Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY

BEING AN INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

Resource Paper #2 | **DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN MULTI-, CROSS-, AND INTER-GENERATIONAL**

The Uniting Church in Australia seeks to be a genuinely intergenerational church in which all ages are welcomed and valued, where every generation is engaged together in active discipleship, growing in and sharing faith in Jesus.

This paper is one of a series that has emerged to assist the church in being and becoming more intentionally intergenerational. It is offered as a resource for all those who share the dream of a more intergenerational church – a church comprised of lifelong followers of Jesus, of all ages, caring, praying, celebrating, learning and serving faith-fully together.

In discussion around intergenerational ministry, there can often be confusion (and unhelpful conflation) around the terms multi-generational, cross-generational and inter-generational.

If the risk of becoming mired in linguistic pedantry can be avoided, greater clarity and precision around these terms can be beneficial in deepening an understanding of genuinely intergenerational ministry.

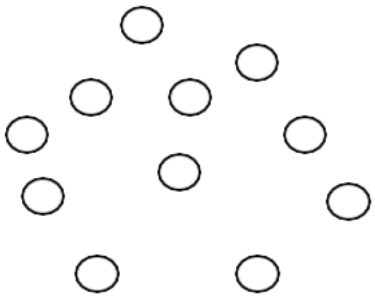
What, then, might be the difference between multi-, cross- and inter-generational?
What are the implications for intergenerational ministry?

A useful resource for exploring the distinctions between multi-. cross- and inter- is the Defining Multicultural, Cross-cultural, and Intercultural* paper from the United Church of Canada. Drawing from this resource, and applying the same language to the intergenerational space...

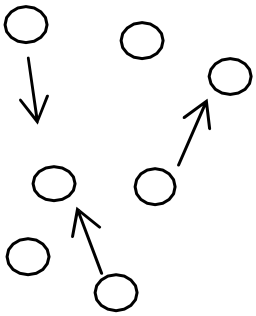
MULTI-GENERATIONAL environment	CROSS-GENERATIONAL environment	INTER-GENERATIONAL environment
tolerance, living alongside, superficial and polite interaction	some sharing, listening and learning, little individual or collective transformation	comprehensive mutuality, equality and reciprocity, individual or collective transformation more likely

In essence, the trajectory from multi- to inter- involves a greater depth of relationship, a change in the nature of the relationship and an increasing openness to being changed through relationship with “other”.

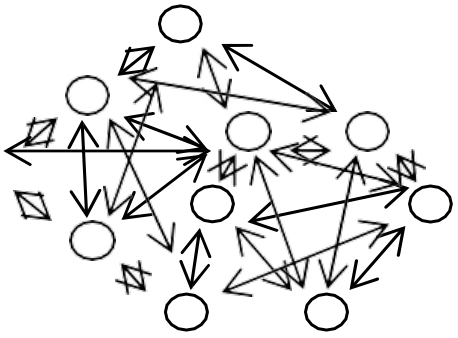
In multi-generational environments, we engage next to one another.



In cross-generational environments, there is some reaching across boundaries



In inter-generational environments, relationships are polydirectional



* Defining Multicultural, Cross-cultural, and Intercultural, United Church of Canada, Defining Multicultural, Cross-cultural, and Intercultural - ResearchGate

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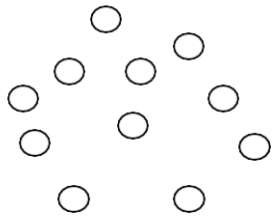
BEING AN INTERGENERATIONAL CHURCH

Resource Paper #2 | **DEFINING MULTI-, CROSS-, AND INTER-GENERATIONAL**

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This paper is one of a series that has emerged to assist the church in being and becoming more intentionally intergenerational. It is offered as a resource for all those who share the dream of a more intergenerational church – a church comprised of lifelong followers of Jesus, of all ages, caring, praying, celebrating, learning and serving faith-fully together.

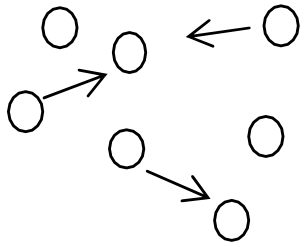
This material has been adapted from a handout prepared by the United Church of Canada entitled Defining Multicultural, Cross-cultural, and Intercultural © 2011 The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada.

MULTI-GENERATIONAL environments	CROSS-GENERATIONAL environments	INTER-GENERATIONAL environments
We engage next to one another.	There is some reaching across boundaries	There is comprehensive mutuality, reciprocity, and equality.



A multigenerational community can also mean that

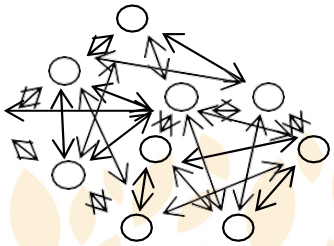
1. the community recognizes and includes distinct generational groups, with equal status
2. people from different generational groups are understood as standing side-by-side, at times in isolation from one another
3. often there is superficial celebration or engagement, without deep learning
4. power differentials are not addressed; it does not allow for genuine exchange between these generational groups, and tends to only focus on representation.



We try to build bridges of relationship between generations by sharing, listening, learning, and being open to changing. It usually requires intentionality, and programs of education and community-building.

It also means that

1. two or more generations are considered or related to
2. often generations are compared or contrasted with one another, and one generation is deemed superior or inferior to another
3. power differentials are still not addressed; it only allows for limited learning or exchange between generations
4. generational differences may be understood or acknowledged, but are also managed in a way that does not allow for individual or collective transformation



Our structures and everyday interactions are defined by justice, mutuality, respect, equality, understanding, acceptance, freedom, diversity, peace-making, and celebration. Intergenerational engagement hopes to take us deeper than multigenerational or cross-generational models of community.

It also means that

1. there are mutually reciprocal relationships among and between generations
2. people from different generations interact with one another, learn and grow together; build relationships and become transformed, shaped, and moulded from each other's experiences
3. the focus is on relationship building (not survival), deep connections, interactions, mutual gifting, respect, and learning from one another
4. no one is left unchanged in the intergenerational process: some examine their own generation more deeply, some are changed through their interaction with others, many learn more about what it means to be in community together
5. generational power imbalances are addressed; people are enabled to learn from each other and lead toward the transformation of all ages

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