



Intergenerational Mission Experiences at Home

There are many reasons that members of our faith communities might prefer or need to engage in mission experiences without traveling or getting out in the community. The area they live in may be under stay-at-home recommendations; they may be at high-risk and therefore staying at home; or they may be staying at home for a variety of other reasons.

Mission experiences that are intergenerational are still possible from our homes. Here are a few ways that your faith community can engage. Some of these ideas were adapted from the quicksheet about youth engaging in mission during COVID-19, and you can find that here: www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/sheltering-at-home-is-a-time-for-advocacy/

Engaging older adults and younger generations

Many of our older adults will be sheltering at home for an extended period of time and may have always been fairly isolated from the church community. These members often had the pastor or a group of church members assigned to visit with them. This is a perfect time for households with children at home to engage with and “adopt” an older adult or couple.

Church leadership should meet about the specific needs of these members and what their abilities are as far as communication. Some can use Zoom, some prefer the phone and some have hearing issues and may need to receive mail only. Match a household with an older member(s) and provide them with as many photos as you have and a description of their situation. Younger children will especially like to see the photograph so they can connect.

Remember to focus on developing reciprocity and mutuality in intergenerational relationships.

All members of the household can participate in drawing pictures, writing letters, participating in Zoom conversations and including these older adults in daily prayers. Help families come up with questions to ask so that the relationship can go deeper than, “How are you today?”

As restrictions are lifted, you might be able to do a drive-by parade or wave through windows. Remember to focus on developing reciprocity and mutuality in intergenerational relationships. Ask if there is something that the older adults can lead and teach the family — perhaps cooking, sharing recipes, knitting or other skills could be shared.

Maybe there are young children in your congregation that don’t have grandparents or an extended family network. These sorts of relationships can be beneficial for all and should not focus on “who is in need.” This is a mission experience that builds lasting intergenerational relationships.

Here are some more ideas for sharing gifts and talents across generations:

- Learn to cook or bake, then send those meals or goodies to the doorstep of people who could use and enjoy them. Consider putting together freezer meals.
- Learn how to knit scarves from YouTube videos or by using FaceTime with someone older who knows how, with the plan of sharing their work with others. Does your church already have a knitting or prayer shawl ministry? Try getting a Zoom tutorial going between some church knitters and households.
- Do any of your youth or children play an instrument or sing? Invite them to record themselves performing a song that your congregation is already familiar with and then post it on your church’s social media sites. Perhaps it could even be used in your congregation’s next online service!
- Do you have any poets in the group? Invite them to write a poem specifically written as a message of hope to share with the congregation. They can record themselves reading or performing it and send it to you to post on the church’s social media sites. (Raps count too!)



Intergenerational mission groups (remote)

Consider putting together intergenerational mission groups that include 10-12 people (maybe 2 to 3 households) for a season of service. These groups can focus on an organization of need in the community or an organization somewhere in the world. They might meet every couple of weeks over Zoom or when they are able to meet in person in a large outdoor space. In some circumstances, they will be able to go to the organization to serve.

Once the group is established there should be ways that everyone can learn about and participate in the service chosen. Decide on the time frame this group will gather for — maybe it is for a few months or even a year. Commission the group as you would any mission team and bring them back together for reflection and sharing at the close of their time together.

Here are some ways all ages can participate:

- Small children can collage photographs that are printed from organization websites so you can have a visual as you pray. Consider adding a poster collage to your household worship area. Talk often about what the organization does with small children. Make sure to use words that express our values around mission partnerships with all ages of children: “There are times when people need extra help to get food,” instead of “we are giving food to people that are poor.”
- Youth may be able to engage in social media posting for your group—developing hashtags, researching images, making some Tik Tok videos or posting a reflection on Instagram.
- Putting together blessing bags and supply kits is something everyone can participate in, and small children can add drawings of hope and love.
- If you are focusing on an organization out of the country, don’t forget to engage in learning about the culture of the country. Learn their customs and traditions. Try some new foods in your homes and maybe have a Zoom dinner with everyone sharing their food.

Prayer marathon

Prayer is an expression of how we love and serve one another. It is a way to be intentional about discerning how we are in partnership with the organizations of our faith communities. Prayer takes practice, and there are creative ways everyone can participate in a prayer marathon together!

Consider putting together
intergenerational mission groups
for a season of service.

Pick a topic, a group of people or an organization to be the focus of your event. This could also be a great kick-off event to your intergenerational mission groups. Plan a week or weekend that you will be in prayer. Offer a sign-up for which households will pray when. Fifteen minutes is a long time for families with small children. A household with small children might sign up for a 15-minute slot around bedtime every evening for example. Once you have set up the event, make sure to provide ideas for different ways to pray and offer ideas of what to pray about depending on the focus:

- Draw a visual prayer.
- Stretch or do yoga while praying.
- Silent prayers – a time of silence in your house possibly in the dark with a candle.
- Popcorn prayers – everyone talks out loud with what they are praying for.
- Find a reading, a passage of Scripture or a poem and read it out loud, pausing for reflection.
- Active prayers while exercising.
- Prayer with some sort of medium to manipulate like playdough or even Legos.



Gardens and yards

There are many ways to help neighbors who are sick or otherwise unable to get outside, even while we keep that important six feet of distance from each other. Many churches are currently taking extra measures to check on their members who are living alone or have limited ability to take care of their yards and gardens like they used to.

As needs are identified by the pastor or a layperson in charge of caring ministries in your church, small intergenerational groups could be called who are willing to go mow their lawn or do other simple landscaping tasks. Community gardens are another way that families can work on a plot with others but socially distancing from them. Container gardens are also an idea that households could plant in their homes and then deliver to the doorsteps of other church members or to an organization that provide food and meals.

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