

*QUARTER 4, 2024*

# **ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER**



# ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

GREAT LAKES  
CONFERENCE  
BRETHEN IN CHRIST

*A quarterly resource to equip and support congregations in the Great Lakes Conference of the Brethren in Christ for the work of growing lifelong disciples within their faith family and surrounding community.*

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One Book, One Video, One Website, One Resource

**"Scientists have discovered that it takes approximately 400 repetitions to create a new synapse in the brain, unless it is done in play, in which case it only takes 10 to 20 repetitions."**

-Karyn Purvis

Michelle Kenney M.Ed  
@peaceandparenting

# CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP

## New Curriculum Task Force & Advent Resource

As part of the Great Lakes Conference's commitment to generational discipleship, a dedicated Children's Discipleship Task Force has recently formed to create a resource that meets the unique needs of children's faith formation across our churches. Led by Rev. Dr. Christina Embree, Rev. Stephanie Peterson, and Rev. Matthew Peterson under Bishop Lynn Thrush's guidance, this team is developing a resource called *Gather & Play: A Journey with Jesus*, a curriculum designed to help children actively engage in faith in ways that resonate with their age and experiences.



### Gather & Play: A Journey with Jesus

This curriculum is crafted to support your church in nurturing faith through interactive lessons, scripture, and hands-on activities, specifically geared for intergenerational use, allowing families to grow together.

As part of our conference, your church will receive the curriculum completely free, making this a zero-cost addition to your ministry that supports and strengthens the next generation of disciples.

Gather & Play will contain flexible digital and physical components that allow you to tailor it to your congregation's needs. This curriculum can ease some of the pressures of content creation for your families, providing a structured, biblically grounded tool for your children's and youth ministry.

With your church's participation, we can also gain valuable feedback for improving and expanding these resources for the whole denomination and beyond. This is a fantastic opportunity to enrich your ministry with minimal cost and maximum impact

We are hoping to have all three of our series All About Church, Church Through the Year, and the BIC Core Values available by the end of next year. But we wanted to offer you a sneak peek this year by making our Advent lessons and some of our materials available now. Since we don't have the online platform available yet, please email [christina@refocusministry.org](mailto:christina@refocusministry.org) for your copies!

## CHILDREN & YOUTH DISCIPLESHIP



### *ARE WE KEEPING CHRIST AS OUR FOCUS OR IS HE THE AFTERTHOUGHT?*

This is the craziest, busiest time of the year for church people, especially ministers. Not only are there all the things that happen outside of church, but all the things that happen inside too – cantatas and concerts, breakfasts and banquets, programs and performances, evening services and midnight services, and everything else that comes with all of those things.

And while they all may be “about” Jesus, those things are not Jesus. And while they all may feel important, we do need to be careful that these things enhance the story of Christ and don’t clutter the season with even more distraction. Kids see and remember; let’s be sure that what they remember is Jesus.

### As we move towards Christmas...

Here are some important questions we can ask ourselves as we tell our children about Christmas and why it means so much to us as believers and as the family of God.

#### Are we presenting the story of Christmas as a fairy tale or a significant part of church history?

Our kids hear fairy tales all the time and in fairy tales (or superhero stories or fantasy stories) magical and impossible things happen; things like a virgin giving birth to a baby and angels appearing in the sky.

How we tell the story matters. If we want our kids to understand that these events have been passed down from people who lived through them and experienced them, from one generation of Christians to another, for over 2,000 years, we have to tell the story that way. We have to tell them that no one made this story up or dreamed it in a dream. Actual people lived the events, told other people about it, who recorded their stories and then shared those stories with us.

#### Are we entering into the journey of Advent or just joining the celebration of Christmas?

Advent is the period of time leading up to Christmas and throughout church history, it’s been the time of waiting and anticipating that made Christmas Day so amazing. It’s a time of hearing the story, not once or twice, but over a period of days and weeks and contemplating it together as we wait for the culmination, the birth of Christ, on Christmas Day.

Advent slows us down and lets us truly consider the incredible events of that time, all wrapped up in the themes of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love. This is a powerful opportunity for children to embrace and understand how the birth of Jesus fit into a larger story of who we are and who God is; a story that they get to be a part of as members of God’s family.



## FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

# WHEN CHRISTMAS IS OVER

The packages have been opened, the treats have been enjoyed, trips have been taken, and a vague sense of normalcy is beginning to return to homes. Bedtimes start to be reinforced again. Twinkling lights disappear and houses “go dark.” Slowly but surely we leave the “most wonderful time of the year” behind us.

If your family is like mine, the adjustment from the wonder of Christmas or the carefree schedules of vacation or the adventures of spring and fall breaks to the monotony of everyday life can be rocky. Over the past few years, there’ve been a few things that have helped us ease into these transitions a bit more smoothly and disciple our kids in the faith at the same time.

### Learning How To Celebrate...All the Time

As Christians we have the unique opportunity to never live a mundane, monotonous life! Our Savior promised us the gift of abundant life. There is a sense of hope and expectation available to us every single day. Teach your kids to find the treasures in the normal moments of life so when the big hyped-up moments go by, their excitement for life doesn’t wane. Celebrate often!

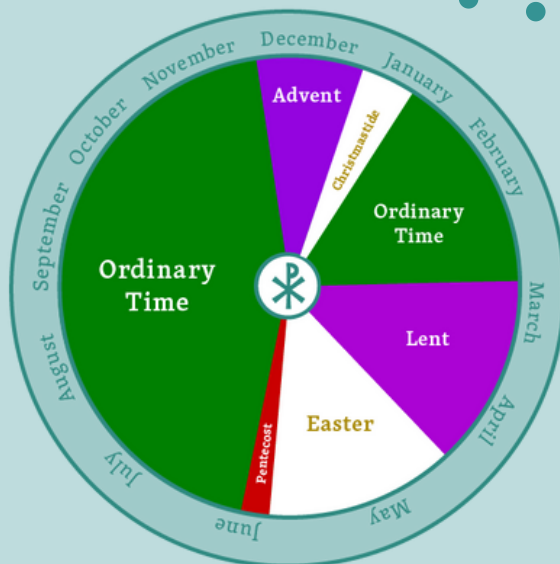
I encourage families to have three “celebrations” in their back pocket: a 30 second celebration (for small but special victories), a 2 minute celebration (when something pretty incredible has happened and we just need to praise God), and a special event celebration (for us this was a Star Dinner when a person in the family has achieved an important milestone like reading their first book or graduating from college).

*ReFocus Ministry offers a Family Faith Formation curriculum called Talk Tools that helps families discover these celebrations and other means of communicating with one another! You can find it at [www.refocusministry.org/family-faith-formation](http://www.refocusministry.org/family-faith-formation) and as always, as a Great Lakes Conference church, you will receive 50% off (20% off for all BIC churches).*

## Follow the Calendar

No, not that calendar...the church calendar. Advent and Christmas are just the beginning of the incredible story of God's promise, appearance, revelation, salvation, resurrection, and indwelling. Epiphany begins on January 6; a season of celebrating God revealing himself to all mankind through the story of the Magi. Easter and Pentecost follow and then the story becomes ours as we enter "ordinary time" made extraordinary by God using us to tell His story.

The church calendar is more than just ancient tradition or a way to mark off time; it's a chance for us to engage the metanarrative of Scripture in our homes with our families. And we can do that all year long.



## Remember Together

The holidays and/or family vacations are often times chock full of activities and experiences that can't be fully appreciated on the moment because of time constraints or just plain weariness.

So, use the time afterward to remember with your family the meaningful moments. Write them down. Send thank you notes. Print the pictures. Then gather together to say "Thank you" to the One who gives the gifts of love, joy, peace, and hope. Re-open again the gifts of Advent and Christmas, this time with a slower pace, and greater chance for gratitude.

We've all probably already seen the picture on social media counting down the days to Christmas. But we don't need to wait a year to experience the joy of celebration again. Let's make part of our transition to regularly scheduled life include celebration, anticipation, and even thanksgiving by inviting Jesus into our everyday.

**Realistically, no family can do it all. But realistically, we can all do something.**

If we are unable to do all "the big things," let's invite Jesus into all the little things and embrace the celebration for His sake. It will look different for each home, as it should. But in each home, Christ desires to be the respite, the rest, the peace no matter what season it is.



# INTERGENERATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES



## AN INTERGENERATIONAL NEW YEAR

Stories or testimonies are one of the best ways for us to share what God is doing in our church and in our lives. And sometimes, it is helpful to hear a story from another body of believers who has done the work of gathering generations together for the purpose of sharing our faith and building community.

Like many churches in the United States, this church had struggled to regain a sense of community after the pandemic and were feeling the impact of generational gap in tangible ways. Young people were not returning. Older people were isolated. Everyone was feeling the strain of separation.

Upon contacting ReFocus Ministry and beginning the coaching program, it became obvious that there were quite a few barriers integrated into their church culture that kept the generations from forming relationships with one another. They decided to focus on one area in particular: Extracurricular activities. That's right – sports and drama and spelling bees and choir performances and tee ball tournaments. You see, they discovered that many of their children and youth were involved in these things and that they and their parents faithfully showed up at these events and this church decided, it was high time they showed up there too.

They placed a bulletin board in a main gathering area and invited parents and kids to post schedules of their upcoming events. And then, the older Sunday School classes committed to visiting that bulletin board and taking turns amongst the members committing to showing up in these spaces.

It was a rocky start. New things often are. However, it didn't take long as the weather warmed up and people could get outside and into bleachers and stadiums for the movement to gain momentum.

By the end of summer, this church could be found all over town at ball games and ballet recitals, cheering on their kids and youth, sitting in the bleachers with parents, and even running concession stands at local softball games.

By fall, the church was abuzz with activity and connection. People spoke one's another's names. They greeted each other in the hallways and high-fived over home runs and scored goals. They commiserated over losses and shared stories of "When I was a kid...". Family Sundays were no longer an exercise in tolerating the presence of kids; instead, kids were invited to sit with their cheerleaders and their biggest fans -the older members of their church.

## **The result? Relationships.**

### **The bigger result? Everyday discipleship in the context of community.**

This is what intergenerational ministry is all about.

Our mission is connect generations at church and at home. But that is not the end goal. The end goal is to create a community characterized by relationships centered around Christ for the glory of God.

We can dissect all the reasons that young people are leaving the church until we are blue in the face. Or we can begin to build relationships and community right now that will ensure deep roots and faith formation that lasts a lifetime.

As we move into the new year, let's reimagine what church together can look like. Let's identify the barriers that keep us apart and inhibit generational discipleship and let's embrace the beautiful invitation to worship and work as a community of faith, all ages, all stages, as one body.





# THE FINAL FOUR

ONE BOOK, ONE VIDEO, ONE WEBSITE, ONE RESOURCE

## *What is Advent?*

*Twinkl Educational Publishing*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RfN7ucvUx4s>

This is an adorable explanation of Advent from the perspective of someone in England and includes instructions for a traditional craft called a Cringle which your family could make together.



## Advent Gather & Play

We wanted to offer you a sneak peek of our *Gather & Play: A Journey with Jesus* curriculum this year by making our Advent lessons and some of our materials available now.

Since we don't have the online platform available yet, please email [christina@refocusministry.org](mailto:christina@refocusministry.org) for your copies!



## All Age Everything

written by Nick Harding

This revised edition of All-Age Everything is full of ideas and suggestions to make all-age worship a true intergenerational worship experience. It looks at every part of an all-age service, from how to go about the initial planning, followed by tips for welcomes and beginnings, to endings and blessings.

The ideas can be adapted to suit your own church setting, but, most of all, they make meeting God fun for the entire church family, however young or old.

## *10 Keys for Intergenerational Leadership by Valerie Grissom*

<https://www.churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/10-keys-to-intergenerational-leadership/>

Intergenerational leaders are fostering communities of hope and creativity by prioritizing relationships, embracing diverse gifts, and encouraging discipleship across all ages. Valerie Grissom identifies 10 keys to intergenerational leadership including facilitating faith rhythms, embracing curiosity, valuing diversity, and empowering all generations to lead. Leaders must resist reverting to old norms, focusing instead on life-giving, inclusive practices.



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## WINTER 2025 REFOCUS MINISTRY COHORT FORMING NOW

Ready to take your ministry leadership to new heights? Join our 12-week program facilitated by Christina Embree, where you'll embark on a transformative journey alongside 4-6 ministry peers.

### Here's what's in store for you:

- 🔍 Dive deep into generational discipleship, intergenerational ministry, and church culture transition.
- 🌱 Experience growth and accountability within a supportive community of like-minded ministers.
- 📖 Gain exclusive access to resources and up to one year of personalized coaching.
- 👉 Harness the power of collective learning and coachable moments with your cohort mates.
- 🗣️ Unlock the opportunity to become a local ReFocus coach and share your expertise on our platform.

### What's Included:

- 📅 Twelve weekly trainings (10 Sessions) and Zoom calls with Christina.
- 💡 Choice of 1 webinar with resources for your church/congregation.
- 🗣️ One year of monthly, 30-minute, one-on-one coaching sessions.
- 👥 Access to a private Facebook group exclusively for cohort members.
- 🎫 Lifetime 10% discount on all ReFocus seminars, workshops, webinars, and coaching packages.

Spaces are limited to 10 people, so secure your spot now and embark on a journey of growth, connection, and empowerment! Email [christina@refocusministry.org](mailto:christina@refocusministry.org) to learn more or visit <https://forms.gle/6Sskfh57u5oqGyGW8> to enroll today. Let's make this summer a season of transformation together!



## Family Faith Formation Curriculum

The heart of Family Faith Formation is families spending time together around the Word of God within the context of the larger faith community.

Many parents express frustration about the lack of support and equipping they experience when it comes to leading their kids spiritually at home. Churches often encourage parents that they are the ones who are called by God to disciple their kids but frequently don't provide the training, experience and resources needed for them to feel adequately prepared for that work.

Our Fill Your Toolbox curriculum gives parents what they need and churches what they desire. Each block contains five lessons focused on introducing, learning, and practicing specific discipleship strategies.

. **GLC/BIC 50% DISCOUNT APPLIES!! Contact Christina for Promo Code.**  
Learn more at <https://refocusministry.org/family-faith-formation>



## Training and Coaching Opportunities

DUE TO A GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIP FROM THE GREAT LAKES CONFERENCE, ALL COSTS HAVE BEEN REDUCED BY OVER 75% FROM THE ORIGINAL PRICE.

### EVERYDAY DISCIPLESHIP

For parents/caregivers who desire to be intentional in the faith formation of their children, this webinar offers practices for daily discipleship at home.

***\$50.00/webinar***

#### INCLUDED:

- Unlimited access to all church members
- Personalized for your church
- Resources for the webinar and as follow-up for parents/caregivers

### RECONNECT WEBINAR

ReConnect Webinar is designed for pastors and ministers interested in beginning to take steps to connect generations in ongoing spiritual formation and discipleship.

***\$80.00/participant***

#### INCLUDED:

- Groups of 4 or more
- 4 One Hour Workshops
- Resources/Handouts for during and after each workshop
- One 1/2 hour personal coaching session following webinar

### PASTORAL TEAM COACHING

ReFocus coaching experiences help churches create missional communities focused on generational discipleship and spiritual formation. Through personalized mentorship, trainings, and coaching, ReFocus will help your church move into a deeper experience of community within your church family.

*\$200-250 based on church size and needs*



Resources compiled by Christina Embree  
GLC Minister of Generational Discipleship

[christina@refocusministry.org](mailto:christina@refocusministry.org)

[www.refocusministry.org](http://www.refocusministry.org)

The resources included in this resource packet are intended for use within local congregations. All resources are credited to their original source if not created by the compiler. Please follow all copyright laws when using the resources described here.