

**THE MULTIGENERATIONAL CHURCH**  
**“Let the Children Come”**  
**or**  
**“Why Multigenerational?”**

**Maranatha Church**

Maranatha Church is an interdenominational house church in Virginia Beach,  
Virginia.

**Mission Statement**

Our mission is to  
*Worship* God,  
*Equip* the believer for ministry, and  
*Disciple* the nations to Jesus  
As we march forward to His imminent return.

*“Even so, come Lord Jesus!”*  
*Revelation 22:20*

**Vision Statement**

**To be a multigenerational house church** where  
hearts are healed,  
saints are exhorted,  
families are edified, and  
disciples are released into ministry,  
And which serves as an equipping supply to the body of Christ.

**Definition of Terms-**

*We have within our vision statement the idea “to be a multigenerational house church.” What do we mean by “multigenerational?” Well, we mean two things. One is that we have a vision for this church to live into the lives of our children and our children’s children so long as the Lord should will and tarry. The second meaning is the one we are examining in this study.*

*As a multigenerational house church, our services include multiple generations within all major facets of the church service, from teaching to prayer. We have grandparents, parents, children, and grandchildren learning and worshipping together. This may sound like a “Duh!” if you have been here for any time, but it is an important principle. Furthermore, it is counter-cultural.*

*In that we are a multigenerational congregation and in that it is counter-cultural, we need to examine why we worship God in this way and how it is that our culture fights against it.*

## Generations – God’s Organizing Ideal

### 1. God’s mandate for human society.

Gen 1:27-28

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. KJV

*God’s expression of dominion over the Creation was to be the multigenerational family. He blessed the man and the woman and said “Be fruitful and multiply . . . have dominion.” It was through their children and their children’s children that this dominion was to be realized. The family (first, husband and wife, then children) was the unit of governance for human society and the world.*

### 2. God’s mandate for worship.

#### a. The Exodus

Ex 10:1-7

1 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the hearts of his officials so that I may perform these miraculous signs of mine among them

2 that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I dealt harshly with the Egyptians and how I performed my signs among them, and that you may know that I am the LORD."

3 So Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to him, "This is what the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, says: 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, so that they may worship me.

4 If you refuse to let them go, I will bring locusts into your country tomorrow.

5 They will cover the face of the ground so that it cannot be seen. They will devour what little you have left after the hail, including every tree that is growing in your fields.

6 They will fill your houses and those of all your officials and all the Egyptians-- something neither your fathers nor your forefathers have ever seen from the day they settled in this land till now.'" Then Moses turned and left Pharaoh.

7 Pharaoh's officials said to him, "How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the people go, so that they may worship the LORD their God. Do you not yet realize that Egypt is ruined?" NIV

*Egypt had already suffered six plagues and its agricultural wealth had been mostly wiped out by them. Pharaoh’s counselors tell him to let Israel go. But Pharaoh has one more question for Moses.*

Ex 10:8-11

8 Then Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. "Go, worship the LORD your God," he said. "But just who will be going?"

9 Moses answered, "We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the LORD."

10 Pharaoh said, "The LORD be with you--if I let you go, along with your women and children! Clearly you are bent on evil.

11 No! Have only the men go; and worship the LORD, since that's what you have been asking for." Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh's presence. NIV

*Neither the Lord nor Moses were content with just letting the men go worship. It was to be a multigenerational family event: "young and old . . . sons and daughters."*

b. The Feasts

Ex 23:14 "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me." NIV

*These three required feasts were the feast of unleavened bread, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.*

i. Passover

Ex 12:1-4

1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,

2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.

3 Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month **each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.**

4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. NIV

ii. Pentecost (Weeks)

Deut 16:9-12 NIV

9 Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain.

10 Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you.

11 And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name--**you, your sons and daughters**, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you.

12 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.

iii. Tabernacles

Deut 16:13-15

13 Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress.

14 Be joyful at your Feast--**you, your sons and daughters**, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.

15 For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete. NIV

3. God's mandate for education.

Deut 6:1-7

- 1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess,
- 2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.
- 3 Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.
- 4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
- 5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.
- 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.
- 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. NIV

*We should understand that education among the Jews in the ancient world revolved solely around the study of the Law. All of life flowed from it. No other subject was worthy of formal education. "In the Talmud there is a story of a progressive young Rabbi who wished to study Greek on the grounds that he had mastered the Law. An older Rabbi reminded him of the words of Joshua: 'This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.' 'Go then and consider,' he said, 'which is the hour which is neither of the day or of the night, and in it thou mayest study Greek wisdom.'"*<sup>1</sup>

*The family ideal is also the organizing structure of spiritual warfare (this a subject in its own right).*

Gen 14:14

When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he called out the 318 trained men born in his household and went in pursuit as far as Dan. NIV

### **The New Testament Church Is to Be a Household Affair**

1. House to House

Acts 2:46

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, KJV

Acts 5:42 KJV

And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> William Barclay, *Train up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World*, Westminster Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, ©1959, p. 38

Acts 20:18-21

18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons,  
19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews:  
20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, **and from house to house**,  
21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. KJV

## 2. Household Conversions

### a. Cornelius

Acts 10:24-27

24 And the morrow after they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them, and **had called together his kinsmen and near friends**.  
25 And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him.  
26 But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man.  
27 And as he talked with him, he went in, and found many that were come together. KJV

Acts 10:44-46

44 While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.  
45 And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.  
46 For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, KJV

### b. Lydia

Acts 16:14-15

14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.  
15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us. KJV

## 3. Household Ministry

1 Cor 16:15

You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, NIV

NT:3614

oikia, oikias, hee - a house

a. properly, an inhabited edifice, a dwelling: Matt 2:11

**b. the inmates of a house, the family: Matt 12:25**

c. property, wealth, goods Matt 23:14

(from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 2000 by Biblesoft)

NT:5021

tasso (tas'-so); a prolonged form of a primary verb (which latter appears only in certain tenses); **to arrange in an orderly manner**, i.e. assign or dispose (to a certain position or lot): KJV - addict, appoint, determine, ordain, set.

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright (c) 1994, Biblesoft and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

*Stephanas had arranged his family to minister to the saints.*

*So we see that God's ideal for social structures is family and generational: fathers and mothers training sons and daughters in all aspects of life and godliness.*

### **Culture, Counter-culture, and Non-conformity**

*What does this have to do with a church service and our "institutional" aims and means at discipling? Much. The multigenerational model is the exception in the United States, not the rule. What is the primary organizational ideal with regard to education in the church? It is the ideal of graded education borrowed from our public school system.*

*By "graded education" we do not mean the handing out of A's and B's (or D's and F's, for that matter). We mean the practice of classifying and dividing students by age. It became the means by which mass public education was organized to handle large number of students. The practice picked up steam in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and remains the standard in our present age.*

*Where did the idea come from? Prior to graded education, most public schools had multiple age groups in one room being instructed at one time. But Darwin's theory of evolution combined with religious humanism began to regard man simply as an organism that responded to his environment. Accordingly, to best educate the "human animal" it was desirable to place him in a correct environment.*

*One man who still has large influence in educational thought is John Dewey (!859-1952). He was a signer of the 1933 Humanist Manifesto. The following are some selected quotes from his "Pedagogic Creed", his educational beliefs, if you will:*

*"I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs."*

*"I believe that the school, as an institution, should simplify existing social life; should reduce it, as it were, to an embryonic form. Existing life is so complex that the child cannot be brought into contact with it without either confusion or distraction."*

“I believe that education is the fundamental method of social progress and reform.”

“I believe that education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction.”

*The social structure that the public schools centered on, both here and abroad, was the separation of children by age. In an article of the 1982 Encyclopedia Britannica entitled “Graded Education,” the purpose of establishing these peer groups is discussed.*

“Peer groups provide children with experience of egalitarian relationships not possible in the family. Through peer groups the child is exposed to values and experiences of dozens of other families, many of which may be greatly different from his own. Through these contacts the child’s horizons are broadened, his perceptions widened.

In order for peer groups to serve these important functions, the child must get outside of the family and interact freely with children of his own age. The school is ideal for this purpose. Its corridors and classrooms, clubs and activities, provide a natural and convenient setting for the young to socialize.”<sup>2</sup>

*This is the structure much of the Church has centered on as its organizational and educational ideal. We have Children’s Church, graded Sunday School, Youth Group, and Adult Fellowships.*

*Question, if before the preacher preaches, kids go to Kid’s Church, and youth go to Youth Group – is the church still one body?*

*Thankfully, educators are waking up to the problem of graded education even if the Church is not.*

*Bruce Miller of the Northwest Regional Education Laboratory noted that traditional graded education is based on three assumptions:*

- ❑ That students of the same chronological age are ready to learn the same subjects.
- ❑ That students require the same amount of time, as in an academic year, to master predetermined content.
- ❑ That students can master predesigned objectives for a grade level for all curricular areas at the same rate.

*He then adds, “grouping students strictly by age does not reflect a naturalistic lifelike setting in which people of different ages learn from each other.” Can you say family?*

*Lillian Katz of the National Association for the Education of Young Children has this to say:*

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<sup>2</sup> As quoted in the ATI 2000-2001 Handbook, p. 13, ©1993 Advanced Training Institute International.

“Single-age groups seem to create enormous normative pressures on the children and the teacher to expect all children to be at the same place on knowledge and skills. There is a tendency in a homogeneous age group to penalize the children who fail to meet normative expectations. . . There is no evidence to show that a group of children who are all within a 12-month age range can be expected to learn the same things, the same way, the same day, at the same time.”

*She found “that participating in mixed-age groups has social and cognitive benefits for both older and younger children. Cooperative, prosocial behaviors increased and discipline problems were reduced.”<sup>3</sup>*

*Nongraded education is one of the biggest components in educational reform today. So it seems that progressive education is finally catching up with the Bible!*

*Why are we multigenerational? It is the best way of handing down our faith from generation to generation. It is not counter-cultural in the revolutionary sense. It is non-conforming in the biblical sense.*

Rom 12:1-2

1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. KJV

*Amen.*

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<sup>3</sup> From web article, Nongraded Primary Education. ERIC Digest, Number 74