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THE EPIC STORY

10 Events

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Grand Rapids, Michigan

We'd like to hear from you! Please feel free to contact us at 1-800-333-8300 or editorial@faithaliveresources.org with your comments and questions about WE.

Faith Alive is grateful to Laura Keeley and Bonny Mulder-Behnia for writing the events in this book.

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WELCOME TO WE

You have in front of you an exciting new concept in faith nurture: a series of intergenerational events that can bring your entire church family closer as you learn about God and God's story.

With WE, your whole congregation gathers ten times a year—all ages together. Why? Because to grow in faith, we need each other! To truly be the body of Christ we need the enthusiasm of children, the energy of teens, and the wisdom and experience of adults from ages 21 to 101. We all have things to teach each other, and we all can help point each other to God.

Why Intergenerational Learning?

In the past few years, many educators have begun to identify some drawbacks of the “silo” approach to faith nurture in which all age groups are separated. That approach has allowed churches to tailor their teaching to the learning abilities of particular groups, but it has also had some unintended negative results, such as

- a lack of community within the church family.
- the loss of opportunities to learn and grow with those who are in different places on the faith journey.
- parents' expectation that church will be the primary source of faith nurture for their children.

As a result, many churches are looking for ways to rebuild community and spend time learning and growing together.

In the book *Intergenerational Faith Formation*, the authors contend, “There has never been a stronger need for intergenerational faith formation. . . . When we bring the different age groups together, we see a revitalization of the faith of the elders and a deeper understanding of the faith traditions on the part of the young” (Twenty-Third Publications, 2008, p. 14). They also argue that all-ages faith nurture empowers parents to share their faith more openly at home.

Why WE?

We're so excited that you've chosen WE—not just because it's a great program that is lots of fun, but because of what WE can do for your faith community:

- WE's event-based format makes it fun for people of all ages to grow together as they learn from each other and grow in faith as they hear God's story.
- WE complements EVERY church education, faith nurture, and children's ministry program. Whatever you're using now, you can use WE alongside it.
- WE is easy to set up and easy to use. And we've kept advance preparation to a minimum—a feature your volunteers will appreciate.
- It's cost-efficient—all you need is this book, a few inexpensive and easy-to-find supplies, some great food, some volunteers, and you're ready to go!

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long does a WE event last?

Each WE event is designed to last about two hours, including a meal. If you serve only snacks or dessert, plan on an hour and a half or less.

Why include a meal?

A prepared meal is often a big draw for busy families. Sharing a meal also makes it easier for people to meet others and to feel more comfortable when it's time to interact and learn together.

How many people should be seated at a table?

Plan for six to eight people per table. This ensures that everyone has a chance to talk and be heard. The session instructions also give you fun tips for making seat assignments to help people mingle and meet each other.

Will all ages *really* feel welcome?

Yes! Your WE group will be talking about open-ended questions that don't require extensive Bible knowledge or a "right" answer. The activities we've included are fun for all ages. No matter how old you are or where you are on your faith journey, a WE event is fun, informal, and faith-building.

Why is it important to give people something to take home?

When the event is over, the learning should continue! After each event, every household will receive a devotional guide to use before the next event. We've also provided suggestions for other take-home items to hand out at the end of an event. These are optional, but they're fun and meaningful!

How do WE events help people of all ages live out their faith?

During each event participants will be challenged to consider how they can or will live out what they have learned. In addition to occasional service opportunities built right into some events, we've also included a step called "Take It Further" in which you'll find great ideas to help participants take what they've learned even further together.

Can we use WE for midweek family ministry or in a home church?

Absolutely! Although WE events are especially designed to involve your entire congregation, they will also work wonderfully in a family ministry, in a home church, in Christian school communities with parents and grandparents, and more! Anywhere an intergenerational group gathers, WE can work.

MAKING WE HAPPEN— PLANNING TIPS

WE: The Epic Story

The theme of this WE series is “The Epic Story.” In ten events your church family will look at God’s story from creation to the new creation. It’s a whirlwind tour, for sure, but it’s a great way to get a bird’s-eye view of how God worked and is still working through his people.

Gather Your Team

To make a WE event happen without doing all the work yourself, you’ll want to identify the following people to help. Some of these duties can be combined if your volunteer pool is small.

EVENT COORDINATOR/GREETER does the planning, promotes the event to the congregation and community, recruits volunteers, and gathers supplies. Also serves as the greeter by welcoming people, handing out nametags at the door, and passing out the take-home items before people leave.

EVENT HOST introduces the event, keeps it moving, and closes the event in prayer. Choose someone who is outgoing, time-conscious, and comfortable in front of a crowd.

SONG LEADER provides musical accompaniment and teaches new songs. Consider asking a college student or musical teen to help in this way.

FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR organizes the food for each event, whether it’s a served meal, a potluck, or a snack, and cleans up after the meal.

A/V TECHNICIAN sets up, tests, and runs the sound system and projection equipment if you’re using them for the event.

At your initial meeting with your team, spend some time helping everyone catch the WE vision. For help, see the document titled “Get Started with WE” (p. * on the event CD) and the “Welcome to WE” and “FAQ” sections of this guide (pp. 5 and 7 respectively).

Set up a meeting three weeks before each WE event to go through the event outline together. Make sure each person on your team is clear about his or her role. Meet once more before each WE event to touch base and tie up loose ends.

Promote Your WE Event

On the WE event CD you’ll find promotional items your church can use to spread the word about WE. We suggest you consider promoting the WE event in some of the following ways:

- Church bulletin insert
- PowerPoint announcement before or after worship service
- Invitation emailed to members
- Postcard invitations sent to homes
- Posters hung in common areas

RSVPs

It's important to plan a way to gather RSVPs, whether it's on a signup sheet or by email. You'll need to know in advance how many people will be attending each WE event so you know how much food and activity materials to have on hand. But be sure to set extra places for last-minute attendees!

Room Setup

For every WE event you'll need the following:

- a welcome table by the door to put nametags on
- tables and chairs set up in groups of 6 to 8
- tables and tableware for food service
- sound amplification equipment, unless your group is very small
- projection equipment for song lyrics and PowerPoint (optional)

Any additional setup requirements will be noted in each event's instructions.

Event Supplies

In the box underneath each step in the event, we list the supplies needed and offer setup tips. Most of the supplies are basic, inexpensive things that you'll easily be able to find in your church or borrow.

Including People of All Abilities

Any time an intergenerational group gets together, there will be people with varying abilities. Consider the needs in your particular congregation and make adjustments as appropriate. Here are some tips that may help:

- To assist those with hearing impairments or difficulties, hold all meetings in a room with a sound system (or better yet, a hearing loop) and ask anyone addressing the whole group to use a microphone.
- If there are people in your church who have sight impairments, ask for volunteers to sit next to them, guide them as requested if movement is necessary, and describe any visual elements of the event.
- On your signup sheet, leave space for people to list dietary concerns or severe allergies.
- When choosing between activity options, consider the needs of anyone who has issues with mobility.
- If there are people in your church with autism or a significant hearing impairment, consider designating one table a "quiet table" so they won't be as disturbed by loud talking or other noises.
- Ask for volunteers to serve as assistants for people with cognitive impairments. Ask the assistants to help explain instructions, guide the person through activities, or help in other ways.
- Make sure all children in your group feel included. When writing is called for, assist anyone who needs help. Make sure there's room for children to participate in all discussions and activities.

A Word about Sound Systems

If a sound system is available at your church, you'll find it to be very helpful for WE events. It's especially helpful for people who have a hearing impairment, and it will ensure that everyone who speaks to the large group can be heard. If your meeting space is small or your church doesn't have sound equipment, make sure to ask everyone who addresses the large group to speak loudly and distinctly.

Music

Singing together is a great community-builder. If there's a piano in your meeting space, that's perfect for accompaniment. If not, ask a guitarist to lead your singing. The theme song for WE: The Epic Story is "One Generation Will Call to the Next" by Greg Scheer (see pp. 10-11). If it's unfamiliar to your group, have a song leader teach it to them. After each WE event we also provide lists of other suggested songs that go with each event's theme.

Song suggestions are drawn from a variety of songbooks and other sources. Many of these songs can be found in the following hymnals and songbooks available from Faith Alive at www.FaithAliveResources.org or 1-800-333-8300:

Contemporary Songs for Worship
Psalter Hymnal
Sing! A New Creation
Sing With Me (children's songbook)

Take It Further

In the reproducible pages for each event you'll find ideas for continuing the learning of the WE event in small groups, youth groups, and homes.

EVENT 1

EVERYTHING OUT OF NOTHING (CREATION)

Scripture

Genesis 1-2:3

Event Focus

In this event we'll celebrate the fact that God made our world and calls us to care for it.

This WE event, like all the others, has three steps:

Step 1: Welcome, Gathering, and Building Community

Gather as a group to enjoy some good food as you talk informally about God's creation.

Step 2: Learning Experiences for All Ages

Enter the story through a readers' theater or James Weldon Johnson's amazing poem "The Creation."

Step 3: Reflect and Praise

Share what you've learned, praise God in song, and learn how to "take it further" with ideas for living out what you've learned.

These activities are designed to help WE participants

- understand that God made the world from nothing.
- feel committed to caring for God's world.
- pray for God's world.

SUPPLIES AND PREP

FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR

Food Ideas

- Potluck dinner
- Salad buffet with cut-up fruit and vegetables
- Pancakes with fruit toppings

SONG LEADER

Suggested Music

- WE theme song: "One Generation Will Call to the Next" (p. 10 in this book or p. * on the event CD)
- "All Creatures of Our God and King"
- "All Things Bright and Beautiful"
- "Creation Song"
- "Earth and All Stars"
- "For the Beauty of the Earth"
- "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands"
- "Many and Great"
- "This Is My Father's World"
- "Who Made Ocean, Earth, and Sky?"

Step 1: Welcome, Gathering, and Building Community

EVENT COORDINATOR **Welcome** your WE group as they arrive. To encourage them to meet others in your church family, find a fun way to mix things up! Direct people to their tables using color-coded nametags (see Supplies and Prep box). Hand out the nametags in random order, but be sure to accommodate any young children who want to sit with a parent.

HOST **Begin** the event with a warm welcome. Since this is the first WE event, set the stage and briefly introduce the WE concept to the group.

HOST **Open** with prayer and a Scripture reading, using one of the options below:

- Read Psalm 19 if you plan to use the readers' theater to present the creation story in Step 2.
- Read Genesis 1-2:3 if you plan to use the James Weldon Johnson poem to present the creation story in Step 2. Before you begin, invite 7 children to come forward and give each child one of the cards numbered 1-7. Line them up in numerical order and have them hold their cards with the number facing down. Instruct kids to flip their numbers when you point to them, then have the large group respond with "And there was evening, and there was morning, the # day."



HOST **Invite** participants to enjoy the good food together and **point out** the conversation tents on each table. Encourage the table groups to use the questions on them to kick off their conversation during the meal and to help them prepare for the learning later. Since you may have a diverse group of churched and non-churched people, it's good to start with the following encouragement:

EVENT COORDINATOR

Supplies and Prep for Step 1

- **Table decorations and nametags.** It's important that your WE group gets to know each other. Randomly assigning people to tables, while it makes some folks uncomfortable, is a good way to help that happen. Assign each table a different color, and decorate each with helium balloons or construction paper shapes in those colors. Then decorate blank nametags with a dot in a corresponding color so people will know where to sit. TIP: Be sure to match the number of nametags to the number of chairs around the table; if you have eight chairs at the red table, make eight red nametags.
- **Conversation Tents.** When you know how many tables you'll have, print the same number of conversation tents (p. 18 in this book or p. * on the event CD) onto cardstock. Fold in half where indicated. Place one tent on each table before your WE group arrives.
- **Number Cards** (only needed if you have chosen to read from Genesis 1-2:3 rather than reading the Weldon poem). Gather seven sheets of paper or cardstock and use a dark marker to write a number from 1-7 in large print on each one. Place the number cards where the Scripture reading will occur.
- **Bible**

One note before you start. As you talk and learn together, you may find that people at your table have differing views about how the world was made. This event isn't meant to debate how creation happened, but to celebrate the fact that God is our Creator and God calls us to care for his world.

FOOD/CLEANUP COORDINATOR When people are finished eating (allow about 45 minutes for a meal or 15 minutes for a snack), clear the tables to prepare for table activities.

Step 2: Learning Experiences for All Ages

ENTER THE STORY

EVENT COORDINATOR Before the event, choose one of the following ways to **present the story**:

- Present the “Act One” readers’ theater. Invite your three readers to come forward. As they do, invite the group to participate by responding with “It was evening, it was morning” and the correct day number each time one of the readers raises his or her arm during the story. On the event CD we’ve provided images to project at different points in the script to illustrate the amazing creation process (use the PowerPoint titled “Event 1, Step 2 Readers’ Theater”).
- Present a dramatic retelling of the creation story using the James Weldon Johnson poem “The Creation.” You may choose to use a reader or to play the recording provided on the event CD. If you use a reader, encourage the reader to memorize the poem for maximum impact. On the event CD we’ve provided images to project at different points in the script to illustrate the amazing creation process (use the PowerPoint titled “Event 1, Step 2 Reading”).

HOST Invite table groups to take five minutes to share with each other what surprises them most about the story of creation. Encourage them to make sure everyone gets a chance to speak. Then ask table groups to share some of their “surprises” with the larger group.

EVENT COORDINATOR

Supplies and Prep for Step 2

- Make copies of either the “**Act One**” **readers’ theater script** (p. 19 in this book or p. * on the event CD), one per reader, **OR** the poem “**The Creation**” by James Weldon Johnson (p. 21 in this book or p. * on the event CD), one per reader.
- Optional: project creation images during the story. Use the “**Event 1, Step 2 Readers’ Theater**” PowerPoint for the “Act One” readers’ theater, **OR** use the “**Event 1, Step 2 Reading**” PowerPoint for the reading of “The Creation.”
- Assemble **one large gift bag for the host** with a Bible and either a **globe** or a **world map** inside.
- Assemble **one large gift bag for each table**. Inside each bag place one large sheet of **posterboard**, an assortment of **colored construction paper**, several pairs of scissors, several **glue sticks**, and other fun embellishments if you like. Attach a **Creation Day Card** (pp. 23-24 in this book or p. * on the event CD) to each of these bags, but not to the host’s bag. (Note: if you have more than seven tables, make more than one of each bag; if you have fewer than seven tables, you can let some tables take more than one bag to work with.) Place all gift bags on a table near where the host will be standing.