



intergenerational

Joel Hodson

# THE power OF A SHARED STORY

**ROSE LEE-NORMAN**  
ASSOCIATE PASTOR, SANCTUARY COVENANT CHURCH MINNEAPOLIS, USA

A shared story is powerful.

It creates identity, connection, and meaning between people who wouldn't otherwise be connected.

Creating this shared story, however, can be difficult. It's even more challenging when a community is diverse and this story is meant to include all generations. Sanctuary Covenant Church, an urban, multi-ethnic, multigenerational church in Minneapolis, has been on the journey of creating a shared

story through intergenerational worship.

Over the past four years, Sanctuary has worked to create Intergen Sundays.

Our two main goals for each Intergen Sunday are:

1. To create meaningful connections across generations.
2. To model our faith to our children and youth through worship.

We have had some wins and some losses as we've strived to figure out how to accomplish

these goals. Here are a few of our wins in creating a powerful story across generations:

## 1. DEFINE SHARED LANGUAGE: TELLING THE STORY

Last year a few staff members and I had the privilege of being a part of the Sticky Faith Cohort through the Fuller Youth Institute. This was a significant step in our process of creating a successful intergenerational story. Through the cohort we were able to solidify language to help our community understand why intergenerational relationships are important and how they are instrumental in contributing to lasting faith in young people.

I recently polled a broad section of our church and, while they were not all 100 percent cheerleaders of Intergen Sundays, they were able to clearly articulate the purpose of Intergen Sundays. This was a big win for us.

## 2. CREATE WARMTH AND CONNECTION: KITES FLYING HIGH

During one recent Intergen Sunday, our church was exploring the role of the Holy Spirit, so we decided to do the obvious: make kites! During the service, people broke out into intergenerational groups. Each group decorated a kite using symbols for the Holy Spirit. After the service, we all went out onto the lawn and flew our kites together. It was inspiring to watch this beautiful picture of warm intergenerational relationships unfold.

From our staff processing, we have learned that for an Intergen Sunday to be successful, we have to include an activity or way in which all generations connect with one another.

## 3. INCLUDE ALL GENERATIONS: EVERY VOICE, EVERY STORY

One major thing we learned through this process is the importance of including all generations. Our Intergen Sundays could

not be viewed as simply a youth or family Sunday—rather, the voices of our young adults and O50 (over 50 years old) needed to be represented clearly.

On a recent Intergen Sunday, we had our worship band play a well-known song and a talented choreographer and her children went down to the front and began to lead the congregation in a simple, upbeat dance. During this dance, each generation was represented and welcomed as we celebrated and worshipped together. It was such a diverse, intergenerational view of heaven that it brought me to tears!

At the same time, we have also learned that sometimes we need to offer children's ministry for our youngest children during the abbreviated sermon and activity time on these shared Sundays, and that's okay.

While we have had many ups and downs in our experiments with Intergen Sundays, my encouragement to other leaders is to create a *shared* story: **define** shared language for your community, **create** a space of warmth and connection, and **include** all voices in your story. ♦

*This blog post was taken from the Fuller Youth Institute website.*

### Take outs:

**The article mentions three things that are part of developing a shared story:**

- Define shared language for your community: what could this look like in your context?
- Create a space of warmth and connection: how would you do this?
- Include all voices in your story: what would you need to do in order to facilitate this idea?