

The Generation Gaps

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MPC - A Church of Seven (plus) “Generations”

- Children
- Youth Group
- Young Adults
(College & post-college)
- Young Families -
the U-55's
- Age 55 – 70's
- Age 70 – 85's
- Age 85 +

Concerns

- Congregation is getting smaller & older
- Generations don't know each other
- Missing connections & opportunities
- MST Survey says 60% rate the importance of bridging inter-generational gap as HIGH

Life at MPC – before...

- May Getaway
- Family Camp
- Baseball Games
- Picnics
- 4th of July
- Yule Feast
- Mardi Gras
- Courtyard Festivals
- Fiesta Fantastica
- Extended Families
- Dinner Groups
- Drama projects
- Music

2006

Mission Study “Treasure”

- A “Chosen Community”
 - Welcoming church
 - Cherished heritage of human relationships
 - Supported on the journey through life

2006

Generational Concerns

- "...separation between members..."
- "...difficulty & lack of opportunity in interacting..."
- "Older members are allowed to just 'drift away'..."
- "Younger families are not offered events that work well with needs..."




2006

“Treasure” Challenge

“How to manifest a caring community to young families and new members, as well as older members who can no longer be involved in MPC’s programs.”

MPC vs. Outside – Where is the focus?

Over 85% actively participate in organizations, committees and groups outside of MPC.



We need to create opportunities
today for deep connections across
the generations.

The Generation Gaps

MPC is a church of at least 7 generations.

Over the course of the past year, the Mission Study Team has heard several concerns that at first glance appear to be unrelated but with further attention seem to us to be related via a common thread - the generation gaps.

The concerns we have heard are how our Congregation is getting smaller & older; how we are growing a little, but we are losing many people each year to death and moving; how the younger generations don't know the older generations and there seem to be separate activities and groups for each; how the younger generations and even some in the older generations who are new don't feel included in the leadership of the church; and how the social justice committees are frustrated with the lack of participation and the younger generations are frustrated that they can't always participate because of children-related commitments, or they can't devote time to a traditional full-bore committee obligation.

As we listened to both the worries and the hopes for the future, the Mission Study Team began to realize that our generational gaps are at the heart of a variety of these concerns.

Our Mission Study Survey indicated that 60% of our population, rate the importance of bridging the inter-generational gap as high.

What's happened and why is there cause for concern?

In the Duke era, there were many more family type activities that were central in the life of the church. The May Getaway & Family Camp experiences were developed as ways to provide extended communal time for people to get to know each other more fully. Celebration was held outdoors more often followed by picnics as another way to help the congregation to mix the generations. The Sunday Celebration for the 4th of July was held in a park & included picnic type games for the whole family. Courtyard festivals, like Fiesta Fantastica were created so that members & FOF could understand and appreciate the work of many of our committees. An annual A's Baseball game outing, along with the traditional tailgate party, was another event for all to enjoy each other's company.

As with all great programs, many of those events have gone by the wayside. As our congregation has aged, we have not been replacing the activities with new ones that are mobility and all ages appropriate. We still do Family Camp but the cost, time and distance have proven to be far more difficult for all ages than in the past.

Yule Feast & Mardi Gras were annual events. Mardi Gras is no longer celebrated & Yule Feast is now a bi-annual event.

Extended Families were created as an ongoing program intended to support people of all generations in small family type groups. Those who wished to participate were assigned to a family in order to maintain balance & avoid cliques. Dinner Groups were another way of interacting in a small group fashion, but on a short term basis, but did not always include children. Some Extended Families and Dinner Groups still exist, but times have changed and needs have changed and we have not yet figured out what will be next for the current generations. While the Beacons are providing opportunities for inter-generational connection, is there more we could be doing for fun and connection?

Our Music and Drama programs provided even more opportunities for inter-generational connections. We continue to enjoy a Children's Choir and Kim has recently begun a Family Choir, but inter-generational drama opportunities in recent years have been rare.

The first “Treasure” listed in the 2006 Mission Study was that we identified ourselves as a “Chosen Community” and that “MPC is a welcoming church with a cherished heritage of human relationships, where people are known, accepted, and supported on the journey through life. “

These are some of the 2006 documented observations that spoke to generational gaps back then:

- “There is a separation between longer-term members and newer members.”
- “Mature members experience difficulty and lack of opportunity in interacting with younger adults, youth and children.”
- “Older members are allowed to just ‘drift away’ as their ability to participate wanes.”
- “Younger families are not offered events that work well with the needs of families with children. There is no organized peer group available.”

The Challenge given to us then was how to manifest a caring community to young families and new members, as well as older members who can no longer be involved in MPC’s programs.”

Have we met the “Challenge” from the 2006 Mission Study?

Social Justice has been a key focus at MPC for many years, but now Social Justice Committees find it hard to attract new blood. Can younger families identify with our Social Justice interests or does it mean something else to them? Maybe activism has taken on a different meaning to them and has spread beyond MPC forms.

Our Mission Study Survey showed that over 85% actively participate in organizations, committees and groups outside of MPC.

We have an outstanding Children’s program with Godly Play. However, parents are generally the one’s providing the program. This gives them little opportunity to participate during Sunday morning celebration or to interact afterward.

We have a Youth Program to be proud of, but we have done little to nothing to encourage them to continue in our Congregational life past their graduation. Recent “care packages” to College students is a move in a positive direction. Visibility of and connection with the Youth has been improving, but we still have a long way to go.

Our generational gaps are an opportunity for us to envision how we will create opportunities today for deep connection across the generations.