



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

99 - March 2019

A Best Practice: Connecting the Generations

In the last twenty years or so, much has been written and implemented about intergenerational faith formation.

This issue, though, will look predominantly at some simple ways and methods for connecting the younger generation with the maturing generation of adults. Previously there were a few **GEMS** issues concerning ways to support grandparents ([GEMS #64-#66](#)). Many of the ideas here would connect to grandparenting as well as involving and connecting the grandparenting-age members of our parishes with our youngsters and teens.

Telling the Stories



Anita Daroczy, director of adult faith formation at St. Mary of the Snows Parish, Milford, MI comments: “We involve our maturing adults in a few different ways. We call the seniors to be involved in Faith formation for children by **team-teaching** a small group. For our Vacation Bible Camp we have a group called RSVP: **Retired Senior Volunteer Program**. The invitation says: ‘Jesus was a story teller and we’d like to know if you are a retired senior who would like to come and share your ‘story’ of Jesus with the children for we would love to have you on board.’”



Leslie Krauledis, director of religious education at Holy Family Parish, Shorewood, IL, also relates how their parishioners who are grandparent-age are involved in **telling the stories within faith formation**: “We offer home schooling in grades three through six. Some grandparents do the teaching. We give them the catechist manual and student book, touching base and meeting with them four timesthroughout the year. They are also invited to our prayer services and Advent and Lenten reconciliation services.”



Barbara (BJ) Haynes, currently ministering at St. Paul the Apostle Parish, Baton Rouge, LA, tells of her time as a catechist in New Orleans: “We used our grandparents for **‘Tell us your Story’**

Sunday. We would invite 1-3 grandparents to tell the children what it was like to be an African-American Catholic youth, especially the reality of racial prejudice suffered in the church and community. This idea could be used with other ethnic groups especially if the grandparents migrated to the USA. We also used some grandparents as “Fishers for CCD” to telephone families of absent CCD children.”



Sister Carole Kimes, SP from St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish, Carmel, IN shares her endeavors: “We are developing a ministry called **‘Silver Linings’** which is for baby boomers and beyond. One component of this ministry is to bridge the gap between the generations.

In May we offered a breakfast for the Silver Lining Members and our parish youth. A small committee of youth helped with the planning:

- They wanted to be able to have a prayer partner.
- The youth provided the breakfast with some assistance from some of the adult contributors.

We had a 2 ½ hour gathering which began with breakfast, followed by a drawing of prayer partners. We prayed together. Then the youth and the silver lining member had a chance to connect and get to know each other. The youth took a picture of the Silver Lining member and then asked them to tell them one lesson the senior learned in their life that would help them (the youth) on their journey.

One of the teens then made a slide show with all the pictures and shared lessons which are now on display with our digital signage in the narthex for the whole parish to enjoy.

The gathering ended with a game of jeopardy as the youth challenged the Silver Lining members. The game was created specifically for this occasion. At the conclusion, the youth were very pleased and asked if they could come together again. One of our future goals is to have the youth document in some way the Silver Lining members’ stories.”

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[GEMS #65](#) explored the idea of encouraging children/youth to “interview” grandparents and older adults, recording their stories. The [StoryCorps](#) movement might provide some ideas. To explore some further thoughts about storytelling:

<https://www.mormonnewsroom.org/article/generations-connect-through-personal-histories-life-stories>

“In all of us, there is a hunger, marrow-deep,
to know our heritage —
to know who we are and where we have come from.”

- Alex Haley

Intergenerational Faith Formation

Before we look at some **more suggestions** for the connection of the younger and older generations, let’s take a moment to remind ourselves of some of the resources available for intergenerational faith formation (connecting all generations).

Some books:

- *Generations Together: Caring, Praying, Learning, Celebrating, and Serving Faithfully* by Kathie Amidei, Jim Merhaut, and John Roberto (LifelongFaith Associates, 2014)
- *Intergenerational Christian Formation: Bringing the Whole Church Together in Ministry, Community and Worship* by Holly Catterton Allen and Christine Lawton Ross (IVP Academic, 2012)
- *Intergenerational Faith Formation: All Ages Learning Together* by Mariette Martineau, Joan Weber, and Leif Kehrwald (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008)

Some Helpful Websites:

- Intergenerational Faith Formation:
<http://www.reimaginefaithformation.com/intergenerational.html>

- Intergenerational Faith Formation:
<http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/intergenerational.html>

Some Articles:

- Three Models for Intergenerational Faith Formation:
<https://www.buildfaith.org/intergenerational-faith-formation-three-models/>
- Faith Formation Across the Generations:
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/faith_formation_across_generations_-_martineau.pdf
- Lifelong Faith Formation for All Generations:
http://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/lifelong_faith_formation_for_all_generations_-_roberto.pdf
- The Importance of Intergenerational Community for Faith Formation:
http://letstalkfamily.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/importance_of_intergenerational_community_for_lifelong_faith_formation.pdf

Some Resources:

- Intergenerational Catechesis: <https://www.loyolapress.com/our-catholic-faith/parish-ministry/intergenerational-catechesis>
- Growing Up Catholic: <http://www.growingupcatholic.com/>
- Intergenerational Faith Formation:
<https://www.vibrantfaith.org/product/intergenerational-faith-formation-complete-set/>
- People of Faith:
http://www.osvcurriculum.com/home/pof_bridge.html
- Intergenerational Model:
http://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/95641/docs/Sadlier_WBCI_IntergenerationalModel.pdf?t=1501512166568

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The nature of intergenerational faith formation stands as a countercultural witness to the consumer-driven society that plants the seeds of need, using 'things' to fill the need of relationships, purpose and meaning.

International faith formations calls us to remove the blinders of assumption from our eyes and to call forward the best from one another as we explore our call to be disciples of Jesus Christ in today's world.

It provides a setting in which to learn compassion, to learn how to listen, to celebrate the gift of faith in the hope found in others.

-Marianne Martineau

Connecting the Grandparenting-age Members of our Parishes with our Children and Youth

Roma Hanks, Ph.D., Professor and Chair in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work at the University of South Alabama and Director, USA Programs in Gerontology, said: "The grandparent role historically has been multi-faceted. Grandparents are seen as the living ancestor, family historian, teacher, mentor, role model, nurturer, crony, pal, conspirator with the grandchild against the parent, wizard, Santa Claus, and hero." (<http://www.theharbinger.org/xvi/971125/grandpar.html>)

This describes the innumerable roles of today's grandparents. Could they also be true for the role of many other older adults who are (could be) involved in the lives of our youngsters?

Benefits

Research – and personal experience – tell us of the countless benefits of connecting the generations. A few of them:

- Provides an opportunity for both to learn new skills
- Gives the child and the older adult a sense of purpose

- Helps to alleviate fears children may have of the elderly
- Helps children to understand and later accept their own aging
- Invigorates and energizes older adults
- Helps reduce the likelihood of depression in the elderly
- Reduces the isolation of older adults
- Fills a void for children who do not have grandparents available to them
- Helps keep family stories and history alive
- Enables youth to develop social networks, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, positive attitudes toward aging, a sense of purpose and community service

<http://www.seniorlifestyle.com/fun-value-intergenerational-programming/> and <http://www.bayshorehomecare.com/10-benefits-connecting-youth-seniors/>

45% of Americans working in retirement say they want to work with youth.

Older adults who regularly volunteer with children burn 20% more calories per week, experienced fewer falls, were less reliant on canes, and performed better on memory tests than their peers.

In schools where older adults were a regular fixture, children had more improved reading scores compared to their peers at other schools.

Youth involved in intergenerational mentoring programs are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, and 52% less likely to skip school.

<http://www.seniorlifestyle.com/fun-value-intergenerational-programming/>

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Some Suggested Activities

Bayshore Home Care (<http://www.bayshorehomecare.com/10-benefits-connecting-youth-seniors/>) and Seniorly (<https://www.seniorly.com/resources/lifestyles/8-fun-activities-for-children-and-seniors-to-do-together>) suggest various activities that initiate, build and strengthen intergenerational relationships.

- ✦ Which ones can you incorporate into parish life, into faith formation opportunities?
- ✦ Which ones can you help facilitate among the generations within your parish, your community?



- **Storytelling.** Swapping stories is a great activity and can help build a connection.
- **Learning skills.** Many older adults have skills or talents that would be interesting for children. Perhaps your child could learn to weave, crochet, fish, bake, or even take care of animals.

- **Reading** to each other.
- Planning/preparing a meal or **baking and cooking.**
- **Establishing phone pals.** This activity can connect older community members with children who are alone after school.
- Talking about **ethnic heritage.** Share ethnic customs, discuss the meaning of a name in native language, or relate special stories passed down about culture.
- Planting seeds or **gardening.**
- **Weather watching.**



- **Discussing hobbies** and sharing examples.
- **Scrapbooking.**
- Having the child/youth teach the senior a new **technology.**
- **Arts and Crafts.** There is no better way to enjoy an activity together than creating something you'll both love.
- **Nature Walks.** Go to a park or just walk around the neighborhood. You could even plan a scavenger hunt or just collect some leaves and bring them home to do a craft together.
- **Puzzles and Games.** Introduce them to the classic board or card games you played as a kid. Or let them bring one of their own and teach you how to play.



Connecting with/because of Technology

➤ [GEMS #60](#) describes a “Device Sunday” at a parish with the suggestions of offering “learning centers” before and after the celebration of liturgy with teens and available to answer questions and give help to older parishioners regarding their tech devices.

➤ This delightful article tells the story of a group of teenagers who never knew a world before computers who launched Wired for Connections/Mentor Up, a club at Carmel High School in California, designed to help senior citizens understand the basics of modern-day devices and bridge part of what they perceive as the intergenerational divide. (<http://www.dailygood.org/story/839/perfect-pairing-young-people-teaching-seniors-about-technology-dennis-taylor/>)

Carly Rudiger, one of the founders, says; “I can honestly say that I feel like I’ve learned more during these sessions than I’ve taught, I mean, obviously

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they're taking in all this information and hopefully applying it every day but, for me, just talking with them and learning their stories is what draws me back every time. I love having those conversations.”

- Similar stories are experienced over and over through Cyber Seniors:
 - <https://cyberseniors.org/>
 - <http://cyberseniorsdocumentary.com/>
 - <https://www.fosi.org/good-digital-parenting/cyber-seniors-connecting-generations/>

➤ This creative idea comes from a “bunch of young talented people” who participate in a youth project called Backswing” in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia. Their mission: “Our aim is to bring generations together and build a stronger community. We believe the young and old generations can benefit from each other’s knowledge and life experience.”

Their invitation: “This event is about sharing knitting skills and sharing tips and tricks about technology. We will create covers for mobile phones and tablets but no one will stop you from knitting a pair of socks if you want to. You can also have a go at our giant knitting nancy. Ultimately, it's about having a good time, sharing stories, discovering common grounds and building friendships.” (<https://www.commuknitty.com.au/>)



Connecting through Letter Writing

As more researchers and doctors recommend the benefits of handwriting for both children and senior citizens, Domtar Corporation created a program called PaperPal (<https://www.teachthought.com/current-events/a-letter-writing-project-to-connect-students-with-senior-citizens/>).

The effort endeavors to connect generations through letter-writing. It is designed to

- help youngsters develop fine motor skills
- spur seniors to practice a useful cognitive exercise

- give both groups a way to develop enjoyable and enriching connections



Connecting to share talents, resources, and support

This guide (from IN THE MIX, a PBS series and the MetLife Foundation) https://www.tc.pbs.org/inthemix/educators/lessons/bridgingtheyears_guide.pdf guides teachers (and parish leaders) to explore three different experiences:

- High school art students and older adults at the senior center work together to create murals and mosaic tables to beautify a local community park in their small town.
- An intergenerational center which has a unique initiative that pairs autistic teens with surrogate “grandmas and grandpas” who work patiently to improve the teens’ communication and social skills. High school volunteers also enjoy helping at the center.
- Older Hispanic women and at-risk students in New York inspire each other as they create and perform a play to a full house.

GEMS Suggestions

- Many of these suggestions and resources do not take place in a parish setting. Yet -
 - Which ones can you tweak and incorporate into parish life, into faith formation opportunities?
 - Which ones can you help facilitate among the generations within your parish, your community?
- At a future gathering with your colleagues, using this **GEMS** as background, brainstorm how each of your parishes are offering intergenerational opportunities.

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Adding New Luster to an Older Gem

[GEMS #64-66](#) explored some ways that parishes and dioceses can support grandparents. And, this current issue, of course, touches upon connecting grandparents and grandchildren. Here are some additional ideas, activities and resources.

- ✦ Grandparenting From the Inside by David M. Thomas, PhD: <http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org/articles/articles-grandparenting/item/grandparenting-from-the-inside>
- ✦ 5 Ways to Embrace Your Vocation as a Grandparent by Dr. Allen R. Hunt: <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/5-ways-to-embrace-your-vocation-as-a-grandparent/>
- ✦ Our **GEMS** issues highlighted a Grandparent-Grandchild Camp. This article provides more information and resources on them: <https://christiangrandparenting.net/a-christmas-gift-that-outlives-you/>
- ✦ “One question that gnaws at the gut of all grandparents is this, “How can I leave a legacy for my kids?” The written word is powerful. Certainly, it’s important to speak words of blessing and encouragement to our grandsons and granddaughters, but writing has the potential to last much longer since words can be saved and read over and over again. The written word has power to shape and encourage our grandchildren and build a lasting family legacy. Short notes, journal entries, letters and even e-mails can be great tools to keep in touch and affirm our grandchildren.” This article explores several ways of passing on a legacy through writing: https://grandkidsmatter.org/hot-topics/young-adults/grandparents-written-legacy/?mc_cid=03fb39aff6&mc_eid=62ea809a65

- ✦ Below is a flier describing “Movie Day for Grandparents and Grandchildren” sponsored by the diocese of Wichita. These days have been offered on days when school is closed (e.g. Easter Monday) as many children are being cared for by their grandparents on those days. Two of the large senior care homes in the area have large theatre rooms; they provided free popcorn and bottled water.



MOVIE DAY
FOR GRANDPARENTS AND THEIR SCHOOL AGED GRANDCHILDREN

REFLECTION RIDGE RETIREMENT COMMUNITY THEATRE ROOM
2300 N. TYLER ROAD WICHITA, KS

MONDAY, APRIL 2, 2018 @ 1:30-4:00 PM

ADMISSION
1 HOMEMADE EASTER CARD
TO GIVE TO ONE OF THE RESIDENTS

FREE
POPCORN & WATER

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe features four kids who travel through a wardrobe to the land of Narnia and learn of their destiny to free it with the guidance of a mystical lion.

EVENT IS LIMITED TO THE FIRST 120 WHO CALL 685-5240 TO RSVP

SPONSORED BY:



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