

Case Study

Logos Ministry

Grace United Methodist Church, Coal Center, PA

Andrea Erbrecht is the Children's Ministry Coordinator at Grace United Methodist Church in Coal Center, Pennsylvania. Andrea and Grace United Methodist understand that children need adults and adults need children and that these intergenerational relationships need to be nurtured both inside and outside of the family. They have developed a variety of ways to build intergenerational relationships with dynamic and creative program offerings and worship experiences. An effective program from GenOn ministries is central to their effort.

GenOn Ministries is an organization that has been equipping faith communities and families to develop lifelong disciples of all ages for nearly fifty years. Their signature program offering is called Logos and helps church members learn about, experience and practice the art of Christian relationships. Participants of all ages eat, play, study and pray together in intergenerational and age-specific groupings on a weekly basis.

Logos is offered every Wednesday at Grace Church during the school year, 5:00-7:30 p.m. Whole families are invited to experience the program together each week. Many parents serve as volunteers. There are four distinct parts to Logos, each led by a different team of adults so that the children who participate develop strong relationships with a variety of adults in the church, which has been shown in many studies to benefit both children and teens in their social, emotional, intellectual and faith development. Brief descriptions of the four parts follow:

1. Dinner

A Logos dinner is designed to feel like a family meal to maximize the many researched benefits of family dining. Food is served family style and commonly accepted table manners are taught and encouraged. Polite conversation skills are also emphasized, but all dinner etiquette is presented in a light-hearted and attractive manner. Children and non-parent adults are assigned to dinner tables for the entire Logos year. This helps to build strong intergenerational relationships throughout the church community. Clean-up is accomplished by hoppers and moppers, assigned roles to get food to and from the tables and to get the room back in order before the next part of the program.

2. Bible Study

The content of Methodist faith is explored in 45-minute, age-specific learning sessions following dinner. All age groups focus on the same material to reinforce a common theme that runs throughout the entire program. The church uses regular Bible study resources for this part of the program.

3. Recreation

A 30-minute play session follows Bible study. A variety of games and crafts are featured during this part of the program and are thematically connected to the rest of the segments. The overarching goal of the recreation experience is to learn to play in a Christian way. They repeatedly reinforce Christian play with the mantra, "Experience fun at the expense of no one else." While friendly competition is inevitable and acceptable, there is never a reason to treat anyone as though he or she is not a child of God.

4. Worship Skills

This 30-minute session focuses on preparing participants for active participation in the church's worship services on Sunday. Children at Grace Methodist learn worship skills such as singing, hand bells, skit development and performance, video production and more. All of the learned skills are implemented in Sunday worship services for the congregation. They are featured at the worship service most populated by families with children. Grace Church has developed worship experiences that connect with all ages. They are musically and visually dynamic enough to meet the needs of any age group.

Get a glimpse of what Logos looks like by clicking on the following link and watching a brief video about Logos at Grace United Methodist Church: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9MXdSMDbf8>

Grace Methodist does not limit their intergenerational experiences to Logos. Andrea Erbrecht reports that they also have whole families participating in service programs too. Families work together to collect shoes and package them for a local charity. They also invite whole families to participate in Operation Christmas Child together. They've taken programs that many churches do in age-specific groupings and have expanded them to include multiple generations.

Andrea and her team have also developed a summer program that mirrors the Logos experience but with a VBS-like twist. They call it Family Nights in the Park. It incorporates all of the features of Logos with a lighter and more family-oriented touch. In this version, families stay together for the program and the recreation piece is amplified. Each week they meet at a different park in the community for the program, weather permitting. They designed Family Nights in the Park and only later realized that they had developed a program that incorporates all of the great features of Logos. It appears that Logos has become part of the culture at Grace Church.

- To learn more about Grace United Methodist Church, visit their website: <http://www.come-to-grace.org>.
- To learn more about GenOn Ministries and the Logos resource, visit the GenOn website: <http://www.genonministries.org>.