

**MULTI-GENERATIONAL MINISTRIES IN THE
CONTEXT OF A LOCAL CHURCH**

by

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SUMMARY

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Never before in living memory has the gap in mutual acceptance and understanding between generations been as large as it is now. Massive societal and cultural shifts, fuelled by changing technology, increasing rates of change, globalisation and disconnectedness, have caused a deep divide between those born in the first two-thirds of this century and those born in the latter decades. This dissertation aims to identify the causes of this divide, quantify the effects and suggest solutions. Although generally applicable to many different organisations in society, especially schools, parenting, businesses with young and old employees or those with generationally diverse target markets, this dissertation focuses specifically in application on the context of local churches. It aims to provide an understanding of the concept of a “generation gap” and practical guidelines for churches seeking to become truly multi-generational in their structures and ministries.

Key terms:

Generational studies; generation gap; postmodernism; youth work; church; young and old; generations; culture; children; teenager; young adult; senior; future.

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Introduction

1 The Context of the Discussion

The last fifty years of church ministry have been characterised by ever increasing division between people of different ages. In days gone by, the local church itself made few age-based distinctions in ministry, relying almost exclusively on parachurch ministries, such as the Sunday School movement, Bible Clubs, Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association, Young Life, Youth for Christ, Scripture Union, Student's Christian Association and a host of others, to provide age-appropriate ministry to the young people in their church (cf. Senter 1992). In the last twenty years, these parachurch organisations have moved their focus away from providing ministry to church-based young people, and focussed more on reaching those young people that churches traditionally have not been able or have not wanted to reach. The parachurch ministries have been fully justified in this shift, as the local churches have begun to implement church-based youth ministry as a key focus of the church's ministry structure. However, this has had a significant, negative spin-off effect for church-based youth ministry. "The single strategy that has become the most common characteristic of youth ministry today is the isolation of teenagers from the adult world and particularly from their own parents" (DeVries 1994:41).

Simultaneously to this happening, however, emphasis in society has shifted from a "hands off" approach to youth care to a more active role in the raising of children. Parents in particular are keen to be more involved in their children's lives. They are also looking for organisations to assist them in the process of child rearing. The church is one organisation to which some have looked, especially those who have been attending church. Thus, the focus in churches has been on creating "youth groups" or "youth ministries" that address the specific needs of young people in age appropriate ways. While this has been a positive step for church ministry, it has brought with it a number of problems. The most significant of these problems is that youth ministries in general seem to be failing to produce adult Christians - youth ministries seem to lose their young people as they near the completion of their studies. These young people do not seem to be moving out of the youth ministry and into the adult ministries of the church. "Churched kids are in deep trouble and are not making the transition to mature Christian adulthood" (Haymond 1998:4)

This trend towards the atomisation of youth is not only evident within Christian ministry, but also in many areas of contemporary society. Community-based youth clubs, restaurants with play areas for children, shopping malls with children's entertainment areas, and satellite or cable television with programming aimed specifically at different age groups are examples of industries and institutions creating the divide between young and old. Fashion, entertainment, musical tastes, computers, magazines and a variety of other media and electronic equipment are also being specifically targeted at different age groups. In fact, it has got to the point where young people feel obliged to dislike anything their parents like. This reaction against parents is surely part of what it means to grow up, but it seems that in the last fifty years, this reaction has grown to new levels. The fact that most adults have not experienced anything other than this "generation gap" leads us all to believe that it is normal, acceptable and that nothing can be done about it.

In order to respond to this situation, the current trend in Christian ministry and community-based development work is to talk less of youth ministry and more about family ministry. Because of this, the focus is not exclusively on youth anymore, but more on families, attempting to take into account the context within which a young person spends a majority of their time. Simply shifting focus from youth to youth-in-family is not, however, a long-term solution to the problems that have been created by the atomisation of church and society along age-related lines. Additionally, in a world where families themselves are being split apart, if the church focuses almost exclusively on "families", they may miss the opportunity to minister into the hurt and brokenness of what is left after families are split apart. For example, in a Johannesburg church, a survey of the church members' family structures was undertaken, and it was discovered that single parent families accounted for less than 2% of all church families (Church Growth Committee, Honeyridge Baptist Church, 1997). While the majority of leaders reflected on this statistic with something akin to pride in the fact that the "family focus" of the church was "working", a few leaders expressed the concern that possibly the statistic was telling them that the church was not accessible to people who did not have the "father, mother, 2.4 kids" stereotypical family. The fact that single parent households accounted for more than 25% of all families in the community seemed to indicate that this latter view was more accurate. Yet, no adequate response to this fact was given by the church leadership.

Churches are not the only institutions that are battling with new definitions of "family" and "youth" or are finding it increasingly difficult to relate to young people. Within schools, seasoned teachers, who for years and even decades have been teaching with great success, passion and personal fulfillment have recently found that nothing is working for them. They don't seem to be able to connect with this new breed of young person. Being involved in consulting to schools, the author of this study has found that all over the

country, in White, Black, Indian, Coloured, and all other communities, the teachers are saying the same thing: "its not working any more!". In business, there is a whole new breed of employees joining companies. The middle-aged executives and supervisors who have to manage these new young employees are pulling their hair out in frustration and exasperation. The young people are perceived as arrogant, pushy, demanding and seem totally oblivious of the etiquette of business. In particular, they have no concept of "paying your dues" or "climbing the ladder" – they seem to want to start at the top and work up from there. Many well established brands are also finding it harder and harder to compete in this emerging market known as young people. Flashy, viby advertising just doesn't seem to be getting through. And the market research results are confusing – there don't seem to be trends, let alone "rules" that can be applied to today's young people. Parents, too, are finding it increasingly difficult to know how to respond. Instinctively they know that they are going to battle to help their children grow up and be ready for this new world – which school to choose?, which course of study to pursue?, which career options to make available? – all these are questions many parents don't even know how to start asking, let alone providing the answers for their children.

It is a well established fact that today's youth are in crisis. Not so much a teenage "angst" so often portrayed in the popular movies and "rag mags", but rather a deep-rooted, low-level anxiety that arises from not having any roadmaps on which to plot the route of life. Instinctively, young people are aware that their elders know less about the world in which they live than they themselves do, and so they cannot turn to their elders for help. If not, then to whom can they go? To whom can they turn to provide the "rules" for life – to show them how it all works, and to answer the questions about why it works that way? Human beings are essentially spiritual beings, instinctively knowing that there are some answers that must be found in a realm beyond the material world. Throughout history, religions have attempted to give frameworks for this search for the supernatural. Today, more than ever, young people see the spiritual side of life as their only hope. They are growing up in a spiritual and moral vacuum, left to drift perilously without a compass by elders whose maps do not include the world in which we are currently sailing. This provides the Christian church with a wonderful opportunity, since we believe that we have the map and know "The Way" (cf. John 14:6, Acts 24:14). But in order to communicate this, we must understand today's young people, and be able to "translate" our map into their language. The author of this study attempted to explain this in an Honours thesis, *A Model and Methods for Reaching Generation X from the Context of a Local Church* (Codrington 1998). That thesis showed that the crisis facing the world's youth is a crisis within church youth ministry as well. In a recent profile census of South African youth and families (Price and Codrington 1998), Bill Price and Associates found that there was no significant difference between churched and unchurched young people in terms of

morality, attitudes and the ability to distinguish right from wrong. This echoes similar research done by Josh McDowell in America, and documented in his excellent book, *Right from Wrong* (1994). There can obviously be much debate as to what has gone wrong.

It is the argument of this dissertation that it is the responsibility of preceding generations to ensure that the Gospel, as well as morality and a love for God, is passed down to the successive generations. This responsibility is made clear in the Bible as early as Deut. 6. Yet, throughout Scripture, we see the older generations renegeing on their responsibility, with dire consequences. The most obvious example is the generations of Joshua and the conquest (cf. Josh. 24:31 – those who “served the LORD” and “experienced” Him for themselves), followed by those who survived them and settled in the land (cf. Judg. 2:7 – those who also “served the LORD” but had only “seen” what He had done in their parents’ lives). These two generations were followed by those “who neither knew the Lord, nor what He had done for Israel” (Judg. 2:10). Whose fault was it that the younger generation did not know about what God had done for Israel? It was the adults’ fault, of course. Please note that by saying this, this study is not advocating a form of popular psychology that blames all sin and failure on a lack of decent parenting. Rather, it is concerned that the Bible does not so much lament the sinful *deeds* of this wayward generation, but rather the lack of knowledge of God. The responsibility for this lack of knowledge must rest with the preceding generation, who had a responsibility, commanded by God, to “teach these things to your children” (Deut. 6:7ff.).

It is the contention of this study that we are living in a similar time at the end of the twentieth century. For many reasons, and in many different ways, the older generations of parents and grandparents, have not taken their responsibility towards the younger generations seriously enough. This can be seen in parenting styles, church ministry and structures and even in community organisations and the schooling system. If today’s young people are “lost” it may not be entirely because they have wandered off as “prodigals” - it may be because they were “abandoned” as babies.

This concern for young people and the state of the church is not simply a local concern, in South Africa, but is evident internationally. The debate about generation gaps and generational responsibilities should therefore be undertaken within the context of a worldwide dialogue regarding youth ministry (cf. Dunn and Senter 1997). The focus of this debate internationally has been towards the role of family ministry in church life, as well as the place of youth church and the separating of youth into completely separate and often independent ministry structures. The core of concern rests in the fact that most evangelical churches are failing to successfully transfer young people from these youth ministries into adult ministry. There are a variety of reasons for this, including lack of

spiritual maturity in youth, too large a gap in style between youth and adult ministries, lack of commitment by adults to adapt to new generations of young adults, lack of desire to leave comfort zones by young and old, lack of support of youth ministry structures by the church, and many other similar complaints.

At the heart of the trouble is a series of misunderstandings between young and old, based on the fact that the world in which young and old are growing up is encountered in fundamentally different ways, with different sets of assumptions and attitudes. So much has changed over the last twenty years in particular that this divide is perceived as almost insurmountable. Many organisations have tried to remove the divide and failed – and have therefore decided not to bother to continue trying. However, organisations should accept the divide, understand it as a basis for changing attitudes towards it, and then work on ways of dealing with it that will be beneficial to young and old alike. This does not mean that organisations should simply aim to do better what they are already doing. It does not mean that simply improving on current programs is going to help. In fact, “one of the realities of the emerging twenty-first century is that yesterday’s successes are no guarantee of tomorrow’s survival” (Anderson 1992:17).

Rather, it is an acceptance of the fact that there is a deep divide between the life experience of today’s middle-aged and older adults, and the world in which today’s young people are living. The world of today “is caught in the crack between what was and what is emerging. This crack began opening in 1960 and will close sometime around the year 2014. Trusted values held for centuries are falling into this crack, never to be seen again. Ideas and methodologies that once worked no longer achieve the desired results. This crack in our history is so enormous that it is causing a metamorphosis in every area of life.... Today, the fastest way to fail is to improve on yesterday’s successes” (Easum 1993:23).

2 Identification of the Problem

It is at this point that concern for their generation has proved to be problematic for today’s youth. Their concern, when expressed to the older generations, has been met, at best, with blank stares from the older generations, and at worst with outright rage and defensive counter-attacks, often *ad hominem* in nature. Most adults today see the future as simply an extension of the past. They view the current maladjustment of youth and adolescent rebellion as nothing more than an extreme form of the generation gap they know so well from their own youth, and not for what it really is: the repudiation of the present and the past by the dominant youth culture in virtually all societies and cultures around the world.

Theorists who emphasize the parallels between past and present in their interpretations of the generation gap ignore the irreversibility of the changes that have taken place since the beginning of the industrial revolution. This is especially striking in their handling of modern technological development, which they treat as comparable in its effects to the changes that occurred as one civilisation in the past took over from another such techniques as agriculture, script, navigation, or the organization of labour and law.

Mead 1970:52

The above quotation, by Mead, was written before the pervasive World Wide Web portion of the Internet was birthed in the early 1990s. Her words have an even more profound ring now that the Internet has begun to revolutionise the way we live our lives. The Internet revolution is no less profound a revolution than the changes in society and culture that must have occurred with the invention of the wheel and of writing. Both of these inventions fuelled numerous and sweeping changes, including the ability for more information to be more accurately transferred, quicker and easier to more people at less cost. In recorded history (a phrase only made possible by the invention of writing), the printing press has been the only other invention to have an equally profound impact on society. Many historians, including church scholars, would agree that the printing press was one of the major catalysts of not only the Reformation, but also the entire Enlightenment. The printing press allowed more information to be more accurately transferred, quicker and easier to more people at less cost. Thus, these three inventions each changed the world profoundly. Taken together, their effect is incalculable.

And today, the Internet allows for more information to be more accurately transferred, quicker and easier to more people at less cost. In relation to the previous inventions that enhanced these factors, the Internet's potential is vastly superior. The relative cost is miniscule, the effort incomparably small and the accessibility by people universal. Of course, the initial equipment costs are still high, and electricity and phone lines are required. Even so, these costs are small compared to other literacy costs, and computer facilities can be shared by communities. The Internet will change life more than any other invention ever has. And most of the generations alive today will live to see the effects of this change – we already are. We began to see the forewarnings of the change in the massive social upheavals of the 1950s and 60s, and the rise of new methods of thinking and interacting in the last two decades in particular. We are seeing the immediate effects at the close of the second millennium. We can only gasp at the potential that may be exploited within our own lifetimes. Although, as a currently qualifying Microsoft Certified Solution Developer (MCSD), and qualified Financial Accountant and Business Consultant, the field of computer communication and development, and its economic effects, is more than a hobby for the author, the concern of this work is not so much the awesome changes

themselves, but rather it is concerned with the societal impact of the drastic changes of the last 50 years and the ways in which young and old interact in this unprecedented milieu.

Today, suddenly, because all the people of the world are part of one electronically based, intercommunicating network [NOTE: Mead was writing *before* e-mail and the Internet] young people everywhere share a kind of experience that none of the elders ever have had or will have. Conversely, the older generation will never see repeated in the lives of young people their own unprecedented experience of sequentially emerging change. This break between generations is wholly new: it is planetary and universal

Mead 1970:50

Today's young people are like the first generation born in a new country. They have no memories of the "old" country and have no means by which to understand their parents' stories about the past. As the children of settlers in a new land have no access to the memories which still move their parents to tears, the young today do not share their parents' responses to events and memories that moved them in the past. As they watch their elders, the youth of today get the feeling that they are fumbling, that they are managing clumsily and most often unsuccessfully in an attempt to deal with the tasks and issues forced on them by the new conditions. The youth of today see that their elders using inappropriate means, with poor performance and limited results, and very uncertain effects. "The young do not know what must be done, but they feel that there must be a better way" (Mead 1970:60).

This dissertation is not so much about the "better way", rather it is concerned with the transitional age. This dissertation will show that for the next three or four decades, we will be living in a "time between times", as we transition from a world our parents knew and took for granted as "normal", to a wholly new world, as yet unknown and only vaguely conceived in the minds of the most forward and bravest of thinkers. We will see that the best way to not only survive this transition, but also to thrive in it is to get the experience and wisdom of the old combining with the creativity and adventure of the young, as we together chart a course and draw the maps of this new world. The old cannot afford to fortress themselves in the safety of the "known". The young cannot abandon the fort completely and head out unarmed and unprotected into the "unknown". Somewhere in between lies the balance.

"The missing link is one that is virtually non-existent in the youth culture of today, including church youth ministries: the link of generations" (Haymond 1998:4). Youth ministry should form an integral part of the community of faith which is the church and should be holistically planned. Although this dissertation is being done in fulfillment of the requirements of a Youth Work subject, the contents should not be separated off into "youth ministry", but should be seen as a challenge to the entire church. The problem of

youth not being integrated into the church is the whole church's problem. In fact, the problem could equally be identified as the church not being integrated into the world in which young people live. The solution for this transitional age (which will form the basis of any long-term solution for the new age to come) is to return to the Biblical mandate of multi-generational interaction.

The central focus of this dissertation is therefore to answer one profound question: What is the generation gap and how must the church practically and theologically respond to the challenge this gap presents it at the start of the third millennium?

3 A Study within the Field of Practical Theological

Theology is derived from the Greek word, *theologia*, a compound of two words meaning the discussion of or the account of the gods or God (cf. Wright 1988:680). Largely through the influence of the early scholastic writers, theology has become a field of study, even a disciplined science. Of course, we cannot study God directly or adequately discuss God in human language. Thus, as Heyns and Pieterse point out, theology is really the "scientific study of people's faith in and their religious statements about God" (1990:3). The field of theology is divided into a number of major disciplines, such as Biblical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, pastoral theology and practical theology, to name a few. The discipline of Practical Theology specifically refers to that field of theology which is concerned with the "practice of ministry" (Tidball 1988:525), or more specifically with "people's religious actions" (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:6). "Practical theology is that branch of theology that considers those actions designed to ensure that God's word reaches people and is embodied in their lives. Its object is people's religious actions. Thus it deals with questions concerning preaching, public worship, instruction and catechesis, pastoral care and ministering to people" (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:1).

Traditionally, practical theology has been linked closely, if not exclusively, with the role of the ordained minister. In recent times, however, as Tidball (1988:525) points out, the scope of this field of study has extended to concern the ministry of the whole church. Thus, it has an increasing focus on praxis, or action. However, it is evident that orthodoxy and theology cannot be separated from praxis – they are inextricably linked. Therefore, practical theology must stress both aspects of the title: practical, with an emphasis on action and ministry, and theology, with an emphasis on understanding and doctrine. Because of this dual emphasis, practical theology could be viewed as being at the heart of the local church's expression. Indeed, Tidball states that "practical theology studies the means by which the community of faith preserves and protects its identity" (1995:42), and

entails a “critical dialogue between theology and praxis. This new-style practical theology is concerned with the way in which the faith of the church works out in practice in the world and raises questions about what it sees, addressing them back to theology” (1995:42).

The focus of this study is the “generation gap” that exists between young and old in the world today. God’s plan for His Word is that it will be passed on from “generation to generation” (a phrase used 10 times in Scripture: Exo. 3:15, 17:16; Ps. 79:13; Isa. 34:10, 17; Jer. 50:39; Lam. 5:19; Dan. 4:3, 34; Luke 1:15; also, Ps. 145:4). This injunction was given in the preamble to the Law which follows immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5). In Deut. 6:4, we find the “Shama Israel” – the call to worship still used by Jews today, “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One”. After entreating the listeners to impress the laws on their own hearts, the very next command is to “impress these things on your children” (Deut. 5:7). The intent is not simply a theological discourse or classroom setting, as the verse goes on to give the context for such teaching: “Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deut. 5:7-9, NIV). The problem is that in today’s world there seems to be very little dialogue and even less understanding between the generations. The task of passing on God’s decrees from one generation to the next is severely hampered, if not completely ignored. If this continues, we will see a repeat of the sad indictment on Judges 2:10, which highlights the failure of the older generations to tell their children of all that God had done for Israel. In many parts of Europe, the results are already devastating to see, with empty churches and lost youth. Something must be done. And more than simple theological analysis of the sinfulness of humankind is required.

This is the reason that the practical theology field of study was selected. The author of this study is professionally involved in business consulting and training, forecasting and consulting to schools and churches. It has already been pointed out that the issues addressed in this dissertation affect businesses, schools, families, community development agencies and by implication government as well. This work has resulted in a view that is much broader than simply the local church context. Thus, it is no obvious thing that this work should be done within a practical theological framework. Yet, as a Christian minister, the author is wholly committed to the efficacy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to speak not only into the religious affairs of society, but also in its power to transform and transcend society. In order for society to adequately chart these tricky, transitional decades, one sure hope is to do so with the power of the Christian Gospel as a rudder and compass. This is true in all areas of the transition – not only in the religious spheres of life.

Having said this, there is a real danger that the church has so profoundly anchored itself to the sinking ship of scientific modernism, that it knows no other way of interacting with the world or of responding to it. This has seen the church retreat into a cocoon of defensiveness and reaction, which is not only unhealthy, but has also caused it to lose all credibility with a world plunging headlong down the rapids of change. Where scientific modernism is floundering, so the church is floundering too, and the waters are threatening to engulf it in the process. In their heart of hearts, pastors and church members alike know that things are no longer working. In the quiet moments when they can be completely honest with themselves, today's adults do grudgingly and fearfully admit that something is not quite right. Yet, most, if not all, have no idea what has gone wrong. And they have no idea where to start in finding the solution.

Practical theology's "focus is particularly on those religious actions designed to mediate God's coming to humankind – in other words, actions that enable people to hear the gospel properly and to understand, accept and actualise it in their lives" (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:10). This is the intent of this study. This study does not profess to have all these answers, nor even to have a complete diagnosis of the problem. This is consistent with the nature of a practical theological study: "Unlike church workers, [practical theologians] are not themselves practitioners but are engaged in reflection on praxis" (Heyns and Pieterse 1990:21). Yet, the praxis proposed by the practical theologian must always be rooted and grounded in reality, tested in practice and refined by actual use. One thing this study holds fast to is that God has chosen the local church as His vehicle for bringing His Good News to the world and to future generations. Therefore, the issue of how the church passes on the truth from one generation to the next and how these generations interact with each other with the context of the local church is an absolutely vital study within the field of practical theology. As much as we may wish to give up on the church due to its inadequacies, and the pain and hurt it has already inflicted on many of today's young people, we cannot give up! We are compelled to go "back to basics" in an attempt to understand how the changeless, matchless Yahweh, the eternal I AM, can steer us through the ever-changing, shifting waves of the transitional age in which we find ourselves. And hopefully, through this work, ongoing interaction and refining, and through works of a similar nature, the young, whose lives stretch mainly before them, can interact for mutual benefit with the old, whose lives mainly lie behind them, to provide some navigational tools for the church in the journey that will take at least the next three or four decades to complete.

This study will look at the effect of the generation gap on church ministry, and the implications for the spreading of God's Word to the next generations. With this focus, there seems no better place for this study than in the field of practical theology. The

church stands at a point of decision: to change, in the tradition of the Reformer's *semper reformandum*, or to stagnate and continue the generally downward trends in all areas of church analysis. The insights that businesses have gained by facing the same choice in the past two decades will be brought to bear. The insights gained by progressive schools which have already begun to face the same choice in past five or so years will be taken into account. We would be foolish to ignore the path these institutions have already blazed for us. But ultimately, it is the focus of the local church to which this dissertation will return again and again in an attempt to discern God's heart for His body, His bride, His family and His temple. In doing such a study, the practical theology, as a theological science, can do no other than investigate these factors within theoretical frameworks, but with the goal of using them to improve praxis. The underlying foundation of this study is the theological quest to discover what God is calling His church to. Since this calling is focused on the future, a natural bias is formed towards youth ministry. Framed in terms of practical theology, it is the unfolding of how the church should minister within the current world milieu at the beginning of the third millennium.

4 Hypothesis

This dissertation takes as its basic hypothesis that one of the major reasons that youth work is currently not working, whether that work with young people occurs in schools, families, businesses or churches, is that the adults involved in leading and directing young people have a fundamentally different worldview than the young people themselves. The "gap" that this produces is the cause of much tension and frustration for young and old alike. In churches, in particular, the "gap" is a major contributing factor to the alienation of youth ministries, and causes young people to lose faith in their elders' ability to guide them into the future. For many young people, the easy solution to this problem is to equate the church with the attitude of the adults. When they do this, they often conclude that church is out-dated, irrelevant and "not for us", and leave. When they do this, they do not only leave the institutionalised church, but very often also abandon their Christian faith, judging it to be equally irrelevant.

The underlying assumption in this dissertation is that young people will enter into the adult world more equipped for that world if they have significant involvement with adults who understand the world as it *currently* is, as opposed to the world as it *was* when they were young. This means that adults must recognise the tremendous changes that have taken place since they were young, and be prepared to adjust their value systems accordingly. Adults will be able to make this mental adjustment if they are prepared to view their world in a complete context, rather than in atomised parts. Once the focus has been shifted from

personal comfort to generational responsibility, true multi-generational interaction can occur, where everyone, from the youngest to the oldest, gains some benefit. When adults show themselves capable of doing this, they will win back the respect of the young. This, in turn, will mean that today's youth, who are desperately longing for someone to show them the way forward, will actually value the input of significant adults into their lives. Without such interaction between the generations, families, schools, businesses and churches will not be able to survive for very long in the third millennium. If this demise is not by the simple aging, and literal dying, of their current constituency, then it will be by a more conscious effort of young people to dismantle the organisation. Either way, there is no real option for organisations of all types – we must involve young and old alike in dynamic partnership.

5 Research Methodology

The primary research methodology employed for this dissertation was a qualitative study. Readings were taken from literature in many diverse fields, including the fields of management development, education, history, economics, future studies, generational theory, social development, family, systems theory, sociology, anthropology, theology and youth work. The vast scope of reading was completed in order to compare different theories of generational development and interaction. The purpose of this approach was to synthesize the various fields of study and develop a new approach that is particularly applicable to local churches. In addition, the author drew on a number of years of experience as a management consultant in the fields of business, development, education and religious organisations, as well as current interaction with individuals in South Africa and on the Internet.

Although the central issue of this dissertation has implications for people of all ages in the church, this dissertation will focus primarily on the effects and implications for youth ministry. Throughout the last four decades in particular, there has been tremendous development in research and programs for the people at the “edges” of the human age spectrum, i.e. the young and the old. These two age categories have accounted for more and more of the overall population. In the South African Census 96, those under age 20 accounted for 44%, and those over 60 for 7% of the population – both of these percentages are expected to grow considerably in the next few years. Gerontologists have focused on the elderly, and youth specialists on the young. But these two groups have hardly ever worked together. There is certainly a need for this to be done, but the content of this dissertation does not allow scope for such a broad investigation. This opens this work up to a criticism most clearly expressed by Margaret Mead: “In most discussions of the

generation gap, the alienation of the young is emphasized, while the alienation of their elders may be wholly overlooked. What the commentators forget is that true communication is a dialogue and that both parties to the dialogue lack a vocabulary" (1970:62).

While this may be true, the aim of this study is to assist older generations to gain valuable insights into the generation gap by understanding it from the perspective of young eyes. In addition, although the generation gap is a phenomenon equally important to both young and old, it is the old who are currently incumbent authorities, who hold in their power the ability to promote or to hinder change. Although true multi-generational ministry involves people of all ages from all generations, many older people are well represented in different levels of church and organisational governance, and are prohibiting the youth from growing into the new world in which we live. By focussing on framing the situation primarily from the perspective of youth, it is hoped that adults will understand their role in the current world.

Once the fact of a deep, new, unprecedented world-wide generation gap is firmly established, in the minds of both the young and the old, communication can be established again. But as long as any adult thinks that he, like the parents and teachers of old, can become introspective, invoke his own youth to understand the youth before him, then he is lost. But this is what most elders are still doing.... In the deepest sense, now as in the past, the elders are still in control. And partly because they are in control, they do not realize that the conditions for beginning a new dialogue with the young do not yet exist.

Mead 1970:63

Thus, this dissertation needs to focus specifically on the involvement of youth in multi-generational ministries, and it is from the perspective of youth that it is written. Note that by "youth", this dissertation refers to children, teens and young adults - roughly those aged 0 to 30 years old. The approach to this subject has been limited by the lack of current research and similar investigative work. It has also been limited by the fact that most churches are unaware of the issues raised in this dissertation, and therefore there are very few adequate case studies available. "The primary evidence that our present situation is unique, without any parallel in the past, is that the generation gap is world wide.... Concentration on particularities can only hinder the search for an explanatory principle. Instead, it is necessary to strip the occurrences in each country of their superficial, national, and immediately temporal aspects" (Mead 1970:54). With this in mind, this study aims to complete a thorough theoretical overview of the subject, supplemented by ongoing involvement in a wide variety of organisations through the author's professional experience in the role of consultant to businesses, schools and churches. No specific case studies will be reported on, although experience gained through personal interaction with

organisations, as well as numerous Internet-based interactions on a global scale, will inform and direct the study and its application.

6 Outline of Study

This dissertation is divided into four parts.

Chapter 2 looks into the causes of age-related division between people at the end of the twentieth century. By understanding the influences that were brought to bear on people, especially in their childhood years, one can make generalised statements about their value systems: that part of a human being which distinguishes between good and bad, right and wrong, normal and weird. These influences come in a predictable cycle, producing a predictable series of generational types. The chapter ends by looking at Biblical examples of the cycle of four generational types.

Chapter 3 continues the theme of chapter 1, by looking at other factors causing division between old and young at the end of the twentieth century. The argument is that there are massive sociological shifts occurring, which are radically altering the very state of the world. These changing foundations have fundamentally altered the world. The dividing line occurs during the late 1950s and 1960s. Anyway born and raised before then has lived in the "old world". Anyone born and raised during that time lives a life of permanent transition. Anyone born after that time lives in the "new world". The argument is that these additional factors have exacerbated the effects of the generation gap. Because we know of nothing else, they have also established the generation gap as a permanent feature of the world, whereas, in fact, we argue that this is not necessarily so.

Chapter 4 begins to look at solutions to the generation gap, realising that many of these solutions are temporary measures, aimed at dealing with a transitioning world. The solutions offered are not programs, nor are they "quick fixes". In fact, all the solutions offered in chapter 3 require systemic changes. This chapter argues not only that change is needed, and drastic change at that, but also that such change must be adult-initiated.

Finally, chapter 5 takes a very practical look at solutions to multi-generational issues, by providing some suggestions as to multi-generational interaction, multi-generational activities and ministries, and finally, some suggested means of changing the current central focus of most church's ministries, the Sunday service, to be multi-generational.

Generation Gaps as a Cause of Conflict at the end of the Twentieth Century

*“Among democratic nations each generation is a new people.”
-Alexis de Tocqueville, Among Democratic Nations (1835).*

1 Inter-Cultural Tensions

Every human being is an individual, with a unique set of attitudes, culture, opinions and personality. All of these combine to give each of us a reasonably unique view of events, and shapes the individual's actions and reactions in every circumstance. This set of deep-rooted methods of processing the data from the world external to the individual is known as the individual's "worldview". More and more, sociologists are beginning to define worldviews and are able to identify the distinguishing features of differing worldviews (cf. in relation to generational interaction, especially Margaret Mead 1970, and Lingenfelter 1998:15f). A person's worldview forms part of what would be called in Christian ministry, the conscience. It plays a vital role in determining what the individual perceives to be right and wrong, good and bad, normal and weird in the world the individual encounters. The worldview is the basis on which we formulate "first impressions" - those sub-conscious, instinctive reactions to meeting people or encountering new situations.

It is not difficult to understand, then, how when two or more of these worldviews meet, there is the potential for misunderstanding, which can (and often does) escalate quickly to conflict. Racial and cultural conflict has been a constant feature of the twentieth century, from the Anglo-Boer South African war at the start of the century, through the Holocaust of World War II, the American civil rights movement, apartheid in South Africa, to the very recent ethnic cleansing wars in Europe and Africa. Worldviews are the basis of what we call "culture", and when worldviews collide, there is conflict.

Worldviews are affected by a multiplicity of factors that make generalisations difficult. It is possible, however, to broadly categorise these factors and detail the effects, in general terms. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to do so in anything but the broadest possible terms. The most important early factor is family. Whatever the family views as

normal, right and good will be a very strong influence on the individual as he/she grows up.

It is very difficult to escape the family influence, even if that influence is almost totally bad the rest of life will very often be lived in rejection of and defiance and sadly, sometimes compliance, to that family situation.

The second strong influence as a young person grows up is the friends they have, and to a lesser extent, other significant peers. Often the teenage years are a time to “test” the worldview received from the family (cf. Olson 1984:27ff., DeMoss 1997:29ff.). This testing is often done in the context of a peer group. Other significant influences in the modern world include school, where young people spend the majority of their formative years, the textbooks that are used in schools -Massey (1976) gives an example of this by citing the early 1970s, successful court case against the California School Board which enabled the banning of the “chauvinistic” *Dick, Jane and Spot* reading books for first level readers - religion or even a rejection of religion which is still a religious choice, nuclear power, politics, the media, television and the entertainment industry, technology, especially telecommunications, and computers. All these things help to fashion our view of the world, and especially our view of what is “normal” in the world.

Even though we are all individuals, and have unique influences on our developing value systems as we grow up, we all still have grown up in the context of the world of the 20th century. In this century, like never before, global forces have been at work. Such is the extent of these global forces that many people throughout the world have had similar experiences or have had to face similar situations at the same time. Because of this, it is possible to identify moments in the history of this century in different countries and cultures, where similar defining forces were brought to bear on families, communities and societies. We are also able to generalise to a certain extent with regard to the possible influence this may have had on the generation of young people growing up at the time.

It is thus possible to explain why many people who are similarly aged, and have been exposed to similar historical and cultural pressures, view the world in similar ways. Comparing the predicted influence with the actual way in which the older living generations have actually grown up serves to verify that these generalisations ring true, and provide some confidence levels in predicting the likely worldview of the currently emerging younger generations.

Strauss and Howe (1991) refer to the similarity in worldviews of those similarly aged as a “cohort generation” effect. A cohort generation is a group of similarly aged people that has similarities in attitude and worldview, mainly due to shared life experiences at

comparable ages. Groups of people born within a few years of each other will experience defining events at similar ages. Of course, in the modern world of this century, as the world has grown progressively “smaller”, events on one side of the world have been experienced globally, thus making geographic location an increasingly irrelevant factor in defining a cohort generation. In fact, Sine (1999:49) goes so far as to say that the single biggest factor in the modern world is globalisation.

The greatest effect of these defining historical moments will be seen in the young people who experience them. Young people are much more impressionable than adults, and are obviously affected by defining moments in different ways to their parents and to their grandparents. In addition, certain forms of child care become fashionable at different times, and this has an effect on entire generations. Possibly the greatest single example of this was the early years of the American Boomer generation (1943-1964), following the release on July 14, 1946, of Dr. Benjamin Spock’s book **The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care**. Dr. Spock’s book is America’s second best-selling book after the Bible, and had a huge impact on how parents raised their children. However, there has been a recent backlash against what many perceive to be a too lenient approach to parenting, and most parents today (late Boomers and early Gen Xers) are taking a much more proactive approach to parenting.

History creates generations, and generations create history. The cycle draws forward energy from each generation’s need to redefine the social role of each new phase of life it enters. And it draws circular energy from each generation’s tendency to fill perceived gaps and to correct (indeed, overcorrect) the excesses of its elders. The powerful nurturing and ‘shadow’ relationships between two-apart generations are especially important. The alternation between underprotection and overprotection of children is also key.

Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ

Although Strauss and Howe are probably the best known recent exponents of generational theory, this is by no means a new field of study. In modern times, “this quest occupied a succession of nineteenth century European philosophers: Auguste Comte, Maximilien Littré, John Stuart Mill, Gustav Rümelin, Ottokar Lorenz, Wilhelm Dilthey and Emile Durkheim. These philosophers were confronted with the task of determining to what generation they themselves belonged.... The primary European contributors to generation theory in the twentieth century have been José Ortega y Gasset, Karl Mannheim, Julius Peterson, Willhelm Pinder and Julian Mariás” (Zimmerman 1995:43). But the work on generation theory goes back even further than this. Some would argue that the Bible first deals with generation theory in the family history of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph (see 3. below). A fourteenth century Bedouin, Ibn Khaldun, was the first philosopher to describe a four-generation cycle in detail (Mariás 1970:198-207). Strauss and Howe

(1997:53ff.) cite the works of Greek historian, Cicero, Greek writers, Heraclitus and Homer, Chinese philosopher, Lin Yü-t'ang, and the writers of the Old Testament Pentateuch, amongst others to show that this cyclical nature of history and generational development has not just been recently noticed and hyped.

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into the detailed sociological and anthropological background to this approach to generational studies. The reader is directed to the theoretical works of Neil Howe and William Strauss, as well as the practical works of Margaret Mead. The former authors have jointly written a number of works dealing with "the history of America's future" and are continuing their work in an international setting of a web-based discussion forum (<http://www.fourthturning.com>). Strauss and Howe (1991), broke new ground with their book, **Generations: The History of America's Future**, by suggesting that American history can be viewed through the framework of a repeating cycle of attitudes and approaches to life. The cycle, as they proposed, consists of four parts, each roughly twenty years in duration. They traced this cycle from the first American settlers from Europe to the present day, and then went further to make predictions for the future, right up to 2069.

Margaret Mead, on the other hand, was an anthropologist, explorer and teacher, who spent most of her life studying and documenting the tribes of New Guinea. She was fascinated to see these tribes in their ancient forms, and equally amazed to see the transformation of these tribes as they came into contact with "civilisation" for the first time. She was able to watch, over the course of nearly 5 decades of direct involvement, as these tribes changed rapidly through many different stages of development that other nations had taken a few centuries to do. Her work is widely regarded as foundational to modern theories of social development and inter-generational interaction (cf. especially **Culture and Commitment: A Study of the Generation Gap**, 1970, which was based on a series of lectures she completed in 1969).

Further detail on the generational theory can also be found in the current author's Honours thesis, **A Model and Methods for Reaching Generation X from the Context of a Local Church** (1998).

These and other authors have identified certain key defining generationally-linked trends in worldview and value system development. This chapter will consider all those people born after 1920, and briefly identify general characteristics definitive of each generation. Since most of the work on generational theory has been done in America, this chapter does have an American slant to it. However, there are many other researchers doing work in other countries around the world that is demonstrating that the generational theory is indeed

universal, although only now beginning to converge, due to the global culture created by international media.

While America offers the world's best example of cyclical history, other modern societies have beaten to similar rhythms - and since World War II, these rhythms are drawing closer together. Generational archetypes similar to America's can be found, in roughly the same age brackets in Canada and Australia, throughout western Europe, Russia, Israel, and China.

Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ

This chapter will attempt to look at the generational theory through South African eyes in particular. This may be useful to non-South Africans, as it will provide an insight into a complex country full of cultural diversity – which we will see in the next chapter is at the heart of the generation gap.

2 Living Generations

Having seen the theoretical basis for the problem of generation gaps, we must now turn to look at each of the generations still alive at the end of the twentieth century, to determine whether, in fact, generation and cultural gaps have occurred. If so, we need to discover the causes for these gaps in order to create solutions. By understanding the cultural influences and forces that have been brought to bear on each of the living generations, especially those during their early, formative years, when their value systems were being shaped, we can begin to understand what has made people of different generations develop such different worldviews. We can also understand the nature of the clashes between these worldviews, or “cultures”, and begin to look for solutions. Much of what follows is based on the first chapter of **A Model and Methods for Reaching Generation X from the Context of a Local Church** (Codrington 1998).

2.1 The “GI” Generation

In America, these are the people born in 1901 - 1924 (Strauss and Howe, 1991:261). In South Africa, we find similar characteristics in those people born from 1910 - 1930. They are born and experience their early years during an “unraveling” period, as society slowly begins to disintegrate and a crisis looms. This is very similar to conditions we find pervasive at the end of the twentieth century – a fact that Strauss and Howe anticipate in their cyclical approach to generational theory. It means that today's children, the Millennial Generation (see below) are very similar to the GIs. The GI's are a civic minded generation, born during a time in society when people are inner-focussed. Their parents have begun to see the error of leaving children to their own devices, and so they are raised as increasingly protected youth. Despairing of the “lost” generation that preceded the GIs,

society worked hard to ensure that this generation of youth grew up clever and cooperative. The major shaping event during their youth was World War I and its after-effects.

The cut-off birth date for this generation in America is 1924. This was at the height of the "roaring twenties" economic boom in America. "Following a postwar depression in 1920-21, the economy bounced back with a vengeance, growing a torrid 30% in the next two years. And money succeeded in holding its purchasing power as inflation averaged a less than 1% in the decade. The boom filled federal coffers. The 1920s was the last decade in this century when the federal budget ran a surplus every year. The national debt shrank from \$24 billion to \$16 billion. Taxes were reduced" (cf. TIME, July 28, 1997). Also in 1924: in Russia, Lenin died; in the United Kingdom: BBC Radio began public broadcasts; and in South Africa: Hertzog's Nationalist Party was elected to government. In South Africa, the events that indicated a shift in society began with the election of Jan Smuts in 1919, and culminated in the National-Labour Party alliance winning the general election in 1924, with segregation as a major platform. The 1920s and 30s were characterised by widespread riots and unrest, within Black townships, as they protested the Laws being passed by the Union government, and also by poor white workers. These workers were almost all Afrikaans speaking.

The title, "G.I." was used by Strauss and Howe (1991:264f.) because it indicates that the "general issue" or "government issue" clothes that became synonymous with the soldiers of both World Wars. It also refers to their attitude of community and regularity. They enjoy standardization and homogeneity.

In youth, they were the first "teenagers". In fact, the term was coined for them. They were also the first boy scouts (1910) and girl guides (1912), and the beneficiaries of new playgrounds, processed "protective" foods, vitamins, and child-labor restrictions. "By 1914 almost every state in the nation had laws prohibiting the employment of youth below a certain age, usually fourteen. The removal of teenagers from the main labour force was a clear sign of their special estate" (Elkind 1984:20). Public schooling saw significant improvements, and for the first time in American history more teenagers were in school than out of it. The early years of this century were also the high point of "private", missions schooling in South Africa. The ethos, which was encouraged at school, and in literature, such as *Pollyanna* and *Little Orphan Annie*, was that good kids "work hard, play by the rules, and everybody gets rewarded" (Strauss and Howe 1991:270). They also were drawn into greater standardisation than previous generations by listening to the same radio shows (started 1916 in USA), watching the same movies - "talking movies" in 1904, and television in 1928 - and attending the same sporting events at stadia like the Rose Bowl which was opened in 1923.

As discussed above, the formative influences experienced during youth often have the greatest effect on a generation's characteristics as it grows up. Today, we can still see the effects of these things. This is a generation that believes in hard work. They believe that the harder they work, the more they will be rewarded – and great examples of people from the generation, like Nelson Mandela and Billy Graham, only go to prove their point. The GIs formed the manpower component of the engine that beat the combined crisis of World War II and the Great Depression. It was in doing so that they continued to learn to work and function as a unit and team, and reiterated by experience their belief that working together achieves the best results for everyone. This “corporateness” is a defining characteristic of this generation. They believe that it is “good” and “normal” for people to all agree, all work the same and even all look the same. This generation puts on suit and tie for everything - even to go down to the local corner shop to buy the Saturday paper. As leaders they invariably place public interest over personal gain, and inspire society to great acts. These are realised during the outer-directed era which they controlled as midlife leaders.

As young adults, their homogeneously uniformed corps patiently endured depression and heroically conquered foreign enemies in the double secular crisis of the Great Depression and World War II. As they moved towards midlife, Christian GIs created student organisations and paraChurch ministries that emphasized their togetherness and common goals (e.g. Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship 1923, Young Life 1941, Youth for Christ 1943, and Campus Crusade 1951). In South Africa, these young people formed themselves into political movements, such as the *Ossewabrandwag* (1939), *Sofasonke*, the squatter movement (1944), and the ANC Youth League which forced the issue of the “defiance campaign” (1952) and *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (1961). The characteristics of patriotism and unquestioning devotion to organisations is well illustrated in the 1939 initiation ceremony into the *Ossewabrandwag*, exceedingly popular among young GIs: “With his hand on a Bible, with a loaded revolver pointing at his chest and another at his back, the young man recited: ‘If I advance, follow me. If I retreat, shoot me. If I die, avenge me. So help me God...’” (Saunders 1994:349).

Obviously, each generation's early experiences of “church” and religious life will be foundational to their view of what is right, good and “normal” for Christian expression and institution. The GIs were raised during an inner-directed era, when faith is largely expressed in experiences. They had just come off the back of revivals in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the church had seen some declines. The rise of Pentecostal expressions of the Christian faith occurred during the GIs youth, and has geared them to be more comfortable within a religion that expressed faith emotionally and outwardly. For

them, religion is largely about experiencing God and being in relationship. “In such periods, those traditions with the greatest emphasis on the personal life and religious experience of the ‘believer’ will thrive. It is also in these periods that new groups spin off from existing institutional structures” (Regele 1995:40). However, their emphasis on faithfulness and dependability has led to see these experiences as being governed by strict discipline – and it is not surprising that most mainline denominations have more than their fair share of GIs in them at the end of the twentieth century.

As they moved into midlife and began to take positions of influence, their civic mindedness came to the fore. Jefferson’s presidential office-taking speech is much the same as that of John F. Kennedy’s, two and half centuries later. In line with Howe and Strauss’ generational cycle, both these president’s belong to the same civic-minded generational type, although they are two “cycles” or “turnings” apart. Both called on their “fellow Americans” to “unite in common efforts for the common good...advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye” (Jefferson, 1801) and to “ask not what America can do for you, but what you can do for America” (Kennedy, 1960). In midlife the GIs created the biggest and best of their generational cycle (i.e. this century) during the outer-driven era, from business to engineering feats, they are a generation of winners and achievers. Throughout their lives, this generation has been heralded as that generation which achieves great things. “They always seemed to do it *big*, to do it *together*” (emphasis in original, Strauss and Howe 1991:261). Some of the biggest names in “big business” come from this generation. Many of this century’s most powerful politicians come from this generation, including Nelson Mandela, Margaret Thatcher and Bishop Desmond Tutu. In his inaugural address, President Kennedy described his generation as “born in this century”. Kennedy was the first US president born in the 20th century, and since him, Boomers have dominated the White House for most of it.

In midlife, subsidized by the *G.I. Bill*, which paid American veterans to go and study, and in the midst of the outer-driven era of the 1950s, they built gleaming suburbs, invented miracle vaccines, and launched moon rockets. In Christian churches, they were “responsible for building up the big denominations and their big agencies through the fifties and early sixties. [GI] pastors built big, “tall-steeple”, mainline churches” (Regele 1995:116). Politically, their unprecedented 32 year long grip on the American Presidency began with a “New Frontier”, a “Great Society”, and “Model Cities”, but wore down through Vietnam, Watergate, deficits, and problems with “the vision thing.” By late midlife, however, the wheels started to come off the optimism, and through tragic and shattering events, the public image of many of these people has been somewhat tainted. For example, there is currently much speculation regarding the role that F.W. de Klerk played in the South African government, even as he appeared to be working for change,

and Lady Margaret Thatcher appears to currently be making herself very unpopular by seemingly undermining her former political allies (cf. "A Stirring in the Attic" *The Economist*, 9 October 1999, pg. 54). As elders they have come under attack by the midlife Boomers (see below). Most of this generation retreats quickly from public life, leaving only major leaders in place for a few more years. However, they do not stop being a powerful influence, working hard to create their dream society.

As those currently in the late years of their lives, GIs still exude confidence and energy. They stay busy in retirement, many not retiring at all. Nelson Mandela and Jimmy Carter are good examples. Many of them live long and fulfilled elderhoods. However, some die in despair as their lifelong dreams of unlimited progress seem to be dying in the hands of the younger generations. This despair is not personal, but rather directed towards the world which they leave. "I regret that I am now to die in the belief that the useless sacrifice of themselves by the generation 1776, to acquire self-government and happiness to their country, is to be thrown away by the unwise and unworthy passions of their sons" (Thomas Jefferson, 1820, quoted in Strauss and Howe 1991:180) is a comment many GIs can relate to today.

As elder "senior citizens" - another term coined by this generation - they have safeguarded their own "entitlements" with 1970s and 80s legislation which essentially raided the future to pay for their current Social Security, Medicare, S&L bailout, senior saver and old-age tax cut expenses. In Christian ministry, many "want to preserve the old proven ways which prevailed before the experiments with new 'superficial stuff' were introduced in an attempt to please the audience" (Hendriks 1998a:online). Possibly because of this, but possibly also because of the rapidly changing world and the "cult of youth" at the end of the century, GIs seem to have lost the moral authority that the oldest generation has historically wielded in society. "Their economic well-being has come at the expense of the moral authority prior generations of American elders once wielded over the young" (Strauss and Howe 1993:37). In South Africa, this generation is attempting to reap the rewards now of a life they were never able to enjoy under apartheid. With seemingly little concern for the future, many of this generation are on the "gravy train".

It is not coincidental that this generation gave birth to one of the most enduring comic strip heroes of all time: Superman. This "superhero" - yet another phrase in common use which was coined by GIs - is a parable for their generation, being a special child, with a corrupt next-elder, Lex Luther, formidable strength and manliness balanced by supreme blandness, and having invariable success for the good of the community. It is also not coincidental that Superman was "laid to rest" in the early 1990s, along with the public life of most of these great achievers. There can be little doubt that Regele is correct when he states that

this generation has always received “the best a society has to offer at every stage of their life” (1995:115). And yet, even at the end of “their” century, many of these GIs are healthy and energetic, and rich enough to enjoy a wonderful lifestyle, even if they must do it alone, isolated from the younger generations.

2.2 The “Silent” Generation

The “Silent” generation’s first birth year in America is 1925, and their last is 1942 - an era which coincided with the lowest birthrate per decade this century. The 1930s saw the lowest decennial growth rate in American history (Strauss and Howe, 1991:279). These birth years correspond with what was happening in South Africa at the time. Due to most of the world coming off of the gold standard in the 1930s, there was a short-lived economic boom as the price of gold sky-rocketed. But that did not last long, and the benefits never really made their way back to the general population. By the end of the 1930s, South Africa was in the same position as many countries around the world, namely a “Great Depression” where times were tough, and children were expected to work. In South Africa, this generation consists of those born from 1931 - 1949.

The “Silent” Generation are those young people who grew up when children “should be seen and not heard”. “They got the tag ‘Silent’ back in the McCarthy-era 50s, when their leading edge came of age gliding compliantly into newly built suburban society... [that] was oversimple, conformist, and bland” (Strauss and Howe 1993:39). This kind of world has been parodied and questioned in movies such as **The Truman Show** and **Pleasantville**, and was excellently portrayed in the hit television series, **The Wonder Years**. They are an adaptive generation, raised by overprotective parents during the secular crisis of World War II and the Great Depression. Parents and the older generations did this to ensure the safety of their children during the crisis. The children had no choice but to accept this and toe the line. They tend to be withdrawn, cautious, unimaginative and unadventurous. In the midst of failed banks and businesses, they learnt not to trust others for their security, and to this day are self-reliant, and find it difficult to spend money, especially to take a “step of faith” in financing large projects. Self-reliance and not asking for help have been raised to the level of virtues. They have also grown to believe that it is “good” and “normal” to work hard. They believe that by sheer hard work one can achieve anything. They also learnt early that it is not good to complain or moan about one’s lot in life - the “right” thing to do is to knuckle down and get on and do the job. Their early life did not allow for many pleasures, but it did instill in them a deep romanticism, as stories of war and conflict often do. This romanticism, mixed with a feeling of duty to work, continues to define this generation. There is a sharp contrast between their outward complacency and sense of duty and their inner feelings of emotion, passion and desire for personal fulfillment. This creates in them a very accommodating, even compromising

spirit which dominates their approach to life. They were too young to take any active part in the resolution of the crisis, even if they can remember it. They missed out on being heroes. However, they did learn from their elders that life is about winning or losing - there is no middle ground. The Nazi's and their Axis allies were not simply beaten, they were crushed and humiliated. American troops are still stationed in Germany to this day, with the last American owned base being handed back only in late 1998. They have learnt from this to be tough-nosed opponents, although they tend to go about this in a stone-faced, quiet way. There is no middle ground, very little compromise, and even if you do "beat" them, you may end up feeling like you have lost.

In youth, this generation experienced the worldwide crisis of the Great Depression, which began on "Black Tuesday" 29 October 1929 in New York, precipitating a world-wide Depression that continued well into the 1930s, and was followed by the crippling World War, begun in Europe in 1939.

They grew up as the suffocated children of war and depression. Many left school early to work, or, like countless British children, were separated from their parents for their own safety and survival. Always overlooked and just missing out, however, this generation was too young to make any impact on World War II, and too old for Vietnam. The only war American Silents fought in was Korea, and it is only in the late 1990s that the veterans of that war have gained a memorial. They certainly have not received the kind of response that their next-younger Boomer veterans of Vietnam received, nor their next-elder GI veterans of World War II continue to receive. They came of age just too late to be World War II heroes and just too early to be youthful free spirits, and found themselves lost between the thirty-something returning war heroes, and the coddled post-war, Boomer babies (see below). Instead, in early young adulthood, this early-marrying Lonely Crowd became the risk-averse technicians and professionals - as well as the sensitive rock 'n' rollers and civil-rights advocates - of a post-crisis era in which conformity seemed to be a sure ticket to success (Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ). The outer-directed era of the 1960s led the Silent generation to strive for the rights of minority groups. But even in this, they adhered to a code of nonviolence and appeals to fairness, more than anything else appealing to the mind - a characteristic of the generation that also produced some of the greatest minds of this century.

Their experience of the church and faith was shaped by the institutions their next-elder young adult GIs created for them (e.g. Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship 1923, Young Life 1941, Youth for Christ 1943, and Campus Crusade 1951). Although these institutions were originally created by young GIs to be break-away spiritual movements from traditional churches, the Silent youth, towards whom these ministries were directed, did

not pick up on the experiential spirituality, but rather the structures for spiritual growth. For the Silents, faith is expressed best in doing. The ministry focus is on building the institution and creating “programs” and “structures”. Because of this, the 1950s and 60s, as Silents grew into young adulthood, saw a decline in experiential expressions of the faith, and a rise of the mainline denominations. It was the height of evangelicalism, and had such leading figures as Francis Schaeffer, Billy Graham, John Stott and the writings of C.S. Lewis. Extension of the church was a primary goal, often achieved by collaboration and liberalization, in practice and theology. Regele shows that during this time of outer-directed societal emphasis, “the institutional life of the church is shaped, formed and solidified. Many of the larger churches in the mainline traditions were built during this era. This is the era of the large, program-based church whose activities focus around doing the Gospel as a community” (1995:41).

After the crisis, in the 1950s and 60s, the Silent young adults entered a world of rising prosperity, and enjoyed the benefits of new job opportunities. Not able to compare in grandeur to their next elders, they settled into a life of dutiful expertise, rather than heroism. The crisis averted, heroes are not required. The outer-driven era which follows requires hard and diligent workers, and this the Silent generation provided easily. Midlife, during the awakening of the 1960s and 70s, was an anxious “passage” for a generation torn between stolid elders (GIs) and passionate juniors (Boomers). Modern America has most often looked to the Silent generation for comment and mediation, including civil rights activists and public interest advocacy groups - often led by the “doing-faith” churches- but when it needed a lead, it “turned back to GIs for a steady hand, and forward to Boomers for new values.... In their hands, America has grown more accustomed to deferring or learning to live with problems than to taking aggressive steps to solve them” (Strauss and Howe 1991:283, 291). And yet, this is more because of their early reputation than their actual ability, since they seem to have grown less cautious and more willing to be radical the older they have grown. This trend was evident to some as early as 1968, when William Styron wrote: “I think that the best of my generation... have reversed the customary rules of the game and have grown more radical as they have gotten older - a disconcerting but healthy sign” (quoted in Strauss and Howe 1991:289). The tendencies to be “two-faced” and overly modest are characteristic of this generation.

In the 70s, this generation produced the Phil Donahue-type talk shows which allowed people to communicate with each other at an “ordinary” level, and it gave us a generation of therapists who counseled Boomer and Xer kids (see below) to “open up”, and they embraced the burgeoning telecommunications industry, encouraging its early introduction into modern life, so that people could be in touch with each other more easily. In Christian ministry, this emphasis led the Silent generation to start organisations that emphasized the

relational side of life and faith (e.g. Faith at Work, Habitat for Humanity, World Vision). "Faith wasn't just about doing, it was about relating! One of the direct results of this cause was the birth of the small-group movement" (Regele 1995:122), and just in time – for Generation X youth.

In later midlife, the Silent generation attempted to put off some of the caution of youth by taking greater risks. The older the Silent generation gets, the more they feel constrained and the more they attempt to break out of their confines. This has led to a great number of family break ups and the breaking down of social structures. "Outwardly fortune blessed them: ...coddled in childhood, suffered little in war, came of age with quiet obedience, enjoyed a lifetime of rising prosperity, and managed to defer national crisis until most of them had died. But behind these outer blessings lay inner curses.... [namely] nonparticipation in the major events of their era.... History records little that is distinctly theirs" (Strauss and Howe 1991:181f.). Their role is to be the conflict-resolvers of history. A generation caught in the in-between times.

In elderhood, which the oldest of them are now entering, society is moving towards another crisis, and they see the protective family structure of their youth disintegrating around them - often it is their own families that are falling apart. They do not provide directive leadership, but prefer to be seen as friendly and accommodating, rather than moralising and dominating. "the distinctive trait of this adaptive generation is that they are facilitators" (Regele 1995:119). When they do take a tough stand, it is often not publicly demonstrated. Even the "A-type" personalities amongst them appear to prefer to defer to the opinions of respected experts, rather than take a dominating stand themselves. They are sensitive and sincere, "flexible, caring and open-minded but indecisive and guilt-ridden." (Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ). Major problems are deferred or accommodated rather than dealt with. They are a generation that does not seem to provide personal or public direction. For example, South Africa's new president, Thabo Mbeki, appears to be taking a very "Silent Generation" approach to leadership of this still volatile country. Where the GIs had Superman, the Silent generation had Alfred E. Neuman's "What, me worry?" to get them through. William Gaines' creation assumes many different forms, and wears "masks" just as the Silent generation does.

The Silents have produced three decades of top Presidential aides, from Kennedy's era to Bush, but no American Presidents as yet. In jumping from Bush to Clinton, the Presidency has jumped from GI to Boomer, with no Silent President in between. Additionally, according to exit polls, as a generation they have voted for the losing candidate in every close modern American election (cf. Strauss and Howe 1991:285).

They are entering elderhood with unprecedented affluence, a “hip” style, and a reputation for indecision. However, they will shun the GI “old-boys club” collegiality approach to elderhood, and rather look for ways of staying connected with the younger generations. They will use their economic position to enhance younger generations, ushering in an age of philanthropy. The Silent generation has a unique intergenerational understanding, and often mediates in the clash between Boomers and Xers. Many of them will die in the first two decades of the next century, when the next crisis looms large and as it arrives - but only the smallest percentage will live to see the resolution of the dark clouds that hang over life today.

2.2.1 *The “Builders”*

Many demographers have grouped the GI and Silent generations together, often referred to as **Builders**. This can be helpful, as the “slower the pace of change, the more succeeding generations are alike” (McIntosh 1995:28). Additionally, GI and Silent generation both fall into the economic category of “retired” folk, where their current lifestage, at the end of the twentieth century is fairly similar. There are some common characteristics that are important to understand: they are hard workers – a trait stemming back to their roots in a rural lifestyle, early school-leavers or heavy industry - and they continue to work hard even in retirement. They are frugal and tend to save their money – this makes them the most affluent elderly in recorded history: In America, over 80% of them are home owners, they have 43% of all discretionary income, they have 75% of America’s wealth and they own 80% of savings and loan deposits and virtually all of the stocks (L.I.F.E. LINE newsletter no. 17, quoted by McIntosh 1995:43). They are patriotic: for many of them, being a good Christian is the same as being a good citizen. They are loyal and value commitment and teamwork. They do not see “grey”, but rather black and white, and will very often do things because “it’s the right thing to do”. They are private and “don’t air their dirty laundry in public” – when threatened they will back down publicly and redouble efforts behind the scenes. They are cautious, stable, dependable and they are respectful of others: “they go out of their way to help neighbours and support each other in times of need” (McIntosh 1995:40). They are intolerant of those who are different from themselves. In terms of Christian ministry, here are also some common characteristics: they believe that knowledge of the Bible is the key to living a good Christian life – “most believe that if anyone knew enough of the Bible, they would do the right thing. Bible study focussed almost exclusively on the content of the Bible” (McIntosh 1995:46); missions is seen as expanding the Christian church at the “edge of the Empire” in foreign missions (cf. Mead 1991:14ff); ministries are seen as being run most effectively by a “board of governors”; they are loyal to denominations and cannot understand how someone can change denominations easily; they prefer expository and explanatory preaching; worship is

characterised by reverence and quietness; and duty is the underlying motivation for ministry.

These characteristics have paid off for them as they reach their retirement. They have seen it through many rough years, and now enjoy the benefits. As we will see in the second chapter, it is when these characteristics, which these generations view as “normal”, right and good, come into contact with very different characteristics in the other generations, that conflict arises and a gap is created.

2.3 The Boomers

The “Boomers” are possibly the most well-known and most analysed generation in history. Yet, it is surprising that it only started in 1970, when Landon Jones coined the word “Boomers” for his book *Great Expectations* (cf. Zimmerman 1995:42). The American Boomer generational cohort birth years are generally taken as starting in 1943 and ending in 1960 (Strauss and Howe 1991:299), although others have placed it as ending in 1964 (eg. Zimmerman 1995:42). In South Africa, the Boom years were extended due to the policy of apartheid which tried to socially engineer society. On either side of the political and racial divides, middle-aged people (from the Silent Generation, see above) attempted to create a worked out, peaceful settlement in South Africa, just as their peers, led primarily by Martin Luther King, were attempting to do in the United States. It was largely the Boomer generation who “woke up” during the 1960s and early 1970s and decided to work towards a more decisive solution. On the side of the oppressed, this meant violence and war. On the side of the government, it meant creating a large defence force, armed by conscripted young people from the Boom Generation; making the white South African 1970s history very similar to America’s Vietnam generation of draft and draft dodgers. For many other young people, from all racial groups, it meant outright defiance and rebellion. Thus, the Boom years in South Africa extend from about 1948, when the National Party came to power, to 1970 (see the next section for more details on the end date).

In youth, the Boomers were part of a euphoric society that had just beaten the seemingly endless double crisis of the Great Depression and World War II. The key events in 1942/3 were: the bombing of Sydney, Australia, by the Japanese, and the increased involvement of America in the War (in Europe), the first nuclear power station unveiled and the retaking of North Africa by Allied Troops. Although Boomers will not remember the war, these events caused a shift in attitude towards the war - a shift to one of teamwork and a sense of victory. After the War, “ex-soldiers got married, and their offspring, the baby-boom generation, swelled the population 18.4%, to 178 million. Everybody went shopping: consumer spending - adjusted for inflation - surged 38% in the decade. As families grew,

demand for hospitals, schools and homes took off. All this activity lifted the average annual growth in real gross national product by 4.8% from 1947 to 1953, slowing to 2.5% for the rest of the decade. Globally, the U.S. economy ruled" (TIME International, July 28, 1997). In South Africa, there was a serious economic boom between 1954 and 1964, as the gold price surged and the South African Rand was stronger than many other currencies in the world, including the dollar and at times, the Pound Sterling. During these years, South Africa's annual growth rate was around 14%, second only to Japan in the world. In every community and every suburb, people had more money than they had had before.

In addition to these economic realities, Boomer children were raised on Dr. Spock permissiveness, which, in conjunction with the advent of the Birth Control Pill, was one of the influences leading to the sexual revolution of the 60s. They were the children of *Leave it to Beaver*, and other TV shows depicting things such as in-charge children. As Grenz (1996:5) shows, they were the Captain Kirk generation, the rugged individualists, going where "no man has gone before" in Star Trek's quest for the "final frontier". As children they grew up in an optimistic era, characterised by altruistic feelings and a general sense of wellbeing and hope. They were spoilt and protected as children, being given more opportunities and safety than children in previous generations. This was most likely because their parents were largely the GI generation who were not well protected as children and therefore tried to make up for their own youth by almost smothering their children. Today, this generation remembers their youth as "the wonder years", and are often heard lamenting today's youth: "Why can't they just be kids again?" It is noteworthy that Boomers are essentially the only generation to ever "just be kids", as those before them either worked on farms, or left home early to work during the Depression.

In terms of their early experiences of faith and religious life, they were the young people who were the focus of the Silent generation's move towards structure and institution. They have grown up with a high view of church, especially of how church should be "done". They lived as children through the "membership and programmatic apex of historic mainline American denominations" (Regele 1995:41), when church was a central focal point in the community. They also grew up during the time when GI pastors were ensuring that churches were built big. They have grown up with a "bigger is better" view of the church. Many of today's large churches, such as Bill Hybel's *Willowcreek* and Rick Warren's *Saddleback*, are run by Boomers. A similar trend of Boomer-led mega churches is evident in South Africa (cf. Hendriks 1996 and 1998a) "Seeker-sensitivity" as a means of drawing large crowds is a hallmark of their ministry. They are also very strong on strategy and visioning. This stems from the fact that as young people they "were all captured by a grand vision, whether in the church or out" (Regele 1995:129).

They have grown up to be characterised by a moralistic view of the world, and an over-inflated self-opinion. They truly believe that they have all the answers for all the problems. They don't necessarily believe that hard work is the ultimate virtue, as their next elders, the Silents do, but rather that good fortune, "luck" and innovation are the keys to success. The fact is that many of their generation, including Bill Gates, Steve Jobs and others involved in the computer revolution, have become the richest self-made men in history. Because of the great achievements of the GI generation during their youth, they have also grown up to believe that "bigger is better". They can be perceived as loud, brash and show-offs by other generations. They are not shy in trumpeting their own achievements.

Their young adult years were spent in a time of cultural and spiritual awakening. As young adults they were caught up in an awakening. This led them from youthful revolution directed against the establishment to young adult internal revolution: a quest for self. This journey of self-discovery has had many different faces, but is generally characterised by a rejection of the "traditional" way of doing things, and a rebellion against all forms of authority. Boomers are therefore very experiential and tend to work more from emotion and intuition than objective reason, and are "better philosophers than scientists, better preachers than builders" (Strauss and Howe, 1991:303). The "cult" of motivational speakers is virtually completely dominated by this generation. All these things, such as preaching, motivational talking, etc, involve changing the way we live and think, something Boomers are always keen to do – and to help others to do as well. Maybe because of these factors, Boomers seem to want to talk. From therapists to focus groups, and endless committees and debates, they are a generation that sees communication, even repetitious communication, as important. But, although the cultural revolution is viewed as a collective experience, it was really experienced individually. Thus, Boomers tend to work in parallel to each other, but not really together. They are essentially individualists.

During the Boomers' developing years of Youth and Young Adulthood, they lived through an economic boom and tremendous growth, as well as witnessing the ascendancy of America as a world super power. But the euphoria this produced was undermined by a series of events, including: the Cold War, Civil rights abuses and activists in many countries around the world, the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa (1960), the start of the Berlin Wall (1961), Bay of Pigs in Cuba (1961), the Great Train Robbery in England (1963), John F. Kennedy assassinated (1963), the Profumo Scandal (1964), Mandela sentenced for treason (1964), Vietnam (1965-1973), H.F. Verwoerd (the "architect of apartheid") assassinated in Parliament (1966), Moon landing (1969), Apollo 13 disaster (1970), Watergate scandal (1973), invention of the PC (1976), Mars landing (1976),

Soweto riots (1976), Biko killed in jail (1977), Margaret Thatcher elected PM (1979), the increase in international terrorism, shootings of major world leaders - e.g. Pope (1981), Reagan (1981)-the Iran hostage situation (1981), Falklands war (1982), and the like. This is mainly a long list of tragic occurrences, involving technological feats of wonder, followed by breakdowns of mammoth scale. It involves great politicians being killed or disgraced, civil rights problems and human rights abuses and wars. This produced a sense of failure and despair in the system, as institutional weaknesses began to show.

The 1960s and 70s were a turbulent time, as Young Adult Boomers went to College and into the workplace, rebelling against the institutions they found there. Their moralistic outlook spurred them on to activism against many of these institutions. Their rebellion was not so much aimed at toppling the system *per se*, but rather at removing the perceived corruption from within the system. In other words, Boomers were happy with the system of authority, but wanted to have that authority for themselves. This they quickly achieved, with one of the youngest ever American Presidents, Bill Clinton, and a similarly young British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. This has been followed by a young German Chancellor, Schröder and Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Many other countries around the world, as well as major corporations now have the "youngest ever" leaders.

As Boomers entered midlife they became very moralistic, principled and dominating. The 1980s saw the movement of these Boomers from being the rebellious flower-power generation to a solid, middle-class, materialistic, self-absorbed set of midlifers. Although the "yuppie" (young urban professional) may account for only about 5% of all Boomers, economically speaking, the attitude of self-immersion, an impatient desire for self satisfaction and a weak sense of community, are defining attitudes for Boomers of all economic means. No matter which side of the moral debates they stand (for they stand on all sides thereof), they take their stand resolutely and with force. There can be no compromise, and no room for grey in a world of black and white, especially with respect to the next generation of youngsters coming up quickly behind them. P J O'Rourke, an American satirist and journalist, has called this the "new seriousness" (Washington Post, 3/8/1988). Where once they rebelled against institutions they now see the value in directing these institutions, including government, towards their own moralistic goals. They have no difficulty legislating against the excesses of their own youth. Their rallying cry is a greater sense of morality and social standards, and towards this goal they strive with everything they have. This inner-directed era lends itself well to their style of leadership, which does not consult much with other generations.

This has occurred within the church as well, as Boomers have seen a different view of the church. They have fuelled the Charismatic and church growth movements, and have been

attracted to images of the church “as an organic body instead of a hierarchical organisation” (Regele 1995:129). As midlifers, Boomers are on a spiritual quest. Many are returning to church, but are not staying. They prefer to create a potpourri of spirituality to get them through.

A generation that came of age in an era of ‘Is God Dead?’ is immersing itself in spiritual movements of all kinds, from evangelical fundamentalism to New Age humanism, from transcendentalism to ESP. By a substantial margin, Boomers are America’s most God-absorbed living generation. Six out of ten report having experienced an extrasensory presence or power, versus only four out of ten among older generations. Six times as many Boomers plan to spend more time in religious activities in future years as plan to spend less.

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The Boomers superheroes include Ken and Barbie, those enduring icons of perfection, and the first dolls to be marketed to a world-wide audience. They also supported Captain Kirk of the Starship Enterprise, that rugged individual, “boldly going where no man has gone before”. The year 2000 will see them in late midlife and in definite control of national power in many countries, trumpeting values, touting a “politics of meaning,” and waging scorched-earth Culture Wars (see Chapter 2, below). They are legislating against the excesses of their own youth, giving federal organisations such as the Drug Enforcement Agency sweeping powers, legislating against smoking, and suing tobacco companies in the process, and taking moralistic and patronising stances in their foreign policies. Interestingly enough, “every phase-of-life has been fine, even terrific, when Boomers entered it - and a wasteland when they left... Yes, the Boom is a generation of trends, *but all those trends are negative*” (emphasis in original, Strauss and Howe 1993:43). It is difficult to know whether it is the environment that shapes the generation or the generation that shapes the environment. As the Boomers head towards Elderhood, the specters of global economic collapse, international terrorism and ecological burnout all threaten to precipitate the next secular crisis. In each of these areas, Boomers are already making their influence felt and it is to them that younger generations will look for guidance in the next three decades. They will also wage war on a moral front, fighting against sex, profanity and violence in the entertainment industry. For this and other reasons, the culture war between Xers (see below) and Boomers will likely increase in temperature, as the principles of the values-focussed Boomers will lead them to make decisions that will appear moralistic, hypocritical and domineering to the Xers.

The defining characteristics of Boomers at the end of the twentieth century are: they have the highest average educational level of any generation in history; they are media-oriented and susceptible to media-hype; they are independent activists who are cause-oriented; they enjoy experimentation; they are extremely quality conscious and value “professionalism”; and, they question authority. In the church, these characteristics shine through. In addition

we can identify specific characteristics very evident in “Boomer-led” churches: they are attracted to dynamic leaders; they want a sense of belonging and achievement; they seek after experiences of faith; worship is seen as celebration – it is loud, exciting and vibrant; and, they are tolerant of differences. It is very likely that the high profile, dominating style of the Boomers will continue for many more years, well into their later life.

In Elderhood, they will be “visionary, righteous, austere, principled and creative but sometimes selfish and arrogant” (Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ). They will be the leaders who are in control as society heads for a secular crisis. They remain cool-headed and authoritative in the midst of crisis, being good stewards and setting the agenda that will be the redemption of society from the crisis. They will become the revered old men and women who will lead their nations through grave danger to a better world beyond. Their optimism never wanes, and their principles should win out.

2.4 Generation X

As explained above, this generation’s first birth year is identified in America as 1961. This is fairly controversial amongst demographers and media - many would place the date as late as 1967, and as early as 1958. There are a number of reasons, however, why 1961 seems more accurate. “Annual polls of high school seniors show that those born just after 1960 came of age much more fearful of national catastrophe than those born just before” (Strauss and Howe 1991:317). It was also in 1960 that the Birth Control Pill was introduced (Snider 1990:online), and thus the birth boom ended as women began to take pills to stop having babies. A number of important international events happened in 1960/1: The first woman Prime Minister in the world (Ceylon), a massive anti-Soviet campaign at the United Nations, the election of John F. Kennedy (the first American president to be born in the 20th century), the Apartheid riots in Sharpeville (South Africa), the closing of the border between East and West Berlin, the rise of Castro in Cuba, the Bay of Pigs debacle, and Russia and America both put men into space in 1961/2. Additionally, “the strain [on America] of being both an economic and a military superpower started to show. The federal deficit in 1959 jumped to 2.6% of gross domestic product, the largest since 1946. By the 1960s, ambitious social programs and the widening war in Vietnam led to higher taxes, while economies in Europe and Asia began to make inroads against the U.S.” (TIME, July 28, 1997). Bret Ellis, in a New York Times article entitled, “The Twentysomethings: Adrift in a Pop Landscape” stated that “few of my generation were alive from, much less remember, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, but the oldest of us, even at age 2, could sense something had gone wrong. For the rest of our childhood, things seemed to go that way” (quoted in Strauss and Howe 1993:50). Added to this is the growing anti-children mentality of this age, as older Silent generation parents saw the energy and freedom of the younger Boomers and viewed their children as a hindrance.

The Xer youth, largely left to their own devices as the young adult Boomers were still in self-absorbed rebellion, grew up very quickly and remained street-smart. Their parents were largely from the Silent generation, and were reacting to their own over-protected and suffocating childhood memories, and therefore they were allowed a bit more latitude and freedom than their over-protected and spoilt next-Elders, the Boomers.

In America, their end birth year is largely agreed as 1981 (Strauss and Howe 1991:317). This is mainly due to the fact that 1982 marks the birth year of those young people who will graduate High School in the year 2000 or later. The ending of the X generation is marked by the start of the next, rather than anything significant of its own. This is, in fact, characteristic of this X generation: They are defined more by what they are not; that is that they are not like their next-elder nor the next-younger generations, than by what they are. They are an enigma to other generations.

In South Africa, Generation X can be loosely defined as all those young people old enough to remember apartheid and be judged by history to have been part of it, and yet not quite old enough to have been involved in any form of struggle on any side of apartheid. White Xers would have just missed out on national service, and black young Xers would not have been old enough to join the school children of 1976 who demanded "liberation before education". Yet, they have all grown up in the shadow of these events, sensing, as Ellis said above, that "something had gone wrong". They are now viewed as being culpable and "part of the problem", even though this may not necessarily be the case. In July 1961, Nelson Mandela persuaded the ANC Executive to form their armed wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe*. This was a turning point for the struggle, as it began the process of armed resistance. This led to the reign of terror - enacted by all sides - that was the defining atmosphere of the mid 1970s onwards. Black young people growing up in this time were much more exposed to the terror and difficulties of the time than their white counterparts. As noted above, the social engineering of apartheid extended the Boomer generation years for white South Africans until about 1970. Young people born after 1970 were forced to deal with the realities of apartheid regardless of their background. In fact, this was the whole purpose of *Umkhonto we Sizwe*, who wanted to "raise the stakes" in the resistance to apartheid. Thus, in South Africa, non-white young people would probably fall into the Generation X cohort if they were born between 1965 and 1990. White English speaking young people would probably be Generation Xers if born from 1970 to 1990. And white Afrikaans speaking people if born from 1975 to 1990. As always, and especially because of the diversity of South African culture, these are only very broad generalizations, and even then are only likely to apply more closely to urban, middle class communities of all racial groupings.

As young people Xers were expected to grow up quickly. In 1984, psychologist David Elkind wrote that “teenagers are now expected to confront life and its challenges with the maturity once expected only of the middle-aged.... High schools, which were once the setting for a unique teenage culture and language, have become miniatures of the adult community. Theft, violence, sex, and substance abuse are now as common in the high schools as they are on the streets” (1984:3ff.). It is true that in 1999 there are still murders and drugs in schools - the difference is that this is now international headline news, in a new era that is over-concerned for its children. In the Generation X era, it was simply accepted as a given. And worse still, parents do not seem interested in making any changes or providing any direction for their children. Walt Mueller, president of the **Center for Parent/Youth Understanding**, in his *youthculture@2000* magazine (Winter 1995), gave one shocking example:

One of 1993’s most discouraging news stories reported the arrest of nine teenage boys from the middle-class community of Lakewood, California. They called themselves the “Spur Posse.” Described by authorities as “athletes and social climbers”, the boys were nabbed for raping and molesting girls as young as ten years old in a long running competition to amass points for sexual conquests. Some had tallied more than 60 encounters! Surprising and scary. . . but even more frightening are the comments of one father as he defended his son’s actions in court: “Nothing my boy did was anything that any red-blooded American boy wouldn’t do at his age!”

During the 60s and 70s, divorce rates increased dramatically. According to the U.S. Public Health Service, the percentage of all children involved in divorce increased by 300% from 1940 to 1980 (chart, Strauss and Howe 1993:58). In addition, many of the Xer’s parents were out actualising their own potential in the spiritual awakening of the 60s and 70s. In the 80s, the teen and early young adulthood years for Generation X, parents were living the yuppie dream of middle-class suburbia, but both parents were required to work long, hard hours to sustain this lifestyle. The concept of the “latchkey kids” was created for Xers - those young people who came home from school to empty homes, and looked after themselves, and even their households, on their own. This is a generation that has arrived home to an empty house, with both mom and dad working, or a single parent home where the remaining parent is having to work to survive. Often, especially in the latter situation, the young person has been forced to take on part-time employment as well. “The international phenomenon of children and youths living on the streets has also become an issue of concern in South Africa. A related phenomenon is ‘latchkey children’, i.e. children who are left to their own devices usually outside school hours. It is alarming that studies indicate that nearly a third of Johannesburg’s children, and nearly half of Soweto’s fall into this category” (van Zyl Slabbert 1994: 3.20, pg. 76f.). This is also the generation that has spent every other weekend at their other parent’s home, and has seen a profusion of different family relationships, such as “dad’s girlfriend”, “mom’s previous ex-husband”,

“my second step-father”, or “my step-brother’s father’s ex-wife”. This has caused young people to be skeptical of relationships, yet still feel the need to fill the void with something else. Friends and peers become surrogate families, as a small number of dependable relationships are valued highly.

The Generation X generational cohort was born during an awakening era, when their next elders, the Boomers, were rebelling against the systems. This attitude of rebellion was thus fostered within the youth, but the values that underlie the Boomers’ rebellion were not. Thus, with Xers, it is rebellion for rebellion’s sake. Generation X is characterised by a total apathy towards those in authority.

Generation Xers are a very spiritual generation, having had their earliest years in the shadow of the Boomer’s spiritual awakening in the 60s and 70s. They are seeking a spiritual home where they can truly belong. Their early experiences of church have been dominated by the vision of church provided by the clash between Boomers and the Silent generation. This ongoing battle between different styles of worship, preaching, church structure and governance methods has led many Xers to have a cynical view of the church’s relevance. In-fighting has produced a church divided. They will spend most of their lives either putting the churches back together or leaving and starting their own churches. Because of their experiences in broken relationships, small group experiences are more attractive, especially when there is an emphasis on family and relationships. For them, faith is experienced. Yet, they are growing up during a time when charismatic and pentecostal churches are beginning to join the decline that mainline churches are still experiencing. Churches with radically new approaches will be attractive. The Xers will be in the forefront of pioneering these new approaches, and will be ready to lead the next civic generation into them. Just as the GIs experienced this at the start of this century, so now the Millennials will do the same at the end of it.

As the Boomers grew into their moralistic and narcissistic midlife, the Xers were moving into their teens. They were, and still are, very much left to fend for themselves, and are given a lot more freedom than the Boomers were as children. As rising young adults, the Xers are being seen as arrogant and “lost”, and very little hope is pinned on them by older adults. They buck the system by being nontraditional in their approach and also by forging new employment opportunities and opportunities overlooked by established businesses, and being prepared to take enormous risks.

As young adults, maneuvering through a sexual battlescape of AIDS and blighted courtship rituals as the legacy of the 60s sexual revolution and feminism lives on, and remembering with pain their Silent generation parents’ failed marriages, they date and marry cautiously. The music of Generation X, from grunge to hip-hop, reveals a hardened

edge. Their most famous cartoon character is a fitting representation of these young people. Bart Simpson is irreverent, self-reliant, and really doesn't care what adults think about him. Always in trouble, he nevertheless always lands on his feet, and often fixes up the messes of his father.

Politically, they lean toward pragmatism and nonaffiliation, and would rather volunteer than vote. This was evidenced clearly in the 1999 General Elections in South Africa, when the 18-25 year old age group had one of the worst registration and turnout rates of all (cf. Independent Electoral Commission Statistics, <http://www.elections.org.za>). This has caused a lot of tension between old and young, especially within black households, as older people who fought so hard to earn the right to vote feel that their own children have very quickly become blasé about it. This apathy towards voting also indicates an aversion to institutions, and to giving control of anything that is theirs over to someone or something else. Bill Clinton successfully wooed this generation by being the first MTV president, by initiating the first live televised presidential debate, by being the sax-playing guy-next-door, and because of the savvy of his very young team, headed by the Xer, George Stephanopolous, who was the Deputy Campaign Manager and Director of Communications for Bill Clinton in 1992, before leaving the Clinton team in January 1997 for a lucrative network news and lecturing career. The low voter turnout in the 1996 United States of America elections is possibly an indication of their aversion to affiliation.

In the work place, they are similarly skeptical of institutions, realising that long-term commitment is unlikely to pay the dividends it did to their parents and grandparents. They are therefore opposed to paying their own dues, and look for quick, short-term rewards, prepared to embrace risks and work hard for themselves. This entrepreneurial, selfish and individualistic attitude is often seen as a similar rebelliousness to their next-elder Boomers, and many of the older generations simply ignore it, believing that Xers will soon grow up and move out of this phase. However, "in marked contrast to the Baby Boomers, Xers' individualism has very little to do with rebelling against authority - our self-assuredness comes from a powerful sense that we have been able largely to fend for ourselves" (Tulgan 1995:49).

Economically, Xers are among the poorest people in America. That label belonged to the previous Reactive generation for most of their lives, as in the 1950s to early 1970s, "the over-65 age bracket showed the highest poverty rate" (Strauss and Howe 1991:327), and then, due to the 1970 recession this mantle was passed directly to the next Reactive generation, the young Xers, without touching any of the other generations in between. Moving into midlife, they are the first American generation who can expect to earn less (in real terms) than their parents. In South Africa, the situation is even more desperate.

Freddy Pilusa, of the South African National Youth Council, held discussions before the Presidential Job Summit in that year. He was interviewed on 25 July 1998 on the *News at 8* on SABC 3, and quoted the following statistic: "Of those aged 16 to 30 in South Africa, close to 75% are unemployed".

As they move into midlife, the end of the awakening era is being heralded by major events that disturb the collective psyche of culture. These political, economic and other disappointments lead people to look inward, and begin an inner-directed era, which is formative for the young adult Xers. It forces them to become realists and pragmatists in order to survive. In fact, survival is a key motivating factor for many Xers. Economic realities are brought into sharp focus as Xers reach their midlife years. This is beginning to happen in America. When they are at the height of their earning potential, the economy is likely to be at a low point during the looming crisis. But during this crisis, Xers will rise as powerful leaders. Because of their pragmatism they are able to make critical decisions and because of their resilient patience, are able to energise the younger generations who grow weary of the crisis.

As shown in Codrington's thesis (1998), and Strauss and Howe's works, the generations operate on a seemingly repeating cycle. This makes the theory useful in predictive modeling. On the basis of what previous similar generational-types have done in different life-stages, it is possible to extrapolate probable behaviour and attitude changes of current generations in to the future. In a few years' time, therefore, as Xers move through midlife to elderhood, they will likely be the pragmatic workers that get the job done, at the same time helping the aging Boomers to "get real" without losing themselves in apocalyptic visions. They will be cunning and deft in business and elsewhere, quick to seize opportunities and adapt to changing environments. And they will be nice to be around. They will "have that Twainlike twinkle in the eye, that Trumanesque capacity to distinguish between mistakes that matter and those that don't" (Strauss and Howe 1991:415). However, their earlier risk-taking makes way for caution, "their wildness and alienation [will turn] into exhaustion and conservatism, and their nomadic individualism [will mature] into a preference for strong community life" (Strauss and Howe 1993:217). They will become restrictive and over-protective parents of the next generation, and will bolster social structures, such as the family, by calming the social mood and slowing the pace of social change down.

In elderhood, they are likely to be quickly forgotten, with not many of them left to lead the institutions they helped during the crisis. The era following the crisis will be one of reconstruction and growth (like the 1950s) and will demand younger leadership. Xers will probably not be too concerned about this. They will continue, however, to fight for the

rights of other generations, especially the Millennial generation immediately following them (see below). Even in their old age, they will fight for the rights of the young, rather than for their own rights as the old. They will be independent, even caustic, elderly, not much loved, but leaving a lasting legacy for the young. Throughout life, Xers hardly ever draw attention to themselves as a generation, and are good at covering up what they really think and feel as a group. Maybe because of this, they are some of the most investigated and berated generations in history. However, this should not be taken as meaning that they work as a cohesive unit. In fact, the opposite is true. The X generation is atomised and individualistic.

The defining characteristics of this generation, at the end of the twentieth century include: relationships matter the most to them; they are risk-taking challenge-lovers, sex is expected yet confusing and dangerous (because of AIDS), they live with change, and embrace it, they are stressed out and organised to death, pain and anger are rising, they want rules from the right authorities, their now matters more than their future, they have a new style of learning and communicating, "truth" and reason don't matter, they don't want to know "is it true?", they want to know "does it work?", they are spiritual seekers who believe in the supernatural, music is huge - it is the "window on their soul" and the language they use to express themselves (cf. Codrington 1999).

In terms of church ministry, they prefer: small, cell-based ministries; they are very attractive to short-term mission opportunities, especially at a local community level; missions is seen as anywhere outside the doors of the church; theologically, they are more traditional and conservative; worship is not so much valued by style or volume as by the level of intimacy involved; they prefer "how to" sermons; and, they prefer less structured, more interactive learning environments. They are the most "different" of all the generations, and the most misunderstood by the others.

2.5 The Millennial Generation

This generation is called the "Millennial" generation by most American demographers since they will graduate High School in the new millennium. They have also been labeled the Bridger Generation (Rainer 1998), the Net Generation (Tapscott 1998), Generation Y (Codrington 1998), the Nintendo generation (Online 1997) and many others besides. Their first birth year in America, 1982, coincided with the first "Baby on Board" car stickers, as "social trends started to shift away from neglect and negativism, and toward protection and support" (Strauss and Howe 1993:14). This shift was abrupt, as demographic data indicates. In South Africa, this generation consists of those born after 1990, with members who have no personal memory of apartheid (the undemocratic and unjust system of government that officially ended in 1994). This generation is the recipient of free health

care and free primary education in South Africa. They are a civic-minded generation, in many ways likely to mirror the GI generation (see above) as they have been born into a similar historical situation - the ending of an upbeat era and in the shadow of a looming crisis, following a "lost" generation.

In their youth, Millennials have experienced abortion and divorce rates ebbing, with popular culture beginning to stigmatize hands-off parental styles and recast babies as special. The new "status symbol" of an up-and-coming family is to have a stay-at-home mom. Child abuse and child safety have become hot topics, while books teaching virtues and values are best-sellers. There are an incredible amount of "good parenting" books being released, and churches which run parenting classes cannot keep up with demand. Today, politicians define adult issues (from tax cuts to deficits) in terms of their effects on children. Youth organisations have historically flourished during the Civic-type generation's youth, and this has the effect of standardising youth culture, leading them away from the individualism characteristic of their next-elders, and towards a more collectivist community approach to life, where "belonging" is important. We can see this already beginning in churches with, amongst others, the True Love Waits campaign and SYATP (*See You At The Pole* prayer meetings). The Million Man March and Promise Keepers will be part of the early memories of family for the Millennial kids. AmeriCorp, created in 1993, is a government initiated program of civil service as a requirement for High School graduation (Goldsmith 1995: online). In South Africa, the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund is aimed solely at Millennial generation kids.

Even Hollywood is replacing the Gen X-type, cinematic child devils and lost children (e.g. *Rosemary's Baby* 1968, *The Exorcist* 1973, *The Omen* 1976, *Taxi Driver* 1976, *Halloween* 1978, *Children of the Corn* 1984, *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* 1986) with child angels and heroes (e.g. *Home Alone* 1990, *My Girl* 1991, *Little Man Tate* 1991, *Look Who's Talking Now* 1993, *Power Rangers* 1993, *The Sandlot* 1993, *Matilda* 1996, *Fly Away Home* 1996, *Leave it to Beaver* 1997, *Kundun* 1997). It is interesting to note that the only movies listed in the Internet Movie DataBase's (<http://www.imdb.com>) archives under the category "kids-outsmart-adults" were made after 1990, indicating an adult deference to children, and recognition of their ability to "beat" adults. Cable TV and the Internet are cordoning off "child-friendly" havens. While educators speak of "standards" and "cooperative learning", school uniforms are surging in popularity, and USA test scores are faring better in international comparisons (Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ).

Whereas the generations before have worshipped rugged individualist heroes, like Superman, GI Joe, the Lone Ranger and Captain Kirk, the superheroes of this generation are the Power Rangers:

When summoned, these ordinary youths transform themselves into thunderbolting evil fighters. Cheerful, confident, and energetic, Power Rangers are nurtured to succeed in the face of great odds. Whatever they do - from displaying martial arts to piloting high-tech weaponry - they do as a choreographed group. Their very motto, *The Power of Teamwork Overcomes All*, speaks of strength in cooperation, energy in conformity, virtue in duty. Their missions are not chosen by themselves, but by an incorporeal elder in whose vision and wisdom they have total trust. Come the [next crisis era], coming-of age Millennials will have a lot in common with these action toys.

Strauss and Howe 1997:293

In terms of traditional heroes, however, this generation is sorely lacking. They have celebrities instead of heroes. The Millennial "heroes" are actors, multi-million dollar performers and sports stars whose claim to fame is popularity rather than for "heroic" act of intrinsic value. Most celebrities actively promote a destructive lifestyle, and tell young people not to follow their example. Yet, these are the people who gain the headlines and the admiration of today's youth. This is not to say that heroes of generations past were not human or never made mistakes, but rather that the acts that conferred hero status onto them were acts of value or benefit to society, rather than the ability to manipulate the media to gain publicity. Pop Stars are the religious icons of today. According to the dictionary, an icon is a figure representing Christ; a symbol, a representation, anybody or anything uncritically admired. We use religious terminology to describe pop stars. Most pop stars have enhanced value rather than functional value. Functional value is where something is important for what it is; while enhanced value is when something has a value placed on it that is beyond the true value of the object. In a consumer society, functional value has little importance. In the past most famous people were famous for a functional reason. Certain actions caused them to become famous - while today people become famous for who they are and not so much for what they do. In a postmodern world (see below), style is more important than content. Madonna's style (for example) made her into an icon. Pop stars have become the new role models in society - we look to them for how to act or dress.

In addition to an overactive entertainment industry, today's schoolchildren have grown up immersed in a world of computers and other information technologies. They play video games; they listen to music on digital compact discs; they help their families program the computerized controls of videocassette players. They have on their desks and at their fingertips access to more information of every sort than any human beings have ever had in the whole of history. They have in their homes more raw data processing power than most nations have ever had. To put this in a bit of perspective, consider the following illustration:

Let's say you're going to a party so you pull out some pocket change and buy a little greeting card that plays "Happy Birthday" when it's opened. After the party,

someone casually tosses the card into the trash, throwing away more computer power than existed in the entire world before 1950. The party gift you give is a system called Saturn, made by Sega, the gamemaker. It runs on a higher performance processor than the original 1976 Cray Supercomputer, which in its day was accessible to only the most elite physicists.

Huey 1994

This access to knowledge and level of data processing power have given children a different way of interacting with information compared with previous generations. Many familiar communications media-including television, movies, radio, newspapers, magazines, and books-are essentially linear. The users of those media have little if any control over the information they receive. They follow the flow of information from beginning to end along a path determined in advance by the providers of the information (cf. "The Nintendo Generation", 2000). Millennial kids, however, prefer their information to arrive in "interactive" forms, and are especially drawn to Internet information channels. They have a much higher "information overload" threshold, but have been forced to make drastic changes in how they process and learn information. This has been largely misunderstood by older generations who attempt to force them into the older methods of linear processing.

As we noted above, the Millennial generation is in a very similar societal period to the GI generation. Strauss and Howe refer to this phenomenon in great depth, as they show the cyclical nature of history. Thus, many of the characteristics that were true of the GIs apply also to the Millennials. One of the common threads is their approach to faith and religious life. As we saw above, "in such periods, those traditions with the greatest emphasis on the personal life and religious experience of the 'believer' will thrive. It is also in these periods that new groups spin off from existing institutional structures" (Regele 1995:40). We should expect to see this happening, and, in fact, there are already movements towards this. But the emphasis is more directed towards "doing faith". True faith is seen in faithfulness and in building the institution that becomes the vehicle for spreading the Gospel to the community. Commitment is given to those organisations that encourage and actively develop meaningful "community" and relationships.

This will be seen in community structures and an increasing patriotism as well.

The agenda of the Next New Deal will center around young adults. In exchange, old Boomers will impose a new duty of compulsory service, notwithstanding those elders' own youthful draft resistance. Millennials will not oppose this because they will see in it a path to public achievement. If inducted for war, Millennials will cast aside any earlier pacifism and march to duty. Like Power Rangers, they will not be averse to militarized mass violence, just to uncontrolled personal violence - quite the opposite of Boomer youths back in the Awakening. National leaders will not hesitate to mobilize and deploy them in huge armies. Where Boomer youths once

screamed against duty and discipline, Boomer elders will demand and receive both from Millennial troops.

Strauss and Howe, 1997:295

In South Africa, we are already seeing a call for a national community service time for school leavers or graduates. Although Xers will rile against this for a few more years, we should not be surprised if it is young people themselves who ensure, in a few years time, that national service, in a civilian developmental capacity, is ushered in. In this sense, they are a very practical generation, prepared to get involved and do what it takes to make things happen. They have a much longer-term view than their next-elders, Generation X.

Gen Y is marked by a distinctly practical world view, say marketing experts. Raised in dual-income and single-parent families, they've already been given considerable financial responsibility. Surveys show they are deeply involved in family purchases, be they groceries or a new car. One in nine high school students has a credit card co-signed by a parent, and many will take on extensive debt to finance college. Most expect to have careers and are already thinking about home ownership, according to a 1998 survey of college freshman for Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. This is a very pragmatic group. At 18 years old, they have five-year plans. They are already looking at how they will be balancing their work/family commitments.

Neuborne 1999:online

In terms of Christianity, around the world, there seems to be a sense of expectancy, a sense that God is "doing a new thing". The Millennials are being influenced by this renewed reliance on the Spirit, and by the sense of expectation of a move of God. Even if such a revival does not occur (in fact, there are reports of many such revivals occurring, e.g. in Brownsville, Pensacola and in the Church in Brazil and Korea), the Millennial generation will have been influenced by the excitement of expectation and the sense that church must change. They will most likely provide the leadership of the new church structures that will emerge from the Boomer-led, Generation X fuelled changes in Christian ministry that are beginning to take place across the world.

The generational characteristics of these young people have still to be developed, and it is too early to identify a generational personality. However, armed with our understanding of the generational cycle, as well as our early observations (and the developing leading-edge Millennials in America), we can identify some traits that are important: Community matters the most to them; they are confident and energetic; they are Passionately tolerant; change is constant, focus is fragmented; they have a very weak morality; they value choice and variety, not size and volume; they are over-protected; they only trust themselves; there is an increasing divide between rich and poor; they have non-traditional family definitions and are leading a sexual counter revolution; nothing shocks them: they've "Been there, done that!"; and, they are plugged in (cf. Codrington 1999b).

When asked about their generation, Millennials say “technology tops the list of advantages while crime, violence, and drugs are the leading problems the Generation 2001 students sees facing them” (Harris 1998). Bill Price & Associates research in South Africa sees a remarkable increase in the importance placed on the family (1998). In virtually every poll taken of the Millennial generation, the common indicators used to assess a generation are all moving for the better. In general, older generations (with the probable exception of Generation X) will be drawn to these young people. They will make a good impression, especially with those older adults who have battled so much with the Xers.

New pop culture trends will be big, bland, and friendly. In film, young stars will be linked with positive themes, display more modesty in sex and language, and link new civic purpose to screen violence. In sports, players will become more coachable, more loyal to teams and fans, and less drawn to trash talk, in-your-face slam dunks, and end-zone taunts. In pop music, Millennials will resurrect the old ritual of happy group singing, from old campfire favorites to new tunes with simple melodies and upbeat lyrics. Whether in film, sports, or music, the first Millennial celebrities will win praise as good role models for children.

Strauss and Howe, 1997:294

Already this trend can be seen in Millennial music, as an example. It started with the Spice Girls, and the trend of music with a softer edge *and* light-hearted feel has continued with artists such as Ricky Martin, Shania Twain, Boyzone, Britney Spears, Jennifer Lopez and the ubiquitous “Mambo number 5” in 1999. Of course, harder, edgier music still exists and sells well, but the resurgence of a fuller, jazzier, brassier sound that is fun, is characteristic of the current mainstream musical trends. Interestingly enough, the GIs saw the same trend as youth, with the emergence of big band and the dance band sound. A similar move can also be seen in Christian praise & worship music. The older sounds of the Bill Gaither-style bands was not just an “older” sound, but fundamentally, musically different. The beat, for instance was on the dominant notes, or the “on-beat” – the feel, although up tempo, was still often solemn if not always serious. These tunes were fairly easy to clap to and follow a rhythm, which made them easy to learn. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, *Integrity*, led primarily by Don Moen and Ron Kenoly, picked up the beat of the 1980s, which was more on the “off-beat”. Older people have real difficulty with picking up the beat of these songs in many cases, and it is not natural to them. The mid-1990s have been dominated by *Hillsongs*, Australia who followed a similar feel. This worship was mainly aimed at Boomers, although the refreshing newness captured Xers as well. The latest trend is coming out of Britain, especially from *Soul Survivor* and Matt Redman. This is a much softer sound, much simpler and “back to basics”, with more of an acoustic tone, but a real emphasis on “off beat” rhythms and unexpected melodies that are not as easy to learn. This “sound” and “feel”, combined with intimate words is really connecting with Xers and Millennials. The theme is worship - intimate worship one-on-one with God.

This study predicts, however, that we will see a resurgence of bold, brassy praise songs, as the Millennials begin to make their impact on Christian worship.

These children are being groomed to be the civic-minded, community-oriented work force of the next crisis, who will then emerge as the world's leaders in the outer-driven era that will follow. And for the first time in generational history, because of medical science extending life expectancies, an older Civic generation (the GI generation) is still significantly active enough to reach across the generations and help raise the next Civic generation (the Millennials). This has the potential to create an even more powerful and ambitious group of Civics than ever before in history. This is borne out in numerous surveys of Millennial generation attitudes. The Generation 2001 survey found that 88% of students have already established specific goals for the next five years and 78% agree strongly that they are sure that someday they will get to where they want to be in life. A strong majority of 75% disagree that "lucky breaks are more important to achieving success than hard work" and 57% are willing to work more than 40 hours per week to reach their career goals (Harris 1998).

"If the generational cycle prevails, we will enter some kind of crisis between 2015 and 2025. In 2015 the oldest [American] millennial will be thirty-three, and the youngest around eleven. Like the [GIs] before them, they will be at just the right age to fill the ranks necessary to defeat the rising threat" (Regele 1995:142). Unfortunately, with the pictures of the "GI" World War II pasted in our minds, this is not necessarily a happy thought.

3 Biblical Generational Models

The concept of a "generation" is found often in Scripture. In the NIV, a simple word search reveals 163 usages of the word "generation" or its plural. In the Old Testament, there are 61 in Pentateuch alone, and 128 in total. And this does not even begin to look at the concept as used in other contexts or linguistic structures, such as the concept of "families" or "inheritance". It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to deal with the Biblical and cultural usage of these concepts, especially in eschatological discussions. However, it is fairly obvious, even at a most cursory glance at the Old Testament, that the concept of a "generation" is central to the Old Testament covenant with Abraham and his "descendants" (cf. Gen. 12:2). The focus on family is clear as God's chosen people are often referred to as "children" of "Abraham, Isaac and Jacob". Many of the psalms have a generational focus, with 34 references in total. See especially Pss. 49, 78, 79, 102 and 145. The prophets, especially Isaiah, have a similar focus.

The concept of a generation is most easily traced within a family, and it is on families that the Bible seems to concentrate. This does not mean that during a time in history when family structures are not as strong as they were in Biblical times that the concept of a "generation" is meaningless. The research referred to above has clearly shown that generations are well established in society and can be defined in fairly precise terms. This dissertation agrees with Strauss and Howe's model of a four-generation cycle, of Idealist (dominant), Reactive (recessive), Civic (dominant) and Adaptive (recessive) types. "Biblical narrative suggests the possibility of a four-generation cycle in similar patterns found in the successive generations of Abraham/Isaac/Jacob and Esau/Patriarchs, or Moses and Aaron/the desert generation/Joshua and the conquest generation/the Judges, or Samuel/Saul/David/Solomon. Commentators have noticed links between Abraham, Moses and Samuel in terms of type and style" (Zimmerman 1995:45).

Olson (1997) gives a good illustration of how the "old generation" of the desert wanderings in Numbers is a recessive generation that demands obedience to laws and authority without question (Numbers 1-10). This generation was led by Moses, a "Silent"-type generation leader (in Moses' case, quite literally afraid of public speech, cf. Ex. 4:14-15), adaptive and working alone (he had to be told by his father-in-law how to delegate, cf. Ex. 18:14ff.) and also, like many of the current Silent generation, never getting to see the "promised land" and being very disappointed with the generations that follow. Yet, Joshua, the "Boomer"-type leader takes the next idealistic, "new generation" of those who would cross the Jordan in the conquest of Israel, a dominant generation that rebels against authority and looks for compromise in the law (Numbers 11-25), and conquers the land. Olson cites a number of examples (especially the two accounts of the daughters of Zelophehad) to show the differences between the two approaches, and how Moses battled to deal with this transition to a new generation. Yet, even as Moses battled, God did not. After Moses and Joshua came a reactive generation that rebelled against all that they had learnt (cf. Judg. 2:10). This "Generation X"-type group were viewed as "lost" and hopeless. And were followed by the first of the judges, a "Millennial"-type civic-minded judge and leader who accepted the role of nation building. This cycle is continued throughout the judges.

The same cycle can be seen in the establishment of the monarchy in Israel, with a recessive, adaptive type king Saul, followed by an idealistic period which culminated in the planning of the Temple under King David. This was followed by a reactive King Solomon, who although he started well, questioned the "old" ways and the "rules" established in history, thus bringing a collapse which was so complete and profound that the next generation, although civic-minded saw the expression of this dominant character in the division of the nation into two kingdoms. The "generations" and the way in which

the effects of each generation's action are carried through to the "fourth generation" (cf. Ex. 34:7; Num. 14:18; Deut. 5:9).

The intention of this section is not, however, to provide Biblical proof texts to bolster the argument for generational analysis within Christian ministries. Rather, it is to make the simple point that throughout history (Biblical history included), older generations have had to come to terms with a younger generation that did not do things the way they "had always been done". And even though there are many instances of this leading to tragedy, there are equally instances of the younger generations getting better and renouncing the tragedy of their parents' acts. The cycle of the book of judges, and the erratic progress of Israel under its kings also shows that God is in control of the whole process. God has never been taken by surprise with a generational "constellation" in history. God is not surprised now, at the start of the third millennium to discover these vast differences between the living generations. Our task is to discover how God wishes us to behave during this time, and by what means this can be most successfully achieved. Before we address this issue, however, we must come to terms with the fact that additional pressures are conspiring to magnify the effects of the generational cycle. And the magnification is reaching its greatest point as we head into the third millennium. We analyse these complicating factors in the next chapter.

Culture Wars: The Post-Y2K Generations

*"A billion hours ago, human life appeared on earth.
A billion minutes ago, Christianity emerged.
A billion Coca-Colas ago was yesterday morning."
from: 1996 Coca Cola Company annual report.*

Having established the differences between people born at different times during the past century, we now turn our focus to the impact of those changes, and the creation of "generation gaps". We also need to consider other major factors that are creating division between people, especially between young and old.

1 The Generation "Constellation" at the start of Third Millennium

At the start of the twenty-first century, we have a certain "constellation" of generational cohorts (cf. Susan McManus "The Nation's Changing Age Profile: What Does It Mean?" In Thau and Heflin 1997:130ff.; Strauss and Howe 1997). The dominant, civic-minded Millennials are in their youth, a time focused on development, characterised by learning and dependency, and the time when values are being acquired. They are increasingly protected youths, who ooze confidence and ability. The recessive, reactive Generation Xers are moving into their young adult years, where the central role is activity: in the workplace, establishing careers, starting families, and the testing of values. They are under-protected, and over-criticised youths, now growing into risk-taking, alienated young adults who irritate all other generations. The dominant, inner-fixated, idealist Boomers are in midlife, where they are beginning to rise to prominence as leaders, using their values to guide society. The narcissism of the Boomers' young adult years gives way to moralistic fervour in midlife, as they "take control" of society. The recessive, adaptive Silent generation is moving out of midlife, realising that they are no match for the dominant Boomers who are following them into leadership positions. They act as indecisive "arbitrator-leaders", rapidly losing the respect of the generations who follow them. The dominant, civic-minded GI generation is in elderhood, where their central role is stewardship and generativity (that is, giving back to younger generations), as they supervise, mentor and pass on values. They are busy elders, sustaining the powerful image they had as leaders a few years ago.

2 Generation Gaps

Although in individual people, such as two identically aged next door neighbours, it may be impossible to identify the moment at which one generation gives way to the next, taken as a whole, the generations are fairly distinguishable if somewhat “fuzzy” at the edges.

Mariás (1970) used the image of a watershed mountain range, with valleys on either side to illustrate the concept of generational development. A generation consists of those born in the “valley” between two “ridges”. The ridges are the “watersheds” in history - the critical moments in history. We saw briefly in the previous chapter some critical moments in this last century: For instance, those born after 1 January, 1901 did not fight in World War I, those born after 1 January, 1943 were eligible for the Vietnam Draft, and those before were raised on radio not television, and were reasonably unaffected by rock ‘n’ roll; those born after 1982 graduate High School in the next millennium, and those born after 1990 in South Africa cannot remember institutionalised apartheid. These critical moments do make for sharp divides between two people born on either side of them. Other generational divisions may not be as clear cut, but the general impression of society, and of those within the generation is one of identification with a given generation. Of course, there will always be those who do not “fit”, or because of a variety of factors have had to adopt attitudes from a different generation. For example, it is not uncommon to find the best teachers picking up the characteristics of the students they teach. It is also not uncommon for those who are especially attuned to society, such as priests, pastors, counselors and politicians to display traits from a variety of generations, especially from those of their dominant support base.

Another reason for this development of generational types is due to the nature of parenting. In fact, Strauss and Howe (cf. 1997:80) claim that the reaction of children to their own parent’s parenting style is one of the key driving forces between generational development. Especially since it can be demonstrated that a dominant parental era produces largely recessive children. And predominantly recessive parenting produces dominant children.

A dominant generation requires the formation of a generation of the recessive type as its successor. Each generation is formed in the shadow of the immediately preceding generation. Group personality is shaped by forging distinctive characteristics to differentiate one generation from its predecessor. Distinctive clothing, language, music preferences and patterns of interaction are cultivated. When the preceding generation is dominant, the succeeding generation develops a recessive group personality type. This generation reaches adulthood to discover all the leadership positions have been filled by predecessors. The recessive-type generation finds it always lives in the shadows until most of the opportune years for leadership have passed. Abraham and Isaac provide an appropriate biblical example of this alternation sequence. Even though Isaac was born in Abraham’s

elder years, he was forced to live in Abraham's shadow, even after Abraham's death. The most significant role Isaac plays in genesis is to serve as the link to transfer the covenant promises from Abraham to Jacob and Esau. Dominant generations are followed by recessive generations.... This alternation of generation types suggests why grandparents and their grandchildren often demonstrate natural affinities for each other. Both may share generation type in common.

Zimmerman 1995:45

The "generation gap" is therefore defined as the differences in attitude, outlook and values that develop between two successive groups of people, mainly due to the need for children to individuate from the parents and form their own identity.

3 Worldview Gaps

Different generations (i.e. people of different ages) have different worldviews. Thus, we would expect there to be some misunderstandings, possibly leading to conflict as these worldviews interact. In a world of ever-increasing change, the cultural shifts within communities are enormous. Never before in history, have people had to deal with so much change in a single lifetime. Change used to be a slow process, drifting almost imperceptibly over the course of an individual's lifetime, and was measured more in aeons and centuries than any other time scale. Today, especially in the arena of electronics and computers, change is best measured in terms of hours and days. No individual can expect to be living in a recognisable world in a few years time. Everyone living today expects the world to undergo fundamental changes within their own lifetime – this was not always so.

In the last twenty years, all of Western society has passed through extraordinarily turbulent times. We have been living in a time when fundamental rules, the basic ways we do things, have been altered dramatically. That is, what was right and appropriate in the early 1960s is now, in many cases, wrong and highly inappropriate in the 1990s. Or, conversely, what was impossible, crazy, or clearly out of line in the early 1960s is, in many cases today, so ordinary that we forget that it wasn't always that way. These dramatic changes are extremely important because they have created in us a special sense of impermanence that generates tremendous discomfort.

Barker 1993:21f.

The writer of the above quote cannot help speaking of "us" and "we" as he writes. He is a Boomer, reflecting on his own life and that of his peers. The changes he refers to were well dramatised in Mike Meyers' *Austin Powers* movies, especially the first one, *International Man of Mystery*, where a 1960s James Bond-like super-spy is transplanted into the 1990s and must deal with all the changes that have occurred. Seeing the two eras juxtaposed on screen helped to highlight the enormity of the changes that have occurred, especially as we winced at Austin Powers' gaffs, using 1960s logic and acceptable

behaviour in the 1990s. Yet, for most of today's young people there is no "discomfort" at these changes, since we have no memory of another way of life. For young people today, these changes are not changes – they are simply "how things are", and they are normal and good, and will be part of their childhood memories. Thus, where older generations feel discomfort, younger generations feel normal.

One only needs to think in terms of what the average 70 year old, having reached the Biblical, "three score and ten", has experienced this century. Born in 1930, they have seen the invention of jet engines and the birth of commercial air travel, they have seen the birth of radio and television, they have seen men fly to space and walk on the moon, they have seen the rise and fall of apartheid, and of communism. And consider this, when thinking of today's *twenty year olds*:

They have only known one Germany. Man has always walked on the moon. Their lifetime has always included AIDS. The expression "you sound like a broken record" means nothing to them. They have never owned a record player. They have likely never played Pac Man, and Star Wars looks very fake. They have always had an answering machine. They have always been able to fax. Cell-phones are normal. There have always been VCR's, but they have no idea what Beta is. Roller-skating has always meant inline for them. They never took a swim and thought about Jaws. Petrol has always been sold 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They don't remember who Botha is - neither Naas or PW. They do not care who shot J.R. and have no idea who J.R. is. The Cosby Show, Miami Vice, WKRP in Cincinnati and Dynasty are shows they have likely never seen (unless in afternoon reruns). Jet airlines? - are there any other types of planes? Those ten years old and younger cannot remember institutionalised apartheid. Michael Jackson has always been white.

(Extract adapted from an Internet Illustration entitled Getting Old. Author unknown, Quoted in Codrington and Swartz, 1999)

The problem for Christians, as Lingenfelter (1998) correctly points out, is that when we attempt to pass on our Christian heritage to the next generation, or as his focus is in his book, attempt to pass it on to other cultures, we tend to pass on not only the fundamentals of the faith, but also a whole lot of our own cultural trappings. He argues that culture is not neutral (1998:16), and this leads, in fact, to sin being passed on in the guise of religion. As we have already seen, "members of every society hold a collective worldview and participate in structured social environments. Learning from parents and peers to accept and live in accord with certain values, beliefs, and procedures for action, they create a collective this-worldliness, which becomes a prison of disobedience. So entangled, they live a life of conformity to social images that are in conflict with God's purpose for humanity" (1998:15f). This is the real reason that generational conflict has arisen in the church – there is a fundamental culture clash, or "worldview gap" between old and young. This gap has emerged in addition to the generation gap that would be normal between

parents and children. This has the effect of exacerbating the generation gap. We must therefore turn our attention to defining the causes of these worldview gaps that exist today.

4 The post-Y2K generations

Because change is happening so fast today, Generation X and the Millennial generation stand not only on different sides of generational divides from older generations, but also on a different side of a wider societal ridge. Long (1997:13) expresses the concern that at the start of the third millennium, an understanding of generational differences is not enough:

Everything I read and heard was focusing on the transition from the baby-boomer generation to Generation X. I began to search for a steering mechanism in this transition. I found the clue I needed in David Bosch's seminal work *Transforming Mission* (1991), in which he describes six major societal paradigm shifts. While reading his work, I began to recognise a link between the transition from the baby-boom generation to Generation X and the transition from the Enlightenment era to the postmodern.

Today's young people are different. There is little debate about that fact. But they are not just different because they are teenagers - they are very different from the kind of young people you remember when you were a teenager. "Sometime between 1960 and 1980, an old, inadequately conceived world ended, and a fresh, new world began" (Hauerwas and Willimon 1989:15). Today's teenagers seem to be from a totally different world, where all the rules are different, and the game doesn't seem to make sense.

For many churches, the most disruptive discovery of recent years has been that few of today's teenagers were born back on the 1950s or 1960s. A new generation of teenagers arrived with the babies born in the post-1969 era. What worked well in youth ministries in the 1960s or 1970s or early 1980s no longer works. Why? One reason is those approaches to youth ministries were designed by adults for an adult dominated world in which most teenagers looked to adults for wisdom, knowledge, leadership, affirmation, expertise, authority, and guidance. That world has almost disappeared and exists today largely in the heads of people age twenty-eight and over.

Schowalter 1995:8

Never before in the history of the world has one generation seen so many changes in culture and society. Those people born between the two World Wars have witnessed the greatest technological moments of mankind's history: commercial jet airlines, fax machines and photocopiers, space travel and a moon landing, pictures of Saturn and Jupiter, computers, satellite telephones, radar, the Internet, television, MP3, CD and DVD players, calculators and much, much more. Yet, it is not just these things, and the speed at which they have arrived, that separates the young from the old in the world at the beginning of the third millennium - today's young people are separated from their elders by incredible, fundamental shifts in thinking. There is a yawning chasm between today's

adults (over 30) and youth (under 30). Because today's adults do not know or understand or, in some cases even acknowledge the existence of, a fundamentally new world, with a fundamentally new worldview, they have lost the confidence of today's youth. Whereas in the past adults were looked to for help and a "roadmap" for the future, today's young people have little confidence in their ability to guide them into the third millennium – so they look elsewhere for assistance.

It is absolutely vital for the future of the Christian faith to reverse this trend. Throughout Scripture, the young are encouraged and commanded to look to the old for wisdom and counsel. This is not optional for young people. Yet, at the same time, older people need to realise the predicament we find ourselves in. The task that Scripture lays at the feet of the older generations is to be the guiding lights for the young – to hold the torch up to illuminate the path which must be traveled. This can only be done if those following are continuing in the same path. Unfortunately, all of the changes in society over the last 20 years in particular, and the last 50 in general, mean that the path that today's young people are working on is very different from that of the older generations. The older generations are frustrated because the young don't seem to listen to their advice or follow their footsteps. The young are frustrated because they see no guiding light or words of wisdom applicable to the path they're on. We are in a dangerous place at this moment of history.

A similar moment was reached as the era starting with Abraham and ending with Moses was reached. At the end of the book of Joshua, we read about the generation of leaders who were contemporaries of Joshua. "Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel" (Josh 24:31 NIV). Notice that these people had personally experienced God and served him faithfully throughout their lives. In the next book, we read about their children, the generation that followed: "The people served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had seen all the great things the LORD had done for Israel" (Judg 2:7 NIV). This generation served the Lord, too, but notice the subtle shift in wording – they had not personally "experienced" God, they had "seen" God at work. And then, just two verses later, we read this sad description of the next generation: "After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD nor what he had done for Israel" (Judg 2:10 NIV). We are in danger of this same process occurring on a similarly pervasive scale if we do not take action to bridge the gulf between the generations. The vastness of the gulf is a "freak" occurrence in history, as we move from one philosophical paradigm to another. This is similar, for instance, to the start of the Enlightenment or Reformation. It will not last more than about another 30 years, as today's youth, growing up on the "far side" of the mountain top of change will only have to contend with

generational differences between themselves and their children, and not fundamental cultural changes as well. We cannot, however, simply give up, conceding that the divide as it stands today is simply too great to cross. Scripture does not give us a mandate to give up on our generational responsibilities to learn and teach. The onus, however, is on the adults. Scripture, and common sense place the initial responsibility for bridging the gap on the older generations. One of the ways in which this can begin to happen is for everyone involved to understand the radical nature of the divide between young and old today. This will assist us to put in place structures and ministries to deal with divide, even if these are temporary and less than ideal.

The shifts in thinking and society that have caused this extraordinary divide between young and old at the end of the twentieth century were anticipated by the philosophers of the nineteenth century, including Hegel, Nietzsche and Sartre in the early twentieth century. Francis Schaeffer wrote about the coming effects during the 1960s. The fundamental shifts can be broadly categorised under five main headings. Today, the effects of these five shifts have moved out of the realm of philosophy and into everyday existence. Thus, anyone under the age of 30 today is not only "Post-Y2K", they are also:

4.1 Post-Industrial

For the last 200 years, the world has been changing at an increasing pace, fuelled by the Industrial Revolution. This industrialised era is the world that many older people know as "normal". During the Industrial era, most jobs have involved a set routine from morning to evening. We have a "normal" working day of "9 to 5" because during the pre-Industrial age, in agrarian economies, you could not work at night when there was no sun. That is obvious. But since the advent of electrical lighting, we are no longer bound by the sun, and could actually follow our body's natural rhythm of effectiveness. For many people, this means 3 or 4 stretches of effectiveness during the day and night, each lasting about 3 hours. Different people will be better at different times of the day. The Industrial age mentality has not yet made this adjustment. For the last 20 years, however, the world has been moving from an Industrial Age to an Information Age. Many companies are moving away from the 9-to-5 approach, to take advantage of this rhythm of effectiveness in business as "flexi-time" arrangements go 24-hour. This is the work world into which many young people are now entering.

In the early 1900s 85% of workers were agricultural. Today less than 3% are. In 1950 73% of workers were in production or manufacturing. Now less than 15% are (Pritchett 1999). The world has also moved rapidly from a manufacturing-base to a service-base, from the factory gate to the shopping mall, from the production line to the PC. As a result, society is more diverse, more fragmented, and more individualistic that it used to be. No

longer will we accept the old offer of Henry Ford and his Model T car - that we could have it any colour we want, "as long as it's black". Mass-production has been replaced by mass-customisation. And mass-customisation has led to uncontrolled consumerism.

For example, Motorola, an American telephone provider is currently putting 72 satellites into space to create a global satellite communications network. It is their plan is to allocate a number to each individual at birth. This is your phone number which you keep for life, no matter which country you happen to be in, it always stays the same. This will be fully operational by the middle of next century - so just imagine how many cell phones will be wandering around by then.

The speed of industrial change is also incomparable in history. For example, take the computer industry – the paragon of 20th century achievements. ENIAC, commonly thought of as the first modern computer, was built in 1944. It took up more space than an 18-wheeler's tractor trailer, weighed more than 17 Toyota Camrys, and consumed 140,000 watts of electricity. ENIAC could execute up to 5,000 basic arithmetic operations per second. One of today's microprocessors, the Pentium II, is built on a tiny piece of silicon about the size of a 20c piece. It weighs less than a packet of sweeteners, and uses less than 2 watts of electricity. A Pentium can execute over 60 million instructions per second. In addition to the increase in power and decrease in size, computers are now about 8,000 times less expensive than they were 30 years ago. If similar progress were made in automotive technology, today you could buy a Camry for about R6 (\$1). It would travel at the speed of sound, and go about 1,000 kilometers on a thimble of petrol.

Today's young people have grown up in a world where nothing is impossible. They are growing up in a consumer driven world, where everything is governed by getting the next promotion, the next upgrade, the next biggest fad. The workplace has changed, and this is changing how we live our lives.

Christian ministry must accept that the "one size fits all" mentality is dead. We can no longer expect that one event will cater for the diverse needs and desires of a "consumerised" people. And saying that the way you worship God is the "correct" way is counter productive to evangelism. We know from Scripture that God is a God of diversity - in fact, He glories in it. We should do the same. There is nothing inherently wrong with mass-customisation - in fact, it may be truly Christian, as it takes into account that we are all individuals, individually hand-crafted by God. We are not just one amorphous mass of human-animals, at the mercy of the giant "machine" called modern living. One UK mission agency started a short-term mission programme last year, and in only the second year of the programme it had 120 applicants. It achieved this by offering tailor-made short-term placements, which are designed around when you could go, how long for, and

what you wanted to do. Given that they didn't even have a full-time short-term programme co-ordinator at that time to handle all these, they had to cut back on the offer. But their unexpected "success" illustrates the issue (from Tiplady 1999).

The church must also realise that it is not "giving in" to consumerism when it provides choices to its members and attenders. Although it is consumerism that has raised the level of need for such choice and variety within people, that desire for variety is not inherently evil. And therefore, it is not a problem for churches to provide variety. Of course, when it is variety for varieties sake, or more strictly, when it becomes novelty that is important, rather than variety, then we run into difficulties. Schaller discovered in his research on Boomers especially, that "at least one-half of the churchgoers born after 1940 place quality, relevance, choices, and a meaningful response to their religious and personal needs above either geographical proximity or denominational label" (1994:61).

The church has been through an "information revolution" before - when Guttenberg invented the printing press, and Martin Luther first mass-produced Bibles in the German vernacular. This fuelled the Reformation. Today, too, Christians are being exposed to a much broader spectrum of Christian thought, let alone other religious thought, and many beliefs, previously unquestioned due to limited exposure to differing Biblical interpretations, are now being re-examined. Today's young people are not so much interested in whether something is true or not, since they have become skeptical of any human's ability to grasp truth and be completely "correct" in Biblical interpretation. Today's young people are much more concerned about what works than what is true. This does not mean that they are slipping into pragmatism or situational ethics. What it means is that they will not accept abstract, hypothetical debates, in the ilk of "how many angels can dance on the head of a pin". Rather, they understand that the acceptance of the Bible as God's Truth is a faith issue (Hebrews 11:1), that faith must be demonstrated in deeds (James 2:17-18), and that without such faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6).

It is the strong contention of this study that this post-industrial approach to ministry will fuel another Reformation or, as Ogden (1990) contends, a final realisation of the goals of the first Reformation. The first Reformation took theology out of the hands of professional priests and gave it to the laity. But it never achieved its second goal - to take ministry out of the hands of the priests and give it back to the laity as well. A post-industrial church is too diverse and complex for any single pastor or group of "professional" leaders to manage. Authority and permission must be handed down to "ordinary" Christians - and we know what God can do with "ordinary people just like us" (James 5:17).

4.2 Post-Literate

When books were first made widely available with Gutenberg's printing press, it is easy to imagine many parents being very concerned about the anti-social behaviour book reading encouraged in their children - their noses glued to paper all day. While obsessive book-worming is not healthy, many parents today are equally concerned about the move away from books to the screen. Today's young people receive information fast and frequently. CNN, Sky, SuperSport News, BBC and a variety of other news services keep them up-to-the-minute in touch with global events. As young children, they were witnesses to the world's first "armchair war", in the Gulf. They spend more time with the television than with their parents during childhood. In addition to the growth of television and satellite, personal computers, video games, fax machines and photocopy machines have been part of today's young people's "normal" environment, and portable video games, VCRs, the walkman, laptop computers and "beat box" portable hi-fi systems have allowed them to take the media wherever they want to go. In the time it takes for a baby to grow into an adult, the Personal computer has revolutionised our lives. The first e-mails were sent in 1972 - that's after many Boomers entered the work place. PC's were only invented in 1976. The world wide web Internet was first pioneered in 1992 - that was when the majority of Xers were entering the workplace. In its few years of history, the Internet connected to the PC has changed the way in which we live. "The Internet revolution is a revolution. It is as revolutionary as the printing press and the internal combustion engine. And its going much faster" (Rich Karlgaard, Publisher, Forbes magazine, quoted on CNNfn, Digital Jam, July 1998). Nothing has been the same since PCs and the Internet arrived on the scene, but we are only at the beginning of the revolution. Young people have quickly embraced these changes and the technology driving them. It may be middle-aged computer nerds who are gaining financially out of being the visionaries of the computer age, but it is twenty-something young people who are the wizards behind the scenes, making the thing work. And growing up on "this side" of the information revolution is having a profound effect on Xers and Millennials, serving to widen the gap between them and the older generations.

The gap is widening in all areas of life. The "new economy" is based on information. The sought after people in today's job market are not necessarily those with specialist skills, but rather those with the ability to process raw data and access information quickly. Knowledge is no longer power - that playing field has been leveled by the world's largest database: the Internet. Everything that anyone has ever discovered or known is available on the Internet. The weekday edition of the New York Times contains more information than the average person was likely to come across in a lifetime during the 17th century (cf. Pritchett 1999). The power now belongs to those who can find that information in the most efficient way, in the shortest time, and who can present it in the most appealing form.

To older generations, today's young people "seem impatient for answers, always demanding information, asking questions, and pursuing multiple lines of enquiry simultaneously. What looks to some [adults] like a lack of attention in [today's young people] is, rather, a rapid-fire style of interacting with information which comes naturally to us as children of the information revolution" (Tulgan 1995:173).

One group of adults which has experienced the full brunt of the changes taking place are those who belong to the teaching profession. Over and over again, we have heard the cry: "It's just not working anymore". Many experienced and talented teachers, for whom teaching was a passion and motivator up until about five years ago, in South Africa, found that everything they had learnt at teaching College and all their experience helped them to teach with enthusiasm and effect. But it all stopped working in the middle of the 1990s. Margaret Mead anticipated this twenty years ago, when writing about the need for adults to recognise the magnitude of the changes taking place. "Ironically, it is often those who were, as teachers, very close to former generations of students, who now feel that the generation gap cannot be bridged and that their devotion to teaching has been betrayed by the young who cannot learn in the old ways" (1970:63).

This generation of young people have embraced technology and modern telecommunications. This has required them to learn the entirely new languages of different computer coding languages and "netiquette", and also taught them to communicate in fundamentally new ways. Douglas Rushkoff has brilliantly analysed this change in his book, *Playing the Future* (also known as *Children of Chaos*, 1996), where he argues that they learn in a mosaic fashion rather than linearly. They have a rapid-fire information consumption capability. Rushkoff points out that many of the things for which this generation is maligned, such as short attention spans and lack of ability to concentrate on a single task at once, are not problems but actually brilliant coping mechanisms for a world overloaded with information. "The skill to be valued in the twenty-first century is not the length of attention span, but the ability to multitask - to do many things at once, well.... [and] the ability to process visual information very rapidly" (Rushkoff 1996:50). Tulgan also points out this voracious appetite for information, and the ability to process it at high speeds (cf. 1995:176, 186, 191). "It is not just changing technology which characterizes the workplace of the future, but a changing atmosphere. [Today's young people] already know how to work in the virtual office where the only thing to grasp onto is your log-on password.... We're self-sufficient in the virtual marketplace where meaning is the primary commodity" (Tulgan 1995:174).

Parents, in particular, find it very difficult to keep up with the technological changes that dominate our lives. The role of a parent is to assist children to prepare themselves for the

world in which they must live and work. Parents did this by knowing more about the world than their children, and by using their experience to inform young people. However, today's parents, and teachers, have very little to teach today's children about the world. Just think about who is most capable of programming the household video machine or who answers the tough computer questions, if you don't believe that today it is the young people who are more geared up for the next century than their parents ever will be. The traditional role of the parent and adult, as irrefutable purveyor of all knowledge, must change.

The purpose of the youth ministry model of the past half century was to communicate knowledge about God with the assumption that young people could grab that knowledge and make it their own. That assumption was valid in the lives of millions of young people up until a decade ago. The focus of the spiritual formation model is intimacy. It doesn't bypass knowledge, but always seeks to make that knowledge real in actual experience. The goal is a rich, real intimacy with God without making assumptions that kids can jump from knowledge to experience on their own.... The spiritual formation model relies on a team of mentors: each mentor is deeply involved in the lives of a few young people.

McAllister 1999:105, 107

The Bible does not often give us categorical statements about methods. Yet, in Mark 4:34, we read a very powerful statement regarding Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus understood the ability and desire of His audience as He taught them spiritual truths. Firstly, He only told them stories. He did not speak to them in any other way. He entertained them - the root of this word means "to hold someone's interest". He kept them enthralled. Yet, He only told them as much as they could understand. He left them with an air of mystery and intrigue. He left them thinking and pondering - unlike many preachers today who think they need to explain every nuance of every syllable of the text. Jesus' stories came from everyday life, from the culture in which He lived - if He were living today, there can be little doubt that He would draw richly from the media, movies, and popular fiction to illustrate His points and make parables. It was only when He was alone with His disciples (the more mature Christians) that He explained things. And Jesus did all of this in the context of deep intimacy with a small group of disciples.

Teachers and preachers need to realise that multi-threaded/multi-tasking learning is absolutely vital. They must also realise that change is an essential part of any post-literate worldview. One of the major problems with church and school today is that it is boring for young people, because it is neither energetic nor dynamic / changing enough. The task of teaching is only complete when the learners have not only learnt, but also have been changed by that learning. This will NEVER happen when the learners are bored. Thus, although the teacher may be out of his or her comfort zone with some new teaching techniques, this is of little significance in our evaluation of effective teaching. The task of

teaching is NOT complete simply when the teacher has taught. Thus, if the learners have new styles of learning, it is the teachers who must adapt and fit in with them - not the other way round.

Young people in the twenty-first century will know more and have access to vastly greater quantities of information than ever before, and they will have the same information at their fingertips that their teachers have - possibly even more, since they know how to access it better. Which means they will be less likely to accept authoritative and definitive answers. Young people also know that in all fields of study, new knowledge has made much of what adults learnt at school and university redundant already. No longer will "Because I say so" suffice - especially when the "I" is an older person who can't search Encyclopaedia Britannica online; isn't a member of three email forums, doesn't read nine daily newspapers from around the globe and doesn't subscribe to six of the latest scientific and theological journals from universities as far afield as Boston and Bangkok. Let's face it, how many of us can do that already? Today's young people have had a jump start - while anyone currently over thirty is still playing catch up when it comes to Information Technology.

Teaching should be less about dumping content, and more about teaching wisdom and discernment. This generation of young people has too much of the former, and very little of the latter. The church needs to update its style, look at modern society for method (not content), and make more use of modern story telling techniques, and using as movies, media, multi-media presentations, and music. Long one way sermons will no longer communicate. Instead methods need to be innovative, short and interactive.

Dawson McAllister, in *Saving the Millennial Generation* (1999:105), has said it best:

The purpose of the youth ministry model of the past half century was to communicate knowledge about God with the assumption that young people could grab that knowledge and make it their own. That assumption was valid in the lives of millions of young people up until a decade ago. The focus of the spiritual formation model is intimacy. It doesn't bypass knowledge, but always seeks to make that knowledge real in actual experience. The goal is a rich, real intimacy with God without making assumptions that kids can jump from knowledge to experience on their own. The question is, What changes lives? In years past, the knowledge we communicated changed lives because young people had enough spiritual handles to assimilate it and apply it. That is no longer true today. The style of youth ministry was fun and games with a short talk at the end. Youth ministers became incredibly creative at inventing skits, contests, and other wacky things to draw kids to meetings, make them laugh, and then communicate a gem of truth. And it worked! Many of us reading these pages are thinking, So what's wrong with that? That's how I became a Christian. That's how I grew in my faith. That's how I met my wife. Hey, it's a winner! I'm not saying that style of ministry is wrong. It just isn't culturally relevant (or as relevant as it used to be). When

television was in its infancy, and there were no cable television, VCRs, video games, or virtual reality, then swallowing goldfish was pretty cool! But today, youth ministries have an incredibly difficult time competing with the images kids see in all the media they watch every day. These images are sharp and quick. The new technology is unbelievable. And think what it will be like tomorrow! But technology can't provide people with one thing they desperately want: an experience with the God of grace. We can.

4.3 Post-Modern

Postmodernism is a reaction to the rationalistic outlook of modernism, specifically a reaction to the concept that truth can be discovered by simple rationalistic induction. The most common caricature of postmodernism is that it is a complete denial of truth, thus relativising everything. Postmodern people, however, do not deny that there is truth and objective reality. What they question is our ability to distinguish truth from non-truth. One of the core premises of postmodern thought is that both the self, and "reality", are constructions. If my "self" can be reinvented as often as I wish, then I don't want to limit my options now. I might want to change my mind later. How can we know what is true, when we can never be truly objective? We can never stand outside of something - we are stuck in a mortal, earthly situation, and this skews all observations. In fact, the very act of observing changes that which is observed. We can never be objective, and we can never therefore really know whether we know what is true. In other words, true postmodern people accept that there must be absolute truth, but they do not accept that it is possible for anyone to find it and have a complete grasp of it. At best, we can know parts of it. At best, our beliefs should always be held lightly - and seen as temporary theories.

All truth-claims are therefore made in faith, which means that no one truth-claim can have any objective precedence over any other truth-claim. Anyone or any institution claiming to have a corner on the truth market is ridiculed out of court. And those who wish to impose their particular view of the world on others are scorned. Tolerance of people's worldviews is the ultimate virtue for today's society. Postmodernism is really, therefore, a reactionary movement, backlashing against the arrogant approach that modernism took to scientific study and "proof".

Modernist believe that human beings have within their own power the ability to rationally discover all truth and to apply these truths to moral and ethical situations. The Enlightenment was based on the principles that knowledge can be certain (i.e. essentially and inherently correct and absolute), objective (i.e. viewed and analysed from outside the flux of history and personality), and good (i.e. that "science, coupled with the power of education, will eventually free us from our vulnerability to nature, as well as from all social bondage" (Grenz 1996:4)).

Other defining characteristics of the modernist worldview include the belief that ultimate truth can be found in theology and application of the mind. What modernist theologians means by this is that religion can ultimately be shown to be “reasonable” and “scientific”. Central to their theological efforts is the attempt to represent religion and faith in a way that is attractive and acceptable to rationalistic scientists. This can all be traced back to Rene Descartes, who gave the foundation for modernist’s absolute trust in human reason.

Modernism also believes that everything can be explained. The basic algorithm believes that the more we study, the more we will learn. The more we learn, the more we will understand. The more we understand, the more control we will have. The more control we have, the better world we can create. Thus, modernism is on a quest to discover the all-encompassing scientific theory, and to use science to create a better world. “Proponents of the Enlightenment... held the extravagant expectation that the arts and sciences would further not only the control of the forces of nature but also the understanding of self and world, moral progress, justice in social institutions, and even human happiness” (Habermas, quoted in Grenz 1996:3).

Although Descartes was a Christian and went on to “prove” God’s existence, modernism has rejected the supernatural, and anything that is outside the bounds of “pure” scientific verification. By relying totally on what can be seen and verified, modernism has totally removed any need for supernatural intervention in the world. Philosophically, towards the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, writers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) were expounding the logical conclusion of Enlightenment, which led to very pessimistic conclusions about mankind’s absolute freedom and accountability, since there was no inherent knowledge or morality. For them, total freedom brought only total chaos and confusion. The power to act independently brought only crushing moral responsibility. The view that mankind is at the center of the universe brought only pain at our inability to control even the smallest details of our destiny. This existential humanism is the foundation of much of 20th century culture. Nietzsche, in his infamous “God is Dead” premise in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, predicted that the concept of God would soon disappear from society, as it was no longer needed. Sartre echoed his thoughts as he explains: “Existentialism is not atheist in the sense that it would exhaust itself in demonstrations of the non-existence of God. It declares, rather, that even if God existed it would make no difference from its point of view” (1989:56). That sums up modern views on God - they are not antagonistic, in general, but merely ambivalent.

Two world wars, and a plethora of local conflicts, combined with humanity’s inability to deal with the major problems of the world, such as natural decay, disease, poverty and

over-population, have dampened the spirits of the modernists. In America, the height of 1960s euphoria in the West, which included man landing on the moon, and computer technological advances, was tainted by political assassinations, racial violence, Vietnam and Watergate. Similar trends have been seen in other countries around the world in the second half of this century: the fall of communism and the Marxist ideal, the meteoric rise and subsequent collapse of Far Eastern economies, the racial violence in South Africa in the 1970s and 80s. All over the world, the view of human potential for discovering truth and morality has come crashing down. At the end of the 20th century there is no repeat of the optimistic idealism present a century ago, before the turn of this century.

In addition, Albert Einstein's discovery of the Theory of Relativity has created major problems for Newtonian physicists and the quest for the all-encompassing theory, by showing that we do not have an absolute base reference point in time and space as had always been assumed, but rather that everything in the universe is relative. Quantum physics works in a realm of contradiction, where, for example, light is experimentally described as either a wave or particle, depending on how it is observed. This contradicts logical laws of noncontradiction, and seems to bend reality to its own irrational devices. There is no truly objective vantage point in the world. This has destroyed the basic foundation of Cartesian thought, and undermined all of modernist science and philosophy.

These political, scientific and cultural realities, as well as the philosophical foundations, have been seen to be essentially bankrupt, or at least, critically flawed. This has caused the movement to postmodernism to be so strong. There are three main components driving the shift from modernism to postmodernism. These are: (1) the breakdown of belief, with no universal consensus as to what is true and what is not; (2) the birth of a global culture, as belief systems become aware of other belief systems, and become increasingly unable to accept any of them as absolutely true, even despairing of finding any method of deciding between the relative values of the different systems; and, (3) an increasing polarization between different camps on issues of morality, truth, education, culture and even an increasing generation gap.

Probably the single most important shift is the view of truth and how knowledge is attained and imparted. For postmodernists, truth is a social construction. Our view of truth and our understanding of knowledge is conditioned by what we are, which is conditioned by the society and culture within which we have grown up and lived. The first major steps to pointing out the ramifications of this belief were made by linguists, known as deconstructionists. They attempted to show that it is impossible to read a text "objectively" or to discover the "real meaning", by which modernists referred to the intended meaning of the author. Meaning is found when a reader engages with a text.

Thus, different readers would gain different meanings from the same text. In fact, the same reader could gain different meanings from the same text at different readings. “One purpose of Deconstructionism is to show there are multiple meanings; there is no right interpretation of any text” (Goetz 1997:52).

A popular example of the deconstruction of meaning can be found in the “behind-the-scenes” look at making a movie. The sound team working on the movie *Twister*, for example, had an interesting approach to producing the sound of the tornado itself. They could not record it live, due to speed of the wind buffeting the microphones and producing distortion. So they had to create it digitally. However, they also had to consider one other major factor: the sound used in *The Wizard of Oz* when the tornado took Dorothy. The howling sound, according to the sound crew, has become so associated with tornadoes that they had to use it, and so used a device from *The Wizard of Oz*, a circular wheel covered in newsprint to produce the same sound and incorporated this into their movie sounds. So, what people have come to associate with tornado sounds from an old movie became the sound for the new one, even though the director’s stated goal was to create the “most realistic sounding tornado in film history”.

Examples can also be found in literature. Terry Pratchett, in his science fiction novel, *Moving Pictures*, cleverly satirizes the Hollywood movie industry. The main city of his fantasy world, Ankh-Morpork had been recreated in a Holy Wood studio. The main character arrives on the set of the “moving picture” and finds a scene of great activity.

Carpenters swarmed over a construction that, when it was finished, would make Ankh-Morpork look like a very indifferent copy of itself, except that the buildings in the original city were not, by and large, painted on canvas stretched over timber and didn’t have the dirt carefully sprayed on. Ankh-Morpork’s buildings had to get dirty all by themselves. It looked for more like Ankh-Morpork than Ankh-Morpork ever had.

(1990:208)

That’s the irony of postmodernism that the copy can be more “real” than the “real thing”. Postmodernism realises that because we all see out of different eyes, and have no way of knowing that we even see the same colours, yet alone the same reality, there can be no such as a truly objective reality. All reality is filtered through individual senses which render all sensory experiences subjective. Being in the same place at the same time witnessing the same event does not guarantee the same response, either. One can think of a multitude of examples when this would be true. Some wag has suggested that observing the game of cricket is the best example of this – imagine sitting next to someone who knew nothing about the game – the reality which faces both of you is completely different. Modernists would argue that if everyone were simply explained the “rules” and assisted to develop to a sufficiently comparable intellectual level, we would all see things in the same

way. Centuries of arguments and the *increase* in debate and controversy that modernism has brought seems to show the lie in this assumption.

Suffice it to say, that postmodernism accepts that the interaction with the world is not a purely intellectual exercise, but involves the whole being. Thus, emotions are as powerful and as important as intellect. Thus, if some constructed “reality” is able to evoke the same, or even greater emotions than the original, why would we necessarily prefer the original to the copy? Thus, postmoderns have no difficulty in understanding that something can be “more real than the real thing”. It is this sense of reality, founded as it is in total subjectivity, that postmoderns are seeking.

The process of deconstruction was taken up by other philosophical schools, all of which reject metanarratives. A metanarrative is a “story” which explains an existential event or occurrence. Thus, for example, Christianity as a metanarrative explains the existence and purpose of life on earth. Postmodernism rejects all metanarratives which claim the status of “all-encompassing” or are exclusivist in nature. This is something which is often attributed to attitudes within traditional Christianity.

In a lecture at Kings College entitled: “Pop Stars & Priests, Clubbing and Church Music, Money and Religion”, Rupert Till, the lecturer in pop Music at Bretton Hall University College in Leeds, presented the thesis that society has moved from an agriculturally-based society (where meaning was sought in a transcendent source) to a production-based society (where people looked to science for answers) and finally to a consumption-based society (where society looks to money or financial considerations for the answers to meaning and fulfillment). In relation to arts and culture, this era of postmodernism has five key features: (1) a breakdown of the distinctions between culture and society; (2) an emphasis on style at the expense of substance and content; (3) no distinction between high culture and art; (4) confusion over time and space - i.e. The internet and TV; and (5) a decline of metanarratives. He stressed that it is not so much a philosophy as a description of what is going on in society.

Back in 1967, Marshall McLuhan, the father of all media theorists, explained to a bewildered Barbara Walters that the discomfort associated with electronic media stems from the fact that it transports the people who use it. “On the telephone” he said, “it is YOU who gets sent, not the message. That’s why the medium is the message. It’s because it sends you, and not just what you’re saying.” In fact, psychologists such as Jung have gone so far as to say that in sending and receiving messages and information, we should deliberately stop trying to be objective, stop trying to only use our minds and open ourselves up to other methods as well. Jung forever lamented people constantly analysing and rationalising rather than being open to experience, of allowing insights to come to

them in their own time. For Jung, spiritual belief was inherently un-rational - not opposed totally to logic; just not confined by any of its premises; and first and foremost, intuitive.

It is vital for adults to understand that this shift from modern to postmodern worldviews is taking place, and that attempting to impose their own worldview, as cemented to an out-of-date, and anachronistic culture and modern way of thinking as it is, is not the best method of parenting or mentoring. It is difficult to accept just how fast the pace of change has been since 1970, and how much this has influenced the worldviews of young people. Never before has the ideological gap between parents and children been this wide. Parents need to pass on underlying principles and values to their children, teaching them how to "learn to discern" (cf. deMoss 1997) for themselves. Bruce Wilkerson, in *Walk Thru the Bible's* excellent video series on *The Three Chairs* explains that convictions cannot be passed on. Convictions are based on personal experience, and we cannot simply hand that down to the next generation. We need to help them to generate their own convictions. If we don't, our children will downgrade what were our convictions and turn them simply into beliefs. And they will not even be able to pass these beliefs on to their children. If we fail, our grandchildren will inherit only opinions.

As Christians, we believe that Truth is not some abstract concept. In fact, the Bible only records one real truth claim: Jesus said, "I am.. the Truth". For a Christian, finding Truth is about having a relationship. A relationship is not a static, abstract concept. Neither is it absolute. A relationship is relational and relative. It is ever-changing, hopefully for the better. It is dynamic. This is what it means when we find Truth as Christians. This must sound scary for someone brought up in the "bomb-proof" modernist view of truth – where truth is some objective, external standard. This study is not denying that this external standard exists – in fact, it affirms that God Himself and His written Word are those standards. But who can know God? Who can fathom His ways? And who can deny that one of the things we learn from church history is that some of the greatest spiritual minds have never agreed on even the basics of the faith? What right do we have for our confidence in our ability to interpret Scripture and be 100% sure that we are correct in every point?

The modern question, "Prove to me that God exists. I won't believe it until you prove it" has been replaced by the postmodern question: "I'm not sure if God exists or not. And if he does, the only way we can know that is if we experience him. How does one experience God?" Not only are these two different questions but even "how" we answer the questions are different. It's not that we don't do apologetics but we have to do it differently. And we must also keep in mind that there are many people that do have both, a combination of modern and postmodern questions. One apologetic method cannot fit all.

We believe what we believe on the basis of FAITH. We also were commanded by Jesus Himself to worship in spirit and truth. We were told by Him that we would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit who would teach us all things, in a dynamic, ongoing way. We will reach a tolerant-demanding generation when we put aside our arrogance, and stop believing that we have a corner on objective truth.

“They will know that you are my disciples by your love” (John 13:35). This is our hope. Love, and Christian unity. Love, and Christian tolerance. As Jimmy Long puts it: “Postmodernism has discarded all notion of universal truth and recognizes only preferences. All claims to universal truth are equally valid.... Many evangelicals are in a quandary. We have been taught to follow the apologetic path set forth in 1 Peter 3:15... Today we need to emphasize the hope within us more than the reason. Many evangelicals are poised to give an answer although no one is asking the question” (1997:192). He goes on to call not for an abandonment of apologetics, but rather a new apologetic method, based on the Socratic method and narrative evangelism. But ultimately, the foundation of postmodern evangelism must be the community of faith. “Although this postmodern generation might not be looking for the truth, it is looking for what is real” (Long 1997:196) – and this generation can see what is real when it is lived out for them. They are not asking “is it true”, they are asking “does it work” – and they can see whether or not it works when it is lived out for them.

As long as we Christians try to debate this postmodern generation from the position that we are right and they are wrong, we will merely turn them off and turn them away. As long as we treat Xers as souls to be won for our side rather than human beings who need a touch and a listening ear, we build walls between us. However, if we can weep for the vast majority of Xers who are experiencing deep pain and if we can demonstrate compassion to Xers around us, then we can build bridges.

Long 1997:200

4.4 Post-Colonial

The great colonial empires that dominated the early parts of this century have gradually collapsed. Governmental power, whether measured in absolute terms or by actual effectiveness, is on the decrease. There are institutional weaknesses in so many different areas, from family to the church, to government and big business. Authority has shifted. Where, just a few decades ago, authority was positional, related to the task one performed (such as parent, teacher, pastor and headmaster), now authority must be earned. It is not automatically obeyed, nor respected.

Because big government has let today’s young people down through destructive policies (e.g. apartheid), scandals (e.g. Watergate), lies and half-truths (e.g. Iran-Contra) and

personal failures (e.g. Clinton and Lewinsky), and because big business has let them down through massive job layoffs and unemployment, this generation is skeptical of any organised institution. They assume that institutional relationships will be short-lived, and therefore avoid them, or treat them as short-term. They are therefore often criticised for their lack of loyalty. In business, they would prefer to be in smaller business units, and not be seen as a cog in a machine. The concept of "paying dues" is seen as outdated, as it was a contract: loyalty in exchange for long-term security. Companies can no longer offer long-term security, so young people won't give loyalty and "slave labour", either. Paying short-term dividends is the key to their motivation. The reason is clear - the traditional rites in the workplace have been part of an initiation to a club called job security, a club which today's young people are not invited to join. For that reason, they are not willing to embrace the bottom rung of the ladder as a matter of course, despite the fact that those of predecessor generations may have done so. The concept of "paying dues" is seen as outdated, as it was loyalty in exchange for long-term security. Companies can no longer offer long-term security, so Xers won't pay their dues, either. Paying short-term dividends is the key to their motivation. "What Xers are not willing to do is to pay dues which, in any sense, are based on protocols of hierarchy or rights of initiation. The reason is clear - the traditional rites in the workplace have been part of an initiation to a club called job security, a club that Xers are not invited to join. For that reason, Xers are not willing to embrace the bottom rung of the ladder as a matter of course, despite the fact that those of predecessor generations may have done so" (Tulgan 1995:108). Because of this, Xers have gained the unfair label of "slackers". Spurning traditional jobs, and seeking quick money in short-term relationships with companies, they have been seen as not having any commitment. This, too, is unfair. Older generations look on in disbelief as young Internet moguls make enormous amounts of money out of nothing. Or, at least, that's what it looks like. The same must have been true when the first service organisations opened, and "white" collars began to be distinguished from "blue" collars.

They assume that institutional relationships will be short-lived, and therefore avoid them, or treat them as short-term. They are therefore often criticised for their lack of loyalty. "Recent surveys have shown that only a small percentage of young people belong to organisations specifically geared to the youth" (van Zyl Slabbert 1994:3.43, pg. 85).

Globalisation is the biggest trend in the world today. This refers to the homogenisation of culture, experiences, language and cultural expressions. National currencies are being effectively eroded by the rise of international e-commerce, where credit cards and e-money rule. The largest multi-national corporations outsize many countries. For example, two Japanese toys recently became world-wide hits: kamagochies & furbies. Michael Jackson and the Spice Girls both sell more records in Japan than in the USA. Post-colonialism

spells the end of homogenous communities, as people can no longer create single-culture communities that exclude others. The end of colonialism is also the end of the “bigger is better” approach. Everything is being “downsized” and authority is being decentralised.

Another distinguishing feature of the post-colonial age is the decline in importance of the “nation”. National currencies are being effectively eroded by the rise of international e-commerce, where credit cards and e-money rule. Multi-national corporations outsize countries: the top five companies in the world have more money than most countries (cf. Sidler 1997). The only place in which nationalism is still evidenced is in the arena of international sports - and many believe that is the only place it belongs. Yet, even there, national boundaries are eroded, for example in Golf’s Ryder Cup’s “European team”, or during the Rugby World Cup finals in 1999, when many South Africans couldn’t decide whether to support arch-rivals Australia in order to ensure a south hemisphere victory, or France in order to ensure Australia didn’t “steal” two World Cups from South Africa in one year. Traditional rivalries and alliances are constantly shifting. This is not to say that nationalism is dead, of course. Rivalries between England and France over meat, or between China and its neighbours are still growing stronger, as are tensions in the Middle East. The point is that the thought of one nation being morally and ethnically superior than every other is declining - battle lines are redrawn on sports fields and in economic trade negotiations.

These massive shifts in the face of the world, politically, economically and in many other ways has left many older people feeling unsettled and ungrounded. It has resulted in bloody wars around the globe. It has also produced a fierce ideological battle, which democratic free-market capitalism seems to have won. This system is based on the concept of the “survival of the fittest”, not to mention the leanest and meanest. Boomers, with their in-built idealism and natural bent to competition and “bigger is better” mentality have done exceptionally well in this environment. Many Xers are repulsed by it, or rather use the system than become part of it.

It might be argued that this is causing a spiritual divide between especially Boomers and Xers. Xers would point out that God is not interested in the bigger and better approach to life. We worship a God who glories in the mustard seed, the widow and the single lost sheep. Only the strongest and biggest survive in the global economy, but “God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor. 1:27 NIV). Many of today’s young people feel weak and insignificant. They feel bruised and lonely - they need to know that they’re the kind of person God glories in. The move towards cell-based ministry is a key strategy for reaching this generation. They need smaller, more intimate groups, that are less institutional and

more relational. Yet, Boomers would argue that God does not want a weak and ineffective church – that we are an army, and should be fighting and winning our battles. Unfortunately, most Boomers and Xers have not seen this battle line drawn in the sand, and are not dealing with the underlying issues that are causing stress and conflict.

Christian mission has been characterised over the last few centuries as the church going to the “ends of the earth”. This was as a result of working within a colonial “Empire” where missions was done at the edge of the Empire. Although there is still much work to be done “at the ends of the earth”, there are no unknown people groups left, and precious few that are totally unreached. Mission organisations are “re-languaging” and shifting emphasis. The church must do the same. The mission field in our “Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria” (Acts 1:8) can no longer be ignored.

Today’s young people are looking to the church to be involved in the world, or more specifically in *their* world, or at least to provide some direction for making decisions in the new world landscape. Young people also want to see a less homogenised worshipping community, where people of different cultures, languages, and ages, worship as one family. The church needs to take social concern much more seriously in the third millennium, if it is going to be relevant to post-colonial young people.

4.5 Post-Christian

For the past 500 years, Judeo-Christian morality has been the basis of “common decency” which everyone has taken for granted. Although Christianity’s truth claims have been questioned, most people have at least had some grounding in Christianity before asking such questions. Most people who have rejected Christianity have at least known what they were rejecting. But it is not so today. We have grandparents who had a Christian belief, parents who have a memory of that belief, and now kids who have nothing. This comment was made of present-day American culture. The situation is thankfully not yet this bad in South Africa, but current research into South African youth culture by Bill Price and Associates is showing that it is most certainly going to be true fairly soon. Although 86% of young people in South Africa would align themselves with Christianity, and 83% of young people consider spirituality to be “important” in their lives, only 52% were able to indicate the basis of their beliefs, and just less than half of those young people claiming to be Christians attended church youth groups more than once a month (cf. Codrington and Swartz 1999:120).

Recent research by Jurgens Hendriks (1998) and Marjorie Froise (1999) indicates that in 1980, 77% of South Africa’s population associated themselves with a Christian Church. It has declined since then. The 1991 figure is 74.5%, and in the 1996 census it had dropped to

74.1%. This may not seem alarming, but the way in which South African census data on religion is phrased gives even the most nominal of religious attenders little option but to call themselves "Christian". The more accurate portrayal is denominational membership, and here the trend is very disturbing. Traditional denominations are losing members, on average 19% between 1980 and 1991, and a further 14% up to 1999 (Froise 1999:35). This decline is in spite of the tremendous growth of so called mega-churches in most of these denominations.

At the National Youth Ministry Forum, Prof. Hennie Pieterse presented some preliminary research from the Department of Practical Theology at Unisa, regarding young people in South Africa. His research team has discovered what many youth workers have known for a while. Young people are interested in religion, but not in church. Although 100% of them reported that they pray, not many of them knew really who they prayed to.

Hendriks, talking of recent changes in South Africa, states that "we must realise that before 1994 the state was responsible for upholding Christian values. There were laws forbidding abortion, gambling, pornography, certain activities on a Sunday, etc. Local authorities endorsed these laws. Furthermore, Christian principles and biblical lessons were taught in schools. In the new dispensation the responsibility for upholding Christian values has been transferred from the state and secular authorities to believers and congregations" (1998:online). In times gone by, Christian parents could rely on the schools, youth groups and the State to ensure that their children grew up "all right", with a sensitised conscience and Christian values. This is no longer the case. Most of today's young people have no concept of "basic morality". It's no good wishing they did, or bemoaning the fact that they don't but still treating them as if they should. We have to work with what we've got. They simply don't know that it is not right to lie and cheat. This is not to say that they shouldn't be taught, but much of our teaching style and disciplining style assumes that the young people understand what they have done wrong, and therefore accept the punishment as a just response to a wrongdoing. Many genuinely do not.

The most important thing for our young people is to SEE morality being lived out: not simply in the way we actually behave, which is VITAL, but also in the way we respond to immorality of all types. Do we get involved? Do we ignore political correctness where it conflicts with Biblical morality? Would we disobey the laws of the land when they contradict Biblical morality? More and more, these are issues everyone in the "free" Western world are being forced to face. And how we respond will be watched keenly by today's post-Christian young people, as they look for a moral safe harbour in which to shelter from the storm.

In the midst of this spiritual revival, most major churches, and all of the traditional, mainline denominations, are experiencing continued decline in numbers and involvement. The church itself is in dire straits. Churches need to stop feeling that they are embattled enclaves of saints, and turn themselves into field hospitals for sinners. Too many church members spend too much of their time attempting to hold onto those expressions of the faith which are most meaningful, and also most comfortable, for themselves. They have lost sight of the fact that the church exists almost exclusively for its non-members. As the existing congregations continue to grow grey, there is an ever-increasing pool of young people not being drawn into the church. Today's adults must put aside their own comfort zones, their own religious inclinations and especially their own culturally inherited expressions of faith, in favour of different styles of ministry that will be appealing to the unchurched people of this lost world.

This is a changing, transitional age, and our view is outward rather than inward. In an age of newspapers, free libraries, and cheap magazines, we necessarily get a broader horizon than [sic] the passing generation had. We see what is going on in the world, and we get the clash of different points of view, to an extent which was impossible to our fathers. We cannot be blamed for acquiring a suspicion of ideals, which, however powerful their appeal once was, seem singularly impotent now, or if we seek for motive forces to replace them, or for new terms in which to restate the world.... We have, as a result, become impatient with the conventional explanations of the older generation... The positive aspect is particularly noticeable in the religion of the rising generation... The religious thinking of the preceding generation was destructive and uncertain. We are demanding a definite faith, and our spiritual center is rapidly shifting from the personal to the social in religion. Not personal salvation, but social; not our own characters, but the character of society, is our interest and concern.

Randolph S. Bourne "The Two Generations" In Thau and Heflin 1997:102-3

One of the major issues that the post-Christian church must face is how to deal with the culture in which it finds itself. This concern is especially significant for those who have known the "Christian" world of the late 1950s and earlier decades. The youth experts from this era have a very similar message to tell: that adolescence is a time of danger. There is no greater example of this than James Dobson's introduction to his book, *Preparing for Adolescence* (1980). In it, he paints the picture-analogy of a road on a dark night. The teenager is driving on the road and cannot go back because the car has no reverse gear. On the road is a man waving a red flag – Dobson identifies himself as that man. His task is to warn the teenager that there is a massive gorge up ahead, and only by driving slowly and careful will they avoid an accident that could ruin their lives. Ron Hutchcraft has a similar message, when he equates the ministry to youth with a battleground in his book, *Battle for a Generation* (1996). Ross Campbell, in *Kids in Danger* (1995), Kiley, in *Keeping Kids out of Trouble* (1978), Peter Brierly, in *Reaching and Keeping Teenagers* (1993), relying heavily on Winkie Pratney (who wrote a number of books, including *Youth*

Aflame 1970, revised 1983) are further examples. Brierly in particular, refers to the ancient god Moloch, to whom children were sacrificed, warning us that this god still lives today and has declared “war on the child”. This theme runs through his book, with war on the womb, the home, the mind, and war in the streets.

“Many evangelical Christians experience aspects of contemporary society as extremely threatening. This threat often arises from elements within youth culture.... The evangelical feeling such views is likely to feel a deep sense of alienation from many aspects of contemporary society and youth culture is the most frequent cause.... A generalised fear of much of present-day youth culture becomes more concentrated as parents see their children entering the teenage years” (Ward 1996:161).

Only recently have younger authors, such as Walt Mueller, Pete Ward and Bob DeMoss started to phrase things in a different manner. This is not to say that the concerns over today’s culture are not legitimate. Of course, there is a battle for today’s young people – a battle that cannot be ignored. Of course, we should not just sit back and allow deteriorating society to have free reign over our children. However, to view Christians as an embattled and surrounded fort leads to the view of church as a “safe haven”, a “harbour in the storm”, a “refuge” or a “hiding place”; all these phrases are taken from songs popular during the late 1970s, when the Silent generation was writing the popular songs for the church.

The purpose of Ward’s book, **Growing up Evangelical: youthwork and the making of a subculture**, (1996) is to draw attention to the fact that through the forces acting on Christians in the middle of this century, there has been a growing urge to create a separate (alternative) youth culture within the church. The emphasis is on protecting the young people from the evil world. Obviously, the concerns of Christian parents for their children is legitimate. But one must realise the extent to which these concerns have hijacked and influenced the structure and form of church youth ministry. Many parents, frightened by the post-Christian world they see around them have palmed off their responsibilities to the church youth ministry. This has resulted in youth ministry often being regarded as nothing more than a “safe place” for “our children” to grow up. This is the type of youth ministry that late Boomers in particular have attempted to create for their children, especially the Millennial kids.

The problem is twofold: (1) this creates an incorrect view of church. Young people need to be “protected”, and are mollicoddled so much they have little or no ability to make a real stand when they venture out into the “big, wide world”. This is often why many abandon their faith during early College years. (2) The incorrect view of church is exacerbated as the church no longer engages in the missionary task of going out into the

community and ministering to the “unsafe” families and young people it would find there. As Ward (1996:167) points out, the healthy desire to nurture young people in godly faith has unhealthy results: “Fear and survival are fundamentally linked in evangelical work among young people.... There is therefore an issue here in the way that the need for safety and protection acts against the young person’s need to develop and grow. When the desire to keep young people is charged with anxiety from Christian parents, youthwork can easily lose a sense of balance between these dual needs.... Christian youthwork, however, should be helping young Christians to engage courageously with their own culture” (Ward 1996:167, 178, 181).

The problems that this kind of approach to youth ministry create are multi-generational problems, since at their root is a different worldview. Ward points out that in the 1940s - incidentally, when the previous Reactive - Xer - generation young people were leading the youth groups - there was no sense of panic as there has been for the last 20 years. These leaders “share with present-day youthworkers a genuine desire to see young people grow within the faith. The difference however comes in their tone rather than their message” (1996:197). Young people need to develop and grow, not be protected and smothered. As the previous Xer generation led this approach, possibly today’s Xers as they grow into leaders can begin the same process. But more than likely it will be the dynamic and ambitious Millennial leaders, as they grow into Young Adulthood who will do most of the real work.

Young people today are interested in spiritual things. They are not , however, religious by nature - they are not interested in institutional religion. They seem to know that the answers they are looking for are to be found in the spiritual realm, but they have no idea of where to look. They are “shopping in the right store, but they’re in the wrong aisle” (Ron Hutchcraft, at Motivate ‘98 in Cape Town). For many older Christians, the changes that have occurred over the last few decades have produced a crisis of faith. Whether or not they will admit it to themselves, the young have seen this crisis, and are reticent to commit themselves to something that is tenuous at best. In discussing the generation gap, Margaret Mead explains from an anthropological point of view: “the situation in which we now find ourselves can be described as a crisis of faith, in which men, having lost their faith not only in religion but also in political ideology and in science, feel they have been deprived of every kind of security. I believe this crisis in faith can be attributed, at least in part, to the fact that there are now no elders who know more than the young themselves about what the young are experiencing.... The acceptance of the distinction between right and wrong by the child is the consequence of his dependence on parental figures who are trusted, feared, and loved, who hold the child’s very life in their hands. But today the elders can no longer present with certainty moral imperatives to the young” (1970:64). This is not to say that

there are no moral imperatives or absolutes. In fact, the point this study is making is the opposite – there *are* these absolutes, but if the cultural veneer of much of what is portrayed as absolutes to today's youth by their elders, is stripped away, it will be found that there are much fewer absolutes than adults anticipate. It is not for nothing that the law of Moses is summed up in 10 commandments, very broad and backed up only by case studies and case law in the Old Testament. It is not for nothing that Jesus chose to sum up the "entire Law and Prophets" with two very broad and sweeping commands to love (cf. Matt. 22:35-40). It is interesting that He did so in response to a Pharisee's question – and it was the Pharisees of Jesus' day who had erected "hedges around the law", filled with cultural expressions of faith. Today's young people are seeking God. They are seeking the freedom promised by Jesus (cf. John 10:10).

This obviously provides an opening for Christian evangelism, but unfortunately, many churches are totally out of touch with this post-Christian mindset. Young people look at churches, many of which seem to be stuck in the 1950s, and believe that we, as a human race, have tried Christianity and Jesus, and it hasn't worked. In a survey completed by students at BTC Southern Africa in 1998, a number of respondents commented that, "if you want to know what church was like in the 50s, just come to mine this Sunday". They therefore do not even bother to investigate Christianity as a viable option. They have a non-traditional approach to spirituality, which often comes across as very irreverent. This notwithstanding, their search for real meaning beyond the visible is genuine. Research has shown that "young South Africans are serious about religion" (van Zyl Slabbert 1994:3.46, pg. 86).

They believe in the supernatural, and have no difficulties in understanding the concepts of transcendence and mystery. In fact, they thrive on mystery and enjoy being in situations that seem to be beyond them, and that tug at their spiritual side. This is why so many new age religions have gained new ground with these young people. They are not searching for truth, rather they are searching for meaning. The problem is that the church plays fantasy games with itself:

We pretend that people want the same things from church in the 1990s that they wanted in the 1950s. We pretend that the majority of Americans are churchgoing Christians who believe in the God of the Bible and who order their lives to reflect this reality. We pretend that the spirituality of Americans in the 1990s is enhanced by a decades-old diet of practical faith, old-time religion, revivals, and personal 'quiet time'. We pretend that the church is still the center of community life and that people will come back to church 'when they get their lives straightened out'

Nash 1997:2

We cannot go on pretending. We are living in a post-Christian world, and the sooner we admit this and start acting accordingly, the sooner we will be able to create a church that is

once again relevant to the culture in which it finds itself. In order to do this, the church must overcome a major hurdle – that is, the Boomer generation, which is currently in midlife to later midlife, and managing most of the world’s organisations, including the churches and Christian ministries. In many cases, Boomers have recently begun to take control of the leadership of these organisations (this is especially true in the computer/IT industry, of course, but other more traditional industries, as well as religious and educational institutions are seeing a growing number of Boomers at the helm). The reason this is a problem is that the Boomer generation is a transition generation, between the old, pre-Y2K world and the new, post-Y2K world. They fit in neither world, and find themselves caught between a “rock and a hard place” as generations on either side of them disagree and oppose their approach. Yet Boomers are tough and ready for such conflict. Although the generation gap extends on all sides of the modernist/postmodernist divide in this century, Boomers are at the center of the multi-generational controversy.

5 The Focus of the Gap: Boomers at the Core

In the late 1960s and 1970s, when the sociological concept of a “generation gap” first emerged, it was generally used to describe the gap between young adults in their twenties and their fifty-plus year old elders. Today it’s commonly considered to be mainly between young people and the thirty-to-forty year-olds. In these conflicts there have been two constants: each time, the same conspicuous generation has been involved, i.e. the Boomers. Each time, they have claimed the moral and cultural high ground, casting themselves as the apex of civilization and portraying those in other age categories as soulless, progress-blocking philistines. They first targeted their seniors (the Silent generation), now they are doing the same to their juniors (the Generation Xers) (cf. Howe, 1992).

At end of 20th century, looking back is inevitable, as are the ever-increasing “best of” lists. It is amazing, however, to notice how “Boomer-dominated” these lists are. Take, for example, the music lists, such as best song, best album, best artist and best group. On the morning drive show on Radio 702 (Gauteng, South Africa) on Monday, 8 November 1999, David O’Sullivan, standing in for John Robbie, was incredulous that anyone could even bother with anything other than 1960s music. He was particularly scathing towards rap music. Yet, he freely admitted that he “loved” 60s music because of the memories they evoked for him. It did not seem to occur to him that music made after about 1979 could have any memory-stirring abilities for younger generations. A similar experience was repeated by this author in an interview on Jenny Cryws-Williams show on radio 702 in 2000. A caller, aged 41 and a Boomer phoned in and argued that only the “good old” music could evoke memories and tug at emotions. He could not believe that today’s music

had the same ability to affect today's young people. This is typical of the Boomer mindset. For them, culture stopped developing after 1980.

5.1 Boomers and Xers

The obvious place to start looking for a cultural and generational gap, is where the divide between the modern and postmodern worldviews is situated. In general, Boomers are not really modernist, but they are not postmodern either. Their earliest days, during the development of their value systems, was during the start of the shift to postmodernism. Xers have continued this shift, and, although being a lot further down the road of the shift, are not fully postmodern, but they are not modernist either. They complete the shift, which is picked up by the fully postmodern Millennials. The Silent generation were the last "pure" modernist generation, and the Millennials are the first "pure" postmodern generation. Thus, Boomers and Xers form a transition from one system of thought to another. Yet, they still stand on either side of that dividing ridge. And the divide that this creates is enormous.

For examples of this emerging generation gap, consider the following: A *Fortune* magazine survey in 1998 asked employed twentysomethings if they would ever "like to be like" Baby Boomers. Four out of five said no. A variety of recent surveys asking American college students what they think of various Boomer-sanctioned moral crusades—everything from "family values" to the "New Age movement" return, with overwhelming margins, that they either disapprove or are remarkably indifferent. There were furious Thirteen-year-penned responses just after the media's celebration of the twentieth anniversary of Woodstock, or after the recent turn away from yuppie-style consumption. "Let the self-satisfied, self-appointed, self-righteous baby-boomers be the first to practice the new austerity they have been preaching of late," Mark Featherman announced in a *New York Times* essay titled "The 80's Party Is Over" (quoted in Howe 1992).

Already Xers blame Boomers for much that has gone wrong in their world, a tendency that is sure to grow once Boomers move fully into positions of political leadership. Bill Price & Associates discovered in their *Profile of South African Youth and Families* (1998), that South African young people blame their parents primarily for apartheid and for the current problems in South Africa.

"Although 1990s-edition Boomers are no throwback to the 1960s, they see themselves as they did then (and always have): as the embodiment of moral wisdom. Their aging is taking on a nonapologetic quality - prompting *The New York Times* to relabel them 'grumpies' (for 'grown-up mature professionals'). The idea of telling other people what to do suits them just fine" (Howe 1992). The idea of being told what to do is not "just fine"

with Xers, who grew up in a world filled with censorship and control, and have bucked against external forces.

Randolph S. Bourne, an Xer writes:

The modern parent has become a sort of Parliament registering the decrees of a Grand Monarque, and occasionally protesting, though usually without effect, against a particularly drastic edict.... [The results are] a peculiarly headstrong and individualistic character among the young people, and a complete bewilderment on the part of the parents. The latter frankly do not understand their children, and their lack of understanding and of control over them means a lack of moral guidance which, it has always been assumed, young people need until they are safely launched in the world. The two generations misunderstand each other as they never did before. This fact is a basal one to any comprehension of the situation.... It must be remembered that we of the rising generation have to work this problem out alone. Pastors, teachers, and parents flutter aimlessly about with their ready-made formulas, but somehow are less efficacious than they used to be. I doubt if any generation was ever thrown quite so completely on its own resources as ours is

“The Two Generations” In Thau and Heflin 1997:96, 98.

The tensions between the Boomers and Xers are well illustrated in the following excerpts from letters in an anthology of generational issues, where different generations wrote and responded on a variety of mainly economic topics:

Written by a Boomer:

X-ers are right to suspect that boomer complaints about them are based largely on resentment. No one was ever supposed to be younger than we are. Every generation feels that way; but probably none ever milked The Young Idea as successfully as the boomers did in our time.

Michael Kinsley, “Back from the Future” in Thau and Heflin 1997:20

Written by an Xer:

Yes, it's on. Undeclared though it is, a new Cold War exists. This one is generational. It has the most spoiled and self-indulgent generation in history on the one side and their dissed and deprived successors on the other.... The problem Boomers have with the generation that came right after them is what anyone would have upon suddenly noticing that their shadow is talking back to them. Shadows are supposed to be quiet. They are supposed to follow us without actually affecting anything. Shadows are seen, but not heard; observed, but not acknowledged. Yet, the only thing we have been able to do is scream.

Robert A. George “Stuck in the Shadows with You” In Thau and Heflin 1997:27.

Xers often view Boomers as sell outs, who “started” the revolution in the 1960s, but now seem more content to live in the relative comfort of their middle-class life. The label of “hypocrite” is the one most commonly placed on Boomers by Xers. On the other hand, one of the common criticism of Xers by Boomers is that they are “not team players”. This arises out the different approaches to authority and leadership that these two generations have developed. Xers prefer a mentoring and empowering style, rather than a supervisory

and dictatorial style. Boomers are more product-oriented and prefer aspiration, Xers are more process-oriented and prefer inspiration. These fundamentally different approaches cause a lot of conflict, as Xers wish to have the freedom to disagree with the team, and question the team - even in public - yet still be part of it; this is very difficult for a Boomer. Xers also don't see the need to show a fully united front on the leadership - this is an ideal they know that nobody believes anyway. Boomers' ideal leader is perfect, whereas Xers prefer the wounded healer as a model. Because Boomers have the positions of power, it is easy for them to denounce the younger Xers and throw all blame onto them. This conflict is even more accentuated when there is a clash between Silent generation and Xers. The Silent generation, with their highly developed sense of duty and their unwillingness to compromise make things really difficult for young Xer leaders. If the situations are carefully analysed, it is interesting to note that Boomers and Silent generation leaders are often more guilty of not working in teams than Xers are. They often impose the will of two or three strong leaders onto a "team". The "team's" function is simply to provide numerical backing. Xers won't allow this to happen. Xers are unwilling to be part of a team where there is a feeling that the team is being railroaded, or that all the issues have not been fully dealt with. Thus, although it appears that Xers are putting spokes in the wheels, they are very often simply attempting to ensure that everybody is on board.

In the same way, Xers are more natural "systems thinkers", and see connections between different activities and decisions that older generations may miss. They are not prepared to simply work on a small section of a project, if they cannot see how it affects the whole, or if they do not like the effect it would have on the whole. Thus, for example, one of the biggest causes of conflict in local churches at present is the youth leaders getting involved in discussions with regard to the church's style of worship. Many Silent generation leaders, supported by some Boomers, argue that this is not their "domain" and that they should concentrate on youth issues. Xer youth leaders, however, contend that the goal of the youth group is not simply to create good teenagers, but ultimately to produce godly adults, who take their place in the adult church. If the teenagers feel no desire to take their place in a church whose worship style is far removed from their own preference, then the youth leaders cannot fulfill their function properly. Thus, they attempt to influence the worship of the church, so as to adequately do their function amongst the youth.

Aside from the fact that the contention of this dissertation is that the divide between "youth" and "adult" church is a false and unhealthy divide, it should be clear to anyone who understands systems thinking that the youth leaders are correct. It should also be clear to anyone who understands church leadership and change management that the church leaders are also correct. This causes conflict. Unfortunately, because the underlying generational worldview conflict is not correctly identified, this conflict soon degenerates

into personal tussles and destructive interaction between generations and individuals. More often than not, because the older generation are the incumbents it is the youth that must give way. The Silent generation are very bad at allowing this to happen graciously and with honour, and are often the cause of very acrimonious farewells by promising youth leaders.

5.2 Boomers and Builders

Over the past five decades, as Boomers have charted their life's voyage, they have consistently aged in a manner unlike what anyone, themselves included, ever expected. They began as the most indulged children of this century, basking in intensely child-focused households and communities, as their Builder parents who had had nothing as children of the Depression era now had disposable income which they used to give their children everything they had never had. Dr. Benjamin Spock mixed science with friendliness and instructed parents to produce "idealistic children" through permissive feeding schedules and *laissez-faire* leadership. To most middle-class youths, poverty, disease, and crime were invisible, or, at worst, temporary nuisances that would soon succumb to the inexorable advance of affluence. Their parents expected Boomers to be, in William Manchester's words, "adorable as babies, cute as grade school pupils and striking as they entered their teens," after which "their parents would be very, very proud of them" (quoted in Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ). In 1965, TIME magazine declared that teenagers were "on the fringe of a golden era"—and, two years later, described collegians as cheerful idealists who would "lay out blight-proof, smog-free cities, enrich the underdeveloped world, and, no doubt, write *finis* to poverty and war" (quoted in Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ).

However, during the late 1960s, Boomers discovered that they were never meant to be doers and builders like their parents. Instead, finding their parents' constructions in need of a major spiritual overhaul, even creative destruction, they triggered a youth-focused "Consciousness Revolution." Their focus was on idealistic visions of a new society, not based on great achievements but rather on a new consciousness of self and others. Along the way, they became what Annie Gottlieb has described as "a tribe with its roots in a time, rather than place or race" (quoted in Strauss and Howe, 2000:FAQ). That time was the late sixties, when the term "generation gap" became popular.

The youthful Boom ethos was deliberately antithetical to everything Builder: spiritualism over science, immediate gratification over patience, consumerism over production; pessimism over optimism, petulance over conformity, rage over friendliness, self over community. Screaming radicals and freaked-out hippies represented just 10 to 15 percent of America's 1970s youth, but they set the tone. In America, the Builder-Boomer

generation war paralleled Vietnam. It peaked in 1969, along with draft calls and casualties. A couple of years later, after Ohio's National Guardsmen killed four Kent State students, after student opinion turned solidly against the war, and after Congress amended the Constitution to allow eighteen-year-olds to vote, Boomers began heeding the Beatles' simple words of wisdom: "let it be." The generation gap between Builders and Boomers began to ease, in its outward forms at least, replaced by a grinding pessimism and a gray Boomer drizzle of sex, drugs, unemployment, and a sour, if less confrontational, mood on campus. No pact was signed, no speeches were made, but something of a deal was struck. On the one hand, Boomers said nothing as GIs then on the brink of retirement proceeded to channel a growing portion of the nation's public resources, over a period from the post-Vietnam peace dividend to the post-Cold War peace dividend, toward their own "entitlements." On the other hand, GIs did not object as Boomers asserted control of the culture. GI leaders (e.g. Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George Bush) continued to preside at the pinnacle of government, while their retirement-bound peers became America's first old people to call themselves "senior citizens" (cf. Howe 1992), leaving Boomers to reap the benefits in business, as the up and coming Boomers cut their hair and bought new suits, and became the "yuppies" (young upwardly mobile professionals). As before, although yuppies claimed only a 15% market share of Boomers, they were indicative of the 1980s Boomers, in the grips of Reagonomics.

5.3 Builders and Xers

Although the core of the "generation gap" revolves around Boomers, there is also a gap between Xers and Millennials on the one side, and Builders on the other. The gap between Builders and Xers is an ideological one. However, experience has shown us that in general, the gap is so wide between the different viewpoints, that conflict is not the usual result – instead, we find confusion. The worldviews of Builders and Xers are so different, that each stare in amazement at decisions and actions taken by the other generation.

One of the greatest areas of conflict is the view of each of these generations on authority and respect. People used to have positional authority. The authority of someone was based on the position they held, such as pastor, boss, father or president, not on their own personal merits. The Boomer era changed this for us, by rebelling against such authority structures. But Boomers rebelled when they saw these authorities messing up, and their rebellion was simply to gain the authority for themselves. As much as Boomers railed against "the establishment", they have done nothing to change the establishment now that they are it. Boomers actually saw nothing inherently wrong in the structures per se, but rather in how these structures were being abused. Thus, once they had obtained the power, they began relying on positional authority. Boomers see the position and the person as separate - so that they can respect the position, but not the person. Bill Clinton's polls (in

1998) show this trend in Boomers - "a great president, a bad man!" is what people are saying. This is part of the "transitional" nature of the Boomer generation – the rebelled against authority and then took that self-same authority for themselves, and apply it with an even heavier hand than those whom they rebelled against.

Xers, by contrast, hold no truck with positional authority at all. Their rebellion against authority is against the entire system itself. Xers are looking for personal authority, where authority is derived from personhood, rather than position. Authority is always earned, never inherited and can never be demanded. They respect people because of the way that person treats them and because of who that person is. There is no such thing as positional authority. Authority is granted to those who earn it by their character and relationships, not because of their position or job title. Position and title are nothing! Person is everything. They want someone to tell them what to do and how to live - but that person must be someone they can respect. No Xer worthy of the name will ever just respect someone because of their position. Thus, respect is always earned. Appeals to great authorities, even the Bible itself, which are unsubstantiated and which are not borne out in the life of the group will carry no weight at all. Authority is bogus if it is not matched by a worthy lifestyle, and so the leader's first role is to live out what is taught. Most Xers are likely to respond to the Gospel in such a way that it will be obvious they have been caught by, and not taught about, the Gospel.

Unlike previous generations, however, this negative view of authority structures does not lead them to radical action. Rather, they are more apt to whine and moan, and yet do nothing at all to change anything. This has earned them the titles of "slackers" and "whiners". P J O'Rourke, in his inimitable style sums up the frustration many older generations have with Xers when he says parenthetically at the end of the introduction to *All The Trouble In The World*, "And memo to Generation X: Pull your pants up, turn your hat around, and get a job" (1994:17). It is this kind of attitude that puts Xers off totally. They want relationships and acceptance, and that basis will choose to grant authority to people in their lives. Those who earn the right to speak into their lives will be given the privilege of helping this generation to navigate the waters of confusion that they are currently engaging.

The approach that is most needed is summed up in the title of Bob DeMoss' book, *Learn to Discern* (1997). This generation does not need to be taught the rules, it needs to be helped to understand them, and then given the space to learn to apply them for themselves.

One of the difficulties within the church is that the approach to religion by Builders and Xers is so different. Builders' religion was a reverent, quiet religion that required commitment, sacrifice and was able to stand the test of time. The focus was on the

timelessness of the faith, and the objective nature of the truth that was revered. Religion was run by professionals, and only those with real ability could truly understand the Bible. Think, for example, of the preachers who consistently remind us “that *in the original Greek, this really means...*”. It was an intellectual religion, where Christianity had to stand its ground against scientific thought. It was a conservative religion, not just in style but also in ideology. None of these characteristics are inherently bad – in fact, most of these characteristics are good. But this does not make them “normal” for all time.

Xers prefer a religion that is vibrant, relevant and practical. They like to mix and match many forms of religious expression, from the countless traditions of Christianity, both old and new. Tom Beaudoin has carefully documented this in *Virtual Faith* (1998). Xers cannot simply observe religion, they must be involved, and they are not prepared to simply accept the word of some preacher – what is said must be verified either in the preacher’s life or their own. Their concept of truth then is related to experience, as we have already seen. They also do not see religion as a “safe place”.

“One of the greatest injustices we do to our young people is to ask them to be conservative. Christianity today is not conservative, but revolutionary. To be conservative today is to miss the whole point, for conservatism means standing in the flow of the status quo, and the status quo no longer belongs to us. Today we [Christians] are a minority. If we want to be fair, we must teach the young to be revolutionaries, revolutionaries against the status quo” (Schaeffer 1994:78). Most Builders would never consider this, as they know that the church would be one of the first institutions that Xers would revolt against. There is nothing wrong with a revolt against a church structure - take Martin Luther or Hudson Taylor or any number of pioneers of the past as an example. The problem is that these revolutions upset the status quo *in church* as well, and Builders quite like changelessness as a theological and practical concept.

Francis Schaeffer was an incredible visionary, and writing to the then-young Builders in Christian ministry in the 1960s, he warned of the changes that were coming. It is amazing, and quite saddening as well, that his books are as relevant today as they were in the 1960s – sad because it means that the Builders did not listen, and the problems Schaeffer predicted 30 years ago are still with us. It is, however, never too late.

5.4 Boomers as a transition generation

Toffler calls the time in which we live the “transforming boundary between one age and another, between a scheme of things that has disintegrated and another that is taking shape” (1991:xix). Easum identifies it as a “crack in history” (1993:23). It is interesting that most people would label the late 1950s as the start of this age of transition. Not many

have dared to guess an end date, but most view it as a short-term thing. Many are saying in the 1990s that it is likely to last only one more generation (i.e. about 20 years). Easum (1993:23) says it will end in about 2014 – the same time in which Strauss and Howe predict a crisis moment in history (cf. 1991:375). Interestingly, if these boundaries of 1960 to 2014 are taken, they correspond virtually identically with the working adult life of the Boomers. Therefore, throughout the years in which the Boomers will have had influence, we will have been in a transition period. If this is true, the Boomers are doing a very good job, with no-one before them to follow and no-one after them following.

Given an understanding of everything that has occurred during this century, it should come as no surprise that Boomers are at the core of the most serious generation gaps of this century. Boomers sit right at the start of some of the most profound cultural and intellectual shifts in world history. Because of their unique position as the “transition generation” in this century, they sit between two generations who frown on them. The Silents, being the last true modernist generation, cannot understand the process of transition to postmodernism which the Boomers initiated, with everything from rebellion against positional authority to the primal beat of rock n roll to a spiritual renewal based on a mystic quest. The Boomers cannot understand how the Silents can continue to lead and live as if nothing had changed. Xers, are the first postmodern generation. If they are not all fully postmodern, they are at least the first to be born into a postmodern world. They cannot understand that Boomers are prepared to go some of the way towards the “new world” but yet stop so far short of it. Xers also perceive a selfishness in Boomers - an attitude which Boomers themselves would simply see as a survival technique. In many ways, Boomers are on their own and will only survive if they wrest control from the Silents.

In many respects they live in their own world - a world of transition - a “time between times”. They are therefore largely correct in their belief that they are the best people to provide leadership and guidance on every issue. Unfortunately, they fail to recognise that such leadership is really suited to their world, and is not appreciated, and possibly not even needed, within other generation’s worlds. An additional complicating factor is that Boomers feel that the place they find themselves in is the same place every generation will find themselves in.

Pressure is placed on Boomers from every side. For example, Silents have been theologically disappointed with a generation which appears more interested in practical than systematic theology. Xers are disappointed in a generation that appears more interested in structures, programs and big events than intimacy and relationships.

6 Towards a Resolution: The Millennials?

There's good news and bad news. The bad news is that the generation gap is the largest it has ever been. This calls for urgent action. The good news is that it is likely that the generation gap will never again be this big. Margaret Mead expresses it well: "The situation that has brought about this radical change [the divide between young and old] will not occur again in any such drastic form in the foreseeable future.... The young will hopefully be prepared to educate their own children for change. But just because this gap is unique, because nothing like it has ever occurred before, the elders are set apart from any previous generation and from the young" (1970:62). We need to realise that we are living in a transitional age. As such, transitional rules will need to be applied, as we move towards a resolution.

If, slowly but surely, Millennials receive the kind of family protection and public generosity that GIs enjoyed as children, then they could come of age early in the next century as a group much like the GIs of the 1920s and 1930s--as a stellar (if bland) generation of rationalists, team players, and can-do civic builders. Two decades from now Boomers entering old age may well see in their grown Millennial children an effective instrument for saving the world, while Thirteeners [Xers] entering midlife will shower kindnesses on a younger generation that is getting a better deal out of life (though maybe a bit less fun) than they ever got at a like age. Study after story after column will laud these "best damn kids in the world" as heralding a resurgent American greatness. And, for a while at least, no one will talk about a generation gap.

Howe 1992

Much of the data coming out of early research into the Millennial Generation is indicating their openness to older generations. In fact, the only generation they seem to be opposed to is their immediate next-elders, the Xers. This is largely due to the fact that the Xers are jealous of the attentions lavished on the Millennials by government programs, parents and other institutions. Xers portray a very negative attitude to the world, and the upbeat Millennials are already reacting to this. The *Generation 2001 Survey* found that "when it comes to values and lifestyle, the majority (85 percent) [of Millennials] say there is a difference between themselves and their parents. Grandparents are trusted most by Gen2001, followed by parents; GenXers are trusted the least." (Harris 1998). However, when the Xers reach midlife, and begin to work altruistically for the benefit of the youth, especially the next Adaptive generation, the attitude of the Millennials is likely to change. Or so history would have us believe.

The problem that older people perceive as look to the future is that with the pace of change ever increasing, people are just not going to cope. A common thought is that Generation X is likely to grow up and be burnt out middle agers. Although there may be some truth in this, it is surprising that Xers, now so often labeled as slackers (i.e. lazy) would be burnt

out by middle-age. Burnt out by doing what? Rather, it is the thought of all the change that the Xers and Millennials have to deal with that leads Boomers to believe burn out is the only possible future for them. However, Boomers and older generations need to realise that when one grows up with change as a norm, it does not feel like change. It takes very little emotional energy to change if change is normal. Thus, the Millennials in particular are unlikely to even notice change happening. This will result in a much calmer, even if faster, pace of life.

The slowing down of the pace of change, or at least the perceived slowing down as we get used to the speed at which we are traveling, means that the generation gap between Millennials and their parents will begin to close. Their parents will be tolerable Baby boomers, who pretty much invented the generation gap, when part of growing up Boomer, even if you weren't a flower child or a pothead, meant rebelling against Mom and Dad. Parents, outflanked and outnumbered, went down to defeat. They probably won't this time. For one thing, although there will be more teenagers than ever in 2008, they won't represent as large a percentage of the population as did Boomer teens. Most important, Millennial teens are unlikely to muster a full-bore rebellion. Boomers turned away from their parents, who were unable to give them advice or only gave them advice that didn't work. But the Boomer's children will have lifestyles that are much more similar to their parents. So Boomer parents will be able to help them – even if not in the details, at least in an attitude towards the changing world. “And why not? Even now, Dad wears a ponytail and cranks up the stereo, while Mom slips into jeans and sneakers for work. The Nickelodeon/Yankelovich poll found that 94 percent of today's 9- to 17-year-olds say they trust their parents. And 80 percent of 6- to 17-year-olds say they have ‘really important talks’ with their parents about their lives” (Cobb 1998).

7 Biblical Culture Wars

In addition to the Biblical examples of generation gaps quoted in the previous chapter, the Bible also contains illustrative examples of clashes of worldviews and cultures.

“Perhaps the ugliest conflict in the first-century church grew out of Paul's move toward a different contextualisation of the faith” (Sample 1998:93). The mission that God entrusted to Paul was to take the Gospel to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 13:46, 14:27, 22:21; Rom. 11:13, 15:16; Gal. 2:7-8). This brought him into conflict with the leaders of the Jewish church. Many of his letters involve sections where Paul has to defend his ministry and explain his actions. Paul also had to continually come up against conflict with the established ways of expressing faith. For example, Paul confronted the great apostle Peter (see Gal. 2:11-21) on issues of cultural expression. Indeed, such conflicts led Paul to that great outburst of

Gal. 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (NIV). Paul was also concerned that Christians maintained this distinction from the prevailing culture when he commanded us not to "conform any longer to the pattern of this world" (Rom. 12:2 NIV). In the days of the early church, as our church history textbooks tell us, this often meant direct conflict with culture, often with dire consequences for Christians.

However, possibly the greatest example of a culture clash was the Incarnation of Jesus, Himself. In talking of the Incarnation (literally, "pitching one's tent amongst") as a model to be followed, Sample states that "in pitching the tent the Word joins a basic and indigenous practice of the world of Jesus' time. Every faithful attempt to be Incarnational requires this kind of indigenous engagement.... This does not mean, however, that the church pitches tent with every practice in a culture. Some are clearly in violation of the faith.... But it also means that the church is not to be captive to a range of cultural practices from one culture that it imposes in colonial fashion on another culture because the church has come to identify those as essential to the faith, when they are basically an expression of pitching tent in another and quite different culture" (1998:106). In fact, Scripture shows clearly that Jesus challenged the accepted society and worldview, creating a "culture gap" between Himself and society (cf. Lingenfelter - pg. 17ff.).

This understanding of Christians as somehow "different" is an essential element of moving towards a solution. We take this theme up in more detail in the next chapter.

Towards a Solution: Systems thinking, Contextualisation, and a Pilgrim Mentality

*"The 1960s was all about the search for meaning -
and the 1990s is about the search for the moment" - Bono, U2
(Interview, MTV, May 1996)*

Now that we have established the causes of the gap between the different generations, we must move on to finding solutions. There are no "quick fixes" to the conflicts between the generations, unfortunately, and the solutions offered in this chapter are more theoretical than practical. This is because the first steps towards solutions are found not in the implementation of programs or structures, but rather in the changing of attitudes. We will see in this chapter, and the next, that much of the initiative in multi-generational interaction must come from the older generations. Until older generations are prepared to give up their "rights" to enjoy their comfort zones, it is unlikely that anything of significance will happen between them and the younger, and older, generations.

Consider, for example, the arrival of a first child into the home of a couple married for five years. As much as during the nine month pregnancy this couple convinced themselves that the baby "would not change their lives", and that they would not be housebound, go to less movies or dinners with friends, or do less outdoor activities, they are in for a nasty surprise. It is, of course, not healthy if a baby rules the household, and the parents never get chance to act as "husband and wife" rather than "parent". However, it is impossible for that child not to change the priorities and functioning of the household. As the child grows older, these changes are even more profound. Consider a family with three children, two parents and one television set. Picture the scene as they decide what to watch on television. There will be times when Father decides that he wants to watch cricket, and because of his position in the family he allows no argument and dominates the set. However, if Dad always gets his way, no matter what the other family members say, he will be labeled selfish, rude and an unfit father. So, sometimes on a Saturday afternoon, Dad will put the *Barney* video into the VCR and watch the great purple dinosaur keep his young offspring entertained for hours on end. He may even enjoy it; for a while. And then he will take them on his knee and explain one of the great mysteries of the universe: the rules of cricket.

Family interaction involves a give and take from all sides. It involves a balance between getting your way sometimes and giving way on other occasions. It is not about dependence (i.e. one member of the family always relying on another) nor is it about independence (i.e. each member of the family always doing their own thing). Rather, it is about interdependence (i.e. each member of the family both giving and receiving, interacting with all other members of the family). This is an analogy for multi-generational ministry in the church. The church "family" consists of existing adults, into which come three different types of children: (1) those who are physically young in age, and (2) those who are spiritually young, being recently converted and incorporated into the church universal, and (3) those who are spiritually old (and mature), but are new members of a specific church in its local form.

If the existing "parents" simply refuse to acknowledge that the presence of these "babies" in their midst should change their lifestyle, and stubbornly insist that the child "must fit in with us", they will eventually discover that the child will waste away and be severely impaired in its development. In the same way, children cannot expect to have all their whims and fancies met – they are entering an environment where they are newcomers, and they must learn to interact with the "adults" that they find there. There must, in other words, be a mutual "moving together" of the young and old, of the established and the new. This change is a continual process, just as the development from baby to child to teen to adult to married partner to parent to grandparent perpetuates a cycle of growth in a human being. In fact, change is the very sign of life in any living being. Once a living being stops changing, it is dead. So, too, every organisation must be continually changing to ensure that it remains alive.

This is especially true if the church wishes to survive. Just as family requires children to survive and carry on the family name, so too the church requires new children to survive into the future. Some churches have recognised the crisis of the present lack of involvement of young people in most mainline denominations. For example, the following excerpt is taken from the bishop's invitation to the Third Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa (Natal-Transvaal), which was held from 13-16 October 1997:

There is great cause for worry, since many youth do not find a home in our church any more. Must this be seen against the bigger framework of secularization; have we as adults lost credibility among the youth, or can it be ascribed to the fact that youth have been repeatedly called 'church of the future', which implies that they do not enjoy any space within the adult congregation? We have to deal with these and many other questions ... and therefore the main topic of the Synod will be Our Youth.

Lilje 1997

The church, along with all other organisations, needs to be open to the “new”, and especially to different cultural expressions. This is mandated in Scripture. We see this especially in the accounts, recorded mainly in the book of Acts, of the largely Jewish church coming to terms with the fact that God was saving the Gentiles as well. Paul summed up the end goal succinctly in Galatians 3:26-28, “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (NIV).

We need to become multiculturalists. However, we must raise a warning sign at this point. “As good multiculturalists, we give people the right to be different, but therein lies the point – they’re ‘different’, not normal. We’re the normal ones” (Tiplady 1999). This is an important point. Our definitions of “normal” are so culturally bound that it is virtually impossible to escape them. We must not be scared of questioning what is truly Biblical and timeless, and what is merely cultural form and expression.

Many people are scared of the process of questioning and change. Many have a legitimate concern, as we do not want to change the basis of our faith, or our reliance on God and His Word. However, these are not the things that are requiring the most major attention. The real issue at stake is not content or even form in churches, but rather process. “There is a pressing need for the church and its leaders to rethink *why* they do *what* they do the *way* that they do it. In recent years, there has been a tendency to break the church down into specialized tasks and programs and then focus on trying to improve those various tasks and programs. Rather than rethinking the church, we have become engaged in repairing the church” (White 1997:10f.). Management gurus, such as Drucker and Handy have emphasized, in books and conferences, that there are two points of management focus: efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency is about doing things right. Effectiveness is about doing the right things. We have tended to focus on the former in churches. White’s point is important – church is about process. It is about the complete gamut of activities and ministries that all interact and function together, not in isolated enclaves. The constant and excessive desire to atomise is the result of the modernistic scientific approach. The new way is the way of the “big picture”, watching trends and working in “process futurism” (Barker 1993:21).

Before we look at some suggestions for multi-generational ministries in the next chapter, below, however, let us step back and consider some of the foundation philosophical issues for resolving inter-generational conflict and multi-cultural tension within an organisation such as the local church.

1 Systems Thinking

The first change in attitude that is required is to stop viewing organisations as a multitude of different component parts, and to start viewing them as whole units, making up a unified, complex systems. Systems thinking has become a worldwide trend in management training over recent years. It is a new field of study which focuses on the inter-relationship between component parts more than the parts themselves. It recognises that nothing occurs in a vacuum, but that there is a context for each action and reaction. That context is a complex combination of the worldviews of the individual/s involved, the culture of the organisation/s involved, as well as the interplay between the different elements of the given situation. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to give anything more than a cursory introduction to this field of study. We will briefly consider two of the most well recognised types of systems thinking: (1) viewing the context as a system in itself, and focussing on the interplay between different component parts, and (2) viewing each individual within the larger context as being part of a system of thought (worldview) that is shared with others.

1.1 Viewing the Context as a System

Peter Senge is probably the most well known management consultant who deals with systems thinking. His book, **The Fifth Discipline** (1990) is a defining text on this topic. Systems thinking, as used by Senge and others, refers to a way of looking at a situation that does not look at individual parts, but rather focuses on the whole and on the inter-relationships between the various parts.

Today, systems thinking is needed more than ever because we are becoming overwhelmed by complexity. Perhaps for the first time in history, humankind has the capacity to create far more information than anyone can absorb, to foster greater interdependency than anyone can manage, and to accelerate change far faster than anyone's ability to keep pace.... Systems thinking is the antidote to [the] sense of helplessness that many feel as we enter the 'age of interdependence'. Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing the 'structures' that underlie complex situations, and for discerning high and low leverage change. That is, by seeing wholes, we learn how to foster health.... [It is] concerned with a shift of mind from seeing parts to seeing wholes, from seeing people as helpless reactors to seeing them as active participants in shaping their reality, from reacting to the present to creating the future.

Senge 1990:69

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a detailed introduction to the complex subject and practice of systems thinking. However, it is important in an understanding of organisational health to have a brief overview. The concept of "health" is the underlying goal of systems thinking. Health does not imply being disease-free, but rather the ability of the organism to identify and respond to any threats from disease or sickness. Neither is

growth always a numerical increase. If we view the church primarily as an institution, then we will be forced into measuring growth on purely institutional grounds, such as numerical increase, size of budget, size of overdraft and a variety of other such measures. However, if the church is seen primarily as an organism, then the growth indicators will be very different. Thirty seven times in Scripture, the church is referred to as “the body of Christ”, and Christ is identified as its “head” in seven references. It is also clear that the church is not a building somewhere (cf. For example, Mark 14:58; Acts 5:11, 7:48, 9:31; Rom. 16:5; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:24). There is no doubt that the “church” refers to an organism – a living unit. “An organic view prevents us from imposing on health a meaning it does not have. Organic processes are not linear. They are not merely progressive or expansive. Some organic processes promote growth through decay, shedding, and breakdown. Some organic growth is downward – a deepening, a rooting, maturing process. An organic view will not allow us to make health synonymous with enlargement and mass. Organic life comes in many sizes and shapes, all of which may be said to be healthy” (Steinke 1996:viii).

Systems thinking provides a means of thinking about an organisation that identifies weaknesses and threats, works to respond to them, and looks for leverage points to make proactive changes – thus ensuring health. It is this type of thinking that is most required in churches, where the atomisation of the various ministries in local churches is virtually complete. The church and its ministries need to be seen holistically, and the various efforts need to be integrated into the whole system that they really are. This does not so much involve a change in practice or structure, but rather a change in thinking and attitude. It is important to remember that “health is not an end but a means to fulfill the purpose of life. Health is a resource for life, not the object of living” (Steinke 1996:ix). Many churches view numbers, attendance, budgets and the like as the ends in themselves. Systems thinking ensures that we look beyond the growth factors to the real purpose of existence.

Until we start to take a wider look at the situations we face in youth ministry, we will never understand what is actually going on, nor will we know how to bring change. We have to start seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains. Too often we only see individual actions instead of the structures underlying the actions. This usually means that we go around looking for someone to blame when something goes wrong. A systems thinking approach teaches us that everyone shares responsibility for a problem generated within a system. It also encourages everyone to work together synergistically to bring change. A system has two processes at work within it: (1) Reinforcing processes - these cause growth to occur in a system; and (2) Balancing processes - these cause growth to either stop or be delayed. Pure accelerating growth or decline seldom occurs unchecked in nature - sooner or later limits will be encountered which will slow, stop or divert growth.

In ministry it is vital to watch for balancing processes that will hinder growth. If this is done, and ways are identified to change these factors, more healthy group systems will be created. We must not just be concerned about solving a problem but also work on changing the thinking that caused the problem in the first place. A quick-fix approach to ministry may mean that we end up facing the same problem in the future. Bringing change in a system is not about pushing harder. It is more important to identify the factors that are hindering growth and deal with them. The best results come when we take small well-focused actions rather than large-scale efforts. Wise functioning is continually looking out for the little ways in which we can improve our ministry.

To help understand the means by which system thinking is undertaken, Peter Senge presents eleven laws of systems thinking (1990:57ff.):

1. **Today's problems come from yesterday's solutions.** The way we solve one problem in the past may impact on another problem in the future. Some solutions just shift the problem from one part of a system to another. Youth leaders must be careful of solving a problem today in a way that will cause more problems tomorrow. It is important to solve problems and not shift them to another part of the ministry.
2. **The harder you push, the harder the system pushes back at you.** When something is not working - the solution is not usually to push harder. Often a different approach is needed. To bring change we will need to think more carefully and creatively about what needs to be done, rather than simply working harder. Often working smarter works better.
3. **Behaviour grows better before it grows worse.** There are many ways to get things to look better in the short-term, but later the problem will end up worse. When we change one aspect of a system we may find a short term improvement, but if we have not adequately addressed underlying structures and issues, we will find that the problem will get worse in time.
4. **The easy way out usually leads back in.** We often apply familiar solutions to problems because we like to stick with what we know best. In order to minister effectively among youth in the 21st century we are going to need to look for new solutions to problems, rather than relying on ones that worked before.
5. **The cure can be worse than the disease.** Often a familiar solution is not only ineffective but it can be addictive or dangerous. Shifting the burden is not the best way to deal with a problem. Any good solution to a problem will depend on the ability of the system to shoulder its own burdens
6. **Faster is slower.** All systems have built in optimal rates for change. The optimum rate is usually far less than the fastest possible growth. This means that when there is quick growth the system will start to slow down to compensate for the excessive growth.

7. **Cause and effect are not closely related in time and space.** The symptoms that suggest there is a problem often take a while to manifest. This makes it hard to identify problems early enough.
8. **Small changes can produce big results but areas of highest leverage are often least obvious.** Small, well-focussed actions can sometimes produce significant and lasting changes. Leaders need to look out for change that will require minimum effort and which will bring about lasting improvement.
9. **You can have your cake and eat it, but not all at once.** We fail to realise that two options are not necessarily in opposition to each other.
10. **Dividing an elephant in half does not produce two small elephants.** The integrity of a system depends on it being a whole - we must explore the whole system and not deal in isolation. We must continually be asking, "What other factors could be influencing this problem or situation?"
11. **There is no blame.** Instead of looking for outsider circumstances to blame for our problems we must realise that we and the cause of the problem are part of the same system.

It is interesting that the move away from "youth ministry" towards "family ministry" which is the current trend within local church youth work (cf. DeVries, Clap) is actually a move towards a more systemic approach to youth work. Young people cannot be seen in isolation from their context. Where they come to a church youth group, they are not likely to be in contact with a youth leader for more than five hours per week at most. This accounts for a mere 3% of their week. The rest of the 168 hours of the week is spent in different environments, dominated by the home/family and school/friends. Instinctively, almost, youth leaders have realised that to be truly effective it is not enough to help young people to be good Christians at church, but rather to help them be good Christians at home and school as well. This requires the youth leaders to take a systems view of their involvement in the life of young people. Unfortunately, the vast majority of youth leaders still have not realised that this is their role, and continue to minister to young people with no concern or even knowledge of their context.

1.2 Understanding Systems of Thinking

Another use of systems thinking is to categorise worldviews of people into different systems of thinking. Armour and Browning, in *Systems-Sensitive Leadership* (1995) were the first to do this from a Christian ministry perspective. Their categorisation of systems of thought into eight sequential systems is extremely helpful. A summary of the eight systems appears in Appendix C (below).

Briefly, their system involves tracing the development of an individual from birth through youth to adulthood. This development follows a similar pattern to the development of civilization from the earliest human interactions until the present. Just as societies have had to go through the systems sequentially over many centuries, so individuals experience this development sequentially in their own lives. This occurs because each human being starts at the first system, at birth, and potentially develops within the context of their society to the level to which that society has developed. Only when a critical mass of people move to the next system of thought, does the society as a whole move. This development has historically occurred due to major technological or philosophical developments, such as the discovery of writing, the use of logical analysis by the Greeks, and the development of democracy. Until the start of this century, in all of recorded history, only three major advances (from system 1 to system 4) had been made. During this century, a further four advances have been made (from system 4 to system 8). The move from system 4 to system 5 occurred before 1950, while the remaining shifts (from system 5 to system 8) have all occurred since 1950, underlining once again the magnitude of the changes that have occurred in the second half of this century.

Although it would be impossible to do justice to the impact of **Systems-Sensitive Leadership** by providing a short summary, it is worthwhile to briefly outline the systems, especially since they relate very closely to what has been said above about generational cohort characteristics. Armour and Browning are very insistent that age is not a good means by which to allocate people to systems. They are partially correct. As we have already noted above, the generational approach is taken as a generalisation and simplification of a more complex issue of worldviews. Certain individuals, especially those who must, by the very nature of their jobs, interact with different generations, will not “fit” the generational generalisations. However, most people of a certain age will “fit”, which is the reason we have chosen to use the generational analysis approach in this dissertation. The summary below therefore links the systems of Armour and Browning to specific generations.

1.2.1 System 1: The Quest for Survival

This system is evident in extremely primitive cultures, and in very young children. It is also evident in times of extreme mortal danger and physical hardship. It exists as a means of survival for those who would be on the bottom levels of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (cf. Huitt 2000 and Norwood 1999). The primary existence issue is physical survival in the face of immediate threats to life itself. Organisations are structured around random groupings of people in bands that forage together for food, water, and shelter, and the clan chief is therefore the archetypal system 1 leader. As such, this system is not part of

everyday existence, and where this system is operational, the issues addressed in this dissertation would be irrelevant – only survival is of any importance.

1.2.2 System 2: The Quest for Safety

System 2 is evident in primitive cultures and in children. This system views the world as a complex interaction between the physical and spiritual (supernatural) worlds. In children it manifests itself in fantasy and fear of “monsters”, for example. In primitive cultures it manifests in the form of religious expressions. The “priest-king” is the archetypal system 2 leader. This system is not a regular or dominant feature of “civilised” worldviews, but vestiges of it remain in a deep inner need for symbolism that uses the physical to symbolize, or even assist in connecting with, the supernatural. The view of the church as a “sanctuary” is typical of this system.

1.2.3 System 3: The Quest for Power

“System 3 lives by the rule of might. In the ethics of system 3 the strong survive and the weak perish. Winners make the rules not by virtue of moral or intellectual superiority, but simply because they have prevailed in the struggle” (Armour and Browning 1995:65f.). System 3 is not a system that many people function in within a democratic society, but it may be invoked in the face of hostile forces or perceived threat. The warlord is the archetypal system 3 leader. System 3 builds strong hierarchies in the shape of a pyramid where privilege and luxury are exclusively for those highest on the pyramid. It is the motivating force behind the church’s war anthems, such as **Onward Christian Soldiers**. This is the system that takes things on – head on!

1.2.4 System 4: The Quest for Truth

Modern democracies that rely on the general population to vote for leaders or to provide juries for legal proceedings assume that the average citizen has reached a level of functioning commensurate with system 4 thought. Since the systems are largely cumulative, any person functioning at a “higher” system would be equipped to perform these civic duties as well. As such, the Builder generations are typical of system 4 thinking. The primary focus of system 4 is the provision of moral and social stability in a world given to hedonism, impulse, passion, and violence. System 4 organises itself into highly vertical organisations, with clear lines of authority from top to bottom. Decision-making is concentrated in authority figures at the top, who promulgate rules and regulations, often through a multi-layered bureaucracy. System 4 entrusts authority to leaders who have demonstrated integrity and moral fibre, then follows those leaders almost unquestioningly. It demands the same unquestioning obedience from everyone else as well.

God is the transcendent Author of Truth and Eternal Creator. Absolute truth is the bedrock of all religious expression, and thus this system has profound (even idolatrous) respect for Scripture and biblical authority, and revels in theological cut-and-thrust. It views everything it does and everything it believes as having divine mandate. Thus, people learn by passively sitting at the feet of authority, and loves the world of books. The difficulty is that once a subject has been decided upon, system 4 allows no deviation and no discussion. It thus tends towards authoritarianism. Much of our religious expression today is firmly rooted in system 4. System 4 develops theology systematically. It organises religion, and sects and denominations appear, each defined theologically. "Viewed from the outside, nothing is more striking about System 4 religion than its institutional expression" (Armour and Browning 1995:81). In this institutionalising, system 4 is striving for predictability and stability. Evangelical faith is the primary example of system 4 religion. It has often been viewed as harsh and can fall very easily into the trap of legalism.

1.2.5 System 5: The Quest for Achievement

"As a reaction to system 4's caution, system 5 promotes the drive to achieve, to get things moving. It has little patience with policies and structures that hamper what it perceives as needed change.... It equates security with personal effectiveness.... It is a tremendously energetic system and extremely inventive. It innovates tirelessly and delights in experimentation" (Armour and Browning 1995:91). The motivational speaker is a key figure in this system. This is the Boomer Generation. Their driving force is the desire for personal effectiveness and achievement in a world whose demands for conformity thwart an inner sense of fulfillment. They create competency-based organisations that depend on efficiency and bottomline effectiveness to survive. Mission statements, strategic thinking, corporate goals, and departmental objectives are critical to maintaining organisational focus. Wherever possible, they talk things through, and form committees, and task groups, almost as a reflex action. Leaders are expected to be coaches and mentors, not "bosses".

God is seen as a Friend and Guide, and there is a great emphasis on "my personal walk with the Lord." They are very concerned with finding opportunities to develop spiritual gifts and use them in the service of God, and are much more interested in practical theology than doctrinal theology. They build houses of worship that bespeak status and success, and want professionalism in the way the church goes about its work and the way it presents itself to the community. For system 5, bigger is always better. This is the style of church made popular by people like Bill Hybels (Willow Creek) and Rick Warren (Saddleback), and most clearly evidenced in the mega-churches currently proliferating the world.

System 5 faces the potential major pitfall of materialism, and equating spiritual health with outward signs of success, such as slick presentation, numerical growth and positive cash flow financial statements. System 5 is also “often blind to damage it does to key relationships” (Armour and Browning 1995:101) – and this, as we have seen, is at the heart of the current generation gap crisis.

1.2.6 System 6: *The Quest for Intimacy*

Among other things, system 6 is a response to the elitism which system 3 introduces and which subsequent systems prolong. System 3 builds on power elites, system 4 on class elites, and system 5 on success elites. Each creates its own brand of victims. In system 3 the worship of power leads to exploited masses, having no voice in their destiny and often subjected to harsh conditions. The enforcement of rules and regulations in system 4 can crush sensitive spirits by slipping into heartless legalism, bureaucratic insensitivity, and rigid authoritarianism. And the quest for prestige and status in system 5 exaggerates the gulf between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’. When system 6 comes on the scene, it takes up the cause of these victims. System 6 sees itself as a healing presence in a deeply injured world.... System 6 works to empower the entire community by undercutting the elitist remnants of previous systems.

Armour and Browning 1995:103

This reactive inclination is typical of Generation X. System 6 prefers small, egalitarian groups that bond intimately together, and therefore shun hierarchy, preferring flat organisations. The preferred leadership style is a facilitator who guides the group, often with individual members rotating into the facilitator role on an *ad hoc* basis. God is seen primarily as a Healer and Reconciler. System 6 prefers intimate settings for worship and non-judgemental acceptance of all who gather in that setting. They need worship that touches deep feelings and causes people to be introspective.

System 6 suffers from a near fatal flaw. “System 6 ideology and system 6 methodology are not always compatible in the same context. They get in each other’s way. That compels system 6 to make trade-offs.... When trying to forge a far-reaching political alliance [with another system], system 6 is unable to work with other groups, including those committed to systems 6 causes” (Armour and Browning 1995:110).

It is interesting to note that Armour and Browning, when ranking the conflict between the systems rate the conflict between systems 5 and 6 as high (i.e. between Boomers and Xers), but rate the highest conflict between systems 5 and 6 on one side, and system 4 on the other (i.e. Boomers and Xers against Builders) (1995:171). This ties in exactly with what was said above about Boomers being at the core of multi-generational (and multi-cultural) conflict.

1.2.7 *System 7: The Quest for Flexible Solutions*

“System 7 emerges once the pace of change becomes so accelerated that it is often easier to see chaos than order in events.... System 7 presumes that nothing is nailed down, that everything is in a state of flux.... We must be endlessly flexible. Otherwise change will overwhelm us” (Armour and Browning 1995:113f.). The primary focus for system 7 is averting the looming disaster of a polarised world in which rigid viewpoints and partisan spirits promote warring camps and thwart the flexibility we need to survive. This is one of the reasons why the Millennial generation was cited above as the solution to the problem we currently face. It will be system 7 thinkers who will lead the de-atomisation (i.e. growth) into the future world. “Ironically, the very thing that gives system 7 its strength is also a potential pitfall. Because system 7 thinks so much in ‘big pictures’, it is not particularly astute at managing details.... Neither is it noted for its people skills.... In addition, system 7 is so pragmatic that other systems (system 4 in particular) often think it unprincipled” (Armour and Browning 1995:118f.).

System 7 creates highly flexible, thoroughly modular organisations that can be restructured and revamped almost instantaneously with minimal loss of momentum. In line with Easum’s “permission giving” structures (cf. *Sacred Cows Make Gourmet Burgers* 1995), decision-making is dispersed throughout an organisation in which information networks tie everyone together in a neural structure.

1.2.8 *System 8: The Quest for Holistic Solutions*

Armour and Browning spend no more than a few pages briefly touching on system 8. They correctly identify this as a new system, not yet evidenced. This system will be the system developed by the as yet unborn adaptive generation that will follow the Millennials. It is system 8 thinking that will provide the final catalyst to resolving the crisis of the transitional age we find ourselves in. As the next adaptive generation grows up, it will address the polarities that now exist, and provide a unifying focus that will draw the generations and systems together. This will ultimately resolve the differences, and set the foundation for the emergence of a new framework of thought and worldview.

1.2.9 *Application: Which system is best?*

Systems thinking can be very helpful as we try to understand how different people are thinking as they approach a given situation. It is also useful to assist us to work out which system is dominant in a particular group of people or an organisation. The group will adopt that system as its *modus operandi*. The problem is obviously that people from a different system will no doubt feel uncomfortable within that group. Scripture does not give us the right to homogenise ourselves so much that only likeminded people find a place in fellowship with us.

Therefore, although in the introduction to this section, Armour and Browning's insistence that the systems were not age-based was negatively evaluated, their contention may actually be the solution to the problem to attempt to remove age-bias from these systems. The solution to the systems-thinking divide is not for a group to select a system. There is no "best" system. And the systems do not develop, so that the last system is better than the others. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Each has its own place in making a unified whole. True systems thinking views systems in this way. Thus, the ideal person, and, by extension, the ideal organisation, is that which has access to all systems, and has the ability to identify and apply the correct system to the appropriate situation. True systems thinking is when this process is done consciously and openly.

Thus, although systems seem currently to be linked to different generations, systems thinking provides a solution: each generation must make a conscious effort to understand their own systemic bias, and work towards incorporating the other system of thought into their own "vocabulary" of interaction. A complete systems view will allow participants to engage a situation by selecting the most appropriate response from the full range of available systems. Once the choice has been made, leadership is assumed by those who operate most comfortably and naturally within the selected response system. This is, of course, much easier said than done, and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to expand on how systems thinking can be taught to a group of people. Suffice it to say that there is a growing body of work that is specifically aimed at doing just that, and the reader is encouraged to move seriously in this direction.

2 Missions thinking: Contextualisation

As we have seen graphically above, the world in which we are living has changed so dramatically that it is not stretching the facts at all to claim that young and old today are like separate cultures, even if they live in the same house. Added to this is the fact that the world is more multi-cultural than ever before, with people of different languages, racial groups, ethnic backgrounds and worldviews living side by side in large metropolitan areas. Missions is no longer reserved for foreign, "dark" continents. Missions, if it is seen as taking the Gospel to people who have never had it before, finds expression not only in foreign countries controlled by pagan religions, but also in the neighbourly chats with the person next door, or in the parent-child interactions over the dinner table. The most helpful new paradigm for youthwork is the concept of youthwork as missions (cf. Ward in particular). Missions is the process by which the Gospel is contextualised into the worldview framework of the culture to which the missionary is going. This is not to say that the Gospel is compromised or changed to "fit into" the culture, but rather that the

frameworks and concepts available within that culture form the basis of the means by which the Gospel is communicated to that people group.

For example, the Yao people of central and eastern Africa, centered in northern Mozambique and Malawi, have no concept of "snow". It has never snowed in many of these regions - not in living memory anyway. Thus, the concept of "sins being washed as white as snow" (Isa. 1:18) has no meaning for them. The missionaries working in that area translated this word to be "as white as bread", since the grain which is crushed in the shores of Lake Malawi is left in the sun until it turns pure white. This is not a "change" to Scripture, although many fundamentalists would probably view it as such. Rather, it is a necessary "contextualisation". The same may be required for the more pastoral (i.e. agrarian) parables found in Scripture, when these parables are to be explained to inner-city children who believe milk comes from a box and meat from a packet with a polystyrene base.

Lingenfelter says that "the idea of contextualisation is to frame the gospel message in language and communication forms appropriate and meaningful to the local culture and to focus the message upon crucial issues in the lives of the people" (1998:12f.). He is talking about missionaries establishing churches in foreign cultures. It is the argument of this dissertation that this is what today's adults need to use an analogy for their work amongst today's youth. It will not always be so, as the post-Y2K generations will be a lot closer in worldview than the gap between Boomers/Silents/GIs and Xers/Millennials is today. "Missionaries have succeeded in bringing a biblically informed worldview, but one that is thoroughly contaminated by their culture. Is it possible to bring a truly transforming gospel, or are we always limited to reproducing our own cultural reflection of Christianity wherever we carry the message?" (Lingenfelter 1998:12).

While some of them are consciously aware of it and some are not, today's generation of children, teens, and young adults wanders through our cultural landscape in search of The Way home. Many of us in the church wonder why their search doesn't lead them enthusiastically into our pews and willingly onto the road to life. Perhaps our unwillingness and lack of enthusiasm to go to them by learning their "language" and understanding their world is to blame. In other words, it's not a case of this generation consciously turning it's back on the church, but the church unconsciously (or maybe even consciously) turning it's back on this generation.

Walt Mueller 1998 (Spring 1998 edition of youthculture@2000)

"It is much more comfortable, of course, to go on speaking the gospel only in familiar phrases to the middle classes.... Each generation of the church in each setting has the responsibility of communicating the gospel in understandable terms, considering the language and thought-forms of that setting.... The reason we often cannot speak to our children, let alone other people's, is because we have never taken the time to understand

how different their thought-forms are from ours” (Schaeffer 1968:94). Every culture needs to be impacted and penetrated by the gospel. The multitude of youth cultures is no exception. Once that culture has been penetrated and youth come to know Christ, we should not demand that young people lose their culture. In current missionary thinking, we would not make native Americans and Africans dress like Europeans in order to be acceptable worshippers. Why then do we do this to the young people who live in our community, but are growing up in a different culture. Let us at least, having learnt past painful lessons, allow room for Christ himself to transcend these cultures. Culture can and must be retained in a Christian lifestyle.

We believe that the invisible church of Jesus Christ exists outside of and independent from culture. However, the visible church, which manifests itself in every era and place as a social institution, reflects the social norms and beliefs of its host culture. Indeed it is unavoidable, for the church is comprised of people who live in cultures and reflect the assumptions of those cultures.

Regele 1995:37

3 Pilgrim Mentality

3.1 Aliens and Strangers

In addition to the two attitudes above, we need to remember our position as Christians. We have been specifically commanded to have the attitude of pilgrims – of those who are just passing through – those who don’t belong, but have temporary residence – those whose allegiance belongs to another land. Peter reminds us of this when he says: “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims ...” (1 Peter 2:11 KJV). In a more modern translation, the whole paragraph says: “Dear brothers and sisters, you are foreigners and aliens here. So I warn you to keep away from evil desires because they fight against your very souls. Be careful how you live among your unbelieving neighbours. Even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honourable behaviour, and they will believe and give honour to God when he comes to judge the world” (1 Peter 2:11-12 NLT).

For a pilgrim, “there never is a sense of satisfaction or arrival” (Anderson 1990:146). “The life of the pilgrim is unsettled; no single culture is adequate, settling down is temporary, and accommodation to culture is for a higher purpose” (Lingenfelter 1997:20). We must learn to both “submit to every authority instituted among men” and “live as free men... as servants of God” (1 Peter 2:13-16). In quoting these verses, Lingenfelter is calling us to live as pilgrims in an alien land. Pilgrims are never fully at home, although they do their best to understand and adapt to the culture of the land through which they travel. But this adaptation is never at the expense of their own culture. They are always perceived as

foreign and alien by the inhabitants of the land. Lingenfelter's theme, throughout his two books, is that this is how Christians should view culture. We should never attach ourselves firmly to any one cultural expression of our faith, but should rather see these things as temporal. Our "culture" as Christians is attached to our "homeland", that is heaven, where our true homes are. We cannot help but adapt to the culture in which we currently pilgrimage, but we can never adapt our faith so much that it becomes synonymous with the culture in which we are moving. His cause for concern is that this is precisely what western missionaries do. From all that has been said so far, it should be clear that it is also what older adults are currently doing to the youth. Viewing ourselves as pilgrims is a first step in unshackling our Christian expression from the cultural chains we have placed on it.

Hauerwas and Willimon base their book, *Resident Aliens* (1989) on Phil. 2:5-11 and 3:20-21, explaining that we are God's representatives (ambassadors) on earth. Taking Moffatt's translation of Phil. 3:20, they talk of being "heaven's colony" on earth. "The Jews in Dispersion (exile) were well acquainted with what it meant to live as strangers in a strange land, aliens trying to stake out a living on someone else's turf. Jewish Christians had already learned, in their day-to-day life in the synagogue, how important it was for resident aliens to gather to name the name, to tell the story, to sing Zion's songs in a land that didn't know Zion's God. A colony is a beachhead, an outpost, an island of one culture in the middle of another.... We believe it is the nature of the church, at any time and in any situation, to be a colony" (1989:11f.). Could it be that the Old Testament exile, and the detail we have recorded in the prophets is not only part of our Bible as a picture of God's judgement on the people of Israel, but that it is also a pattern for the church today? It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to pursue this thought, but on the surface it is a very appealing question, with intriguing possibilities.

Another way of looking at this concept of one culture living as aliens amongst another has been presented from an anthropological point of view, and is discussed in the next section in detail.

3.2 Figurative Culture

In her book, *Culture and Commitment* (1970), Margaret Mead used data recorded over a number of years in New Guinea to indicate how a culture develops through different stages. She used the concept of a figurative ability to imagine and extrapolate to demonstrate this development. There are three stages: (1) postfigurative, (2) cofigurative, and (3) prefigurative.

3.2.1 *Postfigurative*

“A postfigurative culture is one in which change is so slow and imperceptible that grandparents, holding newborn grandchildren in their arms, cannot conceive of any other future for the children than their own past lives. The past of the adults is the future of each new generation.... The postfigurative culture depends upon the actual presence of three generations. So the postfigurative culture is peculiarly generational. It depends for continuity upon the expectations of the old, and upon the almost ineradicable imprint of those expectations upon the young” (Mead 1970:1, 4).

Many older members of churches, although not living in postfigurative cultures, impose postfigurative methods of spiritual training. They expect their children to blindly, and unquestioningly, put on the mantle of spiritual expression that they themselves have put on. Mead, in dealing with how primitive cultures interact with modern ones (by using these terms, please note that no judgment is made on their relative values – much that is “modern” is very destructive, as we know), highlights the problem for churches which follow the same approach: “Under the pressure of contact with cultures which are not postfigurative... individuals may leave their own culture and enter another” (1970:10). She goes on to show how this process occurs, with the taking on of the external forms of the new culture, and resulting in great internal conflict between the external forms and the internal postfigurative “programming”. Ultimately, these people very often totally reject their first cultural expressions and completely subsume themselves in their adopted culture. This phenomenon, observed by Mead in Polynesian and New Guinea cultures may help us to understand the rejection of the church by young people who have had a postfigurative growing up experience that is so very far removed from the world in which they live. Churches that have failed to see the contextualisation process as important will battle most with this.

3.2.2 *Cofigurative*

“A cofigurative culture is one in which the prevailing model for members of the society is the behavior of their contemporaries.... In a society in which the only model was a cofigurative one, old and young alike would assume that it was ‘natural’ for the behaviour of each new generation to differ from that of the preceding generation. In all cofigurative cultures the elders are still dominant in the sense that they set the style and define the limits within which cofiguration is expressed in the behaviour of the young” (Mead 1970:25). Mead goes on to identify times when cofiguration will be dominant. The main cause is a substantial and sudden change in culture, such as with immigration, causing the experiences of the young to be very different from those of the old (cf. 1970:29). As we have already seen, such changes have occurred within culture during recent decades. The fact that no geographical migration has taken place has served only to exacerbate the

problem, since people have had no reason to anticipate this cultural shift. Because no geographical migration has taken place, many older people refuse to see that a cultural migration has taken place anyway.

“Conflict between generations in such situations is not initiated by the adults. It does arise when the new methods of rearing children are found to be insufficient or inappropriate for the formation of a style of adulthood to which the first generation, the pioneers, had hoped their children would follow” (Mead 1970:29). Mead specifically indicates that the change from one culture to another is often hampered more by grandparents than parents. This would certainly be true in today’s generational constellation, as Silents and Xers appear to get along better than either do with Boomers, yet the gap between Silents and Xers is almost insurmountable. This produces a difficult paradox for both generations, as they admire and respect each other, yet continually find themselves clashing on ideological grounds. This is the reason that in large corporations where change is a significant factor, retirement, especially early retirement for the Silent generation, is a “social expression of the same need for flexibility” (Mead 1970:35), as similarly, is the “ease with which many second- and third- generation Americans relinquish all responsibility for the elderly” (Mead 1970:40).

The real concern that Mead expresses is the concern for the American society she herself was part of. As she looked at the 1960s society, she saw the worst of configurative generational tensions. Characteristic of this age are the expectation of generational breaks and that each new generation will experience a different world technologically. Her concern was with the attitude of parents to these expectations. Simply expecting a child to behave with “more of the same” values that they had been raised with was not necessarily a good response to the change.

[This attitude] does not extend to a recognition that the change between generations may be of a new order.... In much the same way, children in our own and many other cultures are being reared to an expectation of *change within changelessness*. The mere admission that the values of the young generation, or of some group within it, may be different in *kind* from those of their elders is treated as a threat to whatever moral, patriotic, and religious values their parents uphold with postfigurative, unquestioning zeal or with recent, postfiguratively established, defensive loyalty. It is assumed by the adult generation that there still is general agreement about the good, the true, and the beautiful and that human nature, complete with built-in ways of perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting, is essentially constant.... Today’s children have grown up in a world their elders never knew, but few adults knew that this would be so. Those who did know it were forerunners of the prefigurative cultures of the future in which the prefigured is the unknown.

Mead 1970:47f., 50 (emphasis in original)

3.2.3 *Prefigurative*

"We are now entering a period, new in history, in which the young are taking on new authority in their prefigurative apprehension of the still unknown future" (Mead 1970:1).

Mead anticipated the prefigurative culture, identifying much of the globalised world as being cofigurative at her time of writing. Yet, she was never able to truly define what a prefigurative culture would look like – possibly this is the whole point. From a cofigurative viewpoint, a prefigurative culture is incomprehensible. She did, however, accurately describe the conditions under which a prefigurative culture would arise: "Today, nowhere in the world are there elders who know what the children know, no matter how remote and simple the societies are in which the children live. In the past there were always some elders who knew more than any children in terms of their experience of having grown up within a cultural system. Today there are none" (1970:60f.).

3.3 **Explorers, Pioneers, Settlers, Inhabitants and Citizens**

Mead's investigative work amongst New Guinea tribesmen is even more useful than she herself first thought. The concept of the move from postfigurative culture, through cofigurative to prefigurative is a description of what is happening in the world of the late 20th century. Where she looked at pioneers and the first and second generation children, it is possible to look at the shift from modernism to postmodernism and beyond in the same terms.

The Builders (especially the adaptive Silent generation) can be equated with the (postfigurative) pioneers. Many of the better thinkers of this generation, such as CS Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, and obviously a whole host of secular philosophers, foresaw the vast changes coming with the demise of the "Enlightenment Project" (modernism). They began the process of pioneering a "new land" of thought. Before them were the "explorers", those precious few with brave hearts and bold minds who explored the new land long before any other humans were able to go there. These were the Nietzsche's, Kierkegaard's, Kant's and others who explored postmodernism well ahead of their time intellectually. It was on the basis of the exploration done by these explorers that the pioneers were able to begin to move into this land, albeit with tentative steps. And the pioneers were able to make the land their own, as postmodernism began in various forms in the 1950s.

Yet, as good and important as their efforts were, the first generation "settlers", the Boomers, rejected much of what they had achieved by moving to this new land. Pioneers are on a journey, knowing that they have never arrived, yet as old age sets in, knowing too that they must now set up camp and live it out in the rough new land. They often do so by

trying to create fortresses and fortified settlements for themselves, protecting themselves from the harsh countryside inhabited by hostile forces.

Their children, those born in the “old” land but with few memories of it, learn very quickly to live in the land and accept it as “normal” territory. However, having grown up in the “fort”, the children are wary of the land, and attempt to dominate it, rather than live in it and integrate with it. History shows that first generation settlers are often the most savage and driven of the generations of settlers – fighting fierce and demanding battles. This is like the Boomers, who see themselves as warriors in a war, battling to survive the onslaught of this hostile new “land” called postmodernism.

The next generation are neither pioneers nor settlers. They are inhabitants – they begin to come to peace with the new land, accepting its rugged beauty for what it is, and not feeling the need to dominate and attack it. Possibly this is because they have accepted it as their own in a way their parents and grandparents were never able to do. Speaking of the youth of her day, Mead says of the young Generation Xers (in words that chillingly foresaw the struggle Xers have had to deal with thus far in their lives):

The young generation, however, the articulate young rebels all around the world who are lashing out against the controls to which they are subjected, are like the first generation born into a new country. They are at home in this time. Satellites are familiar in their skies. They have never known a time when war did not threaten annihilation. Those who use computers do not anthropomorphize them... They can understand immediately that continued pollution of the air and water and soil will soon make the planet uninhabitable.... As members of one species in an underdeveloped world community, they recognise that invidious distinctions based on race and caste are anachronisms. They insist on the vital necessity of some form of world order. They live in a world in which events are presented to them in all their complex immediacy; they are no longer bound by the simplified linear sequences dictated by the printed word...Although I have said *they know* these things, perhaps I should say that this is *how they feel*. Like the first generation born in a new country, they listen half-comprehendingly to their parents' talk about the past. For as the children of pioneers had no access to the memories which could still move their parents to tears, the young today cannot share their parents' responses to events that deeply moved them in the past...Watching, they can see their elders are groping, that they are managing clumsily and often unsuccessfully the tasks imposed on them by the new conditions.... They see that their elders are using means that are inappropriate, that their performance is poor, and the outcome very uncertain. The young do not know what must be done, but they feel that there must be a better way.

Mead 1970:59f.

The final stage of moving from an old culture to a new one is to become a citizen of the new land. This will be left to the Millennial generation, followed of course by their children and grandchildren after them. They will be the first full “citizens” of this new land of thought. The transition we now call postmodernism will be over, and just like the

“wild west” was tamed, so too, the Millennials will live in an ever-tamer world. The key to understanding this is to remember that we are in an age of transition. We must understand that the “rules” may be different in this “wild west”, and the rules may only be temporary as well. We need to focus our attentions on surviving the transition and preparing the best possible future for the future citizens. This may involve, as it involved in America’s history, the setting up of a framework that future generations can hold as “self-evident” even if we, the people of the transition, do not do so with much confidence ourselves. This is our challenge – and it cannot be met and accomplished by one generation lone, nor even by one generation at a time.

There can be no doubt that the young and old need each other as we head into the uncharted territories of the third millennium. Each generation brings a unique and important view of this “new land” we enter together: from pioneer and settlers to inhabitants and citizens, there is a place for us all.

A healthy church must balance the need to conserve expertise (by valuing seniority, tenure, and past contribution) with the need for fresh blood and new ideas. Both time-tested expertise and energetic innovation are needed in times of rapid and radical change. Without the former, huge quantities of energy, time and money are wasted.... Without the advantage of wise and experience counsel, creative genius shows an amazing proclivity to find ingenious new ways of making the same old foolish mistakes. But age-old experience itself teaches us that without the fresh, invigorating blood of creativity, organizations drift and descend relentlessly toward plodding gerontocracy, nostalgia, irrelevance, arthritic inflexibility, senility and death.

McLaren 1998:104

This is what multi-generational interaction is all about – the interaction of generations around a common goal: living in the present and the future. The task of older generations is not to pass down out-of-date cultural expressions, but to assist young people to develop completely “indigenous” expressions of faith within a new culture. This is difficult for older postfigurative generations who have never had cause to examine the basis of their theological beliefs, and hold all of these beliefs with equal fervour and passion. Yet, if they were truly honest and were committed enough to the younger generations, they would take the time to do such an examination, and would find, to their surprise, that many of the beliefs they hold as sacrosanct and “holy” will turn out to be cultural and generational, and must therefore not be part of what is imposed on younger generations.

With all of these images in our minds, we must now turn to the last and most practical section of this dissertation, which looks at how we can implement multi-generational ministry in a local church.

Multi-generational ministries

*"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must act anew" – Abraham Lincoln
(The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000)*

"If you have a new world, you need a new church. You have a new world" – Brian McLaren (1998:9)

Most churches that the author of this study has been in contact with do not have a multi-generational approach. The best these churches do is to have the odd event where one generation dominates and the others are invited to attend. Such events include youth services, family camps, Easter/Christmas cantatas, sports days, and missions trips. In this chapter, we look at the true nature of multi-generational ministry, and then provide some practical ideas for the implementation of such ministry. These ideas are not an exhaustive list, but rather one compiled through observation, interaction with people attempting to be multi-generational, especially via e-mail on discussion forums, and theoretical research. There is little doubt that a church that truly aims to become multi-generational will easily surpass the suggestions made below to come up with some truly indigenous ministries.

Before we look at multi-generational ministry ideas, however, we must address one issue that may cause confusion, and that is the relationship between "family ministry" and "multi-generational" ministry.

1 Family Ministry?

The accepted scope of multi-generational, or "inter-generational" structures excludes families. Newman writes: "Intergenerational programs are designed to engage nonbiologically linked older and younger persons in interactions that encourage cross-generational bonding, promote cultural exchange, and provide positive support systems that help to maintain the well-being and security of the younger and older generations" (Newman et al 1997:56). The emphasis on the nonbiological link could be for two reasons: (1) the belief that the family system is well catered for already in terms of programs and that it will function adequately without specific emphasis and support, or

(2) that the family system is in such a state of disrepair that it is virtually impossible to repair and should be replaced by intergenerational programs.

In some ways, this may be an admission of defeat. "Because of its roots in family interactions, intergenerational programming has a positive impact on [community, family and individuals]. By supplementing, recreating, or replacing the basic familial connections that now seem to be crumbling in many American communities, such programs can have a direct impact on the quality of an individual's life" (Newman et al 1997:37).

Family ministry appears to be the "new big thing" in youth ministry approaches. There is, of course, validity in family ministry, where parents, supported by the church, are involved in and take primary responsibility for the spiritual development of their own children. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to do a complete analysis of this approach to ministry. The reader's attention is simply drawn to two foundational works on the subject, by DeVries (1994) and Sell (1995).

Multi-generational ministry is not the same as family ministry. Family ministry assumes the context of a family unit, and specifically focuses on working alongside the parents of young people in the youth ministry. Since in most churches the majority of the youth group is made up of young people whose parents attend the church, there is certainly a need for this approach. Those young people whose families do not attend the church are at a disadvantage, of course, but most good family ministers encourage the church body itself to be seen as an extended family. Although this approach is good and beneficial, it does have some weaknesses. One of the major weaknesses is that one of the central assumptions of the model is that the "family" should worship together. The nature of "family" would include traditional and non-traditional concepts of the nuclear family, as well as the extended or church family.

1.1 Weaknesses of the Family Ministry Model

If the church is viewed *primarily* as "family", there are a number of problems that may arise (cf. Ward 1996:153ff.):

1.1.1 Loss of diversity

The "family service" is raised to the level of the "main" worship event, and the focus point of church life. This reduces the importance of other church activities and other service types that may be available. In fact, in many "family churches", there is a deliberate and conscious effort made to ensure that all worship services are identical in style. This is in some vain attempt to continue a "family theme" – even though functional families are filled with a variety of different activities aimed at different members of that family.

True family enhances and encourages diversity. Strong families are those where each member of the family has not only a role to play within the family environment, but also has space to express their individuality. Within a family, the adult parents are not simply “mother” and “father”, they are also “wife” and “husband”, “daughter” and “son”, often “sister” and “brother”, and hopefully “friend”. These different roles require them to operate in different social frames of reference, and enhances the diversity of the family situation. Unfortunately, “family” churches tend to do the opposite, homogenising the experience of the attenders, normally aiming at a median age over 30, and expecting young people to adapt and endure it.

1.1.2 Integration

The integration of youth into the life of “the church” (most often defined as the “adult” components of the church) is a priority in family churches. Adults do not like events that separate young people off for activities on their own. The process of maturing as a Christian is defined as a successful transition from attendance only at “youth events” to attendance at “adult” events, i.e. church. Although there is nothing wrong with this process in itself, when the message sent to young people is that the only legitimate means of evaluation of Christian maturity is attendance at a church service, this is unhealthy, and unwise in the long term. When it is done to the exclusion of other legitimate youth activities it becomes even more negative. To say that attendance at a church-based, spiritual event is more important than attendance at a school-based, spiritual event in determining spiritual growth and maturity, we have made church something that it is not.

1.1.3 Pressure to attend

Ward correctly observes that “for evangelicals, belonging equals attendance” (1996:153). The problem is even more profound, in that attendance is equated with spiritual health. This is nowhere more true than attendance at the main worship service. Many churches monitor the involvement and commitment of their members exclusively on this activity. It is a brave church member who may be thoroughly involved in the life of the church and community, who is irregular in attendance on a Sunday morning. Many young people, who want to be fully involved in the life of the church, but for whom the prevailing style of worship is difficult to deal with and counter-productive to their worship experience, are nevertheless often pressured to attend. In addition, Sunday morning may not be the best time for young people to attend. Many of them have very full weekends, starting with the traditional youth meeting on Friday nights, and often including church youth activities on Saturday, too. They may also have sport, cultural or community activities on a Sunday morning. They may be spending every other weekend with another parent or have the pressure of examinations. Of course, we should not allow young people to look for

excuses to not attend. Although if young people are not excited to go to the house of the Lord like the young Psalmist of Ps. 122, we should first ask ourselves if it might be the service that is deficient. Neither should we equate spiritual health with attendance at a single church event. "Given the choice between belonging and attending or not attending they choose the latter" (Ward 1996:154).

Saying that young people must "learn to worship" with the adults is hypocritical to say the least. Why do adults not "learn to worship" with the youth. Why do adults believe that they have the right to be comfortable in the style of "doing church", and that others must adjust? This is certainly not how a family works. Those newly pregnant parents who swear that "this baby won't change the way we live" are rightly sniggered at by those of us who know what having a baby means. The child changes the way you live. It changes the way you talk. It changes the way you view life, and innumerable adjustments are made in the home to accommodate the new life. Parent's preferences are deprioritised in order to make these adjustments. This is not to say that the baby becomes the boss. There must be give and take, and the child must learn to live in interdependence within the family. But saying this is very different from saying that the parents will make no concessions for the child at all. It is this latter attitude that is most prevalent, unfortunately often especially in "family" churches.

1.1.4 Individuation

One of the vital developmental stages that teenagers in particular must go through is individuation, where teenagers learn to think and act independently of their parents. Within a "family" service, it can be very disconcerting for parents not to have their teenage children with them - if not actually seated next to them, at least in the same venue at the same time. Not wanting to attend church with one's parents may be no indication of the teenager's spiritual health - it may simply be a need to individuate. The problem is that the more pressure applied, especially when the experience of church is not satisfactory for the young person, the more the feeling of individuation will lead to rebellion. When the young person then has the opportunity to be an individual, they will backlash against the pressure by choosing not to attend church at all. This is a typical scenario in many family churches - these churches often battle the most with their 16 - 22 year age group.

It is interesting to read the youth ministry literature from the mid-1960s, when the GI generation were running the youth ministries. They were very clear on the issue of individuation. For example, Little writes: "Although priority is assigned to building youth integrally into the worship and work of the church, this emphasis should not be understood as absorbing youth, or molding them to conformity with established adult norms, or viewing them as adults" (1968:170). It was when the Silent generation took over in the

early 1970s, with their protective approach to parenting that the shift from approaches typified by Little to the protectionism often evident today, which leads to youth being “absorbed” rather than valued – as is the case in many modern family churches.

1.1.5 Leadership

Largely because of this battle with the immediately out-of-school age group, many “family” churches staff their youth group leadership teams almost exclusively with these young people. The (mostly unstated) objective is to keep these young people in church during this critical phase of their lives. Christian youthwork traditionally has seen a key spiritual developmental indicator as a well-defined path of leadership development. “Starting with leading a few prayers in a service or a meeting, and going on to running a Bible study, leading on a Christian camp or becoming a CU president at university, the successful evangelical route is well-trodden.... the route to being accepted as an ‘adult’ on the youthwork scene is by willing to adopt a leadership role” (Ward 1996:189f.). Obviously the result is that spiritual growth is only measured by leadership within the church youth ministry. Not only is this a very narrow view of spiritual growth, it also flies in the face of Biblical instructions on giftedness and the body (cf. 1 Cor. 12 and Rom. 12:8). Leadership is a spiritual gift, which not everybody has.

1.1.6 Desire to question and experiment is disallowed

Young people are at a developmental stage where they need space, and even permission and assistance, to question their faith. Not allowing this time of questioning is the most comfortable solution for parents who have not fully internalised their own faith, or for parents who do not wish to take the time to help their children to own their own faith. It is, however, extremely counter-productive, as young people never internalise their faith. Family church does not allow time for young people to ask questions, nor is being in a group with one’s own parents the right forum for young people to have such discussions. Young people are very willing to discuss issues with adults; it is simply their parents from whom they need to individuate.

1.1.7 Cultural Imperialism

“The idea that we should all meet at the same time, in the same place and do the same things is of the essence in modern church life. To do this we inevitably have to have something of a shared culture.... The whole message is that this ‘culture’ is for everyone” (Ward 1996:156). The way in which churches worship can be a great stumbling-block for today’s unchurched young people.

The problem that Ward goes on to identify is that the majority of church expressions are manifestly middle class and relatively privileged. In Africa, where the “average” Christian

does not fit this profile, the church nevertheless still maintains strong linkages to middle-class expressions of Christianity, in everything from the structure of the service to the way people dress. The implications of the imposition of a middle class culture as a prerequisite to the gospel are so dire and obviously anti-Scriptural, that they don't even need to be mentioned.

“Religious style can minimize the gospel message. Many of our churches have a ‘members only’ country-club mentality. There is a pervasive and often not too subtle attitude that the church has what the world needs, and it’s not available to outsiders.... This arrogance is most often a problem of style, not substance. The gospel tells us, even requires us, to share, but we share only from our own perspective, from our own style, and the gospel is hindered, even hidden” (Schowalter 1995:77).

1.1.8 Too parent-focussed

This relates specifically to leadership and decision-making structures. There is very little involvement of young people in planning, organising, leading, participating, evaluating and changing the way in which the “family” service is run.

1.2 Multi-generational family ministry

This is not to say that family ministry is irrelevant or harmful. Neither does it imply that we should not be actively engaged in family ministry. There is no doubt that the family itself is under tremendous pressure, and even attack, today, and that, as the basic block of society and of God’s church, the health of the family is vital to the health of the church and community. What this study is attempting to emphasize is that a limited application of family ministry that simply attempts to get youth into an “adult” church setting, and possibly one or two other minor interactions between young and old (parents and children) is not sufficient to truly bridge the great generational and philosophical divides that exist between young and old today. It is thus proposed that we follow the much broader ministry concept of **multi-generational ministry**. Multi-generational ministry is larger and broader than family ministry. It incorporates family ministry in its entirety, thus affirming its importance, but aims to achieve a lot more in addition to family ministry. In a sense, therefore, it is an extension of family ministry, rather than an alternative.

2 Multi-generational Ministry: A Definition

Multi-generational ministry is not so much another program, but rather about providing opportunity for adults to spend quality time with young people, where they come to the event on equal terms. This does not necessarily mean that they take away an equal

amount. There is a clear Biblical mandate for the role of teacher to be taken primarily by the adult, and learner by the young person. However, multi-generational ministry takes seriously the interaction of young and old as “brothers and sisters in Christ” where interpersonal ministry is primarily the responsibility of the Holy Spirit, mediated by all those involved.

2.1 Characteristics of true multi-generational ministry

The rest of this dissertation will look at some practical suggestions as to how churches and other organisations can implement effective, genuine multi-generational ministry. As discussed above, there is a lot that can masquerade as multi-generational that is not. Thus, presented below is a short checklist to assist you to assess the genuineness of the multi-generational nature of a specific ministry, structure, event, activity or organisation. Note that, although due to the focussed nature of a post-graduate research dissertation this study has homed in specifically on local church-based ministries, these concepts apply equally to non-church Christian ministries, schools and businesses as well.

Leifer and McLarney (1997:18) highlight three main conditions that must be in place to ensure successful multi-generational programs: (1) adults must be willing to share their power and responsibility, (2) young people must be willing to take on responsibility, and (3) both young and old need the skills to work together. It should be reasonably obvious from what has been said so far that multi-generational ministry is not simply a case of adults “allowing” young people to attend events planned by the adults, but involves young people, and respects their involvement at all levels. It must be ministry *with* young people, not *to* or *for* or even *by* young people. The following are critical factors to consider when setting up and evaluating the effectiveness of multi-generational programs:

2.1.1 Contact between the generations

This may seem like an intensely obvious point to make, but it must be made. Multi-generational interaction involves contact between the generations. Simply belonging to the same “club” is not enough. Attending meetings in the same venue but at different times, or at the same times but in different venues, is not multi-generational interaction.

2.1.2 Mutual Benefit

The single most important defining characteristic of multi-generational programs is that “both older and younger age groups derive mutual benefits from their participation in such programs” (Newman et al 1997:81). If one generation derives benefit while the other does not, this is either paternalism (if the younger derive all the benefits) or a mild form of slavery (if the older derive the benefits). Saying that “mutual” benefits must accrue does

not, however, imply that *equal* benefits accrue. In fact, it is likely that the young will gain more benefit, since they are primarily learners and the old are primarily teachers. But there must be some reciprocity of benefit for it to be truly multi-generational.

2.1.3 *Youth/Adult Partnerships*

“Partnership arrangements are distinguished from mentorships. Partnerships are about sharing information and ideas, not about an older, wiser person bestowing wisdom on a younger one” (Leifer and McLarney 1997:10). The gaps between the different worldviews dealt with above need to be understood and breached as best possible by a culture of tolerance and forbearance between generations. Adults need to stop thinking of the young people as the “church of the future” and realise that they are the church *now*.

It may be true that by the year 2050, today’s youth will be leaders in the church, and today’s church leaders will be no more, but this does not mean that the youth have no place in today’s church. In fact, the history of evangelicalism is the history of ministry to young people and ministry by young people. The Bible itself is filled with young people doing ministry: Joshua, David, Jeremiah, Mary, the disciples and Timothy are but a few examples. The youth are not the church of tomorrow - they are the church of today. The Church needs young people to be the church today, as they are the only generation naturally equipped to survive and thrive in the postmodern world of ongoing, incremental change.

Leifer and McLarney (1997:5) explain the implications of youth/adult partnerships in an organisation. For young people it means making a commitment to take on new roles and responsibilities, learning to cooperate with different kinds of people, believing that you can make a difference in your community, then working toward that goal and recognizing how much power and influence you have. For adults it means being open to the energy and insights of young people, learning to work *with* youth, not for them, listening to youth rather than telling them, letting go of your role as parent or teacher to share power and responsibilities.

2.1.4 *More than just Family*

Newman, in discussing the historical development of intergenerational programs in the United States, indicates that one of the key driving forces behind their creation is the question: “How can intergenerational programs replicate between non-biologically linked older and younger persons the positive outcomes historically evidenced in familial intergenerational exchange?” (1997:56). Multi-generational ministry, although having a significant element of family ministry is a much broader ministry structure, that attempts to

get young and old from non-biologically related environments to relate to each other. True multi-generational ministry goes beyond simple family ministry.

2.1.5 *Involvement by all ages in decision making*

“The common thread in successful [youth/adult] partnerships is that they involve young people in decision making. Just having token youth members does more harm than good.... The ultimate goal of youth/adult partnerships is to bring young people into the planning and decision making roles at all levels of an organization” (Leifer and McLarney 1997:10). More than other age groups, young people need to feel part of an organisation before putting energy into it. They need to “own” the program, and the best means of achieving this ownership is by involving them in the decision making processes that define what the organisation actually does.

Of course young people lack skills in decision making and planning, many of them are too idealistic and they lack the experiential foresight that adults use to signal danger ahead. Yet, if the structures are in place to counteract these weaknesses, the benefits of youthful enthusiasm, fearless testing of assumptions and breaking of stereotypes and the creativity that they will bring will far outweigh the negatives. Having said this, it must be admitted that having young people on a decision making body is much more difficult than excluding them. It takes a lot of effort, physical and emotional, to get the best out of young people. But this should not stop adults from doing it – for the good of their organisation, for their own good and for the good of the young people as well.

2.1.6 *Parallel lifestages*

Many developmental theorists have attempted to develop a generic plan of development for a human being. None is completely adequate, but Erik Erikson’s approach (see Appendix D) seems better and more complete than most. In it, he lists a number of sequential lifestages that a person must pass through. The interesting thing is that the earliest and latest lifestages have strong parallels:

Table 1: Parallel Development Tasks in Young and Old

Children	Adults
Sense of basic trust	Capacity for Intimacy
Sense of autonomy	Ego integrity
Sense of industry	Sense of generativity
Basic identity	Leaving a legacy/ Ego integrity

These needs are reciprocal. For example, the need to develop basic trust is developed within the first year of a baby’s life. The corresponding adult need for intimacy, found in

friendships, love and marriage, is taken to new heights in the intimate bonding of parent and child within that first year. True multi-generational ministry takes lifestage development into account when planning generational interaction. It is not simply putting young and old together – there is a specific reason for doing so. The goal is on mutual benefit and development through interaction.

2.1.7 *Diversity*

Talking of what organisational structures are required for the church of the future, Easum and Bandy write: “Their strategy is not to clone themselves in as many places as possible, within a uniform ethos of denominational practice. Their strategy is to empower whatever works, in order to overcome any obstacle limiting life with Jesus” (1997:109). Multi-generational ministry will, by definition, involve many different viewpoints and many different activities. Thus, the diversity of an organisation’s activities will be a key measure as to how well this multi-generational interaction is faring.

2.1.8 *Budget Allocations*

Most youth ministries’ biggest complaint is the lack of finances. This shows the level of commitment the church actually gives to it. A snap survey in a local church, asking people to indicate who made an initial commitment to Christ before the age of 18, will be revealing. If the church fits worldwide averages, it will find over 75% of all Christians made some form of commitment to Christ before age 18. If this is generally true, and if the role of the church is reach the world with the Gospel, then it makes sense to concentrate our energies where it will be most effective. At least 75% of the church’s budget, 75% of time and 75% of facilities and equipment should therefore be focussed on youth ministry. In the context of this dissertation, a sizeable portion of that allocation should be spent on ensuring the transition from youth ministry to adult ministry, and the involvement of generations together in mutually beneficial activities.

2.1.9 *Training*

“While young people need *skills* training, adults will need *relationship* training” (Leifer and McLarney 1997:34, emphasis in the original). Especially with regards to leadership (especially board) positions, “youth and new adult members will need special orientation to assume their responsibilities at first and continued training to deal with dynamic situations. Members should have somewhere to turn for assistance with questions and concerns” (Leifer and McLarney 1997:51).

2.1.10 Failure

Wherever people are involved, there is the potential for failure. This is even more true when young people are involved. In youth/adult partnerships, adults should allow young people to fail. Obviously, the adults will not allow the failure to reach such proportions that the entire organisation is threatened, but within a limited scope, young people must be allowed to see the consequences of their actions and decisions. Where there are no failures, and no difficulties, then true multi-generational ministry is not occurring.

3 Critical Areas of Potential Conflict

Before we look at some generic ideas for multi-generational programs, it would be wise to deal with some of the areas that have created the greatest conflict over the past 20 years or so. If true multi-generational interaction does not go a long way to solving the conflicts in these areas, then it is not worth pursuing.

3.1 Worship

Possibly the most difficult area to be multi-generational is the area of corporate worship. Because the generational preferences are so diverse when it comes to worship, it is an ongoing challenge to meet these often mutually exclusive expectations. To be honest, sometimes it is impossible to do so.

Obviously, one of the ways in which these conflicting preferences can be dealt with is to have separate services and separate worship experiences. Would this fit in with the characteristics of multi-generational ministry discussed above? If all ages are involved in planning each service and in developing the overall strategy of the church, then the only characteristic that would be in danger is the first one of inter-generational contact. But there is no specific reason why this interaction cannot be accommodated at another time. Additionally, there is not much interaction between anyone of any age during a church service – that is not the purpose of such a meeting of people. Sitting in the same building at the same time, and even singing together is no guarantee of interaction with each other. This is especially true in churches over the size of about 150, where even within one service people would not know everybody else.

The multiple-service option may not be practical or desirable. In such cases, we are forced to work with a single-service strategy. The best way to deal with this is to understand that behind the generational “style” preference is a much more deeply rooted need that is being expressed. This is where Armour and Browning (1995) are so helpful. Their system analysis goes beyond preference to deeply rooted values.

The Builders (Armour and Browning's System 4) prefer worship to be structured, analytical, clear thinking and precise, with a clear emphasis on absolute and timeless Truth. Tradition and timelessness are important elements of worship. Duty, respect, loyalty and responsibility are key motivators. Predictability and directive leadership are valued, as are homogeneity and conformity – it is right and good that everyone worships in the same way, and that all worship is the same (i.e. not much variation between different services). System 4 also tend to be clock watchers – an extension of their need for structure and predictability. For example, it is very unlikely that they will want to deviate from their standard service length, which in most evangelical churches is about 70 minutes.

The Boomers (Armour and Browning's System 5) are much less structured, even though they have a strong task orientation. Boomers attempt to break any moulds that imposed, and strive for freedom of expression and individuality. They therefore value highly freedom, a sense of creativity, experimentation and innovation. They enjoy frequent changes in style and approach, valuing an entrepreneurial spirit. Efficiency, effectiveness and professionalism are important elements in worship – things must flow smoothly, there must be no technical hitches, and the whole event is best when it is properly “stage managed”. They prefer a “bigger and better” approach to worship. They prefer a “personality” leadership style, where the leader imposes his/her personality fairly clearly onto the worship event.

Although there is a gap between Builders and Boomers in terms of the energy in worship, there is a further divide between Boomers and Xers/Millennials:

Both personal and corporate worship are going to change. For [today's youth] outward appearance is not going to be a measure of spirituality. Postmodernism is characterised by paradox, especially in its expression. This will be most fully seen in worship, which to truly touch postmodern Christians will need to be eclectic. Individuality in the midst of community will be paramount in worship. We need to be prepared to facilitate this. The Soul Survivor movement in the UK is a good example of this. The fact that many Black churches, whose white counterparts would be very conservative, are mostly Pentecostal and Charismatic in practice although perhaps not in theology, is another. Ultimately there is nothing sacrosanct about our worship services. Culture is after all only culture - we must recognise this fact if we are to incarnate Christ. Personal preference must make way for accommodation; form for worship in both Spirit and Truth.

Codrington and Swartz 1999

Generation X (Armour and Browning's System 6) enjoy the less structured and innovative environment of the Boomers' worship approach, yet desire more intimacy and relationship to be expressed. Being able to express one's hurt, find healing and develop relationships are important aspects of worship. They are experiential, and prefer the worship leader to

be a fellow pilgrim in the journey of worship, rather than a leader – he/she must simply facilitate a connection with God.

The Millennial Generation (Armour and Browning's System 7) values flexibility and change, and is comfortable with very different expressions of worship being linked together in an eclectic worship experience. Millennials are not concerned about failure, nor about the "flow" of the service. Professionalism is not an important factor, as long as people are able to connect with God in a meaningful way – this arises out of the fact that they prefer to look at the "big picture" than at details. They value a connection between the worship experience and other aspects of the service, and a connection to the "real lives" is absolutely essential. They look for stimulation in the worship experience, valuing multiple sources of input, such as having two overhead projectors, one for words of songs being sung, the other for appropriate images.

Armour and Browning's System 2 is also a very important system that is often present in churches. System 2 relies a lot on imagery and icons to help it worship. Form and structure ("high church" liturgy, for example) are valued. Truth is discovered indirectly through ritual, symbols, stories and intuition – this is reflected in the worship preference of System 2. Often system 2 works in conjunction with other systems – and this is why the New Age movement has been able to tap into the spiritual longings of today's youth – New Age religions are strong in system 2 worship. Armour and Browning point to black evangelical churches ("African American" congregations), as examples of churches where system 2 is dominant (1995:249). System 4 virtually entirely rejects system 2 – which is why many of our system 4 dominated, conservative, evangelical churches are floundering in their attempts to be relevant to today's youth's worship preferences.

It is important to keep these systems of worship in mind as one is preparing the service. There should be elements of the service for each system of worship, and the balance between systems should be kept as even as possible. So, for example, if there is a proliferation of choruses, done in an energetic, modern style (catering for system 5 predominantly), there should also be some more intimate songs selected (for systems 6 and 7). Then, the style of the sermon can be expository and explanatory (aimed at system 4). This requires a lot more effort to put services together – but it is worth it if we can ensure that everyone not only enjoys the worship service, but also gains spiritual benefit from it as well. Armour and Browning give an important piece of advice as we attempt to be multi-generational. They advise that we be upfront about the way in which we will be doing this (cf. 1995:256f.). They suggest that the service leader actually express the fact that certain parts of the service are for one system and other parts for other systems. This should be reiterated at each element of the service. "We are asking them to forego their preference

momentarily, with assurance that we are sensitive to that preference and will honor it too in due course" (1995:256).

It is also important for older church members to understand that the radical societal changes of the last twenty years have not left cultural expressions untouched. In particular, music has changed radically. For example, "youth today, for the most part, are not listening to music that they can sing. Most youth music is simply heard but that does not make it nonparticipatory music. The music still demands nonverbal participation" (Schowalter 1995:21). Dance music (music made specifically for dancing and not for "listening" or singing – often with no words) is also much bigger today than it ever has been. Dance music has a history in Jazz and Blues. People drank and danced to the music, and used it as background "noise" for their own conversations. There was no passive listening in the seats because people danced and joined in. Music permeates Black culture – to understand their music is to understand their life itself. When Whites took over traditionally Black music they changed it from dance music to listening music. Dance music is a celebrative form. There are a number of key characteristics of dance music: (1) There are no real stars – people don't even recognise the faces of a DJ – there is no performer on the stage with a passive audience. (2) The audience as performer – listening is a performance and dancing is enhanced listening – where everyone is involved. (3) It is involving. (4) It is multi-art with technology. (5) It is anti-commercial – there is an element of illegality about the whole culture – and it keeps changing and forming new subcultures to stop to mainstream from getting a handle on it. (6) It has an ever-changing style. (7) It is characterised by psychedelic, pragmatic mysticism (it is a combination of African and Asian culture). The dance culture is very different to the world of the pop star. In fact, it is more like an African Celebration as opposed to a Western concert.

A number of groups have decided to form churches that are more like Dance culture than like Concert culture. The alternative worship scene has the following characteristics: (1) there are no priests – everyone is a priest; (2) with dance music the audience is performer; (3) it is involving – all participate; (4) it is multi-art – video, slides and multimedia are used; (5) it is anti-commercial – it was linked to the social justice movement; (6) it is culturally relevant – they used the arts all around them; (7) there is an interest in ancient mysticism; (8) it incorporated Celtic, Bhuddist and non-western rationalistic culture; (9) it is about reconnecting to the earth; (10) it is non-geographic in that people did not stick to their parish; (11) it stressed community and emotions – the stress was on "how do you feel?" not on "What do you think?"; and (12) it is community based on style and culture and not geography.

How do you design a worship experience in a post-literate age where about 100 percent of the North American culture receives most information from a source other than the printed text? We need to go back to the future by asking 'How did

the Church do worship in a pre-literate culture?' The pre-literate Church made rich use of visual imagery. The medieval churches in Europe depended upon the visual arts to tell the biblical story. Elaborate wood and stone carvings, massive stained glass windows, tapestries, frescoes, and detailed paintings by the masters mixed with dramas that were often used as interludes in the sermons. This appeal to the senses made the Church the best multi-media experience in town. Candles and incense added to the multi-sensory environment. The ritual, with "bells and smells," was intentionally designed as pictures for the senses. The visual arts were so central to the presentation of the gospel in the middle ages that they even influenced the ways preachers spoke and gestured! Late-medieval preachers were skilled visual performers who used a repertoire of gestures known to their audiences from paintings. Manuals of such gestures existed, providing a stylized body language that accompanied and heightened the verbal communication. The contemporary secular technology, the pipe organ, was incorporated into the communication strategy of the medieval Church and had astounding success in its impact upon reaching the unchurched. It probably comes as no surprise-the godfathers and godmothers of the Church strongly resisted the use of a secular instrument in a holy place. "We've never done it that way before!" We live in an age where text, audio, and video converge into the new mixed genre, which is labeled multi-media. This convergence drives us back to the future to design worship experiences that are tactile and multi-sensory. Traditional, abstract liturgy no longer speaks the language of a post-modern culture. Our worship forms must bridge a person's mind to connect to feelings and emotions. Pre-literate worship centers evoked awe and wonderment. Electronic media are no longer an option for the church. Electronic media are the language of our culture.

Ginghamsburg Church [where the author is senior pastor] joined the Media Reformation on December 17, 1994. Media becomes part of every worship experience. Worship attendance grew from 1,200 to over 3,100 in the first two and a half years. Almost half of the people who have come to the church during that time were unchurched. We use electronic media in an interactive form with music, literature, painting, drama, dance, writing, filmmaking, poetry and movie clips. We borrow ideas from David Letterman's 'almost live' spots, in which he appears to leave the studio by playing clips that are really produced earlier. With this tactic I am able to go "on location" in the middle of my sermon. Electronic media open the door to unlimited creative possibilities.

Slaughter 1998:75-6

In his excellent book on the history of evangelical youth ministry, **Growing Up Evangelical**, Pete Ward looks at the history of the three major song books that changed the face of Christian worship in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. These moved from the specific youth focus **Youth Praise** (196X), to the more generally regarded **Songs of Living Waters** (197X), and **Scripture in Song** (1971, from New Zealand), to the widely accepted and very popular **Songs of Fellowship** (198X) and **Scripture in Song Volume 2** (1981). Once again, within evangelicalism, youth work led the way to a more broadly accepted trend. However, the important point for our purposes is that this development also traced the development of Boomers within the church. Boomers were only young teenagers when the first songs were written for them. They were the writers of the next set of songs, and

continued to enjoy and make use of the third set as it became available. Boomers have been at the forefront of the musical revolution in churches – which is probably why they think they own the sole rights to it!

The songs in the second two books, above, were very simple and had “on-beat” rhythms. They were designed to be easy to learn and remember to minimise the time needed to “get into” worship. They were mainly designed for spontaneous and individualised worship styles. Of course, these are good objectives in themselves, but Boomers in the 1990s, many now in charge of church worship ministries have elevated these concepts to absolute standards by which “good” music is judged. Music must be easy to learn, easy to play, melodious on the “normal” melodic scale, piano led, on beat, standard rhythm in order to be acceptable to Boomer ears.

It is interesting to note that it was the Silent generation youth leaders, supported by the middle-aged GIs who made significant steps forward to connecting with the Boomer youth in their youth ministries. The adaptive Silent generation was prepared to make the initial changes that brought choruses to the fore. One would expect Boomers to continue in this tradition – but they have not. The worship style has simply grown with the Boomers. At every stage of life, Boomers have had the worship style that they wanted. Since churches are currently dominated by Boomers, most churches today have a music style that is dominated by folksy, conservative music on the one hand, or upbeat, “loud and proud” music on the other. Boomers have not stopped to consider the style of music that their Xer children might prefer. They certainly have not considered that the style might be radically different, and just as their next-elders were able to make adaptive changes to satisfy them, so too, they should be making similar changes to incorporate Xer musical tastes into worship.

A survey in the United States, reported by Ron Hutchcraft at Motivate '98 in Cape Town, found that in dealing with hassles, young people rated talking to mom number 48, talking to dad number 51 (out of 53) and music was number 1! Axel Rose said: “When I was in high school my best friend was music”. Music is their voice. They are listening to someone who is singing their feelings. Music is one of the biggest way in which Xers tell out their stories. The music is therefore as varied as the stories, from the soulful R&B (Rhythm and Blues), the heartbreaking sounds of new Country and Western, through the search for love in pop and soul, the despair in grunge, to the in-your-face sounds of inner city hip-hop and the killer-instinct of gangsta rap. Young people are giving their lives meaning and expressing that meaning through the story their music tells.

Much of their music reinforces their dark sides: for example, they are lonely so they listen to lonely music, and this just makes them more lonely. They feed what they should be

staving, reinforcing their bad feelings. Music is more than a beat or a style it is the language of this generation, it is their very soul and an expression of their feelings.

This generation loves stories, especially true stories of people's lives. Douglas Coupland's book, which gave a name to this generation, **Generation X** (first printing in 1991), is about three friends who "left our lives behind us and came to the desert - to tell stories and to make our own lives worthwhile tales in the process" (1992:8). Because they have abandoned metanarratives, they are forced to create narratives of their own to define meaning and to give expression to their selves.

"Stories are intensely important to Generation X. We're not big on descriptions and adjectives. We want the feelings, the action, the story... 'Either our lives become stories', says one Coupland character, 'or there's just no way to get through them.' Our stories give us identity" (Ford 1996:238). And stories are told through music.

3.2 Preaching (Communication)

In his book *Between Two Worlds*, John Stott challenges preachers to become "bridge-builders" by relating the unchanging truths of God's Word to the existential situation of those longing to hear Good News. Stott's challenge is relevant to the entire church if we want to effectively communicate to children, teens and young adults as we enter the new millennium. Stott writes, "Now a bridge is a means of communication between two places which would otherwise be cut off from one another by a river or a ravine. It makes possible the flow of traffic which without it would be impossible. What, then, does the gorge or chasm represent? And what is the bridge which spans it? The chasm is the deep rift between the biblical world and the modern world.... Our task is to enable God's revealed truth to flow out of the Scriptures into the lives of the men and women (and children, teens, and young adults) of today.

Walt Mueller 1998 (Spring 1998 edition of *youthculture@2000*)

We will say more about different learning styles of different generations below (see 4.3). At this point, we simply need to recognise that the assumptions we make regarding teaching and preaching are generationally programmed. A recognition of this is the first step towards resolving conflicts that may arise due to the style of communication used within a church. Many of today's young people feel church is boring and irrelevant. Many older people are concerned about compromise and weak theology when new styles of communicating are attempted.

The predominant style of teaching in evangelical churches is a system 4 approach, dominated as it is by the Builders. They have strong concern for doctrine and Truth, and view education as primarily indoctrination – the learning and acceptance of facts. The structure is content-oriented. This means that the more communicated in the time allocated the better. The focus is on "chalk and talk" dumping of content. Teachers are viewed as

qualified when they prove their ability with the Bible, both in knowledge of the content and the ability to interpret that content – teaching techniques are secondary in this assessment. The teacher is seen as the expert purveyor of knowledge, and is never challenged. Learning is primarily aural. The desired content mainly relates to *what* we believe.

Boomers, by contrast, are not looking for authoritarian statements of doctrine, but rather wish to be led through a process of discovery. They learn best through hands-on experiences, real-life or simulated, and are open to creative and innovative means of expressing information. They are conscious of image and the effects of what is being taught. While system 4 (Builders) can be satisfied in huge lecture hall-type learning environments, system 5 (Boomers) much prefer visually-reinforced, interactive learning environments. The teacher is challenged often, not out of disrespect, but because learning best happens in a give-and-take environment. Learning is primarily visual, and must involve interaction. The desired content moves beyond simply what we believe and to how and why it makes a difference in our daily lives.

Generation X is even more different still. Where Boomers needed smaller size groups, even their group size is too big for Generation X, which looks for very small, intimate groups, where everyone would need to be involved. “System 6, with its emphasis on consensus and congeniality, can never accept a learning experience that leaves a single person unwilling to participate.... System 6 genuinely learns best by hearing people tell their own story” (Armour and Browning 1995:224). Learning is primarily by means of interactive “sharing” with the teacher acting as facilitator. The teacher is seen as a fellow learner as well. The desired content relates to personalising the practical implications. Where system 5 is interested in self-expression, system 6 is interested in self-revelation.

The Millennial generation is still growing up, and through the early phases of life, the different system of thought kicks in rapid succession. There is also the more overarching move from concrete to abstract thinking. Thus, we have not yet been able to assess the learning style of the Millennials. However, it is safe to assume that they will appreciate and respond to a great deal of flexibility and variation in style and form. They enjoy an eclectic approach. They also want to see the “big picture” and not get lost in details.

“The old paradigm taught us that if you have the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching.... It is not so much that one is right and the other is wrong; it is more a matter of the perspective one takes on God’s touch and God’s truth” (Anderson 1992:21).

3.3 Leadership and Governing Structures

“Only in rare circumstances may leadership be limited to a single generation. Our churches should seek to be multi-generational as a matter of principle” (Zimmerman 1995:53). The reason for this is that both young and old bring something to the leadership role: creativity and energy from the former and experience and stability from the latter. But the young/old divide is not the only divide that needs to be crossed. The dominant generations (GIs, Boomers and Millennials) make much better natural leaders than do the recessive Silent and Xer generations, and often dominate them, imposing their worldviews. Ensuring that different ages, generations and personalities are represented at the level at which decisions are made and direction set is vital to ensure that all people in the organisation are given the opportunity of being fully involved.

“Systems thinking points to the higher probability of effective leadership between members of alternate generations. Builders [Silents] are often very effective in specialized ministries with generation X because they both represent [the same]-style generations” (Zimmerman 1995:53). Generation theory explains why the Boomers are battling to transfer leadership to the Generation Xers. The Xers have been competing with relatively large year groups for the few leadership positions available, and as such have had to have much longer apprenticeships than their Boomer predecessors. Most people in South Africa can remember back 15 years or so, when “young” people had top positions. Many denominations had the “youngest ever” records for attaining leadership positions broken about 15 years ago – and those same people are still in the positions of leadership today. Generation X is living in the shadow of a dominant generation, and find themselves deemed “not yet ready” for major responsibilities, even though the Boomers who make this judgement call were themselves more than “ready” at a similar age two decades previously. The result is a larger than normal gap between the Boomers and Xers.

“The most effective youth leadership comes from within the same generation” (Zimmerman 1995:53). Conflict arises at roughly regular intervals, as the leading edge of a new generation comes into conflict with the trailing edge of a preceding generation. The leading edge youth do not relate to the trailing edge leaders, and vice versa. Generation theory helps us to anticipate this conflict, and mediate the change to a new leadership style for a new generation. Generation theory would indicate that the best group to mediate this change is the next-elder generation of the trailing edge leadership, as they have a similar generation-type to the leading edge youth.

One grave mistake that churches make with regard to youth leadership is to regard the youth group as a good training ground for leaders. This is a most dangerous misconception, as inexperienced and naïve leaders are let loose on the youth. Adults are a

lot more forgiving than teenagers. Adults are also a lot more discerning than young people, and have the ability to distinguish between good and bad ministry. It seems strange then that we persist with using the youth ministry as a training ground. We should use adult ministry as a training ground, and only the very best leaders should be allowed to lead in the youth ministry. In the context of this section it is also important to note that youth should be represented on all levels of church leadership, not just on youth groups committees and youth councils.

As we have seen above, in addition to generational differences, there are also major societal shifts taking place, especially from modernism to postmodernism. This obviously affects every part of life, including structures and leadership styles. Long (1997:152) provides the following helpful comparisons between modern and postmodern leaders (see over):

Table 2: Comparison of Modern and Postmodern Leaders

Enlightenment / Modern (Boomer)	Postmodern (Xer)
Positional [authority]	Earned
Perfect	Wounded healer
Supervisory	Mentoring
Product-oriented	Process-oriented
Individual	Team
Dictatorial	Participatory
Aspiring	Inspiring
Controlling	Empowering

These are obviously major differences, and provide major challenges for multi-generational leadership. The major tensions have been between Silents and Boomers. Xers are now beginning to join this fray. Because of its unique style and generational character, Generation X cannot be led or managed as previous generations were. They work by different rules and need a different approach. Xers have often been accused of not being able to function in team contexts. This is usually because teams are set up using rules that Xers don't accept, rules that relate to out-dated methods of management for a bygone era before the information revolution. Xers require a different approach to leadership and team work in order to be effective.

Xers do not expect to spend a long time in any one position. They are a generation on the move. Therefore, we must ensure that we continually provide them with new and exciting challenges. Within ministries, they should never be allowed to simply slip into a rut. Churches have never been very good at providing valuable and critical feedback to

volunteers. Xers, however, will require this or they will leave. Xers are acutely aware that to survive in this world, they must put effort into self-development. The opportunities for this provided by ministry involvement in a Church is enormous, and Xers will be drawn to such involvement, as long as they know that their development is a priority. In other words, when we lead Xers we need to stress the short-term benefits that will be gained by their involvement, the most important of which is that we will not suck them dry, but be concerned about their personal development and give them continuous feedback and regular doses of public acknowledgement for their efforts.

“Xers must be given clear goals in the form of responsibility for tangible end-products. The clarity of goal setting requires more, however, than a strict definition of the end-product. The most important clarity relates to ownership of goals” (Tulgan 1995:201). Xers need a quality supply of information about the ministries we are leading them in. Xers may not be keen to get involved in taking decisions, but they most certainly want to know the reasons why decisions were taken, and all the available information on which a decision was based. Xers have a voracious appetite for information. You can never give them too much. Thus, leaders of Xers must ensure they are continually communicating with those they are leading.

Because of this incredible ability to use and process information, “Xers see new connections where prior generations see confusion and noise. Where others see problems, Xers see possibilities. Xers’ creative prowess is energised by opportunities to define and solve problems – to challenge ourselves in our own space and time” (Tulgan 1995:200). To get the best out of an Xer, this creativity must be allowed to come out. This is done by giving Xers well defined end goals in terms of the product to be produced, and then allowing them the freedom to reach that goal in whatever manner seems best to them. Regular discipleship and follow up meetings can be useful to ensure the processes are on track, but ultimately Xers should be given space to be creative.

When this happens, Xers will most likely take risks and be daring. They are very keen to have fun in the roles they assume, and to express their unique generational attitudes. This may take a lot of nerve for the leaders to stand back and allow what may appear to be a fairly chaotic approach to produce its results.

We have focussed on the Xers, as they are the largest group that is currently being excluded from leadership teams. An understanding of their different approach to leadership and authority is important to making a move to involving them in Silent and Boomer dominated leadership structures.

4 Ministry Considerations

4.1 Multi-generational age-based ministries

The title of this section is not oxymoronic. Virtually all children's and teen's ministries, including Sunday School, in a church are multi-generational at some level, since adult leaders are involved in interacting with young people. However, as we have seen above, there are certain criteria that must be met for these ministries to be truly multi-generational. It is not enough to simply have adults and young people in the same room at the same time, or for adults to be doing ministry to and for young people. Multi-generational ministry implies doing ministry together.

We must realise that multi-generational ministry is Biblically mandated and therefore not optional. For example, in 1 Tim 5:1-2, Paul commands: "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity" (NIV). In a world where age groups are so fragmented, where children are quickly packed off to schools and day care, where grandparents are left to waste away in old age homes, where great divides exist between the styles and preferences of people of different ages, the church stands as a beacon of hope and light. The church is called to model what a true family should be like, where everybody has a place, where everybody is welcome, and where everybody is honoured.

4.1.1 Multi-generational children's ministries

One of the frequent concerns expressed with regards to multi-generational ministry involving children is the ability of children to actually interact with others, or to take responsibility for spiritual matters. This concern is often used to exclude children from ministry opportunities. There are, however, a number of reasons why children should be fully involved in multi-generational ministry. (1) The place of children in the Bible is very prominent. We may not see this obviously now, but David was about 13 years old when he was anointed king, Jeremiah was called to his ministry as a child, some of the kings of Israel were very young as they were crowned, and Mary the mother of Jesus was likely 13 years old when she gave birth to Jesus. We can guess this as her marriage to Joseph was an arranged marriage, and the betrothal usually was turned to marriage at the 13th birthday of the young woman – she was betrothed but not yet married. (2) In Isaiah 11, the prophet is speaking out a vision of what the world will be like when righteousness is fully established. One of the parts of his vision referring to the nations is that a "little child will lead them". (3) In Matthew 18, Jesus used a child as an object lesson of true spirituality. We lose out on obedience to his instructions to "become like a little child" if we have no

contact with children in a spiritual context to learn from them (cf. Luke 18:17). (4) The spiritual principle of the “mustard seed” (Matt. 13:31f) is that the it is the smallest and weakest things that God ultimately raises up to shame the big, strong and “wise” (cf. 1 Cor. 1:27).

Of course, this does not mean that children have all the privileges and responsibilities of being full-grown adults, nor that they can usurp the authority reserved for parents. Neither does it mean that we defer to children in every theological debate or practical issue. We must take into consideration their level of intellectual ability, which is still developing, as well as their maturity levels, and their experience. However, most churches are giving children too little credit, not too much.

Our churches need to change to incorporate children. But this does not simply mean that they are allowed to attend the adult meetings. Many churches bring the children into the first few minutes of their services. This is supposed to be to allow multi-generational ministry to occur. But the first few minutes of a church service are normally the most boring, including all the announcements and other “formalities”, like welcoming visitors or taking up the offering. There is also little effort to adapt the service to the children’s level, or sing children’s songs, or have the children involved in serving, such as being door stewards, taking up the offering or serving communion. If the church wants to keep the children in the service then they should be prepared to have child-friendly services. If they want to have a children’s church then they need to have people who are committed to doing it right and are gifted in that area. Children’s ministry is not easy and children know if the leaders really want to be there.

4.1.2 Multi-generational teenage ministries

The goal of youth ministry is not simply to produce Christ-like teenagers. Rather, it is to produce fully motivated, involved, Christ-like *adults* who do works of service in the church and the world. Too often, youth workers and youth pastors have focussed too much on teenage ministry for the sake of keeping teenagers happy and growing them in a teenage environment. Although there is nothing wrong with these objectives, at best, they can only be short-term objectives, as the lifestage called “adolescence” is soon over. The fact that most churches lose in excess of three quarters of their young people during the teenage years, especially during the last two years of high school and as they go to College, is an indication that they have not taken the role of producing Christ-like adults seriously enough.

The problem is that the young people develop spiritually, and are moulded into traditions that are often in stark contrast, sometimes even diametrically opposed to the “normal”

practices and expressions of the church to which the youth ministry is attached. Over the past 50 years, in the midst of the societal crisis, visionary youth workers have created “parachurch” ministries which initially aimed at bridging this gap. Most parachurch ministries were founded as support structures for local churches, providing an outlet for individuation and expression not available at the church, but always ensuring that the youth were socialised into the life of the church. For example, Youth for Christ (South Africa) still requires its staff members to maintain active membership and involvement of a local church. However, just as local church youth groups, which, although basically unknown until about 1950 have made a vast leap in popularity in the last 20 years, have been guilty of moving their own young people away from the culture of the “adult” church, so, too, parachurch ministries have moved their emphasis away from support of the local church into other areas. Although this is often a very positive move, as parachurch ministries get involved where individual churches would battle, such as supporting community-wide development initiatives, or providing staff members for a school district, etc., it has also helped to galvanise an incorrect view of youth ministry in people’s minds, i.e. that youth ministry is something that happens apart from the local church.

Without getting into the current debate surrounding youth church concepts, and the advantages and disadvantages of that approach, it is important to understand the goal of youth ministry. If youth churches and “divorced” youth ministries can achieve this goal of producing Christ-like adults from their ministries, then there is no problem. The theme of this dissertation, however, is that this is unlikely to happen unless it is done within a context of multiple generations mutually interacting. Not only does a divorced youth ministry steal from the young people in terms of their development, but it also denies the adults within a church the opportunity to learn from the “little children” – something that Jesus seemed insistent needed to happen for true religion to be evident (cf. Matt. 18:3-4).

The Bible also has some clear examples of teenagers at the forefront, including: Joshua, when Israel left Egypt he was second in command to Moses, and outlived Moses by a good 50 years; David, anointed king of Israel before age 13; many of the prophets in the Old Testament appear to have been teenagers when they started their ministries; King Josiah was only 6 when he took the throne; some of Jesus’ disciples were in their early teens when Jesus called them. This premise is an extrapolation based on their generally accepted dates of death and the fact that some of them were working for their fathers and not in their businesses when Jesus called them. Timothy was in his teens when he took over one of the largest churches in the world at Ephesus. Church history also gives us some insights into young people making a difference, from the ill-advised children’s crusades to the incredible preaching of the great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, who became pastor

of the London Metropolitan Tabernacle at the age of 18, where he served over 10,000 members.

4.1.3 Multi-generational young adult ministries

Young adult ministry has not had a very clear history at all. In many churches it is now lumped in with the youth ministries. This is often because the only way to retain the young people in the life of the church is to get them involved in leadership of the youth group. This is obviously not sufficient for their spiritual growth, so the church is forced to make some arrangements for Bible Studies, prayer, fellowship and other such activities. This often falls on the youth pastor to do. The real problem with young adult ministries is that, although the teen years are seen as a time of great growth, it is actually in the young adult years that a lot more maturing takes place. If the church, for instance, has a "College and Careers" group (aimed at age 18 to 25), by the time young adult reach about 23 years of age, they are too old for it. Between this group and other adult ministries is a massive gap, and since the entire youth structure of most churches has done nothing to bridge that gap in the previous 15 years of a young adult's life, there is no reason to assume that the transition to the adult ministries will be an easy and natural one to take. In addition to this problem, an additional one often arises when a strong young adult group comes through a church's youth structures, and at about the age of 25 want to begin to help mould and change the church for the future. As we have seen above, if the church is relatively unchanged from the time this group of young adults was born into it, it is already more than one generation out of date). Yet, they are often still regarded as children by their parents' age group. There is no sense of the youth having grown up, or a recognition of their maturity, which should be the product of the church's youth ministry anyway.

Young adults need to be integrated into the life of the church from very early on. This should be the primary focus of the church's young adult ministry. However, we must reiterate the point made numerous times already: this does not mean that the young adults simply get absorbed into the main adult church. They cannot be integrated into the church without changing it in some way. If this occurs then it is a "hostile take over" of the young adults, rather than a mutual integration.

4.1.4 Multi-generational adult ministries

We often consider adult involvement in youth ministries, but do not often consider youth involvement in adult ministries. As we have seen above, it is vital for the spiritual growth of adults to be in contact with young people. For many adults, the most powerful of these contacts comes when they have children, and set up family devotional times, and look after the spiritual well being of their families. The fact that this practice is on the decline is a sad symptom of the lack of true multi-generational ministry over the past 50 years. Yet,

they need to go beyond their own families, considering firstly those young and old who do not have biological families, and secondly considering themselves to be part of the wider family of God. Those adults who think there is nothing to learn from interaction with children have obviously never had children of their own.

In many churches, young people are considered “involved” in the life of the “main” church simply because they have been allocated a variety of “servant” tasks. The reason for all the inverted commas in the last sentence is because of the difficulty of working with different definitions of concepts. The Bible is very clear that every gift and every position within a church is one of servanthood - even leadership, if Biblically correct, is servant-leadership. However, when older people within a church want to get young people involved, they often feel that young people must “learn to serve”, and therefore allocate them tasks that may include serving tea, cleaning the church, door steward duty, car park attendants, ushers and other such ministries. Although these tasks are absolutely vital, and most definitely should be done by people gifted with the gifts of hospitality, administration, helps, and similar gifts, it is an insult both to young people, and to those adults who find their ministry in these areas of the church, to call these the only areas where young people can “learn to serve”. Young people should be encouraged to find their God-given gifts, develop them and then should be given opportunities to use these gifts, whatever the gifts may be. There are no tasks that can be considered, on Biblical grounds, to be the sole domain of any single generation.

In the churches the author of this study has observed, young people do not regularly minister to adults, either at adult small groups or in church services. If it is true that our spiritual ability comes not by might, nor power, but by God’s empowering Spirit, and if it is true that it is the Holy Spirit who gives gifts, then age should not be a factor when it comes to utilising one’s gifts. When young people become Christians they do not get a “Junior Holy Spirit”. They do not get “spiritual gifts lite”. They get the full power of the Holy Spirit, and should be given ministry opportunities on this basis.

4.1.5 Multi-generational seniors ministries

Although youth ministry is the focus of this dissertation, multi-generational issues are not simply aimed at youth. Arn and Arn (1995) call the church to realise that senior ministry is vital. In fact, “the 60+ year old age group is growing three times more rapidly than the population at large; and for the first time in American history there are now more citizens over age 65 than under age 18” (1995:7). *The Economist* (Millennium Special edition) made an amazing statement recently: “Half of all people who have ever reached the age of 80 are still alive today”.

Just as churches need to integrate young people, so too must old people be integrated. The world in which we live discards the old very quickly. The church cannot do so. In fact, we are commanded in Scripture to value the wisdom of the aged, and to submit to their wisdom (cf. 1 Peter 5:5). This does not mean that the middle-aged Boomers can demand respect from the Xers and Millennials, if they themselves are not giving equal respect to the Silent and GI generations who are older than them. The grandparents are often much more open to proper integration of young people into the church than parents are. There is also a great need for young people to be involved in direct ministry to seniors. There is something unbelievably special about children that brings a ray of light into the most dreary retirement home. The church needs to be at the forefront of bringing children and seniors together.

4.2 Spiritual Maturity

One of the major critiques of age-based ministries is that it does not take into account the spiritual maturity levels of the congregation. These spiritual levels of maturity are hardly ever related to physical age. For many young people who are spiritually mature it can be very frustrating to be dealing with simple issue of the faith, at a very low level – they desire greater stimulation and a higher level of interaction. For older adults who are new believers, the adult classes may be very far removed from their current level of spiritual ability, assuming a basic level of Biblical and theological knowledge that do not actually possess yet. It is therefore very advantageous to split the church’s teaching or “growth” ministries by spiritual maturity, rather than by physical age.

The following matrix is used by de Jongh (1999):

Table 3: Matrix of Church Ministries

	Children	Teens	Young Adults	Adults	Seniors
Fellowship					
Discipleship					
Evangelism					
etc.					

The vertical axis is a list of the major purposes of the church, most of which can be subsumed under the heading: discipleship, as it is in these ministries that people are developed and taught in their gifting. These “growth groups” are not age divided at all, but rather linked to spiritual maturity, giftedness and ability. Thus, there may be beginner, intermediate and advanced level ministries for each of the purposes of the church, or for each area of discipleship, or for each giftedness area (e.g. evangelism, administration, helps, prophecy). The horizontal axis consists of the age/lifestage divided groups. There

is also a need for people at the same lifestage to meet together. Thus, each member of the church would be expected to be involved in at least two activities in addition to the general meeting of the church where everybody gets together - most likely to be the Sunday service: i.e. a discipleship group based on spiritual maturity, a group based on age/lifestage.

4.3 Education and Learning Styles

Learning for today's young people is not linear - in some ways it is not even rational, in the strict definition of the word. The generational difference is that people who graduated from high school or college before 1950 felt they had learned everything they needed to know - they were filled up with knowledge. Those who graduated between 1950 and 1980 began to realise that what they had learnt at school was being replaced very quickly by new information - this is true of every field of study, from the sciences to the arts. Yet, many of them felt that they could reach a certain level of proficiency, and although they would lag behind in their knowledge, would still have the necessary skills to survive in the world. The new knowledge was only for those at the fringes of technology. However, anyone who used personal computers and the Internet while studying has realised that not only is it virtually impossible to keep up with all the new information, but also that making an attempt to do so is a lifelong occupation that is essential to survival in the world.

Notice how we still use the phrase "on the job training" - because not everyone assumes that whatever job you have to do today you will always be receiving new training and new skills. Once we are through the "wormhole" transition era no one will ever again assume that education for anything is ever complete: it will be assumed that all people are life long learners. The ministry challenge is to intentionally bring people together in all kinds of different ways in which learning opportunities can be created. Or to help people learn when situations spontaneously present themselves.

Some Christians may be concerned about this continual increase in knowledge - their belief is in the timelessness and unchanging quality of God's Word. It is true that in the midst of all this change, some things do not: like the Bible and Shakespeare, and gravity. Yet, the way these are viewed, the criticisms leveled against them and their practical application to new fields of study ensures that they remain fresh and new. Look at the proliferation of Hollywood movies that are using Shakespeare as a basis, or consider the incredible advances in genetic biology which are creating vast new fields of ethics to which theologians must apply their minds. Tony Campolo, for example, in a lecture on the future of youth ministry at Moraleta Park DRC Church, Pretoria, South Africa in 1998, said that he believed that in 50 years time Christians would find themselves at the forefront of a huge "human rights" campaign for the fair treatment of human clones who may be

treated like slaves. Thus, although the basis of faith may not change, the expression and application of it is in constant flux, even as the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things and will remind you of everything” (John 14:26 NIV).

Armour and Browning are convinced that age is “no determinant of dominant modalities [systems]” (1995:221), and thus feel that teaching should be grouped around systems, rather than around ages. Although this is partly true, this study has already argued that the systems can be linked largely to different generations, and thus you are still likely to have fairly homogenous age groupings, even if systems thinking is the basis of division.

Much of the generation gap is related to difference in style. Silents respect the opinions of experts. Silents had superheroes for role models as they grew up. It’s pretty well ingrained in their historical make-up that there’s someone out there with the expertise to solve their problems. They believe that hard work will make the day - not luck - and are prepared to listen to those who have made it work. They especially are susceptible to “scientific” experts who rely “on years of experimentation and development”. Boomers on the other hand are more impressed by style and attitude. They look rather to those who have “proved themselves” by creating large and impressive ministries. Boomers will continue to fill large church conferences which focus on motivation and excitement, and also promise “experts” in areas. Xers are not interested in this at all. They are more interested in the type of people involved, and since this can only be discovered by experience, they are not attracted to “personalities”. Xers look rather for someone who is willing to be vulnerable and open with them.

The style of teaching is also important, just as the facilitator is. Xers are easily bored and easily distracted. Therefore, lessons must be fun, exciting and innovative. This is often done by rapid-fire changes in attention and program, with little bits and pieces of information and program and activity all adding together to make one point. At a youth night, the games, devotion, prayers, readings, stories, announcements, activities, songs, background music, visuals, and everything else should all carry one theme and one message. As far as possible, variety should be introduced into the programme. Boomers prefer a spectacle, rather than a more intimate teaching environment. Silents and GIs prefer more of the “traditional” teaching approach, based on the passing down of content. Builders enjoy words, and can be showered in data.

4.4 Mentoring

Discussion groups, as well as one-on-one discussions, can be very effective if they employ the self-discovery techniques of the Socratic method. The keys to the success of this method are to ensure that you know your subject matter, that you have internalised your

faith, and that you are able to discuss it without resorting to irrational arguments or getting defensive. Most important, in presenting information in this way, is to walk the fine line between not being dogmatic and yet not compromising the truth of the Gospel. This generation is extremely intolerant of any methods that begin by putting one ideology above another.

“Good discipleship involves developing a ministry that lasts” (Burns 1988:62). Youth ministry must produce disciples of Christ who can think and act independently of the leaders; who can stand firm spiritually; and who are willing to take a stand against evil. It is impossible for anyone to live or grow on someone else’s faith. The task of youth ministry must be to come alongside young people as they attempt to make the Christian faith their own. This will mean helping them to test it, to experiment with it, and to lead them on the path of discovery that will lead to their own , personal acceptance of Christ and what it means to be a Christian. This is not just an intellectual exercise, but must involve practical application and emotional, mental and physical support, as the need may arise.

5 Multi-generational Ministry Opportunities

In addition to everything that has been said about multi-generational ministry, this section provides some creative ideas for ministries that will foster multi-generational interaction and mutual ministry. This is not a comprehensive list, nor is it meant to be prescriptive. It is merely illustrative of the kind of ministries that would be classified as multi-generational in line with this dissertation’ definition of that concept. As we have already said, multi-generational ministry is not so much about adding another program, but it is rather about providing opportunities for adults and young people to spend quality time together, and be involved in ministry together.

Some of the suggestions may involve more finances than the church is prepared to make available. Other suggestions may involve structural changes that the church is not prepared to make. These are simply suggestions that may or may not work within the larger strategic vision of your particular church. This dissertation is not a dissertation on change management, so we cannot get into the details of how one would change the current situation. Suffice it to say that our current structures and situation should not limit us. A God-given vision always supervised current circumstances. When God inspires, He always asks us to do more than we imagine we can do. He always takes us out of our comfort zones. He always extends us, so that He can prove His glory and strength by enabling us to do that which scared us.

5.1 Camps

In a world that seems so full of noise and busy-ness, getting people away together reaps great rewards. What may not have been achieved in a couple of months of normal ministry and activity can often be achieved in a focussed time away for just a few days. There are many different camps that churches have traditionally run, most of them, however, are age-based. There is certainly room for multi-generational camping activities.

5.1.1 "Family" Camps

Many churches hold annual "family camps". These are ideal places to do multi-generational ministry, as, for some reason, most churches have a very different camp style to their normal church style. There could be many reasons for this, including the need within the Silent generation to break free from earlier constraints. Whatever the cause, it shows a weak or defective theology of church, where certain expressions of worship and other activities are not permitted within the church building on a Sunday, but form an integral part of the annual camp.

Whatever the reasons, there is little doubt that family camp is a good time to introduce innovations in multi-generational ministry and to expose the congregation to concepts and forms such as those discussed in the rest of this chapter. In addition to providing a good opportunity for experimentation, family camps can be completely multi-generational in every aspect, as long as people of all ages are involved in every aspect of the camp, from preparation to running to follow-up. The difficulty is that many churches have not thought of including young or old members on the planning and implementation teams. Many churches create a "family" experience which is led by middle-aged men (Boomers), often being planned by simply taking last year's outline, even right down to the menu, and duplicating it. This often includes having separate activities and meetings for children, teens and adults. This is obviously not true multi-generational ministry. Rather, planning committees should be at pains to include representatives of all age groups.

Activities should be planned so that there are times when different age-groups and life-stages have specific, targeted activities, but also where there is true multi-generational interaction. These could include allowing young people (including children) to be involved in leading worship, parents vs. children sports matches, different age groups serving meals and doing clean up, and family-based games.

Sell (1995:198ff.) suggests a number of different approaches to family camping, including resident-centralized (the spiritual program revolves around a platform speaker, with families staying together and meals and activities provided by the organisers), resident-eclectic (all activities are centered around the family units, even though carefully planned

and timed), family-enrichment (specifically aimed at helping families/marriages to reconnect and revitalise), family-camporama (aimed specifically at fun and fellowship, with a centralised program), family-cluster (no more than ten families go on a camporama, where the program is decided by the campers with the help of a lead family), family-colony (clusters of families with no more than sixteen people per cluster join together, with each cluster setting its own direction and focus within a larger context), and caravanning (more specifically linked to travelling and smaller family units).

5.1.2 Father-son / Mother-daughter camps

Many churches have specific weekend camps restricted only to fathers and their sons, or mothers and their daughters. One church of which the author of this study is aware, has a father-daughter camp as well. Activities are specifically designed around the interaction between the generations, not just necessarily within the biological pairing either. One negative of these camps is that they often aim at the parent and child, where the child is a teenager or young child. They often forget about grandparents. This also obviously provides a challenge for churches wishing to be sensitive to the unmarried or childless.

5.2 Retreats

A “retreat” is a form of camp that has a specific spiritual focus, aimed at helping the individual to connect with God. Although retreats come in many different forms, the standard elements include reflection, meditation on God’s Word, guided times of self-analysis, silence, prayer and worship. They are deeply spiritual times away, often done in complete silence. These times of getting away can be very difficult for people, but are usually extremely rewarding spiritually.

Most retreats are aimed at individuals. In fact, where silence is involved, it is the individual alone on the retreat that really matters: community is not a factor. However, we know that it is in community that we truly experience God. There is, of course, a time for personal reflection and retreat, but there should also be a time for communal retreats. This is probably going to be most effective if “family retreats” are organised, where families can reflect together on their family’s spiritual state, and can set plans in place for the future of their family’s spiritual walk.

5.3 Home Churches

Throughout the New Testament we read of the “church” meeting in homes (e.g. Acts 5:42, 20:20; Romans 16:5, 16:19; Philemon 1:2). We also similarly read of entire “households” coming to faith, and then starting a church in their home (e.g. John 4:53; Acts 11:14, 16:15, 16:31, 18:8, 1 Corinthians 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:19). These house churches (Greek:

oikos) appear to be family driven, where parents, children, slaves and any others living in the family compound would be included. It would also include visitors and guests. Schaller (1994) points out very strongly that the community-based church was a model that worked well during the time of industrialisation and during the transition from agrarian communities to urbanised communities. However, now that urbanisation has arrived, and there is an increase in the use of privately owned motor vehicles, a good road system, a desire for choice, linked with the erosion of traditional loyalties, such as to specific denominations, the church is no longer bound by a community model, and can meet anywhere. This will lead, obviously, to what Schaller calls "regional" churches, or mega-churches. But equally, it could lead to "off campus" churches, that meet in homes, apartment blocks, townhouse complex, sports clubs, university campuses, and many other smaller, more intimate venues.

These smaller church units, whether they be independent churches, or part of a larger cell church concept, allow for greater involvement by all members of the families involved. This does not mean that this interaction and involvement always happens with house churches, but the potential is probably greater for it to do so.

Generationally, Silent generation and Generation X are both attracted to small, reasonably homogenous groups. Boomers and Millennials are more attracted to larger groupings. To be truly multi-generational, then, there needs to be a structure that allows for small and large groups. The cell church concept, as laid out by Neighbour (1994) has a structure that starts with cells, but also includes what they call "celebrations" when all the cell groups get together for celebratory experiences in community.

Xers are looking for five main characteristics in faith groups: (1) authenticity - since they have been burned by so many broken promises, they want to know the bottom line and they prefer honesty over politeness; (2) community - they are looking for the family unlike the broken, dysfunctional ones in which they were raised; (3) a lack of dogmatism - experience is more important than dogma; (4) a focus on the arts - where faith can be shared and expressed through various art forms; and (5) diversity - racial, economic and ethnic diversity authenticates Christianity's claim of loving ones neighbour

Tapia, 1994

Xers will not easily be drawn to a small group outside of their chosen group of friends. However, if this group is based on a common activity, small group interaction can occur. Sport is the most common of these attractions. Churches could offer sport facilities and should also go to sports centres, where they can interact with other young people. This may include local sports clubs, tennis, rollerblading, skateboards, beach volleyball, surfing, and the like. Other groups could include board games, video games, computers, chess, art and writing groups.

Note that the title of this sub section is not “Bible Studies”. We need to move away from the feeling that the only reason a group of Christians may come together is for the study of the Bible. There is nothing wrong in studying the Bible. There is nothing wrong with doing this often and in groups. But the Christian life is composed of many other facets as well, including fellowship, evangelism, mission, social outreach, prayer, worship and just “being together”. All of these aspects should be incorporated into home churches.

In the Fair Lady magazine, Jane-Anne Hobbs wrote an article on “Book Clubs - power network or mommy mafia?” (30 April 1997, pp. 34-38). She explains that, especially in South Africa, women are meeting in their thousands on a monthly basis. “Ostensibly, the *raison d'être* of the clubs is books, but any hardened initiate will tell you that these gatherings serve a far more useful purpose... They have exchanged advice, ideas, recipes and even insults; they have wept on each other's shoulders, and cheered and consoled one another through marriage, childbirth, infidelity, divorce, illness and death; they've hatched business schemes, formed partnerships, closed deals and forged enduring friendships” (pg. 33). Oprah Winfrey, the American talk show host, has popularised book clubs in many other countries around the world. Jenny Crwys-Williams of Gauteng's Radio 702 is doing the same in Johannesburg. This is an opportunity that Christians can't afford to miss. Input into book selection, as well as being able to have input into discussions about deep spiritual matters that arise out of books, can be an invaluable evangelistic tool.

5.4 “Family” evenings

Many families battle to find time to do activities together. When they have the time, the battle to find what to do. Television is the easy route out. Clearly, sitting in the same room watching the same TV show does not constitute doing something together. Most homes in middle class areas have more than one TV, to ensure everyone can watch what they want to. The church can help families by providing genuine family-based entertainment and interactive evenings. These evenings can go beyond actual biological family units, and provide interactive times for other people as well, within a family context.

Family evenings involve people meeting at a centralised venue and being guided through activities that encourage and promote interactivity between the various members of the family group. These activities are aimed at different levels, so that everyone within the family feels that they are involved. The best types of activities are creative games that involve role playing, drama and sharing between the small groups. It is also good to have interactivity between the different family groupings. In particular, this is important for those who are not part of a group with father, mother and children. Single adults, orphans,

widows, single parents, grandparents geographically removed from their families, engaged couples and married couples with no children should all be included.

5.5 Meals and Entertainment

Food is a great leveler of generations – everyone has to eat, and most people enjoy it. Eating together, preparing the food together, serving it and cleaning up afterward together can be great times of generational interaction. This is particularly true around traditional family holidays, such as Christmas and Thanksgiving in the United States. An example of how this could promote multi-generational interaction is if one generation serves the other. We often think of young people serving the older generations, but it can also be the other way around. This can be done at the church, or it can be encouraged for homes. Entertainment is a huge factor in modern society. This can be used to good advantage by getting a generationally-mixed group of people to watch a movie together and to follow this by a guided discussion, possibly in small, generationally mixed groups. If done regularly, movies from different eras should be shown. The same can be done for magazines, advertising, literature, newspapers and a host of other media.

Many of the examples mentioned in this section may not be able to be done at the church itself, but through teaching and example, these multi-generational activities can be encouraged to be implemented at homes, or in smaller groups.

5.6 All-age discipleship classes (“Sunday School”)

The challenge for the church in the next 20 years is what to do with a ministry structure that was created as part of a modernist approach to church - where the sole intention was to pass on content and “head” knowledge, outside of a structured relational approach to youth work. The fact that the first Sunday Schools paid teachers is proof of this aim. In that sense, Sunday Schools did for schooling what the Reformation did for theology - took it out of the direct control of the clergy and gave it to the laity. But education is now largely in the hands of the public sector, and we are rapidly realising that the modernist approach to ministry is dead. Relational, postmodern ministry is the way of the future. This means moving away from “head” knowledge as the primary focus, and moving towards “life” knowledge. Although churches should be teaching these, this is not the same as lifeskills, rather it refers to teaching about how to live one’s life. This can best be taught in small accountable groups through a mentoring process. Sunday School is unlikely to be the best means by which this can be done.

The Workshop Rotation Model of “Sunday School” is being used by about 600 churches around the world (<http://www.rotation.org>). It taps into the postmodern emphasis on

different types of media, including audio-visual/computers and movies. The concept is simple: different venues are set up, and facilitators present the same "lesson" for five or six weeks in a row, with a different group of people attending each week - depending on how many different workshops you opt for. At each workshop during the five or six weeks they explore the same topic but in different ways. The reason that this can work so well is that it is not related to age, but rather to a spiritual maturity level and interest. The role of the facilitator is crucial, as the learning methodologies must be applicable for people of different abilities.

One of the difficulties in doing this, is that it is open to the criticism that it splits families up. This may be so, but the focus of multi-generational ministry is not primarily on the family unit, but rather on non-biologically related people of different ages interacting. As long as there exists in the church's ministries adequate time for family ministry, there should be no problem having other activities, like a workshop rotation model that does not specifically keep family units together. It is also worth remembering that teenagers require specific time apart from their parents to individuate. This does not mean that they need time apart from adults, though, as we saw above. One of the major difficulties with this approach, though, is that GIs like homogeneity. They like to feel that "one size fits all" and that everyone has access to the same product - this kind of rotation model may not be effective for them.

In considering what has just been said, a style of service in America has been used to cater for all of these needs: namely, adult Sunday School. The principles are that everyone meets together for worship, young and old alike join in a relaxed atmosphere of singing and worship to God. This is then followed by an introduction of the issue that is to be discussed. Everybody then divides up into their age group, as it is easier to teach people at a similar lifestage, or with similar academic abilities. Although physically divided for the learning session, everyone, from young to old, is studying the same theme/passage/issue but at their own learning level/ability. After the individual learning sessions, the entire group could meet together again and have some form of feedback to let the whole group learn from the interaction the small group had.

5.7 Prayer Meetings

Prayer is a difficult activity for most Christians to sustain. Very few families are consistent at having times of family prayer. Thus, the church should combine teaching and activity surrounding prayer with practical means of promoting prayer in community. One method would be to promote "concerts of prayer". This involves a large group of people meeting at a central venue for a time of prayer. The large group is broken into smaller groups, and these groups are rotated (i.e. the members swap groups and pray in different small groups

during the prayer meeting). The groups should be generationally diverse. The groups then either pray for the same issues (this can be facilitated from the front), or each group is given a different issue, and focuses solely on that issue (this could also be divided by prayer types, e.g. intercession, praise, confession, etc).

There is nothing more special than to hear a child pray in agreement with an adult. However, this environment can be intimidating for younger people or new Christians. Creative means must be employed to help people to overcome the barriers of public prayer. One such method is called "popcorn prayer" (Schowalter 1995:23). The group sits in a circle and holds hands while praying. Starting with the leader, each person is expected to pray in turn, moving clockwise around the circle. When a person is finished praying, they squeeze the hand of the next person in the circle to indicate that it is their turn to pray. If a person does not wish to pray, they can simply squeeze the hand of the next person. This can be a great help in a generationally mixed group, as it can take away some of the difficulties many younger people find in finishing prayers or in embarrassment at praying out loud.

5.8 Evangelism

Denise Hotze (1999) explains the concept behind LRE (Lifestyle Relational Evangelism) which her church uses. It is a door to door ministry, building relationships in the communities around churches for the purpose of sharing Christ with them. People go out in teams of three and make initial calls on people as well as follow-up calls to grow the relationships. Her experience is that there is nothing more powerful in this ministry than when a teenager, middle aged person and an older person on one team knock on someone's door to share Christ's love with them. She says: "Of course, many blessings come to those who we share Christ with, but one of the biggest blessings come from inside the church, when these three different age groups are in ministry together, they bond in a serious way" (1999).

5.9 Mission Trips

Deborah Jenkins (1999) explains that her church does multi-generational missions trips. In their most recent trip, 6 youth and 11 adults, ages 14 - 60+, joined together. "At the start we discussed treating one another as each having gifts and talents to contribute to the event. The team did medical assessments, VBS [Vacation Bible Schools] and a youth event and worship service. The youth participated in all the areas. We spent a great deal of time preparing and praying together".

This particular ministry can be very effective with the GIs and Millennials, since they are more naturally drawn to community building and civic, outreach projects. In addition, GIs are active both physically and mentally. They are a generation of “doers”. They like to get out and about. A word of warning: GIs want everything pre-packaged. They want things to be organised for them. They want no involvement in organisational affairs. For example, pre-packaged tours are big business with this generation (cf. Fishman, nd).

Silents like to help others. Members of the Silent Generation are rather painfully aware of the benefits they reaped from the sacrifices of the GI Generation and that future generations will have a tougher go of it. Mission trips and local campaigns that uplift communities would also have impact with the environmentally-oriented Boomers and Xers. This is one area that can be incredibly multi-generational.

5.10 Team Building Exercises

It is a current corporate training rage to do all sorts of wild and off-the-wall team building exercises. These can be used with limited adaptations to provide multi-generational team building. This can include bridge building, river rafting, “adventure” camping, hikes and a variety of other activities. Simulation games, especially those specifically designed to deal with multi-cultural issues can be easily adapted to make a big impact on multi-generational situations, and are a good means of doing these interactive activities.

6 Church Service Structure

Many churches that are keen to simply implement new programs may get the wrong idea from the preceding sections of this chapter. Multi-generational ministry goes way beyond simply putting new ministries into place – it is an attitude that requires changes to the very heart of the church if it is going to be successful in reaching all people of all ages with the Gospel. Therefore, we cannot ignore the structure of the main activity on most churches: the church service. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss the value and nature of the church service, or to question its place as the main activity of the church. This dissertation will simply assume that the main focus of the church’s corporate activity is centered on the weekly church service/s, and will provide some creative ideas as to how these events can be made more multi-generational.

The need to address the church service is obvious: the traditional Sunday service is probably the single activity most synonymous with “church” in the minds of unbelievers. It is to this event that many seekers are most likely to come. And it is from this event that many young people are running. The most common statement about a church’s ministry,

made by young people, is that it is boring. Young people are not being integrated into the main service of the church. In fact, many churches have deliberately opted for a style that specifically flies in the face of the preferences of young people – some even making the acceptance of this style a sign of spiritual maturity. This total disregard for a generation's spiritual needs and comfort is dangerous to the health of the church, which is always only one generation away from extinction. If the intended goal of the church is to ensure that those who have not yet responded to the Gospel are given the opportunity to do so, then one of the primary ongoing tasks of the church is to reach out to the youth, realising that every new baby born is an unreached person. The church cannot afford to hold onto structures that prohibit it from fulfilling its God-given mandate in the world. Any church which does stubbornly hold on to such structures should be considered heretical. "Heretical structures are structures which prevent the Gospel from reaching its intended goal" (conclusion of one of the working groups in the World Council of Churches study on "The Missionary Structure of the Congregation", quoted in Williams 1963:83).

Here, then, is a list of possible means by which young people can be fully integrated into the church service and structure. This is not an exhaustive, nor prescriptive list, but rather illustrative of the type of things that can be done. A church that is truly intending to be multi-generational will involve representatives from all generations in a working group that will be able to come up with many more ideas and means to be truly multi-generational.

6.1 Welcoming

Most books on church growth indicate that the first impression someone gets as they arrive at a church is a significant factor in whether they choose to return or not. Not much thought seems to be given to the fact that in today's world, marketers have proven time and again that it is children that influence the spending patterns of their parents – and that this influence is the single biggest factor in consumer decisions. At one level, the church is aware of this, as they often "target" parents through their children. Most churches are also aware that many parents are choosing churches these days based on the calibre of the youth ministry, because they see their children's spiritual growth as equally important as their own, if not more so. For all these, and other reasons it would be a great idea to have young people as part of the welcoming team at the church. This could include carpark attendants and "traffic" officials, people who greet visitors as they walk from their cars to the main church building, door stewards who distribute bulletins, information packages and help people to their seats (also called ushers), as well as people on duty at information counters.

6.2 **Worship**

We have already dealt with the difficulties surrounding multi-generational worship above. These are a few ideas not already mentioned. The concept “worship” is often used to refer simply to the time of communal singing during the church service. This dissertation will use the concept of “worship” to refer to every action of the church service that has an intention of drawing attention to God or human’s relationship with God. Seeing the service as more than just music is incredibly helpful in designing multi-generational worship experiences. The ideal will be to provide a balance of elements in every multi-generational service so that every generation has an element of the service that is suited to them. This relieves the pressure of having to include “1 hymn for every 3 choruses”, as a church that the author of this study knows actually does instruct their worship leaders.

6.2.1 *Music*

Multi-generational worship does not only include an understanding of different styles and preferences (as discussed in 3.1. above) but also refers to the members of the worship group itself. Worship teams should be multi-generational, even if this produces some difficulties of style (e.g. an older person not being able to learn the younger style songs easily). As discussed above, a real effort must be made to ensure that people from different generations or system of thought are recognised and have their preferences taken into account in the planning and production of the worship time.

6.2.2 *Prayer*

We have already stated that there is something special about the innocent prayer of children. Where corporate and public prayer is a feature of congregational worship, different people should be encouraged to pray. By spreading this opportunity amongst people from different generations, prayers that appeal to these different generations will be heard on a regular basis. The person co-ordinating the entire service can use this prayer time as another opportunity to provide the generational and systems balance to a service – so that if the music has been predominantly aimed at Xers (system 6), then a strong Silent generation (system 4) prayer will bring a good balance.

6.2.3 *Reading*

In many evangelical traditions, the Bible is not often read in public for the sole purpose of hearing God’s Word. The Scripture reading is most often part of the sermon, and only the portion from which the preacher is to speak is read. Whether this is the case in your church or not (e.g. if your tradition includes set “readings” or “lessons” for each Sunday), it can be wonderful to have people of different ages doing these readings. Within the Anglican (Church of England or Episcopalian) traditions, for example, “readers” are

people who been through some form of theological training and they are specifically recognised for their ability to infuse a Bible reading with great meaning. There is no reason why this task should be reserved either for professional clergy, or for older congregants.

6.2.4 Drama

An element of worship that can bring the generations together very effectively is the use of dramatisations. These can be dramatisations of Biblical stories or of the lesson for that Sunday, or can be creative forms of dance or expression that add to worship in one way or another. This free form of expression allows for the involvement of many different people, of all ages. Drama and dance also allow for a much broader involvement, including writing, stage direction, choreography, music, reading, narration, performance, acting, dancing, costume design and creation, set design, artwork and a host of other talents. The involvement of people at all these levels is a very important aspect of ministry in a postmodern environment, where the ministry is not reserved for professional clergy alone.

6.3 Sacraments

Many denominations and churches have strict rules as to who can be involved in distributing the sacraments. Although this study's view is that churches of the future will need to question such restrictions placed on them by out-of-date denominational hierarchies, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to make a full case in this regard. Suffice it to say that where it is possible, young people should be used to minister the sacraments, not only to their own peers, but to the larger church body as well.

6.4 Testimonies

People at different lifestages can often get sucked into a view of life that relates only to them and their problems. When they hear the testimonies of the trials and joys of people in different circumstances and different lifestages, the effect can be dramatic. We should not be scared to involve people of all ages in giving their testimonies in public. A testimony is not simply a story of how one is converted to Christianity, but also includes all reports of how God has dealt with someone, in any life circumstance, be it good or bad. Such testimonies should be edifying to the entire congregation.

6.5 Preaching

Many authors have begun to deal with the move away from professional clergy as the sole bearers of truth and authority in local churches (e.g. Ogden, Anderson, Regele, Easum). However, not many of these authors have touched the "sacred cow" of preaching. If

preaching is a gift just like any gift (interestingly enough, preaching is not specifically listed in the lists of gifts on the New Testament), then this gift is given by the Holy Spirit, to “whom He chooses” (cf. 1 Cor. 12:11). There are no restrictions evident, either in Scripture or in church history that could be used to deny such gifting to young people. In fact, the very opposite may be true (cf. 1 Tim. 4:12). The true test of whether a church has moved into real postmodern ministry is when the pulpit and the preaching are opened up to the general congregation (to those gifted to preach) of any age (and, this writer would argue, any gender, culture, race and language). Where preaching is hallowed ground for professional clergy only, there is no real freedom, no real commitment to multi-generational ministry and no real commitment to postmodern ministry.

This is not to say that just anyone should be let into the pulpit, but it does mean that even preachers should take 2 Tim. 2:2 seriously – it is not their role to merely preach the Word, they must also be involved in actively identifying, training and discipling other preachers, and giving them opportunity to establish, test and develop their gifts by preaching.

6.6 Follow up

Many churches have a means by which visitors are identified and can be followed up, by telephone or visit (surprisingly few churches ask visitor for their e-mail addresses, even though this is fast becoming the accepted form of communication). Most churches do not seem to worry about following up young people. Nor do they bother to send young people on follow up visits, even if they know that the family they are visiting has children or teenagers. Even follow up must be multi-generational if the service itself can be called multi-generational. Everything to do with the church service must be multi-generational, from the planning, and running, to the evaluation and follow-up.

6.7 Together and Apart

We conclude this chapter by giving an example of one church that took the section on education (4.3 above) seriously, and introduced a church service where there is both multi-generational interaction, and age-specific ministry. Jim Winning (1999) writes:

We have tried a new approach to our Sunday evening service. It works a bit like a family service. A typical evening (if there is such a thing) includes worship followed by a crowdbreaker/intro to the theme (on Sunday we acted - improvised - Joshua and Jericho). The kids then use the hall to look at the theme. We felt that the promised land was divided up between the tribes in a similar way to Scotland (our country) was divided between clans. The young people looked at this and painted their faces to represent their clan. Meanwhile the adults learn about the theme through a more traditional sermon. We finish with worship and a time where we share what each group has been doing.

There are some dangers that should not be overlooked, such as the transition of older youth from the “fun” children’s program to the adults’ “traditional” sermon. However, at least this church is making attempts to be truly multi-generational. Many churches are simply ignoring it, due to laziness or fear. Neither of these are legitimate excuses for neglecting the responsibility that the church has to the next generation of young people who need the Gospel of Jesus Christ to set them free.

Conclusion

Is it just about youth?

“Man’s most human characteristic is not his ability to learn, which he shares with many other species, but his ability to teach and store what others have developed and taught him” – Margaret Mead (1970)

“Behold, I make all things new” – The LORD God (Isa. 43:18f.)

*“The youth of our country are the valued possessions of the nation. Without them there can be no future. Their needs are immense and urgent”
- Nelson Mandela (state of the nation address at the opening of South Africa’s first non-racial parliament, 1994)*

One of the major difficulties with a study that needs to provide major theoretical foundations is that these foundations overshadow the application. The reader of this dissertation may feel that the final chapter did not contain enough information to sustain a full implementation of multi-generational ministry. This is, in fact, absolutely accurate – it does not. There are two reasons for this: (1) this study was focussed on providing a framework for debate, and providing a solid theoretical foundation for further empirical studies, and (2) one of the findings of this study is that setting up structures and ministries with no concern for context and no in-built mechanisms for change and flexibility is not only unhealthy, but foolish and dangerous as well. We could easily swap one set of out-dated structures that do not work, for a whole set of temporary structures that also do not work. If this study has taught us anything it is that the Boomer and Silent penchant for “packaging” products will not survive into the post-Y2K era. Structures and ministries do not transport easily – they must be translated. It is also not advisable to simply pick up the latest trends and apply them without any consideration to the context. Thus, the way of the future will be a return to understanding foundations, and thinking, analysis and strategy.

The final chapter was therefore never intended to be more than it is: a series of examples and pointers. However, there is certainly scope for much more empirical work on the matter of multi-generational ministry, and as more organisations experiment with this approach, there will be more fieldwork opportunities to investigate both success and failure in our attempt to understand what really works, and why.

This dissertation has attempted to show that young people should not be isolated from the rest of the church in custom-made activities. Although in the short-term this may be very effective, it does not fulfill the ultimate, true goal of youth ministry. The goal of youth ministry is not to produce Christ-like young people. Rather, the goal of youth ministry is to produce Christ-like adults, who are not only fully integrated into ministry in the church and community, but are godly people of influence in their workplace, family and social environment. This process of integration into adult life is the key failure in most churches at the start of the Third Millennium. Most mainline denominations are shrinking, which means more people are leaving than joining. Most people who are leaving are young people. And most young people who are leaving, do so before they finish high school. The purpose of this dissertation has been to identify and address this shocking trend, and provide some theological, sociological and practical information on how to use multi-generational interaction to reverse the trend, never forgetting in our zeal for providing integration and continuity for our young people, that they have a need for individuation as well. Finding this balance will take a lot of effort.

1 How to Know If Its Working

As a starting point for evaluation of multi-generational ministries, we can look to Leifer and McLarney (1997:70ff.), who offer the following sound principles for evaluating youth/adult partnerships:

1.1 Signals of Success

There are will be obvious signs of success in multi-generational ministry. The best sign of success is actually health, rather than some simple outward expressions. However, it is likely that you will see the following: (1) Enthusiasm - look for what gets people excited (shown by lots of ideas generated, paying attention) and look for what gets them down (sighs, side looks, side conversations); (2) Curiosity - are young people asking a lot of questions? That's a good sign. It means they are engaged. If you ask for questions and there aren't any, it probably means that interest is low. Be alert for blank looks, long silences; (3) Clarity - do people understand their responsibilities and assignments? Do they agree on common goals? If you asked adult and youth members to each describe a project, how close would the descriptions be? (4) Growth in membership - if the group grows, it means something is going right and that young people are communicating their enthusiasm to their peers. If it doesn't grow, that's something to check out. It may not be tuned into the needs of those it's serving; (5) Lots of laughter - in lieu of high salaries and personal advancement, enjoying yourself can go a long way to maintaining commitment to a cause.

Sometimes the signs of success are more subtle. Sometimes, success is measured by shifts in attitude. Success can be when you begin to look at your organization not as a group of adults and youths trying to work together, but as a team composed of equally important partners, each making an essential contribution.

1.2 “Icebergs in Paradise” – Signals of Failure

Young people won't always tell you that they are not happy with the way the partnership is working, so you have to be alert to the signals they might send you. While your children could win a Nobel Prize if they ever start a category for argument and contradiction, they will often have a difficult time communicating their displeasure to adults. So, don't expect young people to express dissatisfaction directly. Be sensitive to more subtle clues. Signs of trouble include: (1) Drop in attendance - this signals that the program isn't meaningful to them or they don't feel a sense of ownership; (2) A previously animated youth who becomes quiet or shy; (3) Not looking you in the eye; (4) Rowdy or challenging behavior; (5) Complaining about work to be done - even if the complaints are unfair, look for the dissatisfaction or frustration that may be behind them. Pay attention to those “but” statements. “Yes I'm happy, but ...”; (6) Not performing agreed-upon tasks - This could mean that the youth just has too much to do, but if the youth had been performing similar tasks in the past and suddenly stops, it's a sign that the youth feels the task is demeaning or unreasonable or confusing; (7) No follow through - what percentage of projects gets carried out versus falling by the wayside? What is the reaction to projects that don't get done? We can't accomplish everything we set out to do, but a lack of concern about this indicates trouble. A lot of volunteer groups don't have good follow through. If its poor, check out the commitment to the project, morale, leadership of the group. Look at whether the task is too ambitious and/or too big.

These factors do not only apply to young people (i.e. children and teens) but also to many Generation Xers.

2 A Final Warning

Church was never meant to be a comfortable place to see out mid-life or retirement. Church is meant to be a place where the full family of God can be involved in passing on the Truth from one generation to the next. Whatever it takes!!

God is very clear that it is HE who preserves His church, and guides it through the passing years and ages. God will not allow aberrations to exist for too long - He will intervene.

God will not allow His church to turn into something that it is not. He will not allow complacency to rule forever. He will not allow people to live in their comfort zones, and ignore an entire generation of those who are lost.

God will step in and punish the church for disobeying His mandate. He may do this through judgement on the church and its leaders. He may do it by raising up people who work outside the church's current structures. He may do so by using the "foolish" to shame the "wise", and by using the "weak" to shame the "strong". He may do so by using the young to shame the old. Let us pray that He does not need to. Let us work so that we can ensure we are judged good and noble servants of His calling.

We must heed the warning that appears at the end of Old Testament - a warning that Israel failed to hear, and paid the price with 400 years of silence from the heavens. God says that "He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse" (Mal. 4:6 NIV). If the young and the old do not turn their hearts to each other, and discover what true multi-generational ministry is, then God may very well enact this curse on us today.

Let us rather look to the next millennium as an opportunity to leave behind the old ways of interacting, and begin the process of bridging the gap between the generations. Let us create true multi-generational ministry that will bring great benefit to young and old, and pave a pathway to a better future.

Appendices

Appendix A: Peer Personalities by Generational Type

Source: *Generations*. Strauss and Howe, 1991:365

Characteristic	IDEALIST	REACTIVE	CIVIC	ADAPTIVE
Lifecycle Type:	prophetic	picaresque	heroic	genteel
Parental Attachment in Youth:	strongest to mother	independent of both	strongest to father	obedient to both
Coming-of-Age Experience:	sanctifying	alienating	empowering	unfulfilling
Principal Focus, Coming-of-Age:	inner-world	whatever works best	outer-world	torn between inner & outer
How Perceived Coming-of-Age:	stormy	bad	good	placid
Preoccupation in Rising Adulthood:	reflecting	competing	building	ameliorating
Attitude Transition in Midlife:	detached to judgmental	risk-seeking to exhausted	energetic to hubristic	conformist to experimental
Preoccupation in Elderhood:	civilisation	survival	community	family
How Perceived as Elders:	visionary, wise	lonely, caustic	busy, confident	sensitive, flexible
Style of Leadership:	righteous, austere	pragmatic, cautious	grand, expansive	process-fixated, pluralistic
God is . . .	truth	persuasion	power	love
How It Is Nurtured:	relaxing	underprotective	tightening	overprotective
How It Nurtures:	tightening	overprotective	relaxing	underprotective
Positive Attributes:	principled resolute creative	savvy perceptive practical	rational selfless competent	caring open- minded expert
Negative Attributes:	ruthless, selfish, arrogant	amoral, pecuniary, uncultured	overbold, unreflective, insensitive	indecisive , guilt-ridden, neurotic

Appendix B: Drie Paradigma's Onder Wit Afrikaners

(Three Paradigms of White Afrikaners)

Source: Unpublished document, Prof. Jurgens Hendriks,
University of Stellenbosch, 1997.

BOUERS	PRESTEERDERS	ONTNUGTERDES
VSA: Strivers	Challengers/Boomers	Calculators/Busters
Gebore: 1890-1930	1930-1970	1970-
Engelse oorlog & depressie	Tweede wêreld-oorlog	SWA-Namibië-binnelandse terreur
Dorp	Stad	Wêreld
Koerant	Radio	TV & Rekenaar
Huis	Kantoor	Gym & Rave
Beplan	Bereik	Wantrou
Ons @ hulle	Ek @ hulle	Hulle @ ons
Leiers	Wenners	Vriende
Betroubaarheid	Prestasie	Egtheid, deursigtig
Tradisie	Wetenskap	Ervaring
Gemeentes	Sinodes	Cell & Celebration
Minderwaardigheid	Skuld	Seer
Aanvaar	Weet	Voel
Wese	Woorde	Dade

Appendix C: Systems-Sensitive Leadership

Adapted from: *Systems-Sensitive Leadership*, by Michael C Armour and Don Browning

Armour and Browning (1995) have taken the concept of value system or worldview “gaps” to a different level, by abandoning a generational (age-based) approach, and rather looking at the emerging concept of systems thinking as a means to classifying different ways of looking at the world. They are correct in their assertion that generational divisions are generalisations, and, as such, are open to the argument that they do more damage than good by putting people in a box. This may or may not be true, but the fact remains that it is a generalisation that people find helpful. There are certainly exceptions to the generational archetypes discussed in the text above, but it is even within the context of a generalised archetype that the exceptions can be easily identified.

This appendix contains a summary of their eight system of thought. Additional information has been added at key points, and, where appropriate, additional detail extracted from their book. The very clear link between some of their system of thought and generational types as identified above have also been identified. There can be no doubt that their analysis, although complex, is extremely valuable in assisting leaders to be “systems sensitive”. Note that the systems are entered into sequentially from birth, with system four being attained by the age of majority. In fact, American civil life assumes a level four functioning within each voting citizen. From there, the systems can either develop sequentially, or can “skip” a system (i.e. go from 5 to 7), although this is unlikely. These systems have also developed historically, with early civilisation moving into system 2, followed by the vast system 3 empires which ended at the end of the Roman Empire. System 4 is the underlying system of modern political vehicles, with a move to system 5 in more advanced countries at the end of the 20th century.

System 1: The Quest for Survival

Primary Existence Issue: Physical survival in the face of immediate threats to my very life.

Organisational Impulse: Random groupings of people in bands that forage together for food, water, and shelter.

- Leadership Structure:** Virtually non-existent. Things are done merely as short-term reactions to external events.
- Family Expression:** Focused largely on finding basic necessities. Everyone, down to young children, pitches in to lay hands on food.
- Spiritual Expression:** Little or none. When people re-enter System 1 in times of wholesale disaster or protracted battles with disease, prayers are survival-centred.
- Learning Style:** Conditioned response to events in the environment. Otherwise, no real learning experiences.
- Characteristic Activities:** Wanders aimlessly. Responds primarily to the drive of appetites. Accepts conditions others would consider degrading in order to survive.
- Responds Warmly To:** Settings that hold the promise of a steady supply of food and shelter. A full stomach. A warm bed. People who sense its plight and come to its rescue.
- Responds Adversely To:** Things that require it to think beyond the next few hours. Judgmentalism about its condition.
- Strengths:** A very powerful drive that enables survival in almost unthinkable conditions.
- Weaknesses:** Lives in the world of immediate necessities. Contributes nothing to the physical well-being of society. Hordes scarce commodities. Has no sense of principle or duty to others.

System 2: The Quest for Safety

- Primary Existence Issue:** Personal safety in a world of unseen powers.
- Organisational Impulse:** Forms family or tribe-like groups that share a common sacred or "safe" place.
- Leadership Structure:** Little hierarchy. A circle of elders governs the life of the community and maintains its traditions. A chieftain (or patriarch of the clan) either doubles as a "priest" for the group (like Job sacrificing for his children) or has someone with great "spiritual prowess" at his side.
- Family Expression:** Thinks of the clan as family, so that cousins are almost like brothers, nephews almost like one's own son. Observes distinct rites of passage. Limits marriage options rigidly to avoid mixing of bloodlines. Defends family honour passionately and is quick to avenge a wrong done to the family.
- Spiritual Expression:** Centres on the immanence of God, i.e., a God who is near at hand in the ordinary events of life. Senses the wonders of God in the mysteries of nature. Has a profound respect for things sacred. Flourishes in an atmosphere of rich ceremony, ritual, and symbolism. Builds a close sense of communion with Deity, but also fears God's wrath. Greatly concerned about being cursed by God. Thinks of sin in terms of defilement. Casts salvation in terms of cleansing and purification.
- Learning Style:** A passive learner who looks to "parent" figures as models of appropriate conduct and behaviour. Needs repetition, rituals, and routines to learn effectively.

Characteristic Activities: Spiritual rituals. Tribe-building ceremonies and celebrations. Imaginative stories. Repeated rhythms in music and dance. Use of totems and charms. Frequent gatherings at a shared “safe place” or “holy place.”

Responds Warmly To: Tradition. Sensing the presence and blessing of divine benevolent power. Maintaining routines that keep life predictable.

Responds Adversely To: Individualism. Questioning of received ways. Disregard for spiritual forces. The threat of curse. Sudden change or dislocation.

Strengths: High respect for spiritual realities. Builds a strong sense of “belongingness” with the group and creates vibrant family ties. Appreciates the importance of mystery and awe in personal experience. Is deeply attracted to the wonders of nature. Shows great creativity with symbols.

Weaknesses: Permits little freedom in determining one’s role in life. Highly vulnerable to gross superstition. Does not think critically. Extremely resistant to change. Has often led to strong ethnic rivalries.

System 3: The Quest for Power

Primary Existence Issue: Physical safety in the face of hostile human forces.

Organisational Impulse: Builds strong hierarchies in the shape of a pyramid where privilege and luxury are exclusively for those highest on the pyramid.

Leadership Structure: A tough “boss” at the top with a distinct pecking order of subordinates, each ruling his portion of the domain with a firm hand.

Family Expression: Family fights as a unit against outside threats. Boys raised to be tough, to “take it like a man.” Rites of passage built around tests of courage, strength, and endurance. Women treated largely as property, with little voice beyond strictly domestic issues.

Spiritual Expression: Respects God for His power and might. Seeks God as a personal defender in a world of hostile forces. Builds impressive houses of worship, laden with grandeur. Attracted to religious events that are replete with pomp and ornate ceremony. Little given to what we normally think of as theology. Interested instead in how God will act, at this moment, on behalf of His people. Thinks of sin as acting in a manner unworthy of the great God who rules over us. Casts salvation in terms of deliverance from personal enemies (as seen in many of David’s psalms).

Learning Style: A manual learner, i.e., learns by handling things, building things, tearing things apart to see how they work. Needs strong, demanding teachers who are not afraid to maintain firm control. Loses motivation without frequent rewards for learning.

Characteristic Activities: Impulsive and pleasure loving. Defiant of convention. Plays to win. Fights frequent turf wars. Exploits weakness. Has little concern about long-term consequences. Loves to show itself daring and fearless.

Responds Warmly To: Being known as tough. Basking in the glory of triumph. Wearing the scars of victory. Showing people up.

Responds Adversely To: Being humiliated (not to be confused with being defeated). Cowardice. People who want a “soft” life. Intellectuals.

Strengths: Provides the fighting might to withstand oppression. Mechanically inventive. Builds strong teams that can react decisively to provocation or threat. Provides a counterbalance to predatory elements in society. Operates with minimal overhead or bureaucracy.

Weaknesses: Easily becomes undisciplined. Does not adequately consider long-range consequences. Can be hedonistic to a fault. Is often exploitative of others. Manipulates people. Often loses sight of mercy and compassion. Creates embittered enemies.

System 4: The Quest for Truth

Closest Living Generation: G1 and Silent (Builder) Generations

Primary Existence Issue: Moral and social stability in a world given to hedonism, impulse, passion, and violence.

Organisational Impulse: Creates highly vertical organisations, with clear lines of authority from top to bottom. Decision-making is concentrated in authority figures at the top, who promulgate rules and regulations, often through a multi-layered bureaucracy.

Leadership Structure: Entrusts authority to leaders who have demonstrated integrity and moral fibre, then follows those leaders almost unquestioningly.

Family Expression: Home provides the focal point for character formation and moral training. Demands strong respect for parents. Sees the wife as a covenant-partner, but not an equal with the husband. Abhors marital unfaithfulness.

Spiritual Expression: Reveres God as the transcendent Author of Truth and Eternal Creator. Profound respect for Scripture and biblical authority. Draws its moral foundation from biblical principles. Produces highly developed theology. Starting with divine mandates, works out implications in great detail. Promotes simplicity and purity of motives in worship. Thinks of sin in judicial metaphors, as guilt for the violation of God's laws and standards. Casts salvation in terms of exoneration and justification.

Learning Style: A passive learner who sits at the feet of authorities and listens. A good aural learner. Enjoys lecture and can follow involved oral presentations. Eager to know what is true, what is false. Diligent about study and homework. Loves the world of books.

Characteristic Activities: Devoted to ideals. Promotes strong moral codes. Goes the extra mile. Works diligently. Keeps covenants faithfully. Insists that one's word be one's bond. Demands truthfulness, integrity, and civilised behaviour. Enforces rules of propriety and etiquette. Makes long-term investments and sacrifices. Promotes a vibrant sense of neighbourliness. Defends the status quo.

Responds Warmly To: High moral character. The cause of truth and justice. Loyalty. Doing one's duty. Being responsible. Punctuality. Perseverance. Martyrdom for the cause of truth. Stability. Structure. Lifestyles that are unpretentious.

Responds Adversely To: Undisciplined lifestyles. Wastefulness. Dishonesty. Laziness. Disrespect for authority. Excessive pleasure-seeking. 'Thumbing one's nose at convention.

Strengths: Builds strong communities. Elevates respect for life and human dignity. Puts a priority on truth and learning. Builds extensive moral foundations. Is thoroughly self-sacrificial. Pursues an orderly and well-disciplined lifestyle. Needs few near-term rewards to stay motivated.

Weaknesses: Sees things as black-and-white. Can become oppressively bureaucratic. Slips easily into legalism. Relies excessively on guilt and fear for motivation. Is quite guarded about change.

System 5: The Quest for Achievement

Closest Living Generation: Boomer Generation

Primary Existence Issue: Personal effectiveness and achievement in a world whose demands for conformity thwart an inner sense of fulfilment.

Organisational Impulse: Creates competency-based organisations that depend on efficiency and bottomline effectiveness to survive. Mission statements, strategic thinking, corporate goals, and departmental objectives are critical to maintaining organisational focus.

Leadership Structure: Entrusts leadership to people who can make things happen and get strong bottomline results. Leaders are expected to be coaches and mentors, not “bosses”.

Family Expression: Family is primarily the nuclear family (Mom, Dad, and the kids). Closeness to the extended family is greatly diminished. Wives are equals, typically pursuing professional careers outside the home. High expectations for children to get into the right schools and do well in the right professions. Extreme mobility. Family may rarely eat together, certainly not at breakfast or lunch. Few things done “as a family.” Instead each member has his or her own recreational, vocational, or educational pursuits independent of others in the household.

Spiritual Expression: Looks to God as Friend and Guide. Stresses “my personal walk with the Lord.” Concerned with finding opportunities to develop spiritual gifts and use them in the service of God. More interested in practical theology than doctrinal theology. Builds houses of worship that bespeak status and success. Wants professionalism in the way the church goes about its work and the way it presents itself to the community. Thinks of sin as failure to live up to the potential God places within us. Casts salvation in terms of regaining the image of God and being transformed into His likeness.

Learning Style: Wants an instructor who is a mentor and has proven his or her competency. Loves case studies, problem-solving, and testing of ideas. Learns visually, especially from graphics that simplify complex bodies of information. Likes to express views freely during the learning process. Needs a teacher who is an authority, but not authoritarian.

Characteristic Activities: Pursues self-improvement projects. Does things professionally. Is given to symbols of status. Thrives on data. Maintains an energetic schedule. Continually explores new ideas. Enjoys material comforts. Builds profit-driven companies.

Responds Warmly To: Being recognised for achievement. Perks. Having freedom to innovate. Rewards commensurate with performance.

Responds Adversely To: Incompetence. Stifling of innovation. Uninformed leadership. Cumbersome rules and regulations. Make-work activities. Boring presentations. Not being consulted on key decisions. Slow decision-making processes.

Strengths: Highly inventive and innovative. Is thoroughly ambitious and results-oriented. Expands material well-being. Promotes research and experimentation with new methods and technologies. Builds mission-focused activities. Makes an immense enlargement of personal freedoms and options. Gives rise to the capitalist system and to a large middle class in society.

Weaknesses: Easily slips into crass materialism. Often becomes so driven to succeed that it sacrifices key relationships in the process. Can put more emphasis on symbol than substance, more energy into building image than building integrity. Promotes excessive burnout rates. Gets too busy to be neighbourly.

System 6: The Quest for Intimacy

Closest Living Generation: Generation X

Primary Existence Issue: Building bonds of intimacy and mutual support in a world given to insensitivity, alienation, and exploitation.

Organisational Impulse: Fosters small, egalitarian groups that bond intimately together.

Leadership Structure: No hierarchy. Flat organisations. A facilitator leads the group, and individual members may rotate into the facilitator role on an ad hoc basis. Makes decisions, whenever possible, by consensus.

Family Expression: A household of equals. Wives often retain their maiden name. Parents maintain an emotionally open environment that encourages children to talk freely about their feelings. Little or no corporal punishment of children. Family-time activities are anticipated with excitement and carefully protected on the calendar.

Spiritual Expression: Seeks God as a Healer and Reconciler. Wants intimate settings for worship and non-judgemental acceptance of all who gather in that setting. Needs worship that touches deep feelings and causes people to be introspective about their duty toward those who are hurting or powerless. Drawn to the compassion which Jesus had for people who were socially marginalised. Thinks of sin in terms of alienation from God and from one another. Casts salvation in terms of rebuilding relationships both with Heaven and one's fellow man.

Learning Style: An interactive learner who gains new insight by being part of a group in which everyone shares personal experiences and feelings. Learns best in settings of no more than a dozen people or so. Insists that each viewpoint in the group be heard respectfully.

Characteristic Activities: Care for victims of abuse and trauma. Insistence on treating everyone as equals. Disdain for organisational structure. Taking pains to recycle resources. Promotion of self help groups.

Responds Warmly To: Candour and honesty. Demonstrations of genuine compassion. Helping those who are powerless. Coming to the aid of victims. Relieving hunger and want. Promoting ecology and conservationist efforts.

Responds Adversely To: Elitism. Insensitivity to others. Racism. Exploitation. Ostentatiousness. Authoritarianism. Self aggrandisement. Things that exacerbate the gulf between the “haves” and the “have-nots.”

Strengths: Provides a genuine “humanising” effect on society. Works tirelessly for human well-being. Promotes equality of opportunity across the citizenry. Makes “insiders” of “outsiders.” Works toward a healthier planet for future generations.

Weaknesses: Depends on consensus-building, which can be clumsy and slow. Can be so concerned for victims that it allows itself to become gullible. Is often uncompromising in political situations. Tends to disparage tradition, to the point at times of throwing out almost all conventions of society. Can become narrowly focused on one or two issues and shrill in its advocacy of them.

System 7: The Quest for Flexible Solutions

Closest Living Generation: Millennial Generation

Primary Existence Issue: Averting the looming disaster of a polarised world in which rigid viewpoints and partisan spirits promote warring camps and thwart the flexibility we need to survive.

Organisational Impulse: Creates highly flexible, thoroughly modular organisations that can be restructured and revamped almost instantaneously with minimal loss of momentum.

Leadership Structure: Dispersed decision-making throughout an organisation in which information networks tie everyone together in a neural structure.

Family Expression: Household members frequently exchange roles. Family “routines” are continually open to renegotiation and change. Little pressure to conform to some family image. Broad freedoms of choice throughout the household.

Spiritual Expression: Seeks God as the Great Integrator, who brings all things together as a functioning whole. As interested in divine processes as it is in divine principles. Draws spiritual inspiration from many sources not traditionally thought of as “religious literature.” Relishes the study of paradox in spiritual truth. Enjoys exploring other religious traditions and identifying common denominators in their faith expression and one’s own. Thinks of sin as acting nearsightedly with undue concern for long-term harm to others and to nature. Casts salvation in terms of learning to work harmoniously with the processes God has built into physical, human, and spiritual nature.

Learning Style: Enjoys self directed learning experiences. Thrives on training that is flexible and permits easy adaptation to individual needs and interests. Uses technology avidly as a tool for learning.

Characteristic Activities: “Big-picture” views. Broad interests. Fascination with information technologies. Long-range forecasting. Open acceptance of people as they are. Unthreatened by change.

Responds Warmly To: Opportunities to be self directed and self paced. Studies of the future. Bringing about timely change. Helping diverse elements work together harmoniously. Instant access to vast information sources.

Responds Adversely To: Parochialism. Inflexibility. Narrow viewpoints.

Unprincipled decisions. Incompetent leaders. Activities that leave scars on nature. Simplistic explanations for complex events. Disinterest in learning and exploring. Being forced to maintain routine and repetitive patterns over protracted periods of time.

Strengths: Anticipates change well in advance. Works contentedly in a non-static, ever-changing workplace. Excels at strategic planning. Easily gleans meaning from immense volumes of information. Loves to learn new things. Always open to new alternatives.

Weaknesses: Can be so farsighted that others cannot share its vision. Often becomes so process-centred that it loses sight of people and their needs. While looking at the big picture and broad-based trends can sometimes miss details that call for immediate action. Does not stick with projects when others fail to appreciate its counsel.

System 8: The Quest for Holistic Solutions

Primary Existence Issue: Creating a genuine sense that all humanity is one race, living in a single village, providing equal access to the planet's resources, but caring for the earth as a fragile life-partner.

Organisational Impulse: Alliances of highly diverse elements who lend their expertise to the solution of problems that transcend ethnic and national lines.

Leadership Structure: Collaboration of leaders who think in holistic terms and who are driven to resolve macro-issues. The leadership function requires pronounced skills in long-range thinking and exceptional abilities to synthesise enormous amounts of disparate information.

Family Expression: Offspring raised as "children of the world." Minimal emphasis on ethnic or nationalistic identity. Sacrifices personal interests to the well-being of all creatures.

Spiritual Expression: Seeks God as the Being behind all being. Highly metaphysical in its approach. Recaptures the wonder and mystery about nature that are also integral in System 2.

Wants to build personal "connectedness" with the Well-Spring from which all existence flows. Thinks of sin as failure to treat life in all its forms with due care and respect, a failure which puts us at cross-purposes with the Life Principle behind everything that is. Casts salvation in terms of gaining cosmic awareness of who we are in the greater scheme of reality and acting responsibly as a life-partner with all that exists.

Learning Style: Interactive dialogue with other "macro-issue" thinkers. Immediate access to any information required to address global issues. Needs an atmosphere that encourages people to envision totally unprecedented ways to structure life on the planet.

Characteristic Activities: Trans-cultural and trans-ethnic friendships. Genuine interest in all peoples of the world. Finding ways to circumvent political and

organisational barriers that thwart global action. Profound respect for the life-principle of the universe itself.

Responds Warmly To: Integrative solutions. Wholesale sensitivity to the earth's plight in a world of overpopulation and resource depletion. Earth renewal projects. Intuitive breakthroughs that permit sweeping new alternatives to be envisioned.

Responds Adversely To: Insensitivity to the environment. Ethnic or nationalistic self-centredness. Failure to act with an eye to obligations we have to all humanity. Relegating global needs to subordinate status.

Strengths: Sees the far-reaching impact of actions that others would mistake as having only local import. Keeps political powers aware that threats to human existence indeed loom on the horizon. Is void of the particularised loyalties that have pitted men and nations against one another since time immemorial.

Weaknesses: Thinks so esoterically that many people cannot relate to its insights. Becomes impatient with those who do not share its concern for global survival. Requires vast technological resources to sustain communication flow among widely separated collaborators. Tends toward solutions that are immensely expensive.

Appendix D: A Summary of Erik Erikson's 8 Stages of Psychosocial Development

Source: <http://snycorva.cortland.edu/~ANDERSMD/ERIK/sum.HTML>

STAGE	AGES	BASIC CONFLICT	IMPORTANT EVENT	SUMMARY
1. Oral-Sensory	Birth to 18 months	Trust vs. Mistrust	Feeding	The infant must form a first loving, trusting relationship with the caregiver, or develop a sense of mistrust.
2. Muscular-Anal	18 months to 3 years	Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt	Toilet training	The child's energies are directed toward the development of physical skills, including walking, grasping, and rectal sphincter control. The child learns control but may develop shame and doubt if not handled well.
3. Locomotor	3 to 6 years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Independence	The child continues to become more assertive and to take more initiative, but may be too forceful, leading to guilt feelings.
4. Latency	6 to 12 years	Industry vs. Inferiority	School	The child must deal with demands to learn new skills or risk a sense of inferiority, failure and incompetence.
5. Adolescence	12 to 18 years	Identity vs. Role Confusion	Peer relationships	The teenager must achieve a sense of identity in occupation, sex roles, politics, and religion.
6. Young Adulthood	19 to 40 years	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love relationships	The young adult must develop intimate relationships or suffer feelings of isolation.
7. Middle Adulthood	40 to 65 years	Generativity vs. Stagnation	Parenting	Each adult must find some way to satisfy and support the next generation.
8. Maturity	65 to death	Ego Integrity vs. Despair	Reflection on and acceptance of one's life	The culmination is a sense of oneself as one is and of feeling fulfilled.

Appendix E: Memos to the Generations

Source: Death of the Church, Regele 1995:225ff.

Memo to the Builders (GIs)

We are grateful for your faithfulness, but the structures you built and maintained so faithfully are choking us to death. We would ask that you let go. It is time to accept their death. But death, whatever form it takes, does not have to be a repudiation of your efforts. Death accepted as the forerunner to resurrection is worthy of humble celebration. Just as when a saintly loved one departs there is grief with joy, so also you must consider the end of much of what you have built as a cause for grief with joy. Such a response will be your final act of faith. However, if you cannot do this, if you cannot let what you have built die where necessary, you have simply condemned it to death anyway without the joy that comes from the hope of resurrection. This is the face of the defining moment for you as a generation.

Memo to the Silents

We would plead that you not allow us boomers to push you out of the way in our moralistic zeal. The best hope we have that boomers will provide the kind of gift to the church that is most needed is if we are kept in check. We must mature a few more years. But this is a tall task for the Silents, for we outnumber you significantly. The challenge you face is exacerbated by your own fears. As indicated earlier, you have enjoyed a long ride on the coattails of the postwar economic boom engineered by the builders. As that world passes away, you will find yourselves watching the activity from the sidelines, as if the world simply forgot you were there. If your pain and anger continue to manifest themselves in blocking behaviors, you will only intensify the pressure to push you aside. The challenge will be to move through your anger and accept that it has been a good ride but the ride is over-let emerge what must. If you Silents can do this, then you will be in a position to mitigate some of the boomer zeal and perhaps even mentor us in the ways of graciousness that we will need in our elder years.

In reality, while the defining moment for the builders is in letting it go, for you it will be in making sure the letting go happens in the most gracious and humane way. In some ways, the pain of this death will be greater than the pain the builders will experience. For you will have to participate in the killing.

Memo to the Boomers

To the boomers, we say, "Let's keep our heads, folks." As a generation, we have always felt that we had a key role to play in the great scheme of things. Frankly, most of that may be an overly inflated sense of self-import. But we do have an important role at a very important point in the history of the church. It is not just the normal role all idealists play in the generational cycle. It is the role of revisioning the church for a new age. But we are not ready yet. We must be about the business of learning, of listening, and of building relationships. We must fight against our natural inclination toward self righteousness and look for ways to positively contribute to the communities where we are. And especially, we must love the survivors and stop the criticism. The defining moment for boomers will require coolheadedness and careful compassion. It will require us to step out of our fragmented and hostile polarisations and find in the Gospel a common vision. The difficulty of this for us is the face of our death.

Memo to the Survivors (Generation X)

Avoid burning yourselves out while learning to make it work, Be warned against the tendency to build your young lives around anti-boomerism. In the end, it will be you that gets hurt, not the boomers. Most of all, recognize that you too have an appointed role to play in the very near future of the church. This will be the defining moment for you. Initially it will include making sure we boomers don't do something exceedingly crazy. Later you will be called upon to build the new superstructures of the revisioning effort that must occur. While it is likely that your future selfless service will go relatively unrecognized, please know that it is essential and that the church needs you to provide it.

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