

Five Factors Found in Flourishing Intergenerational Communities

Azzopardi, Joe, and Kayle De Waal. "Discipleship and Intergenerationality: Interrelated Concepts at the Core of Christianity." Chapter 2. In *The Generative Church: Global Conversations about Investing in Emerging Generations*. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019.

"The first three factors... are progressive steps toward building a healthy relationship. The last two factors... concern inclusivity, which is an essential characteristic of a Christian community." (55)

1. The first factor, found in any healthy community, is **Positive Interactions**. Without relationships, there can be no interactions, positive or otherwise, so the first thing that we must foster are authentic relationships. We gravitate to those who are most like us, and to become intergenerational, all ages must push past our natural inclinations to be with those whose ages, interests and backgrounds are most like our own. We must seek out and start conversations with those whose experiences are not like ours. "Positive interactions done regularly with intentionality are likely to elicit meaning and purpose, which lead to the other four factors found in flourishing intergenerational communities." (56).
2. The second factor is **Connectedness**. Intergenerational churches strive to help every generation feel as though they belong and are accepted at their own level. It's a part of what defines intergenerationality itself.
3. "After positive interactions become the norm, the age-diverse congregation becomes interconnected with each other. This interconnectedness leads the congregation to interdependence" (57) where we discover that to be church at our best, we *need* each other. **Interdependence** is also how we understand our function in the body of Christ.
4. The fourth factor is **Empowerment**. Churches that are fully intergenerational have leaders who are willing to give authority to people from a variety of age levels. If intergenerationality is a core value of a community, "then every generation should have the opportunity to participate in all ministries and when possible, to lead. For young people to develop responsibility, they must first be given responsibility." (58) Mentorship is what allows ministries to achieve continuity, and sharing power means some can compensate for the weaknesses of others—another example of what it means to be the body of Christ.
5. **Accommodation**, the fifth factor, means giving something up for the benefit of others. The perspectives and needs of every generation should be considered equitably, which is not the same as equally. Sometimes the needs of one generation will take precedence over the needs of another. Accommodation always requires empathy, and it often asks us to sacrifice or surrender, which is the way of Jesus.