

# EQUIPPING

for intergenerational ministry

## Encouraging intergenerational leadership



*A body is made up of many parts, and each of them has its own use. That's how it is with us. There are many of us, but we each are part of the body of Christ, as well as part of one another. Romans 12:4-5*

When different generational cohorts come together in service, intergenerational relationships begin to form as young and old learn from one another and begin to appreciate each other in the context of growing in faith.

When Jesus sent out his disciples to share the Good News and engage every generation in his name, they were living out and experiencing God's presence in and through them as they used the gifts and talents they had received through the Holy Spirit. This means every part of the body, regardless of their age, appearance or skills, has both value and purpose in God's plan.

Encouraging intergenerational leadership in our congregations involves acknowledging that each generation has a broad range of gifts and talents to offer.

In acknowledging this, our role is to help identify these for each person in our congregation, and encourage all generations to be involved in decision making and leadership.

Though ideal and necessary, good intergenerational leadership is not easy to establish and maintain, as it takes time and a high level of commitment.

## How can we effectively provide a safe place for growing intergenerational leadership?

- Recognise that all generations have something to offer.
- Be prepared to trust God's calling and equipping of younger leaders.
- Give young people an opportunity to voice how they would like to see events/ministry occur. This may be different to how it 'has always been done', but allowing open conversations may birth new ideas that can have a lasting impact.
- Willing mentors can walk alongside the young people to guide and direct, sharing experience where necessary.
- Do not be afraid of change but understand that it may be difficult for some, and they may feel a sense of loss for the 'old' way of doing things.
- Help young people understand that not all 'old' things are bad and that everything 'new' is not necessarily right and good. Compromise will need to be reached and an understanding of the past is important in looking towards the future.
- Planning for a shared future. Leaders of all ages should plan to spend time together spiritually. Studying the biblical



characteristics of a good leader will be important as you journey together. The example of Jesus, who modelled servant leadership as described in Philippians chapter 2, might be a place to start.

Alternatively, you might prefer to discuss the Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23.

In their book *Growing Young*, Powell, Mulder and Griffin, speak about the outcomes of their research with churches across the United States as six core commitments. The first of these being; *Unlock keychain leadership*. Instead of centralising authority, empower others-especially young people.

Here is how they explain it: When we refer to *keys*, we mean the capabilities, power, and access of leaders that carry the potential to empower young people.'

By *keychain leaders*, we mean pastoral and congregational leaders who are

- Acutely aware of the keys on their keychain; and
- Intentional about entrusting and empowering all generations, including teenagers and emerging adults, with their own set of keys.

While every leader has keys on their key ring, not every leader uses those keys in the same way. Some leaders cling to their keys tightly and refuse to share them even for a moment, but keychain leaders model a posture of giving away access and authority. This posture not only empowers others but also meaningfully links them to the life of the congregation.

Four types of key leaders they've discovered include:

### KEY-LESS LEADERS

Often young and inexperienced, without much authority or access, they spend their time proving they're worthy to possess keys.

### KEY-HOARDING LEADERS

Always holding the keys and refusing to give others access, they run the show.

### KEY-LOANING LEADERS

Often taking keys off the keychain and letting others borrow them temporarily, they make sure they keys are returned quickly.

### KEYCHAIN LEADERS

Very aware of the keys they hold, they're constantly opening doors for some while training and entrusting others who are ready for their own set of keys.

When taking on the challenge of encouraging keychain leadership, it will be important to acknowledge how leadership occurs in your congregation and how you could consider sharing the roles of leadership across the generations.

Secondly, think of ways you can identify, encourage and mentor people of all ages for leadership in your congregation.

**"There is just no escaping the fact that the single biggest factor in determining whether an organisation is going to get healthier—or not—is the genuine commitment and active involvement of the person in charge."**  
Patrick Lencioni



If you would like more information about Grow Ministries, intergenerational ministry, or resources and training, please call **08 8267 7300** or visit our website: [www.growministries.org.au](http://www.growministries.org.au)

