



## CBF Peer Learning Groups

### Managing generations in the church

There are at least 5 generations in almost every church:

#### *Builders (Birth dates: 1901-1945)*

- Significant historical events: Great Depression and World War II
- Traits: loyal, respectful of rules/authority, stubbornly independent, hard-working, dependable, conservative/traditional, loyal to employer
- Negative stereotypes: old-fashioned, behind the times, rigid/autocratic, risk averse

#### *Baby Boomers (Birth dates: 1946-1964)*

- Significant historical events: Vietnam War, Cold War, Civil Rights Movement, assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., moon landing, and postwar social change
- Traits: well-educated, questioning authority, work well with teams, reluctant to grow old, accustomed to having power, optimistic, competitive
- Negative stereotypes: self-centered, unrealistic, political, power-driven, workaholic, greedy

#### *Generation X (Birth dates: 1965-1980)*

- Significant historical events: first gas shortages, fall of Berlin Wall, rise of MTV, first Gulf War, Tiananmen Square
- Traits: independent, family-focused, intolerant of bureaucracy, critical, hardworking, socially responsible, balanced (work/life quality), pragmatic
- Negative stereotypes: slackers, selfish, impatient, cynical

#### *Gen Y/ Millennials (Birth dates: 1981-1995)*

- Significant historical events: rise of internet, economic decline, 9/11, Enron, shift of jobs overseas
- Traits: highly socialized, loyal, technologically savvy, socially responsible, balanced (work/life), cooperative, diverse, global, multi-tasking, fun-seeking
- Negative stereotypes: short attention span, spoiled, disrespectful, technology-dependent

#### *Generation Z (Birth dates: After 1995)*

- Significant historical events: rise of social media, economic decline, 9/11, election of Barack Obama, government bank bailouts
- Traits: technologically-dependent, closely tied to parents, tolerant of a range of lifestyles, involved in green causes and social activism, entrepreneurial, balanced (work/life), multi-tasking, global, creative
- Negative stereotypes: short attention span, narcissistic, disrespectful, impatient

*Questions for discussion:*

- Where do you see cross-generational learning and cooperation happening in your church?
- What creates the conditions for that to happen?
- Where do you note tensions between generations in your church?
- Considering the differences between generations, what might be the causes of those tensions?
- How might you foster greater communication and understanding across generations at your church?
- How might your church harness the traits and experiences of each generation for the purpose of helping the congregation live toward God's vision for it?