

DIFFERENT MODELS OF INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP

There are all kinds of intergenerational worship happening around the world, and new ones are being developed and nurtured all the time. Here are the descriptions of several different models of intergenerational church. These descriptions also include some of the practical considerations, benefits and challenges of the various models.

Each model can also give you fresh ideas and perspectives for your own intergenerational worships – so it's worth reading all of them and picking out some of the ideas that appeal to you, and that might work well in your own church.

Not every church is ready for intergenerational worship. The micro-culture of each church is different, and every congregation is on a different place along the road towards involving all the generations. So these models can also help you to plan a road map from where your church is right now, to where you would like it to be in the future.

Program outlines and suggestions have been included for each model, using the theme of the Creation Story, to help you understand the way in which each style of intergenerational worship might approach the topic differently.

CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN AN ADULT-ORIENTATED WORSHIP SERVICE

At the very simplest level, just involving children in your usual worship service, will make a difference. Whenever a child in the congregation sees another child doing something in the service, they will usually stop what they're doing and watch what's happening. Aim to involve at least one child every week in your traditional services, as this gives the other children the message that this service is for them too, that they are valued, and that children have a role to play in their church's worship experience.

CHILDREN CAN:

- Introduce a hymn, play an instrument or be involved in special music
- Read the Bible passage for the day
- Help take up the offering
- Distribute bulletins or handouts
- Submit prayer requests

- Participate in practical sermon illustrations

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- It's important to explain to the child what you are expecting him to her to do. Ask them to tell you what they think you said, to check they really did understand.
- Always do a live rehearsal in the church, such as how to walk on and off the platform, because this will help them to feel more confident.
- Make sure they have something stable to stand on if they are too small to see over the pulpit.
- Check that any microphones are adjusted for their height and voice.
- Don't assume children will know how to do something just because they've been in church every week. They may not have paid any attention to the way people walk on and off the platform, or how the deacons collect the offering, because it hasn't been relevant to them.
- Give children a practical demonstration of what you want them to do, such as which path to take to collect the offering, because many children understand visual instructions better than verbal instructions.
- Provide a mentor who is right there to support and reassure them if they have any problems or in case they become unsure or distressed.
- Always thank them for their contribution to your service. If possible, send them a little 'thank you' card afterwards.

BENEFITS:

- Children are involved.
- Children feel and know that they are in important part of the worship service.
- Children develop confidence in participating in the church's worship experience.
- Children's contributions are valued and appreciated, even if they sometimes make a mistake.

CHALLENGES:

- Children are still 'visitors' to the adult worship experience.
- Children are only participating one at a time, or maybe a few at a time – you may not be involving all the children every week.

- Services where children have minimal involvement may not provide the kind of visual and sensory stimulation, and physical movement, that many children need to keep them interested and comfortable.
- Children who are involved in adult-orientated services are probably not engaging spiritually in the worship experience. They are usually copying adult worship behavior. But a child can introduce a hymn, or even read a passage of scripture, and have no idea what it is really about and how it applies to their worship experience or their personal relationship with God.

IDEAS FOR INVOLVING CHILDREN IN AN ADULT-ORIENTATED SERVICE ON CREATION:

HYMNS

- Children can choose their favorite hymn about creation, or about God as a creator, and introduce it to the congregation.
- Older children and teens could be involved in creating a PowerPoint presentation where the words of the hymn are accompanied by photos of nature.
- Children can use percussion instruments to accompany a rousing hymn of praise to God.

PRAYER TIME

- Children could draw pictures of God's creations that they want to thank Him for. They could come to the front and hold up their pictures for everyone to see. Some of them could also be asked why they want to thank God so much for the creation they have drawn.
- Children could be invited, in advance, to bring in pictures, models and real things that God has created. These could be arranged in a display at the front of the church to inspire thanks and praise to God.

SCRIPTURE

- Children could draw pictures to illustrate each verse used in the scripture reading. They can come to the front and hold up their pictures during the appropriate verse. Or their pictures can be scanned and used to create a PowerPoint to accompany the scripture reading.
- Children could memorize one verse each and present the scripture reading together.
- Children may be able to mime actions to illustrate the scripture readings.

OFFERING

- Children could draw one of God's creations, for which they feel especially thankful, on a plain envelope. They could put their offering in this envelope and place it in the collection.
- Children could be asked to find offering containers that illustrate something God has created. The deacons, or children, can then use these containers for collecting the offering during the service. They might choose an object made from carved wood, a

basket made from twigs or reeds, a dried gourd, a coconut shell, something covered in flowers, etc.

- During the sermon the children could be sent to search for hidden objects that illustrate the different days of creation. They could bring them to the front of the church where they can be displayed in groups for each day of the creation week.
- A beautifully illustrated PowerPoint could accompany the sermon, so that the children have something interesting to look at. They could also be given a handout listing things to look for on the different PowerPoint slides, such as the color of a flower, an almost-hidden mouse, the number of birds in a picture, etc.

MENTORING CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE WORSHIP SERVICE

This level is very much like the first level, but children have mentors who will work with them for a few weeks before the service. Mentors are trusted adults who love children, understand how to nurture their spiritual awareness and help them to participate in the worship service at a deeper level than mere performance.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- A mentor supporting a child who has been asked to do a scripture reading may first meet with the preacher or worship team so they understand the focus of the service.
- The mentor will then meet with the child and they will pray and read the verses together.
- The mentor will explore the verses with the child to make sure he or she really understands what they mean.
- The mentor checks that the child understands all the words and that the child understands the context of the passage.
- Then a discussion can be opened up using the types of questions that Jerome Berryman¹ has developed in 'Godly Play' to nurture children's spiritual development:
 - What do you like best about these verses?
 - What do you think is the most important part of the message?
 - Which phrase or verse says something special to you?
 - What else might we use to help the other children in the congregation understand this message better? (props, costumes, PowerPoint pictures, mime, background music, etc.)

¹ Jerome Berryman, 'Godly Play', Augsburg Fortress, 1999.

- The mentor is careful to nurture the child's ideas and not take over the process. If a child suggests something that seems inappropriate, the mentor might say, 'That's very interesting...I wonder what else we could do?'
- The mentor then works with the child to find the most effective way to communicate the message in the scripture reading. The mentor practices with the child, supports and helps them with their creative ideas, shows them how to step on and off the platform and use the microphone, and prays with them before the service, etc.

A music mentor would also work with any child involved in special music, helping them practice the difficult sections, and supporting them during their playing or singing, etc. The music mentor can also help the child understand the hymn, song or piece of music better, using 'Godly Play' type questions and conversations, so that the child can sing or play with heart-felt meaning.

BENEFITS:

- The child's understanding of their contribution to the worship experience is increased and valued.
- A spiritually nurturing relationship is encouraged between the mentor and the child.
- The congregation benefits from being open to learning from the children in their church, and by being encouraged to see things in fresh ways, through their eyes.
- The children in the church will benefit because they will learn from each other.
- The child feels that their contribution is important and appreciated.
- This is a simple way to ensure children can make a positive contribution to any worship service – at any stage along the path towards fully-integrated intergenerational worship.

CHALLENGES:

- Mentors need to understand their part in the process – as supporters and enablers – not directors.
- There is always some risk when a child is empowered to be creative in a worship service – but the mentor takes the full and final responsibility for whatever happens.
- Some people in the congregation may need to understand that worship is not about a perfect performance.

INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SERVICES

Family services usually aim to be 'family-friendly'. But they may vary widely in their approach. In some churches this just means their service takes place at a family-friendly time, or they provide a crèche or separate program for the children. Others may just have a children's story

and a worksheet on the theme of the service, or they might use some of the ideas listed in the chapter ‘Sixty simple ways to involve children in your worship service right away.’ Some may even include a lively and contemporary children’s song as part of their worship experience. Other services are truly intergenerational family services, and they aim to involve children more actively throughout the program.

The needs of the families, and the worship culture, vary from church to church. If you want to start an intergenerational service, ask your families what they would like to see included, or excluded, from the worship service. One church that surveyed their families discovered that the service needed to finish by 12:15 at the latest. The children were used to eating their school lunches at 12:00 during the week, so they became increasingly restless when their tummies started rumbling! The parents also suggested including a song for the children during praise time; letting the children use percussion instruments during the part of the praise time; keeping prayers simple and short; not using archaic language in church; and providing thoughtful worksheets for the children on a similar theme to the sermon.

One church told their pastor, ‘we don’t mind what you do for the children. We’ve lost so many generations of young people and we don’t want to lose another. Our faith is settled and we can feed ourselves spiritually if we need something extra. So you go right ahead! Be creative, focus on the children, and we’ll back whatever you choose to do!’

Yet another church decided to change the timing of their Sabbath services to make them more family-friendly. Parents of young children in one urban church found the early morning start too stressful. So they decided to experiment by continuing to hold the church service at 11:15am, sharing a potluck lunch together, and then having Sabbath School classes in the afternoon.

Intergenerational services often have an order of service similar to a traditional church service, but they aim to involve more people in more creative ways throughout the service. The ‘sermon’ is likely to be much shorter to enable time for participants to be more involved in the prayers and the Bible story, the scripture readings, brief discussions and other creative activities. The sermon is also more likely to include an interactive, visual or creative experience of some kind.

BENEFITS OF INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SERVICES:

- Children’s needs and interests are considered by the worship planners at every point in the service, as well as the needs and interests of the adults in the congregation.
- Both the children and the adults only need to wait a short time before there will be something in the service that they can understand and enjoy.
- Ensuring that there is something for everyone helps to nurture a spirit of generosity within the congregation – ‘I can enjoy what’s happening right now, even if it’s not my style, because there’ll be something that suits my needs very soon.’

- The service usually includes some movement (like an action song, or children being actively involved in the children's story or a sermon illustration) and something visual (like pictures on a PowerPoint, or watching something happening) so that it will appeal to a wider range of learning modes than the highly verbal traditional service.
- The intellectual needs of some members can be met by preparing an inspirational handout with a summary of interesting points, useful scriptures on the subject, and thought-provoking questions for them to consider. If something in the service doesn't appeal to them, they can explore the ideas on their handout. Thoughtful, deeper questions can also be displayed on a flip chart or PowerPoint for adults to ponder.
- Holding intergenerational family services at least once a month means that those who prefer a more traditional service will have their needs met, and the families and children can look forward to their special services.
- Teenagers and young people can be involved by giving them the topic and inviting them to prepare an activity on the theme – such as a creative prayer, an interesting way to take up the offering, a PowerPoint to accompany the scripture reading, or a short sketch, etc.

CHALLENGES:

- An effective family service does take extra time and thought to plan and prepare. It's useful to work together in a team so that the workload can be shared amongst people, and their different skills and gifts can be used in the most effective way.
- Family services are often noisier than other services, so make sure you have an adequate PA system, and use the loop-system so that those with hearing aids can enjoy a better quality of sound.

REAL CHURCHES...

One small, rural church, with about 50 members, has several families who make up about half the congregation. They wanted to enrich their own children's experience of church, and support their busy pastor who has two other churches. So, with everyone's agreement they chose to make the first service of each month a family service.

The four main families in the church met to develop their vision for the family service:

- The service should have as broad an appeal as possible, but with a strong focus on the children because the other services in the month would have a greater focus on the adults in the congregation.
- The music should focus on songs that appeal to children and there should be some fresh and contemporary children's praise songs whenever possible.
- Each family will be responsible for 3 services a year, so that the workload is shared and they each have 3-4 months to prepare.
- Each service should use as many of the senses as possible.

- Activities need to focus on visual and sensorimotor experiences, rather than listening and speaking.
- Children need to be actively involved in each part of the service.
- Four thought-provoking questions for adults will be printed in the bulletin whenever there is a family service.

What guidelines might your church draw up to ensure a successful family service?

POSSIBLE INTERGENERATIONAL FAMILY SERVICE OUTLINE FOR THE CREATION STORY

PREPARATION:

- Provide a handout or PowerPoint with a few questions for the adults to think about if they wish:
 - What does it mean to you personally that God is your Creator?
 - Apart from people, light, water and food etc., what is your favorite thing that God has created?
 - God created you so that He could love you as the best Father ever! How has He shown His love for you this week, and how have you shown your love for Him?
 - What would you tell someone who wanted to know why you believe God created the world?
- Find and prepare seven large gift bags. If possible each bag should have a picture of something made on each of the days of creation, such as water, flowers, lights, animals, fish, sun, a church, etc. Fill each bag with items that illustrate the things God made on that day (see later). Try to appeal to as many senses as possible – and have something to taste, smell, touch, hear and watch as it moves (wind up animal etc.) Also label each bag with the relevant number and attach a portion of scripture to each bag – in numbered order. Hide the bags around the church for the children to find later.
- Also prepare the prayer activity as described below.

SERVICE OUTLINE:

- **Welcome and introduction** – Possibly start with the room darkened and then turn on the light and show a picture of the world on the screen.
- **Praise songs** – Include at least one hymn and one lively children's song.

- **Scripture reading** - Send the children around the church to find hidden gift bags. Each bag has a large numbered tag with the relevant scripture written on it. Line the children up in the correct number order as seen from the congregation and invite each child to read the scripture written on their bag's tag. Offer help for the younger ones who may find reading difficult.
- **Prayer** – Find four gift bags of different solid colors. Make a large label for each bag that says Praise, Thank You, Sorry, or Please. Using the same color paper as the appropriate bag (to help small children match the papers to the bags), print one of the four prayer headings onto separate sheets of paper. So, if 'Thank You' is on a pink bag, print 'Thank You' on the top of enough pink sheets of paper for everyone to have one (or print them in such a way that you can cut the paper in half with a heading on each half). Give each person four sheets of paper – one of each color/heading - and ask them to write a sentence, or draw an object, inspired by the heading on each of their papers. Send the children to gather the papers and post them in the correct bags, matching the colors. Pick up each bag of prayers in turn and pull out a few papers to read as your prayer for the service. You could display the prayers afterwards on a large wall, if you wish, but avoid displaying the 'Sorry' ones as they may include private confessions.
- **Offering** – use gold-colored gift bags for collecting the offering, to continue the gift theme, and to illustrate that our offerings are gifts back to God to thank Him for sharing His creation and resources with us.
- **Sermon/story** - Use the bags that were found during the Scripture reading to help you tell the story of creation. You will have pre-filled them with some of the following things:
 - **Day 1** – candle, or torch etc.
 - **Day 2** – bottle of water/bubbles (to illustrate the firmament like a bubble around our world)
 - **Day 3** – a growing plant, fruit and vegetables, etc., including some that can be tasted
 - **Day 4** – large battery-operated star, etc.
 - **Day 5** – toy bird or fish
 - **Day 6** – toy animals and simple people dolls
 - **Day 7** – church, large red heart, etc.
 - On each day of creation God gave the world a very different, very special, and very wonderful gift. Tell the story of creation, inviting the children to come and help you unwrap and enjoy the different gifts – tasting, smelling, touching, and listening, etc. Or prepare 7 adults, teenagers and children to speak for 2-3 minutes about what they like about each of the days of creation, or what each day means to them.

- **Closing praise song or two** – There is a song about creation composed to the tune and style of ‘The Twelve days of Christmas.’ You will find the words in the ‘Creation Worship Resources’ section of this book.
- **Blessing/benediction**
- **Take home item** - You can also give each child a tiny gift bag with seven small objects representing each day of creation. They can take them away and try to put them in the correct order when they get home.

FLOW CHURCH

Flow-style services are a useful model for churches looking for an effective way to experience intergenerational worship. They are semi-structured, with some corporate worship experiences for everyone, and a range of optional activities, or worship stations, that are created around the theme for the day. These alternate throughout the service so that each act of corporate worship is followed by a choice of worship activities. In one hour there would be three to four whole congregation worship times and three times when each person can choose the worship experience that best suits their needs, age or interests.

Everyone is together for the start of the service, which includes a few praise songs, a prayer, the collection of tithes and offerings, and an introduction to the theme. There may also be a short orientation to the worship activities being offered. After the introductory session everyone is invited to move around the room and choose a worship activity that appeals to them. After 7-10 minutes a worship song will play to call everyone back to worship together. The second corporate worship experience might include a more reflective song and a scripture reading. The third might include a ten-minute ‘sermon’, and the final corporate worship experience will include a closing thought, hymn/song and a benediction.

The choice of activities between the corporate worship times might include:

- An art or craft activity on the theme of the service
- A discussion group that focuses on a different question during each break-out session
- A creative prayer activity or quiet zone
- An experiment that illustrates the theme of the service
- An interactive children’s story
- An appropriate film clip that illustrates the theme
- A guided writing activity on the theme of the service
- A short Bible study session

- An interesting Bible quiz
- A practical ministry/service opportunity, like packing care kits for homeless people
- A prayer group
- A practical/multisensory way to experience the Bible verse or the theme of the service.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS:

- The flow worship team needs to meet a month in advance of each service to pray together, explore the theme, share ideas and work out the range of activities that will be offered. Meeting up again a week before the service gives everyone an opportunity to explain what they will be doing, check that everyone's on target, and ask for help and materials, etc.
- Flow worship needs plenty of space. It is best if all the activities can take place in one room, to keep people together, and to make it easier to call people back into the times when everyone is worshipping together.
- Flow worship can be noisy as people are interacting, discussing ideas, telling stories, and making things, etc. So each activity zone needs to have plenty of space around it so that people can hear and concentrate.
- Make sure that there are activities that will appeal to each age group, especially children and teens.
- Some activities, like reflective prayer, may need a quieter space, screened area or distant corner, so that people are not easily distracted by the other activities.
- Call people back to worship using a theme song. This provides a gentle and worshipful reminder for them to return to the main group, and people can join in with the song as they return to their places.

BENEFITS:

- Flow church is a flexible model of worship.
- Each person is involved in the corporate worship experiences, as well as in a range of worship activities that they have chosen themselves. Everyone is able to choose the worship that they most appreciate, or that best reflects their current needs.
- Different people can take responsibility for preparing each of the optional worship experiences, so the workload can easily be shared.
- People who might be daunted by being leading out in a traditional service might happily volunteer to supervise an art activity, or help to prepare an area where personal care-kits for homeless people can be assembled.
- If there is a last minute emergency, one of the activities can easily be discarded, as there will still be several other choices.

CHALLENGES:

- Flow worship does take time to prepare and set up. It's important to meet as a team and work closely together to organize an inspiring choice of worship experiences.
- Flow worship can feel strange at first because people are not used to having choices about their worship experiences, moving around the room, and being active during a service.
- Parents may need to accompany young children to some of their activities. But try to provide at least one activity where children can be left while parents choose a worship experience to meet their needs. Interactive story sessions, or even a crèche with some simple toys on the theme of the service, can be helpful.
- Some people may feel uncomfortable moving around and doing different activities during a worship service. They may prefer to sit and listen to three short devotional thoughts, or mini-sermons. If necessary, invite three speakers to give three different five-minute talks on the theme for the day and so that sitting and listening to them can be one of the available options.

FLOW WORSHIP STATION IDEAS – CREATION THEME

CREATIVE PRAYER:

- Provide plenty of lovely craft materials, blank cards, scissors, glue, etc., for people to make a thank you card for God. Invite them to thank Him for seven things – one thing for each day of creation.

INTERACTIVE STORY:

- The story of creation can be told with actions for the children to do, or objects/pictures of the days of creation for them to find and place in order. Leaders can also ask the following questions, based on Jerome Berryman's 'Godly Play' wondering questions:
- Which day do you like the best?
- Which day do you think is the most important?
- Which day is most about you?
- Which day can we leave out and still have all the days we need?

CRAFT:

- Provide lots of playdough and invite people to make a model of something God created that fills them with wonder. Or use Crayola 'Model Magic' - it is expensive, but it has a

wonderful, soothing and smooth feel to it, and it doesn't crumble and make a mess. It doesn't keep once it's been opened, so only open what you need. Let people take home their creations as a reminder of the service.

MEDITATION SPACE:

- Provide a range of natural, created objects, such as flowers, shells, leaves, twigs, fruits, etc. Invite people to choose one, study it really carefully for five minutes, and be filled with wonder about the God who designed and made it.

MINI TALKS:

- What creation means to me, perhaps by an artist, gardener, or craftsperson, etc.
- A short talk about the wonder of creation, perhaps by a scientist or doctor.
- Our relationship with the God who creates, and recreates, by the pastor.

FILM CLIP:

- The C.S. Lewis 'Narnia' book 'The Magician's Nephew' has a beautiful description of the story of creation. There may be a suitable short clip in the film (due to be released in 2013). Or invite a good reader to read the passage. Find some suitable background music to enhance the atmosphere if possible.
- Find a short video clip of a sculptor at work, or a garden makeover. Discuss the difference between our creativity and God's creativity.

A GUIDED WRITING ACTIVITY:

- Provide quality paper and pens and invite people to write a short psalm with 7-10 verses. Each verse needs to praise God for one of the things He made on each of the days of creation. The extra verses can introduce the theme of praise and creation, and conclude the psalm in an appropriate way.

BIBLE STUDY/DISCUSSION:

- Choose two or three interesting discussion questions on the subject of creation.
- Have a brief Bible study on why God chose to create the world, etc.

BIBLE QUIZ:

- Ask 2-3 Bible questions per day of creation – Eg.

- **Day 1** – Questions about times where darkness and/or light are mentioned in the Bible
- **Day 2** – Questions about times where sky, clouds, or water are mentioned
- **Day 3** – Questions about times where trees, flowers, fruits and grass are mentioned
- Etc.
- For younger children – make a simple game where they turn over pictures or pick up created objects and match them to the correct day of creation.

A PRACTICAL MINISTRY/SERVICE ACTIVITY:

- Plant small flowerpots with pansies to be taken to people who are house-bound. Decorate the plant sticks with encouraging cards and messages.
- Make attractive candleholders, etc. to celebrate God's gift of light. Give them as gifts to inspire people going through a dark time.

STORY-CHURCH

Story church is a concept devised by Christian storyteller and pastor Bob Hartman². Rather than trying to follow a traditional service outline, he takes a Bible story and creates a service that is shaped by the details of the story. So, if possible, the main prayer takes place when there's a prayer in the story. The songs are chosen to work well with the different parts of the story. If the people in the story move about and do something, then movement and activity are planned into the service at those points.

The result is a rich worship experience that works as closely as possible with the Bible story, and includes plenty of extra creativity along the way to help everyone become immersed in the story. Another advantage of this approach is that people experience stories within their own personal contexts, meanings and needs. A young boy and his grandmother will both understand the same story, but it can have a very different meaning and personal application for each of them.

Stories keep on inspiring us in different ways, long after 'The End'. This is why Jesus used parables. The Holy Spirit can bring a story to mind, and give it different meanings, at any time in our lives. The more actively we have experienced a Bible story, the better we will remember it, and the more likely it will make a difference to our lives.

² All-Age Services, by Bob Hartman, David C. Cook, 2009.

HOW DOES STORY CHURCH WORK?

- Begin by prayerfully choosing a story. You might start at Genesis and work through the Bible, selecting different stories that suit your church's needs or the time of the year. Or you might decide to explore different parables, or find another way to choose your stories.
- Read the story carefully, with your team, and discuss some of the different themes and ideas you have.
- Look at the storyline and see when prayers, songs and activities might naturally occur, to help you develop an outline for the program.
- Try to find songs that fit well into the story and program. You may need to write some simple words of your own to a familiar tune.
- Choose a creative or simple prayer activity that coordinates with the story.
- Take up the offering in a creative way that may be suggested by the story.
- Think of ways to help the congregation experience the story that will involve as many people as possible, and encourage them to be involved and interact with each other, as families, and across the generations.
- Think 'outside the box' and explore how each of the five senses can be involved in the story. Use verbal, visual, creative and active ways of experiencing the story.

STORY CHURCH SAMPLE PROGRAM AND IDEAS:

- Praise and worship time - focusing on the God of creation.
- Experiencing the story – give each person a cheap paper gift bag, or brown lunch sack. Tell them not to look inside it until you ask them to. In the bag is a tea-light candle, a very small plastic cup, a leaf shape cut from green posterboard or a flower cut from colored posterboard (you can buy bags of precut flower and leaf shapes made from paper, adhesive felt or foam in most craft stores), a few sticky gold stars, a colored feather, two pipe-cleaners, a red heart cut from felt (or a purchased red heart) and a pencil.
- Tell the story of creation. At the end of each day invite people to take the relevant object from their bag and use it to celebrate the gifts God made on that day. The objects and activities listed below are just examples, so feel free to use the creativity of your team to think of other interesting ideas.
 - **Day 1** – place all the tea-light candles on a large heat-proof trays and light them carefully.
 - **Day 2** – collect and drink a small drink of water from their tiny cup.
 - **Day 3** – stick a leaf on a large outline of a tree and a flower on the grass underneath it.
 - **Day 4** – stick the gold stars on a black sheet of posterboard to make a night sky scene.
 - **Day 5** – stick the feathers inside the outline of a bird shape.

- **Day 6** – shape the two pipe cleaners (chenille sticks) into a person or an animal and see if someone else can guess what you’ve made!
- **Day 7** – stick the red hearts inside the outlines of letters spelling ‘GOD’ so that His name is ‘love’.
- **Prayer** – Invite each person to write their name down the side of a sheet of paper, (or on their paper bag, using the pencil or marker in their bag) and to write one thing they want to thank God for beginning with each letter in their name. Children can draw pictures instead of writing if they wish, or older children and adults can help the younger ones. If they have a very long name, they can just use the first 5-6 letters, their shortest name, or a nickname.
- **Offering** – Find seven containers that illustrate the days of creation in some way, such as a birdcage for day 5, a water jug for day 2, and a black and white container, or lantern, for day 1. Number them to make sure there’s no confusion. Invite people to place their offering in a container representing the day in which God made something that they especially enjoy. So they would put their offering into the container for Day 6 if they wanted to say a special thank you to God for their friends and family.
- **Closing** – after a prayer of blessing, celebrate together with an Edenic meal of fruits and nuts.

MESSY CHURCH

Messy Church is an intergenerational church experience designed for people who wouldn’t usually go to a traditional church. Although it was originally developed as a community outreach ministry, the approach, ideas and activities may also work well for informal intergenerational worship services. The goal of Messy Church is to share Jesus with parents and children, because at least one adult family member needs to stay with the child. Messy Church is based on the values of sharing Jesus with others, creativity, celebratory worship, contemporary relevance, and hospitality. It also aims to strengthen the families who attend, as well as the wider ‘families’ of community relationships and people across the globe.

The Messy Church concept was developed in England in 2004, and it has now spread across the UK and around the world. One Adventist church near London has been running Messy Church once a month for almost 5 years. They now have more than 170 people attending each Messy Church experience, which is as many as their space can hold, and many of these families are unchurched.

Messy Church includes crafts, songs, games, a prayer, and a short time of celebration together. All the activities help the children and adults to explore a Biblical theme, to learn about Jesus, and to nurture their relationship with Him. There’s usually a meal or snack after each Messy Church, and the children and their parents or grandparents are also involved in preparing the food. Even the meals are creatively linked to the Bible story in some way!

Messy Church can take place at any time in the week, not necessarily on Sabbath, but most Adventist churches running Messy Church activities schedule them during Sabbath morning or afternoon.

Messy Church was inspired and created by the charity 'Bible Reading Fellowship', which continues to resource and support Messy Church programs. For more information see www.messychurch.org.uk.

PRACTICALITIES:

Messy Church needs a dedicated team of trained people, who understand children, enjoy creativity, don't mind a little mess, have a growing relationship with God and a clear vision to share Jesus with the children and families in their community. Messy Church also needs to have someone responsible for the overall management of the Messy Church Ministry, and others who can help with the publicity, food, music and songs, storytelling, games, and craft activities. Other volunteers and willing teenagers are always useful, but parents and grandparents will also be there to support and help their own children.

Messy Church needs plenty of space for semi-messy activities. The room, walls, floors and furniture all needs to have wipe-clean surfaces. But it's also useful to have the worship celebration in the church, where there are less distractions, while the tables are being set for food and snacks.

The celebration time needs to involve as many children as possible, and maybe some of their artwork, too. It only needs to be short – 3-4 songs – two lively and one quieter, perhaps, a five minute illustration or story, with action and visuals, and a creative prayer activity. Some groups ask for permission to take photographs of the children and their work, and then show them in a PowerPoint slideshow during the worship time or meal.

BENEFITS:

- Messy Church is an intergenerational worship experience that also functions as an effective and successful outreach ministry.
- Children and parents/grandparents, etc. come together to make, eat, listen and celebrate, so there is plenty of intergenerational communication and relationship building taking place.
- The name 'Messy Church' is welcoming for people who feel their lives and relationships are messy; those who would feel uncomfortable in a traditional 'Tidy Church' setting; and those who are concerned that their children would be noisy, messy, or disruptive in a traditional church service. Jesus came to minister to people whose lives were messy – the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, lepers, Zacchaeus, etc.
- Organizers of Messy Churches have reported that they often attract dads, who are very happy to come with their children and get messy, well away from home where mom is

having a break! As it's often hard for churches to reach men, this is an excellent way of breaking down barriers. So make sure you have several men on the Messy Church team to help any dads, uncles and grandfathers feel welcome.

- Messy Church is widely recognized in the UK as a 'brand' of church that families can trust. Christian families are often willing to travel to find a Messy Church so that they can enjoy the experience with their children, and to help their children enjoy getting to know Jesus.
- The workload for each session can easily be divided up between specific teams, so it is easier to organize.
- Messy Church is a flexible concept – you can adjust the program and style to suit your local needs.
- It has a dedicated website with plenty of support materials, and program outlines are continually being generated. So you don't have to reinvent wheels or struggle to find creative ideas.

CHALLENGES:

- Some people may feel uncomfortable with the word 'Messy'. Our concept of church as being orderly, clean, neat and predictable is challenged when we associate it with the adjective 'Messy'! Some churches call it 'Creative Church' instead. But life and children are naturally messy, and being free to make a safe mess helps children to feel loved and accepted, just as they are, without the pressure to perform, to produce a perfect end result, and to stay neat and tidy.
- Some people may wonder about cooking and making things on Sabbath. However, children often do crafts and prepare simple snacks as part of their Sabbath School experience. The crafts and foods involved in Messy Church are all designed to help the children explore the Bible story and to enjoy it with all of their senses, so that they will learn and remember the stories more easily. It may be useful to think of these activities as different ways to worship and learn, rather than as 'work', or as 'things we don't do on Sabbath'.

USEFUL RESOURCES

- www.messychurch.org.uk

CREATION MESSY CHURCH - SAMPLE IDEAS

CRAFT ACTIVITIES

- Children can be provided with all kinds of craft materials and be invited to make a new creation out of old junk, etc.
- Or they can design a brand new animal, fish, bird or flower.

- They can draw something they enjoy that God made during each day of creations.
- They can make a mobile or garland illustrating the days of creation.

FOOD

- Children can make edible pictures of a garden using slices of fresh fruit.
- They can choose their own fruit smoothie ingredients and create a new kind of drink.
- They can have a paper plate divided into seven sections, with something to eat representing the things God made on each day.
- They can make and decorate gingerbread people and animal cookies.

GAMES AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

- Allocate spaces around the room for the numbers 1-7. Call out something God made and let the children run to the number of the day on which they think it was made.
- Have a relay race where children take it in turns to run to a table and collect something from each day of creation in the correct order.

CELEBRATION

- **Prayer** – as part of the craft time invite the children to make thank you cards for God for the things He has created. Or use an alphabet thank you prayer – call out any letter of the alphabet and have the children thank God for created things beginning with that letter.
- **Songs** – choose songs that praise God for what He has made. Use some action songs where the children can act out being different animals, trees, fish, etc.
- **Illustrated talk** – Try making a world using a ‘recipe’ that follows the days of creation. You will find a description of this in the ‘Creation Worship Resources’ section of this book. Make it in a big plastic box with semi-transparent sides, half filled with water. Add a floating candle for day 1, etc. Of course – it won’t work, it will be a horrible mess. We couldn’t make a world no matter how hard we tried! All we do is make a big mess. Only God can make something as beautiful as our world.

OTHER INTERGENERATIONAL WORSHIP CONTEXTS

House church, family worships and family camps may also provide creative and informal contexts for intergenerational worship experiences. The benefits of these settings are that you can do almost anything you like because you don’t have some of the constraints of trying to do a service to meet the needs of lots of people inside a building. The challenges may be that you don’t have as many technical resources as a church, etc.

Here are some ways in which a house church or family camp might explore the story of creation:

- 7 baskets or boxes could be labeled with the different days of creation and the children and adults could search for different objects natural and man-made that illustrate what was made on each day of creation week.
- Simple activities could be used to help people experience the days of creation. Light could be experienced as having a blind-fold walk, or exploring something in the darkness, and then having the blind-fold removed; blowing bubbles to illustrate the firmament – a big watery bubble that protects our world; or pond dipping; identifying all the trees, grass and flowers in a small area; using the sun and a magnifying glass to start a safe fire, or making a sun-dial to track the sun's movement across the sky; bird-watching; bug searches; casting animal foot-prints, etc.; making models of each other out of clay; and then having a lovely picnic and praise time to represent Sabbath, etc.
- Inviting different people to research and present a short talk or experience based on each day of creation, or to bring 7 special things that represent each day of creation for them. These can then be displayed and discussed.
- Different families can be given different days of creation and 30 minutes to make something that represents their day, in any way they like, After 30 minutes all the families can go on a grand tour to visit each other's creations and experiences.
- How else could small family groups celebrate the wonder of creation in intergenerational ways?

EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK 'ALTOGETHER LOVELY?' (PROVISIONAL TITLE) BY
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