

## ***Intergenerational Religious Education***

***Models, Theory, and Prescription for Inter-age Life and Learning in the Faith Community***

**by James W. White**

**[Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1988]**

*Review by Pat Hoerl, UUA Children, Family, and Intergenerational Programs Director*

*What would a book on intergenerational religious education look like?*

This book attempts to answer that question posed to the author more than 15 years ago. Although many years have transpired since its publication, White's diagnosis and theory, models and prescriptions can inform our religious professionals and congregational leaders today. The book describes what religious institutions of America are and can be doing in the way of programmed intergenerational life and learning. After providing an analysis of our isolating social situation and a descriptive review of the field of intergenerational religious education, the pages of this book lay out theoretical bases for cross-generational action and programs. The appendix includes nine age-inclusive programs at All Saints Christian Church and how these programs evolved, built on each other, and went on to influence the whole life of the church.

The life of any congregation needs to be placed in the context of its wider social/cultural matrix. Religious leaders need to understand this matrix to develop creative and helpful responses to meet the faith development needs of their people. The changing family underscores the context in which individuals and families now live. The major social institutions and cultural structures create and maintain separation by age groupings with growing isolation and insulation of persons. Although some attempts have been made recently to bring the generations together across race/ethnic barriers, class divides, ability access, religious persuasions, the author's diagnosis—*segregation, isolation, and insulation of persons are prevailing conditions of our culture*—rings true today. Where are the "ties that bind" generations to one another? He concludes that congregations are best suited to facilitate cross-generational life and learning.

White defines intergenerational religious education as "two or more different age groups of people in a religious community together learning/growing/living in faith." He advocates for each and every person at any age to be helped in his/her "being and becoming" by intergenerational experiences. He discusses six basic paradigms for multigenerational programming:

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|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| * family group      | * worship service               |
| * weekly class      | * worship-education program     |
| * workshop or event | * all congregation camp/retreat |

Within your congregation where are there opportunities to bring the generations together—in intergenerational worship services? in multigenerational learning communities? in cross-generational social service or social action projects? in family cluster or family covenant groups? in pan-generational retreats or camps? How do you promote the concept of intergenerational responsibility where people of all ages have relationships with others of different ages?

I invite ministers, religious educators and lay leaders to study the models, developmental theories, and program strategies outlined in this book to increase the multigenerational opportunities in their congregations. May there be faith bridges across the generations!