



Ministry update for Synod 2021

Intergenerational Ministry (Children & Families)

What an amazingly productive season! Whilst acknowledging the increased stress experienced by many and the myriad challenges faced by individual congregations and presbyteries in 2020 especially, there has also been much unexpected blessing since the 2019 Synod meeting. Though the specific nature of activities undertaken may have differed to that which may have been expected, the permission to work from home has significantly increased productivity, the wider church uptake of Zoom has increased efficiency with respect to travel/time and the willingness of so many to embrace change has been energising. That so much has been achieved despite the ongoing administrative, communication and management challenges with-in the eLM environment bears remarkable testimony to the grace of God at work.

Resourcing the church for intergenerational ministry has continued as a focus since the last Synod meeting. Many new resources have been completed, conferences have been run successfully and distribution channels have been expanded. By way of example, 2020 saw the uploading/dissemination of the Six Spiritual Traditions series, the InterGenerate (book) resources, the Storycine (stories told with plasticine) powerpoints and the updating of many other collaboratively developed resources (eg. the Lenten and Advent Engage Together editions). The shift to on-line delivery of conferences led to increased participation in the regular Stories of Childhood (Playgroup/Preschool) and Make it Messy! (Messy Church) events and the response to the InterGenerate AUS (intergenerational ministry) – with 300+ participants compared to around 60 the previous year – was stunning. Regarding distribution of resources, a renewed focus on the Children & Families facebook page has seen close to a tripling of the reach and the e-mailed Monthly Update is now distributed to 5,500+ recipients.

Relationships with a wide variety of ministry practitioners have continued to be strengthened. In 2020 a number of initiatives were made possible by the increased comfortableness with Zoom and the greater flexibility/availability of many due to the changed environment. Regular on-line gatherings have been initiated as a means of support encouragement and support for Playgroup leaders, Messy Church leaders and those in paid Children & Families ministry roles. Multiple on-line Huddles were formed for ministry agents, with each individual Huddle focusing on either Intergenerational Ministry or Advent. Another significant development was the initiation of on-line gatherings for Children & Families ministry agents nationally.

Results from the on-going commitment to collaboration have also started to become more evident since 2019. Collaboration with Bradon French (Intergenerational Ministry – Youth) resulted in the excellent intergenerational podcast series. Collaboration with Robin Yang (Intergenerational Ministry – Young Adults) is enabling progress around the intergenerational/intercultural intersection. Collaboration with Mat Harry (New and Renewing) is bringing synergy in relation to exciting new ministry opportunities. Collaboration with Pilgrim Theological College has seen increased participation in the Units specifically relevant to ministry with children and their families and, for the first time in many years, the opportunity to formally engage with students as part of their formation program. Increased collaboration with Presbyteries via the Presbytery eLM Ministers has been a particular highlight.

That so much has been achieved in such a difficult environment is due in no small part to the incredible generosity, graciousness and willingness to engage of those who comprise the body of the church – those who serve so faithfully day by day, week by week, month by month and year by year in their local





(congregational) and regional (presbytery) contexts. Looking ahead, may the appropriate addressing of the systemic challenges we face as the Uniting Church enable us to pursue God's mission together even more faithfully.

For more information, please contact ...

e. chris.barnett@victas.uca.org.au

p. 03 9340 8806

