

JOIN THE BAND: BENEFITS OF ENGAGING INTERGENERATIONAL VOLUNTEERS IN
THE LOCAL CHURCH WORSHIP MINISTRY

By

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Liberty University

A THESIS PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF WORSHIP STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

Throughout the Bible and much of church history, intergenerational ministry was the common practice. However, in recent decades many local evangelical churches have abandoned the practice of intergenerational ministry and have instead embraced age-segregated ministry models. Reflecting this shift, age-segregated worship ministries within the local evangelical church have become the norm. This qualitative study examined biblical examples and teachings regarding worship and ministry and examined worship and ministry practices from throughout church history. Analysis of the research findings addressed the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry. Although facilitating an intergenerational worship ministry is a complicated endeavor, this study revealed that participation in an effective worship ministry is relationally, developmentally, musically, and spiritually beneficial for all involved. While it is true that each generational cohort benefits from involvement in intergenerational worship ministry, research indicates that such participation is especially beneficial for the youngest generations. Therefore, this project also examined the generational characteristics and needs of Gen Z (those born between 1995 and 2010) in order to ascertain how to best engage them as active participants in intergenerational worship ministries within the local evangelical church.

Keywords: intergenerational worship, intergenerational ministry, intergenerational worship ministry, generational characteristics, Gen Z

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

College Transition Project – CTP

Fuller Youth Institute – FYI

Intergenerational Ministry – IM

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

From the ancient days of Asaph, the chief musician of David's time,¹ to the modern days of the twenty-first century, musicians have joined together in worship and ministry, for the good of the people and for the glory of God. In today's vernacular, these bands of musicians are commonly referred to as the worship ministry teams of the local church. Charged with leading the musical portion of corporate worship for their local churches, these teams bring their individual musical skills together to form one cohesive unit. Functionally, a local church worship ministry team is a microcosm of the church at large: the individual parts come together to form one body.² In other words, the local church worship ministry serves as a paradigm for the broader scope of church life.³

Just as "iron sharpens iron,"⁴ in church life, when the parts come together to form a whole, the individual parts impact one another in a multitude of ways. Specifically, when individual musicians come together in the context of local church worship ministry, they impact one another relationally, musically, and spiritually. The type and level of impact in these areas is affected by the generational makeup of the worship ministry.⁵ Furthermore, because "worship is central to the life of the congregation,"⁶ the generational makeup of the worship ministry impacts the generational makeup of the various ministries of the church, which in turn affects the relationship development and spiritual formation of the people.⁷ Therefore, in view of its

¹ 1 Chronicles 16:5-7

² Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

³ Jim Merhaut, "Intergenerational Faith Formation Today: Its Impact and Sustainability," *Lifelong Faith Journal* 7, no. 3 (Fall 2013): 28-37.

⁴ Proverbs 27:17

⁵ Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic), 77-82.

⁶ David A. Eikenberry, "Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation" (DMin thesis, Trinity International University, 2013), 76.

⁷ Allen and Ross, 77.

impact on its individual members as well as on the church body as a whole, the generational makeup of the worship ministry of the local church is important and worthy of careful study and consideration.

Background of Topic

In both the Old and New Testaments, intergenerationality is the norm. The psalmist Asaph proclaimed, “we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done. He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children.”⁸ Exemplifying Asaph’s proclamation, when Israel gathered for special occasions such as Moses’ farewell address,⁹ Joshua’s renewal of the covenant and reading of the Law,¹⁰ Jehoshaphat’s cry to the Lord when threatened by the Moabites and Ammonites,¹¹ and Ezra’s reading and explanation of the book of the Law,¹² all generations were present together. The book of Acts records the regular gatherings of the early church in homes, which would have necessitated the presence of multiple generations of extended family members.¹³ Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus address issues of intergenerationality within the church.¹⁴ The pervasive teaching and example of Scripture is that of all the generations gathering together for all facets of life and ministry.¹⁵

⁸ Psalm 78:4-6 (NIV)

⁹ Deuteronomy 29-30

¹⁰ Joshua 8:30-35

¹¹ 2 Chronicles 20:1-19

¹² Nehemiah 8

¹³ Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerational Christian Education: An Imperative for Effective Education in Local Churches (Part 1),” *Journal of Christian Education* 41, no. 2 (1998b): 11.

¹⁴ 1 Timothy 4:11-5:2; Titus 2:1-8

¹⁵ Allan and Ross, 84.

An examination of past and present ministry practices in the local evangelical church reveals that throughout much of church history, intergenerational ministry (IM) was the common practice. Likewise, intergenerational worship gatherings were also the norm. In contrast to multigenerational gatherings, in which the multiple generations are present but interact on a limited basis, Allen and Ross define intergenerational Christian settings as “authentic, complex, *formative* environments, made up of individuals at various stages in their faith journeys, teaching some and learning from others as they participate in their community of believers.”¹⁶ Although the intergenerational Christian environments which Allen and Ross describe were once common, in recent decades many local evangelical churches have abandoned the practice of IM and have instead embraced age-segregated ministry models.

Segregating according to age, which is referred to by many as siloing, gained prominence in the late 20th Century as a church growth strategy. Appealing to a specific age group is much easier and more appealing than attempting to address the wants and needs of several age groups simultaneously. Age-segregation in worship and ministry offers people what they want, when they want it, in the way in which they want to receive it. Therefore, numerical growth often accompanies this practice. However, numerical growth is not necessarily synonymous for spiritual growth. Furthermore, what brings the quickest results does not always bring about the best results. But in an impatient culture, quicker is often mistaken for better. Recognizing this tendency, Robyn Burns-Marko refers to IM as “a long-term process with long-term buy-in.”¹⁷ Long-term buy-in seldom exists without an understanding of purpose. Summarizing the purposes of IM, Eikenberry writes, “Intergenerational ministry (1) reflects the

¹⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 102.

¹⁷ Robyn Sue White Burns-Marko, “Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together” (DMin thesis, Azusa Pacific University, 2017), 82-83.

nature of the church as one body, (2) releases the gifts of all the people in the church, (3) helps us appreciate our differences, (4) supports the vital ministry of the nuclear family, (5) enables the church to be a family, (6) helps keep young adults in the church, and (7) is a powerful witness to a fractured and isolated world.”¹⁸

Problem Statement

Reflecting the worship practices of many evangelical churches today, intergenerational models of worship ministry have commonly been replaced by age-segregated models. This shift in generational approach has a relational impact on the individuals within the segregated age groups. Although each generational cohort is affected by the practice of age-segregated models, the relational impact is greatest for Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2010).¹⁹ So consumed with mobile devices and social media that they are often referred to as “iGen,”²⁰ members of Gen Z have abandoned face-to-face connection for the hollowness of virtual connection.²¹ Furthermore, Gen Z has been parented by workaholic, often-absent Gen Xers, resulting in an increased feeling of isolation and insecurity.²² As these factors fuel increased feelings of loneliness and isolation among members of Gen Z, age-segregated models of ministry

¹⁸ Eikenberry, 47.

¹⁹ Concerning the still-fluctuating date parameters of Generation Z, James Emery White writes, “So who falls into Generation Z? There’s still some debate on exact dates, but essentially it involves those who were born after Generation Y, so approximately 1995 to around 2010. It is the generation that is now collectively under the age of twenty-five.” James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017) 37-38.

²⁰ Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy – and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* *and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Books, 2017), 2-4.

²¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z: The Culture, Beliefs and Motivations Shaping the Next Generation* (2018), 105.

²² James Emery White, *Meet Generation Z: Understanding and Reaching the New Post-Christian World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 52-65.

further deprive them of the strategic relationships with older generations which could offer them the mentoring, encouragement, and influence which they so desperately need.²³

There are musical implications of an age-segregated worship ministry model versus an intergenerational ministry model, as well. Research indicates that both older and younger generations benefit from intergenerational music-making.²⁴ Older generations benefit from exposure to the creativity of younger musicians,²⁵ while younger musicians benefit from exposure to the higher level of skill common to more experienced musicians.²⁶ Age-segregated models of worship ministry deprive all generations of the musical growth and development which are possible with intergenerational music-making.

Finally, and most importantly, spiritual formation is affected by the type of generational engagement, or lack thereof, within the local church worship ministry. The generation most impacted by the shift to age-segregation is the youngest generation. In his recent study of the spiritual formation of emerging adults, Frederick Fay writes, “Spiritual formation is not isolated from Christian community. Part of the disconnect young adults have from involvement in the church is the isolation of the generations.... For Christian spiritual formation to occur, different generations come together, know each other, and experience life in the body of Christ together. A person grows as he or she is immersed in a community that embodies a maturing faith

²³ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 101.

²⁴ Maria Varvarigou, Andrea Creech, Susan Hallam, and Hilary McQueen. 2011. “Bringing Different Generations Together in Music-Making: An Intergenerational Music Project in East London.” *International Journal of Community Music* 4 (3): 207.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 213-214.

²⁶ P.R. Schilf, (2001). “An Analysis of Interactions between Teenagers and Their Parents in an Intergenerational Concert Band.” (PhD diss., The University of Iowa, 2001).

themselves.”²⁷ The presence or absence of the multiple living generations deeply affects the formation of the involved individuals, particularly those within the youngest generations.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative historical study is to examine worship ministries in the local evangelical church in an effort to assess generational engagement. Age-segregated worship ministries are studied and analyzed in an effort to accurately assess structure, implementation, and unique characteristics. Worship ministries which are dominated by and cater to specific generational cohorts, such as Boomers or Millennials, are also examined. Finally, the structure, implementation, and characteristics of intergenerational worship ministries is assessed.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for church leaders and worship pastors to consider when making decisions regarding the implementation of either an intergenerational worship ministry model or an age-segregated worship ministry model. The implementation of either model will have important implications for church growth, as well as for church health. Furthermore, the implementation of either model for worship ministry will have far-reaching implications for Generation Z as they come of age.

Identifying and understanding the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry is important because every local church worship ministry is a part of the Body of Christ, and according to Scripture, the Body of Christ is not divided by age. Rather, each

²⁷ Frederick R. Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church” (DMin diss., George Fox Evangelical Seminary, 2015), 71.

member of the Body is to work in conjunction with the other parts, in unity, for the good of the Kingdom of God.²⁸ In Eikenberry's words,

When congregations routinely separate themselves into age-specific divisions, then the richness and fullness of the church is diminished. We miss the unique contributions and spiritual gifts that complement one another and strengthen the body. Conversely, when all generations worship the Lord and serve Him together, we remind ourselves of the oneness of the body of Christ, and bear witness to that unity to the watching world.²⁹

Furthermore, spiritual formation occurs most effectively as one generation proclaims to another the great and mighty works of the Lord.³⁰ As Allan Harkness states, "The overall picture from a biblical and theological perspective is that intergenerational interaction is crucial to enable Christians to move towards increasing maturity in their faith, through the unity of word, behavior, and attitude, which was modeled and advocated by Jesus himself..."³¹

Identifying the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry is important because of its impact on a new generation of worshipers. As Robert Pendergraft explains, "There is no more important truth for Christian adults to pass to children than what it means to become a worshiper.... The legacy of adults in the church is a new generation of worshipers to continue worshiping even after the older adults are no longer there."³² In order to leave a legacy of worshipers, the generations must worship together.

Although identifying and understanding the benefits of participating in an effective intergenerational worship ministry is important for all the generations, perhaps it is most crucial

²⁸ Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

²⁹ Eikenberry, 19-20.

³⁰ Psalm 145:4

³¹ Allan G. Harkness, "Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 124.

³² Robert Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains through Crises," *Philosophy Study* 7, no. 6 (June 2017): 288.

for Generation Z. According to recent surveys, the younger the generation, the fewer the number who identify as Christians.³³ Confirming this finding, after their recent survey Barna Group concluded, “The pattern is indisputable: The younger the generation, the more post-Christian it is.”³⁴ Summarizing the spiritual need of Gen Z, James Emery White writes,

Perhaps the most defining mark of members of Generation Z, in terms of their spiritual lives, is their spiritual illiteracy.... They do not know what the Bible says. They do not know the basics of Christian belief or theology. They do not know what the cross is about. They do not know what it means to worship.³⁵

Put more succinctly, they are simply spiritually lost.³⁶ And yet, Jen Bradbury explains that the College Transition Project report, sponsored by Fuller Youth Institute, states that “involvement in all-church worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation.”³⁷ Reflecting on the findings, Bradbury observes, “Sticky faith forms when adults and teens lead worship together.”³⁸

Research Questions

As has been previously stated, many evangelical local churches have abandoned intergenerational worship ministries for age-segregated siloes. However, the benefits of interweaving the generations within the context of the local church worship ministry offer strong reasons for reversing this trend. Affirming this conviction, Holly Catterton Allen contends, “One of the best things we can do for both young and old is structure our churches in ways that facilitate continuous caring encounters across the generations so that all ages can be enfolded in

³³ Barna Group and Impact 360 Group, *Gen Z*, 64.

³⁴ White, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.

³⁷ Jen Bradbury, “Sticky faith: What keeps kids connected to church?” *Christian Century* (May 29, 2013), 24-25.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

the warmth of the full body of Christ.”³⁹ In order to better understand the importance of structuring worship ministries in such a way as to facilitate the engagement of intergenerational volunteers in the worship ministry of the local evangelical church, certain questions must first be answered.

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church?

RQ2: In what ways can the local evangelical church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

The benefits of engaging multiple generations in a local church worship ministry cannot be identified and understood without first determining the characteristics of an effective intergenerational ministry. One aspect of understanding these characteristics involves recognizing the contributions and benefits of each generational cohort, including the youngest generation, Generation Z. As Eikenberry explains, “Every generation has something to teach the others. Whether it is Jesus lifting up children as an example of humble faith for us to adopt, or Timothy learning from his mother and grandmother, every generation is important in the worship and education of the church.”⁴⁰ Identifying the specific needs and contributions, as well as the challenges, of every generation, including the youngest and loneliest,⁴¹ is an integral step in achieving effectiveness in intergenerational ministry.

³⁹ Holly Catterton Allen, ed., *InterGenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry* (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018), 35.

⁴⁰ Eikenberry, 18-19.

⁴¹ Twenge, 96-99.

Hypotheses

The following are the working hypotheses:

H1: The characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church are relational connection, musical development, and spiritual formation.

Howard Vanderwell writes, “The formation of our character in the economy of God is a community event. We aid each other in such formation. God acts on us through others. And, in particular, the working together of the generations is a necessary component of healthy formation.”⁴² Healthy formation, in the context of worship ministry in the local church, is multifaceted in that it has relational, developmental, musical, and spiritual components within it. The working hypothesis for this study holds that each of these components are present within an effective intergenerational worship ministry.

One practical benefit of the musical and spiritual formation which occurs as a result of an effective intergenerational worship ministry is the cultivation of new worship leaders. Concerning this concept, Allen and Ross write, “Encourage cross-generational worship leaders.... Make a concentrated effort to draw on older members.... Also, mentoring teen, and even preteens, into this role can allow these younger members to listen in on the process, to hear the hearts of those who lead, to be included as equal partners and to contribute.”⁴³ Going a step further, Laura and Robert Keeley state, “By partnering experienced people with novices, we are

⁴² Howard Vanderwell, ed., *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 24.

⁴³ Allen and Ross, 201.

not only involving more people but also building a community and training a new generation of worship leaders.”⁴⁴

H2: The local evangelical church can most effectively engage Generation Z through use of technology, relationships and mentoring.

Practically speaking, the best way to engage with Generation Z is through the use of technology. They are so technologically connected that professor of psychology and generational expert Jean Twenge has dubbed the youngest generation, “iGen.”⁴⁵ Regarding communication practices, White explains that “when it comes to responding to a text or a direct message from a friend... Gen Z response is ‘immediate.’ The personal and the relational cut through the noise of their lives.”⁴⁶

As previously mentioned, Generation Z is a generation marked by loneliness and isolation. They are technologically connected, but relationally disconnected. Substantial, caring relationships are vital points of engagement for Generation Z. According to LifeWay Research, “teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school.”⁴⁷ Gordon Smith writes, “In speaking of the importance of inter-generational connections for young people, it is helpful to remember that this is particularly the case for those in the 15-25 age range because, at least in part, this is the pivotal period when a person typically moves from adolescence to adulthood.”⁴⁸ In other words, as Dave Sanders asserts, “it is incumbent on all three older generations to apply themselves to

⁴⁴ Vanderwell, 163.

⁴⁵ Twenge, 1-16.

⁴⁶ White, 124.

⁴⁷ Bradbury, 24.

⁴⁸ Gordon T. Smith, “Generation to Generation: Inter-Generality and Spiritual Formation in Christian Community,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 10, no. 2 (2017): 188.

the biblical task of intergenerational leadership/discipleship, specifically with millennials and screeners.... Mentor, mentor, mentor – get every generation involved and engaged in it at every level....”⁴⁹ For Generation Z, relationships are key.

Definition of Terms

Intergenerational ministry: the generations within a congregation join together in service and participation in the core activities of the church, resulting in meaningful interaction between the various generations.⁵⁰

Multigenerational ministry: programming exists for all generations, but interaction between generations is not assumed or encouraged.⁵¹

Generational theory: a recurring cycle of four distinct generational cohorts with specific patterns of behavior which correspond to recurring patterns in historical events.⁵²

Greatest Generation: those born between 1901 and 1924, who came of age during WWII.⁵³

Silent Generation: those born between 1925 and 1942, who are known for being hard working and loyal.⁵⁴

Baby Boomers: those born between 1943 and 1960, who are consumeristic and focused on individualistic preferences.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Dave Sanders, “Millennials and Screeners,” in *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Holly Catterton Allen (Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2018), 182.

⁵⁰ Allen and Ross, 17-19.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 19

⁵² William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 33.

⁵³ Allen, 77.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 77-78.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 78.

Gen X: those born between 1961 and 1981, who grew up as “latchkey kids” and maintain a cautious and pessimistic outlook as adults.⁵⁶

Millennials: those born between 1982 and 1995-2000, who came of age in the new millennium, in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks.⁵⁷

Generation Z: those born between 1995 and 2010 (approximately), who constitute the largest generation and are digital natives.⁵⁸

Chapter Summary

Functioning as a microcosm of the church at large, the local church worship ministry has reflected the common worship practices of the church of today by replacing models of intergenerational ministry with age-segregated ministry models. As a result of this shift, each generational cohort is impacted relationally, musically, and spiritually, with the greatest effects being experienced by Generation Z.

An assessment of generational engagement within worship ministries in local evangelical churches reveals the specific structure, implementation, and characteristics of the various ministry models. Careful study of this information is important for those who are charged with making decisions regarding the implementation of either an intergenerational worship ministry model or an age-segregated worship ministry model. Furthermore, the best methods of engagement with Generation Z by the local evangelical church must be assessed in order to successfully encourage their increased involvement in the local church worship ministry. The question of whether to implement an intergenerational worship ministry model or an age-

⁵⁶ Allen, 79-80.

⁵⁷ Allen, 80 and White, 37-38.

⁵⁸ White, 37-38.

segregated worship ministry model has far-reaching implications for every generation, but most critically for Gen Z.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter reviews literature which pertains to various issues related to generational engagement within the local church worship ministry. The literature review consists of five sections. First, literature is reviewed which addresses the three most common generational configurations of corporate worship and ministry within the local evangelical church: those which are age-segregated, those which are organized according to generational cohorts, and those which are intergenerational. Within section one, key contributing factors which lead to each specific configuration are addressed, as are the benefits and drawbacks of each type. The second section presents a review of the literature which discusses biblical and theological considerations for evaluating best practices for generational engagement within the local church. Section three reviews the literature pertaining to generational issues, including characteristics of the various currently-living generational cohorts, generational theory, and the proverbial “generation gap.” The fourth section is a review of literature addressing the implications of the various types of generational engagement for Generation Z. The fifth and concluding section summarizes current scholarship regarding generational considerations and generational engagement within the local church, addresses knowledge which is currently unknown, and identifies the gap in the literature regarding the generational engagement within the worship ministry of the local evangelical church.

Generational Configurations of Congregations and Ministries

Age-segregated

In the 21st Century evangelical church, as in the rest of society, “generational fragmentation is a cultural reality.”⁵⁹ Summarizing the fragmented reality which has emerged during the last one-hundred years, Allen writes,

...steady changes have occurred in society that have separated families and segregated age groups, not only in educational settings, but also in life in general. These changes include the universality of age-graded public education, the geographical mobility of families, the movement from extended to nuclear family, the rise of divorce and single-parent families, and the prevalence of retirement and nursing homes for older persons and preschools for the young.⁶⁰

As age-segregation took root in society, faith communities continued to be the one place where all generations came together and interacted with one another on a regular basis.⁶¹ However, “the dominant cultural ideology of individualism”⁶² eventually consumed the church as well, and age-segregation is now the norm in many of today’s evangelical churches.⁶³

Marketing themselves in such a way as to appeal to the preferences of individual age groups, churches often categorically segregate the generations according to age, education, and social needs.⁶⁴ As a result, members of an extended family might travel together to their local church campus to engage in corporate worship only to scatter and not see one another again until the ride home. The children go to “children’s church” and the teenagers participate in the “youth

⁵⁹ Darwin Glassford and Lynn Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 364–78.

⁶⁰ Holly Catterton Allen, “Bringing the Generations Together: Support from Learning Theory,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2005): 319.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 38.

⁶³ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era, 365; Brenda A. Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches: Maximizing Influence for Adolescent Spiritual Development” (Ed.D., Biola University, 2012), 16.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 367.

service,” while the adults attend a service tailored to their personal preferences and educational needs. For many evangelical churches, generational siloing has become the norm.⁶⁵

Hill and Harkness contend that age-segregation within the Christian practices of corporate worship and congregational ministry traces its roots to the establishment of age-segregated public schooling during the time of the Protestant Reformation.⁶⁶ However, the practice of segregating youth from adults, as we have come to know it, began with the establishment of the Christian Endeavor and YMCA movements of the late 19th century.⁶⁷ The Sunday-night meeting format of Christian Endeavor proved to be an effective means for reaching teenagers throughout the early 20th century.⁶⁸ When the popularity of the Christian Endeavor Sunday-night meetings began to dissipate in the 1940s, a new style of youth ministry emerged through organizations such as Young Life and Youth for Christ.⁶⁹ These ministry organizations effectively utilized a new strategy of reaching teenagers outside the traditional institutional church setting. During the late 20th century, churches increasingly hired youth ministry professionals, or “youth ministers,” who led specialized youth ministries within the local church, targeting teenagers with creative new ideas and formats.⁷⁰ From the late 20th century to today, the prevalent expectation is that to be effective, a church must offer relevant ministry to multiple age groups at one time. Failure to do so will result in a failure to appeal to families searching for a church home.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 30-31.

⁶⁶ Brian Hill, “Is It Time We Deschooled Christianity?” *Journal of Christian Education* 63 (November 1978): 5-21; Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerational Christian Education: An Imperative for Effective Education in Local Churches (Part 2),” *Journal of Christian Education* 42, no.1 (1998): 37-50.

⁶⁷ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era, 367.”

⁶⁸ Mark DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry: Reaching the Been-There, Done-That Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 21-22.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era, 367.”

As age segregation became the norm in evangelical churches during the second half of the 20th century, youth ministries began functioning as separate entities from the rest of the church body. Warning of the impending consequences of such extensive separation, Stuart Cummings-Bond penned an important article in 1989, outlining his concept of the “One-Eared Mickey Mouse.”⁷² According to Cummings-Bond, the typical local church youth ministry had become like an appendage or growth (the ear) on the local church (the body), separating from the church in an unhealthy manor, much like a tumor. Initially, Cummings-Bond’s concept was largely dismissed due to the prevalence, popularity, and apparent success of the youth ministry model.⁷³ However, within a few years of the inception of the “One-Eared Mickey Mouse” concept, a steady flow of books and articles were written by leaders in the youth ministry field, such as Mark DeVries and Mike Yaconelli, decrying the viability of youth ministry in its separate, tumor-like state.⁷⁴

The “One-Eared Mickey Mouse” concept of youth ministry points to some of the greater problems of age-segregation at all levels of the local church. For instance, age segregation results in isolation, rather than community. When churches are fragmented according to individual age groups, there is no sense of belonging to the larger community of the church family.⁷⁵ In other words, there is no sense of connection to the Body of Christ, as described in 1 Corinthians 12.⁷⁶ Without a strong connection to the Body of Christ through the local church, there is a high

⁷² Stuart Cummings-Bond, “The One-Eared Mickey Mouse,” *Youth Worker Journal* 6 (Fall 1989): 76-78.

⁷³ Chap Clark, ed., *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith, Youth, Family, and Culture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2016), 17.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

⁷⁵ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era, 368.”

⁷⁶ Brenda A. Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches: Maximizing Influence for Adolescent Spiritual Development,” (Ed.D., Biola University, 2012), 7.

probability that a student will abandon his or her faith after graduating from high school.⁷⁷

Concluding that a youth ministry that is not connected to the full body of the local church will not produce adults who are active members of the Body of Christ, Ketcham contends that the high rate of attrition from faith among post-high school emerging adults is an integration problem, rather than a retention problem.⁷⁸ As Santos observes, “Perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised when youth abandon the corporate body of the church after graduation – it wasn’t theirs from the start.”⁷⁹

Another pitfall of the age-segregated model of ministry found in many evangelical churches is the stunted, distorted version of spiritual formation which takes place in peer-to-peer environments.⁸⁰ When summarizing the distortions of spiritual formation which result when individuals are confined to their own peer group, Allen and Ross quote Mary Pipher’s alarming assessment:

A great deal of America’s social sickness comes from age segregation. If ten fourteen-year-olds are grouped together, they will form a *Lord of the Flies* culture with its competitiveness and meanness. But if ten people ages 2 to 80 are grouped together, they will fall into a natural age hierarchy that nurtures and teaches them all. For our own mental and societal health, we need to reconnect the age groups.⁸¹

Spiritual formation is a lifelong process. Therefore, for healthy spiritual formation to occur, the older generations need the passion, exuberance, and new insights of the younger generations,

⁷⁷ Chap Clark, *Adoptive Church: Creating an Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong*, Youth, Family, and Culture Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, 2018), 30.

⁷⁸ Sharon Galgay Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution” (Ph.D., Boston College, 2014), 6.

⁷⁹ Allen, ed., *Intergenerate*, 44.

⁸⁰ Frederick R. Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church,” 11.

⁸¹ Mary Pipher, “The New Generation Gap,” *USA Weekend*, March 19-21, 1999, p. 12, as quoted in Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 37.

while the younger generations need the wisdom, experience, and expertise of the older generations. All generations need regular interaction and involvement with the other generations in community in order to mature in a spiritually-healthy manner, and in order to develop a healthy self-identity.⁸² When limited to the peer-to-peer engagement of age-segregated environments, spiritual formation will be slowed and distorted, to the detriment of the Body of Christ.⁸³

Age segregation in the local church encourages an attitude of consumerism, especially among the youth. Ketcham believes that the “One-Eared Mickey Mouse” model fosters a service-provider approach to youth ministry.⁸⁴ In Ketcham’s view, age segregation in the church limits the youth to the role of consumers of the services the adults provide.⁸⁵ Ketcham warns, “The Christian faith is in danger of being understood by youth as a commodity to consume like a good cup of coffee, not a community in which to belong and participate.”⁸⁶ When “church” becomes yet another thing to consume in a consumer-saturated culture, individuals begin seeing themselves as the center of the community. When adolescents are conditioned to have a consumeristic mindset toward the church, they carry this mindset into adulthood.⁸⁷ As Santos explains, “If a young person’s spiritual practices are largely confined to Mickey’s ear, he may search for an environment that resembles that experience later in life because those norms were established during childhood and adolescence, for example, a unigenerational, casual gathering that sings current praise songs that change every few months.”⁸⁸ A consumeristic mentality,

⁸² Santos, “Why Now?” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 44-48.

⁸³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 192-195.

⁸⁴ Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution,” 7-26.”

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸⁷ Santos, “Why Now?” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 46-47.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 47.

cultivated through an age-segregated, service-provider approach to ministry does not bode well for long-term adherence to faith and connection to the Body of Christ.

An obvious benefit of age-segregated worship and ministry in the local evangelical church is the ability to offer customized, age-appropriate learning environments for each specific age group.⁸⁹ Age-segregated environments, led by hired professionals who specialize in specific age demographics, are often appealing to children and parents alike. Furthermore, ministry professionals have noted that age-segregated ministries are less work and are easier to facilitate than are intergenerational ministries.⁹⁰

Another benefit of age segregation is seen in the area of peer evangelism.⁹¹ Individuals are more inclined to invite their same-age friends to corporate worship, ministry offerings, and special activities that cater to their specific age demographic rather than to multigenerational events.⁹² Generational “sameness” provides a level of comfort for both the inviter and the invitee, thus providing greater success in evangelism and relationship-building with visitors.

Age-segregated ministry environments allow peer relationships to flourish, particularly in children and adolescents. Social science indicates that peer influence is prominent in nearly every area of development during adolescence, including “the formation of religious identity and a personal relationship with God.”⁹³ A strong social network of peers encourages retention and

⁸⁹ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era, 367.”

⁹⁰ Christine M. Ross, “A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry” (Ph.D., Saint Louis University, 2006), 106.

⁹¹ Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches, 17.”

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches,” 17.

engagement with the church at all generational levels, but especially among adolescents.⁹⁴ Stated succinctly, people want to be where their friends are.

In an age-segregated church structure, the worship ministry teams typically reflect the homogenous structures and ideologies which have been previously discussed. The worship ministry team which leads the “adult” service consists solely of adults, thereby facilitating corporate worship that is “by adults, for adults.”⁹⁵ The corporate worship in “children’s church” is primarily led by adults, thereby fulfilling the service-provider model of ministry.⁹⁶ The worship ministry team for the youth services either consists of adults who are providing a service to the youth, as Ketcham contends,⁹⁷ or a group of youth who are leading their peers, fulfilling adherence to the programmatic approach of youth ministry, as described by Clark.⁹⁸ In each area, the music of each group is primarily confined to the preferred musical language, or “heart music,” of each specific age demographic.⁹⁹

Generational Cohorts

In the early years of the 21st century, church growth strategists intensified the level of age segregation by encouraging churches to structure corporate worship to appeal to specific generational cohorts.¹⁰⁰ Generational cohorts have common characteristics and cultural norms which have been shaped by common historical events and cultural phenomena, particularly

⁹⁴ Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches,” 17.

⁹⁵ Laura and Robert J. Keeley, “Intergenerational Connectors in Worship,” *The Church of All Ages: Generations Worshiping Together*, ed. Howard Vanderwell (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2008), 147.

⁹⁶ Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution,” 7-26.”

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Clark, *Adoptive Church: Creating an Environment Where Emerging Generations Belong*, 30-32.

⁹⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 40-42; Fred P. Edie, *Book, Bath, Table, and Time: Christian Worship as Source and Resource for Youth Ministry* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007), 4-6; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Age: Generations Worshiping Together*, xiii-xv.

during their formative childhood and adolescent years.¹⁰¹ Although the characteristics of the various generational cohorts will be discussed later in the chapter, it is important to note that cohorts have their own general “personality,” including common attitudes and preferences.¹⁰² Capitalizing on the reality of common sets of generational characteristics, church growth experts of the 1970s and 1980s began promoting homogenous small groups within churches, thereby adhering to Donald McGavran’s Homogenous Units Principle (HUP).¹⁰³ Homogenous small groups soon evolved into homogeneity at the macrochurch level, as well.¹⁰⁴

As a result of the evangelical church trend of programming to appeal to the various generational cohorts, corporate worship has become segregated by group according to the perceived stylistic preferences of the individual cohorts.¹⁰⁵ Allen describes her discovery of this trend in 2000 when her family moved to California. She says they encountered churches which, “besides having age-specific children’s and teen worship services, were offering Gen X worship services as well as traditional services at 8:00 or 8:30 and contemporary worship services at 10:30 or 11:00, thus in effect dividing the church into five generations.”¹⁰⁶ Offering a more vernacular description of the effort to appeal to individual generational cohorts, a youth worker at a large church stated that the church staff “offered ‘hymns and the pipe organ’ to the older folks at an early service, ‘praise band and ‘Cat’s in the Cradle’” to the baby boomers at another, and ‘sacraments and Taize chants to the Gen-X’ers’ at a third ‘because they’re into the really old stuff.’”¹⁰⁷ Because corporate worship has been so tailored to the meet the perceived stylistic and

¹⁰¹ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations*, 8, 32-34; Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches, 19.

¹⁰² Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 9-99.

¹⁰³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 41.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, see footnote 21.

¹⁰⁵ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, xiv.

¹⁰⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 31.

¹⁰⁷ Edie, *Book, Bath, Table, and Time*, 5.

musical preferences of the various cohorts, congregations have been fragmented not only according to age – children, adolescents, and adults – but by generational cohort, as well.¹⁰⁸

In addition to the drawbacks of age-segregated worship and ministry which have previously been discussed, churches which tailor themselves to target a specific generational cohort relegate everyone outside the cohort to the periphery.¹⁰⁹ This issue becomes particularly problematic as the targeted cohort has children or has family members from other generations who want to worship with the same body.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, those who engage long-term in a church which is segregated according to age and generational cohort will rarely, if ever, have the opportunity to “worship with, minister with or even *know* those older and younger.”¹¹¹ As has been previously discussed, limiting one’s relationships to peer-to-peer engagement is relationally and spiritually detrimental to all, regardless of the generational cohort to which one belongs.

Intergenerational

Addressing the prevalence of intergenerationality throughout church history, Harkness writes, “Ever since the development of Christian faith communities in the post-Pentecost era of Christianity, there has been a consciousness that such communities need to encourage and embody a genuine intergenerationalism.”¹¹² Although age-segregation has gained popularity over the course of the last century, as its popularity has intensified due to the development of generational cohort stratification during the last thirty to forty years, interest in

¹⁰⁸ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, xiv.

¹⁰⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 31.

¹¹⁰ Ross, “A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry,” 140.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?,” *Religious Education* 93, no. 4 (September 1, 1998): 431.

intergenerationality in the church has begun to experience a resurgence.¹¹³ One of the primary realities fueling this interest resurgence is the alarming rate at which youth and emerging adults are abandoning their faith.¹¹⁴ After examining available research, researchers at the Fuller Youth Institute have concluded that “40 to 50 percent of kids who are connected to a youth group when they graduate high school will fail to stick with their faith in college.”¹¹⁵ As Snailum notes, exclusively age-segregated ministry “has not proven sustainable for ongoing transmission of faith and spiritual maturity among young adults who have grown up exclusively in youth ministries.”¹¹⁶

In their seminal work, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, Allen and Ross address the importance of intergenerational relationships for spiritual formation. According to their findings, “believers are formed spiritually as they interact together in complex, authentic, intergenerational Christian faith communities.”¹¹⁷ As Allen and Ross note, Nelson states that faith both begins and matures in a community of believers.¹¹⁸ Likewise, Westerhoff contends that the process of coming to faith, which he refers to as “enculturation,” occurs within the context of interactive, intergenerational Christian community.¹¹⁹ Kinnaman’s findings, based on recent extensive research, affirm these assertions.¹²⁰ According to Kinnaman, intergenerational

¹¹³ Holly Catterton Allen and Chris Barnett, “Addressing Two Intergenerational Questions” in *Intergenerate: Transforming Churches Through Intergenerational Ministry*, ed. Allen, 17.

¹¹⁴ Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 25-26.

¹¹⁵ Kara E. Powell, Brad M. Griffin, and Cheryl A. Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition: Practical Ideas to Nurture Long-term Faith in Teenagers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 15.

¹¹⁶ Brenda Snailum, “Implementing Intergenerational Youth Ministry Within Existing Evangelical Church Congregations: What Have We Learned?,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 169.

¹¹⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 73.

¹¹⁸ C. Ellis Nelson, *Where Faith Begins* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1967), as referenced in Allen and Ross, 65.

¹¹⁹ John H. Westerhoff III, *Will Our Children Have Faith?* rev. ed. (Toronto: Morehouse, 2000), as referenced in Allen and Ross, 66.

¹²⁰ David Kinnaman with Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving the Church...and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2011), 203-205. Kinnaman references eighteen studies conducted by the Barna Group during the five years prior to the writing of his book.

Christian communities nurture Christian spiritual formation in a profound and crucial way.¹²¹ Recent findings such as these regarding the importance of intergenerational Christian communities for healthy spiritual formation, combined with the increased number of youth and emerging adults abandoning the faith after being raised in age-segregated church environments have resulted in renewed interest in intergenerationality in the 21st century evangelical church.

An important benefit of intergenerationality in corporate worship is its positive impact on the spiritual formation of youth and emerging adults. According to the findings of the Fuller Youth Institute research team, “Involvement in all-church worship during high school is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation.”¹²² Further supporting the importance of intergenerational involvement in the spiritual lives of young people, the FYI research team also discovered that students who had served in middle school or children’s ministry during their high school years had “stickier faith in college.”¹²³ Participation in intergenerational worship and ministry plays a vital role in successfully developing faith maturity in teenagers that continues to grow during emerging adulthood.

Although spiritual formation occurs to some degree in age-segregated environments, healthy spiritual formation takes place most effectively in the context of intergenerational relationships.¹²⁴ As Vanderwell explains, spiritual formation occurs in the context of community as God acts on individuals through their interactions with others.¹²⁵ Furthermore, the interaction

¹²¹ Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 203.

¹²² Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 75.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 82-97; Frederick R. Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church,” 71-72; Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations,” 124; Vanderwell, 24.

¹²⁵ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 24.

of multiple generations is essential for healthy spiritual formation in that each generation learns from the others through mutual cooperation and edification.¹²⁶ In the assessment of Allen and Ross, formation occurs within the context of intergenerational Christian settings as believers at various stages of life and faith teach some and learn from others through participation in their church community.¹²⁷ Affirming their assessment, Linderman concludes that such intergenerational interactions in the context of ministry have a positive impact on overall church health.¹²⁸ Children and youth are not the only ones who are spiritually formed through intergenerational interactions: each generation learns from the others, and each generation has something to teach.¹²⁹ As Vanderwell succinctly summarizes, the young learn from the experiences of the old, while the old learn from the exploratory nature of the young.¹³⁰ Harkness refers to this mutual intergenerational formation as an “edification spiral,” in which individuals from the various generations within a faith community promote ongoing growth and renewal of those from other generations.¹³¹ Describing the edification spiral, Harkness writes,

This comes about as, for example, older people observe the enthusiastic spiritual growth and conversion experiences of young people; the adults’ reflection on this may lead to a recollection of their own previous spiritual experiences and perhaps even some degree of reliving them through the activities of the younger people – resulting in encouragement and/or challenge to renewal and continued growth in the adults’ faith beliefs and practices. The effect of change in the adults may then be observed by the younger members of the faith community, motivating the younger ones to continue and persevere in their faith journey. And so the spiral maintains its momentum for mutual upbuilding.¹³²

¹²⁶ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 24.

¹²⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 102.

¹²⁸ Larry G. Linderman, “The Relationship between Intergenerational Ministry Practices and Church Health” (Ph.D., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2016), 211.

¹²⁹ David A. Eikenberry, “Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation,” 18-19.

¹³⁰ Vanderwell, 24.

¹³¹ Harkness, “Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations,” 124.

¹³² *Ibid.*

Without intergenerational worship and ministry in the Christian community, the healthy spiritual formation which takes place through the edification spiral will not occur.

Work in the field of developmental psychology further supports the importance of intergenerational relationships for healthy spiritual formation for all generations. Erik Erikson refers to the interaction of multiple generations as *mutuality*.¹³³ According to Erikson, each generation needs interaction with other age groups in order to mature fully and properly.¹³⁴ In Pendergraft's view, age segregation impedes healthy movement through each of the stages of development.¹³⁵ James Fowler's theory of faith development, which is the most cited theory in the field,¹³⁶ describes six progressive stages of faith.¹³⁷ These stages of faith encompass each of the generations. According to Fowler, the social interaction which occurs in the context of community is crucial for healthy faith development in all six stages.¹³⁸ Therefore, intergenerational relationships are crucial for healthy spiritual formation for all generations.

Another spiritual benefit of participation in intergenerational worship and ministry is the sense of belonging which results from ongoing intergenerational relationships.¹³⁹ According to Prest, children who participate in intergenerational corporate worship are "assimilated...with a deep sense of belonging" as part of the body of Christ.¹⁴⁰ Perhaps no generation is in greater need of a sense of belonging than the teenage members of Generation Z. Powell, Mulder, and

¹³³ Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1963).

¹³⁴ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 87; Ross, 24.

¹³⁵ Robert Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains Through Crises," 283.

¹³⁶ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 37.

¹³⁷ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (San Francisco: Harper, 1981).

¹³⁸ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*; James W. Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation: Stages of Faith and the Public Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991).

¹³⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 195.

¹⁴⁰ Eddie Prest, *From One Generation to Another* (Capetown, South Africa: Training for Leadership, 1993), 25, as quoted in Allen and Ross, 194.

Griffin contend that “a defining experience for this generation of teenagers is systemic abandonment,” resulting from increased detachment from busy or self-absorbed parents.¹⁴¹ An important and beneficial response to systemic abandonment is systemic support from an intergenerational body of believers.¹⁴² Likewise, emerging adults experience a similar need for the nurturing and safety of loving intergenerational relationships.¹⁴³ Older generations also experience a sense of belonging as they invest in loving relationships with younger generations. As the older generations share their wisdom and experience with the children, youth, and emerging adults, and the younger generations inspire the older adults through their vitality and new ideas, all generations experience a sense of belonging.¹⁴⁴

A sense of belonging fosters understanding and unity among the generations who are engaged in intergenerational worship and ministry.¹⁴⁵ Ross writes that the leaders of the four intergenerational congregations in her study reported that “members became more accepting of each other’s strengths and weaknesses and became more willing to alter some of their preferences in order to better meet the needs of the whole community. The leaders felt that intergenerationality helped promote a we/us rather than an us/them mentality.”¹⁴⁶ The increased level of understanding and unity described by those in Ross’ study is a product of the cultivation of intergenerational relationships which naturally occurs in the context of intergenerational worship and ministry. However, as Harkness notes, all age groups within an intergenerational worship/ministry setting must be considered in order to achieve mutual acceptance of all

¹⁴¹ Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: 6 Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2016), 107.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 175.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 107.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Christine M. Ross, “Four Congregations That Practice Intergenerationality,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 9, no. 1 (Spring 2012): 143.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

generations, which is essential for a genuine sense of belonging and unity among the generations.¹⁴⁷

Another important benefit of intergenerational worship and ministry is the increased opportunity for modeling,¹⁴⁸ or mentoring,¹⁴⁹ between the generations. As Ketcham notes, the preliminary results from the National Study of Youth and Religion show that the religious faith of youth reflects the religious life of the adults in their lives, indicating that invariably, “youth become what they see.”¹⁵⁰ Van der Walt contends that in order for a Christian worldview to be successfully transferred to a young person, that young person has to see a Christian worldview exemplified in the life of the mentoring adult.¹⁵¹ Mature believers walking alongside younger generations offer the best method for successful Christian faith transference to youth who are searching for identity and purpose.¹⁵² As Van der Welt explains, “Christian mentors have to *guide* their pupils, students, or mentees to a specific goal, in this case to the acceptance of a Christian worldview necessary for an own identity. They have to *unfold* God’s entire creation for the receivers, *enabling* them to live in the world according to God’s sovereign will for every aspect of their life.”¹⁵³ Although they are rare in churches that segregate according to age, opportunities for Christian modeling through mentoring relationships abound in intergenerational church environments.

¹⁴⁷ Harkness, “Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?, 435.”

¹⁴⁸ Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution,” 102-103; Pendergraft, “Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains Through Crises,” 287-288.

¹⁴⁹ Bennie J. van der Walt, “Sharing an Integral Christian Worldview with a Younger Generation: Why and How Should It Be Done and Received?,” *In Die Skriflig; Potchefstroom* 51, no. 1 (2017), 5. <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.liberty.edu/10.4102/ids.v51i1.2245>.

¹⁵⁰ Ketcham, 102-103.

¹⁵¹ Van der Walt, 5.

¹⁵² Pendergraft, 287.

¹⁵³ Van der Walt, 5.

An intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church offers a fertile field for cultivating mentoring relationships between the generations. From the band to the vocal team to the choir, the worship ministry consists of various types of musical ensembles, where musical and spiritual mentoring naturally take place.¹⁵⁴ According to Sharp, the musical ensemble in the 21st century is “a vibrant learning environment and a subtle mentoring environment.”¹⁵⁵ Rehearsals are prime opportunities for older, more experienced musicians to teach and train younger musicians in both musical skills and spiritual truths.¹⁵⁶ Research indicates that individuals best learn skills and implement new knowledge when they are paired with a skilled and supportive partner.¹⁵⁷ Likewise, rehearsals offer opportunities for younger musicians to challenge and encourage older musicians with their enthusiasm and new ideas. As Sharp explains, mentoring within the context of a musical rehearsal is “reciprocal and democratic,”¹⁵⁸ thereby benefitting all involved, regardless of age or experience level. Furthermore, local church worship ministry rehearsal settings are training grounds for the next generation of worship leaders, as experienced leaders share their musical and spiritual insights with novices and developing musicians.¹⁵⁹ The church has a responsibility to be good stewards of the God-given gifts of each generation that is present within the community, and good stewardship of the musical giftedness within a worship ministry occurs best in the context of intergenerational ensembles.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ Tim Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts: Helping Others Find Their Voice* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc., 2011).

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁵⁶ Laura and Robert J. Keeley, “Intergenerational Connectors in Worship” in Vanderwell, 150-152.

¹⁵⁷ Erika Carlson Knuth, “Intergenerational Connections and Faith Development in Adolescence” (Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology, 2012), 5.

¹⁵⁸ Sharp, 160.

¹⁵⁹ Keeley in Vanderwell, 163.

¹⁶⁰ Eikenberry, “Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation,” 19.

In addition to musical benefits, those participating in intergenerational worship ministries commonly experience positive changes in cross-generational attitudes.¹⁶¹ These attitudinal shifts are manifested through “the creation of interpersonal attachments, the development of mutual concern and caring for one another, and the dissolution of stereotypes.”¹⁶² Research indicates that this is particularly true in vocal ensembles.¹⁶³ Therefore, as Whittaker argues, participation in choir is a significant means of successfully incorporating multiple age cohorts within the intergenerational worship model.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to the American system of music education, which typically divides ensembles according to age, intergenerational ensembles within the local church offer opportunities for cross-generational music-making which are absent elsewhere.¹⁶⁵

Although there are many benefits to intergenerationality within the worship ministry of the local evangelical church, drawback also exist. One such drawback is the increased level of perceived frustration among the generational cohorts. Frustration sometimes occurs during rehearsals due to varying skill levels and varying preferred methods of learning.¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, frustration occurs because of the disconnect which results from the varying desired outcomes of the different generational cohorts.¹⁶⁷ On a practical note, planning rehearsals and services for

¹⁶¹ Varvarigou, Creech, Hallam, and McQueen, “Bringing different generations together in music-making: An Intergenerational Music Project in East London,” 208; Colleen Conway, and Thomas M. Hodgman. “College and Community Choir Member Experiences in a Collaborative Intergenerational Performance Project.” *Journal of Research in Music Education* 56, no. 3 (2008): 228-234.

¹⁶² Alice-Ann Darrow et al., “The Effect of an Intergenerational Choir Performance on Audience Members’ Attitudinal Statements Toward Teens and Older Persons,” *International Journal of Music Education* 38, no. 1 (November 1, 2001): 44.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ William T. Whittaker, “Exploring Characteristics of Choral Ministry within Georgia Southern Baptist Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry” (DMA diss., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015), 13.

¹⁶⁵ Melanie Jane Brooks, “Building Bridges through Music: A Recording and Performance Collaboration with Adult Composers, Young Soloists, and Collegiate Band Accompaniment” (D.M.A., Arizona State University, 2018), 62.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Andrew Sutherland, “‘I Tried Hard to Control My Temper’: Perceptions of Older Musicians in Intergenerational Collaboration,” *The Qualitative Report; Fort Lauderdale* 23, no. 11 (November 2018): 2675–2676.

intergenerational groups requires more forethought and preparation than preparing for age-homogenous groups.¹⁶⁸ Regarding spiritual dangers for children involved in intergenerational worship, Harkness warns of the increased possibility of manipulation which exists when children are present in intergenerational environments.¹⁶⁹ Care must be taken to avoid manipulation during intergenerational worship within the local church.

In order to successfully implement an effective intergenerational worship ministry, all generations must be invited to contribute in meaningful ways. Clark emphasizes the importance of empowered contributions from all members of the “family.”¹⁷⁰ Offering his definition of a contributor, Clark writes, “A participant is *allowed* to be with us. A contributor is a coworker we must listen to and take seriously.”¹⁷¹ Allen and Ross not only encourage the use of cross-generational worship leaders on a worship team,¹⁷² but also contend that the worship planning team should include representatives of all generations in order to implement ideas in corporate worship which reflect the entire faith community.¹⁷³ Arguing for the inclusion of youth in the corporate worship life of the local church, Bradbury writes, “Intergenerational worship demands not just that we invite youth to attend, but that we give them opportunities to use their gifts in worship as ushers, acolytes, lectors, musicians and assisting ministers, not only on token occasions like ‘Youth Sunday’ but throughout the year. Sticky faith forms when adults and teens lead worship together.”¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁸ Conway and Hodgeman, “College and Community Choir Member Experiences in a Collaborative Intergenerational Performance Project,” 234-235.

¹⁶⁹ Allan G. Harkness, “Intergenerational Corporate Worship as a Significant Educational Activity,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 7, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 5,3, 16.

¹⁷⁰ Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 146-148.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 147.

¹⁷² Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 201.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 199.

¹⁷⁴ Jen Bradbury, “Sticky Faith: What Keeps Kids Connected to Church?,” 25.

Biblical and Theological Considerations

Any determination regarding best practices of generational engagement in worship and ministry in the local church must be founded on the teachings of Scripture. Regarding the preponderance of biblical teaching on the matter, Allen and Ross observe that “Scripture presumes that faith formation occurs within intergenerational, familial, and community settings.”¹⁷⁵ Offering a more detailed assessment, Harkness writes, “The overall picture from a biblical and theological perspective is that intergenerational interaction is crucial to enable Christians to move towards increasing maturity in their faith through the unity of word, behavior, and attitude, which was modeled and advocated by Jesus himself and which was integral to the ecclesiology of the early church.”¹⁷⁶ An examination of the biblical and theological perspectives of which Harkness writes is essential for an accurate understanding of the benefits of engaging in an intergenerational worship ministry within the local evangelical church.

Deuteronomy 6

The Lord’s instructions in Deuteronomy 6, as delivered by Moses, offer a pattern for the transference of matters of faith across the generations:¹⁷⁷

“This is the command – the statutes and ordinances – the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, so that you may follow them in the land you are about to enter and possess. Do this so that you may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life by keeping all his statutes and commands I am giving you, your son, and your grandson, and so that you may have a long life. Listen, Israel, and be careful to follow them, so that you may prosper and multiply greatly, because the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you a land flowing with milk and honey. Listen, Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These words that I am giving you today are to be in your heart. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you sit in your house and when you walk

¹⁷⁵ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 77.

¹⁷⁶ Harkness, “Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations,” 124.

¹⁷⁷ Robert W. Pazmiño and S. Steve Kang, “Generational Fragmentations and Christian Education,” *Christian Education Journal; Glen Ellyn* 8, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 383.

along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Bind them as a sign on your hand and let them be a symbol on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and your city gates.... When your son asked you in the future, ‘What is the meaning of the decrees, statutes, and ordinances that the Lord our God has commanded you?’ tell him, ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a strong hand. Before our eyes the Lord inflicted great and devastating signs and wonders on Egypt, on Pharaoh, and on all his household, but he brought us from there in order to lead us in and give us the land that he swore to our fathers. The Lord commanded us to follow all these statutes and to fear the Lord our God for our prosperity always and for our preservation, as it is today. Righteousness will be ours if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us.’”¹⁷⁸

The pattern of Deuteronomy 6 is that of generations sharing God’s works, promises, and character with one another, often in response to the questions of children.¹⁷⁹ Vanderwell contends that the words of Deuteronomy 6 are “a bold plea for people of all ages to remain involved in each other’s lives.”¹⁸⁰ The principle at work within the pattern is one of mutual benefit: one generation teaches the truths of the faith to the next generation, but as they teach, their own faith is renewed and fully realized.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, Deuteronomy 6 illustrates that a faith that teaches most effectively is a lived faith that evokes questions from the observers.¹⁸² However, this interactive faith transference cannot take place between the generations unless the generations are together.

Psalms

The book of Psalms is replete with calls to proclaim the power, mighty acts, and wonders of God to the coming generations.¹⁸³ As with the instructions in Deuteronomy 6, the psalmists’

¹⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 6:1-9, 20-25 (CSB)

¹⁷⁹ Pazmiño and Kang, “Generational Fragmentations and Christian Education,” 383.

¹⁸⁰ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 25.

¹⁸¹ Patrick Miller, as referenced in Dale K. Steele, “A Biblical and Theological Rationale for a Familial Motif of Congregational Life That Facilitates the Transfer of Faith from Generation to Generation” (D.Min., Anderson University, 2010), 123-124.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁸³ e.g., Psalm 22:30; 71:18; 102:18; 145:4

call to instruct the next generations in the things of God is a call not solely to parents, but rather to the entire nation of Israel.¹⁸⁴ The spiritual formation and teaching of the generations is the responsibility of the entire faith community. Consider the instructive words of Psalm 78:1-8:

My people, hear my instruction; listen to the words from my mouth. I will declare wise saying; I will speak mysteries from the past – things we have heard and know and that our fathers have passed down to us. We will not hide them from their children, but will tell a future generation the praiseworthy acts of the Lord, his might, and the wondrous works he has performed. He established a testimony in Jacob and set up a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children so that a future generation – children yet to be born – might know. They were to rise and tell their children so that they might put their confidence in God and not forget God’s works, but keep his commands. Then they would not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was loyal and whose spirit was not faithful to God. (CSB)

As Vanderwell points out, Asaph’s instructions reference at least four generations, and possibly five.¹⁸⁵ Asaph is giving a clear call to all the generations to participate in the spiritual instruction and formation of the other generations as they help one another stay faithful to God.

Vanderwell contends that the words of Asaph and the other psalm writers regarding intergenerational teaching and formation is instructive for today’s church. He writes, “The interplay of the generations in reminding each other of the truth of the gospel and the acts of God is an indispensable element of the continuation of the church.”¹⁸⁶ Simply put, each generation is responsible for shaping the faith and practice of the next generation. Failing to fulfill this responsibility is a spiritual detriment to the future generations.

¹⁸⁴ Jay Sedwick, “Teaching for Adoptive Ministry” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 305.

¹⁸⁵ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 26.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

Examples of Intergenerationality from Scripture

Many examples of formative non-familial intergenerational interactions are found throughout Scripture. As evidence of intergenerational interaction within the biblical record, Harkness provides the following list of examples: Moses and Jethro in Exodus 18; Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth; Samuel and Eli in 1 Samuel 1-3; David and Saul in 1 Samuel 16-31; Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1; Simeon and Anna as they respond to the presentation of the newborn Jesus in Luke 2; Jesus' disciples interacting with the boy with five loaves and two fish in John 6; Jesus and various young people as recorded throughout the Gospels;¹⁸⁷ Paul and Timothy in Acts 16, 1 Timothy, and 2 Timothy; the baptism of the Philippian jailer and his family in Acts 16; Paul and Eutychus in Acts 20; and Paul with the Christians in Tyre in Acts 21.¹⁸⁸ Although the list is lengthy, Harkness notes that when examined against the totality of the biblical record, skeptics may argue that the list provides insufficient evidence to support intergenerational interaction as a biblical principle.¹⁸⁹ However, as Harkness explains, one important hermeneutical principle requires understanding the Bible in light of the historical-cultural context in which it was written.¹⁹⁰ Both the Old Testament and New Testament were written in a time and culture when faith communities were naturally intergenerational communities. Therefore, the limited number of writings which address intergenerational issues leads naturally to the assumption that faith communities were functioning well in the intergenerational context, which increases the significance of the intergenerational interactions which are listed.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁷ E.g. Luke 7:11-17; Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 9:14-29.

¹⁸⁸ Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 121-122.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

In addition to personal intergenerational interactions, records of intergenerational worship gatherings are also found throughout Scripture.¹⁹² For instance, when Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness, he called the people to a time of worship for the purpose of renewing the covenant.¹⁹³ Moses described the gathered worshiping congregation as “the leaders of your tribes, your elders, and your officials, all the men of Israel, your children, your women, and the aliens who are in your camp.”¹⁹⁴ Joshua later called for a similar worship service for the purpose of covenant renewal, during which Joshua read all the words of Moses “before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the aliens who resided among them.”¹⁹⁵ Later, Jehoshaphat led a service of worship, during which “all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children.”¹⁹⁶ After Nehemiah led the Israelites in successfully rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem, Ezra gathered the people and read the book of the law to them from early morning to midday “in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand.”¹⁹⁷ The worship gatherings recorded in Scripture were predominantly intergenerational gatherings.¹⁹⁸

Another biblical example with intergenerational implications is recorded in Luke 2:41-52, which provides the only Scriptural account of Jesus as an adolescent. In this account, Jesus at age twelve travels with his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. After the festivities, Jesus’ parents began the trip back to Nazareth, but Jesus remained in Jerusalem. However, his parents did not realize that he was missing until after a full day had passed. After returning to Jerusalem,

¹⁹² Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 21-22.

¹⁹³ Deuteronomy 29

¹⁹⁴ Deuteronomy 29:10-11 (NRSV)

¹⁹⁵ Joshua 8:35 (NRSV)

¹⁹⁶ 2 Chronicles 20:13 (NRSV)

¹⁹⁷ Nehemiah 8:3 (NRSV)

¹⁹⁸ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 20-24.

three days passed before they found him in the temple with the teachers. Powell, Mulder, and Griffin raise practical yet revelatory questions regarding the days of Jesus' separation from his parents: "Where did Jesus sleep? Who made sure he was safe? And maybe most importantly, *who fed this boy?*"¹⁹⁹ In their opinion, odds are high that the faith community in Jerusalem welcomed the adolescent Jesus, cared for him, and met his needs, thereby setting an example for faith communities in the 21st Century.²⁰⁰

Paul's Household Motif

Caring for and interacting with fellow believers as one cares for and interacts with one's own family is the pattern Paul prescribes in each of his epistles.²⁰¹ Paul's household motif, also termed the household tables²⁰² or the kinship expressions,²⁰³ undeniably reveals his concept of the Christian community as family.²⁰⁴ Furthermore, 1 Timothy 5:1-16 and Titus 2:1-10 indicate that the Christian community is an intergenerational family,²⁰⁵ marked by reciprocal intergenerational relationships.²⁰⁶ Burns-Marko explains that Paul utilizes the household metaphor in order to bring about "an expanded view of interdependence – an interdependence of generations."²⁰⁷ This intergenerational interdependence is particularly evident in Paul's pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus,²⁰⁸ where intergenerality is revealed as a way of life, and not merely as a code of conduct.²⁰⁹

¹⁹⁹ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 177.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 177-178.

²⁰¹ Joseph H. Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 126.

²⁰² Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 122.

²⁰³ Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 99.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 126; Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 83; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 26.

²⁰⁵ Harkness 2012, 122.

²⁰⁶ Hellerman, 104-106; Harkness 2012, 122; Allen and Ross, 83.

²⁰⁷ Burns-Marko, "Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together," 38.

²⁰⁸ Allen and Ross, 83; Vanderwell, 26-27.

²⁰⁹ Burns-Marko, "Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together," 38.

As Harkness notes, Paul's inclusion of children in his directives indicates that children were fully engaged, interactive members of the community.²¹⁰ Paul could not have addressed children as he does in Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21 unless he assumed that children would naturally be present and engaged within the Christian community.²¹¹ Therefore, the household of God as described by Paul, which Clark offers as a model for youth ministry, spans the generations from the youngest children to the oldest senior citizens.²¹²

Ecclesiology

In addition to an examination of biblical examples and teachings regarding generational engagement within faith communities, an assessment of best practices for generational engagement within the 21st Century evangelical church also requires a sound understanding of biblical ecclesiology. According to Harkness, Christian ecclesiology involves an understanding that the church is an intergenerational community.²¹³ Affirming Harkness's assertion, Allen and Ross explain that "first-century churches were multigenerational entities, with children present for worship, healings, prayer meetings, even perhaps when persecutions were perpetrated."²¹⁴ A proper understanding of Christian ecclesiology recognizes that the church consists of members of every age group, from children to senior citizens.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Harkness 2012, 122; Allen and Ross, 83.

²¹¹ Harkness 2012, 122.

²¹² Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 64-65.

²¹³ Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?," 437.

²¹⁴ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 82.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 82-84; Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?," 436-437.

Good ecclesiology means understanding that the church is a family.²¹⁶ Early Christians recognized that being a Christian meant being a part of a new family.²¹⁷ Hellerman defines this new family as a “surrogate family...whose members are related to one another neither by birth nor by marriage, but who nevertheless (a) employ kinship terminology to describe group relationships and (b) expect family-like behavior to characterize interactions among group members.”²¹⁸ The surrogate family that is the church is an adoptive family²¹⁹ full of siblings whose ages span the generations.²²⁰ It is in the context of this intergenerational surrogate family that faith formation takes place,²²¹ as all generations participate as contributors to the faith community, rather than merely observe as spectators.²²² Therefore, perhaps the 21st Century corporate worship service should be viewed more as a “gathering in the family room” than as a “trip to the theater.”²²³

Good ecclesiology means understanding that the church is the Body of Christ.²²⁴ As Fay states, “Christian community as the Apostle Paul described is a body where each person regardless of age or experience is integrated into the whole life of the church.”²²⁵ Paul’s description of the Body of Christ indicates that if any part of the body is removed, the entire body suffers from its absence.²²⁶ Therefore, churches that primarily exist to meet the needs of a

²¹⁶ As has already been addressed in this chapter, Paul’s household motif indicates that the church is a family. However, the practice of the first-century church, as recorded throughout the book of Acts, indicates this truth, as well.

²¹⁷ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 121; Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 225.

²¹⁸ Hellerman, 4.

²¹⁹ Burns-Marko, “Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together,” 47.

²²⁰ DeVries, 121; Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution,” 66.

²²¹ DeVries, 157.

²²² Mark Cannister, “Thinking Ecclesologically: Teenagers Becoming Part of the Church,” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark ((Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 141.

²²³ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 183.

²²⁴ Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

²²⁵ Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church,” 71.

²²⁶ Burns-Marko, “Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together,” 39.

single generation or scatter according to age-specific groupings result in stunted spiritual formation and reduced effectiveness in both the church itself and the world at large.²²⁷ When churches deny children and youth the opportunity to contribute to the body, they do so to the detriment of the entire body, but with the most damage being done to the youngest generations.²²⁸ The Body of Christ is healthiest and most effective when all generations are regularly and actively engaged with one another in ongoing relationship as many parts who constitute one whole.²²⁹

Generational Issues

David Kinnaman refers to the church as “a partnership of generations fulfilling God’s purposes in their time.”²³⁰ In most multigenerational churches, this “partnership” includes six generations: The G.I./Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z.²³¹ Navigating a successful partnership between the various generations in the church body requires a high level of generational intelligence.²³² In order to achieve the necessary level of generational intelligence, one must understand generational theory, as well the influences and characteristics of each of the various individual generational cohorts.²³³

²²⁷ Eikenberry, “Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation,” 19-20; Allen, 35; Burns-Marko, 39-40.

²²⁸ William R. Myers, “Youth Ministry After Christendom,” *Religious Education* 111, no. 2 (March 14, 2016): 180; Fay, 71; Santos in Allen, 46-47.

²²⁹ Allen, *Intergenerate*, 35.

²³⁰ Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me*.

²³¹ Lynn Barger Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 76.

²³² Haydn Shaw, *Generational IQ: Christianity Isn’t Dying, Millennials Are the Problem, And the Future Is Bright* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2015), 19-21.

²³³ Shaw, 19-21; Allen and Ross, 142-155; Elliott in Allen, 73-83; Strauss and Howe, 32-35.

Generational Theory

The development of the concept of generational theory is largely credited to William Strauss and Neil Howe, who explain their theory in great detail in their seminal work, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*.²³⁴ According to Strauss and Howe, a generation is defined as “a cohort-group whose length approximates the span of a phase of life and whose boundaries are fixed by peer personality.”²³⁵ Although researchers disagree on the exact year during which a generation begins and ends, it is generally agreed that the approximate length of a generation is twenty to twenty-five years.²³⁶ Strauss and Howe contend that the boundaries of a generation are determined by the historical and cultural influences surrounding the birth and coming of age of the generational cohort.²³⁷ Furthermore, these same historical and cultural influences impact the peer personality of the generational cohort, resulting in wide variances between the generations.²³⁸ Generational theory addresses the interplay between the peer personalities of the generational cohorts.²³⁹ As Allen and Ross explain,

Generational theory spans all ages and suggests that there are differences in age-related groups of people due to a cyclical pattern driven by changing values and attitudes of each new generation.... Generational theory indicates that a fifty-year-old Boomer will view life very differently from the way an older Silent saw life at that same age. Not only did society change between the time the Silent was fifty and the time the Boomer turned fifty, but the characteristics common to each generation mean they will view even similar circumstances differently.²⁴⁰

²³⁴ Strauss and Howe's work is referenced in Allen, Allen and Ross, Shaw, Jackson and Roof, Clark, et al, as the foundational explanation of generational theory and generational characteristics. Although many books and articles have been written on the topic since their 1991 publication, Strauss and Howe is considered to be the authoritative work on generational theory.

²³⁵ Strauss and Howe, 60.

²³⁶ Elliott in Allen, 76.

²³⁷ Strauss and Howe, 64-66.

²³⁸ Ibid., 63-64.

²³⁹ Allen and Ross, 144-145.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 144.

Excluding the youngest and oldest generations, Strauss and Howe contend that the remaining four generational cohorts combine to form a generational “constellation.”²⁴¹ It is this generational constellation which then provides the “snapshot impression of the American lifecycle of the moment.”²⁴² An accurate understanding of a cultural and historical era must include an understanding of the current generational constellation.²⁴³ In order to understand a specific generational constellation, one must be able to identify and understand the generational types which make up the constellation, while also grasping the way in which each type relates to the others. Affecting the way it relates to a faith community as well as to culture, each generation “bears the distinct imprint of a huge set of influences shaping its outlook, sensitivity, and institutional style.”²⁴⁴ Strauss and Howe have identified four generational types which recur in the same pattern throughout history: Idealist, Reactive, Civic, and Adaptive.²⁴⁵ These generational cycles correspond to recurring types of historical events and recurring patterns of generational characteristics.²⁴⁶ Identifying the influences and characteristics of the four generational types offers a predictive glimpse into the future needs, contributions, and experiences of the youngest generation of a cultural and historical moment.²⁴⁷

The passage of four generations marks the completion of a generational cycle, which covers a period of approximately ninety years.²⁴⁸ Each generational cycle experiences both a secular crisis and a spiritual awakening, which Strauss and Howe refer to as social moments.²⁴⁹

²⁴¹ Strauss and Howe, 31-34.

²⁴² Ibid., 32.

²⁴³ Ibid., 32-33.

²⁴⁴ Jackson W. Carroll and Wade Clark Roof, *Bridging Divided Worlds: Generational Cultures in Congregations* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 36.

²⁴⁵ Strauss and Howe, 33-40; 43-57.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 33-40; 43-57; Allen and Ross, 145-150.

²⁴⁷ Strauss and Howe, 35-40; 43-57.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 35-37.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 35-37; 71-75.

Like the four generational types, Strauss and Howe contend that social moments follow a predictable pattern: “Social moments normally arrive in time intervals roughly separated by two phases of life (approximately forty to forty-five years), and they alternate in type between secular crises and spiritual awakenings.”²⁵⁰ Interestingly, Strauss and Howe explain that the dominant generations, the Idealists and the Civics, are entering rising adulthood and elderhood during social moments, while the recessive generations, the Reactives and Adaptives, are entering youth and midlife.²⁵¹ Recognizing this recurring pattern offers additional predictive insights into the future characteristics, needs, and experiences of the rising generations.²⁵²

Characteristics of Generational Cohorts

As previously mentioned, Strauss and Howe contend that each generation has its own “peer personality.”²⁵³ A generation’s peer personality is the summation of its general characteristics, attributes, and attitudes.²⁵⁴ Researchers agree that descriptions of generational peer personalities are generalities rather than certainties which fit every individual,²⁵⁵ with Strauss and Howe going so far as to refer to a generation’s peer personality as “essentially a caricature of its prototypical member.”²⁵⁶ Furthermore, an accurate examination of the characteristics of a generation requires understanding that analysis of the attributes and attitudes of a specific generation is weakest at its chronological boundaries.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, an understanding of the characteristics of the peer personalities of the current living generations is

²⁵⁰ Strauss and Howe, 71.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 72-73.

²⁵² Strauss and Howe, 69-79.

²⁵³ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 60, 63-64.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 63.

²⁵⁵ Paul Taylor and the Pew Research Center, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown* (New York: Public Affairs, 2015), 63-65; Allen and Ross, 144-145; Elliott in Allen, 76; Strauss and Howe, 63-64.

²⁵⁶ Strauss and Howe, 63.

²⁵⁷ Taylor and Pew Research Center, 65.

essential to successfully navigating generational engagement within the local evangelical church.²⁵⁸

G.I./Greatest Generation

The oldest living generation, born between 1901 and 1924,²⁵⁹ is commonly known by two names: the G.I. Generation²⁶⁰ and the Greatest Generation, a term coined by television journalist Tom Brokaw.²⁶¹ Both names allude to the reality that this generation was marked by the national crisis of World War II, and rose to face the crisis through dedication, teamwork,²⁶² and a singular sense of purpose.²⁶³ According to Strauss and Howe's generational rubric, the dominant G.I. Generation²⁶⁴ is a civic generation²⁶⁵ known as a group of upbeat team players.²⁶⁶ Members of this generation have a high level of institutional trust, primarily because they experienced a government which successfully fought and won a war, cared for its veterans, and rebuilt a post-war economy.²⁶⁷ A strong sense of local community is a high priority for this generation. The combination of a high level of institutional trust and a strong sense of community results in a positive view of the institutional church for the G.I. Generation.²⁶⁸ For some members of this generation, the church has been a place to turn for guidance, while for

²⁵⁸ Allen and Ross, 143-145; Elliott in Allen, 76; Taylor and Pew Research Center, 65.

²⁵⁹ Strauss and Howe, 261.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 261-294.

²⁶¹ Elliott in Allen, 77.

²⁶² Allen and Ross, 145-146.

²⁶³ Elliott in Allen, 77.

²⁶⁴ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁶⁵ Strauss and Howe explain the Civic Generations as follows: "A dominant, outer-fixated CIVIC GENERATION grows up as increasingly protected youths after a spiritual awakening; comes of age overcoming a secular crisis; unites into a heroic and achieving cadre of rising adults; sustains that image while building institutions as powerful midlifers; and emerges as busy elders attacked by the next spiritual awakening." Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁶⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 145-146.

²⁶⁷ Elliott, "Generational Theory and Faith Communities" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 77.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

others, joining the local church was simply “the right thing to do.”²⁶⁹ As the G.I. Generation passes away, many mourn the simultaneous passing of the values and institutions its members worked so hard to create.²⁷⁰

Silent Generation

The next generation in the chronological flow is the Silent Generation, which consists of those born between 1925 and 1942.²⁷¹ This recessive generation came of age in the shadow of the dominant, leadership-oriented G.I. Generation.²⁷² As a result, the Silent Generation has produced a plethora of trusted assistants and skilled managers, but no United States presidents.²⁷³ This adaptive generation²⁷⁴ is characterized as patriotic and loyal,²⁷⁵ as conservative and conformist,²⁷⁶ and as comforted by the status quo,²⁷⁷ all of which lead them to be resistant to change.²⁷⁸ Known to be passive parents and effective peacemakers, Silents are fair-minded listeners, which sometimes leads to indecisiveness and inner conflict regarding personal beliefs.²⁷⁹ However, like the G.I. Generation before them, the Silent Generation has a positive view of the church, and has largely remained loyal to the church of their community, often filling volunteer and leadership roles within the church.²⁸⁰

²⁶⁹ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 77.

²⁷⁰ Allen and Ross, 146.

²⁷¹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 279-294.

²⁷² Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 146.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁴ Strauss and Howe explain the Adaptive Generations as follows: “A recessive ADAPTIVE GENERATION grows up as overprotected and suffocated youths during a secular crisis; matures into risk-averse, conformist rising adults; produces indecisive midlife arbitrator-leaders during a spiritual awakening; and maintains influence (but less respect) as sensitive elders.” Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁷⁵ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78.

²⁷⁶ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 65.

²⁷⁷ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78.

²⁷⁸ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 65.

²⁷⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 146.

²⁸⁰ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78.

Baby Boomers

Named for the economic boom and baby boom that followed World War II,²⁸¹ the Baby Boomers were born between 1943 and 1960. This dominant²⁸² idealist generation²⁸³ was raised to believe in themselves²⁸⁴ and to trust in the promise of a positive and prosperous future.²⁸⁵ However, the upheaval caused by the Civil Rights movement, the assassination of a popular United States president, the impeachment and resignation of another U.S. president, and the Vietnam War splintered the positive outlook and institutional trust of their childhood.²⁸⁶ Instead of following the example of their G.I. parents by placing their trust in institutions, the Boomers became known as the “long-haired hippie protestors” who were responsible for the countercultural upheaval of the 1960s.²⁸⁷ Noting the Boomer’s reversal of the positivity and prosperity of the G.I. Generation, Strauss and Howe write, “By almost any standard of social pathology, the Boom is a generation of worsening trends.”²⁸⁸

The spiritual quest of the Boomer Generation has had a marked impact on the church.²⁸⁹ Describing the change, Strauss and Howe write, “In their subsequent search for spiritual euphoria, Boomers flocked from drugs to religion, to ‘Jesus’ movements, evangelicalism, New Age utopianism, and millennialist visions of all sorts. As they did, they spawned the most active

²⁸¹ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78.

²⁸² Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁸³ Strauss and Howe explain the Idealists Generations as follows: “A dominant, inner-fixated IDEALIST GENERATION grows up as increasingly indulged youth after a secular crisis; comes of age inspiring a spiritual awakening; fragments into narcissistic rising adults; cultivates principle as moralistic midlifers; and emerges as visionary elders guiding the next secular crisis.” Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁸⁴ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147.

²⁸⁵ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁷ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 65.

²⁸⁸ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 305.

²⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 78-79.

era of church formation in the twentieth century.”²⁹⁰ Allen and Ross note that this active era of church formation involved “values-laden education stressing good works, service and family.”²⁹¹ Further emphasizing the impact of Boomers on the twentieth-century evangelical church, Elliott explains that because Boomers felt no loyalty to the churches of their local communities and because they placed a high premium on personal experience, they began shopping “for the place that would offer the desired experience.”²⁹² As a result, small local churches have declined while large staff-heavy regional churches have thrived.²⁹³

Gen X

Strauss and Howe’s cyclical formula indicates that the generation that follows the idealist Boomers will be a reactive generation.²⁹⁴ True to the formula, the pragmatic, skeptical, independent members of Gen X,²⁹⁵ born between 1961 and 1981,²⁹⁶ have come of age reacting to the culture and lifestyle choices created by the Boomers.²⁹⁷ Often nicknamed the Latch-key Kids, Gen Xers received little parental direction during their early years.²⁹⁸ Strauss and Howe report that as a result of the lack of parental guidance, *American Demographics* referred to early-teen Gen Xers as “proto-adults.”²⁹⁹ Describing their childhood, Strauss and Howe contend that Gen

²⁹⁰ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 303.

²⁹¹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147.

²⁹² Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 79.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ Strauss and Howe explain the Reactive Generations as follows: “recessive REACTIVE GENERATION grows up as underprotected and criticized youths during a spiritual awakening; matures into risk-taking, alienated rising adults; mellows into pragmatic midlife leaders during a secular crisis; and maintains respect (but less influence) as reclusive elders.” Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

²⁹⁵ Strauss and Howe refer to this generation as Thirteeners. However, the generally-accepted name for this generation is Gen X.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 317-334. Although Strauss and Howe set the chronological borders of Gen X at 1961 and 1981, it should be noted that Pew Research Center sets adjusts the border dates to 1965 and 1980. Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 65.

²⁹⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147-148; Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 79-80; Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 320-324.

²⁹⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147.

²⁹⁹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 321.

Xers were “America’s true ‘children of the 1960s.’ And, especially the 1970s. An awakening era that seemed euphoric to young adults was, to them, a nightmare of self-immersed parents, disintegrating homes, schools with conflicting missions, confused leaders, a culture shifting from G to R ratings, new public-health dangers, and a ‘Me Decade’ economy....”³⁰⁰ Furthermore, while coming of age during the 1980s, Gen Xers experienced political and military scandals, the AIDS epidemic, the Challenger shuttle explosion, and an increased rate of divorce.³⁰¹ As adults, these same reactive Gen Xers are now known for their skepticism, realism, and resourcefulness.³⁰² Additionally, as a reaction to their own upbringing, many Gen Xers have become overprotective parents.³⁰³

As adults, Gen Xers make decisions regarding church involvement partially based on their experiential preferences, much like their Boomer predecessors.³⁰⁴ However, in their skepticism and overprotectiveness, Gen Xers are also cautious and distrustful of institutions, including the local church.³⁰⁵ When making decisions regarding church involvement, Gen Xers place a high value on family involvement, while maintaining a desire to protect personal family time.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁰ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 321.

³⁰¹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147-148.

³⁰² Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 147-148.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 80.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Millennials

The Millennials, born approximately between 1982 and 2000,³⁰⁷ are larger than all previous generations in U.S. history,³⁰⁸ as well as more racially and ethnically diverse.³⁰⁹ As a result of their diversity, Millennials fully embrace the multicultural world in which they live. In addition to their identity as a diverse generation, Strauss and Howe identify the Millennials as a civic generation, following the progression of their four-generation repeating cycle.³¹⁰ As such, Strauss and Howe observe that Millennials “believe themselves more powerful than older generations,”³¹¹ and “develop activity-oriented peer relationships, peer-enforced codes of conduct, and a strong sense of generational community.”³¹²

True to the previous pattern of the civics, the Millennials were raised in highly-protective and highly-guided home environments and have been expected to excel in their every endeavor.³¹³ Millennial children were raised and shaped by “helicopter parents,” who are described as “being so concerned with the child’s well-being that they literally ‘hover’ over all aspects of the child’s life to make sure that he doesn’t get hurt or make bad decisions. Due to the parent always being present, the child is often unaccustomed to being told ‘no’ or that they are wrong.”³¹⁴ Helicopter parents continue to be heavily involved in their children’s lives, even

³⁰⁷ Researchers do not yet agree on the chronological parameters of the Millennials. Strauss and Howe mark 1982 as the start of the generation but offer no ending date (Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 335); Barna sets the parameters as those born between 1984 and 2002 (Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2018*, Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2017, 15), while Gen Z researchers White and Twenge set the ending date at 1995 (White, *Meet Generation Z*, 38 and Twenge, *iGen*, 2).

³⁰⁸ Thom S. Rainer and Jess W. Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2011), 2.

³⁰⁹ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 56; Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2018*, 107.

³¹⁰ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 360.

³¹² *Ibid.* 361.

³¹³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 148.

³¹⁴ Adam Brooks, *Understanding Millennials: Tips and Tricks for Working with Today’s Generation* (Lexington, KY: Brooks Books, 2016), 6-7.

though their children have reached adulthood, often accompanying them to interviews and helping them with life decisions.³¹⁵ The effects of helicopter parenting on the now-adults of the Millennial Generation are profound: “The long-term effects of restricted socioemotional growth appear to be the inability to work through tough situations on their own, a tendency to struggle to gain and hold down employment, and the continuous pursuit of ‘the helicopter’ to fix most, if not all, of their problems.”³¹⁶ In many ways, helicopter parenting has shaped an entire generation.

One byproduct of growing up with helicopter parents is the Millennial Generation’s “slow walk into adulthood.”³¹⁷ Psychology professor Jeffrey Jensen Arnett reports that “60 percent of his subjects tell him they felt like both grown-ups and not-quite-grown-ups.”³¹⁸ As a result of his research, Arnett identified a new developmental stage of life, known as “emerging adulthood.”³¹⁹ As evidence of this phenomenon, more than 40% of Millennials have returned home to live with their parents at some stage of their young adult lives.³²⁰ Only 20% of all twenty-somethings are now married, versus approximately 50% of their Boomer counterparts, at the same age.³²¹ Fully embracing adulthood has occurred at a slower pace for Millennials than it has for previous generations.

Millennials are digital natives, which means they are “the first generation in history for whom digital technology platforms are the essential mediators of social life and information acquisition.”³²² Technology is not something they have had to adapt to, as other generations have

³¹⁵ Elliott in Allen, *Intergenerate*, 80.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

³¹⁷ Taylor, *The Next America: Boomer, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown*, 51.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ Jeffrey Jensen Arnett, “Presidential Address: The Emergence of Emerging Adulthood: A Personal History,” *Emerging Adulthood* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 2014): 155–62. Arnett first proposed the theory of emerging adulthood in 2000. Since that time, the theory has become an accepted stage of life and field of study.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

³²² Taylor, *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials, and the Looming Generational Showdown*, 177.

had to do, but rather, it is all they have ever known. As a result, digital technology has played a foundational role in shaping friendships, social networks, learning methods, social support, interaction with institutions, global interactions, and time allocation.³²³ Furthermore, because they are digital natives, Millennials think of digital technology as a language, whereas older generations think of it as a tool.³²⁴

Technology has impacted the concepts of community held by Millennials.³²⁵ Community is no longer confined to specific, common points in time or space, but rather occurs around the clock and with a global proximity.³²⁶ Therefore, the local church which meets only at a specific time and place must recognize and respond to the Millennial generation's constant access to community.³²⁷ Due in part to a propensity to find community elsewhere, a lack of trust in institutions, and a frustration with the perceived unwillingness to address social issues, many Millennials are choosing to walk away from their Christian faith.³²⁸ As of 2014, more than one-third of Millennials identified as religiously unaffiliated, or "nones."³²⁹ According to Pew Research Center, young adult Millennials have a far greater likelihood of being unaffiliated than did members of previous generations during their young adult years.³³⁰

As churches work to reach the Millennials, they must recognize this generation's desire for purpose, which often materializes as a desire to create a better world.³³¹ Churches must also recognize that Millennials desire to use their skills and knowledge in leadership positions now,

³²³ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 177-178.

³²⁴ Micah Fries, "Reaching Millennials" (Lecture at Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA, March 14, 2017).

³²⁵ Elliott, "Generational Theory and Faith Communities" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 81.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

³²⁷ *Ibid.*

³²⁸ *Ibid.*

³²⁹ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 163.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ Elliott, "Generational Theory and Faith Communities" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 81.

rather than waiting until they are older.³³² However, although these young adults possess skills and more knowledge than any previous generation in history, they need the wisdom and spiritual understanding necessary for using their knowledge and skills.³³³ Churches are in a unique position to provide vital mentoring and discipleship to Millennials in order to nurture and develop spiritual wisdom to go with their high level of knowledge and skills.³³⁴

Generation Z

The youngest and sixth living generation has yet to be named,³³⁵ although it is most commonly referred to as Generation Z, or Gen Z for short.³³⁶ The birth-year cutoff dates are still being somewhat debated, but essentially those born between 1995 and 2010/2012 constitute Gen Z.³³⁷ This generation is both the largest and the most diverse generation in American history.³³⁸ According to Strauss and Howe, Gen Z should be an adaptive generation.³³⁹ Strauss and Howe describe members of adaptive generations as “overprotected and suffocated youths” who mature into “risk-averse, conformist rising adults.”³⁴⁰ This is, indeed, an accurate description of Generation Z.³⁴¹

Like the Millennials before them, Gen Zers are digital natives.³⁴² In fact, digital technology is so pervasive in their world that other common generational nicknames include

³³² Elliott, “Generational Theory and Faith Communities” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 81.

³³³ Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials: A Blueprint for Your Culture, Ministry, Leadership and Facilities* (Barna Group, 2014), 25.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*

³³⁵ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 150.

³³⁶ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 37.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 37-38; Twenge, *iGen*, 5-7; White holds to birth years between 1995 and 2010, while Twenge holds to birth years between 1995 and 2012.

³³⁸ Twenge, *iGen*, 10.

³³⁹ Strauss and Howe, *Generations*, 74.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁴¹ Dave Sanders, “Millennials and Screeners” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 177-179.

³⁴² Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15.

Screenagers,³⁴³ Screeners,³⁴⁴ and iGen.³⁴⁵ As Twenge points out, the internet was commercialized in 1995, the iPhone was introduced in 2007, and the iPad was invented in 2010.³⁴⁶ Gen Z has always had the internet constantly available on their phones, literally at their fingertips.³⁴⁷ As a result, Gen Z teenagers spend almost nine hours a day consuming media.³⁴⁸ Twenge reports that the average Gen Z teen checks his or her phone over eighty times per day,³⁴⁹ while White reports that ninety-one percent of Gen Zers go to bed with their devices.³⁵⁰ Not only has technology changed the way Gen Z learns and processes information,³⁵¹ but technology has changed their social interactions and psychological well-being, as well.³⁵² This generation is more technologically connected and yet more isolated than any previous generation.³⁵³ Isolation and social media use are contributing to sharply-rising levels of depression, anxiety,³⁵⁴ and suicide among members of Gen Z.³⁵⁵ Understanding Gen Z requires recognizing and understanding the deep impact of technology on nearly every aspect of their lives.

Another important characteristic of Generation Z is its developmental pace: Gen Z is maturing at a different pace than previous generations.³⁵⁶ Members of Gen Z experience an extended adolescence,³⁵⁷ as the age of the onset of puberty has dropped³⁵⁸ while the age when

³⁴³ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15.

³⁴⁴ Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 177.

³⁴⁵ Twenge, *iGen*, 1-5.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 42.

³⁴⁹ Twenge, *iGen*, 2.

³⁵⁰ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 43.

³⁵¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15; Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 179.

³⁵² Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15-24; Twenge, *iGen*, 69-91.

³⁵³ Twenge, *iGen*, 76.

³⁵⁴ Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 179.

³⁵⁵ Twenge, *iGen*, 3, 93-118.

³⁵⁶ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 97-99; Twenge, *iGen*, 17-47.

³⁵⁷ Steven Bonner, "Understanding the Changing Adolescent" in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Clark, 36-38.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 99.

adulthood is fully embraced has risen.³⁵⁹ Twenge contends that in actuality, childhood has been extended and adolescence is now beginning at a later age.³⁶⁰ According to Twenge, “Adolescence – the time when teens begin to do things adults do – now happens later. Thirteen-year-olds – and even 18-year-olds – are less likely to act like adults and spend their time like adults. They are more likely, instead, to act like children – not by being immature, necessarily, but by postponing the usual activities of adults. Adolescence is now an extension of childhood rather than the beginning of adulthood.”³⁶¹ Whether referred to as extended childhood, extended adolescence, or emerging adulthood, the result is the same: Generation Z is taking longer to act like adults.³⁶²

Although the onset of adulthood is delayed, Gen Z experiences higher levels of stress at a younger age than previous generations.³⁶³ Teenagers commonly juggle early-morning extracurricular activities, after-school study and tutoring sessions, athletic practices, and private coaching sessions in addition to school and homework.³⁶⁴ Children now begin specializing in a single sport in elementary school rather than in high school.³⁶⁵ Adolescents and children too often feel the pressure of adults who are using them to live vicariously through them, to achieve status through them, or to gain attention through their endeavors.³⁶⁶ In the face of such pressures, thirteen- to seventeen-year-olds have a greater likelihood of feeling “extreme stress” than do adults.³⁶⁷ Further adding to the level of stress for members of Gen Z, Powell reports that “Parents

³⁵⁹ Bonner, “Understanding the Changing Adolescent” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 97-98.

³⁶⁰ Twenge, *iGen*, 39-41.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁶² Twenge, *iGen*, 17-47; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 97-99; Arnett, “Presidential Address: The Emergence of Emerging Adulthood: A Personal History.”

³⁶³ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 100-102.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁶ Bonner, “Understanding the Changing Adolescent” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 33-34.

³⁶⁷ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 101.

often don't realize the constant heat felt by adolescents, increasing the pressure for them to figure out who they are and what's important to them."³⁶⁸

In the face of high levels of stress, Generation Z is also obsessed with safety³⁶⁹ and averse to risk.³⁷⁰ Having grown up in a post-9/11 world marked by terrorism and a financial crisis, Gen Zers do not remember living in a country at peace.³⁷¹ Gen Z children and adolescents are more carefully protected from extrinsic dangers than previous generations,³⁷² which results in emerging adults who are not prepared to deal with the real world when they enter college.³⁷³ In fact, Gen Z's obsession with safety goes beyond physical safety and encompasses emotional safety, as well.³⁷⁴ In order to protect themselves and others from anything that might cause offense or provoke negative feelings, "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces" have been created to offer Gen Z students opportunities to avoid anything that might cause emotional distress.³⁷⁵ Their extreme obsession with safety and self-protection has earned Gen Z the nickname, "Generation Snowflake," because they are "apt to melt under the slightest pressure due to their extreme fragility."³⁷⁶

Gen Z is a generation that has largely "been left alone to journey through adolescence."³⁷⁷ Although overprotective regarding the outside dangers of the world, their Gen X parents have been underprotective in most other areas, including technological use and emotional

³⁶⁸ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 101.

³⁶⁹ Twenge, *iGen*, 144-146.

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 152-153.

³⁷¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 29.

³⁷² Twenge, *iGen*, 164.

³⁷³ Twenge, *iGen*, 164.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 153-158.

³⁷⁵ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 27; Twenge, *iGen*, 153-158.

³⁷⁶ Twenge, *iGen*, 154.

³⁷⁷ Bonner, "Understanding the Changing Adolescent" in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 37.

issues.³⁷⁸ Research indicates that a defining experience for Gen Z is systemic abandonment resulting from a lack of adult support.³⁷⁹ Consequently, members of Gen Z have a deep sense of loneliness combined with a strong desire for a sense of belonging.³⁸⁰ As Twenge points out, electronic connectedness is not a suitable substitute for face-to-face human connection.³⁸¹ In fact, those who spend more time on screen activities are more likely to be lonely and unhappy than are those who spend less time on screen activities.³⁸² As Twenge makes clear, “iGen’ers still yearn for in-person interaction.”³⁸³

Generation Z is the most religiously-unaffiliated generation in American history.³⁸⁴ Barna research indicates that only four percent of Gen Z hold to a biblical worldview.³⁸⁵ Furthermore, twice as many members of Gen Z identify as atheist as do U.S. adults.³⁸⁶ In White’s assessment, Gen Z is “the first post-Christian generation.”³⁸⁷ Twenge believes that part of the reason for the rise in the religiously-unaffiliated in this generation is because a larger number of them are being raised in nonreligious households.³⁸⁸ Further contributing to their lack of religious affiliation is a rise in the number of them who choose to walk away from their faith in adolescence or emerging adulthood.³⁸⁹ As Barna summarizes, “Many in Generation Z, more than in generations before them, are a spiritual blank slate.... They were not born into a Christian culture, and it shows.”³⁹⁰

³⁷⁸ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 35.

³⁷⁹ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 106-107.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 107

³⁸¹ Twenge, *iGen*, 69-91.

³⁸² Twenge, *iGen*, 77-84.

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

³⁸⁵ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 25.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 49.

³⁸⁸ Twenge, *iGen*, 122.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 26.

Implications of Generational Engagement for Generation Z

As previously mentioned in this chapter, Generation Z is isolated and underparented, and consequently lacks a sense of belonging. The “one-eared Mickey Mouse” model of ministry found in churches segregated by age or generational cohorts further exacerbates the problem of isolation³⁹¹ experienced by the children and youth of Gen Z. Such isolation is problematic for the young members of this generation because belongingness is vital for spiritual formation and care, particularly for children and teens.³⁹² Conversely, however, intergenerational faith communities offer experiences which cultivate a strong sense of belonging for all involved, including children and teenagers.³⁹³ Research done by Fuller Youth Institute indicates that rather than desiring isolation from adults, Gen Z teenagers desire more opportunities for connection with those who belong to older generations.³⁹⁴ In order to counteract their deep sense of isolation, Gen Z will benefit most when engaged with multiple generations, for as Allen and Ross state, “To be received by a multigenerational body of believers is to belong at a deeply satisfying level.”³⁹⁵

Generation Z needs guidance and direction, especially in matters of faith.³⁹⁶ In White’s view, with little direction coming from their families, Gen Z is a leaderless generation.³⁹⁷ Further compounding the problem is the reality that there is a greater likelihood that a member of Gen Z is being raised by religiously unaffiliated parents than in any previous generation.³⁹⁸ According to White, Gen Z has “endless amounts of information but little wisdom, and virtually no

³⁹¹ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 41.

³⁹² Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 48.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 59.

³⁹⁵ Allen and Ross, 49.

³⁹⁶ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 81-82; White, *Meet Generation Z*, 64-65.

³⁹⁷ White, 65.

³⁹⁸ Twenge, *iGen*, 121.

mentors.”³⁹⁹ Mentors from older generations are difficult to find in age-segregated church environments, but are readily available in intergenerational faith communities.⁴⁰⁰

Intergenerational mentoring relationships offer prime opportunities to pass a biblical worldview and lasting faith to the youngest generation,⁴⁰¹ as well as to provide a safe place for open dialogue as Gen Z expresses questions and doubts about their faith.⁴⁰² The discipleship and mentoring which the members of Gen Z need so desperately occurs most effectively in the context of intergenerational worship and ministry.⁴⁰³

As young Gen Zers grow and mature, they need to experience a strong connection to the Body of Christ in order to have a greater likelihood of continuing in the faith when they reach adulthood.⁴⁰⁴ A key aspect of achieving this connection for teenagers is being involved in intergenerational relationships.⁴⁰⁵ As Bradbury reports, “According to Lifeway Research, ‘teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school.’”⁴⁰⁶ A study by Fuller Youth Institute indicates that teenagers were more likely to feel connected to a church when adults made an effort to form a relationship with them and know them personally.⁴⁰⁷ Clark contends that youth feel connected to the church when they are contributors to ministry alongside older adults.⁴⁰⁸ Intergenerational

³⁹⁹ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 65.

⁴⁰⁰ Sanders, “Millennials and Screeners” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 181-183.

⁴⁰¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 82.

⁴⁰² Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2018*, 176.

⁴⁰³ Sanders, “Millennials and Screeners” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 181-183.

⁴⁰⁴ Bradbury, “Sticky Faith: What Keeps Kids Connected to Church?,” 24.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; Allen Jackson, “Thinking Critically about Families and Youth Ministry” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 164.

⁴⁰⁶ Bradbury, 24.

⁴⁰⁷ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith: Youth Worker Edition*, 77.

⁴⁰⁸ Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 147.

churches offer a much greater likelihood of members of Gen Z achieving a feeling of connection to the Body of Christ than do age-segregated churches.

Chapter Summary

A growing body of literature examines generational engagement within the local church.⁴⁰⁹ Recent research recognizes the benefits of age-segregated environments for cognitive learning⁴¹⁰ and peer evangelism,⁴¹¹ while also acknowledging such pitfalls as a lack of connection to the Body of Christ,⁴¹² stunted spiritual formation,⁴¹³ and consumerism.⁴¹⁴ Literature identifies the biggest weakness of churches organized according to individual generational cohorts as their inability to include anyone outside their specific cohort.⁴¹⁵ A growing body of literature addresses the positive spiritual and relational impact of intergenerational worship and ministry in the local church.⁴¹⁶

A large body of literature explains the biblical and theological foundations supporting intergenerational engagement within the local church.⁴¹⁷ The instructions found in Deuteronomy

⁴⁰⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation; Intergenerate*, ed. Allen; Clark, *Adoptive Church*; Powell, Mulder, & Griffin, *Growing Young*; Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches: Maximizing Influence for Adolescent Spiritual Development”; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*.

⁴¹⁰ Glassford and Barger-Elliott, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era,” 367.

⁴¹¹ Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches, 17.”

⁴¹² Glassford and Barger-Elliott, “Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era,” 368.

⁴¹³ Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church,” 11.

⁴¹⁴ Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology: A Vision for Adolescent Contribution,” 7-26.

⁴¹⁵ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 31.

⁴¹⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation; Intergenerate*, ed. Allen; Clark, *Adoptive Church*; Powell, Mulder, & Griffin, *Growing Young*; Snailum, “Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches: Maximizing Influence for Adolescent Spiritual Development”; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*.

⁴¹⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 77-118; Harkness, “Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations;” Steele, “A Biblical and Theological Rationale for a Familial Motif of Congregational Life That Facilitates the Transfer of Faith from Generation to Generation”; Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*.

6 provide a pattern for faith transference across generations,⁴¹⁸ as do the Psalms⁴¹⁹ and the writings of Paul.⁴²⁰ Literature addressing Christian ecclesiology reveals that the church is to be an intergenerational community⁴²¹ which functions as a family⁴²² and as a body.⁴²³

Recent literature explains generational issues which are relevant to the local church, including generational theory and characteristics of each individual generational cohort.⁴²⁴ Generational theory, as developed and espoused by Strauss and Howe, explains the interplay of generations within the greater generational constellations, as well as the repeating cycle of four generational types.⁴²⁵ The literature also explains that each generational cohort has common characteristics and experiences which work together to form a peer personality for each individual generation.⁴²⁶

Research is beginning to emerge regarding the peer personality of the youngest living generation, Generation Z.⁴²⁷ Members of Gen Z are digital natives⁴²⁸ who are technologically connected but relationally isolated.⁴²⁹ Due to what some researchers refer to as an extended adolescence, Gen Zers are taking longer to act like adults.⁴³⁰ They are stressed,⁴³¹ obsessed with

⁴¹⁸ Pazmiño and Kang, "Generational Fragmentations and Christian Education," 383.

⁴¹⁹ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 26-27.

⁴²⁰ Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*; Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 83; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 26.

⁴²¹ Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?," 437.

⁴²² DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 121; Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 225.

⁴²³ Fay, "Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation: A Developmental Approach for an Intergenerational Church," 71; Allen, *Intergenerate*, 35.

⁴²⁴ Allen and Ross, 142-155; Elliott in Allen, 73-83; Shaw, 19-21; Strauss and Howe, 32-35.

⁴²⁵ Strauss and Howe, 27-110.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid.*, 58-68.

⁴²⁷ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*; Twenge, *iGen*; White, *Meet Generation Z*.

⁴²⁸ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 35.

⁴²⁹ Twenge, 76.

⁴³⁰ Twenge, *iGen*, 17-47; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 97-99; Arnett, "Presidential Address: The Emergence of Emerging Adulthood: A Personal History."

⁴³¹ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 100-102.

safety,⁴³² and risk-averse.⁴³³ Current research indicates that Gen Z is less religiously-affiliated than any other generation in American history,⁴³⁴ making them a proverbial spiritual blank slate.⁴³⁵

The research referenced in this chapter contributes to a body of work which assesses generational engagement within the local church. However, in spite of a growing body of literature addressing generational engagement in corporate worship, there is a gap in the literature regarding generational engagement within the worship ministry of the local evangelical church. Furthermore, the relationship between generational engagement within the local church worship ministry during adolescence and continued participation in worship ministry as an adult has not yet been explored.

⁴³² Twenge, 144-146.

⁴³³ Ibid., 152-153.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 120-121.

⁴³⁵ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, Gen Z, 26.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Because intergenerational models of worship ministry have been replaced by age-segregated models in many twenty-first century evangelical churches, it is important to understand the relational, musical, and spiritual impact of both models. The purpose of this qualitative historical study was to examine worship ministries in the local evangelical church in an effort to assess generational engagement. Church leaders and worship pastors need to have an accurate understanding of the implications of generational engagement when making decisions regarding the implementation of either an intergenerational or age-segregated worship ministry model. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology used to conduct this qualitative historical study. This chapter addresses the research design, the process of gathering data, source analysis, data analysis, and data synthesis and interpretation utilized in an effort to answer the research questions.

Research Design

The qualitative historical research design was used to identify and assess the characteristics of generational engagement within worship ministries in the local evangelical church. This research design is appropriate because, in keeping with Creswell, the study necessitated addressing emerging questions through inductive data analysis, while also making interpretations of the meaning of the data.⁴³⁶ Furthermore, this design is appropriate because, as Creswell explains, qualitative research involves intentionally selecting and examining documents for the purpose of understanding the research problem and research questions.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁶John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th edition (Los Angeles: Sage, 2018), 4.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*, 185.

Finally, the use of the qualitative historical design is appropriate because it is useful for examining historical data through a theoretical lens for the purpose of formulating interpretations that will lead to a call for change.⁴³⁸

The process for conducting this qualitative historical study began with the identification of the problem. Next, research questions were formulated, as were hypotheses for the questions. Data was then gathered and reviewed, and the sources were analyzed for validity, credibility,⁴³⁹ and applicability.⁴⁴⁰ After the winnowing process was complete, the remaining data was analyzed and interpreted, which led to conclusions and recommendations regarding the research questions.⁴⁴¹ Limitations to the study were also identified.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study are:

RQ1: What are the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church?

RQ2: In what ways can the local evangelical church engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry?

Hypotheses

The hypotheses for this study are:

⁴³⁸ Creswell, *Research Design*, 199.

⁴³⁹ *Ibid.*, 199-201.

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 192.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 193-199.

H1: The characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church are relational connection, musical development, and spiritual formation.

H2: The local evangelical church can most effectively engage Generation Z through use of technology, relationships, and mentoring.

Process of Gathering Data

The process of gathering data began with the identification, selection, and review of relevant sources which address issues of generational engagement within the local evangelical church. Numerous books, journal articles, dissertations, and theses were examined. Sources which document the development and characteristics of age-segregated models of worship and ministry were gathered and examined first, followed by a study of documents which address worship and ministry engagement which is limited to specific generational cohorts. Next, sources were gathered and examined regarding the development and characteristics of intergenerational engagement in worship and ministry within the local evangelical church. In addition to an examination of the development and characteristics of each type of generational engagement, strengths, weaknesses, and contributing trends of each type of engagement were also examined. As a part of the research regarding generational engagement, issues impacting relational, musical, and spiritual development were examined.

After a thorough study was completed of generational engagement within the local evangelical church, sources were gathered and examined regarding the biblical and theological foundations of generational engagement. The primary source for the biblical foundations aspect of the study was the Bible itself. In addition to scriptural teachings and examples, sources which

provide synthesis and commentary regarding these teachings and examples were also gathered and reviewed. The study of theological foundations focused primarily on sources which addressed biblical ecclesiology, particularly that of the church as family and the church as the Body of Christ.

Next, sources were gathered and reviewed regarding generational issues. Sources were examined which address the time frames, historical and cultural environments, and characteristics of six generational cohorts: the G.I./Greatest Generation, the Silent Generation, the Boomer Generation, Gen X, the Millennial Generation, and Generation Z. Relevant documents which explain and address principles of generational theory, including the interaction of generations within a specific generational constellation, were also gathered and studied. After examining sources which describe and explain the characteristics of the individual generational cohorts and which also describe and explain generational theory, documents were gathered and examined which address the impact of the various generational peer personalities on worship and ministry practice within the local church.

The final step in the process of gathering data involved gathering and reviewing recent sources which address the specific characteristics and needs of Generation Z. Because the oldest members of Generation Z are college-aged emerging adults, the research is recent and is continually-evolving. However, multiple studies were identified and reviewed which reveal common characteristics and needs of this young generation. In addition, sources were examined which address the engagement of Generation Z with the local evangelical church. Finally, research regarding the engagement of Generation Z with other generations was also identified and studied, particularly as its generational engagement impacts its involvement within the local church.

Analysis of Sources

In an effort to ensure the validity and reliability of the study, each source was analyzed according to appropriate validity strategies as proposed by Creswell.⁴⁴² Throughout the process of gathering and reviewing information, multiple data sources were compared in an effort to identify common emerging themes.⁴⁴³ As evidence from multiple sources converged, those sources were identified as valid and credible.⁴⁴⁴ However, when evidence from an individual source could not be substantiated with the data from other sources, the source was identified as questionable and unreliable, and was therefore eliminated from consideration. Furthermore, sources which presented discrepant ideas which do not coincide with the predominate themes found in a specific study were also identified as valid and reliable, because presenting contrary information in the context of a research discussion gives validity to the study according to Creswell.⁴⁴⁵

Analysis of Data

As Creswell explains, in order to make sense of the research, the data must be considered in a systematic and methodical manner, much like peeling back an onion, layer by layer.⁴⁴⁶ The first step in the “peeling” process involved organizing the sources of information into general categories. Next, the sources were read and examined, category by category, and notes were taken on the data contents of each source.⁴⁴⁷ From the notes, a coding system was utilized to identify and organize themes which were evident in the research.⁴⁴⁸ The data sources

⁴⁴² Creswell, *Research Design*, 199-201.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁴⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁴⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 193.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 193-195.

were then reviewed again according to thematic groupings, and common threads were identified within each thematic category.

Synthesis and Interpretation of Data

After sources were identified, gathered, reviewed, coded, and organized thematically, the findings of each specific area of research were examined in light of their relationship to the other areas of research undertaken as a part of this study. This synthesis of the data allowed for an interpretation of the findings as a whole, rather than as individual data points. For instance, research regarding generational engagement within the local evangelical church was considered in conjunction with studies of the characteristics of the various peer personalities of generational cohorts. These findings were then examined through the lens of biblical teaching regarding generational engagement in faith communities. Finally, the principles of generational theory were applied to current research findings in order to ascertain how current and future generational engagement within the worship ministry of the local church might impact the current youngest generation, Gen Z. Synthesizing and interpreting the research in this manner enabled the researcher to draw conclusions and make recommendations for future generational engagement in worship ministries within the local evangelical church.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of research conducted in an effort to examine and assess the generational engagement within worship ministries in the local evangelical church. Addressing the first research question and hypothesis, descriptions are given of the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church. Also, in an effort to address the second research question and hypothesis, findings are offered regarding the ways in which the local evangelical church can engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry. Research findings which impact each area of the study are presented and discussed.

Generational Engagement in Worship Ministries in the Local Evangelical Church

Reflecting the individualistic, consumeristic ideology of 21st Century American culture, age-segregation, also known as generational siloing, is the norm in many of today's evangelical churches.⁴⁴⁹ The worship ministries of these age-segregated churches typically reflect the homogenous structures and ideologies of the churches of which they are a part.⁴⁵⁰ Put succinctly, the worship ministry team responsible for leading corporate worship in the "adult" service in an age-segregated congregation consists solely of adults,⁴⁵¹ while the worship ministry team responsible for leading corporate worship for the "youth" service consists solely of adolescents.⁴⁵² In these age-segregated congregations, adults lead corporate worship in children's services, as well as in youth services where adolescents are not involved in leading,

⁴⁴⁹ Glassford and Barger-Elliot, "Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era," 365; Snailum, "Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches," 16; Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 30-31.

⁴⁵⁰ Keeley, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship" in *The Church of All Ages*, ed. Vanderwell, 147.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵² Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 30-32.

reflecting an adherence to the service-provider model of ministry.⁴⁵³ As a result of the homogeneous nature of the worship ministry, specifically, and of the larger church body, as a whole, the musical expressions of worship by each group are limited to the musical preferences, or “heart music,” of each age demographic.⁴⁵⁴

Generational homogeneity is taken a step further in churches which are organized according to generational cohorts. In these churches, corporate worship is organized and segregated into groups which reflect the perceived stylistic preferences of the various generational cohorts.⁴⁵⁵ As with worship ministries in age-segregated churches, worship ministry teams in churches organized according to generational cohorts typically reflect the specific cohort they are charged with leading. In such an environment, worship, ministry, and relationships are limited to peer-to-peer engagement.⁴⁵⁶

Although age-segregated corporate worship has become common practice during the last century, interest in a return to the practice of intergenerational corporate worship is experiencing a resurgence.⁴⁵⁷ Recognizing this resurgence necessitates understanding the distinction between multigenerational and intergenerational congregations: A multigenerational congregation offers programming for all generations but does not seek to increase interaction between the generations. Conversely, an intergenerational congregation makes a consistent intentional effort to cultivate interaction between the various generations.⁴⁵⁸ The worship ministry of an intergenerational church may or may not reflect the intergenerationality of the

⁴⁵³ Ketcham, “Potential Ecclesiology,” 7-26.

⁴⁵⁴ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 196-197.

⁴⁵⁵ Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, xiv.

⁴⁵⁶ Ross, “A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry,” 140.

⁴⁵⁷ Allen and Barnett, “Addressing Two Intergenerational Questions” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 17.

⁴⁵⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 19.

larger church body. However, when an effective intergenerational worship ministry is successfully implemented within an intergenerational church, all generations, including the youngest generations, are invited to participate and contribute to the worship ministry in meaningful ways.⁴⁵⁹

Characteristics of an Effective Intergenerational Worship Ministry in the Local Evangelical Church

Research was conducted in an effort to ascertain the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church. As the following pages explain, the findings revealed that the characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church are relational connection, musical development, and spiritual formation, thereby affirming hypothesis 1.

Relational Connection

One characteristic of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church is relational connection. A deep sense of belonging occurs among those who experience ongoing intergenerational relationships, which are cultivated and nurtured in the context of an intergenerational worship ministry.⁴⁶⁰ Children who participate in intergenerational corporate worship develop an understanding that they belong to the Body of Christ.⁴⁶¹ Teenagers experience the sense of belonging which results from receiving systemic support from an intergenerational group of believers.⁴⁶² Emerging adults experience the nurture

⁴⁵⁹ Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 146-148; Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 198-201; Bradbury, "Sticky Faith: What Keeps Kids Connected to Church?," 25.

⁴⁶⁰ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 195.

⁴⁶¹ Prest, *From One Generation to Another*, 25, as quoted in Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 194.

⁴⁶² Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 175.

and sense of safety that occur in the context of intergenerational relationships.⁴⁶³ Older generations experience the sense of belonging that occurs as a byproduct of investing themselves in ongoing relationships with younger generations.⁴⁶⁴ An intergenerational worship ministry offers the relational connection necessary for all generations to experience a sense of belonging.

When relational connection occurs between the generations, a sense of unity and understanding develops among the various generational cohorts.⁴⁶⁵ In turn, an increased sense of unity and understanding results in an increased level of acceptance of the strengths and weaknesses of others, as well as a greater propensity to set aside personal preferences for the good of another.⁴⁶⁶ The type of relational connection which best fosters a sense of unity and understanding between the generations occurs naturally in the context of an intergenerational worship ministry, particularly when all generational groups are given consideration within the ministry.⁴⁶⁷

An important type of relational connection which occurs in the context of an intergenerational worship ministry is the mentoring relationship.⁴⁶⁸ For an adolescent, healthy faith transference occurs best when the adolescent is engaged in a mentoring relationship with an older faithful follower of Christ.⁴⁶⁹ Mentoring in the Christian environment occurs when mature believers walk alongside young believers for the purposes of support, encouragement,

⁴⁶³ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 107.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ross, "Four Congregations That Practice Intergenerationality," 143.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?," 435.

⁴⁶⁸ Ketcham, "Potential Ecclesiology," 102-103; Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church," 287-288; Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts*; Van der Walt, "Sharing an Integral Worldview with a Younger Generation," 5.

⁴⁶⁹ Ketcham, 102-103; Pendergraft, 287; Van der Walt, 5.

and faith transference.⁴⁷⁰ The rehearsals of the various types of vocal and instrumental ensembles of an intergenerational local church worship ministry offer fertile soil for cultivating mentoring relationships, which have a positive impact on the spiritual and musical development of both the mentor and mentee.⁴⁷¹

Musical Development

Although the specifics vary from church to church, the worship ministry of a local evangelical church consists of various types of musical ensembles, such as bands, vocal teams, and choirs. Rehearsals for these ensembles provide an excellent musical learning environment for all involved, regardless of age.⁴⁷² An intergenerational worship ministry offers opportunities for seasoned musicians to come alongside young, inexperienced musicians in order to offer teaching and training in musical skills.⁴⁷³ Likewise, regularly engaging in intergenerational rehearsals offers younger musicians opportunities to bring new ideas and a new level of enthusiasm to their older counterparts. As such, intergenerational worship ministry rehearsals are mutually beneficial for all musicians, regardless of age and experience level.⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, the best way to be good stewards of the musical giftedness of the worship ministry as a whole is to engage in intergenerational rehearsals.⁴⁷⁵

Young worship leaders are offered the best opportunity to develop their musical skills when they are included in a group of cross-generational worship leaders.⁴⁷⁶ In many churches,

⁴⁷⁰ Pendergraft, "Erik Erikson and the Church," 287.

⁴⁷¹ Keeley, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship" in *The Church of All Ages*, ed. Vanderwell, 150-152; Sharp, 16.

⁴⁷² Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts*, 16.

⁴⁷³ Keeley, 150-152.

⁴⁷⁴ Sharp, 160.

⁴⁷⁵ Eikenberry, "Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation," 19.

⁴⁷⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 201.

whether intergenerational or age-segregated, the worship leaders are primarily drawn from the younger generations.⁴⁷⁷ Failing to utilize worship leaders from older generations does a disservice to worship leaders from all generations, but is especially detrimental to those who are younger. Important musical and spiritual lessons are offered to young worship leaders when they are allowed to partner with older, more experienced worship leaders.⁴⁷⁸

Spiritual Formation

Healthy spiritual formation occurs in the lives of those who participate in an intergenerational local church worship ministry. One contributing factor to healthy spiritual formation in such an environment is regular participation in intergenerational corporate worship, which occurs naturally for those engaged in an intergenerational worship ministry. This is particularly beneficial for members of the younger generations. Researchers at Fuller Youth Institute refer to teenagers' participation in intergenerational corporate worship as the near-silver bullet for lasting faith, reporting that involvement in intergenerational worship during high school "is more consistently linked with mature faith in both high school and college than any other form of church participation."⁴⁷⁹ However, it is important to note that the involvement of the young also contributes to the spiritual formation of the older generations by bringing vitality, service, passion, and innovation to the corporate worship gatherings.⁴⁸⁰ Participation in intergenerational corporate worship is important for the healthy spiritual formation of all generations.

⁴⁷⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 201.

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁹ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 75.

⁴⁸⁰ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 40-42.

Healthy spiritual formation is a characteristic of an effective intergenerational worship ministry because it offers those involved an opportunity for service and ministry. When an individual, regardless of age, is actively serving within the local church, he or she plays a load-bearing role in the life of the church body, which then contributes to the spiritual formation of the participant.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, when teenagers contribute to the life of the church through ministry, including worship ministry, the spiritual formation of the entire faith community is strengthened.⁴⁸²

Spiritual formation is a characteristic of an effective intergenerational worship ministry because of the intergenerational relationships which are cultivated there. As was discussed at length in Chapter 2, research indicates that healthy spiritual formation happens best in the context of an intergenerational community of believers.⁴⁸³ Each generation learns from the others, and each generation has something to teach.⁴⁸⁴ According to Harkness, an “edification spiral” occurs, as individuals from the various generations within a faith community encourage ongoing spiritual growth in the lives of those from other generations.⁴⁸⁵ However, in order for the edification spiral to take place, multiple generations must be in relationship with one another. Therefore, the intergenerational relationships which are cultivated in the context of an intergenerational worship ministry contribute to the healthy spiritual formation of the participants.

⁴⁸¹ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 209-210.

⁴⁸² Cannister, “Thinking Ecclesialogically” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 141.

⁴⁸³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 73, 82-97; Fay, “Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation,” 71-72; Harkness, “Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations,” 124; Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 203-205; Nelson, *Where Faith Begins*, as referenced in Allen and Ross, 65; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 24; Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, as referenced in Allen and Ross, 66.

⁴⁸⁴ Eikenberry, “Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation,” 18-19; Vanderwell, 24.

⁴⁸⁵ Harkness, “Intergenerality: Biblical and Theological Foundations,” 124.

Work in the field of developmental psychology affirms the role of intergenerational relationships in the spiritual formation of all generations. Erik Erikson, who refers to intergenerational interaction as *mutuality*,⁴⁸⁶ asserts that each generation needs interaction with other generations in order to mature fully and properly.⁴⁸⁷ James Fowler describes six progressive stages of faith in his often-cited theory of faith development.⁴⁸⁸ Because these stages of faith encompass all generations, intergenerational social interaction is vital for healthy spiritual formation in all six stages.⁴⁸⁹

The teachings of Scripture clearly indicate that spiritual formation happens best in the context of intergenerational relationships. In Deuteronomy 6, Moses offers a plan for the transference of matters of faith which requires the interplay of multiple generations. Asaph, as with other psalm writers, echoes Moses' plan in Psalm 78, as he calls for older generations to tell younger and future generations about the powerful, mighty, wonderful acts of God. Both the Old and New Testaments contain many examples of formative non-familial intergenerational relationships. For instance, the Old Testament describes the relationships of Jethro and Moses in Exodus 18; Moses and Joshua throughout Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy; Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth; Samuel and Eli in 1 Samuel 1-3; and David and Saul in 1 Samuel 16-31. Likewise, the New Testament records the interaction between Mary and Elizabeth in Luke 1; the disciples and the boy with five loaves and two fish in John 6; and Paul and Timothy in Acts 16, 1 Timothy and 2 Timothy. Furthermore, Scripture also describes examples of intergenerational worship gatherings, where all the generations of Israel joined together for

⁴⁸⁶ Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed.

⁴⁸⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 87; Ross, "A Qualitative Study Exploring Characteristics of Churches Committed to Intergenerational Ministry," 24.

⁴⁸⁸ Fowler, *Stages of Faith*.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; Fowler, *Weaving the New Creation*.

worship and covenant renewal.⁴⁹⁰ The biblical record establishes a pattern of intergenerational interaction for the purpose of healthy spiritual formation for all generations, including faith transference to the younger generations.

Throughout his epistles, Paul utilizes a household motif as a metaphor to explain his concept of the Christian community as family.⁴⁹¹ Furthermore, Paul's writings in 1 Timothy 5:1-16 and Titus 2:1-10 indicate that the Christian community is to be a family of interdependent intergenerational relationships.⁴⁹² Paul's inclusion of children in his directives found in Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21 indicates that he assumed that children would be present and engaged within the Christian community.⁴⁹³ Therefore, the household of God as described by Paul is an intergenerational family of interconnected and mutually-beneficial relationships, where care is given to one another as needed and spiritual formation occurs among all generations.

Reflecting Paul's household motif, Christian ecclesiology indicates that the church consists of members of all generations, from the youngest to the oldest.⁴⁹⁴ As Paul makes clear, the church is a family, and it is in the context of this intergenerational surrogate family that spiritual formation takes place.⁴⁹⁵ Furthermore, in their respective roles within the family, each member is a contributor, rather than merely a spectator.⁴⁹⁶ In addition to recognizing the church

⁴⁹⁰ E.g., Deuteronomy 29; Joshua 8:35; 2 Chronicles 20; Nehemiah 8.

⁴⁹¹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 83; Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 122; Hellerman, *The Ancient Church as Family*, 99-126; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 26.

⁴⁹² Allen and Ross, 83; Harkness, 122; Hellerman, 104-106.

⁴⁹³ Harkness, 122.

⁴⁹⁴ Allen and Ross, 82-84; Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church," 436-437.

⁴⁹⁵ DeVries, *Family-Based Youth Ministry*, 157.

⁴⁹⁶ Cannister, "Thinking Ecclesilogically" in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 141.

as family, Christian ecclesiology also reveals that the church is the Body of Christ.⁴⁹⁷ Paul's writings concerning the Body of Christ reveal that if any part of the body is missing, the entire body suffers from its absence.⁴⁹⁸ Therefore, churches which exist for the good of a single generational cohort or gather solely according to age-stratified groupings stunt the spiritual formation of its members and reduce its effectiveness in the Kingdom of God at large.⁴⁹⁹ A proper understanding of Christian ecclesiology recognizes that a healthy and fully-functioning Body of Christ is a body where all generations are actively engaged in ongoing relationships with one another, reflecting the spiritual ideal of many parts becoming one whole.⁵⁰⁰ Such is the nature of an intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church.

Ways to Engage with Generation Z in Order to Encourage Greater Involvement in the Local Church Worship Ministry

As has been previously mentioned, interest in intergenerational engagement in the local church is experiencing a resurgence, in spite of the recent popularity of age-segregated models of worship and ministry.⁵⁰¹ One of the primary reasons for this resurgence is the alarming rate at which youth and emerging adults are walking away from their faith.⁵⁰² A 2014 survey by Pew Research Center revealed that thirty-five percent of Millennials were religiously unaffiliated, compared to twenty-three percent of Gen X and seventeen percent of the Boomer Generation.⁵⁰³ Current research indicates that Generation Z is the most religiously-unaffiliated generation in

⁴⁹⁷ Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30.

⁴⁹⁸ Burns-Marko, "Intergenerational Ministry: Bringing the Generations Back Together," 39.

⁴⁹⁹ Allen, *Intergenerate*, 35; Burns-Marko, 39-40; Eikenberry, "Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation," 19-20.

⁵⁰⁰ Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Allen, *Intergenerate*, 35.

⁵⁰¹ Allen and Barnett, "Addressing Two Intergenerational Questions" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 17.

⁵⁰² Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 25-26.

⁵⁰³ Taylor and Pew Research Center, *The Next America*, 164.

American history.⁵⁰⁴ Currently, only forty-one percent of Generation Z attends a weekly worship service of some kind,⁵⁰⁵ with only four percent of the generation holding to a biblical worldview.⁵⁰⁶ Further adding to the alarm, researchers at Fuller Youth Institute have concluded that “40 to 50 percent of kids who are connected to youth group when they graduate high school will fail to stick with their faith in college.”⁵⁰⁷ Therefore, it is vitally important that the local church seeks to engage with Generation Z in order to promote healthy spiritual formation and long-term connection to the Body of Christ. One such way to do so is by encouraging their involvement in the local church worship ministry. According to the research findings, the church can most effectively engage Generation Z through use of technology, intergenerational relationships, and mentoring, which affirms hypothesis 2.

Use of Technology

As has been previously discussed, members of Generation Z are digital natives.⁵⁰⁸ With the commercialization of the internet and the invention of the iPhone and the iPad coming early in their young lives, this generation has always had the internet constantly available, literally at their fingertips.⁵⁰⁹ Their continual technology usage has changed the way they learn, process information, and interact socially.⁵¹⁰ In order to effectively engage Gen Z, the older generations of the church must recognize this reality, and adapt accordingly. For instance, Gen Z is a visual generation, taking in much of its knowledge through video formats such as YouTube, Netflix,

⁵⁰⁴ Twenge, *iGen*, 120-121.

⁵⁰⁵ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 49.

⁵⁰⁶ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 25.

⁵⁰⁷ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 15.

⁵⁰⁸ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15.

⁵⁰⁹ Commercialization of the internet occurred in 1995; iPhone was introduced in 2007; iPad was introduced in 2010; Twenge, *iGen*, 2.

⁵¹⁰ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 15-24; Twenge, 69-91.

and Hulu.⁵¹¹ In addition, pictorial emojis are a natural part of Gen Z's language.⁵¹² In order to encourage them toward greater involvement in the local church worship ministry, the church must be willing to engage members of Generation Z through the use of visual technological resources, rather than relying solely on verbal resources such as print materials and verbal speeches.

Use of technology has also impacted the way Gen Z communicates. For better or worse, the bulk of their communication happens either online or via text messages.⁵¹³ Gen Z indicates that their response to a text message is immediate, while their responses to other methods of communications is delayed.⁵¹⁴ Additionally, members of Gen Z will give an immediate response to a direct message sent through a social media site.⁵¹⁵ Engaging with Gen Z requires communication, and effective communication with members of the youngest generation often begins with a willingness to communicate via the means they know best, which is texting or direct messaging.⁵¹⁶

Relationships

The church can most effectively engage Gen Z through the development of intergenerational relationships, which is a characteristic of effective intergenerational worship ministries. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, Gen Z is isolated, lonely, and lacking a sense of belonging.⁵¹⁷ Research indicates that a defining experience for Gen Z is systemic

⁵¹¹ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 118-119.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 120-124.

⁵¹³ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 124-127.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁵¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 124-127.

⁵¹⁷ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 106-107; Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners," 179; Twenge, *iGen*, 76.

abandonment resulting from a lack of adult support.⁵¹⁸ However, intergenerational relationships offer an opportunity to cultivate the sense of belonging and support members of Gen Z need and crave.⁵¹⁹ Research indicates that Gen Z teenagers desire more opportunities for relational connection with individuals from older generations,⁵²⁰ as these intergenerational relationships help to counteract their deep sense of isolation.⁵²¹ Opportunities for intergenerational relationships naturally exist for those who are engaged in an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church.

Research regarding factors which contributed to Millennials choosing to stay connected to the church after high school, rather than choosing to walk away, offers insight about the importance of intergenerational relationships for Generation Z. According to a 2014 study conducted by Barna, emerging adults who stayed connected to the church after their teenage years were twice as likely to have a close relationship with an older adult in their church than were those who walked away.⁵²² Conversely, seven out of ten Millennials who walked away from the local church did not have a close relationship with an older adult in their faith community.⁵²³ A study by Lifeway Research found that “teens who had five or more adults from the church invest in them during the ages of 15 to 18 were less likely to leave the church after high school.”⁵²⁴ Research conducted by Fuller Youth Institute reveals that teenagers who were studied were more likely to feel connected to a church when adults made an effort to form

⁵¹⁸ Bonner, “Understanding the Changing Adolescent” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 37-38; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 106-107.

⁵¹⁹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 48.

⁵²⁰ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 101; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 59.

⁵²¹ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 49.

⁵²² Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials*, 48.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ Lifeway Research, “Lifeway Research Uncovers Reasons 18 to 22 Year Olds Drop Out of Church,” as quoted in Bradbury, “Sticky faith: What keeps kids connected to church?,” 24.

a personal relationship with them.⁵²⁵ Like their Millennial counterparts before them, members of Gen Z need intergenerational relationships with individuals from older generations. An important byproduct of these intergenerational relationships is an increased likelihood of experiencing a strong and lasting connection to the Body of Christ.⁵²⁶

Mentoring

Another way through which the local evangelical church can engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry is through mentoring. In an age-segregated church environment, mentors from older generations are hard to find. However, older mentors are readily available to young Gen Zers in the context of intergenerational faith communities, such as the intergenerational worship ministry.⁵²⁷ As has been previously discussed in Chapter 2, Generation Z receives little spiritual and emotional direction from their families, thereby rendering them a leaderless generation.⁵²⁸ Furthermore, more Gen Zers are being raised by religiously unaffiliated parents than were members of any previous generation.⁵²⁹ As White explains, Gen Z has “endless amounts of information but little wisdom, and virtually no mentors.”⁵³⁰ However, involvement in an intergenerational worship ministry offers prime opportunities for intergenerational mentoring relationships to be formed, which in turn results in opportunities for older mentors to pass a biblical worldview and lasting faith to members of the youngest generation.⁵³¹ Furthermore, mentoring relationships offer

⁵²⁵ Powell, Giffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 77.

⁵²⁶ Bradbury, 24; Jackson, “Thinking Critically about Families and Youth Ministry” in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 164.

⁵²⁷ Sanders, “Millennials and Screeners” in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 181-183.

⁵²⁸ White, *Meet Generation Z*, 65.

⁵²⁹ Twenge, *iGen*, 121.

⁵³⁰ White, 65.

⁵³¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 82.

members of Gen Z a safe place to ask questions and express their doubts.⁵³² A Barna study shows that nearly nine out of ten Millennials who walked away from the faith after high school never had a mentor at their church.⁵³³ This statistic, combined with an understanding of the characteristics of Generation Z, affirms the importance of engaging Gen Z through mentoring relationships in the local church.

Spiritual mentoring among participants in an intergenerational worship ministry occurs as older generations of worshipers teach and train younger generations about what it means to be a worshiper.⁵³⁴ Research by Fuller Youth Institute indicates that the most effective model of worship ministry involves kids and adults leading worship together.⁵³⁵ By doing so, experienced worship leaders have an opportunity to mentor younger leaders, and pass leadership responsibilities to them as they mature and are ready.⁵³⁶ Concerning the importance of mentoring relationships within the context of the worship ministry, Pendergraft writes, “There is no more important truth for Christian adults to pass to children than what it means to become a worshiper. When children are kept separated from adults, those adults miss the opportunity to pour into the children’s lives by action and example.... The legacy of adults in the church is a new generation of worshipers to continue worshiping even after the older adults are no longer there.”⁵³⁷ Engaging Generation Z through intergenerational mentoring is essential for raising up a new generation of worshipers in the local church worship ministry.

⁵³² Barna Group, *Barna Trends 2018*, 176.

⁵³³ Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials*, 48.

⁵³⁴ Pendergraft, “Erik Erikson and the Church: Corporate Worship that Sustains through Crises,” 288; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 85-89.

⁵³⁵ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 87.

⁵³⁶ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 50-77.

⁵³⁷ Pendergraft, 288.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter will present a brief summary of the study, including an overview of its purpose and procedure. A brief discussion of research findings is included, along with a discussion of the relationship between the findings and prior research. Limitations of the study are acknowledged and described. This chapter offers implications for practice for the worship ministry within the local evangelical church. The chapter concludes with possible directions for future research.

Summary of the Study

In many of today's evangelical churches, intergenerational models of worship ministry have been replaced by age-segregated models, reflecting the corporate worship practices of these same churches. Therefore, a qualitative historical study was done in order to examine worship ministries in the local evangelical church in an effort to assess generational engagement. Sources were gathered, examined, and analyzed in order to determine common characteristics of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church. Also, recent sources were studied in an effort to determine the ways in which the local evangelical church can engage with Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study indicate that age-segregated worship and ministry has become common practice in many of today's evangelical churches,⁵³⁸ with worship ministries typically

⁵³⁸ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 30-31; Glassford and Barger-Elliott, "Toward Intergenerational Ministry in a Post-Christian Era," 365; Snailum, "Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches," 16.

reflecting the homogenous practices of their respective churches.⁵³⁹ In some congregations, generational homogeneity is taken a step further, as corporate worship gatherings are organized and segregated according to the perceived stylistic preferences of the various individual generational cohorts.⁵⁴⁰ However, interest in returning to the practice of intergenerational corporate worship and ministry is currently experiencing a resurgence,⁵⁴¹ largely due to the alarming rate at which youth and emerging adults are disengaging from the church.⁵⁴²

An examination of the teachings of Scripture regarding generational engagement and its impact on spiritual formation reveals that spiritual formation happens best in the context of intergenerational relationships. From Old Testament passages such as Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78 to the New Testament directives of Paul, the preponderance of Scripture indicates that faith formation should take place in intergenerational settings.⁵⁴³ Likewise, Christian ecclesiology views the church as an intergenerational community.⁵⁴⁴

Research findings reveal that one characteristic of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local evangelical church is relational connection, which results in a deep sense of belonging⁵⁴⁵ and an increased sense of connection to the Body of Christ.⁵⁴⁶ Another characteristic of an effective intergenerational worship ministry is the opportunity for musical development for musicians of all ages and experiences levels.⁵⁴⁷ Effective intergenerational

⁵³⁹ Keeley, "Intergenerational Connectors in Worship" in *The Church of All Ages*, ed. Vanderwell, 147.

⁵⁴⁰ Vanderwell, xiv.

⁵⁴¹ Allen and Barnett, "Addressing Two Intergenerational Questions" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 17.

⁵⁴² Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 25-26.

⁵⁴³ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 77; Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 124.

⁵⁴⁴ Harkness, "Intergenerational Education for an Intergenerational Church?," 436-437.

⁵⁴⁵ Allen and Ross, 195.

⁵⁴⁶ Prest, *From One Generation to Another*, 25, as quoted in Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 194.

⁵⁴⁷ Sharp, *Mentoring in the Ensemble Arts*, 16, 160.

worship ministries are also characterized by healthy spiritual formation, resulting from regular participation in intergenerational corporate worship,⁵⁴⁸ involvement in service and ministry,⁵⁴⁹ and engagement in mutually-beneficial intergenerational relationships.⁵⁵⁰

The findings of the study indicate that one way to effectively engage Generation Z in order to encourage greater involvement in the local church worship ministry is through the use of technology. As digital natives⁵⁵¹ who have always had the internet available at their fingertips,⁵⁵² technology has changed the way members of Gen Z learn, process information, and interact socially.⁵⁵³ Also, the local church can effectively engage Gen Z through the development of intergenerational relationships.⁵⁵⁴ In addition, another way to effectively engage Gen Z is through mentoring.⁵⁵⁵

Research findings are based upon prior research regarding generational engagement within the local evangelical church, Biblical teaching regarding intergenerationality, generational theory, and characteristics of generational cohorts. Findings regarding Generation Z are based on recent research which explores the trends and influences impacting the generation, as well as emerging generational characteristics.

⁵⁴⁸ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 75; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 40-42.

⁵⁴⁹ Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 209-210; Cannister, "Thinking Ecclesialogically" in *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, ed. Clark, 141.

⁵⁵⁰ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 73, 82-97; Eikenberry, "Developing an Intentional and Transparent Intergenerational Ministry in a Small Congregation," 18-19; Fay, "Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation," 71-72; Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 124; Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 203-205; Nelson, *Where Faith Begins*, as referenced in Allen and Ross, 65; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 24; Westerhoff, *Will Our Children Have Faith?*, as referenced in Allen and Ross, 66.

⁵⁵¹ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, *Gen Z*, 15.

⁵⁵² Twenge, *iGen*, 2.

⁵⁵³ Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 15-24; Twenge, 69-91.

⁵⁵⁴ Allen and Ross, 48-49; Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 101; Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, 59.

⁵⁵⁵ Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 181-183; Barna Group and Impact 360 Institute, 82.

Limitations of the Study

This researcher acknowledges certain limitations of this study. When conclusions are being drawn regarding the research, the following limitations should be considered:

1. Very little research exists regarding any type of generational engagement within the worship ministry of the local evangelical church. Although much research exists regarding generational engagement in the context of corporate worship, and some research exists regarding generational engagement in the context of service-oriented ministry opportunities within the local church, generational engagement within the context of worship ministry is seldom addressed.
2. Research regarding Generation Z is continually emerging. This researcher acknowledges that the oldest members of Gen Z are just now entering the phase of life known as emerging adulthood. Therefore, the data regarding this generation is subject to change as the rest of the generation comes of age. However, because of the agreement found among the research regarding Gen Z, combined with the predictive nature of generational theory, this researcher believes that current studies regarding Gen Z are valid and informative for decisions regarding generational engagement within the local church worship ministry.

Implications for Practice

Church leaders and worship pastors are continually faced with decisions regarding the practices of worship and ministry within the local evangelical church. Corporate worship practice and opportunities for ministry and service converge in the implementation of the worship ministry in the church. The findings of this research study have implications which must

be considered when church leaders are determining whether to implement an age-segregated, cohort-focused, or intergenerational model of worship ministry. Likewise, these same implications must be considered when leaders are deciding whether or not to continue with the model of worship ministry already in place. Decisions regarding what type of worship ministry to implement will affect church growth and church health, but will also have a long-lasting impact on the young members of Generation Z.

The research indicates that the best model of local church worship ministry for church health is an intergenerational model. The long-term health of the church is linked to the spiritual health of its members, and research shows that healthy spiritual formation occurs best in intergenerational environments.⁵⁵⁶ The age-segregated model, which is effective for short-term church growth,⁵⁵⁷ results in stunted and distorted spiritual formation.⁵⁵⁸ The age-segregated model also encourages a consumeristic and individualistic mentality,⁵⁵⁹ which runs counter to healthy spiritual formation.⁵⁶⁰ A spiritually-healthy church is a long-term goal with results that are often not seen in the short-term, while numeric church growth is seen almost immediately. Church leaders should be aware that deciding to implement an intergenerational model of worship ministry may result in lower numbers, initially, because the model runs counter to the consumerism and individualism which are common in today's culture. Personal preference and personal convenience will need to be sacrificed for the good of the intergenerational whole,

⁵⁵⁶ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 64-74, 82-97; Fay, "Emerging Young Adult Spiritual Formation," 71-72; Harkness, "Intergenerationality: Biblical and Theological Foundations," 124; Kinnaman with Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 203-205; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 75; Vanderwell, *The Church of All Ages*, 24.

⁵⁵⁷ Snailum, "Integrating Intergenerational Ministry and Age-Specific Youth Ministry in Evangelical Churches," 17.

⁵⁵⁸ Allen and Ross, 192-195.

⁵⁵⁹ Ketcham, "Potential Ecclesiology," 7-26.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid.; Santos, "Why Now?" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 46-47.

which also runs counter to consumeristic and individualistic mindsets. However, the implementation of an intergenerational model will contribute to the long-term spiritual health of the individual, the worship ministry, and the local church body.

The decision to implement an intergenerational worship ministry has far-reaching implications for Generation Z. Research shows that top contributing factors to whether or not youth and emerging adults remain connected to the church after high school are regular participation in intergenerational worship,⁵⁶¹ regular engagement in service and ministry,⁵⁶² and involvement in multiple intergenerational relationships within the faith community.⁵⁶³ All three of these things occur when an individual is engaged in an intergenerational worship ministry of the local church. An individual who participates in an intergenerational worship ministry serves the Lord regularly in the context of intergenerational corporate worship, while cultivating intergenerational relationships with individuals of other generations within the worship ministry. Therefore, one of the most effective ways to encourage members of Generation Z to remain connected to the Body of Christ after high school is to encourage them to be engaged in an intergenerational worship ministry in the local church.

The worship pastor who determines to implement an intergenerational model of worship ministry should be prepared for the possibility of an increased level of frustration in the rehearsal environment. The varying skill levels and varying preferred methods of learning among the intergenerational members of the worship team can be a source of frustration for many.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶¹ Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, *Sticky Faith, Youth Worker Edition*, 75.

⁵⁶² Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 146-148; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 75.

⁵⁶³ Barna Group, *Making Space for Millennials*, 48; Lifeway Research, "Lifeway Research Uncovers Reasons 18 to 22 Year Olds Drop Out of Church" as quoted by Bradbury, "Sticky faith; What keeps kids connected to church?," 24; Powell, Griffin, and Crawford, 77; Sanders, "Millennials and Screeners" in *Intergenerate*, ed. Allen, 181-183.

⁵⁶⁴ Brooks, "Building Bridges through Music," 62

Furthermore, frustration can occur as a result of the variance in desired outcomes among the various generational cohorts.⁵⁶⁵ Varying stylistic and musical preferences can also be a source of frustration between members of various generational cohorts. In order to address these possible sources of frustration, the worship pastor must provide steady, strong, loving leadership as he or she guides the worship team toward personal deference, mutual edification, and unity.

Careful planning will be essential for the worship pastor who implements an effective intergenerational worship ministry. Planning for intergenerational corporate worship services and preparing for intergenerational worship ministry team rehearsals requires an increased level of knowledge and forethought over what is needed for age-homogenous groups.⁵⁶⁶ In addition to having a working knowledge of the characteristics, personal preferences, and preferred learning methods of the various generational cohorts, the worship pastor must also know how to work with each of those variances in the contexts of intergenerational music rehearsals and intergenerational worship services. The worship pastor must also carefully plan for the meaningful contribution of all generations, rather than relying solely on the contributions of one or two dominant cohorts, while the other cohorts are relegated to a place of token participation.⁵⁶⁷ The spiritual, musical, and relational needs of the team will need to be assessed, and a strategic plan will need to be formulated for meeting those needs, both on individual and team levels. High levels of planning and preparation are essential for successful implementation of an effective intergenerational worship ministry in the local church.

⁵⁶⁵ Sutherland, ““I Tried Hard to Control My Temper,”” 2675-2676.

⁵⁶⁶ Conway and Hodgeman, “College and Community Choir Member Experiences in a Collaborative Intergenerational Performance Project,” 234-235.

⁵⁶⁷ Allen and Ross, *Intergenerational Christian Formation*, 198-201; Clark, *Adoptive Church*, 146-148.

Successful implementation of an intergenerational worship ministry will require clear, continual communication on multiple levels. The church leader or worship pastor who endeavors to implement an intergenerational worship ministry within the life of the local church must be prepared and willing to teach the congregation about the importance of intergenerational worship and ministry. Church leaders, congregation members, and members of the worship ministry team will most likely not possess the same level of knowledge regarding biblical and practical teachings relevant to generational engagement within the local church. Therefore, the church leader or worship pastor who is leading the quest for implementation must be equipped and willing to teach those principles to all involved, and to teach regularly and repetitively. Attitudes regarding generational engagement in the local church will most likely not change overnight but rather will change over time as the teaching of biblical and practical principles of generational engagement takes root.

When seeking to implement an intergenerational worship ministry, the church leader or worship pastor should first enlist support from the church leadership, including staff. Without the support of the staff and leadership, effective implementation will most likely not occur. Likewise, securing support from current members of the worship team is also crucial. The implementation of an intergenerational worship ministry will bring many changes to the worship team, so their support is vital for successful implementation. Finally, the church leader or worship pastor should actively enlist new worship team recruits from each of the generational cohorts, including Generation Z.

As an ongoing part of the implementation process, the worship pastor will need to shepherd the worship ministry team while also shepherding the individual worship team members, according to their specific needs. The worship pastor has a responsibility to shepherd

the team by providing spiritual care and guidance, musical instruction and teaching, and relational encouragement and support. By continually shepherding them spiritually, musically, and relationally, according to individual and generational needs, the worship pastor cultivates and encourages an environment of growth and unity for the worship ministry team, which will have a positive impact on the successful implementation of an intergenerational worship ministry.

The church leader or worship pastor who determines to implement an intergenerational worship ministry should not do so without much prayer. Prayer is vital, beginning with the first realization of the need for intergenerational worship and continuing throughout the process of implementation. Nehemiah provides an excellent example of a leader who prayed upon realizing the need,⁵⁶⁸ prayed at the beginning of the undertaking,⁵⁶⁹ and prayed throughout the process.⁵⁷⁰ The church leader or worship pastor must follow Nehemiah's example, and pray fervently and continually for the successful implementation of an intergenerational worship ministry in the local church.

Recommendations for Future Study

The following recommendations for future study are made based on the findings and limitations of this study:

1. Long-term impact of involvement in an effective intergenerational worship ministry for Generation Z. A study which follows Gen Z members of intergenerational worship ministries from adolescence through emerging adulthood could offer insight into the

⁵⁶⁸ Nehemiah 1:1-11

⁵⁶⁹ Nehemiah 2:1-8

⁵⁷⁰ Nehemiah 4:6-8; 6:1-9

correlation between adolescent engagement in intergenerational worship ministry and the continuation of local church involvement as an emerging adult.

2. Correlation between involvement in an intergenerational worship ministry as an adolescent and continued involvement in intergenerational worship ministry as an adult. Perhaps research involving surveys and interviews could determine whether or not there is a correlation between involvement in intergenerational worship ministry as an adolescent and continued worship ministry involvement as an adult.
3. Correlation between involvement in an intergenerational worship ministry as an adolescent and engaging in vocational worship ministry as an adult. Perhaps research involving surveys and interviews could determine whether or not there is a correlation between involvement in intergenerational worship ministry as an adolescent and choosing to serve in vocational worship ministry as an adult.
4. A study of the specific benefits of engagement in an effective intergenerational worship ministry for each generational cohort. Perhaps research involving surveys and interviews could determine specific benefits of intergenerational worship ministry engagement for each generational cohort. Results could be compared and contrasted to discover commonalities and differences.

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