

# Living Stewardship



## Intergenerational

### About this Setting

Intergenerational experiences are rare in our North American society, although they used to be more common and still are the norm in many parts of the world. Faith communities are one of the few places where people can experience being part of a “village” where children can experience nurture and care from adults who are neither their parents nor paid professionals; where adults and youth can be part of the “whole village” that it takes to raise a child; and where all ages can learn and grow together. An intergenerational event offers an opportunity to focus on this unique dimension of being church, by intentionally bringing together all ages. There is no one right way to create a positive intergenerational experience, but careful preparation is key (so that younger participants do not have a lot of “empty” or unfocused time). It is also important to encourage interaction across age groups and to invite a spirit of mutual playfulness and creativity so that older participants do not participate only as helpers or observers. This setting offers an “intergenerational event”—a workshop style experience for all ages, including children, youth, and adults. Activities are designed so that all ages can participate and take something meaningful from the experience (although what a teen or five-year-old or adult will take from the experience may be very different). Because of this wide age span, participants will engage in learning activities in a variety of ways and at many different levels. Group members will learn from one another and assist, challenge, or inspire one another. Children may become “teachers” for youth or adults, helping them to participate more playfully or spontaneously. Adults and youth may share experiences or ideas that may stretch and enlarge the worldview of younger participants, and children will also have important ideas and experiences to share. It will be important for leaders to be open to the variety of gifts, spirituality, wisdom, and experiences present in the group. The activities in this component are written as if there were a single leader. Ideally, however, you will have youth and other adults sharing in the leadership of the intergenerational event.



### About this Faith Practice

As a way of life, expressed in gratitude, living stewardship is a practice that involves all that it means to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. It grows out of a deep caring for and joy in who we are as God's created people and the natural world in which we live. Living stewardship is about how we live our lives and how our lives express our values. It affects all of our decisions, especially the ones we make about the natural and human resources entrusted to us for care. Living stewardship is shalom: living in harmony with others and the world. It is about our relationships, liberation, grace, justice, peace, and mutuality as well as our material possessions. As faithful stewards, we are joined by our common gift of life and the reality of finite resources. We recognize that each of us is a mixture of neediness and fullness and so have responsibility to care for each other as we honor the holy in creation and ourselves. As faithful disciples, we are called to live as generous creatures created by a generous God who mutually shares responsibility with us for all creation. Stewardship involves all people because all are connected in mutually covenanted stewardship within God's original intent for creation.

### Intergenerational Options

These activities may be used to build an intergenerational event for the commencement or conclusion of your series on "Living Stewardship" (up to 3 hours). Or the activities may be used independently (15–20 minutes each), interwoven with age-specific activities throughout the series. An intergenerational event might be used during a time of year that is already set aside as special, such as Advent, Kwanzaa, Lent, Vacation Bible School, or forty days of prayer for children.

Familiarize yourself with all twelve activities, Consider the age of participants and the time available for this event, and choose a group of activities that will meet your needs. For an event lasting 1–2 hours, choose three or four activities from the list of twelve. There are enough activities for three or four events! Or choose a single activity (15–30 minutes) to use as the activity at a community meal or other gathering. Wearing name tags is a good idea, as often older and younger members of a church do not know one another's names.

Each activity ends with a prayer appropriate for the end of the session. Gather as a church family to grow together and have fun!

### Intergenerational Leader Preparation

As you prepare to lead this intergenerational experience, read Genesis 1:26–31 and consider how you have heard this passage before. What stands out as you read it now? You will be gathering with a group of all ages, each entrusted by God with the care of creation, each equipped for the task with particular skills, resources, passion, and energy, and each made in the image of God the Creator. What are your hopes for this event? What gifts, commitment, or resources do you bring to your role as leader? How does the knowledge that you are made in God's image empower you for this ministry of leadership?

*Prayer: Creator God may your Spirit blow through us as it did at the birth of creation. Keep us attuned to your presence and alert to your wisdom. Help us to honor one another as bearers of your holy imprint. Inspire us as we seek to share the gifts you have entrusted to our care. Amen.*

### Exploring & Engaging Activities

Whether we are new to a particular faith practice or an old hand with much experience, all of us benefit from new opportunities to explore the shape of the faith practice and to engage the issues of faith that the practice offers. Sometimes this is a matter of learning new ideas about the practice. Sometimes this is more about reflecting on what we have done in our practice. The activities in the Exploring and Engaging sphere help us figure out how a faith practice intersects with our life and the life of the community of faith.



## Discerning & Deciding Activities

Practicing our faith always involves discernment: naming the realities of our community and world and seeking the will of God for our lives and for the world. We then decide how we will act, what we will do, what values move us forward, what faith has called us to do. The activities in this sphere give us opportunity to practice by discerning and deciding.

## Sending & Serving Activities

Practicing our faith involves serving others and being sent out as empowered disciples of Jesus Christ. We need time in our exploration to plan how we will serve. We need moments that send us forth blessed by the community from which we venture out. The activities in this sphere offer opportunities to practice our faith through sending and serving.



## Exploration: Discovery

### BIBLE FOCUS PASSAGES:

***Genesis 1:26–31***  
***1 Timothy 6:6–10, 17–19***

### 1 Make a Stewardship “Connection” (Discerning and Deciding)

**Leader preparation:** Imagine the kinds of gifts participants might mention and consider how they might interconnect. Reflect on what gifts you offer for care of the earth.

#### Supplies:

- a large ball of yarn (choose a medium weight—something that you can break if you pull hard your hands but doesn't snap easily)
- a teaspoon
- scissors

Tie the end of the yarn securely to a spoon handle. Invite everyone to stand in a circle. Explain that each person must thread the spoon and yarn through themselves in some way (through a sweater sleeve, through a shoe lace or belt loop, under a bracelet or watch band, but NOT AROUND THE NECK). As each person receives the spoon, each should share one or two ways in which they help to care for the gifts and resources that God has entrusted to us by giving money, time, or talents. Start by looping the spoon with the yarn through some part of your clothing. State a way you offer gifts of time, money, or talent. Pass the spoon with the yarn to the next person in the circle. That person loops the yarn through something, states a way they share, and passes the spoon on to the next person around the circle. Continue until the yarn and spoon have gone all the way around the circle and everyone is connected. Note: All the people who have received and threaded the yarn through themselves will need to pay attention and continue to help pass out the yarn around the circle.

When the yarn and spoon have traveled all the way around, ask the group to leave the learning area and reenter, without breaking connection. This will be challenging and requires the group to cooperate. When you are safely back in the learning area, use scissors to disconnect yourselves from the yarn. Gather in a circle to reflect on the experience. Invite the group to recall the different gifts people in the group can offer one another and our world. Even though we are not connected as we were with the yarn, we are still connected in other ways as



we care for one another and our world. Invite the group to suggest some of these connections. Ask: How does what someone does in one way connect with what someone else is offering? (Suggest particular examples, based on what the group has shared. For example, someone might give money to help an organization working with the poor, while another might help protect the environment by recycling, but both are working to care for God's creation).

### 2 Washing Machine: A Drama Game (Easy Preparation) (Discerning and Deciding)

**Leader preparation:** Prepare a movement to illustrate the "washing machine" (see below).

**Supplies:**

- Bible (preferably a children's Bible)

This is a fun cooperative game. Enjoy yourselves! Ask participants to form groups of three or four. Ask each small group to find a way to act out the object or situation that you ask them to depict by a single repetitive motion. Begin with an easy example, such as a washing machine. One person (or two) could be the tub, and the other one (or two) could be the agitator (the big part in the middle of the tub that moves back and forth to wash the clothes). The tub might rock back and forth repetitively while the agitator does a back and forth flailing motion. If you have more people, someone could be the clothes in the machine. Encourage groups to use their whole bodies. Invite groups to be creative, but stress that they must make a continuous repetitive motion, like a machine, rather than a series of actions.

Next, ask groups to add a single sound, repeated over and over, to go with their movement, for example "chug, chug" or "swish, swish" for a washing machine. First have every small group be a washing machine. Then ask them to be something else: perhaps a pair of scissors cutting paper, an axe cutting a tree. Remind participants to keep the motions simple and repetitive and to add only a single repeated sound. Then, suggest something more complex such as a train. Gather in a circle. Read aloud Genesis 1:26 or share a paraphrase such as the following: God said, let us make human beings in our image, just like me. Let them care for the fish of the sea and the birds of the air. Let them tend the cattle. Let them protect the wild animals and the snakes and insects. Let them care for all the creatures that I have made.

Have participants think of ways that we care for the creatures of the planet. Return to the small groups and have each group create a movement and sound that depicts one way people can care for the creatures of the earth. Give each group an opportunity to present their sound/movement creation.



## Exploration: Scripture

### 3 Tell a Creation Story (Exploring and Engaging)

**Leader preparation:** Read the following paraphrase of Genesis 1:26–31 or write one of your own, and prepare to tell it to the group. Do an Internet search for a creation story from another culture or context. For example, see Australian *dream-*



time creation stories at <http://tinyurl.com/2fo95s7> or Native American creation stories at <http://www.tinyurl.com/25rjj8a>.

### Supplies:

- poster: Orion Nebula by Stocktrek Images  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/AllPosters6>

Put up the “Orion Nebula” poster and ask the group to gather around to look at it. Use the following information to tell the group about the Orion Nebula. Nebulae are enormous clouds of dust and gas far away in outer space. Over millions of years, gravity pulls the gas, dust, and other materials together to form larger and larger clumps which eventually become big enough to form stars and planets. The Orion Nebula is 100,000,000,000,000 kilometers away from Earth (on the scale of the universe, that’s fairly close). It is the closest place to Earth where stars are being made. But because the Orion Nebula is so far away, it takes light a long time to get from there to here. So when we look at the Orion Nebula we’re looking at what happened almost 1500 years ago.

Explain that in the Bible there is a story about creation. It is a story that was written down long before people knew anything about the Orion Nebula. Tell the story using the following paraphrase:

God created people to be like God. God blessed them and said to them, “You will have children and grandchildren and great-great-great grandchildren. Soon, people will live everywhere on earth. Take care of all the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and the creatures that live on the ground. I have given you plants to eat and berries to pick and trees with fruits and nuts. And all the creatures will have plants and berries and grasses to eat as well.” So, that’s what happened. God saw everything that was made and it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning on the sixth day.

Ask questions to promote conversation about this story: What do you like about this story? What does it make you think about? Tell another creation story from a different culture or context. Then invite the participants to work in small groups to make up a story of their own about creation. It might begin like this: “Long, long ago, when the universe was very new . . .” Encourage each small group to practice their story so that they can tell it to the whole group.



## **4 Reflect on an Image of Tenderness (Exploring and Engaging) (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader Preparation:** Spend a few minutes in silence with the poster “Planting” and consider how this image speaks to you today.

### Supplies:

- poster: Planting by Rex Goreleigh, <http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>

Put up the poster “Planting” and invite participants to gather around to take a look. Ask people to share what they notice in this picture. Ask people to form groups of three to talk about it. Suggest a question such as one of the following for them to talk about: How does this picture feel to you? Does this picture remind you of anything? If so, what does it make you think of? Gather back in the whole group. Invite the group to imagine this as a picture about God’s care for the world. Pause for a moment. Then say: Imagine that you are the plant and God’s hands are caring for you. How do you feel?



Gather in a circle, standing if possible. Ask participants to cup their hands the way the hands are cupped in the poster. Say, “Pretend I am going to ‘pretend’ to pass something very special around the circle something that we must care for. Each person must take it in their hands, very carefully, and pass it on to the next person.” Do not say what it is, but pass something light such as a soft, fluffy feather around the circle. Ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Next, pass something heavy but very fragile, such as a beautiful glass ball. Again, ask people to say what they imagined they were passing. Invite other participants to choose something special to pass around the circle. Close by passing an imaginary butterfly, have it alight on one finger then carefully transfer it to your cupped palms. When the creature returns around the circle to you, let the butterfly go (release it with your hands) at the end.

Say a short prayer such as the following: *Thank you God, for all the special and beautiful things in our world. Help us to hold them in our care as you do. Amen.*



## Exploration: Discipleship

### ⑤ Sing a Song and Respond with Watercolors (Exploring and Engaging)

**Leader preparation:** Experiment with watercolor paints. If you have not used watercolors before, ask someone to show you some basic watercolor techniques or invite a painter from your church to do this activity with the group. Arrange for an accompanist or someone to teach the group the hymn.

#### Supplies:

- watercolor paints
- brushes
- cups of water
- flat dishes or plates to use as palettes
- masking tape
- damp towels
- hymnbooks with the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love” (tune: Chereponi), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong4>

Teach the hymn “Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love.” Invite conversation about the lyrics of the song. What might it be like to be filled up with Jesus’ love? What would it be like to spend time with someone who was filled with love? How do we show the love of Jesus in our world? Encourage participants to create art that responds to this song in some way. Show them how to tape the paper to the work surface by putting strips of masking tape all around the edge. Wet the paper using water and brush (so that the surface of the paper is damp but not soaking wet). Create a “wash” using a very wet brush and a very small amount of paint. Paint the color over the paper to produce a very pale background color. Then choose a second color of paint and place a small dot of paint on the wash (while it is still wet). The paint will bleed out in a star-like pattern. Repeat with different colors but do not overwork the art (if too many colors are used it will end up as an overall brown or gray). Leave paintings taped in place until they dry so that the paper doesn’t curl.



If participants wish to share their art, after the finished paintings are hanging up, take a tour of the pieces that have been created. Sing "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love" again.

 **6 Self-Portraits of Gifted People (Deciding and Discerning, Sending and Serving) (Easy Preparation)**

**Leader preparation:** Take a moment to reflect on what it means to see yourself as "made in God's image."

**Supplies:**

- washable markers
- charcoal or drawing pencils
- paper (large sheets if possible)
- masking tape

Set out paper and markers, charcoal, or drawing pencils. Ask each person to make a self portrait using the art supplies that you have provided. Have everyone sign their self portrait. Remind the group that as creatures who are "made in God's image," who we are reflects the creativity and giftedness of the Holy One. Encourage participants to be creative—this portrait can be an abstract or impressionist piece, or they can use words and colors rather than an exact line drawing of themselves. The key is for people to try to convey a sense of who they are, their individual "style" or personality, and so on. When the self portraits are complete, post them in the learning area with masking tape. Tape another piece of paper beside each self-portrait. Have an "artist's tour" of each portrait. Stop at each person's self portrait and take a moment to share appreciations of the piece (things the other participants like, appreciate, notice, things the self-portrait reminds them of, and so forth.) Encourage positive responses. Then, ask the group to think of some of the gifts this person has to share with the world, things that help them to celebrate, share, and care for the gifts that life offers. For example: Sammy's jokes help people feel good; Ying helps the younger kids with crafts; Miguel is generous and shares his allowance. Encourage specific, positive comments. Have participants write their comments on the paper beside the self portrait or have people say out loud the gifts they see in each person while a leader records them.



**Exploration: Christian Tradition**

**7 Take a Tour of Your Church (Exploring and Engaging)**

**Leader preparation:** Gather information about the history of your congregation and the history of your denomination (date founded, major events over the years, mission involvements over the years and currently, pastors). Plan a tour through the building or arrange for someone to act as a "tour guide" for the group.

**Supplies:** None

Tell the story of Acts 4:32–36, as follows:

The believers gathered to talk about Jesus. They gave thanks for all that he had taught people of love, of God, and of the way to live. If someone had never heard of Jesus, they told him or her stories. Some of their favorite stories were . . . [invite the children to suggest stories about Jesus]. Some



of the believers were rich; they owned houses and land. Others were very poor. The believers who had lots of property sold it and shared the money with the poor. Then, everyone had enough and no one had too much. A man sold a field that he owned. He came and laid the money at the feet of the apostles. His name was Joseph but everyone called him Barnabas—a name that means “son of encouragement.”

Talk about what the earliest Christians did (told others about Jesus, cared for people who were poor and sick, worshiped and prayed together). Ask: What kinds of things do we do as a church family? Invite older members of the group to share memories of the way your church has helped to care for others and the world over the years.

Take the tour of your church building. Have fun. Pretend you are tourists visiting a historic site. As you visit the different spaces, talk about what goes on there. Ask participants, both old and young, to share special memories they have of something happening in that part of the building. Ask: What does our church family do to care for one another and our world?

### 8 Share a Meal (Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Invite others to help you with the meal (and with leadership in this event); this is not something you should do single-handedly.

#### Supplies:

- ingredients for a simple meal (something that does not require a lot of time to cook, such soup made ahead of time, or make-your-own sandwiches)
- supplies to decorate the tables

Recall with the group how the earliest followers of Jesus shared their possessions and worked together so that everyone had enough to eat, shelter, and care. At their community meals, they remembered how Jesus had shared bread and wine with his friends at the last supper and told them to do this in remembrance of him. From the shared meals of the early Christian community, we get our communion celebration. The meal is an act of justice-making—an act of sharing equally with everyone. Prepare and eat a simple meal together. Make sure that everyone has a role to play in the meal preparation or setting up and decorating the tables.

Before you eat, invite participants to say aloud things for which they are thankful as well as concerns they have for themselves, for other people, and for the world.

Alternative: Say a prayer of thanks before the meal; give thanks for the food and for those who prepared it. Invite God to help you discover ways to care for one another and the world around you.



## Exploration: Context and Mission

### 9 Saving the Birds: Action Research (Discerning and Deciding, Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Do an Internet search for information on a “Lights Out” program near you. “Lights Out” programs work to reduce nighttime lighting of high rise buildings in an effort to help prevent migratory birds from hitting the build-



ings. Go to a site such as <http://lightsout.audubon.org> or search the Internet with the key words “lights out” and “migratory birds.” Find out what volunteers can do to help protect migratory birds that strike high rise buildings.

### Supplies:

- poster: With hoot and squawk and squeak and bark ... by Barbara Reid  
<http://www.tinyurl.com/UCCResources>
- crayons or markers
- pencils
- paper

Post a copy of the poster of the painting by Reid “With Hoof and Squawk and Squeal and Bark . . .” and invite the group to look at the poster. Ask participants: What do you like about this? How does this picture make you feel? Remember the story of Noah saving animals from the flood? What did Noah do to save the birds and animals? What are some things that people can do to protect or care for wildlife? Share information you have located about Lights Out programs to prevent migratory birds from hitting high rise buildings. Invite participants to work in groups of two or three to create their own illustrated story about someone or some group working to save a wild creature or group of creatures that are in danger, such as a group working on a Lights Out program (or helping clean up birds fouled by an oil slick, a dolphin caught in a fishing net, and so forth. You can also find lots of images to go along with these incidents.) Talk about how your group might participate in a project to help local wildlife (such as volunteering with a group that rescues migratory birds that strike high rises or making posters for a Lights Out campaign). Plan an action project in which everyone can participate.

Alternative: If you have access to computers with Internet connection, have participants do this research themselves.

## ⑩ Caring for the Earth: A Tissue Art Activity (Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Think about what the balls might look like when completed. How will you help the group to work together on this project? Consider the anticipated (or possible) size of the group so that you prepare sufficient supplies. This activity will not work well if groups are too large or too crowded together. If your group is large, have several balls and supplies (about one small ball for every three to four participants or one large ball for every five to six participants).

### Supplies:

- large beach ball or exercise ball (the ball can be reused later)
- paint brushes
- blue and green tissue paper (if possible, obtain a variety of different shades of green and blue)
- water-soluble white craft glue (not Podge or acrylic-based glue)

Create a large planet Earth using the ball. Cover the ball with craft glue (use brushes) and paste on pieces of blue tissue paper; overlap the pieces until the ball is completely covered and none of the plastic is showing. Then tear pieces of green paper in the shape of the continents (approximate shape is fine). Paste the continents over the blue tissue using layers of green paper.

When the ball is complete and dry, have participants sit in the circle and slowly pass the ball from one person to another in turn around the circle. As the ball is held by each person, have them say one thing they love about the planet Earth.



Wonder together how God feels about Earth. Say a prayer of care for the Earth, such as the following: *Thank you, God, for this beautiful planet that is our home. Thank you for mountains and seas, forests and skies, plants and birds and animals. Help us to find ways to work together to keep our world safe; help us to keep it always blue and green and beautiful as it spins through space. Amen.*



## Exploration: Future and Mission



### ⑩ Vision of a Future World: Body Sculpture (Discerning and Deciding) (Easy Preparation)

**Leader preparation:** This activity does not require any outside supplies but it will help if you can offer some examples or ideas to illustrate what is meant by "body sculpture." For example, show the group how an arm can be gently shaped to form a tree branch by lifting it up, curving it slightly, separating the fingers, and so on. "Practice" some possibilities in your imagination.

**Supplies:** None

Help the group make a collective sculpture as follows: Ask for two volunteers to be the sculptors. The rest of the group is the clay. The sculptors shape the "clay" into a statue by gently moving people's bodies or asking them to move into a particular position. Practice with a simple idea, using just one person, such as "make a statue of a child playing with a balloon." Then, make a complicated statue using many bodies.

Ask the sculptors to create a statue of a problem in our world that they would like to change. When the sculpture is created, have everyone "freeze" in position. Have people take turns stepping out of position (the sculptors take their places) so that everyone has a chance to look at the sculpture.

### Reflect

Remind yourself of some of the gifts (inspiration, hope, ideas, new learning) that you gained from this intergenerational experience. Recall some of the highlights of the session. What leadership or gifts did the participants share? Pause to give thanks to God for the gifts life offers. What do you celebrate? How has this experience enriched your faith or hope? How can you let the participants know of your appreciation for the gifts they have given you? What will you do again, because it was joyful or seemed particularly meaningful? What will you do differently in future events of this kind?

Then, talk about how you could make a statue of this problem being fixed, solved, or changed. Have two new sculptors make the new statue. Again, give everyone a chance to see the new statue.

Alternative: Have people work in small groups to create a sculpture of "our hope for a future world."

### ⑪ Sing a Song With Movement (Sending and Serving)

**Leader preparation:** Arrange for an accompanist; if necessary, arrange for someone to teach this song to the group.

**Supplies:**

- hymnbooks (or photocopies) with the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" (tune: Talavera Terrace), <http://www.tinyurl.com/FPSong5>

Teach the song "Take My Gifts and Let Me Love You" and sing it together. Invite the group to make up simple actions to go with the words to the song. Plan to sing this song in a congregational service of worship.