

# EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

## Being relational



Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:1-5

*Relational* is one of those words that has been used so much that its meaning is now very difficult, if not impossible, to understand.

*Relational* refers to the decision to prioritise relationships between people over the transmission of information. Information is not ignored or undervalued, however, a relational leader recognises that the information will not have lasting value or impact unless there are strong, authentic relationships established.

A relational leader sets out to encourage people in their faith as they grow in relationship with God and others.

*Relational* also refers to the method in which content is delivered. A traditional model of content delivery involves an expert presenter faithfully telling people what they need to know. A relational method of content delivery still aims to share content, but it allows lots of space for questions, discussions and creative responses.

Additionally, *relational* refers to the environment. A relational environment is one that is comfortable, welcoming, challenging and safe – both in its physical aesthetic and its relational ambience. People need to experience and do things together as they explore their faith. There needs to be opportunities and space for them to discuss matters of faith and life.

**The church may have a building, but that is not its place. The building may be the church's location, but its space is in the shared humanity of its persons.**

Andrew Root

The relational atmosphere is just as important as the physical. It should be a safe space where everyone knows they belong, no matter who they are or what they believe. The people of God are part of his family and belong together because of their faith. Having strong intergenerational relationships in the congregation will help to keep people of all ages connected. They can support each other as they wrestle with issues of life and faith.



Here are some ideas for building these relationships:

- Find ways for all the generations to spend time together and feel welcome. Everyone has something to offer and everyone has something to learn. Perhaps offer an intergenerational Bible study or host an intergenerational lunch with intentional seating and conversation starters. You could host a GIFT event (see Grow Ministries for this resource).
- Nurture spaces where people can get to know each other and develop meaningful relationships not just on Sunday mornings. Introduce *Caring Conversations* during your morning teatime (see Grow Ministries for this resource). Start a 'get-to-know-you' column or '60 seconds chat' with different congregational members in your newsletters or bulletins. (Abide by the rules for sharing personal information online if you have an e-news).
- Provide opportunities for people to share their life and faith stories. This could be both written and spoken.
- Find ways to encourage people to pray for each other.
- Encourage people to check in with each other outside of worship and other organised church events. This may be in the form of small groups, pastoral care groups, and/or through mentoring relationships.
- Look for ways to serve together in your local community. Find opportunities for this to be intergenerational.

Taking a relational approach to leadership and ministry means that everyone has a place to openly and honestly discuss and experience matters of faith wherever they are along their faith journey or whatever they believe at any given moment. By prioritising the relational aspect, it promotes lasting relationships and brings about true, deep engagement with matters of faith.

