

WINTER 2023

ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER



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GREAT LAKES
CONFERENCE
BRETHEN IN CHRIST

A quarterly resource to equip and support congregations in the Great Lakes Conference of the Brethren in Christ for the work of growing lifelong disciples within their faith family and surrounding community.

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CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP

“Go therefore and make disciples” Matthew 28:19

The call to make disciples isn't a new one. It is as ancient as the Christian faith, given by Christ himself before His ascension into heaven. The information about when that discipleship journey begins for most current Christians isn't new either. In 2015, it was reported that 63% of Christian adults started their discipleship journey between the ages of 4-14 ([Source](#)).

But here is what is new.

Barna Group has recently completed a study focused on children's ministry that has yielded some important information about how that discipleship journey plays out. They shared this information in their book *Children's Ministry in a New Reality* and here is what they found: It wasn't enough for a child to be simply be involved in children's ministry at their church in order to engage in the formative practices and meaningful characteristics of a disciple. There needed to be more, another integral step, another piece to the puzzle: Relationship.



They discovered that when kids have a meaningful relationship with an adult in the church, they are twice as likely to have an ongoing relationship with the church.

They are three times more likely to be engaged in Scripture including understanding the metanarrative of Scripture and integrating biblical principles in their life.

They are twice as likely to say church matters to them, three times as likely to see church as a highlight in their week, and three times as likely to read the Bible on their own.

The conclusion drawn by the researchers at Barna Group? (and I quote) “The meaningful relationships individuals have as a children fundamentally influence the stability of their future faith.”

Now, here's the reality check: Only 2 out of 5 kids in children's ministry have a positive, meaningful relationship with a mentoring adult.

Two. Out of Five. That's only 40% of kids in children's ministry at a given church.

CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP



SOME WAYS WE CAN DO THIS:

- SHOW UP – ASK THE KIDS IN YOUR CHURCH WHAT ATHLETIC GAMES OR PERFORMANCES THEY HAVE COMING UP SO YOU CAN ATTEND
- SIGN UP – IF THE LOCAL SCHOOLS HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO VOLUNTEER OR TO BRING IN ITEMS FOR THE KIDS, SIGN UP! IT CAN MEAN SO MUCH TO A CHILD, ESPECIALLY ONE THAT DOESN'T HAVE GRANDPARENTS NEARBY.
- SHUT UP ;) – YES, I SAID THAT.. BUT HEAR ME OUT. TAKE TIME TO LISTEN TO THE KIDS AROUND YOU. ASK THEM QUESTIONS LIKE, “HAVE YOU SEEN ANYTHING INTERESTING ON YOUR DEVICES LATELY?” OR “WHAT DELICIOUS FOOD HAVE YOU EATEN LATELY?” THINK CURIOSITY AND CONVERSATION OVER INTERROGATION AND INVESTIGATION.

Even more telling than that. Only 53% of churchgoing adults identified “Have a loving, caring relationship with an adult” as an outcome for children’s ministry (75% of ministry leaders agreed). That means half of adult church members and a quarter of ministry leaders did not see developing a meaningful relationship between younger and older generations as an identifiable goal and desired outcome for ministry to children.

What does that mean for us?

It is time for us to create spaces and make room for children and youth and young adults to grow with us, worship with us, learn with us, serve with us, laugh with us, cry with us, question and doubt and argue and debate with us, to be in relationship with us so as to become disciples of Jesus with us.

To come alongside parents who are doing the work of discipleship at home and join kids on their journey through life at their schools, their sports teams, their theatrical performances, their social media, and their friend groups.

refocus



FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

Praying Together

One way to incorporate discipleship at home is through praying together. But sometimes, we can get a little lost in how to do that as a family. The following activities and ways to pray designed to help your family explore different ways of praying with one another in your home.

A list of items you may need is at the end of this section.

Activities

Telephone

- “Let’s start by talking about communication! What happens if we try to send a message the whole way through this group by whispering by playing “telephone”? **PLAY GAME.** Ask: “What happened? Did the message stay intact? Did things get confusing or hard to hear?”
- **Discussion:** *What is Prayer? Examples of answers: Communicating with God. No middle man necessary. What happens when we pray together? Suggestion: Have a child read Mt. 18:20. So what happens if we pray as a family?*

World Map

- Spin the globe or blindfold each other and point at a map. Wherever you end up, pray for the people there. NOTE: If your church sponsors missionaries that are in areas that could be risky, this would be a great time to introduce them. If not, there are many online sources for ways to pray for the persecuted church and Christians in prison.
- **Discussion:** *Sometimes we use prayer called “intercession” and that is when we pray for others who may need prayer or may not be able to pray themselves because they don’t know God yet. Who would you like to pray for?*

Charades

- Who is your favorite Superhero? Have family members act out their favorite superhero. Once the hero is guessed, the actor shares what their favorite superpower is.
- **Discussion:** *Sometimes prayer is a way for us to ask God to move on our behalf. When we talk to God, we can ask for His power to come and show itself here on earth. When Jesus taught us to pray, one thing he said to pray for was or God’s kingdom to come, and His will to be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Prayer is a way that we can open the door to invite God to come in His power into our lives.*

Prayer Activity #1

PRAYING SCRIPTURE: One powerful way that you can pray as a family is by praying Scripture for each other.

Let's Do It! Using the Bibles in the room, see if you can find a Bible verse you would pray for two members of your family. You are limited to the book of Philippians (or book of your choosing). For those with younger kids, give them pictures with printed out verses and tell them to pick two to color for people in their family

Prayer Activity #2

PRAYING BLESSINGS: A blessing is a prayer that God will bring good to the people you are praying for. Before your family gathers, find some references to verse that are blessings in the Bible. Younger kiddos might have some pictures that are blessings from God.

Let's Do It! Look up some verses and write them out on a poster board but change the pronouns to the family's name. Younger kids can glue their pictures on the back.

Prayer Activity #3

PRAYER ROCKS: Remember in the Bible how the people of Israel used a pile of stones as a memorial to the Lord? We can do that too.

Let's Do It! Put a pile of river rock and some markers in a bowl (these can be purchased at any local craft store or dollar store). Each person can pull one out and draw or write a prayer need on the bottom and add it to the bowl. After everyone is done, pull out a rock and pray for that one. It is advisable that some prepared prayer stones be in the bowl before the family groups begin adding theirs. Place somewhere in the home where it's easy to grab a rock and pray throughout the day. **BONUS:** Have another bowl for answered prayers!

Prayer Activity #4

PRAYER CANDLE: A lit Christ candle to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world; the rest of the room is dark so that we remember that without Christ there is darkness.

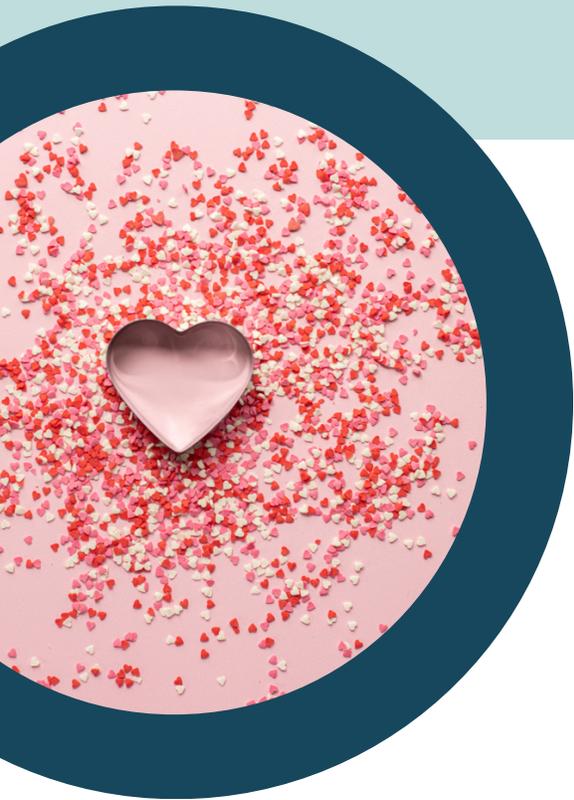
Let's Do It! This is a good time and place for families to pray for people they know who need the light of Jesus in their lives.

SUPPLY LIST

- WORLD MAP OR GLOBE
- BIBLES OR PICTURES OF BIBLE VERSES FOR YOUNG KIDS
- LIST OF BIBLE VERSE REFERENCES OF BLESSINGS
([HTTPS://WWW.BIBLESTUDYTOOLS.COM/TOPICAL-VERSES/BIBLE-VERSES-ABOUT-BLESSINGS/](https://www.biblestudytools.com/topical-verses/bible-verses-about-blessings/))
- RIVER ROCK, MARKERS, BOWL
- CHRIST CANDLE AND LIGHTER



INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



FOR THE LOVE: CELEBRATING LOVE TOGETHER

Valentines' Day is just around the corner. For some, this is cause for great rejoicing because the day brings lots of love and chocolate. For others, not so much. I remember as a single girl in college not liking Valentine's Day a whole lot.

Regardless of our personal feelings about it, each year it rolls around and each year we have the opportunity to ignore it or use it to grow our faith.

Valentine's Day is a fantastic opportunity for your church to connect with one another. Now is the time to begin reaching out across generational lines and connecting people to each other even if we are still technically apart. Here are some ideas of where to start and Valentine's Day could be the perfect kick-off date!

- Intercessory prayer using the Pray for Me campaign.
- Multigenerational committees set up to talk about the return to in-person services.
- Cultivating of resources to help congregants engage with generational discipleship in their homes, faith community and workplaces. Check out GenOn Ministries and Lifelong Faith for some incredible resources.
- Workshops for parents/grandparents/caregivers to help give them ideas for discipleship at home.
- Taste And See Communion Kits (see below)

Taste-and-see communion kits for your faith community that include juice, crackers, and a special Valentine's Day liturgy are a special way to invite households to experience communion in their homes or at church while celebrating the greatest Love that was even given in the gift of Jesus. If you'd like to celebrate together as a whole church, just included a Zoom link for an online event or hold the event in person!

Included on the next page is a brief reading and devotional for the church or family to follow together.

Taste and See Communion: A Celebration of God's Great Love

Prepare: Communion is a celebration! While it is a sacrament and should be treated as holy, it is intended for us to remember and celebrate God's goodness to us. Set the tone with your church by discussing some ways God has shown His love to you. Have a conversation beforehand explaining what communion means. Remind one another that Jesus showed the Greatest Love of all when He died on the cross for us and rose from the dead and that this meal helps us to remember that great love.

As with any time of worship, Christ is with us in communion. This is a special way to that we can invite Christ into our homes/church.

Confession: Before we take the Lord's Supper, we examine our hearts and silently confess anything we need to before God. It might help if you offer your children some guiding questions like, "What do you want to tell Jesus 'thank you' for?" and "Is there anything you want to tell Jesus you are sorry for?"

Choose one of these Scriptures to read as a family/church: Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-38, I Corinthians 11:23-26

Partake: During communion, show your kids what to do. Even if it is very obvious to you, it may not be to them. Take some time to pray together some prayers of thankfulness.

If you would like, you can follow this suggest format for communion time: Take the bread, thank the Lord for it and for his gift of love and offer it to one another saying, "This is the body of Christ, broken for us." Then hold the juice, offer another prayer of thanks, and then give it to each other saying, "This is the blood of Christ, poured out of us."

Process: Take some time afterward to discussion what it means to them to remember Jesus in this way. Ask question ensure understanding and to offer clarity, like, "What do we take communion?" and "What are we celebrating?" and "What are we remembering?" Then move on to more personal questions like, "How did you feel when you remembered Jesus' gift to us?"

Conclusion: Finish your time together by reciting the Lord's prayer (Mt. 6:9-13). Let the children know that this is the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray when they asked him how to pray.

THE FINAL FOUR

ONE BOOK, ONE VIDEO, ONE WEBSITE, ONE RESOURCE

Surprise the World: Five Habits of Highly Mission People by Michael Frost,

This year, our church is focusing on loving our neighbors well and we are reading this book together. In light of Valentine's Day, it seemed like a good one to pass on as a resource for generational discipleship. The book offers practical ideas and tips on how to live our everyday lives in such a way that we are sharing Christ with others everywhere we go. With intentional means of connections and ways to pray, the book encourages us to serve others with God's love. A perfect way for a family or congregation to create opportunities for intergenerational service projects and learning experiences .

Lifelong Faith, <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>

The mission of making disciples and forming faith for a lifetime can seem over-whelming. Leaders want to make lifelong faith formation a reality. They want to nurture, sustain, and deepen the Christian faith for a lifetime. What if we could identify the essential elements that make lifelong faith formation work—key elements that could guide decision-making and planning in every single church? On this website, you will find a plethora of resources to help your community connect around lifelong discipleship. Be sure to especially check out the library which contains everything from articles to curriculum.

Disappearing Childhood

Matt Markins, Awana

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5BxIOOtNQU>

This short talk by Matt Markins complements the Barna research mentioned in the Children's & Youth Discipleship section of this resource and encourages us to consider if the maps we are using as we minister to children, youth, and families are the right ones for this time and place. His helpful explanation encourages us to review our intergenerational opportunities for faith formation in our churches.

Valentine's Day and Lent are coming up and you may be looking for resources for your church. Here are two wonderful websites with a number of opportunities for the whole church to worship together.

Getting to the Heart at Lent

This intergenerational event will help everyone grow in their understanding of the three disciplines of Lent—prayer, almsgiving, and fasting--as it fosters community across generations in your congregation.

Bless This Lent from

<https://katebowler.com/blessthislent/>
Free downloadable guides for whatever this season is bringing you—the lovely, the garbage, the difficult, the heartbreaking. Daily devotionals, group discussion guides, and corresponding sermon guides are all here!



Training and Coaching Opportunities

DUE TO A GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE, ALL COSTS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY OVER 75% FROM THE ORIGINAL PRICE.

EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP

For parents/caregivers who desire to be intentional in the faith formation of their children, this webinar offers practices for daily discipleship at home.

\$50.00/webinar

INCLUDED:

- Unlimited access to all church members
- Personalized for your church
- Resources for the webinar and as follow-up for parents/caregivers

RECONNECT WEBINAR

ReConnect Webinar is designed for pastors and ministers interested in beginning to take steps to connect generations in ongoing spiritual formation and discipleship.

\$80.00/participant

INCLUDED:

- Groups of 4 or more
- 4 One Hour Workshops
- Resources/Handouts for during and after each workshop
- One 1/2 hour personal coaching session following webinar

PASTORAL TEAM COACHING

ReFocus coaching experiences help churches create missional communities focused on generational discipleship and spiritual formation. Through personalized mentorship, trainings, and coaching, ReFocus will help your church move into a deeper experience of community within your church family.

\$200-250 based on church size and needs



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The resources included in this resource packet are intended for use within local congregations. All resources are credited to their original source if not created by the compiler. Please follow all copyright laws when using the resources described here.