



ONE CHURCH: FOUR GENERATIONS STRONG



by Nancy Hammond

In *One Church, Four Generations* (available in the Ward library), author Gary L. McIntosh asks: Is it possible for a church to have an intergenerational ministry?

Ward's Women's Ministries believes the answer to this question is a resounding, "Yes!"

During our **WM** Leadership meetings held in April and May we focused our discussion on the continuing development of intergenerational programs within WM that will benefit all women at Ward as well as unchurched women in the surrounding communities. To that end, we've been educating ourselves about how women from different generations—from teenagers to seniors—perceive the church.

One Church, Four Generations offers descriptions and thorough explanations of the unique characteristics of each generation. We've used these ideas as a foundation and combined them with our own to come up with the following descriptions:

BUILDERS (60 AND UP)

Religious characteristics: Committed to church (as an organization); want programs to meet their needs; loyal to their denominations; minister out of duty

How to minister to them: Provide group activities; offer in-depth Bible studies; help them with retirement; encourage contact with other generations; provide avenues for ministry

BOOMERS (40s AND 50s)

Religious characteristics: Committed to relationships (not an organization); want knowledge that can be applied to daily life; place importance on small group Bible study; want to live their faith

How to minister to them: Emphasize family; highlight purpose and vision; use celebrative worship; develop ministries; stress lifestyle evangelism; communicate visually; streamline structure

BUSTERS (20s AND 30s)

Religious characteristics: Committed to a family atmosphere, but want less structure; want up-to-date options and faster-paced worship; learn best through experience and visual images; want faith that meets their needs

How to minister to them: Define vision; update worship service; use small groups; develop need-based ministries; answer questions; focus on local issues

BRIDGERS (LATE TEENS)

Religious characteristics: Want faith that can be applied to their needs; like honest and open talk; place importance on high technology; want to see faith at work in the lives of their leaders and mentors

How to minister to them: Offer take-home value, model authentic faith; teach holistic discipleship; use technology; promote biblical tolerance and acceptance; train interactively

DECLINE IN THOSE WHO CALL THEMSELVES CHRISTIANS

Percentage of people who say they are Christians*:

Builders (ages 60 & up)	= 65%
Busters (40s & 50s)	= 35%
Boomers (30s)	= 15%
Bridgers (20s)	= 4%

* According to a 1998 survey by the Billy Graham School of Evangelism

As we have explored the generational differences, an excitement has ignited that continues to challenge us to look at WM from a generational perspective as opposed to a "one size fits all" perspective. Our hope is that we can better minister to the women of Ward and more effectively reach those in our communities who do not have the knowledge of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

All of us have different needs and gifts—and each one of us has something to offer all generations within the body of Christ. If we can combine our generational strengths, what kind of difference can we make in the lives of those around us? What kind of work can we do to glorify God? **wm**

If you would like to join in this discussion, please contact:

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We look forward to hearing your generational perspective.

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