



Planning for Intergenerational Engagement

How can I plan so everyone can engage in an intergenerational setting?

When you have all ages in the room - from babies to people in their eighties - it can feel hard to know how to help everyone present engage with the service and enjoy being there. It's important we try. It will never be possible to engage everyone 100% of the time - but that doesn't mean an all- age or multigenerational service or event can't be successful.

Here are some ideas to use:

01

Key Ideas

- **Don't feel you have to aim your content at either the kids or the adults.** Instead, pick a topic we can all relate to: eg, who is God when we're scared or why the Bible is important.

- Plan for everyone to be able to engage:**
 - Song choice** - Choose songs that will be accessible to most people. That might mean using shorter or simpler songs - but very often, if children are present, adults understand this and will support it.
 - Make your worship as accessible as possible.** How can people who don't like / can't read join in? Equip them with what they need, eg permission to listen / instruments to join in / flags to wave / paper to doodle on / space to dance / use of Makaton.
 - Frame your service well** so people understand the 'whys' as well as the 'whats' (see the question on framing earlier in this section).
 - Plan your talk so all types of learners can follow.** What is there for your aural / visual / kinesthetic learners? Which bits can be visually engaging? For example, could you share the Bible story using props / drama / saying it together / using a video version? Could you add movement to your prayers or teach everyone a greeting to use during the Peace?
 - Consider using a side-by-side learning opportunity** (see the question earlier in this section).
 - Be aware of the youngest children.** Can you encourage families to sit where they can see? Work out your timings so that small children regularly have something to engage with eg a story / visuals / song, so that if they are unable to engage with other bits of content, you can keep re-engaging them.
 - Gently coach parents and carers in how to help their kids engage** (see Session 2 Part 2).
- Be aware of the impact on an existing congregation if you plan to introduce other generations:-**
 - Prepare them well** and give them information about why the change is happening eg. how it supports the church's mission, what the benefits are and what might the 'costs' be to them.
 - Consider trying a 'one-off' of the new type of service** eg at Christmas, so they can experience it without fear of loss.
 - Be realistic.** Will the change work for the existing congregation? What will they lose? Could they find this elsewhere?**The Parenting for Faith website has two training videos which will give you more ideas:** A Lunch with Leaders training session with three ideas for creating an all age service that will work Two sessions on the importance of all age gatherings, and the practical steps you can take to make them work.

02

Here are some top tips from other children's, youth and families leaders:

- We make sure we have a variety of people and ages upfront so everyone can feel this service is for them.
- When I plan, I think about all the groups who will be there - men, women, teens, kids, older people, new to faith, long time Christians etc and ask for each section of the service 'how will this work for them?'

- We have 'post-it note jobs' - anything we need a volunteer for eg the Bible reading, handing something out, helping with the baby corner - we write it on a post-it and leave them on a board in the lobby. As people come in they can grab one and join in.
- Have something for everyone but don't be afraid to address one group for a few moments. At Messy Church, I sometimes just talk directly to the parents for a couple of minutes.
- I try to add in times when people have to do things together - like discuss a question, or make something - so they are involved, not just watching.
- Keep things moving - no more than 5 to 7 minutes for any one bit.

FIND OUT MORE

- › All-age services: Facebook live
- › In this together

Last reviewed 20 August 2026

SPACE FOR YOUR THOUGHTS
