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ABSTRACT

BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUTUAL  
BENEFITS AT NORTH PORT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH,  
BREATH OF LIFE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, AND  
CONYERS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

by

Paul David Lincoln Wilson

Adviser: David Sedlacek

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Professional Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH MUTUAL BENEFITS AT NORTH PORT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, BREATH OF LIFE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, AND CONYERS SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Name of researcher: Paul David Lincoln Wilson

Name and degree of faculty adviser: David Sedlacek, PhD

Date completed: June 2023

Problem

Within our churches, North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia), there is a real problem between adults and youth. There is a need to build intentional intergenerational relationships and to examine their effects on spiritual growth/development on both adults and youth. As the adults and the youth of our congregations begin intentional intergenerational relationships (building greater intergenerational bonding) with each other, I believe that greater spiritual growth will be realized by both. While there are

relationships that have been developed between the adults and youth, there is the need for the adults and the youth to be intentional in strengthening each other spiritually. This potential has not been significantly realized. The real problem is a lack of healthy, intentional intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth, and this deficiency consequently dampens their ability to form long-lasting intergenerational relationships.

### Method

A three- to five-month three-sermon series intervention was implemented at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia). The objective of the intervention was to build purposeful intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth for both adults and youth. This intervention included four strategies: (a) Intergenerational Day, (b) pairing youth with adults in a mentoring relationship, (c) providing a prayer box in the congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together, and (d) asking adults and youth to be pew buddies (Consuegra 2018, 100). Using the 5-Point Likert Scale (Preedy and Watson 2010), an anonymous pre-survey questionnaire was administered after each sermon presentation and an anonymous post-survey after the implementation of the strategies. The post-survey was given at the end, five months after the first sermon in June, in order to ascertain what impact, if any, this research had on each congregation. In addition, the data was evaluated as collective participation for adults and youth, rather than as individuals.

## Results

The study indicated that the intervention was well received. All three congregations participated in the anonymous pre-survey. The congregations appreciated the presentations, the research information, and the strategies outlined. It was particularly reassuring to me that they were amazed that the youth identified relationships as central to communities and that they valued intergenerational relationships within their own families, as well as beyond their own families. Both adults and youth resonated with the information presented on loneliness. This was noted particularly in that many felt the reality of this truth, that although our congregations may be filled with many people, many have no one with whom they can become vulnerable and trust, the information they shared would not be used against them. They understood that if they accepted being intentional about having intergenerational relationships in our congregations, it would be advantageous. I was encouraged that the information researched and presented was seen and embraced as being necessary for the growth and development of our congregations, as expressed by many. Only Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church participated in the post-survey. Nineteen post-survey responses were gathered to make assessments. This church wants to continue implementing the strategies outlined in this study.

## Conclusions

Based on the results of this study for the anonymous pre-survey, the three-sermon series was well received. The congregations looked forward to the implementation of the four strategies already explained in the method of this study. The information was seen as key in building intentional intergenerational relationships that are lasting and in seeing how these relationships affected spiritual development. I am appreciative of the

participation of all the congregations in this project and had hoped that all the congregations could have taken part in the post-survey. Each church board approved this study and understood what was required. I followed up with the pastors of the two congregations that did not take the post-survey. Both pastors were satisfied with the pre-survey results and did not wish to follow through with the implementation of the strategies to complete the post-survey. The results from the congregation that participated in the post-survey indicated a large level of fulfillment regarding the strategies and the ongoing need for this intervention to continue. This congregation showed that they were very satisfied with the biblical goal that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation. They believed that it was important for them to know someone was praying for them. They generally agreed that Intergenerational Day would be a quality experience for them. There was a general weakness in the results in relation to communication between the adults and youth who were paired up, but there was a general desire to continue the relationship. This general weakness shows the need for intentional intergenerational relationships. This study was designed to have both adults and youth have healthy intentional intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth. The results showed that the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church is willing to continue building intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Professional Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
Paul David Lincoln Wilson

June 2023

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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this body of work to my late mother and father, Celis M. Wilson and Herman G. Wilson, and my best and dearest friend and confidante, my wife Gleacia C. Phillips-Wilson.

My mother introduced me to Jesus at an early age. She would often say, “I don’t have money but I give you what I have—Jesus.” She passed on to me the best gift she could have given me and that was meeting Jesus as a young child. This encounter changed the trajectory of my life.

I shall never forget the words of my father: “If you wish to accomplish something in *life*, just *bend your mind* to the task at hand, and don’t stop *until* you have *accomplished* it.”

I cannot thank God enough for my dear wife Gleacia being in my life. Other than God, my parents, and key mentors God placed into my life, she is the crucial reason for the progress I have achieved in this life. She encourages me to be a well-rounded man of God. She keeps me balanced and grounded.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Three churches in three different geographical areas in the United States—North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia)—have a social composition of ethnic and age-related aspects. These congregations also share a commonality of inter-generational tension—a phenomenon which detracts from both the spiritual growth and the harmonious functioning of all groups involved. The urban background in relation to population growth, median age, and age dependency ratio in which each congregation ministers is described in the next section. (Please see Definition of Terms for population growth, median age, and age dependency ratio.)

#### **Description of the Ministry Context**

The city of North Port, Florida is currently growing at a rate of 3.23% annually, and its population has increased by 27.29% to 73,010 since the most recent census, which recorded a population of 57,357 in 2010. It is one of Florida's fastest growing and largest cities.

The median age in North Port is 46.1 years—45.7 years for males and 46.2 years for females. For every 100 females, there are 88.0 males. The age dependency ratio for



North Port is 81—43.8 for old age and 37.2 for child age (World Population Review 2021).

Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the city of Fort Washington, Maryland. This city's population has grown by 2.19% since the last census. The median age for the city of Fort Washington is now 46.9 years—45.5 for males and 48.3 for females. The age dependency ratio is 66.7—34.9 for old age and 31.8 for child age (World Population Review 2021).

Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church is located in the city of Conyers, Georgia. This city's population is currently growing at a rate of 1.57% annually, and its population has increased by 10.39% since the most recent census. The median age for the city of Conyers is 33.6 years—27.6 for males and 36.8 for females. The age dependency ratio is 67.5—19.3 for old age and 48.2 for child age (World Population Review 2021).

As the cities grow, so do their needs. Families in the cities would benefit from an environment of support from our intentional intergenerational congregations. When they see that we provide help for troubled families, an openness may emerge that can create an opportunity to meet deeper needs. Families can feel that they belong and may be open to the congregation's providing for their spiritual needs.

According to Allen and Ross (2013, 17), church ministries, in general, basically do good for families that are intact, yet the challenge is to find a strategy that will support troubled families that have no support, are disengaged, and are scattered. The approach is to integrate intergenerational strategies that will benefit these families intentionally.

This will also create an environment that fosters spiritual growth. For the youth who do not have fathers or mothers in their lives, an intergenerational congregation can

provide father or mother figures for those in need (Allen and Ross 2013, 17). These congregations can help limit the prolonged loneliness that plagues the elderly and foster an environment where acceptance and healing are found for both youth and adults. A report published by Cigna shows that more than half (61%) of U.S. adults report feeling alone sometimes or always (Botek 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Within our churches, North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia), there is a relational disconnect between adults and youth. There is a lack of intentional, meaningful, intergenerational relationships. There is no intentionality in forming these intergenerational relationships, and spiritual growth is stymied. There is a need to build intentional intergenerational relationships and to examine their effects on spiritual growth on both adults and youth. As the adults and the youth of our churches begin intentional intergenerational relationships (building greater intergenerational bonding) with each other, I believe that greater spiritual growth will develop for both. While there are relationships that have developed between the adults and the youth, there is the need for them to be intentional in strengthening each other spiritually. If the adults and the youth do not continue to build intergenerational relationships, then the churches will suffer spiritually. Both the adults and the youth have experiences that they bring to the relationship that can help each other grow spiritually. This potential has not been significantly realized. The real problem is a lack of healthy, intentional intergenerational relationships that foster spiritual growth.

## **Statement of the Task**

The goal of this study is to develop, implement, and evaluate an intervention to help the youth and the adults build healthy, bonding intergenerational relationships with each other to grow spiritually as a church family.

## **Delimitations**

This project is delimited to both the adults and the youth eighteen years and older at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia).

## **Description of the Project Process**

A. In order to develop a theological basis for intergenerational spiritual growth, the following four topics were examined in Scripture and in the writings of Ellen G. White:

1. Intergenerational bonding and its necessity/relevance for spiritual growth
2. Relationship of adults with youth and the role it plays for spirituality and spiritual growth in families
3. Intergenerational relationships that are needed in helping our families grow spiritually
4. Theology of inclusion

B. Current literature was reviewed, with a particular focus on intergenerational ministry and its effects on spirituality in families. The topics explored were the same as those in the theological reflection. I also reviewed literature on reverse mentoring.

C. An intervention to improve intergenerational influence in spiritual development was created through the theological and academic study mentioned above. This study was intended to help each generation understand that they both have experiences and insights that each needs as they both grow spiritually.

D. The intervention was implemented by using the four key strategies identified below for building intergenerational relationships in the context of contributing to spiritual growth. These strategies were

1. to make a series of presentation in person/via Zoom on intergenerational relationships with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations,
2. to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship,
3. to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together, and
4. to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies.

E. The process was evaluated after a three-sermon series presentation by means of anonymous surveys (SurveyMonkey) within a three-to-five-month period. The anonymous post-survey was given in the month of November.

F. This study was completed in December 2022.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms should be interpreted as follows:

*Adults:* Sixty-six to seventy-nine (Tunggono 2018).

*Age dependency ratio:* The ratio of dependents (people younger than 15 or older than 64) to the working-age population (those ages 15 to 64). Data are shown as the proportion of dependents per 100 working-age population (World Bank 2022).

*Ageism:* Adults are often discriminated against because of their age; they are seen as senile and stuck in their ways. They are often so marginalized in our society that they are granted few opportunities to bless those coming behind them (Allen and Ross 2013, 20).

*Age segregation:* Age segregation refers to those who are too old or too young. Segregation/separation in our congregation: Congregations are often segregated by age and need to come together with intergenerational relationships. By not bringing all the generations together, unique opportunities for character growth are stymied (Allen and Ross 2013, 18).

*Belongingness:* Belongingness refers to a human emotional need for interpersonal relationships (McLeod 2018).

*Death anxiety:* This often occurs when facing the end of life and having a fear of the dying process (Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi 2017, 25).

*Differentiation of self:* Two opposing basic life forces; one is a built-in life growth force toward individuality and the differentiation of a separate “self” and the other an equally intense emotional closeness. There is appropriate self-validation which embraces togetherness (Gilbert 2017, 12).

*Disciple:* A person who learns from another, especially one who then teaches others (Wiktionary 2023a).

*Elderly:* Eighty to ninety-nine (Tuggono 2018).

*Ethos*: Credibility (or Character) of the speaker (Does the audience respect you...believe you...believe you are trustworthy...you are an authority on the topic?) (Dlugan 2010, 1)

*Hopelessness*: A feeling of despair or lack of hope that life can feel better than it does (Jed Foundation n.d., para. 1).

*Intergenerational*: Intergenerational is defined as relating to, involving, or affecting several generations. Something that exists or occurs between generations (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, 2023, s.v. “intergenerational,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intergenerational#:~:text=%3A%20existing%20or%20occurring%20between%20generations>).

*Isolation*: The state of being isolated, detached, or separated; the state of being away from other people (Wiktionary 2023b, para. 3).

*Logos*: Logical argument (Does the message you are presenting makes sense... based on facts, statistics, and evidence) (Dlugan 2010,1)

*Loneliness*: The condition or state of being alone or having no companions <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/loneliness> (Wiktionary 2023c, para. 4).

*Long-lived Elderly*: One hundred and more (Tunggono 2018).

*Median age*: Age that divides the population in two parts of equal size, that is, there are as many persons with ages above the median as there are with ages below the median (UNdata n.d.).

*Mentoring*: An arrangement by which one person mentors another (Wiktionary 2023d).

*Negative spiritual struggles:* This often produces anxiety and even fear in youth/young adults, the opposite of a positive spiritual struggle which promotes growth. “Negatively, students who encounter spiritual struggle often report experiencing stress, anxiety, and even fear which can lead to suspending their spiritual quests to conform to family or religious group expectations or to feeling isolated from those who fail to appreciate their struggles” (Argue 2017, 9).

*Pathos:* Emotional connection to the audience. (Do your words evoke feelings of love sympathy, and fear? Do your visuals evoke feelings of compassion or envy?; Dlugan 2010, 1).

*Pericope:* A pericope is a set of verses that forms one coherent unit or thought (Wikipedia 2022, para. 1).

*Population growth:* “Population growth is the increase in the number of people in a population or dispersed group” annually (Wikipedia 2023, para. 1).

*Powerlessness:* The state or character of being powerless; absence or lack of power (Wiktionary 2023e, para. 2).

*Religion:* a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices. (*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, 2023, s.v. “religion,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/religion#:~:text=%3A%20a%20personal%20set%20or%20institutionalized,to%20religious%20faith%20or%20observance>)

*Spirituality:* The recognition of a feeling or sense or belief that there is something greater than myself, something more to being human than sensory experience, and that the greater whole of which we are part is cosmic or divine in nature (Spencer, 2012, para. 1).

*Spiritual state:* A person's spiritual state fluctuates according to a hypothesized spectrum of spiritual wellness ranging from spiritual wellbeing to spiritual distress (Monod et al. 2010, 2).

*Spiritual struggles:* One of the most challenging parts of spiritual development appears when a person leaves old paradigms behind to embrace new ideas that support personal meaning-making. These crucial periods are called "spiritual struggles" and have been described as suffering, betrayal, doubt, questioning, anger at God, despair, crisis, the "dark night of the soul," a disorienting experience, pivotal moment, shipwreck, or conversion (Argue 2017, 11).

*Youth:* Eighteen to sixty-five (Tunggono 2018).

### **Summary**

The information that has been presented in this introduction is a specific and identifiable problem observed at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church, Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church. The real problem is a lack of healthy, intentional intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth. Therefore, this study was proposed to address this problem. The study was designed for both adults and youth to have healthy, intentional intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth.

We subsequently proposed an intervention by which to address this problem. To address the problem mentioned above, the congregations were asked to participate in a three- to five-month intervention where they were exposed to four key strategies. These strategies were (a) to make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships are (this was with the intention of an



Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations), (b) to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship, (c) to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together, and (d) to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies. This was to decide whether the intervention proposed by this project had little or any effect on building intentional intergenerational relationships that contributed to both adults and youth spiritual growth.

The results show that the congregation that completed the post-survey is willing to continue building intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual growth. This congregation wants to continue implementing the strategies outlined in this study.

## CHAPTER TWO

### A THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON HOW INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS IMPACT SPIRITUAL GROWTH

#### **Introduction**

The need for intergenerational relationships cannot be overstated.

Intergenerational relationships are impactful and necessary for the development of both adults and youth. In this chapter I will attempt to explain clearly the need to establish intergenerational relationships to aid in appropriate human development and spiritual growth. The goal of this theological reflection is to establish how the Bible supports intergenerational relationships and how impactful they are in the spiritual development of both adults and youth. According to this theological reflection, authentic intergenerational relationships are biblically sound and efficacious.

In order to meet the above stated goals, I will first look at the role of Lois and Eunice in 2 Tim 1:5 and how they impacted Timothy's life spiritually. There are other biblical examples such as Adam and Enoch, Enoch and Methuselah (son), , Moses and Jethro, Retired Levites mentoring younger priests, continued mentorship of youth, Ruth and Naomi, David and Solomon, Elijah and Elisha, Naaman and the slave girl, Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and John Mark, Paul and John Mark, Paul and Titus, Paul and Timothy, and older women mentoring younger women and older men mentoring younger

men, I will describe each and express the principles applicable to intergenerational relationships that each story teaches.

Second, this theological reflection will seek to clarify the relationship of adults and the impactful effects they have on spirituality in our families. Third, this theological reflection will establish the relationship of youth and adults and their effects on spirituality in our families. In the context of reverse mentorship, a younger person enters into a professional relationship with a senior individual and they exchange skills, knowledge, and understanding. A mentor is usually expected to be an older, more experienced person. According to this theological reflection, Timothy and Paul traded mentorships “mutually.” Fourth, we will establish intergenerational need in helping our families grow spiritually in the context of inclusion. Finally, a summary of the findings will be given.

### **Lois and Eunice in 2 Timothy 1:5**

In the relationships among Timothy, his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, we see a continuous building of intergenerational relationships and how they affected Timothy’s life in his service as a gospel minister. James and Fine’s (2015) study concluded: “Thus, it is important for practitioners and/or parents to help youth clarify their notions of spirituality” (179).

Timothy had become an established, trustworthy minister of the gospel; this is especially clarified by the apostle Paul (2 Tim 1:6; 4:1–5). Timothy’s growth was not accidental. It was a deliberate, loving comingling and a bridging of the generational gaps under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In this theological reflection, it is clear that the unity between generations were providentially orchestrated by God. From the beginning,

the focus of heaven was togetherness, oneness, growing together, with each order of creation, and the individual choice's remaining intact. This is an outgrowth of selflessness, the essence of heaven. The opposite was and is still true—separation, selfishness, and self-seeking are the foundation of the enemy's kingdom. Timothy's spirituality was not stymied by his intergenerational connections, but rather, was enhanced by them. His grandmother and mother instilled the true gospel in him. This is made clear in 2 Tim 1:1-18, specifically v. 5, where Paul wrote these words to his spiritual son Timothy. Nichol (1957) shed some light on Paul and Timothy's relationship:

The apostle was persuaded of the genuineness of Timothy's consecration and his essential abilities prior to his ordination; and his consequent services has vindicated Paul's earlier confidence. The sincere "faith" of his grandmother and mother was instilled in Timothy from his earliest years . . . Because Paul was now forced to leave his post of leadership in Asia Minor, Timothy was to rise up with new ardor and to assume yet wider responsibility. (7:328–329)

Looking closer at the Bible in 2 Tim 1:5, Nichol (1957) said: "Paul here compares his rich religious background with that of Timothy's family. They both came from strong, sincere Israelite stock and now they continued in the new framework of Christianity" (7:328). We see clearly that Timothy's spiritual growth was established because of his grandmother's and mother's influence in his life.

Timothy's spiritual development was not developed by chance but was forged by the intergenerational relationships he had with his grandmother and mother. These relationships instilled in him a genuine faith which endured from his grandmother to his mother and was exhibited in his life. These relationships were impactful and lasting in his spiritual development. According to Burr et al. (2015), "the majority of adults report their personal religious belief systems are based on childhood exposures to religion. . . . Thus, religious and/or spiritual beliefs and practices in the family may produce strong and

lasting impacts on subsequent generations” (183).

Not much more is discussed on this matter in Scripture between the relationship with Timothy and his grandmother and mother. However, we are able to glean from these texts that Timothy’s understanding of the gospel was first established in him by his grandmother and mother. It must be clear that Timothy had to make the truths passed down to him personal; he could not be saved by that of others but had to accept Christ for himself. Timothy reached a stage in his life where he internalized the truths instilled in him. He made them his own. Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014) stated in their research:

According to moral development theory of Kohlberg, young children after age 10 reach the stage of conventional morality when they internalize the standards of authority figures and subsequently in young adulthood reach the stage of post-conventional morality when they recognize conflicts between moral standards and make their own judgments on the basis of principles of right, fairness and justice. (294)

After age 10, youth will reach the stage of conventional morality where they internalize the standards of authority figures and, subsequently, in their young adulthood, reach the stage of post-conventional morality. It is in this stage of post-conventional morality that they recognize conflicts between moral standards and make their own judgments on the basis of what they perceive to be principles of right, fairness, and justice. The article goes on to say that “in Eastern culture, elders especially mentors, parents and grandparents have a larger role to play in the moral development of the young. These factors may therefore be included in the agenda of interaction between the young and the old” (295).

## **Biblical Examples of Intergenerational Relationships**

1. Intergenerational relationships are impactful and efficacious. White (1890) stated: “And for hundreds of years there were seven generations living upon the face of the earth contemporaneously, having the opportunity of consulting together and profiting each by the knowledge and experience of all” (83–84).

She went on to explain that all the world had the opportunity of receiving instructions/guidance from Adam. They lived longer in those days and had strong minds. They also had the benefit of oral truths being passed down to their descendants. They had Adam as a reference if they needed to check for any discrepancies. They were benefited by this, and it helped the obedient to grow spiritually. Enoch was one of the obedient. White (1890) also shared that Enoch had the opportunity to learn from Adam, thus benefitting him spiritually: “From the lips of Adam he had learned the dark story of the fall, and the cheering one of God’s grace as seen in the promise; and relied upon the redeemer to come” (84–85).

Enoch benefited from his intergenerational relationship with Adam. He was strengthened spiritually because of their relationship. Out of his experience with Adam he was encouraged to look to the redeemer to come. He was focused on the coming Messiah and grew in his walk with God. The impactful efficacious benefits of intergenerational relationships continue. The Bible is filled with guidance given by adults to youth and vice versa. The opportunity for intergenerational relationships can be seen in various ways. God has given us vertical, as well as horizontal relationships. We not only need to have a vertical relationship with God, but also a horizontal relationship with others. If we claim to have a vertical relationship with God, it will be manifested in our daily horizontal

relationships with others. How many modern-day relationships could blossom and flourish if intergenerational relationships were encouraged and strengthened!

2. Now let us reflect on the relationship between Enoch and (his son) Methuselah and the effects his son's relationship had on him. After having his son, according to this theological reflection, Enoch's life was deeply spiritually impacted. Having a son changed the spiritual trajectory of his life.

According to Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014), "both elderly and young generations can complement each other in providing support" (297).

Enoch no doubt provided appropriate care for his son. As seen in the quote below, he protected his son and provided for him. At this time, let us focus on the efficacious transformation that Enoch experienced because he had his firstborn son. His son's relationship with him deepened his spiritual walk with God. The Bible says: "After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years, and had sons and daughters" (Gen 5:22). White (1890) shed some light on the effects that having his first child had on his spiritual development. His life was never the same after the birth of his son at age sixty-five.

But after the birth of his son... he was drawn into a closer relationship with God. He realized more fully his obligations and responsibility as a son of God. And as he saw the child's love for its father, its simple trust in his protection; as he felt the deep, yearning tenderness of his own heart for that first born son, he learned precious lessons of the wonderful love of God to men in the gift of His Son, and confidence which the children of God may repose in their heavenly father.

Enoch's son taught him lessons that changed the trajectory of his whole life. He was changed forever from that encounter with his newborn son. He was drawn to the deep immeasurable love of God. The article continues: "The Infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all

the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt” (84–85).

Here we see Enoch’s spiritual growth and development after the birth of his son. God was able to use the birth of Enoch’s son to teach him profound spiritual lessons that would strengthen his walk with God. He was first drawn into a deeper and closer relationship with God because of the birth of his son. He was able to understand more fully his responsibilities and purpose as God’s son. He took it personally and his son’s dependence upon him fortified this reality. He was able to behold the wonderful love of God for men in the gift of God’s Son. This truth caused him to go deeper and deeper and he would make this the meditation and focus of his life. He would seek to share such love with the world in which he lived. Enoch also believed in the second coming.

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him. (Jude 14, 15)

Enoch believed in Christ as the coming Messiah and that He would come again the second time. He believed in righteousness by faith in Jesus: “In prophetic vision he was instructed . . . concerning the death of Christ and was shown His coming in glory, attended by all the holy angels, to ransom His people from the grave” (White 1890, 85).

When reading about the life of Enoch, it is easy to come to the false conclusion that Enoch was infallible and made no mistakes, but a balanced approach clarifies that Enoch grew in his walk with his God especially after the birth of his firstborn son Methuselah. He was not like monks hiding from society and living in seclusion. He was a stable and solid citizen, an exemplary husband, and a caring father. He did not hide from



the world but played an active part in it. He was a preacher of righteousness and truth. He was not a recluse but was sought out by those seeking the truth. White (1890) said:

Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or a vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, a husband and a father, a friend, a citizen, he was steadfast, unwavering servant of God . . . The closer the connection with God, the deeper was the sense of his own weakness and imperfections. (84–86)

We see that Enoch's communion with God did not cause him to have a false concept of his own righteousness but brought him to the reality that compared to God, he was an imperfect sinner. He also needed a Savior like his son need him; he learned to lean his weary head upon God. He realized his need for God and that he needed it daily, as his son needed him. He grew in a deeper and deeper relationship with God and surrendered more and more to God. His life was an example of what it means to be a balanced, truly differentiated person. He walked in daily communion with God through prayer and meditation. We today can have such a relationship with God. This is what is meant by Enoch walking with God.

3. Moses and his father-in-law Jethro had an impactful, efficacious intergenerational relationship. You see the effects of this relationship in Jethro's care for Moses and the people's and Moses's love and respect for him.

According to Genesis 18:14, 24:

So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people he said, "What is this thing that you do for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" . . . So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

He was overjoyed to see Jethro and his wife and children. He had a special relationship with his father-in-law. Genesis 18:7 says: "So Moses went out to meet his

father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent.”

Verse 8 tells us that Moses told his father-in-law everything, from all the hardships that had transpired to how God had delivered. His father-in-law rejoiced and praised God and this priest of Midian took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God (v. 12). He no doubt had Moses’ best interests at heart and walked alongside his younger son-in-law and provided love, support, affection, and timely counsel. Moses’ response to his father-in-law’s coming truly speaks of the customs of the orient (Nichol 1957, 1:589). Moses not only bowed down to show his respect and honor of his superior, but he also kissed him, and they talked and sought each other’s wellbeing.

According to White (1890):

The fact that he had been chosen to instruct others did not lead him to conclude that he himself needed no instruction. The Chosen leader of Israel listened gladly to the suggestions of the godly priest of Midian, and adopted his plans as a wise arrangement. (301–302)

Moses spent forty years in Midian with his father-in-law and their relationship appeared to have been consistent and mutual.

4. The biblical story of the book of Ruth is saturated with the importance of intergenerational relations. Ruth and Naomi affected each other on substantive levels. They both benefited from each other spiritually, as was the case of Paul and Timothy. Naomi introduced Ruth to the true and living God. This introduction to God changed the trajectory of Ruth’s life; she was never the same after that. She was introduced to God because of the relationship she had had with Naomi. Naomi’s God was to be her God. The living epistle that Naomi was to her affected her deeply. We do not know the far-reaching effects of authentic, loving, intergenerational relationships. Ruth was now a

blessing to Naomi in the depths of her loneliness and depression. She had lost her husband and sons. She had nothing left—no husband, no sons. Ruth did not leave her in this desperate state. She told Naomi: “Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God” (Ruth 1:16). Their relationship is an example of authentic intergenerational relationships.

According to Benson and Roehlkepartain (2008), “if part of being human is being spiritual, then a commitment to holistic development demands that we come to terms with this dimension of life” (14). Ruth came to terms with this spiritual dimension and did not want to miss what she perceived was a benefit for her. Bowen’s family systems theory is seen in Ruth and Naomi’s relationship. Gilbert (2017) quoted Bowens: “The human has been slow to learn about his own inner space within his own skull. Thus far we have hardly scratched the surface” (11).

This relationship between Ruth and Naomi prepared the way for the Messiah to come. We do not know the end results of intergenerational relationships; only God does. It is clear that Ruth was instrumental in meeting Naomi’s need at a crucial point in her life of despair and loneliness as is often the lot of the elderly. This relationship was to be a blessing to Ruth and Naomi in a way neither one could have imagined. Naomi entreated Ruth to leave her, but Ruth clung to her. This act of kindness on the part of Ruth would eventually result in cataclysmic changes in both their lives. The Bible says in Eccl 11:1: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days.”

Ruth’s kindness towards her mother-in-law with no ulterior motive resulted in the changes that would take place in her future life. These changes would benefit both her

and Naomi. As a matter of fact, the book of Ruth in the Bible is an example of the gospel in full. Ruth's husband Boaz was a kinsman of Naomi's late husband. Boaz married Ruth so their firstborn son would continue Elimelech's line. This was one of the duties of the *goel*:

1. buy back the property a near kinsman had sold to a creditor, or to someone else to meet the creditor's demand.
2. 'redeem' one near of Kin who had of necessity sold himself into servitude.
3. avenge the blood of a near kinsman, if slain by an enemy.
4. marry the childless widow of a near kinsman, as Ruth 3:13, and become trustee of the property on behalf of the offspring of this union. (Nichol 1957, 2:436)

Jesus fulfilled all these roles. He was the one who bought back the "dead" race by dying on Calvary's cross so "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). He redeemed us from the slavery of sin. He redeemed back the property Adam forfeited. We will inherit the earth. He will avenge the blood of His children. He will represent us in court during the judgment. These duties are clear to us as gleaned from the light of the Scriptures. The book of Ruth encompasses it all. The importance of intergenerational relationships cannot be overstated. Its effects are far reaching and efficacious.

Ruth was no doubt mentored by Naomi. Her influence upon Ruth had made transformational changes. Naomi's relationship with her God had caused Ruth to make foundational changes in her own spiritual life. The Bible says, "But Ruth clung to her" (Ruth 1:14b). It appeared that Naomi's lifestyle was one of beauty, and her relationship with her daughters-in-law was exceptional. They did not want to leave her. They begged her to let them stay with her. This speaks to Naomi's relationship with her God. Somehow, the beauty of God's character and love shone through Naomi. Scripture teaches that we are living epistles read by all men. We are God's love letter to a dying

world. It appears, based upon the Bible story, that Naomi's and Ruth's lives were providentially orchestrated. Ruth eventually said to her: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God" (1:16). Naomi was a living epistle from God that was read by Ruth, and God was able to reach her with His own special love. Naomi was no doubt a blessing to Ruth, but God also used Ruth to give Naomi hope again after all the pain she had experienced. It was through the relationship of Ruth with Boaz that the line of the Messiah would continue. Too often, when cherished hopes in our immediate circumstances do not materialize the way we desire to have them play out, we believe God has dealt with us in a rough and unkind manner because we do not know that life is more than what we are immediately experiencing. God's loving, kind, gentle hands are woven into the tapestry of our lives. Based upon this Bible story, Naomi would, in time, see in Ruth far more than her myopic vision could conjure. The purpose of this theological reflection is to demonstrate that authentic, intergenerational relationships are not only biblically sound, but they are impactful and efficacious.

5. Retired Levites mentoring younger priests is seen in Num 8:23–26. The focus is that the Levites at age fifty would retire from strenuous necessary duties of the Levitical priesthood. They were limited in their service at age fifty but could assist as long as they themselves were not doing the work. They could serve in a more advisory role as specified in v. 26. The system was set up to allow those with more experience to walk alongside and help the younger priests.

6. Continued mentoring of the youth is found in Deut 6:4. Here the focus is that parents are to mentor the youth continually. They are asked by God to provide clear, incisive teachings for their children consistently. They had the weighty responsibility of instructing their children in matters of dogma, duty, and their destiny. They would bind the teachings on the inside of the clothing of their left arm and place the phylacteries upon their foreheads. They also inscribed the teachings on the doorpost and the gates (Nichol 1953, 974–975).

According to Kidder (2017),

mentoring is a process of learning and maturing. It takes time and involves various kinds of relationships and accountability. ... For Christians, mentoring becomes rooted in the biblical principle of discipleship. It comes about by mutual edification. Through the time you spend together, you should experience emotional and relational growth, as well as personal and spiritual nurturing. (25)

7. King David and Solomon did not just have a father-son relationship, but an intergenerational relationship. Solomon listened to the wise king and was obedient to his counsel for a time. David charged his young son who was soon to take up the throne to be more than just a ruler, but also a man of God.

According to White (1890),

David knew that God's high purpose for Israel could be met only as rulers and people should seek with unceasing vigilance to attain to the standard placed before them. He knew that in order for his son Solomon to fulfill the trust with which God was pleased to honor him, the youthful ruler must be not merely a warrior, a statesman, and a sovereign, but a strong, good man, a teacher of righteousness. (26)

Solomon benefited greatly from his father's intergenerational relationship. His wise counsel was impactful and efficacious as long as he was consistent to being a true teacher of righteousness.

8. Scripture makes it clear that the prophet Elijah and his protégé Elisha had an impactful, efficacious, intergenerational relationship:

And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place...So he departed from there, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him...Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant. (1 Kgs 19:16, 19, 21)

Elijah led his young protégé to look to God. Elijah asked Elisha what he wanted him to do before he was taken into heaven, and Elisha wanted nothing worldly; he wanted a double portion of the prophet's spirit.

The relationship that Elijah had with Elisha was so impactful that he asked for a double portion of the Spirit of God that was in him. He would continue living a life of total dependence upon God as a prophet and lead the people to look to God for their salvation.

9. Naaman and the slave girl as seen in 2 Kgs 5. No doubt the trajectory of Naaman's life was changed for having encountered this slave girl. She lived an exemplary lifestyle and shared her faith with her master's wife. "If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy" (2 Kgs 5:3). The way this little captive girl bore herself in the manner of her conduct in that home was a testimony of her early training. To a large degree, the teachings and example of the parents decides the future of their children (White 1917, 245).

10. Barnabas and Paul had a strong intergenerational relationship. It was the leadership that sent Barnabas to Antioch; he then went to Tarsus and sought out Paul to take him under his wings as a leader in the church and smooth the way for Paul among the brethren: "And they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch ...Then Barnabas

departed for Tarsus to seek for Paul. And when he had found him he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:22, 25, 26).

Under their leadership, the church grew and many were brought to the Lord. The Spirit of God was so visible in their work that it was in Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.

11. Barnabas and John Mark had an impactful and efficacious intergenerational relationship. Barnabas was a mentor to John Mark after Paul refused to take him with them on that missionary journey because he had deserted them in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13). Barnabas was determined to work with Mark to help nurture him and walk alongside him as he did with Paul: “Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark” (Acts 15:37). White (1911) stated:

Barnabas, on the other hand, was inclined to excuse him because of his inexperience. He felt anxious that Mark should not abandon the ministry, for he saw in him qualifications that would fit him to be a useful worker for Christ. In after year his solicitude in Mark’s behalf was richly rewarded, for the young man gave himself unreservedly to the Lord and to the work of proclaiming the gospel message in difficult fields. Under the wise training of Barnabas, he developed into a valuable worker. (170)

When intergenerational relationships are encouraged and strengthened, the results cannot be measured. Mark would later be developed into a valuable worker for the gospel. This would not have been a reality if Barnabas had not come alongside him and nurtured him. The Bible teaches: “A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench” (Isa 42:3). This text prophesied concerning the role the Messiah would have. The Messiah would be a friend to those who seem, both to themselves and to



others, as individuals who are almost beyond hope. In Him, they would find the comfort, strength, and courage they so greatly needed (Nichol 1957, 4:256). As Hryniuk (2005, 153) shared, we are to focus on disciplining the youth by walking beside them, accompanying them on their journey. Barnabas did not blow out Mark's flickering light but came alongside him in an authentic, intergenerational relationship that would change the trajectory of his life. Such results are the impactful benefits of integrational relationships.

12. Paul and John Mark had an impactful, efficacious intergenerational relationship. Paul no doubt had learned from how he treated John Mark after he had deserted them in Pamphylia on a missionary journey. "This desertion caused Paul to judge John Mark unfavorably, and even severely for a time." Paul was benefited because of the intergenerational relationship that Barnabas and John Mark had had.

According to White (1911), "Paul was afterward reconciled to Mark and received him as a fellow laborer" (170). He also recommended him to the Colossians as one who was a fellow worker "for the kingdom of God" and "a comfort to me" (Col 4:11). His request to Timothy that "only Luke is with me. Get Mark . . . for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim 4:11) speaks to the change he had towards John Mark. Earlier he wanted nothing to do with him because Mark had deserted them in times of difficulty and hardship. Paul was a mentor to John Mark and was also benefited by John Mark's being in his life. He requested his presence. Their relationship was mutual and impactful.

13. Paul and Titus had an impactful and efficacious intergenerational relationship. He would also make Titus one of his understudies and mentor him to have a useful place in ministry. White (1911) stated:

The apostle [Paul] made it a part of his work to educate young men for the office of ministry. He took them with him on his missionary journeys and thus they had an experience that later enabled them to fill positions of responsibility. When separated from them, he would still keep in touch with their work, and his letters to Timothy and Titus are evidences of how deep was his desire for their success. (367)

Paul's intergenerational relationship with Titus would prove a blessing and benefit not only to him, but to all who benefited by Titus' ministry. Under Paul's guidance, Titus became a fit minister of the gospel and was an example of the truths he taught. Paul was a model leader of courage, a consistent lifestyle, and a genuine love for Jesus and lost souls. Paul's intergenerational relationship with Titus would prove impactful to his spiritual development. He was a better minister because of their relationship.

14. Paul and Timothy no doubt had a most impactful and efficacious, intergenerational relationship. Their mutual friendship would prove, for the apostle, a most refreshing necessity in his life of loneliness and for Timothy, the perpetual friendship and supportive guidance of the apostle Paul. The relationship between Paul and Timothy will be discussed at length in the next two sections.

15. We see older men mentoring younger men and older women mentoring younger women in Titus 2:2–8. In these verses, Paul pointed out the importance of the older men mentoring the younger men and the older women mentoring the young women. He exhorted the older men to be sober; reverent; temperate; sound in faith, in love, and in patience. He continued in vv. 6–8 concerning the importance of the young men being mentored to be men of integrity, sober minded, reverent, sound in doctrine, and incorruptible. Paul likewise exhorted the older women in vv. 3–5 to continue mentoring the younger women, to teach them to love their husband and their children, to

be discreet and chaste, to live lives that would not blaspheme the Word of God, to be good home makers, and to be good and obedient to their husbands. Paul was careful to exhort that the older men and women should continue to mentor the younger members of the faith.

### **The Relationship of Adults and the Impactful Effects They Have on Spirituality in Our Families**

In 2 Tim 1:5, we are also made aware of another key intergenerational relationship between the apostle Paul and Timothy. We are able to see multiple intergenerational relationships in this text. Timothy's intergenerational relationship with his grandmother and mother later also included Paul. In this text we see that Paul's mentoring of Timothy was not only for Timothy's benefit, but would also dynamically benefit the church. Paul was not focused on the executioner's sword. His sole purpose in this letter was to guide young Timothy to that which drove him: "The one great purpose of [Paul's] Christian life had been to serve Him whose name had once filled him with contempt; and from that purpose no opposition or persecution had been able to turn him aside" White (1911, 500). In this letter, Paul sought to point his young protégé's attention to the purpose that drove his life. He encouraged Timothy: "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). Paul's mentoring of Timothy in writing this letter would not just benefit Timothy, but all Christian believers who would read these inspired writings.

The epistle had been called the last will and testament of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. Paul wrote this letter personally to his spiritual son Timothy, and generally to the church. Knowing that his end was near, he felt the need of strengthening his younger co-worker's faith by means of his own example. He warned Timothy, and

with him all other Christian believers, against heresies that were to enter the church after his time that all might hold firm to the Inspired Word and remain faithful to their Lord until His second advent. (Nichol 1957, 7:326)

The Holy Scriptures make us privy to this unique bond between the apostle and his young protégé. Paul was now about to leave the scene, and another was to take his place. He was not envious or jealous of the ministry of this young man whom he called his spiritual son. Paul genuinely cared for his well-being and sought to guide him with wisdom born of heaven. Too often the enemy creates a wedge between the generations, and this wedge is used by the enemy to stunt spiritual growth. What if the apostle Paul had been threatened by the younger Timothy and never decided to share his wisdom of how to continue in the ministry after his departure? We would not have the powerful books of 1 and 2 Timothy; 2 Tim 1:5 especially gives us insight into the faith of Timothy that was taught to him by his grandmother and mother. What a loss the world would have received because of selfishness! The apostle was moved by the selfless law of heaven to be a guide for this young up-and-coming leader for the gospel of Jesus Christ. In his loneliness, knowing that he was soon to die, his thoughts were on his relationship with Timothy. He was not sure whether Timothy would be able to fulfill his request to come and visit him before his departure. He was not morose and dark, but upbeat and hopeful. He did not consider that he was about to die—he was not focused on death. He was blessed by young Timothy who was a treasure in his life as he was about to face the executioner's keen, sharp blade. He was not afraid for what was about to happen to him. He was concerned about strengthening this young soldier of the cross to go forward gladly and unafraid. He prepared him for the conflict of the great controversy he would face. He did not leave any stone unturned. He gave sufficient and timely guidance. Paul's

heart was poured out in his letter to Timothy. It is obvious they had a true bond in the Lord and in each other. He missed young Timothy. Their age gap was not an issue but a blessing for them both. According to Scripture, Paul urged Timothy to try and come before winter: “Do your utmost to come before winter” (2 Tim 4:21). He longed to see his spiritual son in the gospel. These intergenerational relationships such as between Paul and Timothy and Timothy and his grandmother and mother are foundational to spiritual growth. These relationships do not deteriorate into emotional fusion.

Schnarch (2009) stated: “When these two life forces for individuality and togetherness are expressed in balanced, healthy ways, the result is a meaningful relationship that doesn’t deteriorate into emotional fusion” (55).

Looking back at the lives of Paul and Timothy, we can see that they needed each other. According to this theological reflection, we need each other far more than we will be able to understand in this life, but that does not mean we are not to do our best to build and grow these intergenerational relationships here. Our lives are far more intertwined with that of others than we think. We were made as individuals by God, but we are likened as one body in Christ. The body functions best with the use of all the parts working together. There is a lack of vulnerability and closeness in our world. There seems to be a fear of being open and authentic with others. It is true that not everyone is trustworthy, but we need to know when to establish these relationships; timing is key.

It is also true that we can pour out our lives to someone only to be misunderstood and misrepresented, but this does not say that we cannot still find someone to trust. Paul was not treated well by some in the church, as already pointed out in 2 Cor 11:26, but somehow, he still found a place of refuge in the younger Timothy. Paul did not let those

who constantly attacked him stop him from being a better person. He realized that his true enemy was not flesh and blood; this was spiritual warfare. Although his total dependence was upon God and not man, he had developed a bond with the youthful Timothy. According to this theological reflection, we need such relationships. We need a human ear or hand to nudge us along life's way. These relationships are like cups of water when life seems like a dreary desert. Many a life would have been shipwrecked had it not been for an adult's influence on the life of a youth, and many adults would continue in their lonely lives were it not for the relationship of a younger person. We need each other.

### **The Relationships of the Youth and the Impactful Effects They Have on Spirituality in Our Families**

The apostle Paul was a special instrument in the hands of God. He had to learn many lessons. One such lesson is seen in his relationship with John Mark (Phlm 24; 2 Tim 4:11). It is clear that Paul and John Mark had a relationship that matured after the dispute between him and Barnabas over John Mark. God uses relationships in the anvil of time to forge us into decent and better individuals. Paul had grown spiritually under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit. Paul's longing for Timothy and need for his friendship and care were seen in his letter to Timothy (2 Tim 4:21). He wished to see the younger Timothy before his death. He was a powerful leader for the Lord, yet he desired the companionship of Timothy.

The following quote sheds light on what happened after the apostle spoke before Nero. He was given the opportunity to defend his faith as he had done with Felix and Agrippa and he was now in the Mamertine Roman prison.

The apostle's speech had gained him many friends, and he was visited by some persons of rank, who accounted his blessing of greater value than the favor of the emperor of the world. But there was one friend for whose sympathy and companionship he longed in those last trying days. That friend was Timothy, to whom he had committed the care of the church at Ephesus, and who had therefore been left behind when he made his last voyage to Rome. (White 1883, 319)

It is clear that Paul and Timothy's intergenerational relationship had mutual benefits that were impactful and efficacious for both of them. They had a very deep bond and intergenerational relationship. Paul and Timothy needed each other and grew stronger in the bonds of godly love. Paul considered Timothy to be his own spiritual son.

The quotation goes on to say:

The affection between this youthful laborer and the apostle began with Timothy's conversion through the labors of Paul; and the tie had strengthened as they had shared together the hopes and perils and toils of missionary life, until they seemed to be as one. The disparity in their age and the differences in their character made their interest and love for each other more earnest and sacred. The ardent, zealous, indomitable spirit of Paul found repose and comfort in the mild, yielding, retiring character of Timothy. The faithful ministrations and love of this tried companion had brightened many a dark hour of the apostle's life. All that Melancthon was to Luther, all that a son could be to a loved and honored father, that was the youthful Timothy to the tried and lonely Paul. (White 1883, 319)

The quotation is eloquently expressed and clarifies the focus of this theological reflection. The love and companionship of Paul for Timothy and Timothy for Paul is another example of the efficacious impact of intergenerational relationships. The age disparity did not hinder them. It was a blessing for them both. They both had so much to give to the other and share with each other. In a sort of reverse mentorship, Timothy was a blessing to Paul. The age discrepancy and their character differences were what made their love for each other more earnest. The love Paul had for young Timothy is clear.

This theological reflection shows that Timothy was a real friend and confidant for the apostle. There were many who did not have Paul's best interests at heart. Paul states

in 2 Cor 11:26: “[I have been] in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren.”

This is clear in the Scriptures, but it was not the case with the younger Timothy. Timothy was young, but he did not appear to be naïve. He seemed to have a wisdom that came with experience. There were those who tried to hinder Paul’s ministry, but Timothy’s relationship with Paul was a bright light that shone across his difficulties and would bear him up in his lonely, tired life. The need for each other was seen in their ministry to each other. What Paul wrote to Timothy is an outgrowth of their tender love for each other. It was the careful clarity of the last wishes of a dying soldier on the gospel battlefield passing the torch to his youthful, but stable comrade. Paul poured out his heart and soul in his letters to Timothy. He left nothing out and when he finished, he said that Luke was with him and he wanted Mark to come too. “Do your utmost to come before winter” (2 Tim 4:21). Paul missed Timothy dearly and wished he could be there with him.

The bond between the two was special. Their intergenerational relationship formed the basis for 1 and 2 Timothy. We do not know of the untold multitudes who have been blessed and have grown spiritually because the Holy Spirit gave us insights into the intergenerational relationship of the younger Timothy and the adult apostle Paul. We are not fully aware of the complete spiritual growth both experienced. We will never get the full story in this life. Paul grew spiritually because of Timothy, and Timothy grew spiritually because of Paul. When we read the books written to Timothy, we get a sense of a deep love and tender care for Timothy from Paul. This is especially seen in Paul’s



second epistle to Timothy. This is believed to be Paul's last epistle written from prison at a time when he was expecting to die soon. Timothy was given all the wisdom needed to be a faithful laborer for God. Timothy seems to have been the one who complemented the apostle's ministry and temperament. We cannot imagine what God wants to do with His children. He is still seeking today to build intergenerational relationships.

According to this theological reflection, "mutual," as well as reverse, mentorship, as seen in these relationships between Timothy and Paul, John Mark and Paul, Enoch's firstborn son and Enoch, Ruth with Naomi, and the slave girl and Naaman are crucial to our spiritual growth.

### **The Intergenerational Need in Helping Our Families Grow Spiritually in the Context of Inclusion**

In this theological reflection, the purpose of intergenerational relationships is to be true representatives of God's love. God feels our pain, hurt, loneliness, tears, joys, happiness, and hopes in the intergenerational relationships He forges. God uses intergenerational relationships to point us to Him, as we saw in Enoch and his son's dynamic spiritual development after the birth of that child. Based upon this reflection, these relationships are used in the context of inclusion as instruments in His merciful, kind, gracious, and loving hands to share His unselfish love with both adults and youth.

Gilbert (2017) quoted Bowen in his development of the "Family System":

This system theory has made a continuing effort to view man as an evolving integral part of life on earth...there is a wide discrepancy between what man does and what man says he does....Systems thinking...is directed at getting beyond cause-and-effect thinking and into a systems view of human phenomenon.

Emotional reactivity in a family, or other group that lives or works together, goes from one family member to another in a chain reaction pattern. (26)

What Bowen was saying is that the basic emotional unit is the nuclear family (emotional functioning in a single generation—mother, father, and children). The unit is essential that the nuclear family be understood as completely as possible. He believed that emotions are rarely contained within the individual in this context. Rather, emotions flow endlessly from person to person within the family and sometimes spill outside the family to other individuals, family units, or societal agencies. What Bowen developed through his family systems theory was the individuality and togetherness forces. This is not only revolutionary but transformational. Gilbert (2017) said: “The theory postulates two opposing basic life forces. One is built-in the life growth force toward individuality and the differentiation of a separate ‘self’ and the other is an equally intense emotional closeness” (12).

The goal is appropriate differentiation for proper self-validation and being together in relationships with others. Intergenerational relationships are to be appropriately differentiated with adults and youth.

When this is understood, it will foster a deeper relationship with God (spiritual growth) which will be on display in an intergenerational reality that benefits not only North Port Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also the Church at large and the world. This will help with retention issues in the church and will be a buffer for loneliness of both adults and youth, which often leads to suicide ideations and contributes to spiritual growth in everyone. The building of intergenerational relationships inspires purpose and has a positive psychological effect on both adults and youth of all generations.

## Summary

This theological reflection attempted to echo the importance of intergenerational relationships and their effect on spiritual growth by focusing especially on the impactful role Lois and Eunice played in Timothy's spiritual development (2 Tim 1:5). There are other biblical examples such as Adam and Enoch, Enoch and Methuselah (son), Ruth and Naomi, Moses and Jethro, David and Solomon, Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Barnabas, Barnabas and John Mark, Paul and John Mark, Paul and Titus, and Paul and Timothy. I described each one and expressed the principles applicable to intergenerational relationships each story taught.

Unity does not stymie intergenerational relationships; rather, they are enhanced as seen in the relationships of Paul and Timothy and Ruth and Naomi. Timothy developed into a stable leader of the gospel because of authentic impactful intergenerational relationships. Ruth came to be a self-validating individual which was no doubt strengthened with her encounter with her mother-in-law. It was because of their intergenerational relationship that Ruth's relationship with the true God was strengthened. Ruth would learn to have her own individual differentiated relationship with God.

A focus of this theological reflection is to make clear that an authentic intergenerational relationship is a biblical model and is seen throughout Scripture from the Old Testament to the New. It is Christ-like to live out His principles. "A bruised reed He will not break and smoking flax He will not quench." This principle can be seen in how both adults and youth interact with each other in intergenerational relationships. Again, the purpose of this theological reflection is to demonstrate that authentic,

intergenerational relationships are not only biblically sound and exemplified throughout the Bible but are also impactfully efficacious.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

Literature relating to intergenerational relationships, reverse mentorships, and how they contribute to spiritual growth is diverse and very extensive. The literature was profound and descriptive and helped to clarify the importance of the role of intergenerational relationships and their contribution to spiritual growth. The review of the literature will be divided into four subsections. In the first section, I will discuss factors that inhibit intergenerational relationships as they relate to youth and adults. The second section is an analysis of intergenerational relationships and their unique benefits. In the third, current research on spirituality and religiosity and how intergenerational relationships uniquely impact spiritual growth and development in both children and adults will be explored. The fourth and final section will assess the appropriate strategies that best foster spiritual growth in the context of intergenerational relationships.

#### **Ongoing Need for Intergenerational Relationships**

The need for intergenerational relationships is ongoing, as seen in this extensive body of research in the context of both past and current literature and the need for ongoing future research. Intergenerational is defined as relating to, involving, or affecting several generations. Building intergenerational relationships to contribute to spiritual

growth is a buffer against failing, segregated churches that might be considered too old or too young. The word “segregation” here is used in the context of churches that are age-segregated—too old or too young. There is a need for intergenerational relationships to strengthen these fading churches (Allen and Ross 2013 ), buffer against mental issues (Dawson 2018; Hodges 2002; Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti 2014; Sodhi and Manju 2014; Verghese 2008; Watts 2018), buffer against social dysfunctions (Apostolides 2017; Richards, Berrett, Hardman, and Eggett 2006), make others know they belong (Ponds 2014), let others know that their families are supported across the board regardless of background in the context of culture (Rhodes and Chan 2008), have a proper understanding of the appropriate use of our resources (Koenig 2015), highlight the need for continuous spiritual growth (Baldwin et al. 2015; Allana, Tennant, and Petrucka 2017; Sandage, Hill, and Vaubel 2011), and explore how we are benefited by sharing each other’s spiritual journey by walking beside each other (Hryniuk 2005; Mulder 2012).

### **Factors that Inhibit Intergenerational Relationships as They Relate to Youth and Adults**

After reviewing current research, there were many issues that inhibited intergenerational relationships. The following are some of the issues that affect youth and adults:

1. Ageism: Adults are often discriminated against because of their age; they are seen as senile and stuck in their ways. They are often so marginalized in our society that they are granted few opportunities to bless those coming behind them (Allen and Ross 2013, 20; Rani and Gayatrivedi 2014, 296–297). “Pervasive segregation of the elderly

has yielded negative stereotyping and discrimination against the older population, which is known as ageism” (Allen and Ross 2013, 20). When we do not provide the exchange process between the youth and adults, we stymie the mutual benefits both provide (Rani and Gayatri Devi 2014, 292; Thompson, Clark, and Gunn 1985, 913).

2. Negative spiritual struggle: It often produces anxiety and even fear in youth/young adults, the opposite of positive spiritual struggle, which promotes growth. “Negatively, students who encounter spiritual struggle often report experiencing stress, anxiety, and even fear which can lead to suspending their spiritual quests to conform to family or religious group expectations or to feeling isolated from those who fail to appreciate their struggles” (Argue 2017, 9).

3. Segregation/separation in our congregations: Congregations are often segregated by age and need to come together with intergenerational relationships. By not bringing all the generations together, unique opportunities for character growth are stymied (Allen and Ross 2013, 18).

4. Death anxiety: This often occurs when facing the end of life and there are spiritual/existential concerns. A lack of spirituality in the elderly can trigger death anxiety. The opposite is also true. Spirituality causes improvement of the function of the body’s immune system and can prevent various types of physical and psychiatric disorders through developing peace, hope, and positive emotion (Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi 2017, 25). The lack of intergenerational relationship support can exacerbate death anxiety. Intergenerational relationship support can help foster spirituality for the elderly who are at the end of life—this aids in decreasing death anxiety.

5. Lack of belonging: Every person has a deep need for belonging and for this basic human need to be met appropriately. Faith communities that are not intentional in building intergenerational relationships suffocate experiences that foster this deep sense of belonging in children, youth, and adults (Allen and Ross 2013, 17). “There are many research studies showing that connectedness with other people is an important protective factor for healthy adolescent development” (Shek, Sun, and Merrick 2013, 4).

6. Not understanding that “spiritual state” is dynamic: A person’s spiritual state fluctuates according to a hypothesized spectrum of spiritual wellness ranging from spiritual wellbeing to spiritual distress. It can be triggered by the patient’s illness or bereavement. A lack of understanding this dynamic in the elderly does not help relieve the problem (Monod et al. 2010, 2). The absence of intergenerational relationship support can trigger spiritual distress because the qualitative spiritual need is not met.

7. Hopelessness/Powerlessness/Lack of Control/Lack of Purpose/  
Loneliness/Isolation: These feelings can be triggered by a sense of loss and can create a spiritual crisis. “A lack of control over one’s life or circumstances is at the heart of spiritual crisis” (Ponds 2014, 60). The lack of intergenerational relationship support can create a spiritual crisis. Not having an adult to walk alongside the youth in this context can trigger spiritual crisis.

### **Analysis of the Benefits of Being Intergenerational**

The significance of intergenerational faith experiences cannot be overstated. The common theme that emerged in the literature was that intergenerational relationships were necessary for appropriate human development and contributed to appropriate spiritual growth. According to Allen and Ross (2013) “intergenerational faith experiences



distinctively nurture spiritual growth and development in both adults and children” (16). The benefits are (a) a sense of belonging, (b) support for troubled families, (c) better use of resources, (d) character growth, and (e) sharing each other’s spiritual journeys (Allen and Ross 2013). Everyone needs support.

Erickson (2008) and Baldwin et al. (2015) focused their studies on youth with disabilities and their spirituality.

Baldwin et al.’s (2015) study specifically focused on youth with disabilities and the correlation between their beliefs and good relationships. They concluded:

Beliefs were also related to having good relationships with others, knowing oneself, being true to oneself, and feeling good about oneself in terms of personal strengths, abilities, and purpose in life...Through qualitative study into the meaning of spirituality for youth with disabilities, we can support the development of definitions and measures for this construct that more accurately reflects how youth perceive spirituality and how spirituality may contribute towards their QOL [quality of life]. (948, 942–943)

The study points out that children have a sense of morality and a basic moral compass. They are motivated by spirituality, and this reality is often overlooked within the developmental framework. We tend to think that children with disabilities are not capable of having their own spirituality. Children with disabilities are no different. What stood out to me was that for children with disabilities, spirituality affected their quality of life. It was concluded from Baldwin et al.’s study of children with disabilities that a majority of the youth were influenced by the beliefs of their families—but they were not automatons. In Baldwin et al.’s study, there were a total of eighteen young people ranging in ages from 11-20. The majority shared the fact that personal relationships/connections with others were a necessity. What was also important was that they felt fulfilled and had a sense of purpose by helping others. According to Rhodes and Chan

(2008), “a religious congregation represents a rich intergenerational network of parents, friends, extended family members, and spiritual models who can help shape and reinforce not only behavioral and academic outcomes but also spiritual development” (85). The study points out that mentoring has a potentially important role to play in the emotional and spiritual development of today’s youth. Again, we see the importance of intergenerational congregations with the rich benefits that come not only from a behavioral/academic standpoint in helping the youth, but also from the direct impact on spiritual growth for the youth.

Apostolides (2017) shared that the time of adolescence can be difficult. According to Apostolides, the three essential issues that adolescents struggle with are independence, intimacy, and identity. With the appropriate support of adults, youth will be able to navigate these essential issues in a positive way (1–2). Apostolides, in appreciation of Fowler’s work, also shared Fowler’s “Stages of Faith” in her research. Fowler developed the idea of a developmental process of human faith. Stages one to three describe a more dependent faith, and four to six, a more independent faith, but all stages are inclusive in nature. All stages show how intergenerational relationships can be effective. In assessing Fowler’s stages, we see that the individual becomes more differentiated in each stage. This is crucial in intergenerational relationships. Fowler described the six stages as follows:

- Intuitive-projective faith (2–7 years of age): This is characterized by the psyche’s unprotected exposure to the unconscious and is marked by a relative fluidity of thought patterns. Religion is valued mainly through experiences, stories, images, and the people one encounters.

- It is crucial in this phase that we pay special attention to our words and actions. Children are very impressionable during these years and need someone to be authentic and loving walking alongside them. They also place value on intergenerational relationships within the family and beyond their family (Bessel 2017, 263).

- Mythic literal faith (7–12 years of age): Persons have a strong belief in the justice and reciprocity of the universe and their deities are almost always anthropomorphic. During this time, metaphors and symbolic language are often misunderstood and are taken literally.

- Westerlund’s (2016) study concludes that “there is scientific evidence that spiritual development through childhood is significant for overall health (219).

- Synthetic-conventional faith (12+ years of age): This is characterized by conformity to authority and the religious development of a personal identity. Any conflicts with one’s beliefs are ignored at this stage due to the fear of threat from inconsistencies.

- Here we must be observant to see as Argue’s study show that we are careful not to let the youth feel isolated if they are experiencing spiritual struggles during this time of their lives (Argue 2017, 9, 11).

- Individuative-reflective faith (21+ years of age): This is a stage of angst and struggle. Individuals take personal responsibility for their beliefs and feelings. As they are able to reflect on their own beliefs, there is an openness to a new complexity of faith, but this also increases the awareness of conflicts in their beliefs.

- This personal struggle of integrating their spiritual beliefs can manifest itself in positive, but also negative ways. (Adults can help the youth to feel that their struggles

are respected and provide an atmosphere for them to thrive.) In a positive sense, spiritual struggles help students reflect critically on their beliefs, thereby promoting greater development and a more mature understanding of themselves, others, and their place in the world (Argue 2017, 8).

- Conjunctive faith (35+ years of age): This acknowledges paradox and transcendence relating to reality behind the symbols of inherited systems. Conflicts are resolved from previous stages by a complex understanding of inherited multidimensional, interdependent “truth” that cannot be explained by any particular statement.

- Here we can help the youth to be appropriately differentiated. And to be the best individuals they are to be as unto God and in their societies (Gilbert 2017, 12).

- Universalizing faith (some might call enlightenment; 45+ years of age): Individuals would treat any person with compassion as they view people as part of a universal community who should be treated with universal principles of love and justice.

- Argue (2017) said that researchers have argued that “spiritual development” fosters students’ well-being, contributes to an interdisciplinary foundation, acknowledges personal “conversion” or transformation, encourages greater authenticity and a more integrated self, and supports meaning-making as one of the ways that individuals construct their knowledge and integrate their lives (10).

In addition, Apostolides (2017) clarified the fact that spirituality and identity go hand-in-hand and that a youth’s identity is influenced by his/her social environment: “The construction of an individual’s reality, in dialectic with the world or society, is how the individual forms identity as he or she finds his or her place within the world” (1).

The review of the literature shows that children learn how to form identity from

the world of their parents while they are being influenced by multiple forms of discourse in their society, including social media (Apostolides 2017).

According to O'Connor, Hoge, and Alexander (2002), the social learning theory views religious behavior as a learned behavior arising out of a particular life context. As life contexts change, people change, primarily by observing role models and practicing new behaviors. Thus, early socialization into a religious tradition is a result of the model provided to children by parents and other adults. (724)

Again, the need for appropriate, ongoing intergenerational relationships to help youth navigate this developmental stage cannot be overstated. They need authentic adults whose actions and words are congruent with their beliefs and values. They need adults who have their best interests at heart, who will not eviscerate their vulnerable individualities as they seek to establish a true sense of self/identity-as they are growing in their spiritual development. They will help guide them away from “inauthentic spiritualities” (Apostolides 2017, 4). Such spirituality causes youth to degrade themselves and lead to the breaking down of their communities rather than contributing positively to it.

James and Fine's (2015) study concluded:

Thus, it is important for practitioners and/or parents to help youth clarify their notions of spirituality. Based on our findings, the extent to which youth use their inner strengths to meaningfully contribute to social institutions in their environments are partly dependent upon how youth conceptualize being a spiritual young person. It is our belief that such processes may allow youth to increase their confidence in their internal standards, guiding their ability to thrive in their social worlds. (179–180)

Gilbert (2017, 12) spoke about Dr. Murray Bowen's “Family Systems Theory.”

What James and Fine were saying embraces Bowen's Theory. The essence of Bowen's Theory is for a person to be appropriately differentiated. Gilbert quoted Bowen: “The

theory postulates two opposing basic life forces. One is a built-in life growth force toward individuality and the differentiation of a separate ‘self’ and the other an equally intense emotional closeness” (12).

The literature revealed that Bowen’s theory plays a crucial role in intergenerational relationships. The ideal integrational relationship is two individuals who are self-validated (Schnarch 2009); they embrace togetherness, not with borrowed validation, but they are self-validated. There is no emotional fusion, to paraphrase Schnarch (2009). Bowen’s Theory truly models the effectual balance of separate, but together. According to Tirri and Quinn (2010), “authenticity fosters one of the key elements of purpose—meaningfulness to the self—but only if done with equal attention to the world beyond the self” (201).

Intergenerational relationships that are thus established are crucial to the wellbeing of both the youth and adults. “Young people who are dismayed with pragmatic problems of life for the first time in the course of their development may be guided through spirituality by senior citizens who are enlightened by the power of spirituality” (Rani and Guatridev 2014, 297).

Bert (2011) stated that “maternal religiosity was found to be a strong predictor of maternal and child adjustment” (82). According to Kilpeläinen and Ruokone (2018), “early mother-infant interaction has been seen as very important for the development of religiosity and spirituality” (122).

According to Burr et al. (2015), “the majority of adults report their personal religious belief systems are based on childhood exposures to religion. . . . Thus, religious and/or spiritual beliefs and practices in the family may produce strong and lasting

impacts on subsequent generations” (183).

Fisher (2009) and Baring et al. (2016) focused on the spirituality and religiosity among youth. The purpose of Baring et al.’s (2016) study was to explore the relationship of spirituality/religiosity (S/R). They gave the following definition of S/R: “feelings and behaviors involving the search for the sacred, occurring both within and outside of institutionalized religion” (164). The authors concluded that there was a probable direct effect that S/R had on the psychosocial adjustments (behavioral process of balancing conflicting needs) of the students. They found that higher levels of S/R contributed to more satisfying relationships. They did better in school, had an overall greater well-being, and understood their role in society, thus resulting in their having greater civic engagement (Baring et al. 2016, 164). They focused on college students, using selected psychosocial variables: identity (psychosocial factors) and relational (psychosocial adjustment) variables. The results point to significant insights for the management of youth religious behavior, in general, and of tertiary students, in particular, despite recent decline in levels of religiosity among the young.

They used the Religiosity and Spirituality Scale for Youth developed by Brittany C. Hernandez (Apostolides 2017, 4) from a sample size of 3,108 students in a Manila-based, denominational, university setting.

Baring et al. (2016) posited the idea that certain psychosocial factors are associated with S/R either as predisposing factors (predictors) or outcomes (psychosocial adjustment). According to the authors, researchers prefer to view S/R as a single multidimensional construct. Studies also show that students who had positive religious beliefs had high parental attachments, better satisfaction in their romantic relationships,

and sturdier attachment with their peers (Baring et al. 2016, 172). They also shared the fact that, in the context of the students in the study, their later S/R levels would tend to increase after college life but would decrease later in adult life. Their study showed that it was due to several factors (Baring et al. 2016).

Argue (2017, 10) and Benson and Roehlkepartain (2008, 14) focused on youth spiritual development. Argue's (2017) study says:

Researchers have argued that "spiritual development" fosters students' well-being, contributes to an interdisciplinary foundation, acknowledges personal "conversion" or transformation, encourages greater authenticity and a more integrated self, and supports meaning-making as one of the ways that individuals construct their knowledge and integrate their lives... Studies have also reported that a majority of undergraduates who enter college have a high interest in spiritual ideas and involvement, and have an expectation that their college or university will support their spiritual development. (10)

That study sought to contribute to the knowledge of undergraduate spiritual development by examining the college-related factors that evangelical students perceive as either supporting or impeding them as they work through spiritual struggles. He clarified "spiritual struggles": "These crucial periods are called 'spiritual struggle' and have been described as suffering, betrayal, doubt, questioning, anger at God, despair, crisis, the 'dark night of the soul,' a disorienting experience, pivotal moment, shipwreck, or conversion" (11).

According to this study, if ever there were a time that appropriate intergenerational relationships were needed, it is now. This period in the life of youth is crucial, a make or break period in the context of spiritual development. In the study done by Argue (2017) in an evangelical college setting, he found that the approach of professors/adults to these college students during this crucial period of their lives was extremely important. Youth hope to be assisted on their spiritual journey and both youth



and professors/adults need to become more vulnerable. This delicate balance can be navigated through appropriate intergenerational relationships. Hryniuk (2005) stated:

A contemplative approach to youth ministry is focused on discipleship through the accompaniment of young people. Just as Jesus sought to form disciples through a relationship of love and an invitation to follow (Mt. 4:18ff), we also seek to initiate young persons into mature Christian faith through relationships with elders who join them in living the way of authentic discipleship. (153)

Sharing each other's spiritual journey—walking beside each other. This is God's desire for His people, to grow together and share each other's experiences in an authentic, caring, sympathetic/empathetic manner.

Again, here is where intergenerational relationships can play a pivotal part in the life of the youth. As Hryniuk (2005) shared, we are to focus on disciplining the youth by walking beside them, accompanying them on their journey. Spirituality can be a source of strength when all else fails, especially under traumatic and dire circumstances.

Voisin, Corbin, and Jones (2016) and Mattis, Palmer, and Hope (2019) focused on the role of spirituality in the lives of African Americans.

According to Mattis, Palmer, and Hope's (2019) study:

The overwhelming majority of Black Americans self-identify as religious and spiritual. While we do not have national data on religious involvement and the religious lives of Black people in urban America in particular, the "Religious Landscapes Study" reports that approximately 83% of Black people in America (i.e., monoracial and multiracial people living in the U.S. who self-define as Black) say that they "believe in God with absolute certainty." (4)

Based on Mattis, Palmer, and Hope's (2019) research in an urban setting, spirituality and religion play a crucial role in the life of African Americans and help them navigate the constant sociopolitical changes. The study also shared that religious institutions, in particular, play a powerful role in the positive development of Black, urban-residing people (10).

Harvey's (2009) study states: "Both African Americans and non-Hispanic whites used spirituality as a coping resource in a variety of ways, ranging from responding to a specific health crisis to effectively dealing with life's daily challenges" (215). The study was based upon spiritual self-management and looked at older adults with chronic illness over a four-year span.

According to Ponds (2014), a vast majority of the young people with whom they worked were experiencing some degree of grief. They usually endured mostly relational loss in their lives. He also shared that most of his work was grief-related. He clarified that many of the youth were experiencing spiritual crisis, feeling powerless in the face of devastating life circumstances. He stated:

Thus, it was necessary to develop a working definition of spirituality and understand the issues with which these youth were wrestling. The lack of control over one's life or circumstances is at the heart of spiritual crisis... Young people who are not with something greater than self can be confused about what is right or what is wrong and how to make positive life choices. Finding a sense of inner purpose is one of the primary gifts of spirituality. (59)

Based on this research, we see that young people who do not have something greater than themselves struggle with spiritual crisis. They do not have spirituality as a coping mechanism. Adults who can provide appropriate intergenerational relationships can help them have higher levels of differentiation so they can attain self-management more effectively. Westerlund's (2016) study concludes that "there is scientific evidence that spiritual development through childhood is significant for overall health and important in reducing the risk of depression, substance abuse and high-risk behaviours" (219).

According to Stoyles et al. (2012), "children have a natural capacity for spiritual

experiences and this capacity suggests that spirituality is an essential influence in a child's healthy development" (203).

In summary, there is continuous need for intergenerational relationships and its efficacious effects on spiritual development. The significance and need for intergenerational relationships cannot be overstated. To paraphrase Allen and Ross, these intergenerational faith experiences noticeably nurture spiritual growth and development in both adults and children. The benefits are as follows: a sense of belonging, support for troubled families, better use of resources, character growth, and sharing each other's spiritual journeys (Allen and Ross 2013).

**Current Research on Spirituality and Religiosity and How  
Intergenerational Relationships Uniquely Impact  
Spiritual Growth and Development in  
Both Children and Adults**

Bulduk, Usta, and Dinçer (2017); Choi, Tirrito, and Mills (2008); Yoon and Lee (2004); and Reed and Rousseau (2007) articulated the importance of spirituality for the elderly person receiving care.

According to Bulduk, Usta, and Dinçer (2017),

elderly care is a period of time which has physical, social, psychological and spiritual dimensions of care for both the individual and the family, and when sentimentality and the perception of spiritual agony increase particularly in the terminal period. It has been reported that spiritual care has positive impact on pain, anxiety, uneasiness, decreasing depression, coping skills and enhancing the quality of life. (853)

This research clarifies an existential reality that takes place with the elderly person facing his or her end of life. One key is that of respecting human spirituality. Bulduk, Usta, and Dinçer (2017) excellently explained that point: "In brief, spiritual care is not caregivers imposing their own spirituality on others, but an individual accepting

that his/her spirituality is an important element in the way they receive healthcare” (853).

The role of the caregiver is never to proselytize, but to be a non-anxious presence.

According to Linders and Lancaster (2013),

our chosen method of heuristic research, pioneered by Moustakas (1990), requires that an investigation arises from a direct relationship to a subject, which is explored until an essential insight is achieved into the quality, meaning and essence of a human experience. It is essentially a creative process whereby intuitive insight is encouraged as the bridge between the explicit and the implicit. In practice this means that insight and meaning arise from an “empathic resonance” between the experience of the interviewee and that of the interviewer. (994–995)

Chafjiri, Shirinkam, and Karimi (2018) clarified the need for educating the elderly in the city of Ramsar as it relates to health-promoting lifestyle among the elderly. According to their study,

educational programs play an important role in integrating health-promoting lifestyle to encourage the elderly to accept more accountability regarding health, sustained physical fitness, proper nutrition, healthy interpersonal relationships, expected spiritual growth, and the proper management of stress and anxiety in life... Health promotion lifestyle includes six dimensions of health responsibility, physical activity, nutrition, spiritual growth, interpersonal relationships, and stress management. (612)

The study pointed out the necessity of having proper education as it relates to healthy lifestyle programs and the effect it has on the elderly. They concluded that proper implementation of these health-promoting lifestyle programs can be executed to improve the level of mental and physical health in our society. It works better if elderly people take personal responsibility for their health. Both the elderly and youth are all benefited by taking responsibility for their healthy lifestyle. Shifting our focus back to the youth, these external issues can be grappled with early.

DiPierro, Fite, and Johnson-Motoyama (2018); Wright, Yendork, and Kliever (2018); and Holmes, Kim-Spoon, and Deater-Deckard (2016) focused on spirituality and religiosity among youth. DiPierro, Fite, and Johnson-Motoyama (2018) said:

Religiosity has been shown to improve overall well-being and decrease anxiety during adolescence and may be related to higher levels of hope. In particular, adolescents who internalize their religiosity rather than passively adopt values from their upbringing, are shown to have lower levels of anxiety. (103)

It is crucial that adolescents who intentionally internalize their religious experience have lower levels of anxiety. It is important that youth be surrounded by authentic, caring, loving individuals who help them develop spiritually.

Previous research has posited that religion and spirituality may foster resilience during adolescence as well as decrease the likelihood of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance use...However, some aspects of religiosity and spirituality may lead to higher levels of anxiety in some youth. A previous study found that heavy involvement in religious services and youth groups in early adolescence were associated with anxiety in mid-adolescence. (103–104)

DiPierro, Fite, and Johnson-Motoyama's study shows that youth who internalize their religion rather than passively adopting it have lower levels of anxiety. The study also shows that some youth may have higher anxiety because of their spirituality/religiosity, The reason for this because youth are often trying to make sense of leaving old belief systems and trying to establish personal meaning and making. A spiritual struggle often occurs. Argue (2017) said, "During times of stress, individuals may also gain support from a higher power or congregation members" (103). He said that having an adult help youth during this time of crisis in their adolescence continues to underscore the need for intergenerational relationships between adults and youth (103–104). During the research, a tendency was observed for the young or immature in the faith to bend toward fanatical concepts of spirituality/religiosity; intergenerational relationships can help buffer against these pitfalls. Adults and youth in intergenerational relationships can greatly benefit youth who are attempting to navigate their spiritual walk as it relates to religious goals and standards. Adults can help the youth by establishing

appropriate intergenerational relationships. That will lead them to stable spiritual growth. As this study has shown, spirituality and religiosity can help foster resilience during adolescence as well as decrease the likelihood of anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance use (DiPierro, Fite, and Johnson-Motoyama 2018, 103).

As it relates to adults, Gallardo-Peralta (2017) examined the association between the various dimensions of religiosity and spirituality and the different aspects of the quality of life in elderly Chilean people. She also included in this evaluation the specificity of this association with respect to social support processes. The study involved a sampling of 777 elderly people living in the far north of Chile. The results of the study showed a specific association with the quality of life. She concluded that religiosity and spirituality should be included in social work interventions (Gallardo-Peralta 2017). According to Hodge et al. (2012, 142), many older adults indicated that their relationship with God or the transcendent was a central component of their lives.

Glicksman's (2009); Moberg's (2009) and Nelson-Becker's (2009) studies focused on religion and spirituality.

After investigating the assumption that religiousness and spirituality can be accurately measured by certain scales and measures, Glicksman (2009) came to two conclusions. First, this assumption is fallacious and needs to be seriously discussed. Second, we cannot use only survey methods to understand religion either quantitatively or qualitatively. To paraphrase the author, we must understand the elderly person's or anyone else's personal faith tradition and how the individual is affected thereby. Without understanding the context of the person's faith, the conclusion would be interpretable. In order to understand how faith shapes the lives of the elderly and youth, we must basically

seek to understand better their background and specific systems of belief.

Glicksman (2009) believed there was an alternative approach to the “social scientific study of religion” that respects and recognizes the remarkable diversity that is inherent in each faith tradition (256). This allows us the prospect of comparing the influence that each faith tradition, or lack thereof, has, rather than putting individuals in a solitary statistical analysis (Glicksman 2009). We must truly care about each person’s need. Meeting individuals where they are fosters belonging, and they feel they are respected.

As it relates to youth and meeting others where they are, Harris (2016) concluded that, based on direct observations in natural settings, children’s outdoor play spaces, especially community parks, can contribute to their spiritual development through enriching activities in nature, pretend play, storytelling, and intergenerational play. She also encouraged consideration of a variety of strategies that can be used to support the holistic development of a young child and nurture children’s spirituality. Supporting a child’s spiritual development with playful activities in outdoor spaces can help to identify the child’s interests, strengths, and creativity through relationships that shape bonds with both families and community.

In the review of the literature, this is powerful as it relates to the holistic development of the child, by helping children to find their purpose early in life. Proverbs 22:6 states: “Train up a child in the way that he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” This simply says that the parent is to support a child’s personal development. Through intergenerational interaction, parents are to observe the child’s strengths and weaknesses in order to see what the child’s interests are and encourage

them to that end. When they are old, they will not depart from it, their purpose/*raison d'être*. The context here is that the child's purpose will be clarified. Hence, the importance of intergenerational relationships cannot be over-emphasized.

The following studies focus on identity formation and youth development (Herzog and Beadle 2018; Hicks and Tran-Parsons 2013; James and Fine 2015; Koenig 2015; Quinn 2008; Rowling 2008; Scott 2003).

According to Rowling's (2008) study, "Spiritual health as connectedness to people and places can increase an individual's overall sense of well-being. It may act as a unifying force linking dimensions of physical, social and emotional health" (249).

James, Fine, and Turner (2015) shared an interesting point as it relates to what they called "positive youth development":

Most of the literature that has explored community assets that contribute to spiritual development has focused on one institution in the community: the church. . . . Although the aforementioned concept of spiritual modeling has primarily been applied in the family context, it could certainly extend to other caring adults in the community who take the time to engage the adolescent in a way that fosters spiritual growth. (683)

According to Bessell's (2017) study:

Social connectedness and interpersonal relationships matter. Friendships, trust and mutual support are important dimensions of human relationships and underpin strong, inclusive communities... children identify relationships as central to communities; a significant and perhaps more novel nuance to that finding is the value children place on intergenerational relationships beyond, and well as within, their families. (263)

Simply put, the spirituality of adults, youth, and children benefit each other in the community through intergenerational relationships. There is a direct, dynamic, unique interaction between youth spirituality and the youth community. According to my research, this can foster positive youth development and establishes the fact that religiousness and spirituality are changing, yet stable, in emerging adults. The fact is that



in emerging adults, there is a more complex picture of development. It is also during this time period that an individual has decreased religious behavior, but not a decrease in their religious beliefs. Here, again, is seen the crucial need for intergenerational relationships between the youth and adults. “This also complicates the measurement of religiousness, as an individual during this time period may decrease in religious behavior but not religious beliefs. The analyses of spirituality add further intricacies, since young adults were actually increasing in spirituality while decreasing in religiousness” (Koenig 2015, 383).

Koenig’s study also established the fact that we must be tactful and sober as we seek to establish intergenerational relationships with emerging adults during this crucial time. There is also a more internal response to religion, although the external response is modified. These emerging adults still see religion as being an important part of their lives. In order to clarify the point further, the emerging adults in this study (college freshmen and sophomores) increased in spirituality (belief) but decreased in religiousness (external practice). Intergenerational relationships are needed but should not control the youth, as was stated earlier. Adults should walk beside them and help them navigate to a more mature spiritual development. The importance of spirituality/religiosity also has long-term benefits as it relates to mental illness. Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti (2014) and Johnstone et al. (2008) shared the connections between spirituality/religiosity and mental health. Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti said:

Three systematic reviews of the academic literature have identified more than 3,000 empirical studies on spirituality and health. In general, individuals who have more R/S have less depression, anxiety, suicide attempts, and substance use/abuse, and experience better quality of life, faster remission of depressive symptoms, and better psychiatric outcomes.

It is crucial that we understand the efficacious impact religiosity and spirituality have on our health. Our personal religious growth is important and strengthens our overall health. It helps us have a better quality of life:

The most widely acknowledged and agreed-upon application of R/S to clinical practice is the need to take a SH (spiritual health), which may improve patient compliance, satisfaction with care, and health outcomes. Concerning integration of R/S into mental health treatment, most spiritual interventions have positive results (superior to control conditions or to other intervention) and seem to be highly cost-effective and beneficial to religious patients. (Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti 2014, 176)

According to Huculak and McLennan's (2010) study, "results herein provide some support to the expanding body of research that specific dimensions of spirituality or religiosity may imbue mental health with a kind of adaptability in the face of stress, and possibly better so than others" (482).

Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti's (2014) study shows that religiosity/spirituality, overall, has positive effects on mental health. This understanding should motivate us to be intentional in our fostering of intergenerational relationships. The importance of integrating spiritual care into health care cannot be overstated; this is an established fact known by healthcare professionals throughout the world. Intergenerational relationships, as they relate to those receiving care and those giving care, continue to play key roles in the positive health of those receiving and giving care. This is important from adolescence to adulthood. Both youth and adults are benefited by having a personal belief system. Intergenerational relationships guide the youth to appropriate spiritual development and help adults grow spiritually as they share in the youth's journey. The youth help the elderly by respecting their specific beliefs as they care for them. They help them navigate loneliness, suicide, alcohol abuse, lack of

spiritual growth, and more. Both youth and adults need intentional authentic intergenerational relationships.

As it relates to adults, Langer (2004) said, “An understanding of inner strength as it encompasses well-being and self-nurturing practices is necessary for health professionals to facilitate and enhance the experience of health and quality of life for older adults” (614).

Langer argues that those providing care should focus on the strengths of the elderly while giving care, not on their deficits and pathologies. It is easy to focus on the deficits, as they are clearly seen with age. The elderly are often encumbered by a plethora of minimization, going from being able to do so much to being able to do so little. They now have to be helped with all their daily needs. Those providing care can play an integral part in helping the elderly focus on their strengths in practice, not just what would be ideal. The rhetoric is focused on their strengths, but this is often overlooked in practice. Often those providing care focus on the deficits of elderly persons and not on their strengths. Intergenerational relationships foster relationships that focus on the strengths of the elderly, not on their limitations. Meisenhelder and Chandler’s (2002) and Taghavi et al.’s (2020) studies assessed the relationship between spiritual health and the quality of life.

Meisenhelder and Chandler (2002) and Shukla (2015, 123) focused on the attitude of the elderly in the aging process. Meisenhelder and Chandler examined the relationship of attitudinal and behavioral measures of spirituality with physical and mental health outcomes in a sample of elderly community residents:

The frequency of prayer, importance of faith, and reliance on religion for their coping were compared for their association with eight categories of physical and mental

health. All three measures, prayer, faith and religious coping, correlated strongly with positive mental health, but not with the other seven physical health categories. Multiple regression analyses indicated importance of one's faith had the strongest association with positive mental health. (243)

For the elderly, the regularity of prayer, the significance of having faith, and dependence on having religion for coping correlated strongly with positive mental health. The youth can help the elderly to keep the right attitude. "The behavioral measure of prayer was a component of importance of faith to mental health, with no independent impact. This study highlights attitudes rather than practices, as the stronger spiritual variables related to mental health in the elderly" (Meisenhelder and Chandler 2002, 243). They concluded that attitudinal measures are the more accurate indicators of the relationship of spirituality and mental health in the elderly.

Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi (2017); Kumar and Parashar (2015); Landes and Ardel (2011); and Reed and Rousseau (2007) focused on the role spirituality plays on those who are dying. Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi (2017) shared how spirituality can be used to buffer or decrease death anxiety among the elderly: "Moreover, spirituality causes improvement of the function of the body's immune system and can prevent various types of physical and psychiatric disorders through developing peace, hope, and positive emotion. All these factors play part in well-being and health, which leads to relief of death anxiety" (25).

Again, the importance of intergenerational relations is crucial here. Monod et al. (2010) referred to the "patient's spiritual state":

Spiritual state is here defined as the patient's feelings regarding his or her spirituality. Spiritual state is dynamic: it fluctuates according to a hypothesized spectrum of spiritual wellness, ranging from spiritual wellbeing to spiritual distress. A spiritual state might be worse because of external stressors such as illness or bereavement; it

may also be improved by spiritual intervention. This concept of spiritual state appeared as the most appropriate way to assess spirituality within the hospital setting. (2)

According to the study, an elderly person's spiritual state can be improved by spiritual intervention that can be provided by the chaplain, as well as by a family member according to the study. Spiritual distress evaporates because the qualitative spiritual need of the elderly person has been met. Spiritual distress is assessed by a tool called the "Spiritual Distress Assessment Tool" (Monod et al. 2). Spiritual distress is "a state in which the individual is at risk of experiencing a disturbance in his/her system of belief or value that provides strength, hope, and meaning to life" (Monod et al. 1).

This is crucial because if the elderly person's spiritual distress is not resolved, it can lead to harmful results such as severe depression and even harmful effects on a patient's prognosis and quality of life. "Those caring for older depressed adults may choose to share aspects of their own spirituality to achieve a positive therapeutic end" (Steffens 2007, 749).

In summary, attitudes, rather than practices, are the stronger spiritual variables related to mental health in the elderly (Meisenhelder and Chandler 2002, 243). According to Monod et al. (2010, 2), spiritual distress dissipates because the qualitative spiritual need of the elderly person has been met. This qualitative spiritual need can be met by the intervention of a professional caregiver or a family member. The presence of people who can share their spiritual journey as allowed by the elderly person in spiritual distress can allow for a curative end.

As it relates to youth, to paraphrase Bessell (2017), social interconnection and interpersonal relationships cannot be overlooked because they matter. In the context of

friendships, trust and mutual support-these are principal dimensions of human relationships that underpin strong, inclusive communities. This is important for children because they identify relationships as central to communities. What is significant and perhaps a more unusual nuance is the value children place on intergenerational relationships that is beyond, and within, their families (263).

### **Appropriate Strategies to Foster Spiritual Growth Best in the Context of Intergenerational Relationships**

After analyzing and assigning the not insignificant body of research on this topic, I identified key strategies that could be used in building intergenerational relationships in the context of spiritual growth. I believe that these strategies, if used appropriately, will help transform our churches. I see these strategies as embracing the Elijah message in the context of present truth for these times. The strategies are as follows:

1. Create an atmosphere where people feel a sense of belonging.

“Belongingness” is third in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs after physiological needs and safety needs are met. According to the five levels of Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the third level is defined in this way:

Love and belongingness needs-after physiological and safety needs have been fulfilled, the third level of human needs is social and involves feelings of belongingness. The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior. Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work). (McLeod 2018, sec. “The original hierarchy of needs,” para. 6)

Needs lower down in the hierarchy must be fulfilled before anyone can attend to needs higher up (the highest need is self-actualization; the lowest is physiological). The needs are as follows:

- Physiological needs: Food, water, warmth, rest

- Safety needs: Security, safety
- Belongingness and love needs: Intimate relationships, friends
- Esteem needs: Prestige and feeling of accomplishment
- Self-actualization: Achieving one's full potential, including creative activities

(McLeod 2018, sec. "The original hierarchy of needs," para. 11).

We all need to be needed, and intergenerational relationships in our churches embrace this basic human need and foster its continual growth.

2. Create support for troubled families.

All faith communities have families facing serious difficulties. When we are intentional about having cross-generational interactions, this will foster an atmosphere that is open and vulnerable to the needs of the entire community. Our churches should basically be communities that provide hope and support for all people (Rhodes and Chan 2008).

3. Create an atmosphere where there is better use of resources (Koenig 2015).

To me, this strategy is very crucial. Churches can be segregated as they relate to age. This is the enemy's plan. We have to merge our resources appropriately. By being intentional with intergenerational interactions, we build an environment that embraces Maslow's hierarchy of needs which contributes to character, as well as spiritual growth. I believe the quote below establishes the point.

While thirty-and fortysomething leaders of younger churches may have a plethora of fresh ideas and plenty of energy, they lack the experience and deep spiritual resources of more seasoned leaders who have navigated repeatedly the multifarious, often troubled waters of a rapidly growing faith community, young leaders sometimes flame out in the absence of older, wiser heads who can hold the course and traverse tricky terrain. Intergenerational faith communities bring together the young, fresh thinkers with the older, wiser veterans creating an integrated profusion of resources. (Allen and Ross 2013, 18)

4. Create an atmosphere for character growth.

There is a unique opportunity for growth by having intergenerational relationships. The concept of modeling is an asset for both youth and adults (Allen and Ross 2013).

Dr. Albert Bandura is known for his Social Learning Theory. He is an influential social cognitive psychologist and is regarded as one of the greatest living psychologists. He is currently serving as faculty at Stanford University. His theory states: “Learning occurs through observations and interactions with other people. Essentially, people learn by watching others and then imitating these actions” (Cherry 2020b, para. 4). I believe this is a biblical principle and what the entire Bible is all about. God modeled the love (cognitive behavior) He desired: “We love Him because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

5. Create an atmosphere where both youth and adults share each other’s spiritual journeys (walking beside).

The active, intentional participation of age-integrated experiences creates an innocent space to form truly into Christ’s image. This is an open/vulnerable, selfless model (Hryniuk 2005).

6. Create an atmosphere that pairs up a youth with an adult to foster a long-term relationship. This relationship helps both youth and adults grow spiritually. This relationship should be built on trust and authentic vulnerability (Rani and Gayatri Devi 2014, 292).

7. Create an atmosphere where the church has an *Intergenerational Day*. I preached at a church in Camden, New Jersey in October 2019, and the pastor informed me that his church was unique in his conference because they had an *Intergenerational*



*Day*. I was given permission to share this concept with others. Adults and youth wear t-shirts with the logo for that day and they really make an intentional effort to experience the benefits of intergenerational relationships especially on that day.

8. Create an atmosphere where the youth seek to alleviate the many difficulties of old age. Help the elderly navigate through loneliness and isolation and, as the elderly/adults approach their end of life, help them ease their death anxiety (Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi 2017, 25).

### **Summary**

This review of the literature has sought to share the ongoing need of integrational relationships and their multiple benefits. Intentional intergenerational relationships aid in positive mental health. They are a buffer against depression, suicide attempts, substance abuse, loneliness/isolation, lack of belonging, hopelessness, death anxiety, inauthentic spirituality, segregated churches (too old or too young), failing/dying churches, ageism, anxiety, and stymied spirituality.

Intergenerational relationships change the dynamics of a church's atmosphere and make youth and adults feel that they belong and are needed. No one feels excluded, but desired. Both have something to share with each other as they walk side by side in their spiritual journey. It helps both youth and adults have appropriate spiritual growth and development. It enhances continual character growth in both youth and adults. They are not afraid to become vulnerable with each other. Intentional intergenerational relationships foster an authentic vulnerability between youth and adults that is continuous and long-term. Intergenerational relationships last a lifetime and create stability and purpose. They foster hope for hopeless and powerless youth and adults. They give adults

the opportunity to share their life experiences with the youth so that they may avoid the varied disappointments and pitfalls that can cause many a youth to become jaded with life. It gives the youth the opportunity to relieve the gripping loneliness/isolation that the elderly often experience. In this way, the importance of the ongoing need for intentional intergenerational relationships becomes clear.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### IMPLEMENTATION OF KEY STRATEGIES THAT WILL BE USED IN BUILDING INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will discuss how I implemented the four key strategies I identified for building intergenerational relationships in the context of contributing to spiritual growth. These strategies were (a) to make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships are—with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations; (b) to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship; (c) to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth that are paired up; and (d) to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies.

I will describe the rationale for each and express how each was applicable in context. I believed that the strategies, if used appropriately, would help transform our churches. The rationales are as follows:

#### **Create an Environment Where People Feel a Sense of Belonging**

Dr. Abraham Maslow developed a five-level model of human needs. These needs are as follows:

- Physiological needs: Food, water, warmth, rest;
- Safety needs: Security, safety;

- Belonging and love needs: Intimate relationships, friends;
- Esteem needs: Prestige, feeling of accomplishment; and
- Self-actualization: Achieving one's full potential, including creative activities. (McLeod 2018)

These are prescribed as hierarchical needs. To clarify, the needs lower on the hierarchy must be satisfied before the higher needs can be met. According to McLeod (2018), “belongingness” is third in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs after physiological needs and safety needs are met. According to the five levels of Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the third level is defined in this way:

Love and belongingness needs—after physiological and safety needs have been fulfilled, the third level of human needs is social and involves feelings of belongingness. The need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior. Examples include friendship, intimacy, trust, and acceptance, receiving and giving affection and love. Affiliating, being part of a group (family, friends, work). (McLeod 2018, sec. Original hierarchy)

This is important because we first have to satisfy people’s more basic needs before we attempt to get them to reach the higher levels of esteem and self-actualization. We cannot help them reach Maslow’s higher levels if we do not first meet their basic needs—physiological, safety, and love/belonging. This needs to be understood if we plan to be effective in creating an environment where people feel a sense of belonging. The environment has to be encouraging for people to feel they belong. We cannot meet this most important need without meeting people where they are. They must feel and see that their ideas, tastes, and differences are respected even though we may not agree with them—this is after their physiological, safety, and love/belonging needs are met. A sign of maturity denotes separating the person from his/her personal beliefs and actions. This is a delicate balance, because we always need to be biblically sound (doctrinally correct), but not accusatory or pejorative. It is still true that “Christ’s method alone gives true

success in reaching the people. The Savior mingled amongst men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bid them, ‘Follow Me’” (White 1905, 143).

People have to feel that we truly have their best interests at heart with no pretense. This can create an environment of openness and vulnerability. This level of openness/vulnerability should not be subdued by our personal agendas. It is important that we create an environment where a person feels respected, acknowledged, and cared for; this fosters human connections. As Cherry (2020a) stated,

people need personal connections to feel accepted and supported...The need to belong to a group also can lead to changes in behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes as people strive to conform to the standards and norms of the group...While Maslow suggested that these needs were less important than the physiology and safety needs, he believed that the need for belonging helped people to experience companionship and acceptance through family, friends, and other relationships. (secs. Overview, How It Motivates)

Needs lower down (concrete needs) in the hierarchy must be fulfilled before anyone can attend to needs higher up (abstract needs; the highest need is self-actualization; the lowest is physiological; Hopper 2020).

According to Hopper (2020, sec. Love and Belonging), “since Maslow’s time, researchers have continued to explore how love and belonging needs impact well-being.” Hopper (2020) then added, “For example, having social connections is related to better physical health and, conversely, feeling isolated (i.e., having unmet belonging needs) has negative consequences for health and well-being” (sec. Love and Belonging).

The need for intentional intergenerational relationships cannot be overemphasized. We all need to be loved and needed, and being intentional about intergenerational relationships in our churches embraces this basic human need of

belonging and fosters a supportive environment for troubled families where spiritual growth may occur.

### **Create an Environment of Support for Troubled Families**

It is important to have an environment where troubled families feel supported rather than isolated and alone. Families in our communities are experiencing challenges and can feel neglected and abandoned. Our churches can be environments of promise and acceptance. According to Allen and Ross (2013), “these strategies call the community of faith to offer hope not only to youth, but also to single parents, divorced persons, and others who have been hurt by family relationships “by providing a family in which healing and acceptance are found” (17).

It is important that troubled families in our communities find a supportive environment that nurtures and meets their needs. According to Rhodes and Chan (2008),

religious organizations offer a potentially rich pool of caring adults who are driven by their own spiritual commitments and strong ethic to serve others...A religious congregation represents a rich intergenerational network of parents’ friends, extended family members, and spiritual models who can help shape and reinforce not only behavioral and academic outcomes but also spiritual development. (85)

This is important because religious organizations truly have the potential to be rich, powerful environments of hope and connectivity for youth and adults. These environments can be a perpetual refuge for fostering spiritual growth, not just to effect behavioral and academic outcomes, but also to bring clarity about how these environments seek to develop the whole person.

### **Create an Environment Where There is Better Use of Resources**

Our churches can be environments where the adults and the youth enable each

other to make better use of their resources. Here is an opportunity for reverse mentoring where all are made to feel and realize the importance of working together. Studies by Allen and Ross (2013); James, Fine, and Turner (2015); and Koenig (2015) share how youth and adults can work better together.

Youth may have vision and energy, but usually lack the wisdom and financial strength needed to sustain a balanced ministry. Adults have the financial strength, but may lack the energy, youthfulness, and support needed in their age of loneliness and isolation. However, as these two groups bridge the age segregation that exists between them, the needs of both are met. An environment emerges where a better use of their resources is created. The adults can help the youth navigate the pitfalls of ministry and give spiritual wisdom, support, and guidance as needed.

According to Koenig (2015), “overall, the study supports the conclusion that religiousness and spirituality are both stable and changing during emerging adulthood, creating a more complex picture of development” (383).

Koenig’s (2015) study indicated that there comes a time for emerging adults when they remain spiritual, but not as religious. Adults can be a key support in these critical times for the youth so that their spirituality and religiosity remain stable. The need for intentional intergenerational relationships cannot be over emphasized. The adults support the youth, and the youth reciprocate support for the adults. The youth become a solid support system for adults who are usually plagued by loneliness and isolation. Intentional intergenerational congregations create an environment for better use of their resources. According to Allen and Ross (2013), “intergenerational faith communities bring together

fresh young thinkers with older, wiser veterans creating an integrated profusion of resources” (18).

This profusion of resources connects youth and adults together. It bridges the gap that is often caused by age segregation and strengthens spiritual growth in both youth and adults. Many opportunities may be lost because there is no appropriate environment conducive for such an integrated profusion of resources to take place. Turf battles and myopic concepts prevailed, while the greater needs were overlooked and down-played. Youth and adults suffer dearly when these stonewall tactics are perpetuated in our churches. Youth spirituality is enhanced in an environment where there are positive, caring adults.

According to James, Fine, and Turner (2015) study, “the results indicated that the presence of positive caring adults in a given community was positively related to youths’ spirituality” (681).

The point is clear that we cannot say too much about caring adults and the beneficial connections they have with the youth. Such individuals are a refreshing sight in this world of selfishness. They help to strengthen the youth and solidify their spirituality, thus helping them to develop formidable characters that will be a model for others.

### **Create an Environment for Character Growth**

When we intentionally create intergenerational relationships in our congregations, we create an environment where character growth takes place. According to Allen and Ross (2013), “churches who value their young and their old will have to deal with clashing perspectives which may slow things down, make decisions harder to come by,



force compromise on difficult matters, and automatically elevate the value of relationship over that of task” (18).

Fostering an environment where such acceptance, love, and care exist cannot help but produce character growth in both youth and adults. There will be clashing perspectives and differences of opinions, but it will not destroy the value both youth and adults have for each other. The environment is one where self is denied and love for others thrives. The differences of opinion do not impede character growth, but by learning to compromise and respect others, they create an environment for deeper levels of openness and trust. They provide an environment that fosters appropriate differentiation in our congregations and perpetuates the modeling of such behavior. The focus is not other-validation, but appropriate self-validation, and yet openness to togetherness. This is transformational and will help sustain healthy intergenerational relationships that will contribute to spiritual growth in both youth and adults.

Differentiation of self is one of the eight concepts of Dr. Murray Bowen’s Theory. I believe this is one of the most powerful concepts ever understood by a human being. Bowen’s concept should not be palliated over or deemed as unimportant. The theory establishes the balance between individuality and togetherness forces. According to Gilbert (2017), Bowen’s concept “postulates two opposing basic life forces. One is a built-in life growth force toward individuality and differentiation of a separate ‘self,’ and the other an equally intense emotional closeness” (103).

This concept helps to solve the struggle that arises out of being human—how to strike the balance between two basic human urges. One is the drive towards being an individual who is alone and autonomous, and the other is the drive towards being

together in relationships with others (Gilbert 2017, 103). This concept is most crucial, and when rightly lived, would have an appropriate level of differentiation. This is key and most helpful in creating an atmosphere for character growth. Intergenerational relationships can play an important role here in helping both youth and adults to have appropriate differentiation. This will eliminate emotional fusion and not foster other validations, but model appropriate differentiation in the intergenerational relationships. This idea is a deeply spiritual matter. God created humanity with the ability to choose and be autonomous and yet, be together. The ideal of this concept is what Jesus represented. He was truly Himself, but He had healthy relationships with others. This is the truest model for sustaining appropriate intergenerational relationships.

“The central dilemma in managing individuality/togetherness forces is how to keep the focus on one’s own life and direction but still stay in open, clear communication with others” (Gilbert 2017, 107).

This is what Jesus modeled. This is what more of our churches can become when we are intentional about having intergenerational relationships in our congregations that model appropriate differentiated relationships. This would create an environment for character growth in both youth and adults that will perpetuate spiritual growth in each along their spiritual Journey.

### **Create an Environment Where Both Youth and Adults Share Each Other’s Spiritual Journeys (Walking Beside)**

It is important that we create environments where the youth and adults walk alongside each other while knowing that they have the support and care of each other. According to Hryniuk (2005), “young people are searching for spiritual guides who are

alive in Christ to help reveal to them their deepest identity and beauty as beloved daughters and sons of God and to assist them in discerning their unique gifts and vocation in the service of God's reign" (153).

To paraphrase Hryniuk (2005), the active, intentional participation of age-integrated experiences creates an innocent space to form truly into Christ's image. This is an open/vulnerable, selfless model.

Fostering supportive intergenerational relationships, expressing forgiveness and acceptance, sharing experiences—might this be a viable alternative to the departure so many young adults are taking from church? For the Millennials surveyed, the answer appears to be an adamant and heartfelt "Yes!" (Jenkin and Martin 2014, 102).

As they walk alongside each other, both youth and adults form an innocent space through an intentional participation of age-integrated experiences. It generates a solid foundation for trust and love. This environment creates a safe space where appropriate, genuine, intentional intergenerational relationships are formed. The focus is not that the adults or youth replace God in these relationships, but simply that they model God's love and support for each other and others. They seek to walk alongside each other as they journey with God. This environment is advantageous to both youth and adults, helps both youth and adults prevent retention issues in their respective generations, and enhances spiritual growth. This environment fosters long-term relationships.

### **Create an Environment That Pairs Up a Youth with an Adult to Foster a Long-term Relationship**

Another intentional way to foster an environment for intergenerational relationships is to pair up youth and adults appropriately to create long-term relationships

that will help each grow spiritually. The city of North Port has less than 3% of its population as Asian (World Population Review 2021). The city of Fort Washington, Maryland has 11.02% of its population as Asian (World Population Review 2021). The city of Conyers, a suburb of Atlanta, has an Asian population of 1.4% (Wikipedia 2021b). The city of Atlanta itself has a population of Asians that is growing at a rate of about 5.1% (Wikipedia 2021a). Though cultures may differ, we can all learn from each other. For example, we can gain insight from what is modeled below in the six points from Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014) as it relates to intergenerational relationships.

Studies by Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014); Chung (2009); Hutchison et al. (2010); and Hryniuk (2005) assessed the relationships that occurred with intergenerational contact between youth and adults. Rani and Gayatri Devi said, “The exchange process between the youth and the elderly may bring mutual benefits for both” (292).

Youth and adults can share projects that they had been involved in throughout the year. This can culminate in a testimonial time at church that highlights the experiences of both on how they benefited from their project. These intentional intergenerational relationships would model the unique collaboration that transpired between youth and adults and would be an experience that would strengthen long-term intergenerational relationships. These projects could simply be, for example, two individuals praying for each other throughout the year and journaling those experiences or working together on a specific church/community project.

Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014) gave the following suggestions about relationships between the youth and the elderly in Indian society:

1. Youth can be trained to dispel negative stereotypes about elderly and accommodate elderly in extended employment systems and benefit from the knowledge disseminated by them.

2. Youth may learn work ethics and culture from elderly and in turn provide support for ageing parents and other members in the society. Youth force can be used as a leverage to alleviate the poverty of the elderly, elderly may counsel the young ones in upgrading their wealth and sustaining environmental resources.

3. Government may plan more for elderly than just the “old age homes.” Other facilities such as recreation centers, meals on wheels, housekeeping facilities for those ageing in place, day care centers, nursing assistance, and respite care may be implemented. Youth trained in appropriate skills may spearhead such projects.

4. Training centers may be set up for imparting indigenous knowledge of the elderly to the youth. For example, Japanese elderly are said to have more knowledge on disaster management which helps them to cope with frequent natural havoc.

5. Preventive programs for the youth such as suicide prevention, juvenile delinquents prevention and rehabilitation, may include participation of the elderly who can be a source of moral and emotional support to the youth.

6. More number of psychological counselors (gerontologists) may be trained and appointed to cater to the psychological needs of the elderly. (301-302)

Hryniuk (2005) noted, “Just as Jesus sought to form disciples through a relationship of love and an invitation to follow Him (Mt. 4:18ff), we also seek to initiate young persons into mature Christian faith through relationships with elders who join them in living the way of authentic discipleship” (153).

Within a given ethnicity and across different cultural ethnicities, there are lessons to be learned as is seen in the six examples given above from Rani and Gayatri Devi (2014). Cultures can learn essential lessons from each other. Let us just use the first of the six examples given. The youth can help to dispel the negative stereotypes that are often believed about the elderly. As the youth work with the elderly, they can, in turn, help change the negative stereotypes that may be believed about the youth. The two generations working together can help to benefit each other and build stronger intergenerational relationships of trust and love between them both.

These intentional intergenerational relationships are relationships of love that

create an environment where innocent, authentic, safe spaces of belongingness are formed where youth and adults are vulnerable with each other as they enhance each other spiritually. This environment has the potential to foster long-term relationships of nurture and love where the youth may also prove a blessing to the adults as they enter their twilight years.

### **Create an Environment Where the Youth Seek to Alleviate the Difficulty of Death Anxiety for the Elderly**

The youth can be a source of strength and encouragement to the elderly especially in this time as the elderly are faced with death anxiety. To remind the elderly gently of their bond and relationship with God in this stage of their life is important. This bond that the elderly have with God cannot be overstated. This can also be a time of reverse mentoring. The youth can gently remind the elderly of the faith that the elderly instilled in them. Although they may feel that they are ready to die and are tired of the pain, the youth can walk alongside them and encourage them gently to continue resting in Jesus. Remind them to tell God that they are ready, (they have that right to voice that to God and to the youth), but in His time. Not my will but yours, Lord. Please give me the patience to wait on your timing, help me to take it day by day as I am now walking through the “valley of the shadow of death” (Ps 23:4). Yes! The youth can help the elderly/adults approach their end of life, help them ease their death anxiety. These studies by Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi (2017); Solaimanizadeh, Mohammadinia, and Solaimanizadeh (2019); and Ali et al. (2014) assessed the relationship between the elderly and death anxiety:

Spiritual beliefs positively affect mental wellbeing, physical health, and happiness . . . Having relationship and bond with God which is seen in religious experiences

serves as a support social relationship and assists in development of security and peace for people . . . All these factors play part in well-being and health, which leads to relief of death anxiety. (Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi 2017, 25)

The need for intentional intergenerational relationships and the role youth can play in this context is not to be ignored. The youth can play an important role in relieving this difficulty of old age in the context of death anxiety and help to strengthen the spirituality of the elderly as they enter their twilight years. As Khormaei, Dehbidi, and Zehi (2017) made clear, having a relationship and bond with God as is seen in religious experiences serves as a supportive social relationship and assists in the development of security and peace for people.

This is interesting. The elderly/adults who have that bond and supportive relationship with God want to share that with a human being. God made us relational beings. Life is reciprocal in nature. The elderly/adults who walk alongside the youth have helped the youth to navigate many hazards in this life. Many elderly/adults who are lonely and isolated, for whatever reason, have no support systems and end up in a fearful state.

Death anxiety consists of thoughts, fears, and emotions associated to the end of life. This typical anxiety is a multidimensional notion... it embraces eight dimensions as follows: 1. necrophobia, 2. early death phobia, 3. fear of death of beloved ones, 4. death phobia, 5. downfall phobia, 6. dead body phobia, 7. fear of unknown death, and 8. fear of the dead. (Shirkavand, Abbaszadeh, Borhani, and Momenyan 2018, 2)

According to Rashedi, Ebrahimi, Mohseni, and Hosseini (2020), “death anxiety is a natural experience for human beings; however, it can turn into a crippling phobia for older adults” (168).

It is important to have the support of the youth in these difficult years. For many elderly/adults, these intergenerational relationships not only alleviate social difficulties,

but also help to strengthen their walk with God and relieve their death anxiety. They can feel that connection again with the human family—which is the difference between life and death for many elderly/adults. When we create the space for intentional intergenerational relationships in our congregations, we maximize the many blessings these relationships can afford. We diminish these relationships at our own risk and peril. The happiness, mental wellbeing, and health that these intergenerational relationships help to foster because they strengthen one’s walk with God cannot be overlooked any longer.

According to Khormaei et al (2017), “development of religious attitudes in people can help them cope with death anxiety, disease, adverse events in life, and emotional and psychiatric disorders” (25).

In other words, as the youth and elderly/adults help each other grow spiritually with God, it strengthens their bond with God and each other. In their spiritual walk with God, they help to improve their body’s immune system and can help to cope with numerous physical and psychiatric disorders. As the elderly face the end of life, their outlook on life after death is benefited. They can now have hope beyond the grave in context. This helps to relieve their death anxiety and gives them a peace that is constant as their relationship with God is strengthened. The benefits of creating an environment where intergenerational relationships are fostered and an Intergenerational Day is implemented will have long lasting benefits for youth and adults.

**Make a Presentation on Intergenerational Relationships Where  
the Church Implements an Intergenerational Day**

In October 2019, I was invited to preach at a Seventh-day Adventist church in



Camden, New Jersey. The pastor informed me that his church was unique in his Conference because they had an Intergenerational Day. I was given permission to share this concept with others. Here are highlights I took away from what they did: (a) adults and youth wore t-shirts with the logo for that day and they really made an intentional effort to experience the benefits of intergenerational relationships especially on that day, (b) the church highlighted the strengths of each generation while not neglecting the limitations of each, and (c) an Intergenerational Day was intentionally experienced yearly. I will now share what I will present:

1. In my presentation, I will share what the Bible has to say about the importance of intergenerational relationships and the benefits that such relationships generate.

2. I will highlight the importance of perpetuating such relationships and their effects on spiritual growth for both adults and youth.

3. I will use the three modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos. These are the three essential qualities necessary for an audience to accept one’s message:

- **Ethos:** Credibility (or Character) of the speaker
  1. Does the audience respect you?
  2. Does the audience believe you?
  3. Does the audience believe you are trustworthy?
  4. Does the audience believe your authority on this topic?
- **Pathos:** Emotional connection to the audience
  1. Do your words evoke feelings of love, sympathy, fear?
  2. Do your visuals evoke feelings of compassion or envy?
  3. Does your characterization of the competition evoke feelings of hatred? Contempt?
- **Logos:** Logical argument
  1. Does the message you are presenting makes sense?
  2. Is the message you are presenting based on facts, statistics, and evidence?
  3. Will your call to action lead to the desired outcome that you promised? (Dlugan 2010, 1)

Throughout each church calendar year, the church would be inclusive and

intentional in making sure that the youth have leadership roles as appropriate in each department. This inclusive model would seek to create a safe, innocent environment where youth and adults strengthen each other spiritually, emotionally, and socially.

### **Implementation**

I will now share the four key strategies in the implementation section to which the rationales pointed.

- I planned to make a presentation in person/via Zoom as stated above on the importance of intergenerational relationships in the Bible and their effect on spiritual growth at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia).

This was with the intention that each church would implement an Intergenerational Day in its yearly calendar. This Intergenerational Day would educate the church members about the importance of the biblical role of intergenerational relationships and the role they play in the lives of youth and adults. This day would highlight the role of the church and the blessings there are in having intergenerational relationships and their effects on spiritual growth. “The potential for spiritual influence is huge” (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 101). Tokens of appreciation could be passed out as a memento of these relationships (100-101).

- I planned to start an intergenerational mentoring program at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia). These churches were chosen to create a larger sample size

with the opportunity for more valid results. The pastors of these churches allowed me to implement these strategies at their churches. This experience paired up the youth and adults in the churches by age as specified in this dissertation. The youth had trusted, older, experienced Christians in their lives. The adults prayed for them and were there to discuss life choices, career options, and so on (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 100). This implementation covered rationales 1–7.

- This also included an intergenerational prayer box. The youth and adults knew that they were praying for each other (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 101).

- This also included having them be pew buddies. The key here was to be consistent, so the same youth sat with the same adult as pew buddies in order to create a bond between the adult and the youth. The goal was to have trusted, vulnerable/confidential relationships. This fosters reverse mentoring (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 100). Reverse mentoring simply means that the senior is mentored by a younger person (Cronin 2020, 1). There will be health benefits for the adults: “Having a close, emotional, and meaningful connection with someone else (even if it’s one person) lowers your chances of being depressed” (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 104). It also decreases feelings of loneliness (105). It will lead to better brain health. The continuation of learning and new ideas will keep brain cells working (105).

I placed a prayer box in the church specifically for the adults/youth. They could place their prayer requests in it. This let them know that an adult and/or youth was praying for them (Consuegra and Consuegra 2018, 101). After the implementation of these strategies, there was an evaluation period of five months.

## Evaluation

- The sample for this survey included youth and adults 18 years and older, not excluding parents/children, grandparents, and great-grandparents. According to Victoria Tunggono (2018), “World Health Organization (WHO) had declared that 65 years old is still considered young. ... Before, based on the Friendly Societies Act (1875) in Britain, old was defined by age of 50....0-17 years old: underage, 18-65 years old: youth/young people, 66-79 years old: middle-aged, 80-99 years old: elderly/senior, 100+ years old: long-lived elderly” (para. 1). The measuring of these activities was over a three-five months observation period.

- I used the 5-Point Likert-type scale. This focus recorded quantitative and subjective responses to measure the attitudes of the respondents. Likert scales are well known in attitude measurement, where they are used to ask subjects to evaluate a set of attitude statements using scales with common categories such as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree (Likert scale 2010, para. 1). The following categories were based on Willott (2021, Assessing Likert scale questions sec.) in Table 1.

I planned to measure the results of the interaction between the youth and adults by analyzing the anonymous surveys collected. The aim of collecting the data was to ascertain the effectiveness of this intervention. The data collected from the participants was processed and analyzed to determine the impact and effectiveness of the intervention. The entire process was confidential (collecting, processing, and analyzing). The information gathered was anonymous and confidential.

- In addition, the data was evaluated as a group, rather than as individuals.
- The participants were informed that the surveys would be kept safely in keeping with Andrews University standards and protocol.

- Finally, the subjects were informed that the information would be destroyed once the project had met University requirements.

The complete questionnaires for the pre- and post-surveys can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1

*Measurement of the Attitudes of the Respondents*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Scale</b>				
Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Moderately Dissatisfied
Were you satisfied with the biblical fact that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation?					
Importance	Highly Important	Moderately Important	Neutral	Not Very Important	Not Important at All
Is it important for you to know that someone is praying for you?					
Quality	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Partially Disagree	Totally Disagree
Was Intergenerational Day a quality experience for you?					
Frequency	Very Frequently	Occasionally	Neutral	Rarely	Never
How frequently did you communicate with the youth/adult that you were paired up with?					
Likelihood	Very Likely	Likely	Neutral	Unlikely	Very Unlikely
What is the likelihood that you will continue this intergenerational relationship?					

## Summary

I have attempted to explain each strategy and have shared the rationale for them. These strategies are as follows: (a) make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships are. The intention is that each congregation will implement an Intergenerational Day; (b) pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship; this will build strong bonding as adults and youth walk alongside each other on their spiritual journey; (c) provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth that are paired up; and (d) ask adults and youth to be pew buddies.

I believe that we maximized the realities of these strategies as explained earlier in the rationales and they are as follows:

1. Create an Environment Where People Feel a Sense of Belonging. This third level of human need after physiological and safety needs are met is the need to belong. This need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior. People are now open to friendships, trust, and acceptance by giving and receiving affection and love (McLeod 2018, sec. Original hierarchy).

2. Create an Environment of Support for Troubled Families. It is true that religious organizations embody a rich intergenerational system of adults, parents, friends, and spiritual models who can help reinforce and shape not only behavioral and academic outcomes, but also help in the spiritual development of others (Rhodes and Chan 2008, 85).

3. Create an Environment Where There is Better Use of Resources. A better use of resources will be seen in our congregations where there is an integrated profusion of

youthful creative ideas and the experience, resources, and wisdom of the adults. With such positive caring adults and youth coming together, spirituality will be developed.

4. Create an Environment for Character Growth. There will be differences of opinions, but this will help to strengthen character when self is denied, and adults and youth come together in a caring, positive environment. This will foster appropriate differentiation in our congregations and perpetuate the modeling of such behavior. The focus is not other-validation, but appropriate self-validation, and yet, openness to togetherness. This is transformational and will help sustain healthy intergenerational relationships that will contribute to spiritual growth in our congregations.

5. Create an Environment Where Both Youth and Adults Share Each Other's Spiritual Journeys (Walking Beside). This environment creates a safe space where appropriate, genuine, intentional intergenerational relationships are formed. They seek to walk alongside each other as they journey with God. This environment is advantageous to both youth and adults, helps both youth and adults prevent retention issues in their respective generations, and enhances spiritual growth. This environment fosters long-term relationships.

6. Create an Environment That Pairs Up a Youth with an Adult to Foster a Long-term Relationship. When the youth are paired up with adults in our congregations in an appropriate intergenerational relationship, there is an exchange process that takes place between the youth and the adults that may result in benefits that may bring reciprocated benefits for both (Rani and Gayatridevi 2014, 292).

7. Create an Environment Where the Youth Seek to Alleviate the Difficulty of Death Anxiety for the Elderly. Death anxiety consists of thoughts, fears, and emotions



associated to the end of life (Shirkavand, Abbaszadeh, Borhani, and Momenyan 2018, 2). The youth can be a source of comfort for the elderly as they face thoughts, fears, and emotions connected to end-of-life issues.

8. Make a Presentation in person /via Zoom on Intergenerational Relationships

Where the Church Implements an Intergenerational Day. I believe that we must be intentional about fostering intergenerational relationships in our congregations. These relationships will contribute to spiritual growth.

After they are implemented, the strategies were evaluated over a five-month observation period.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### NARRATIVE OF THE INTERVENTION

#### IMPLEMENTATION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive framework of the three-sermon series intervention. (Three sermons were used, first to share the need for intergenerational relationships and how this need was established in the theological reflection of this study; second, to show how the need was established in the literary review; and third, to combine the need for the theological reflection and the need for the literary review to exhort the congregations to be loyal to the truth of the gospel. This was Paul's exhortation to Timothy in the last two pericope of 2 Tim 2:8–12, 13–18.). It was the information that the participants were exposed to and how the many aspects of the program were implemented in building intergenerational relationships in order to contribute to spiritual growth in the three churches—North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia). The three-sermon series on intergenerational relationships should be seen as an intervention in helping to resolve the problem of a lack of healthy intentional intergenerational relationships that foster spiritual growth.

As mentioned in a previous chapter, in order to address the problem mentioned above, the congregations were asked to participate in a three- to five-month intervention

where they were exposed to four key strategies. These strategies were (a) to make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships are (this was with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations), (b) to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship, (c) to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together, and (d) to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies.

In this intervention, I used multidimensional methodologies comprised of sermon expositions, PowerPoint presentations, and anonymous survey questions using the 5-Point Likert-type scale. The pre-survey was given after each sermon presentation and the post-survey after the implementation of the strategies. The post survey was given in the fifth month after the first sermon presentation, in order to ascertain what impact, if any, this study had on each congregation. The 5-Point Likert-type scale recorded quantitative and subjective responses to measure the attitudes of the respondents. In addition, the data was evaluated as a group, rather than as individuals. The participants were informed that the surveys were anonymous and would be kept safely in accordance with Andrews University standards and protocol.

### **Sermon One: June 26, 2022**

#### **Biblical View**

This sermon was presented on Sabbath June 26, 2022. The goal of the sermon was to give a clearer view of the biblical foundation and the efficacy of intergenerational relationships as seen in Scripture. I highlighted the importance of fostering such relationships and their effects on spiritual growth for both adults and youth. I used the three modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—for all my presentations.

The sermon title was “Why We Need Intergeneration Relationships Part 1.” The main text used was 1 Tim 2:3–7, with special emphasis on v. 5. This is one of the four pericopes found in this chapter. In v. 5, Paul said, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” Here, Paul affirmed Timothy’s relationship with God that was passed down from his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. We clearly see the intergenerational interplay. According to Consuegra and Consuegra (2018),

Timothy’s faith was passed down from his grandmother, Lois, to his mother, Eunice, and then to him...Also, pay attention to the adjectives that Paul uses to describe Timothy’s faith—a “genuine” faith. It was a visible faith that could not be hidden, revealed in his day to day life, and was so obvious that it was as if it were a physical characteristic. No it was not passed on by genetics, but rather, by living a life that reflected Jesus every day!” (132).

After establishing the fact from research in the Scriptures, in writings of Ellen G. White, and in current literature that faith is passed down from generation to generation, I shared how the intergenerational relationship between Paul and Timothy benefited both their relationships socially and spiritually. To amplify this point, I shared a quote from White (1883) about when Paul was nearing his journey’s end:

The Apostle’s speech had gained him many friends, and he was visited by persons of rank, who accounted his blessings of greater value than the favor of the emperor of the world. But there was one friend for whose sympathy and companionship he longed in those last trying days. ... The faithful ministrations and tender love of this tried companion had brightened many a dark hour of the apostle’s life. All that Melancthon was to Luther, all that a son could be to a loved and honored father, that was the youthful Timothy to the tried and lonely Paul. (319)

#### Current Literature

I also highlighted how current literature supports the need of intergenerational

relationships and the issues that are plaguing our congregations. The following are some of the key issues inhibiting intergenerational relationships between youth and adults that I highlighted in my presentation. They are ageism, negative spiritual state, death anxiety, lack of belonging, not understanding that “spiritual state” is dynamic (Monod et al. 2010, 2), and hopelessness/powerlessness/loneliness/isolation.

In my presentation, I also shared the reason why the need for intergenerational relationships was ongoing:

- Building intergenerational relationships contributes to spiritual growth as a buffer against failing, segregated congregations that might be considered too old or too young. (Allen and Ross 2013).
- Intergenerational relationships can be a buffer against mental issues (Dawson 2018; Hodges 2002; Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti 2014; Sodhi and Manju 2014; Verghese 2008; Watts 2018).
- They buffer against social dysfunctions, anxiety, and the like (Apostolides 2017; Richards, Berrett, Hardman, and Eggett 2006), let others know they belong (Ponds 2014), let others know that their families are supported across the board regardless of background in the context of culture (Rhodes and Chan 2008).
- They buffer against a misuse of our resources (Koenig 2015).
- They highlight the need for continuous spiritual growth (Baldwin et al. 2015; Allana, Tennant, and Petrucka 2017; Sandage, Hill, and Vaubel 2011).
- They explore how we are benefited by sharing each other’s spiritual journey by walking beside each other (Hryniuk 2005; Mulder 2012).
- They buffer against depression/isolation loneliness (Monod et al. 2010),

- They buffer against substance abuse (Moreira-Almeida, Koenig, and Lucchetti 2014).
- They buffer against powerlessness (Ponds 2014).
- They buffer against feelings of lack of belonging (Allen and Ross 2013).
- They buffer against anxiety, depression, suicidality, and substance use (DiPierro, Fite, and Johnson-Motoyama 2018, 103).

### Implementation

I asked the congregations in person/via Zoom to implement the four strategies that I believed would build integrational relationships that contribute to spiritual growth. These strategies were (a) to make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships were—with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations; (b) to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship; (c) to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together; and (d) to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies.

### Anonymous Survey

After my presentation, I asked those in the congregation who were eighteen years and older to take a brief anonymous survey lasting 5-10 minutes. A hard copy was passed out to the congregations and a hyperlink was available for those who wish to take the survey online.

## Sermon Two: July 16, 2022

### Current Literature

The focus of this sermon was to share with the congregations the body of current literature that was found in this study that supports why the congregations need ongoing intergenerational relationships. One of the key findings of my research was Dr. Murray Bowen's Family System's Theory and the crucial role his theory plays in understanding what is meant by building intergenerational relationships to contribute to spiritual growth. Bowen (as cited in Gilbert 2017, 18–19) believed that “people range from high levels of differentiation to low levels on a hypothetical scale, depending on the how much basic self (the solid part of self that is non-negotiable in relationships) is present” (see Figure 2). The ideal intergenerational relationship is two individuals who are self-validated (Schnarch 2009); they embrace togetherness, not with borrowed validation, but are self-validated. To paraphrase Schnarch (2009), there is no emotional fusion. Bowen's theory truly models the effectual balance of separate, but together. According to Tirri and Quinn (2010), “authenticity fosters one of the key elements of purpose-meaningfulness to self-but only if done with equal attention to the world beyond the self” (201).

This truth is often misunderstood in our churches. Authenticity does foster one of the key elements of purpose-meaningfulness to self which is not selfishness, as Tirri and Quinn (2010) clarified. It is not selfishness, *because it is meaningfulness to self with equal attention to the world outside the self*. This simple but distinctly insightful fact is often elusive in our congregations. I shared the balanced view of what Bowen's theory explained, and it was an eye opener for many.

### Biblical View

Although I shared more research material in this sermon, I used biblical texts such as “Thou shalt Love thy neighbor as thy self” (Matt 22:39), “Train up a child” (Prov 22:6), “God is a Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). I used texts like these to emphasize the point. These texts embrace Bowen’s idea of differentiation of self.

### Anonymous Survey

An anonymous hyperlink survey was available for those 18 years and older who wished to take part. No hard copy was passed out this time.

## **Sermon Three: August 20, 2022**

### Biblical View

In this sermon, I reemphasized the biblical importance and need for ongoing intergenerational relationships. I focused on the last two pericope of 2 Tim 1. Verses 8–12 and 13–18 were my key texts. I explained that intergenerational congregations strengthen their members. Appropriate intergenerational relationships foster intergenerational fellowship, and this, in turn, strengthens the congregation as a whole. Congregations that are intentional about having appropriate intergenerational relationships are not ashamed of the gospel and strengthen their members to be faithful to Jesus Christ. These congregations become a buffer against one becoming

- an infidel, one who does not believe in a certain religion,
- an agnostic, a person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God or anything beyond material phenomena; a



person who claims neither faith nor disbelief in God,

- an atheist, one who does not believe in the existence of God, or
- a heretic, one who has fallen away or differs in opinion from the established religious dogma.

In this pericope, in 2 Tim 1:8–12, Paul encouraged Timothy not to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus. By inspiration, he removed all fear, unbelief, uncertainty, and doubt as it relates to embracing Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior. In Paul’s day, to be a follower of Jesus was not an easy matter. Nichol (1957) shed some insight: “That is, the Christian witness about Jesus Christ, which to the Gentiles was ‘foolishness’ and to the Jews a ‘stumbling block.’ (see on 1 Cor. 1:23, 25)” (7:329). The issue of Jesus being a stumbling block to the Jews was not a small concern. The Jews believed: “If a man commits a sin deserving of death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree...for he who is hanged is cursed of God” (Deut 21:22, 23, NKJV). For a Jew in Paul’s day to be a follower of Jesus took divine intervention. It was an embarrassment, a disgrace, a shameful thing to accept a dead Messiah who was hung on a tree. Their concept of the coming Messiah was another thing—they did not accept a suffering Messiah. They looked for a Messiah who would establish the kingdom of God then and overthrow Roman rule. Paul wanted Timothy never to forget the fact that Jesus Christ became accursed for us. He never committed any sin of His own. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become accursed for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.’)” He paid our penalty so all would have the opportunity to go free. “For God so loved the world that He gave His

only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV).

To the Romans (Gentiles), “the cross was a symbol of shame and death” (Hooks 2017, 1). It was true foolishness to the Gentiles to worship a crucified God. Yet Jesus calls us to take up our cross and follow Him. God’s ways are not our ways.

In my sermon, I shared the fact that the time is coming in the future of our churches when some who are happy in Jesus now will be ashamed to follow Him later. It will cost us to be a follower of Jesus as a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. According to Rev 13:15, “he caused as many as would not worship the beast should be killed.” Paul’s letter to Timothy speaks volumes for us today: “Be not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim 1:8). Intergenerational congregations strengthen adults and youth to be loyal to Jesus and the truth of His Word. (The NT history and story show that this concept is doctrinally sound).

#### Current Literature

I also shared another key point relating to intergenerational relationships. According to Rowling’s (2008) study, “Spiritual health as connectedness to people and places can increase an individual’s overall sense of well-being. It may act as a unifying force linking dimensions of physical, social and emotional health” (249).

According to Bessell’s (2017) study:

social connectedness and interpersonal relationships matter. Friendships, trust and mutual support are important dimensions of human relationships and underpin strong, inclusive communities... children identify relationships as central to communities; a significant and perhaps more novel nuance to that finding is the value children place on intergenerational relationships beyond, and well as within, their families. (263)

I emphasized the point that we need each other. We are connected, and it behooves us to support and foster intergenerational relationships. These relationships should be appropriately differentiated. We should be intentional in our congregations in having intergenerational relationships. Spiritual development, spiritual health, and emotional well-being are all fruits of the social connectedness that intergenerational relationships foster.

### Implementation

I shared the fact that it was crucial that these four strategies be implemented. These strategies, I believed, would build integrational relationships that contribute to spiritual growth. The strategies were (a) to make a series of presentations in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships were—with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each of the three congregations, (b) to pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship, (c) to provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who were paired together, and (d) to ask adults and youth to be pew buddies. I then described each of the four strategies:

1. Make a presentation in person/via Zoom on what intentional intergenerational relationships are with the intention of an Intergenerational Day being implemented in each congregation:
  - a. Coordinate with Pastor/Leader
  - b. Why we need Intergenerational Relationships!
    - i. Sermon/Preach—2 Tim 1:3–7/Part 1
    - ii. Sermon/Research Portion/Preach—Literature Review/Part 2
    - iii. Sermon/Preach—2 Tim 1:8–12 and 2 Tim 1:13–18/Part 3

- c. Intergenerational Day:
  - i. Sermon on Intergenerational Relationships: Bible/Spirit of Prophecy/research, and so on.
  - ii. T-Shirts
  - iii. Testimonials: Exchange of how both generations helped each other
  - iv. Shared benefits of both generations
  - v. Youth paired with adults in a mentoring relationship
  - vi. Prayer box placed for adults and youth who were paired up
  - vii. Adults and youth asked to be pew buddies
  - viii. Pros and cons in each generation and appropriate solutions for the cons while strengthening the pros
- 2. Pair youth with adults in a mentoring relationship:
  - a. Create a Mentorship program
  - b. Have a committee oversee strategies (example: Have the men's ministry/women's ministry oversee the pairing of the generations)
  - c. Make sure that all persons participating are trustworthy and have no illicit/untoward agendas
  - d. Have an adult/elderly person adopt a youth/young family
  - e. Have a youth/young family adopt an adult/elderly person
- 3. Provide a prayer box in each congregation for the adults/youth who are paired together:
  - a. Place a prayer box in the church (actual/virtual)
  - b. Have an adult monitor the prayers every other week

- c. Have a youth monitor the prayers weeks adults do not monitor them
  - d. Journal the answered prayers/reflect on God's interventions
4. Ask adults and youth to be pew buddies:
- a. Have adults and youth sit together (6 feet apart according to Covid guidelines) with the understanding that all ages are welcome, not excluded (in the context of the survey)
  - b. Consistency/It could be in the morning portion of the church service with mentoring/reverse mentoring, and then returning to their own family if they choose
  - c. Long-term intergenerational relationships
  - d. Trustworthy, not gossiping, but building healthy intergenerational relationships
  - e. Confidential sharing (very important)
  - f. Talk on the phone during the week
  - g. Walk alongside each other (mission and nurturing/nurturing and mission)

The strategies were welcomed and appreciated by the congregations. The information was seen as significant and needed for our churches now.

#### Anonymous Survey

An anonymous hyperlink survey was available for those 18 years and older who wished to take part. No hard copy was passed out this time.

#### **Summary**

The quotation on the relationship between Paul and Timothy that was presented in

the first sermon highlighted the intergenerational relationship that Paul and Timothy had. The quotation emphasized the importance of the need for intergenerational relationships. They were also aware of the role social connectedness and interpersonal relationships play as they relate to being intentional about intergenerational relationships.

This chapter afforded me the opportunity to report my journey with the members of North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia) for a period of five months counting after the first sermon intervention was presented. The interventions began on June 26, 2022, with the first of the three-sermon series. The sermon was entitled, “Why we Need Intergenerational Relationships/Part 1.” The remaining two sermons entitled, “Why we Need Intergenerational Relationships/Part 2” and “Why we Need Intergenerational Relationships/Part 3” were presented was presented on July 16, 2022, and August 20, 2022, respectively.

During this period the Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church asked me to present the first of the three sermons via Zoom on July 10, 2022, at 9am. The responses were favorable.

The Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland) asked me to present the entire series on the weekend of July the 16, 2022. These adjustments were to fit their church calendar year.

This three-sermon series intervention was implemented for a period of five months, beginning after the first sermon in June 2022 to November 2022. As explained in the previous sentence, these adjustments were made to fit the congregations’ calendars.

Every church board approved what had been specified at the onset before the intervention was implemented, but two churches made changes to fit their schedules afterwards. The post-survey was administered in November. After the last sermon presentation was given on August 20, 2022, the two months of September and October were allotted for implementation of the four strategies. The final month of the three-to-five-month period was November. Counting after the first sermon was presented in June. The anonymous post-survey for evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention took place in November. Only the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church contributed to the anonymous post-survey. The congregation was involved, and the responses were also largely rewarding and insightful. In addition, the data was evaluated as a group, rather than as individuals (in order to generate anonymous group participation, not to see how many adults or youth participated).

Again, I am appreciative of the participation of all the congregations in this study but had hoped that all the congregations could have taken part in the post-survey. Each church board approved this study and understood what was required. I followed up with the pastors of the two congregations that did not take the post-survey. Both pastors were satisfied with the pre-survey results and did not wish to follow through with the implementation of the strategies to complete the post-survey. Of the three churches, only the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church completed the post-survey. They extended the time to the month of December because I sent them the pre-survey by mistake. The correct final post-survey was sent to correct the mistake, and they were patient and understanding. The purpose of both the anonymous pre-survey and the anonymous post-survey was to get group responses rather than individual responses. The

responses received from the anonymous pre-survey were encouraging, moving, and insightful. The responses received from the post-survey were positive, poignant, and impactful. The intervention had a positive effect on the members' lives. In harmony with the pastor's request, I will make a presentation in the second half of 2023 because the members were pleased with the intervention.



## CHAPTER SIX

### PROJECT EVALUATION AND LEARNINGS

#### **Summary of the Project**

In my observation, the churches in this study need to be consistently intentional in building intergenerational relationships that nurture spiritual development. This problem was conducive to the particular objectives and goals of this project. The goal was to build and nurture intentional intergenerational relationships that foster spiritual growth/development as a direct result of having attended and implemented the strategies and recommendations from the three-sermon series intervention offered at North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church, Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church. This intervention occurred over a period of three to five months. Verbal and written invitations were given to the churches, making them aware that a three-sermon series intervention would be offered and was scheduled to begin on Saturday, June 26, 2022. The congregations were informed that although the interventions were for everyone, only those eighteen years and older could take part in the anonymous surveys. All the features of the program were made available at no cost to the participants.

The participants were informed that that there would be two anonymous surveys for those eighteen years and older—a pre-survey and a post-survey. The pre-survey was available after each sermon presentation and the post-survey was given during the fifth

month after the first sermon in June. The surveys were given to ascertain what impact, if any, this study had on each congregation being intentional about intergenerational relationships and understanding the effects these relationships had on spiritual growth/development. All the churches took part in the pre-survey and the feedback was positive and reassuring. The results showed that that the intervention was well received.

The intervention first progressed with the three-sermon series. The first sermon began on June 26, 2022, with one sermon per month. Each sermon made clear the need for intentional intergenerational relationships and the efficacious effects these relationships have on spiritual growth/development. A multifaceted approach was used to present the sermons, including PowerPoint presentations, group discussion, and a Zoom presentation.

Again, the last sermon presentation was given on August 20, 2022, the two months of September and October were allotted for implementation of the strategies. The final month of the three-to-five-month period was November. The anonymous post-survey for evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention took place during November. Only the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church contributed to the anonymous post-survey. The congregation was involved, and the responses were also largely rewarding and insightful. In addition, the data was evaluated as a group, rather than as individuals (in order to generate anonymous group participation, not to see how many adults or youth participated). Our churches are too segregated by age. The last thing this study wanted to do was exacerbate the problem of age segregation any further. The data were collected deliberately as a single group and not as age-related subgroups.

The data show that when the adults and youth come together intentionally, the result is positive.

### **Evaluation Method**

The first evaluation method used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention was the anonymous survey questions using a 5-item Likert-type scale. The questions can be found in Appendix A and the results can be found in Table 2. The total number of responses received was 90.

The anonymous pre-survey responses were positive and insightful. Many spoke to me after the presentations and shared the need for this intervention. One participant (who will remain anonymous) was visiting from another state and was amazed at the information presented; he said that he needed this intervention at his church. Another person, who will also remain anonymous, said that this information was not just for the churches in this research project, but also for the church-at-large.

To avoid hesitation among the participants, I stressed the importance of honest responses. I stressed the fact that the data was evaluated as a group, rather than as individuals, and I reemphasized the fact that their responses would remain anonymous and extremely confidential. I wanted everyone to be free in their individual responses.

Table 2

*Responses to Pre-Survey*

Question #	Answer Choices	Percentages
<b>1</b>		
--How impactful is it for you as an adult that faith be passed down from generation to generation? --How impactful is it for you as a youth that you have the spiritual support of the older generation and that they are concerned about your spiritual wellbeing?	Very Impactful	87.34%
	Impactful	8.86%
	Somewhat Impactful	2.53%
	Not Impactful	0.00%
	Very Unimpactful	1.27%
<b>2</b>		
--Given the fact that you are an adult, do you believe that passing down of faith from generation to generation is important? --Given the fact that you are a youth, do you feel that the previous generation considers you important enough that they seek to pass down the legacy of faith to you? Do you feel that you are needed and that you belong?	Extremely Important	66.00%
	Very Important	20.00%
	Somewhat Important	10.00%
	Not So Important	4.00%
	Not at All Important	0.00%
<b>3</b>		
--How do you plan to contribute to the passing down of faith from generation to generation going forward as an adult? --Do you, as a youth, believe that you will continue the legacy of passing down your faith to the next generation after you?	Weekly	71.00%
	Monthly	16.00%
	Quarterly	8.00%
	Yearly	4.00%
	Never	1.00%
<b>4</b>		
--How important to you as an adult that Intergenerational Day be an event at your church? If so, how often should it occur? --How important to you as a youth that Intergenerational Day be an event at your church? If so, how often should it occur?	Once a Month	27.70%
	Once a Quarter	33.72%
	Twice a Year	25.58%
	Once a Year	13.00%
	Never	0.00%

The second evaluation method used to measure the effectiveness of the intervention was the anonymous post-survey questions using a 5-item Likert-type scale. The congregation that participated in the anonymous post-survey was a large congregation with a membership of seven hundred and about three to four hundred in regular attendance. The responses were rewarding and encouraging. This survey assessed the responses after the congregation implemented the intervention strategies outlined

earlier in this study. The questions can be found in Appendix A and the results can be found in Table 3. The total number of responses received was 19. Again, the data were evaluated as a single group and not as age-related subgroups (this was in order to generate anonymous total group participation with no focus on the number of individuals—adults or youth—in each age group).

Table 3

*Responses to Post-Survey*

<b>Question #</b>	<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>1</b>		
--Adults, were you satisfied with the biblical fact that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation? --Youth, were you satisfied with the biblical fact that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation?	Very Satisfied	47.06%
	Satisfied	41.18%
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	5.88%
	Dissatisfied	5.88%
	Very Dissatisfied	0.00%
<b>2</b>		
--Adults, is it important for you to know that a youth is praying for you? --Youth, is it important for you to know that an adult is praying for you?	Highly Important	82.35%
	Moderately Important	17.65%
	Neutral	0.00%
	Not Very Important	0.00%
	Not at All Important	0.00%
<b>3</b>		
--Adults, was Intergenerational Day a quality experience for you? --Youth, was Intergenerational Day a quality experience for you?	Strongly Agree	43.75%
	Agree	31.25%
	Neither Agree nor Disagree	25.00%
	Strongly Disagree	0.00%
<b>4</b>		
--Adults, how frequently did you communicate with the youth that you were paired up with? --Youth, how often did you communicate with the adult that you were paired up with?	Very Frequent	0.00%
	Occasionally	20.00%
	Neutral	26.67%
	Rarely	20.00%
	Never	33.33%
<b>5</b>		
--Adults, what is the likelihood that you will continue this intergenerational relationship? --Youth, what is the likelihood that you will continue this intergenerational relationship?	Very Likely	26.67%
	Likely	53.33%
	Neither Likely nor Unlikely	20.00%
	Unlikely	0.00%
	Very Unlikely	0.00%

### **Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Scores**

The anonymous pre-survey and post-survey scores for the group participants were collected using SurveyMonkey. The scores indicated overall that the members were very satisfied with the intervention. Of the ninety participants who took part in the pre-test, 87.34% believed that the passing down of faith from generation to generation was “Very impactful” and 8.86% believed that it was “Impactful.” The results show that a total of 96.20% see the passing down of faith from generation to generation as being favorable.

Of the participants, 66% believed that the passing down of faith from generation to generation was “Extremely important,” and 20% believed that it was “Important.” The results show that 86.0% of the participants saw this as being favorable.

Of the participants, 71% planned to contribute to the passing down of faith from generation to generation “Weekly” and 17% planned to contribute “Monthly.” The results show that 87.0% saw this as being favorable.

Of the participants, 27.70% wanted Intergenerational Day to be a monthly event, 33.72% wanted it to be quarterly, and 25.58% wanted it twice a year. The results showed that 87.0% saw this as favorable.

The anonymous post-survey, which was taken by the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, was completed by nineteen participants. As stated earlier in this study, the other two churches, North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church, did not complete the post-survey. Each church board approved this study and understood what was required. I followed up with the pastors of the two congregations that did not take the post-survey. Both pastors were satisfied with the pre-survey results and did not wish to follow through with the implementation of the

strategies to complete the post-survey. The results from the congregation that participated in the post-survey indicated a large level of fulfillment regarding the strategies and the ongoing need for this intervention to continue. One area—How frequently did you communicate with the youth/adult that you are paired up with?—showed weakness. This, again, highlights the problem that there is a need for intentional intergenerational relationships. In harmony with the pastor’s request, I will continue to follow up with this church.

Upon careful review of the data, the results showed that the information presented in the three-series-sermon intervention and the strategies outlined there were embraced overall. The results showed that the weakness was in the question regarding frequency (see the results of the anonymous post-survey in Table 2). No one had very frequent interaction with each other; however, 20% reported that they had occasional interactions, 26.67% responded with a neutral response, 20% rarely had interactions with the person they were paired up with, and 33.33% had no interaction at all. The results showed that there is a need for intentional intergenerational relationships that foster spiritual growth/development.

The following question asked, “What is the likelihood you will continue this intergenerational relationship?”

Of the participants 26.67% responded, “Very likely,” and 53.33% responded, “Likely.” This means that 80.0% responded favorably: “Very likely” and “Likely.” Overall, they would continue this relationship, although the results showed there was an apparent weakness in not interacting often with each other.

Of the participants, 47.06% were “Very Satisfied” that faith is passed down from

generation to generation, and 41.18 were “Satisfied.” Thus, 88.24% saw this as favorable.

Of the participants, 82.35% believed that it was “Highly Important” that a youth or adult was praying for them and 17.65% believed it was “Moderately Important.” These results show that 100% saw this as favorable.

Of the participants, 43.75% “Strongly Agreed” that Intergenerational Day was a quality experience for them, and 31.25% “Agreed” that it was a quality experience for them. Thus, the results show that 75.0% saw this as favorable.

### **Conclusions Drawn from the Data**

Upon careful assessment of the data drawn from the pre- and post-survey, I concluded that the participants were in favor of the information presented in this study. They found the information to be useful and practical and were pleased with the intervention. When I saw that 96.20% saw the passing down of faith from generation to generation as favorable in the pre-survey and that the results showed that in the post-survey 100% saw it as favorable that an adult or youth was praying for them, I was encouraged that this study was not in vain. I concluded that the need for intergenerational relationships is ongoing.

### **Outcomes of the Intervention**

The collected data of this three-to-five-month intervention plainly showed that the participants realized overall that there was a need for intentional intergenerational relationships. Having understood this reality, there is a need to commit to helping congregations everywhere since, as one participant said, this is for the church-at-large. To



paraphrase Allen and Ross (2013), congregations are goldmines and need to understand the benefits they possess.

Regardless of what the outcomes of this study might have been, this study showed overwhelming support and encouragement by many. The commitment and the fervor of the participants were encouraging. One of the congregations in this study will continue to follow the strategies in this study. After reviewing the anonymous pre-survey and post-survey, the results showed that both generations were now more vulnerable and willing to learn from each other.

### **My Transformation as a Ministry Professional**

This three-sermon-series intervention that took place in North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church, Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church with the specified objective of building intentional intergenerational relationships to develop spiritual growth/development might have had a more substantial impression on me than on most of the participants. There are three ways that this project impacted me as a ministry professional.

First, it opened my eyes to the fact that, regardless of the generation, people want to know that they have someone they can become vulnerable to and with and that the information stays between them and the one with whom they shared that information. Many of our people are deprived of having someone to whom they can unburden their souls. To be very clear, if this need is not met appropriately, it will have a grave effect on intergenerational relationships both now and in the long run.

Second, I realize that regardless of the generation, people want to feel that they belong. This deep need of belonging cannot be overemphasized. People want to know

that they are in an atmosphere where they feel that they belong. In this atmosphere of belongingness to paraphrase Maslow (as cited in Hopper 2020), although their physiological and safety needs are met, they still have social needs. This need for interpersonal relationships motivates behavior. When people feel that they belong, they are vulnerable to friendships, trust, Intimacy, acceptance, and desire to give and receive affection and love, as stated previously in the study. I realize that if our congregations are intentional about having intergenerational relationships, they will have the ability to nurture the need people have to feel that they belong. Thus, they can proliferate to the higher levels of hierarchy (Maslow, as cited in Hopper 2020) which are esteem needs and self-actualization. According to Theisen (2021):

The social ties that accompany a sense of belonging are a protective factor helping manage stress and other behavioral issues. When we feel we have support and are not alone, we are more resilient, often coping more effectively with difficult times in our lives. Coping well with hardships decreases the physical and mental effects of these situations...Studies have shown that children who have not achieved a healthy attachment in their young life have lower self-esteem, a more negative worldview, are mistrustful and can have a perception of rejection...Depression, anxiety and suicide are common mental health conditions associated with lacking a sense of belonging. (paras. 3–5)

Third, the sheer act of presenting needed information, interacting with the congregations, and reviewing the participant's results from both surveys helped me to develop as a professional and an individual. I will forever be grateful for this study.

### **Recommendations**

Although this three-to-five-month intervention had some positive impacts on the congregations, there are some recommendations for further actions that need to be explored. The following recommendations might prove to be valuable should another researcher desire to use this template.

1. As a consequence of this intervention, I welcome the opportunity do an extended series in any of our congregations so that I might observe closer and understand better the dynamics of intergenerational relationships and how they continue to impact spiritual growth/development.

2. I strongly recommend that we be intentional about having appropriate intergenerational relationships in our congregations. As a result, our congregations will grow and this, in turn, will have an effect on the society in which that congregation resides.

3. Although the intervention in this study was beneficial, our congregations are habitually segregated by age (Allen and Ross 2013). I strongly recommend that we find other ways to help remove this concern in our congregations and help them realize how to use their resources in a better manner. I recommend that we pair up adults and youth in intentional intergenerational relationships. Let them spend time getting to know each other appropriately while listening to each other actively. Let them share what they like and dislike about each generation. Let them work together on finding solutions that can help bring the generations together. By bringing the generations together, there is a unique opportunity for spiritual development in both generations.

4. Our congregations are afraid to trust each other, which includes generations being afraid to trust each other. I recommend that we find other creative ways to bridge this gap such as using small groups to foster trust. Set boundaries at the onset of these small groups. Each person in the small group will sign a covenant. It must be clear in the covenant that what is shared in confidentiality will remain in confidentiality and not be shared outside the small group. Those who violate this trust will have broken the

covenant and can no longer participate in this small group exercise.

5. It is human to feel the need to belong. Our congregations are no exception to this need. I recommend that we find ways to help members feel and know that they belong. Let each person feel that their tastes and differences are respected and appreciated. Help each person feel that they have a home in this congregation. Say it and show it. The words and actions must match. Invite a visitor home. An adult/elderly couple can invite a youth home for Sabbath lunch. A young couple can invite an adult/elderly home for lunch on Sabbath. Attempt to keep this encounter going by following up with each other. Not by being inquisitive, but by being genuinely concerned. This can help our congregations meet those belongingness needs. This can help our churches grow more resilient and stronger mentally. This can help members cope better with depression, anxiety, and suicide idealization.

6. I strongly recommend that we be intentional in helping our congregations understand just how wealthy they are. They are wealthy with interpersonal relationships. They are wealthy with mothers, fathers, grandparents, uncles, friends, and so on. Be a mother and a father to those in our congregations who have no mother or father. Be a friend to someone in our congregation who has no friends. Many in our congregations do not feel that they have someone to walk alongside them.

7. Our congregations are filled with many people, but there is isolation and loneliness in our congregations. Both adults and youth are affected by this issue. I recommend that we remove this issue by intentionally bridging the gap between generations. Adults and youth should intentionally spend quality time with each other and develop long-term intergenerational relationships that foster spiritual development. There

is a great need to continue to relieve this problem.

8. There are spiritual struggles among our youth. This often produces anxiety and fear and can lead some to feel isolated from those who fail to appreciate their struggle. There is a need for ongoing research. I recommend that adults walk alongside the youth, appreciating their spiritual struggles and help them grow spiritually.

9. Youth, young people, and young adults come to our institutions vulnerable, hoping to be guided spiritually. This intervention clarified that point, but there is still a need for ongoing research. I strongly recommend that we be intentional in walking alongside the youth who come to our institutions, valuing their spirituality and desiring to incorporate spirituality into their experiences. This is crucial!

10. Many desire to be spiritual but not religious. We must find creative ways to help our people understand their role as God's remnant church. This will greatly reduce heretical desires. The context here is to help our people not to fall away from biblically sound doctrine, but to stay true to God's word. I strongly recommend that we seek to understand the high correlation between religiosity and spirituality and how spiritual development fosters students' well-being and encourages greater authenticity.

11. I highly recommend that we understand that authenticity engenders purpose. I recommend that we help both generations to become appropriately differentiated by first teaching them that it is healthy and not selfish to know oneself, and second, by embracing the fact that one's individuality from a biblical perspective is not selfishness, but healthy living. As we love ourselves properly, we can have appropriate togetherness with others. Love thy neighbor as thyself is balance often missed.

## **Conclusion**

The overwhelming support of the congregations, especially those anonymous participants who were a part of this study, made it clear that this intervention was needed. Their introduction to new methods on how best to build intergenerational relationships and their effect on spiritual growth/development was a blessing. This intervention had a positive impact and gave them hope for the future.

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES

Pre-Survey

**Question Title:**

**1. Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older):**

**Looking at the information that was presented on Intergenerational relationships and its effects on spiritual growth in the sermon. How impactful is it for you as an adult that faith be passed down from generation to generation?**

**Youth (18 to 65 years old):**

**How impactful is it for you as a youth that you have the spiritual support of the older generation and that they are concerned about your spiritual wellbeing?**

- Very impactful**
- Impactful**
- Somewhat Impactful**
- Not Impactful**
- Very unimpactful**

**Question Title:**

**2. Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older): Given the fact that you are an adult, do you believe that passing down of faith from generation to generation is important?**

**Youth (18 to 65 years old): Given the fact that you are a youth, do you feel that the previous generation considers you important enough that they seek to pass down the legacy of faith to you? Do you feel that you are needed and that you belong?**

- Extremely important**
- Very important**
- Somewhat important**
- Not so important**
- Not at all important**



**Question Title:**

**3. Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older): How do you plan to contribute to the passing down of faith from generation to generation going forward as an adult?**

**Youth (18 to 65 years old): Do you as a youth believe that you will continue the legacy of passing down your faith to the next generation after you?**

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Quarterly
- Yearly
- Never

**Question Title:**

**4. Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly: How important to you as an adult (66 years and older) that Intergenerational Day be an event at your church? If so, how often should it occur?**

**Youth: How important to you as a youth (18 to 65 years old) that Intergenerational Day be an event at your church? If so, how often should it occur?**

- Once a month
- Once a quarter
- Every six months (twice a year)
- Once a year
- Never

## Post-Survey

### Question Title:

#### Q1. Satisfaction:

**Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older) were you satisfied with the biblical fact that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation?**

**Youth (working age 18 to 65 years old) were you satisfied with the biblical fact that spiritual faith is passed down from generation to generation?**

- Very satisfied
- Satisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

### Question Title:

#### 2. Importance:

**Youth (18 to 65 years old) is it important for you to know that an adult is praying for you?**

**Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older) is it important for you to know that a youth is praying for you?**

- Highly important
- Moderately important
- Neutral
- Not very Important
- Not important at all

**Question Title:**

**3. Quality:**

**Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older) was Intergenerational Day a quality experience for you?**

**Youth (working 18 to 65 years old) was Intergenerational Day a quality experience for you?**

- Strongly agree**
- Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree**
- Disagree**
- Strongly disagree**

**Question Title:**

**4. Frequency:**

**Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and old) how frequently did you communicate with the youth that you were paired up with?**

**Youth (working age 18 to 65 years old) how often did you communicate with the adult that you were paired up with?**

- Very frequent**
- Occasionally**
- Neutral**
- Rarely**
- Never**

**Question Title:**

**5. Likelihood:**

**Adults/Elderly/Long lived Elderly (66 years and older) what is the likelihood that you will continue this intergenerational relationship?**

**Youth (working age 18 to 65 years old) what is the likelihood that you will continue this intergenerational relationship?**

- Very likely**
- Likely**
- Neither likely nor unlikely**
- Unlikely**
- Very unlikely**

APPENDIX B

APPROVAL LETTERS FROM CHURCHES



**NORTH PORT SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
4330 S. BISCAYNE DR.  
NORTH PORT, FL 34287**

3-13- 2022

Institutional Review Board  
Andrews University  
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 322  
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

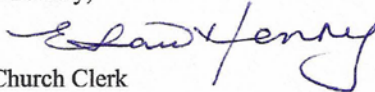
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

On 3-13-2022, the Church Board of North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church has voted to authorize Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson to conduct a series of sermons virtually via Zoom. The sermons will be on "Building Intergenerational Relationships to Contribute to Spiritual Growth at the North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church." In collaboration with Pastor Siam Joseph, Alpha-Agape Seventh-day Adventist Church (Miami, Florida), Dr. Colby Matlock, Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Dr. Fox, Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia).

We believe that Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson's research will benefit adults and youth and the whole congregation at large. This research will help to fulfill our Great Commission as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also give him our full support in this noble endeavor.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

  
Church Clerk

North Port Seventh-Day Adventist Church: Phone number: (941) 426-5708 Email address: northportsdaf@gmail.com

February 28, 2022

Institutional Review Board  
Andrews University  
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 322  
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

On February 27, 2022, the Church Board of Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church voted to authorize Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson to conduct a series of sermons virtually via Zoom. The sermons will be on “Building Intergenerational Relationships to Contribute to Spiritual Growth at the Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church.” In collaboration with Pastor Grigore Leorden, North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), and Dr. Curtis A. Fox, Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia).

We believe that Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson’s research will benefit adults and youth and the whole congregation at large. This research will help to fulfill our Great Commission as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also give him our full support in this noble endeavor.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Gwendolyn Q. Bonner  
Church Clerk



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH

Conyers

3001 Old Salem Road  
Conyers, Ga 30013  
770-483-0764  
[cafox936@aol.com](mailto:cafox936@aol.com)

March 15, 2022

Institutional Review Board  
Andrews University  
4150 Administrative Drive, Room 322  
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0355

To Whom It May Concern

On March 15, 2022, the Church Board of the Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church has voted to authorize Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson to conduct a series of sermons virtually via Zoom. The sermons will be on “Building Intergenerational Relationships to Contribute to Spiritual Growth at our Church.”

We believe that Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson’s research will benefit adults and youth and the whole congregation at large. This research will help to fulfill our Great Commission as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also give him our full support in this noble endeavor.

I would like to thank you in advance for your consideration in this important matter.

Sincerely,

Curtis A. Fox, Ph.D., LMFT, CFT, CFLE  
Senior Pastor



APPENDIX C

FLYER

The series will run on these 3 dates June 26, 2022 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sabbath), July 16, 2022 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sabbath) and August 20, 2022 (3<sup>rd</sup> Sabbath).



All adults and youth 18 years and older of the North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church (North Port, Florida), Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fort Washington, Maryland), and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church (Conyers, Georgia). You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Chaplain Paul David Lincoln Wilson. The title of this project is: **“Building Intergenerational Relationships to Contribute to Spiritual Growth at the North Port Seventh-day Adventist Church, Breath of Life Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Conyers Seventh-day Adventist Church.”**

North Port Seventh-Day  
Adventist Church, 4330 S.  
Biscayne Dr. North Port, FL  
34287, Breath Of Life Seventh-  
Day Adventist Church, 11310  
Ft. Washington Rd, Ft.  
Washington, MD 20744,  
Conyers Seventh-Day  
Adventist Church, 3001 Old  
Salem Road SE  
Conyers, GA 30013



Phone: (941) : (941)  
426-5708 Email  
address:  
northportsdafl@gm  
ail.com

**A volunteer anonymous survey will be provided after each sermon!**

## REFERENCE LIST

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## CURRICULUM VITA

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**Name:** Paul David Lincoln Wilson

**Wife:** Gleacia C. Phillips-Wilson

### **Education:**

- |           |                                                                                              |
|-----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2018-2023 | Doctor of Ministry (Emphasis: Family Ministries), Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary |
| 2010-2011 | 1 Unit of C.P.E., Naples Community Hospital                                                  |
| 1997-1999 | Masters of Divinity, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary                              |
| 1992-1996 | BA in Theology, Oakwood College                                                              |

### **Invention:**

- |           |                                |
|-----------|--------------------------------|
| 2017-2037 | Utility Patent (United States) |
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### **Experience:**

- |           |                                                                                                                                      |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2023-     | Full-Time Hospice Chaplain, Vitas Healthcare (Fort Meyers, FL)                                                                       |
| 2017-2023 | Full-Time Hospice Chaplain, Avow Hospice (Naples, FL)                                                                                |
| 2011-2017 | Volunteer Pastor/Ordained Elder (North Port, FL)                                                                                     |
| 2009-2011 | Volunteer Chaplain, Charlotte Regional Medical Center (North Port, FL)<br>Volunteer Chaplain, Naples Community Hospital (Naples, FL) |
| 2000-2009 | Bone Marrow Recruiter, Community Blood Centers of South Florida (Fort Lauderdale, FL)                                                |