

# Cultivating an Intergenerational Church







How did we get  
here?



# How did we get here?



- Western cultural influences:
  - modern and post-modern individualism
  - tri-partition of society (institutionally, socially, spatially)
- Developmental psychology and educational theory influence
- The success of parachurch organisations with teenagers in the 70's inspired churches to adopt similar specialised ministry approaches
- Consumerism: “the funnest hour of the week!” – a growth strategy
- Ease: it takes more time, energy, effort and creativity to do intergenerational ministry
- No space (or time) for kids!





# Intergenerational

## What's that?

**“Intergenerational is one  
or more age groups doing  
something together.”**

**Allen, Ross: Intergenerational Christian Formation**



# How many generations are under your roof each Sunday?

- Many functional growing churches can have up to six generations gather under the same roof on one day
- The church is one of the few cross-generational communities in Western society today
- Many churches like societies are segregated - institutionally, socially, spatially
- The church has a unique claim to intergenerationalism, but most have bowed to societal conventions and segregated their congregations ignoring the biblical mandate to be the whole body of Christ!



# What if?

*“The church is the last place in society where all five living generations are gathered together under the same roof every week. Isn’t it a shame that these marvellous gifts are often segregated from each other? The moment the elder and child enter most churches they are whisked away to different rooms.*

*What does the elder have to give? Time. Experience. Wisdom. Love. Perspective. Patience.*

*What does the child have to give? Wonder. Energy. Innocence. Honesty. Curiosity. Joy.*

*Wouldn’t it be wonderful if our church had a time and place set aside to let the elder, the child, the parent, the teen and everyone in between share and celebrate the faith together? Wouldn’t it be radical if we chose to be counter-cultural and kept the generations together for an hour or two each week? What if we could return to our roots and become once again be a counter-cultural movement?* Rich Melheim,  
Faith Inkubators

# Cross      Multi      Inter

- Many generations under one roof but are separated for worship, learning, play, mission etc.
- All generations are considered but “never the twain shall meet!”
- Some generations may be deemed to be superior to others.
- No desire to be transformed by each other (or belief that that is possible) .
- Generations worship alongside each other for some time. Effort is made to “accommodate” all ages until they separate for their own worship and learning.
- Generations don’t get to know or appreciate each other, but rather tolerate each other.
- People may celebrate each other’s presence but their interactions are generally superficial and polite.
- Some are “*more equal (powerful) than others!*”
- Relationships across the generations are prioritised and fostered.
- All ages worship together, learn together, pray together, serve together and play together.
- “Intergenerational” is a way of being. It is integral to their culture. It is who they are.
- INTERGENERATIONAL is INTENTIONAL!

# Cross- Multi- Inter- Generational



**How would you define  
the church you minister in?**



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# Why Intergenerational Church?





# God's Intent





# The Early Church modelled it

*“Throughout Scripture there is a pervasive sense that all generations were present when faith communities gathered for worship, for celebration, for feasting, for praise, for encouragement, for reading of Scripture, in times of danger and for support and service.*

*To experience authentic Christian community and reap the unique blessings of ALL, the generations must be together regularly and often—infants to octogenarians.”*

Allen, Ross, Intergenerational Christian Formation

**“Intergenerationalism is our  
Christian church’s past and  
future”**

**John Roberto, Generations Together**





**Children learn best by being with, observing and imitating adults**

*Children learn by watching and imitating adults and by projecting themselves into imaginary worlds. Clergy must make worship truly accessible to children and educate parents and other parishioners to see children as fellow-worshippers, not as intruders who have to be hushed or distracted so that adults are left free to pray!"* Gretchen Pritchard-Wolff, *Offering the Gospel to Children*







# EPIC

connected

image-rich

articipatory

xperiential

# Shared experiences



# Significant moments



# Age segregation: “A worrying Western societal trend”

*“While there is place for some level of age segregation, persistent segregation can sow distrust and prejudice between generations, cause different age groups to be blind to each other’s needs and rob people of the chance to learn from those younger and older than them.”*

Leon Neyfakh, The Boston Globe



# Sound Familiar?

*“We’ve overdone it. We wanted to protect kids from working in factories 100 years ago, but we have excluded them so much from the life of the community that they don’t feel like they have anything to contribute, and they don’t have as much opportunity to learn.”*

Barbara Rogoff, psychologist, University of California Santa Cruz





**FIRST PUNCH**

**Let's reclaim our faith's roots:**

✓ Intergenerational

✓ Counter-cultural

**Let's turn back the clock**







We're not  
saying...



# B@TCH: An Intentionally Intergenerational Church



# Intentionally Inter-generational



I wonder....

- What did you like about this story/model of church?
- What helps this model of church work?
- What are some keys to helping everyone feel welcome?
- What are some of the challenges of being together all the time?
- What are some of the benefits of staying together all the time?





# Intentionally Intergenerational



***Intergenerational** churches foster all age relationships, faith sharing and storytelling; incorporate all generations in worship; develop service projects that involve all ages and engage all generations in learning together. For these churches, **being inter-generational is a way of life.** It is an integral element of their culture. **It is who they are!***

# Cultivating an Intergenerational Church

**A**nalysis **A**ssessment **A**dvocates

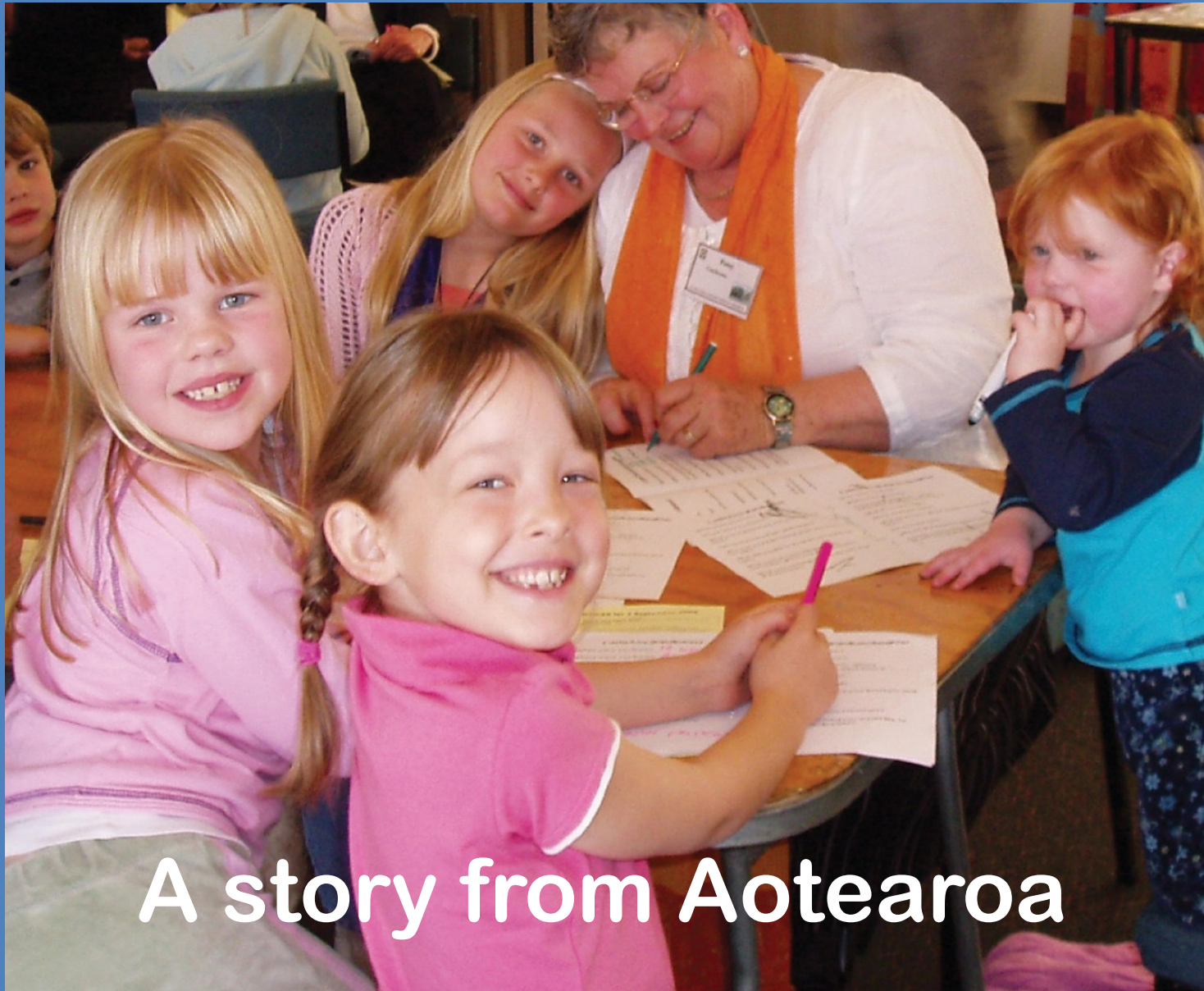
**B**alance

**C**hiefs and **C**elebrate

**D**o things **D**ifferently



# Doing things differently



A story from Aotearoa

**Intergenerational:**  
Doing things differently NOT  
doing different things

- 1. Create intergenerational experiences**
- 2. Infuse intergenerational experiences and relationships into existing ministries and programmes**
- 3. Connect (collide) generations intentionally**



# Moving your church culture change



# What do people think about change?

- Most people (churches) change just enough to get away from their problems, not enough to solve them.
- Most people (churches) want to change their circumstances to improve their lives instead of changing themselves to improve their circumstances.

# What do people think about change?

- Most people (churches) do the same thing the same way and expect different results.
- Most people (churches) are willing to change not because they see the light but because they feel the heat.

# Three Key Factors for Change



**Dissatisfaction** – provides momentum



**Vision** (a snapshot/dream of the desired future) – provides direction, clarifies purpose for change



**Passion** – provides energy and builds a positive climate for designing a new way of being



# My Story



Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand

# Kids Friendly: culture & change

- Grasp the urgency
- Win over the chiefs
- Establish an intentional and strategic Dream Team to:
  - review
  - dream/vision
  - design/set goals
  - deliver
- Equip and support for action
- Communicate and share for buy-in
- Celebrate the small and large wins
- Make Kids Friendly a core value

# Hindrances to Kids Friendly change

- Programme versus practise
- Uncommitted leaders
- Absolving responsibility of ministry with children to a few
- Lack of understanding/appreciation of generations
- Ignoring biblical mandate
- Self-centredness (the enemy)
- Seems too hard
- Seen as a destination not a journey

# Moving your church

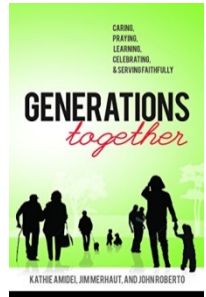




# Helpful Resources

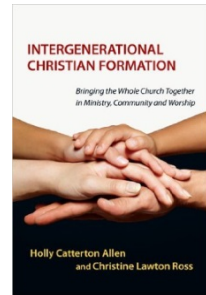
## Books

- Generations Together – Amidei, Merhaut, Roberto
- Intergenerational Christian Formation – Allen & Ross



## Websites

- [www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/worship-together/intergenerational-church/](http://www.kidsfriendly.org.nz/worship-together/intergenerational-church/)
- [www.lifelongfaith.com](http://www.lifelongfaith.com) including Lifelong Faith Journal



## Audio and video

- [Intergenerational B@tch](#) (video)
- [Moving your church – embedding an intergenerational culture](#) (MP3)