innovative ideas and infused adults with much needed energy.

Intergenerational Ministry helps bring understanding and unity within a congregation. Two of the research congregations became involved in Intergenerational Ministry through reading Strauss and Howe's *Generations*.⁷ The ministry leaders "saw" the characteristics of the various generations in their own church members. They began to teach their congregation members about generational characteristics in order to help members understand what people of each generation need from church, the unique gifts each generation brings to the church, and why the different generations may not always agree on the needs of the church. They helped people to understand why they felt the way they did about church and to see that other people may have different feelings and needs. Leaders of two congregations felt that members became more accepting of each others' strengths and weaknesses and were more willing to alter some of their preferences in order to better meet the needs of the whole community. They felt that IM helped create unity within their congregations, promoting a we/us rather than an us/them mentality.

IM also can serve as an outreach tool. IM provides a ministry focus for church members to rally around. This clarity of the church's mission generated excitement in members and enabled them to more readily invite friends



to church. All of the research congregations experienced an increase of membership, especially new families.

Strategies for Implementing IM

"The education piece is huge. Mostly, I keep reminding people to accept one another. I feel like I write the same thing over and over, but if you don't, they won't remember." Southwest church leader

The research showed that there must be a key leader in a congregation who values intergenerational relationships and desires to see IM flourish within the congregation. Leaders must patiently and continually teach the biblical and sociological basis of IM. Intergenerational Ministry leaders taught and slowly integrated IM into their congregations from four to ten years before congregational leaders (i.e. elders, council) decided to make IM a mission or value of the church. Usually the head pastor is the IM leader. If he is not the IM leader, he must express his support of IM and the leader's work in sermons and meetings.

Congregational members must be taught about the importance of the generations living as the body of Christ through sermons, committee meetings, leadership training events, newsletter and bulletin articles, voters' meetings, one-on-one conversations with people, and through the church leadership modeling an IM mindset to people. This modeling could include church leaders interacting with different age groups on Sunday mornings or at various church events, calling or hiring staff members of various generations who are interested in IM, modeling positive intergenerational relationships, or intentionally creating intergenerational committees. When ministry leaders began to implement IM into their respective ministries, such integration provided additional opportunities for teaching and learning.

Leaders must consider the best ways to implement IM. This will greatly depend on the specific needs and activities of a congregation. However, ways that churches

in this research study began to implement IM include: incorporate children's messages into the worship services; create usher, greeter, or visitation teams made up of various aged persons; encourage children and youth to participate in church music programs; create a confirmation mentor program in which an adult family member or a church member attends all confirmation events with a youth; bring older youth and more adults to work in the Sunday school program so that children make relationships with several older church members rather than just one teacher; begin an intergenerational Sunday school program; provide church fellowship events that all ages will enjoy doing together (i.e. baseball teams, fishing, riding on trains, square dancing); sponsor intergenerational outreach or service activities. As members engage in intergenerational activities, they understand more of the benefits of IM which in turn will make it more likely that IM will become part of the church vision. As this process moves along, congregations may find themselves building new facilities to better facilitate IM, such as the creation of preschool and adult day-care facilities, or adding to the fellowship hall so that all ages can gather at one time. One congregation even expanded its sanctuary in order to add rocking chairs for mothers with young children and a carpeted place for infants to crawl on during worship.

Challenges

"You may lose people who can't make the adjustment. But for everyone that leaves you get three more. Why? Because most people understand the innate wisdom of the generations relating to each other."

Rocky Mountain church leader

Research leaders felt that changing adult mindsets was a challenge. Intergenerational Ministry means children and youth are both seen and heard. Adults must allow the goal of enabling younger generations to be a full part of church life to overcome their desire for a tranquil environment. Adults need to be enabled to enjoy the rich life of living out faith within the full community



of believers through continual teaching and encouragement of the benefits of doing so.

The lack of resources makes implementing IM challenging. Church leaders can find materials to teach people of various age groups, but few that help guide a leader to know how to create an intergenerational Sunday school, VBS or mission trip (see references for examples).^{8, 9} An IM congregation must be willing to try new ideas, learn from mistakes, and hold steadfast to the vision through success and failure.

Despite these challenges, IM leaders are excited about the benefits they have seen in their congregations: children, youth and adults involved in church; families ministering together and being ministered to; singles and older adults building healthy relationships with church members of various ages; the biblical themes of the body of Christ and family of God being not just taught, but lived out on a daily basis; the building of bridges among the generations.

One generation shall commend Your works to another and set forth Your mighty deeds. Psalm 145:4

References

- 1 Ross, C. M. *A Qualitative Study Exploring Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Proquest Information and Learning Company, 2006. (UMI Number: 3237443).
- 2 Rendle, G. *The Multigenerational Congregation: Meeting the Leadership Challenge*. Bethesda, Maryland: The Alban Institute, 2002.
- 3 Bolinder, G. and White, J. E. "Two Pastors in a Demographic Debate: Should the Church Target Generations?" *Leadership Journal*, XX, 104, 1999. Retrieved June 4, 2007, from www.ctlibrary.com/le/1999/spring/912104
- 4 Gambone, J. V. *All Are Welcome: A Primer for Intentional Intergenerational Ministry and Dialogue*. Crystal Bay, Minn.: Elder Eye Press, 1998.
- 5 *Lutheran Worship*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2004, 1982.
- 6 Bronfenbrenner, U. *Two Worlds of Childhood: U. S. and U. S. S. R.* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.
- 7 Strauss, W. and Howe, N. *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. New York: Quill, William Morrow, 1991.
- 8 Faith Inkubators materials: Stepping Stones, Heart to Heart Confirmation and Generations in Faith Together Cross-Generational Ministry may be found at [www. faithink.com/Inkubators/gift.asp](http://www.faithink.com/Inkubators/gift.asp)
- 9 United Intergenerational Ministries Sunday School, VBS, Christmas program, Retreat materials found at www.familycrossfires.tripod.com





book reviews

Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church. Understanding a Movement and Its Implications.

D. A. Carson. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

To a large extent, the challenge to the church addressed in this volume (postmodern thinking) is not generational: it is *de facto* cross-generational since the postmodern worldview and way of thinking saturates Western culture and exerts a large influence on the members of all current generations (as well as all other social stratifications) whether the various generations would identify themselves as postmodern or not. Consequently, serious communicators of any sort, above all, those who wish to share the message of the Christian Gospel in the 21st century, cannot avoid this challenge. Carson has served the church well by clearly identifying and defining the challenge that postmodern formulation of the Christian faith poses, as well as providing a thorough and challenging critique.

The issue is demonstrated and made concrete by giving a sampling of the thinking of leaders of the "emerging church." While recognizing that the movement is remarkably diverse and amorphous at this point, nonetheless, Carson contends that "for almost everyone within this movement, [it] works out in an emphasis on feelings and affections over against linear thought and rationality; on experience over against truth; on inclusion over against exclusion; on participation over against individualism and the heroic loner" (p. 29).

Carson is not without appreciation for the leaders of the emerging church. On the plus side he commends them for: 1) honestly trying "to read the culture in which we find ourselves and to think through the implications of such a reading for our witness, our grasp of theology, our churchmanship, even our self-understanding" (p. 45); 2) "the emphasis on authenticity—authentic Christian faith, authentic spirituality, authentic Christian obedience" (p. 49); 3) highlighting "that all of us inevitably interpret things out of a particular framework" (p. 52); 4) "the interest in evangelizing people who are often overlooked by the church" (p. 52); and 5) "wanting to be linked to historic Christianity and not merely the latest twenty years of Christianity" (p. 55).

The above accents are commendable. The issue is how shall they best be achieved and can churches of the modern era (churches of

traditional denominations and confessions) achieve them? Those in the emerging church believe that the current culture has changed so radically that churches of the modern era cannot effectively do mission and ministry to postmoderns. What is called for is the reworking of the church so that it can effectively operate in contemporary (postmodern) culture. Carson contends that for emerging church leaders this means applying the tenets of postmodern epistemology to the formulation of the Christian faith and the church's practice of it.

This leads the author to give a succinct comparison of the main characteristics of the epistemologies of the premodern, modern and postmodern eras. Carson insightfully identifies the primary difference in epistemology between premodern and modern/postmodern epistemology (the latter two being alike in this) as the premodern orientation of beginning with God and the modern/postmodern orientation of beginning with the human self. Beginning with God gives the knower a solid and humble foundation for the task of learning, while beginning with the self leads the knower to an arrogant over-confidence (modernism) or arrogant pessimism (postmodernism). Postmodern epistemology differs from its parent in: 1) rejecting universal foundations (self-evident axioms such as Descartes' "I think; therefore, I am"); 2) relativizing all methods of knowing (intuition is as valid as empirical observation or logic); 3) rejecting objective knowledge as both unattainable and undesirable (especially since it frequently leads to absolutism and intolerance); 4) rejecting "ahistorical universality" of truth (identifying all truth claims as social contrivances); and 5) rejecting philosophical materialism (thus, being open to mysticism, spirituality and superstition as legitimate means of knowing).

Carson evenhandedly and fairly demonstrates how leaders of the "emerging church" (for example, American Brian D. McLaren and British Steve Chalke) more or less adopt the tenets of postmodern epistemology as they formulate the Christian faith for the contemporary world, especially for reaching non-Christians. While

Carson sympathizes with their goal and passion, he rejects their methodology and much of its results as unbiblical, sometimes intellectually dishonest or incompetent, absurd (particularly with respect to moral issues) and ultimately (if consistently applied) self-condemning.

After a thorough critique of emerging leaders' formulations of the faith, the author provides extensive lists of biblical references on the topics of truth and idolatry as well as a number of more in-depth exegetical studies of pertinent texts in support of the premodern/biblical epistemology.

Carson reaches the conclusion that the legitimate concerns of the emerging church can be met (and only met) while maintaining biblical epistemology. The author's presentation is penetrating, well-argued, even-handed and direct while being respectful of the concerns and goals of the emerging church. While Lutherans would emphasize that saving faith in Christ precedes and is the foundation for a commitment to biblical epistemology, they will heartily agree that such an epistemology is both necessary and highly profitable for attaining certain knowledge. Confessional churches will find Carson's evaluation affirming and encouraging. It is worth the read and serious discussion by all generations in the church today as they seek to bring the Gospel to their neighbors of the 21st century.

The Rev. Terence R. Groth
Assistant Professor of Theology
Concordia University, Nebraska
Terence.Groth@cune.edu

**One Church, Four Generations:
Understanding and Reaching
All Ages in Your Church.**

Gary L. McIntosh. Grand Rapids:
Baker Books, 2002.

Can a worshipping community be all things to all people? McIntosh deliberately tackles this question and methodically arrives at several solutions in *One Church* by defining the general characteristics of each of four generations and giving practical ideas for each. He defines a generation as having a common place in time, boundaries and characteristics. Readers who have been students of generational histories will find a general overview as well as practical ideas on how the church can be attractive to each of the generations.

Whether or not a church is attractive to the world is often a controversial issue. McIntosh's use of the idea of attractiveness narrows down what a generation identifies as an authentic expression of faith—the expression that influences others to follow Jesus Christ.

Generational category and subcategory information included in *One Church* are:

BUILDERS

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| • G. I. Generation | - 1925 |
| • Silent Generation | 1926-1939 |
| • War Babies | 1940-1945 |
-

BOOMERS

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| • Leading Edge | 1946-1954 |
| • Trailing Edge | 1955-1964 |
-

BUSTERS

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| • Bust | 1965-1976 |
| • Boomlet | 1977-1983 |
-

BRIDGERS

- | | |
|----------------|-----------|
| • Generation Y | 1984-1993 |
| • Millennials | 1994-2002 |
-

McIntosh begins by identifying four issues:

- Churches tend to target one generation;
- When waves of generations collide, specific problems emerge;
- Historically, four generations exist together;
- New leadership communicates to a new generation. " ... Scripture records that it normally takes new leadership to communicate to new generations." (p. 21)

McIntosh desires to help churches be purposefully and skillfully involved in mission with people of all generations who are not followers of Jesus Christ. He writes about each generation in three ways. First, he generalizes the characteristics of the generation based on common histories. Second, he discusses what these characteristics mean to the church (or to church leadership). Finally, based on their characteristics, he specifically identifies practical ideas for being missionally effective with each generation.

One Church identifies its own weakness as a book in lacking extensive detail of the characteristics of each generation, but then identifies where these details can be found. Furthermore, since the book was published in 2002, many new technologies have already emerged and influenced all four generations (especially the Bridger generation). Finally, McIntosh writes about the influences of the postmodern culture in the chapters covering information on Bridgers, but neglects the postmodern culture's influence on all generations.

The final chapters attempt to give practical information on ministering intergenerationally. McIntosh chooses to write primarily about worship settings and solves the problem by using blended worship techniques that satisfy the likes of each generation. This reader believes he loses his focus on a mission of making disciples of all nations for the sake of attracting numbers.

For leaders trying to get a grip on how to come to an understanding of generations and the technologies that have influenced those generations, an excellent companion book to *One Church* is *The Millennial Matrix* by M. Rex Miller.

Dr. Craig Oldenburg
Interim Assistant Director
Student Life Office
Concordia University, Nebraska
Craig.Oldenburg@cune.edu





CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

800 North Columbia Avenue
Seward, Nebraska 68434

Return Service Requested.

Route to: _____

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE

PAID

Seward, NE
Permit No. 4
