

Confessions from a Youth Pastor— The Secret of Intergenerational Ministry

Two events over the last year have caused me to see the need for intergenerational ministry involving youth. So I am letting you, local mission leader, in on a secret: Our youth ministry—and I am sure yours too—would really benefit from collaboration with the adults in your mission program.

Last year I taught a class for our eighth graders intended to bring them up to speed on major Christian doctrine and prepare them for membership in the church. During that year, the eighth graders were paired with adult mentors in the church.

I spent hours preparing lessons and activities, organizing field trips and service projects. But the most meaningful aspect of that whole year for many of the participants was the relationships they built with their mentors. The class only lasted a year, but those relationships will last a lifetime!

On the heels of that class, I had a conversation with a youth pastor friend of mine who had just returned from a mission trip with his youth. When I asked him about the trip, I learned that it was not only for youth, but for the whole church.

He told me that at first the Work & Witness veterans in the church were concerned that teenagers would slow down their projects and get in the way. Likewise, some of the youth sponsors were concerned the youth experience wouldn't be as fun and exciting if the trip was filled with so many adults.

Both groups were astounded by the actual outcome of the trip. Work & Witness veterans serving alongside teenagers proved to be delightful for everyone involved. The teenagers were treated as equal partners in ministry and felt both affirmed and challenged by this new role. The older adults enjoyed laughing with the teens and sharing life experiences with them.

The youth pastor told me he will never do another “youth only” mission trip. Every trip he takes from now on will be intergenerational.

It is so appropriate that intergenerational ministry take place in mission. As we reach out to the lost, hurting, and broken, we find ourselves being formed into the likeness of Christ and are challenged to draw others along that same journey, especially those who are younger and eager to learn and grow.

These events caused me to ponder my own ministry to youth and how I can intentionalize intergeneration experiences with them. How does God's mission for our youth group involve people of all ages?

In your ministry in NMI, how can you organize, strategize, and intentionalize ways to include youth and children to come alongside you, experience your passion for mission, and learn from your life surrendered to the Lord? You will be surprised how much you also have to learn from these young, enthusiastic lives, ready and willing to take the gospel of Christ to the world, if someone will just show them how.

Shawna Songer Gaines
Chicago, Illinois



**Work & Witness
veterans
serving
alongside
teenagers
proved to be
delightful for
everyone
involved.**

