

THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Written by The Reverend Monica Romig Green
Faith Formation Coordinator for the Diocese of Niagara



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CALLED TO LIFE COMPELLED TO LOVE

Ignited by the irresistible love of Jesus and renewed by the Holy Spirit, we partner with God to deepen faith, join God's mission, and care for God's world.



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FOR PROGRAM FACILITATORS

WHY THIS RESOURCE MATTERS

The Grandparents Club is designed to meet the spiritual and relational needs of members of any Anglican parish who are in their second half of life, particularly those who are grandparents, great grandparents, great aunts or uncles, or godparents, or anyone who has a personal relationship with younger people that they care about. Many in this group have a long history of faithful service to the church and carry a deep longing for their children and grandchildren to share in the Christian faith.

FOR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Because of their history of faithfulness, some in this group may view their own spiritual growth as something completed in the past, adopting a “been there, done that” attitude toward further growth. It is true that many spiritual growth programs are designed for people in the first half of life and simply do not address the needs of those who are more mature.

However, the truth about spiritual growth is that God never stops inviting Christians into a deeper and richer relationship with the Trinity, and this is especially true in the second half of life. The Grandparents Club was written to offer opportunities for faithful Christians to come even closer to God at this stage of life and, through the Holy Spirit, to re-enliven their love for God.

TO ENCOURAGE SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS

The Grandparents Club is also missional in nature. In today’s fractured and isolated society, children, youth, and young adults are in need of caring adults who will accompany and encourage them on their spiritual journeys. They long for someone to recognize the spiritual dimension of their lives and offer a listening ear and a gentle, wise presence. The Grandparents Club equips grandparents with insights into the spiritual world of young people and practical skills to become spiritual elders for the young people they love. These skills include inviting spiritual conversations, listening attentively, responding with care, and offering blessings. By practicing these skills with their grandchildren, participants can strengthen their bonds and foster deeper, more meaningful relationships. Once confident in these skills, they can then apply them in any missional setting—whether with their family or within their neighbourhood.

FOR RELATIONAL CONNECTION

Lastly, the Grandparents Club provides a welcoming space for like-minded Christians to gather regularly, share experiences, and support one another. These connections help people in the second half of life build and strengthen friendships, reducing isolation and loneliness.

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GETTING STARTED

The Grandparents Club requires gathering a group of between three and 12 interested people who are willing to meet regularly for eight sessions. Each session includes clear preparation guidelines and meeting expectations. A facilitator leads the group through the meeting outline and acts as timekeeper. If a layperson wishes to launch the club in their church, they should first consult with the clergy. While having a clergy member as facilitator can be helpful, the Grandparents Club can just as easily be led by a lay person.

LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATIONS

The ideal facilitator is in their second half of life, like the group members. They may be a grandparent, but that is not required. Key qualities include being an attentive listener, managing time well, and guiding small groups effectively while gently but firmly ensuring participants follow the agreed-upon sharing guidelines. A facilitator should care deeply about this topic and be willing to participate with the group in the pre-meeting preparation, so that they are ready to address any concerns or questions. Most importantly, they should be a mature person of faith and prayer, with a strong spiritual relationship with God and a compassionate heart for others.

SCHEDULING AND FORMAT

Meetings typically last 90 to 120 minutes and can be held in person or online. The group may choose a schedule that works best for them: weekly, biweekly, or monthly. When planning, allow enough time for the pre-meeting preparation materials to be completed while maintaining a rhythm that keeps the group engaged and avoids losing momentum between meetings.

NAVIGATING SENSITIVE TOPICS

Jesus said that where our treasure is, there our hearts will be also (*Matthew 6:21*). For many grandparents, that treasure is their grandchildren. When invited to share about them, emotions often run deep. Because we live in a broken world, relationships may not always be as we hope. Painful stories may surface during the Grandparents Club meetings. If a sensitive issue arises that requires further care, the facilitator should seek guidance and support from a clergy member.

FURTHER QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or require additional help, please contact the Faith Formation Coordinator for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara at monica.green@niagaraanglican.ca.

May God bless your desire to enrich the lives of the mature people of faith in your congregation.



INTRODUCTION

Grandchildren are the crown of grandparents.

Proverbs 17:6a (God's Word Translation)

Welcome to the Grandparents Club!

The Grandparents Club is an eight-meeting small group experience designed to help grandparents grow deeper in their relationship with God while learning to become spiritual ambassadors for our grandchildren.

WHO IS IT FOR?

As the name suggests, the Grandparents Club is for anyone with a grandchild or grandchildren who desires to encourage them spiritually.

Your grandchildren can be any age – infants, children, teens, or even young adults.

You can join even if you are technically not a grandparent! You can be a great aunt or uncle or a godparent. When you read the word “grandparent” in the materials, just consider yourself included!

You simply need to be a person in the second half of life who has younger people in your life whom you love dearly and want to support.

THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB IS FOR YOU IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO:

- Grow deeper in relationship with God
- Connect and pray with other grandparents
- Relate more intentionally with your grandchildren
- Learn to have gentle spiritual conversations with your grandchildren
- Become a spiritual elder
- Support your grandchildren's spiritual growth
- Leave a spiritual legacy
- Plant spiritual seeds that may bloom now or long after you are gone
- Be open to learning, trying, and growing, no matter your age

WHAT IT IS NOT

The Grandparents Club is not:

- About proselytizing, arguing with, or preaching to non-believers
- A place to complain about the state of the church today or yearn for how things used to be
- A guarantee that your grandchildren will be baptized or become church-attending Christians

WHAT DOES IT INCLUDE?

The Grandparents Club includes material for eight meetings, each with a different theme.

Meeting 1:	The Prayers of Spiritual Elders
Meeting 2:	The Spiritual Journeys of Children and Youth
Meeting 3:	Reviewing our Life and Spiritual Story
Meeting 4:	Growing as a Spiritual Elder
Meeting 5:	Coming Alongside Our Grandchildren in Their Spiritual Journeys
Meeting 6:	Leaving a Spiritual Legacy
Meeting 7:	Being and Giving a Blessing
Meeting 8:	Continuing the Journey

WHY IS THIS A CLUB?

The Grandparents Club is designed to be a welcoming space where people gather to enjoy fellowship and support one another around a shared topic or activity.

It is called a “club” rather than a “program” because it emphasizes connection and community. Through this warm and encouraging environment, you are invited to grow in your role as a spiritual elder for your family and community.

Your group will even have the option of continuing on as a club after the initial eight meetings, if everyone decides to keep journeying together.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

Like a book club, members prepare for each meeting by reading a short teaching and a few reflection questions.

Meetings follow a prepared outline that includes prayers, opportunities to share, discussion questions, and an activity that the group engages in together.

If an activity does not get completed during the meeting, club members are encouraged to complete it at home later.

GROUP MAKE-UP?

- Clubs can range in size between three and 12 people, the typical size of a small group.
- Clubs can be closed or open to new members along the way, depending on what works for the club.
- Club members do not have to attend each meeting, but the more you participate, the more you will get out of it.

MEETINGS IN PERSON OR ONLINE?

Meetings can take place either in person or online, whichever works best for the club.

TIMING OF MEETINGS?

Meetings are designed to be 90 to 120 minutes, depending on the size of the club.

Clubs can meet weekly, fortnightly or monthly, whatever rhythm works for them.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The Grandparents Club is intended to support you as you express your love and care for your grandchildren and grow deeper in your faith as you do.

May this prayer be a blessing to you as you begin this journey.

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #1

THE PRAYERS OF SPIRITUAL ELDERS

READING AND REFLECTION

"The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results."

James 5:16b NLT

I was a young adult when my father handed me my birthright. He had been going through his deceased mother's trunk when he came across a letter she had saved. It was written in 1949 by his grandmother – my grandmother's mother-in-law – and my grandmother had kept it as a cherished keepsake, tucking it away in her cedar chest for safekeeping. When my father discovered it some 40 years later, he brought it directly to me. "I think this should belong to you now," he said lovingly.

When I opened the letter, I was surprised by how moved I was as I read it. It was just a simple handwritten correspondence through which my great-grandmother was following up with my grandmother after a personal visit. At the time, my grandmother and grandfather were struggling to raise their five young children. During the visit, my grandmother had asked her mother-in-law for some marital advice, about what exactly I will never know.

What caught my attention most is how my great-grandmother focuses most of her letter on prayer:

- My great-grandmother says she has been praying for my grandparents since she visited with them.
- How she urges my grandmother to pray about her current situation, even offering her helpful instructions for praying, like "It doesn't need to be on your knees. A sentence prayer flashed through your mind, 'help, me, Lord, or 'thank you, Lord,'" and "Tell God your troubles just as if you were telling me."
- How she even includes lyrics from the "old hymn" *What a Friend We Have in Jesus* as encouragement for my grandmother to "take it to the Lord in prayer."
- How she ends the letter by writing: "And I am praying. I never close my eyes every night until I have asked God's blessing on every one of my children. And my love to you, my dear girl."

She signs off warmly and simply as "Mom."

As I finished reading this simple letter, I knew immediately why my father had given it to me. At the time, I was a young person just beginning my adult faith journey, and these women – my grandmother and great-grandmother – were not just my physical ancestors, they were my spiritual forebears, too. They were women of prayer, and I have inherited not only their bloodline but also their spiritual legacy, which I now continue.

I never met my great-grandmother. She died long before I was born. And my grandmother died when I was still a baby. Yet there I was feeling deeply connected to these women in their faith through this letter and through their prayers, knowing deep in my heart that "every one of my children" included me.

I share this personal story because I think it speaks richly to the focus for this first week of the Grandparents Club: the importance and responsibility of spiritual elders to pray.

Prayer is the bedrock of our relationship with God. It is both how we communicate with God and one of the main ways that God communicates with us. If we want to deepen our spiritual lives, one of the simplest and best ways to do that is through intimate prayer.

Additionally, one of the most impacting things we can do spiritually for our grandkids – as well as for our own children – is to pray for them regularly. The more intentional our prayers for them, the more connected with God's desires for them we will become.

The world that children and young people are growing up in today is full of overwhelming pressures and challenges. Many of these forces try to separate and isolate young people from the kind of relational and spiritual grounding that has traditionally provided stability and direction for generations past. Praying for your grandchildren is a spiritually important way to help connect them to God's foundational love in the present and to God's hope and strength for them in the future.

One of the beautiful things about prayer is how it also affects the person who is praying. When someone brings their heart's desire to God, they open themselves up to God in honesty and vulnerability. That kind of experience can deepen our trust in God and open us even more to the Holy Spirit's personal transforming work.

Clearly, prayer was important to my great-grandmother. To her, it was the only way forward for herself and for her struggling daughter-in-law. She shared the best she had to offer in that letter: her own prayers and the encouragement for her daughter-in-law to pray as well.

As we begin thinking about the spiritual needs of our grandchildren, we might want to jump right into teaching them how to pray. However, before we do that, I suggest we start one step earlier: by deepening our own prayer life first. We can begin by praying for God's desires for our dear young ones, both for their lives now and for their futures.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you were a child, did someone pray for you? If so, who? What difference do you think their prayers made?
- What is your current habit of prayer? How often do you pray? For whom do you tend to pray?
- How do you prefer to pray? With others or alone? At a regular set time or at random moments? With your own words or with written prayers?
- What would you like your relationship with God in prayer to look like? If you are not sure of the answer, why not pray and ask God?

TO BRING TO MEETING #1

- Your Reflections
- A few blank notecards
- Something to write with

Reference:

Miller, Paul E. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. NavPress: Colorado Springs, 2009.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #1 Outline

THE PRAYERS OF SPIRITUAL ELDERS

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

Read over the group rules. Everyone should discuss and agree on some form of these group rules.

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

For this first meeting, each person will introduce themselves by sharing the following with the group:

- Your name
- Why you joined the Grandparents Club
- Being mindful of privacy, a bit about your grandchildren and their ages.

DISCUSS

Spend some time discussing the answers to these questions:

- What impact do you think an older person's prayers have had on your life?
- What impact would you like your prayers to have on your grandchildren?

GROUP ACTIVITY: CREATING AND USING PRAYER CARDS

Spend the remaining time discussing and making Prayer Cards together.

Prayer cards can be a wonderful way to focus your prayers on a single person or group of people.

Based on Paul Miller's book *A Praying Life*,¹ a prayer card is an index card upon which you write a Bible verse that speaks to the general desire you want to pray for the person.

The following guidelines taken are from Paul Miller's book:

1. The card functions like a prayer snapshot of a person's life, so I use short phrases to describe what I want.
2. When praying, I usually don't linger over a card for more than a few seconds. I just pick out one or two key areas and pray for them.
3. I put [God's] Word to work by writing a Scripture verse on the card that expresses my desire for that particular person or situation.
4. The card doesn't change much. Maybe once a year I will add another line. These are just the ongoing areas in a person's life that I am praying for.
5. I usually don't write down answers. They are obvious to me since I see the card almost every day.
6. I will sometimes date a prayer request by putting the month/year as in 8/25.

EXAMPLES:

<p>Yumi</p> <p>9/25</p> <p><i>"Let the children come to me and do not hinder them." Matt 19:14</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That she might know how much she is loved.• That she might grow strong and steady in character• That we could spend more time together• That she would come to know God	<p>DANIEL</p> <p>OCT 2025</p> <p><i>"I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers." Philemon 1:4</i></p> <table><tr><td>School</td><td>Health</td><td>Loneliness</td></tr><tr><td>Friends</td><td>Dates</td><td>Online Time</td></tr><tr><td>Baseball</td><td>Hockey</td><td>Protection</td></tr></table>	School	Health	Loneliness	Friends	Dates	Online Time	Baseball	Hockey	Protection
School	Health	Loneliness								
Friends	Dates	Online Time								
Baseball	Hockey	Protection								

¹ Miller, Paul E. *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World*. NavPress: Colorado Springs, 2009.

Talk together as a group about what you desire for the young person(s) you are carrying on your heart and together try to come up with Bible verses you can each put on your prayer cards. (If you have many grandchildren you want to pray for, consider writing up a card for each one of them.)

Once you have written your card(s), commit yourself to looking at the card(s) every day to focus your prayers for your grandchildren.

Possible verses for your prayer card:

- Psalm 3:3² – *But you, O Lord, are a shield about me; you are my glory, the One who lifts up my head.*
- Numbers 6:24-26 (NLT) – *May the Lord bless you and protect you. May the Lord smile on you and be gracious to you. May the Lord show you favour and give you peace.*
- Psalm 9:9 – *God will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.*
- Romans 14:19 (NRSVUE) – *Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.*
- Psalm 9:10 – *God, those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you never forsake those who seek you, O Lord.*
- Ephesians 3:16 (NRSVUE) – *I pray that, according to the riches of God's glory, God may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through God's Spirit...*
- Matthew 11:28 (NRSVUE) – *Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.*
- Romans 8:38-39 (NRSVUE) – *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*



BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Finish making Prayer Cards for each grandchild
- Pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #2

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen.

² All Psalm quotes are from *The Psalter of The Book of Alternative Services* Emended for Contemporary Use.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #2

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

READING AND REFLECTION

“People were bringing children to Jesus in order that he might touch them, and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.”

Mark 10:13-16 NRSVUE

Somehow, the disciples had totally missed the point. When some parents wanted to bring their children to meet Jesus, the disciples thought they would just be wasting the time of their great teacher. But Jesus, of course, knew better. He knew that the children themselves already had a desire to come to him, and not just through their parents. In fact, he told everyone there that the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children! Jesus’ message to the disciples? Follow the children’s lead! They already know the Way, even better than you do!

Now, over two thousand years later, psychologists, scholars and scientists have affirmed what Jesus said in that story: children are naturally spiritual and drawn to experiences of God’s presence. If the adults who love them support and nurture a child’s natural spirituality, their pure child-like faith can develop into a robust spiritual lifeline, connecting a child to God’s love over time as they develop, through stormy adolescence, into adulthood, and beyond.

So, what can we learn from psychologists about kids and young people that can help us as spiritual elders?

SPIRITUALITY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Dr. Lisa Miller is a clinical psychologist who has studied the effects of spirituality on children and adolescents. In her very accessible book, *The Spiritual Child*, she outlines her findings and recommends what loving adults can do to help nurture a child's spirituality throughout their development.

For Dr. Miller, the term "spirituality" refers to "an inner sense of relationship to a higher power that is loving and guiding... It encompasses our relationship and dialogue with this higher presence" (p. 25).

Based on this understanding, Dr. Miller shares these major findings:

- Children across cultures are biologically hardwired for spiritual connection, beginning from birth. In the earliest years, children's spiritual attunement is robust and "whole." (p. 3). This affirms what Jesus told his disciples about children in Mark 10.
- A child's spirituality even precedes and transcends language, culture, and religion. It is inborn, central to our physiology and our psychology. However, it is something we can lose if it is not nurtured and used over time (p. 25-26).
- Spirituality in adolescence can be "a central organizing principle of inner life" for teens, and through the lens of spirituality, adolescence can be seen as a time of essential spiritual search and growth. This is stable across cultures (p. 3-4).
- Spirituality can help teens and young adults reorient the source of meaning and purpose in their lives away from mere economic success. Active spirituality is also correlated with being healthier and happier over one's lifetime (p. 12-13).
- Supporting a child or an adolescent's spiritual growth can also be a source of illumination and inspiration for the adults who care for them (p. 4).

LIFE STAGES AND SPIRITUALITY

By having a sense of the unique qualities of young people's spiritual experience at different stages in their development, we, as spiritual elders, can better learn how to come alongside them to support and encourage their spirituality.

INFANTS AND CHILDREN – FIRST DECADE OF LIFE

Dr. Miller notes five key traits of young children's spirituality (p. 110-111):

1. A natural love of spiritual ritual and prayer
2. A capacity for spiritual perception or "heart knowing," such as intuitive guidance, love, and *unitive empathy*, a sense of oneness with others.
3. A desire for right action: to be helpful, giving, contributing, and sharing
4. An innate sense of the specialness of family
5. An affinity with nature and a fascination with the natural life cycle of birth, growth, and the next generation

Key points for supporting spirituality in young children (Appendix p. 12-13)

- Remember that all children are born spiritual; it comes to them naturally.
- Important loving adults in a child's life can be spiritual ambassadors, conveying spirituality to children through consistent loving relationships and through shared experiences of God's transcendent presence.
- The *field of love* for a child contains everyone who loves the child, including God, and this community becomes the sacred space in which a child's spirituality can be experienced and supported.
- Animals and nature are also spiritual and an essential part of a child's spirituality.

ADOLESCENCE – SECOND DECADE OF LIFE

Adolescence is a time of personal and spiritual individuation (*p. 210*). Teens are concerned with “what I feel, think, and believe” as opposed to their parents’ beliefs. Spiritual individuation can help build future relationships based on commitment and love, as well as future work based on calling rather than expediency. Spirituality can provide a blueprint for a life of thriving, meaning, and purpose (*p. 277*).

Dr. Miller frames the adolescent experience in this way:

- Teens experience this passage in the second decade as a storm of feeling and questions without answers. They feel lost in a sea of strong feelings and frustration with the outer world (parents often included) for failing to respond to their upset or to address their deeper hunger. When the cogent unifying rubric that they seek—transcendence and spiritual knowledge—is absent, they only feel pangs of hunger.
- The most helpful way to support an adolescent is to frame the quest as spiritual and as an essential, core part of their emergence to adulthood. The unifying notion of a spiritual quest provides calm, focus, and rootedness. A parent [or other caring adult] can convey that ultimately this passage is an opportunity created by the teen’s tremendous perceptiveness and capacity for spiritual awareness. This difficulty will pass, and answers will come. (*p. 239*)

Adolescents need places where they can ask these big questions and be taken seriously, while also being encouraged to continue their spiritual quest to find for themselves the answers they seek.

Key points for supporting spirituality in teens (*Appendix p. 13-14*)

- Adolescence brings a spiritual surge, in which young people are hungry for transcendent experience and meaning.
- Teens are working to understand their own spirituality, which includes asking big questions of life and purpose.
- Spirituality protects against suffering. A teen with a personal relationship with a higher power is 80 percent less likely to suffer from addiction, depression, and other adolescent struggles.
- Personal spirituality helps teens discover and fulfil their deeper purpose in life, even more than academic or extracurricular activities.

EARLY ADULTHOOD

If your grandchildren are young adults, there are still opportunities at this life stage for the awakening of spirituality. Any major life change can create an opening, particularly those that feel overwhelming and create a sense of need, such as moving to a new place, starting a new career, losing a job, starting a new relationship, experiencing a major illness or accident, marriage, heartbreak, or becoming a parent. Any of these transformative situations can provide an opportunity for a young adult to engage or re-engage in one's spirituality.

Having a better understanding of how spirituality is expressed in children, adolescents, and young adults can help us as spiritual elders to meet the young people we love where they are, as we all deepen our spirituality together.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does reading about children and youth spirituality affect your understanding of your grandchildren's life experience?
- How does reading about children and youth spirituality affect your understanding of your own upbringing and life experience?
- What ideas spring to mind for you as a spiritual elder as you consider your role in supporting your grandchildren's spiritual experience?

TO BRING TO MEETING #2

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you had this week that you would like to share with the Club.

Reference:

Miller, Lisa, *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #2 Outline

THE SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- What is one major **difference** between your life experiences as a child and adolescent and those of your grandchildren today?
- What is one major **similarity** between your life experiences as a child and adolescent and those of your grandchildren today?

GROUP ACTIVITY: HOW WE CAN SUPPORT OUR GRANDCHILDREN'S SPIRITUALITY

Very often, a grandparent becomes this special spiritual partner (to a child) even when the parents are healthy and functional and spiritually supportive. In our busy lives, so often it is a grandparent who sits and listens to a child's questions, welcomes a child's feelings, and has the long, deep talks at the kitchen table. Lisa Miller, *The Spiritual Child*, p. 80.

In *The Spiritual Child*, Dr. Lisa Miller offers seven key actions loving adults can take to help support children, adolescents, and young adults in their spirituality (p. 331-348):

1. Speak: Use Spiritual Language Regularly

Use spiritual language regularly to describe your grandchild's qualities and actions. Feel free to use language from your spiritual tradition, such as God, faith, belovedness, grace, mercy, compassion, love, faith, hope, etc.

2. Share: Transparency and the Voice of Spiritual Experience

Let your grandchildren see and hear how you live out your spirituality and how it affects your problem-solving, relationships, and understanding of life events and circumstances.

3. Connect: Meet Them Where They Are

When a child, adolescent, or young adult asks big questions or shares a spiritual experience, simply welcome the questions and conversation, listen well, and encourage them in finding their own answers. It is more important to come alongside and be present than to give them the "right answers."

4. Teach: Build a Spiritual Practice Together

Invite grandchildren into your personal spiritual practice so they can witness and choose to join you in it. Family rituals can also lay groundwork for spiritual connection for years to come.

5. Nurture: Embrace Relationships with Animals and All of Nature

Nature has a deep and abiding way of connecting us to God, one another, and nature itself. Spend a quiet, peaceful time with your grandchildren in nature and in relationship with animals.

6. Care and Repair: Tend the Field of Love

Express to your grandchild that their relationship with you is a sacred space from which they come and in which they belong. Share helpful stories that connect your grandchild to the generations before them. Acknowledge all those who love your grandchild with gratitude, individually and as a whole, while protecting your grandchild from any harmful family relationships. Be honest with your grandchild—in ways that are age-appropriate and respectful of the other important relationships in their life, including parents and family members—about your own relational mistakes and acknowledge major family changes, such as new births, divorces, remarriages, and deaths.

7. Strive: The Inspired Life

Live the whole of your life aspiring to a greater social and spiritual ethic. See life as deeply connected all the time, and each moment an opportunity for transcendence. In other words, live a life of love, abiding constantly in God and seeking to acknowledge God's ways in everything, all the time.

Talk together as a group about these seven actions you could take with your grandchildren.

- Which of these seven actions are you already engaging in?
- Which actions are you interested in trying?

Make a commitment to try one of these actions before the next meeting.

Tell the Club what you will do. Write it down for yourself as a reminder.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Engage in one of the seven actions with your grandchildren.
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #3

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #3

REVIEWING OUR LIFE AND SPIRITUAL STORY

READING AND REFLECTION

We will not hide these truths from our children; we will tell the next generation about the glorious deeds of the LORD, about his power and his mighty wonders.

Psalm 78:4 NLT

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

I will never forget the first time I created a map of my life story. I had always believed I knew my personal history well and could share it easily. In my mind, my life began with a loving upbringing and moved smoothly into career and personal success during my young adulthood. But everything changed at age thirty, when I was unexpectedly faced with a painful divorce. The emotional healing that followed was difficult, yet it opened the door to something unexpected—a deep sense of calling from God to leave my secular career and enter Christian ministry. That was the story I had been telling myself and others for years.

During the life mapping exercise, I was invited to pause and reflect on memories across my life's timeline. One memory stood out: when I was twelve years old, I felt a clear sense of God's call during a church service—an invitation to dedicate my life to serving God. I had completely forgotten that moment. Taking time to revisit my past brought it back into focus. That rediscovered memory changed how I understood my vocational shift at age thirty. What once felt like a surprising detour—leaving a secular career after a painful divorce—now seemed like a return to something long planted in my heart. The call hadn't come out of nowhere; it had been quietly present all along, buried beneath the noise of life.

This realization helped me reframe my story. I began to see God's care and purpose as persistent and patient, woven throughout my journey—even when I was not aware of it. What I once saw as a turning point now feels like a homecoming.

OUR PERSONAL STORIES MATTER

We all carry with us a story about who we are and what our lives mean. According to narrative psychologist Dr. Dan P. McAdams in his book *The Stories We Live By*, the stories we tell about ourselves both shape our understanding of ourselves and the world around us (p.11). Our life story or personal myth, as McAdams calls it, gets shaped and formed throughout our lives, constantly being revised as personal development and new experiences bring us new information that alters or shifts our personal myth (p. 13-14). To know us is to know our story, and to know ourselves involves continuing to learn more of our story over time. Even the process of simply writing or telling one's autobiography is a healing process (p. 32).

Additionally, having a coherent life story is essential for healthy relationships with others, especially with our children and grandchildren. In *Parenting from the Inside Out*, psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Siegel

writes that our experiences shape who we are, and if we leave a difficult or painful experience unprocessed, our emotions and behaviours in the present can be driven by these past experiences (p. 1-2). Siegel notes that one of the best ways to come to understand our experiences and to process them is to come to know and understand our own life story (p. 31). Telling stories about our lives to ourselves and others helps us make sense and meaning of what we have experienced. And being able to tell a coherent story about our lives requires engaging both our right-brain, which deals with autobiographical information, raw emotions and awareness, and our left-brain, which looks for cause-and-effect patterns and uses language-based processing (p.35-40). Additionally, telling stories from our lives can help bond us to others in relationships and be a guide for children and teens in how to process and understand their own life experiences (p. 41).

As Christians, our faith also helps give meaning and language to our lives, especially regarding our spiritual experiences. Knowing and being able to articulate our life story, and specifically our spiritual stories, can help connect us with younger generations as we are able to better relate who we are, what we believe, and why we believe it.

I tell my personal story very differently now than I did before the life mapping experience. As I continue to grow and encounter new experiences, I expect my story will keep evolving—shaped not only by what happens, but by how I intentionally reflect on how each part fits together. Taking time to pause, remember, and make sense of my journey has been deeply worthwhile, especially in how it has helped me connect more meaningfully with those I love.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How well do you think you know your life story? Would you say that you have a “coherent” story of your life?
- Have you ever had a time when you reconsidered your life story? What happened and what changed for you?
- How open are you to reviewing your life story again? How open are you to considering the spiritual aspects of your life story?

TO BRING TO MEETING #3

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you had this week that you would like to share with the Club.
- Pencils in different colours (if possible)
- An eraser (optional)
- Print outs of Life Map Exercise charts on pages 23-29



References:

McAdams, Dan P., *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of a Self*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1993.

Siegel, Daniel J. and Mary Hartzell, *Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive*. New York: TargerPerigree, 2004.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #3 Outline

REVIEWING OUR LIFE AND SPIRITUAL STORY

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

If you think it would be helpful, read over the group rules again and make sure all agree:

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- What is your favourite spiritual story? It could be from your own life, from a forebear, or from Scripture.

GROUP ACTIVITY: RECOVERING OUR STORIES THROUGH A SPIRITUAL LIFE MAP

A spiritual life map is a simple and powerful tool to help us review our life story with a specific intention to remember how God has interacted with us throughout our lives. It also helps us to recall the significant moments, circumstances, and people who have made a difference.

There are many different life mapping tools. One of the most extensive is the *Listen to My Life* series from onelifemaps.com. Another adapted from Robert Clinton's Leadership Emergency Theory uses sticky notes to help create columns of different memories. This life map practice is an adaptation of several versions; it requires the least special supplies.

LIFE MAP DIRECTIONS

1. Orient yourself with the Life Map charts on the following pages. Write your name and date across the top of the pages you will be using.
2. After the Example page, there are five pages for you to map your life. Each page represents 20 years: Birth to 20, 20 to 40, 40 to 60, 60 to 80, and 80 to 100.
3. Pause for a moment. Before you begin filling anything in, ask God to be with you and help guide you through this exercise.
4. Grab a pencil and start noting major life events along the timeline that match your age when they happened. Place them in the space above the main line if you felt closer to God, below the line if you felt farther from God during these events.
5. If specific influences, supports and contexts come to mind, write them in the top row. If noticings, questions, or specific interventions/interactions with God come to mind, write them in the bottom column.
6. Continue to fill in your life map as memories come to mind. Move things around as you need to.
7. If you think it would be helpful, draw a line from one event to the next to show the ups and downs of how you experienced your relationship with God over time.
8. If specific spiritual stories come to mind while you are working on your life map, make note of them on a separate sheet of paper.
9. Building a life map can take time, so feel free to continue to work on it throughout our course.

Important Note:

Sometimes this kind of work can bring up troubling memories and feelings. If you find yourself getting overwhelmed, simply stop working on the map, put it away, and find someone trustworthy to talk to.

Continue working on your life maps together until the end of the meeting time.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Continue to fill in your life map
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #4

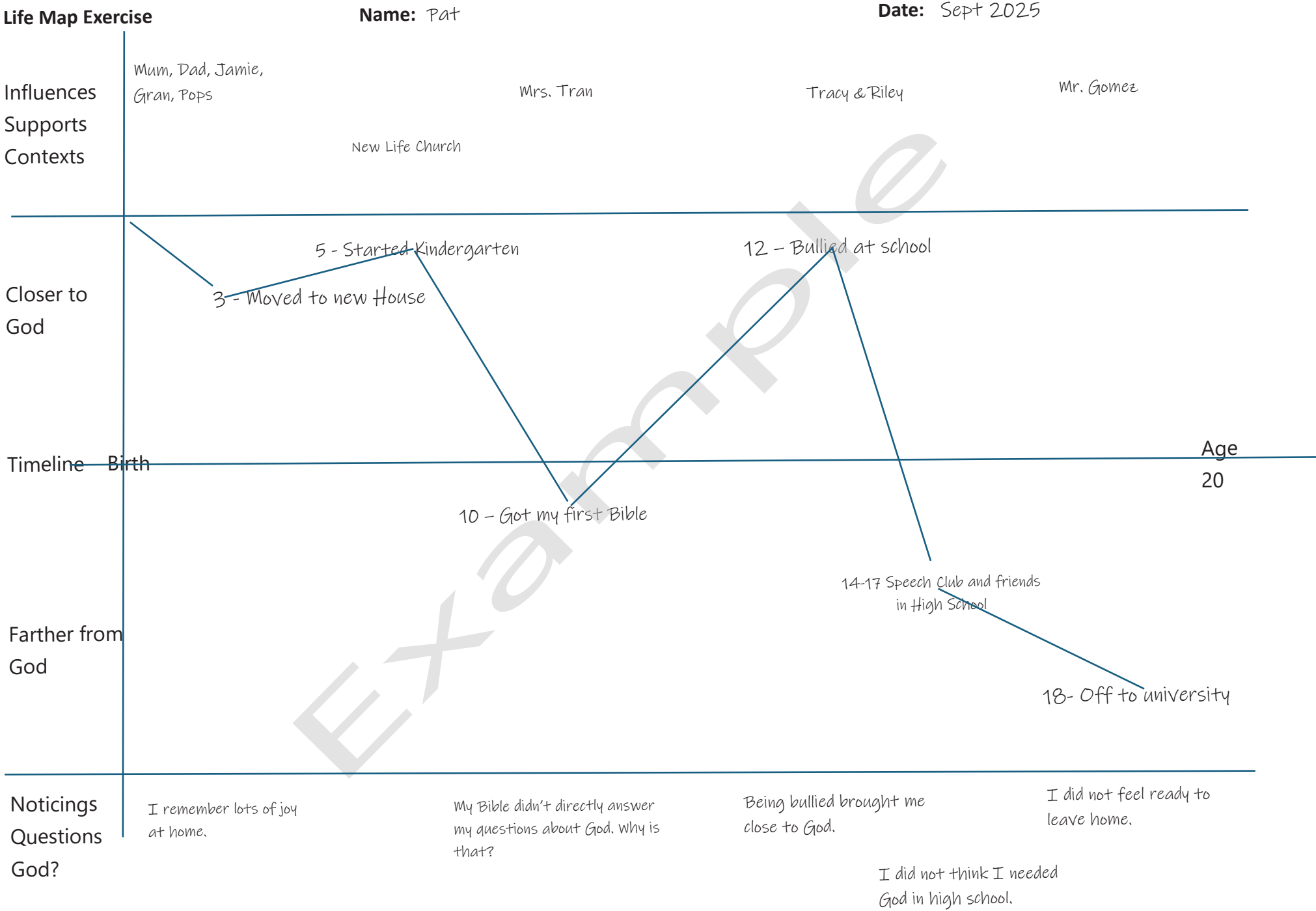
CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.



EXAMPLE:



LIFE MAP EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Influences
Supports
Contexts

Closer to
God

Timeline Birth Age 20

Farther from
God

Noticings
Questions
God?

LIFE MAP EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Influences
Supports
Contexts

Closer to
God

Timeline Age 20Age 40

Farther from
God

Noticings
Questions
God?

LIFE MAP EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Influences
Supports
Contexts

Closer to
God

Timeline Age 40

Age 60

Farther from
God

Noticings
Questions
God?

LIFE MAP EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Influences
Supports
Contexts

Closer to
God

Timeline Age 60Age 80

Farther from
God

Noticings
Questions
God?

LIFE MAP EXERCISE

Name:

Date:

Influences
Supports
Contexts

Closer to
God

Timeline Age 80

Age 100

Farther from
God

Noticings
Questions
God?



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #4

GROWING AS A SPIRITUAL ELDER

READING AND REFLECTION

“For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?”

Matthew 16:25-26 NRSVUE

“A journey into the second half of our own lives awaits us all. Not everybody goes there, even though all of us get older, and some of us get older than others. A ‘further journey’ is a well-kept secret, for some reason. Many people do not even know there is one. There are too few who are aware of it, tell us about it, or know that it is different from the journey of the first half of life.”

Richard Rohr, *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*

A CARTOON ABOUT AGING?

It may seem like just another kid’s animated movie, but Disney/Pixar’s *Up* is far more profound than it might appear on first viewing. It begins with a prelude introducing us to Carl, a little boy who dreams of being an adventurer like his idol, Muntz. Carl meets young Ellie, a fellow adventure enthusiast, and he makes a childhood promise to someday move her clubhouse to Paradise Falls in Venezuela. Then in one of the most eloquent and moving montages in film, we watch Ellie and Carl’s adult life silently unspool before us as they marry, renovate Ellie’s clubhouse into their home, work at the zoo together, get pregnant, grieve a miscarriage, try to save up for that trip to Paradise Falls and fail repeatedly due to several mishaps over time. The montage concludes with a senior Ellie falling ill and dying, leaving Carl alone with his house full of memories. It is a tremendous amount of emotional wordless storytelling in just 4 minutes!

That prologue is necessary because the hero of our story is not Carl the tongue-tied little boy, or Carl the newly married young man, or even Carl the middle-aged balloon seller. *Up* is the story of Carl, the grieving, cantankerous elderly widower, and this will be the tale of how life invites him to grow into the grandparent/spiritual elder we are all invited to become in time, if we are brave enough to go on the adventure.

For Carl, this begins with attempting to escape the pressures of the changing world by flying his house to Paradise Falls using thousands of balloons. Along the way, he ends up collecting an assortment of odd characters: Randall, a young Wilderness Explorer scout, in desperate need of paternal care; Doug, a Labrador retriever who desperately wants Carl to be his master; and Kevin, an elusive, hunted flightless bird who turns out to simply be a mother needing protection to get back to her hungry babies. These three might sound like outlandish companions, but each one of them offers an invitation to Carl to step out of his past and into a new role as elder, carer, and guide. However, in order to accept these invitations, Carl must let go of the quest he thinks he is on and of things from his past that hinder him from moving forward.

SPIRITUALITY FOR TWO HALVES OF LIFE

God's invitations to grow in our spiritual lives are constant. However, what these invitations look like and their purposes for us change as we mature. Franciscan Brother Richard Rohr writes about the differences in our spiritual experiences in the two halves of our lives in his classic book *Falling Upward*. Grounded in the Christian faith and building from the work of Carl Jung as well as spiritual wisdom across faiths, Rohr shares a spiritual secret hidden in plain sight: in maturity, God calls us on a deeper spiritual journey than in the first half of life. This second half of the journey involves recognizing and releasing what we have been holding onto in our first half of life and coming home to who we truly are and have always been (p. 87-88). It is a journey of transformation that ultimately leads to a deeper connection with God and others and to becoming the kind of true spiritual elder our society so desperately needs.

FIRST HALF OF LIFE SPIRITUALITY

To understand God's invitations for the second half of life, we need to understand what first-half-of-life spirituality looks like. According to Rohr, the spiritual task of childhood through middle age is to create a proper container for our lives and to fill that container. Our goals for this half include answering important life questions for ourselves about what makes us significant, how we can support ourselves, and which people will be living life with us (p. 1). This involves us expending our efforts to build up our lives as best we can, which includes shaping how the world sees us. Most of our Western culture is so focused on encouraging and supporting all the tasks and goals of the first half of life that we often cannot even imagine that there is anything else to life (p. 4). As we age, if we fall into the trap of thinking that first-half-of-life concerns are all there is to life and faith, we can become bitter, empty, and critical of being displaced, constantly rehearsing the past and longing for what was, while feeling continually overlooked and unseen, much like Carl at the beginning of the movie *Up*.

THE INVITATION TO A DEEPER JOURNEY

Often, the doorway to the next spiritual journey only opens to us during midlife or after. We need to have some life under our belts before we realize that the building and filling of our life container may not be all that satisfying or even sufficient. In fact, the catalyst to discovering a deeper spiritual journey is usually having to face something you cannot handle with your present resources (p. 65). No matter how hard you try, you are inadequate to overcome the challenge, and you “lose” at something important. You find you cannot fix, control, explain, change, or even understand what is happening to you. Rohr describes this as God acting as a stumbling stone (p. 71). By providing us with a circumstance that we cannot conquer, God invites us to let go of what came before and discover a new way forward.

This new path calls us to face the full truth about ourselves, including the parts we have ignored. In Jungian terms, we begin to recognize our “persona” – the idealized self we present to the world – and its hidden shadow (p. 127). These are the roles and identities we have clung to, often forgetting our deeper, truer selves (p. 85).

When life confronts us with failure or limitation, our shadow becomes undeniable to ourselves. We see the aspects of ourselves we have tried to hide and begin to question the false self we have built. Though this inner work can be humbling, it opens the way to discovering the beloved, authentic self that God has been with and been loving all along (p. 91).

We cannot plan for, anticipate, or step around the hard parts on our way to becoming a spiritual elder (p. 66). God’s invitations are always unexpected and unsought, the kinds of catastrophes that feel like death to the false self, because they are. “It will and must die in exact correlation to how much you want the Real” (p. 85).

SPIRITUAL ELDERSHIP: THE RESULT OF THE DEEPER JOURNEY

Rohr writes beautifully about what awaits the person who agrees to take the deeper journey to becoming a true spiritual elder. The spiritually mature person experiences a fullness and freedom, like they are coming home to themselves and to God (p. 87). By accepting the folly of their persona and its shadow, a spiritual elder forgives themselves for being imperfect and for failing, allowing them to extend that forgiveness to others (p. 114). A spiritual elder expresses a kind of “bright sadness” because they have accepted the pain of life and are now able to “hold it creatively and with less anxiety” (p. 117). They are less reactive and more prayerful and discerning (p. 118-119). There is an authenticity about mature spiritual elders that is a gift to those around them: “We now aid and influence other people simply by being who we are” (p. 123). Generosity becomes a lifestyle because your life is no longer about filling the container, but rather emptying it out for the good of others (p. 124).

Such elders are the “grand” parents of the world. Children and other adults feel so safe and loved around them, and they themselves feel so needed and helpful to children, teens, and midlife adults. And they are! (p. 124).

As Rohr puts it, by letting go and by letting ourselves fall, we end up falling upward into God (p. 153).

In the second half of the movie *Up*, Carl is faced with several hard choices: save the bird Kevin or let his and Ellie's beloved house burn up; continue dragging his house towards his goal or dispose of all its contents so that it is light enough to fly again; follow in the footsteps of his childhood hero Muntz and become an angry, bitter old man hellbent on completing his early life quest at all costs or let go of his quest entirely in order to save and care for Randall, Doug and Kevin. Carl fails at the first choice, choosing his house over saving Kevin. But this failure is what allows him to see and face his shadow side – accepting the grief driving him to escape as well as recognizing his selfishness and failure to do the right thing. Through this epiphany, he discovers a new way forward, one of release and lightness over heaviness and burden. By letting go of his quest, Carl steps into the roles his little group needs him to fill: grandfather, elder, and guide. In the end, (spoiler alert!), Carl is no longer defined by his past, and he fills the role Russell's father has abdicated, blessing Randall with his dearest treasure from Ellie.

May we like Carl accept the invitations God grants us in this second-half-of-life journey and walk into the deeper path of letting go, discovering who we truly are, and becoming spiritual elders for our families and our world.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do you think and feel about this description of second-half-of-life spirituality? Are you familiar with it or is it new to you?
- Where do you think you are in this spiritual journey? What invitations might God be offering you right now?
- How open are you to recognizing your persona/false self and its shadow? What might hinder you from accepting them? What might help you reconcile them?

TO BRING TO MEETING #4

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you had this week that you would like to share with the Club.
- Something to write with and to write on, like a pen and a journal

References:

Docter, Pete and Bob Peterson. (Directors). *Up* [Film]. Walt Disney Pictures; Pixar Animation Studios: 2009.

Rohr, Richard. *Falling Upward: A Spirituality of the Two Halves of Life*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Strobel, Kyle and John Coe. *Where Prayer Becomes Real: How Honesty with God Transforms Your Soul*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2021.

THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #4 Outline

GROWING AS A SPIRITUAL ELDER

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- Name one difference between your spiritual life now as opposed to when you were younger.
- How do you think your spiritual life is a help to you now as opposed to in the first half of life?

GROUP ACTIVITY: PRAYING A PRAYER OF RECOLLECTION

Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. Philippians 3:7-9 NRSVUE

In their book, *Where Prayer Becomes Real*, Kyle Strobel and John Coe offer a Prayer of Recollection (p. 137-140), based on the Philippians passage above and on the writings of St. Teresa of Ávila.

A Prayer of Recollection helps us confess our limitations and acknowledge our need for God, while recalling and affirming our identity as God's beloved. It is an opportunity for us to recollect both *who* and *whose* we truly are.

It is a prayer form particularly suited for a person in their second half of life, a way to recognize which first-half-of-life identities we might still be attached to, when God's invitation is to allow ourselves to let go and fall upward into who we are in Christ.

Have someone from the group volunteer to lead this modified version of Strobel and Coe's Prayer of Recollection by reading it aloud and acting as timekeeper, giving lots of time for silence.

Everyone praying can follow along below. Members can also write their reflections down.

This Prayer of Recollection should take 15 to 25 minutes to complete.

PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD IN PRAYER.

Spend two minutes silently becoming present to God and allowing God to become present to you.

Say in your heart to God:

God, I am here. I am presenting myself to you.

Open my heart to the truth about myself and about you.

Be as honest and open as you can. If you are not feeling it, just tell that to God.

PRAYER OF DETACHMENT

Spend five to ten minutes silently praying this prayer of detachment.

Say in your heart to God:

I am a finite person. I am not God. Apart from Christ, I can do nothing.

God's grace manifests in my weakness.

Begin to list for yourself and God any identities you may be attached to.

Instead of stating them in the positive, state them in the opposite, such as:

I am not a good person.

I am not a grandparent [or an aunt/uncle].

I am not a spouse [or a single, divorced or widowed person].

I am not a success [or a failure].

I am not [your occupation, your former occupation, or a retired person].

I am not [whatever identity is a part of your life].

Stating these identities in the negative can feel extreme or intense. The structure is intentional and meant to elicit reactions in your soul, allowing you to discover the extent to which you are attached to different identities.

In prayer, continue listing in the negative as many identities you might have as they come to mind.

Then, pay attention to how your soul reacts as you state these identities in the negative. Stronger reactions indicate a deeper attachment. Simply notice any reactions you have without judgment.

PRAYER OF ATTACHMENT

Spend five to ten minutes silently praying this prayer of attachment.

Say in your heart to yourself in God's presence:
*I was created for union with God. I have been wounded by sin,
And I long for perfect love. I am precious in God's eyes.
Through grace, I have been clothed in Christ's righteousness.
I name and embrace my soul's true identity as one beloved by God:
forgiven, adopted, chosen, indwelt by God, and being sanctified.
That is who I truly am.*

Pay attention to how your soul reacts as you state your true identities in God.
Just notice without judgment any reactions you have.

If you are really struggling, simply say: *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief.*

PRAYER OF ABIDING

Spend three minutes silently praying this prayer of abiding.

Say in your heart to yourself and to God:
*I trust in God. Nothing can separate me from God's love.
There is no condemnation in Christ.*

Simply sit with God and rest in these truths. Soak in God's always present love for you.

Important Note:

If you find yourself emotionally overwhelmed at any time during this prayer, simply stop praying this prayer and jump to section 4, the Prayer of Abiding. Rest there until the end of the time.

Spend the rest of the meeting discussing what it was like to experience the Prayer of Recollection and how you might use it in the future.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Try praying the Prayer of Recollection again
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #5

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #5

COMING ALONGSIDE OUR GRANDCHILDREN IN THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

READING AND REFLECTION

"The Lord called again, 'Samuel!' Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' But he said, 'I did not call, my son; lie down again.' Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, and the word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him. The Lord called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, 'Here I am, for you called me.' Then Eli perceived that the Lord was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, 'Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"

1 Samuel 3:6-9 NRSVUE

MY GRANDPA'S PRESENCE

When I was three years old, my mom enrolled me in a preschool just down the street from my grandparents' house. A couple of mornings each week, she would drop me off at their home on her way to work. I was always greeted with a loving embrace from my grandmother, Nana. But it is the time I spent with my grandfather, Popo, that remains most vivid in my memory.

On those special mornings, Popo would prepare breakfast for me. Mouth-watering smells of bacon and toast would overwhelm me as I walked into the kitchen. Popo would guide me to the kitchen table, where he had already placed two table settings, each with two small glasses set out: one for milk and

one for orange juice. I would sit on the right, and once he placed the food on our plates, he would sit next to me. I ate with joy, chattering away as young children do. My grandfather, a man of few words, simply sat with me, listening or gazing out the window with me at the trees and passing cars. I do not remember how long we sat like that, but in my memory, it felt like we lingered there forever, until Nana said it was time to go. I would hug and kiss Popo goodbye and head off to preschool. I do not recall much about preschool itself – but I have never forgotten those quiet, loving mornings with my Popo.

Now that I am an adult, I recognize those mornings with Popo as deeply spiritual experiences for me, hopefully for him as well. With very few words, he embodied a beautiful image of God: someone who lovingly prepares a feast and offers a calm, steady, attentive presence, sharing silently in the wonder of the world. Though I was so young, I felt profoundly loved, safe, and cherished. Popo listened with warmth to whatever my little three-year-old mind wanted to share, staying fully present as we gazed out the window together.

Often, the most tangible example of unconditional love to a child is their relationship with a loving grandparent. The attention and care that grandparents offer to children have the potential to shape a loving and attentive image of God in the mind and heart of a child. Grandparents can embody a slower posture that frees them for endless listening with delight to children. Further, they embody timeworn wisdom and humility through which children sense an authentic love and generosity. (Lacy Finn Borgo, *Spiritual Conversations with God*)

HOLY LISTENING

Children's and adolescents' spirituality thrives when a loving adult comes alongside them to be present and to listen attentively to their questions and perspectives.

Lacy Finn Borgo is a spiritual director who specializes in working with children. In her book, *Spiritual Conversations with Children*, she gives readers practical tools for accompanying children as adult spiritual ambassadors. Following Jesus' example interacting with children, she harnesses children's natural desire for connection to create space for "holy listening."

Borgo notes that there are four key elements in children's Christian spiritual formation (p. 24-32):

- Experiences of God's self, sometimes through goodness, beauty, truth, wonder, mystery, and awe
- Relationships in human living, both loving and painful
- Jesus' life, which is "infinitely relatable to children."
- Spiritual practices, such as prayer, solitude, and celebration

If any adult would like to enter a sacred conversation with a child, they will need to be attentive to both:

- Power - Adults automatically have more power in relation to children. Being mindful of one's physical and relational posture towards children can create space for a child to willingly choose connection (p. 38-39). And adults should always use their power to protect children (p. 55).
- Patterns – The key pattern of spiritual conversations are the movement to recognize and the movement to respond. "In spiritual conversations with children, the listening adult makes room for the child to recognize God's presence and respond to this recognition" (p. 41).

WHOLE-SELF LISTENING

Being fully present to a child or teen will cost us something, though. When we listen with our whole hearts to children, change is the price we will pay – it is the byproduct of vulnerability (p. 60).

- The best kind of listening for a spiritual conversation with anyone, but especially young people, involves engaging with your whole self.
- Whole-self listening begins by being fully present to God, for the adult chooses to be open to both God and the child at the same time (p. 61).
- It involves setting aside our “judgemental self and our good advice self” to be fully present with the child (p. 62).
- It requires having our eyes open as well as our ears, paying attention to body language as well as words (p. 63).
- It involves asking questions as invitations that acknowledge the autonomy of the child – honouring the child’s ability to perceive, reflect, and respond as they choose (p. 64).
- Listening to children is an exercise of patience and surrender for an adult (p. 67-68), because we seek to avoid:
 - Making meaning *for* the child
 - Offering advice
 - Fixing and saving the child from a painful or confusing situation
- Staying present, without jumping ahead or to conclusions
- Whole-self listening requires practice, so don’t be discouraged if it takes time.

HELPFUL TOOLS

If you want to begin a spiritual conversation with a child or teen, it can be helpful to start with an open-ended spiritual question.

Borgo calls these “divinely curious questions,” offering some examples (p. 64-66).

- Was there a time in the last week when you knew God was near?
- When did you experience something beautiful or good or true?
- Can you tell a story about when you felt angry or afraid or happy?
- What is one thing you are thankful for?
- How does a special person or creature in your life make you feel?
- What do you say to God?
- What does God say to you?

For children of all ages, playful tools can help in a spiritual conversation by giving young people something to focus on that is both engaging and boring enough to become a “third thing” – an activity that engages the child just enough that they are open to your questions and conversation (p. 40).

Some good options are:

- Battery-powered candle
- Markers, watercolours, watercolour paper
- Wooden figures that tell the story of Jesus
- Silly Putty or clay
- LEGO blocks
- Images of Jesus
- Shallow plastic box with sand
- Small bottle of bubbles
- Prayer beads
- Finger labyrinth
- Blank blocks
- Jenga

It is interesting that when I reflect on spiritual conversations with children, it is those early mornings with my grandfather that come to mind. I do not recall him asking me many questions during breakfast, but the meal itself was clearly a “third thing”—something we shared that gave me the freedom to speak about whatever was on my mind. His choice to sit beside me rather than across from me was inspired. It allowed us to look out on God’s world together and placed him in a posture that did not emphasize his power over me. Popo was a tall, strong man with a big barrel chest, yet by sitting next to me, his strength made me feel safe and relaxed—not dominated. What Popo mastered was listening. He listened with his whole self. He never gave advice, corrected my silly observations, rushed me, or made conclusions for me. He was simply present in a relaxed and loving way. In my work now as a priest, I only hope I can be half the listener he was to me.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who listened to you when you were young? What was it about their presence that made you feel seen, heard, and loved?
 - If no one comes to mind, talk with God about your experiences when you were younger, when you desired to be seen, heard, and loved.
- How are you at listening to others? What aspects of whole-self listening seem easy? What aspects seem hard?
- How do you feel about the idea of inviting a spiritual conversation with your grandchildren? What intrigues you? What makes you anxious?
 - If you have a challenging spiritual relationship with your grandchildren or your children, talk with God about your spiritual desires for them and the challenges you experience. Spend some time listening for God’s response.

TO BRING TO MEETING #5

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you had this week that you would like to share with the Club.

References:

Borgo, Lacy Finn. *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020.

McEntyre, Marilyn and Shirley Showalter. *The Mindful Grandparent: The Art of Loving Our Children’s Children*. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #5 Outline

COMING ALONGSIDE OUR GRANDCHILDREN IN THEIR SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- Who was influential in your spiritual journey, especially when you were a child or a teen? What did they do that was so helpful to you?
- If no one comes to mind, share with the group what you would like to be different for your grandchildren.

ACTIVITY: PRACTICING SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS WITH EACH OTHER

Each member will engage in a practice conversation with another person in the group, with guidance adapted from Borgo's book (p. 71-73). Pair up and one of you will act as the Speaker and the other as the Listener.

1. The Listener begins and lets the Speaker know that **you are interested in their life**. Communicate that you are here to listen, not to teach or do the talking.
2. The Listener chooses **one or two** of the following questions to ask:
 - Will you tell me about a time when you and God did something together?
 - Will you tell me about a time when you knew that God was with you?
 - Will you tell me a story of a very strong emotion you had this week? It could be happiness or sadness or anger – anything.
 - Will you tell me the story of the most beautiful thing you have ever seen?
 - Will you tell me the story of a time when you felt safe or scared?
 - I am here to listen. Is there something you would like to talk about?
3. The Speaker **answers to the best of their ability**, perhaps something they remember experiencing in their own childhood.
4. The Listener **listens and pays attention** to:
 - The Speaker's body language. What are they saying without saying?
 - How they use their words; they may have a different vocabulary for what they are experiencing.
 - Their feelings and the meanings they make of them.
 - When they are silent. Hold that silence open for them without filling it with your words or actions.
 - When your mind starts to drift. It is difficult to pay attention to another for an extended period. When your mind starts to drift, notice what is happening in your body.
 - Your own responses of anger, sadness, impatience, judgement, or surprise.
5. **If the Listener chooses to speak in response...**
 - Before speaking, take a deep breath and pause. This will help you to speak from the heart and not from your head. It will help you to check your responses with the Spirit.
 - Repeat the words that seem to be important to the Speaker back to them, to help the Speaker continue exploring.
 - Call attention to the presence and activity of God in their experiences.
 - Use "I wonder" phrases such as,
I wonder what God is saying to you in this?

- Continue opening the space for the Speaker to share by asking questions such as,
 - Can you say more about that?
 - When did you feel that way before?
 - I don't think I understand. Can you help me?
 - Try not to teach and keep your responses short.

To end the time:

1. Ask the Speaker if you can **pray a blessing prayer** when you are finished. Keep it short. Try one of the two examples below:

- Thank you, God, for [Name].
I am grateful that [Name] shared their stories with me.
Remind [Name] that you love them very much and that you are always near. Amen.
- *Or without God language:*
Thank you for sharing your story with me. I am grateful for your life.
Love is always near you.

After everyone has practiced playing both parts, discuss how it went in the larger group.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Plan a time to meet with one of your grandchildren one-on-one just to listen or to try having a spiritual conversation. If they are far away, this can be done by phone call or video chat.
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #6

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen.





THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #6

LEAVING A SPIRITUAL LEGACY

READING AND REFLECTION

“The good leave an inheritance to their children’s children, but the sinner’s wealth is laid up for the righteous.”

Proverbs 13:22 NRSVUE

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:19-21 NRSVUE

FINDING HER GRANDMOTHER’S BIBLE

Sophie* was in her twenties when she discovered her grandmother’s Bible sitting in a drawer in her parents’ house. Sophie had always known that her grandmother was a devout Anglican, attending church weekly on Sundays. Otherwise, she only thought of her grandmother as her mother’s mother.

But when Sophie opened this Bible, she was suddenly ushered into her grandmother’s private spiritual life. Reading the handwritten notes in the margins, Sophie recognized this as her grandmother’s personal Bible, not the fancy family one that chronicled the dates of special events in the front. This Bible had specific verses underlined and meaningful passages from *Forward Day by Day* cut out and pasted to the inside cover.

*Name and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

Reading the personal notes written throughout the Bible, Sophie came to discover that her grandmother, who had died several years earlier, had been a woman much like herself. They seemed to share a tendency to struggle with anxiety and worry, and they both went to God for comfort in times of trouble. Sophie's grandmother was becoming more of a person to her than an idea. Most importantly, Sophie now saw her grandmother as a woman whose spiritual life was a stabilizing force and whose relationship with God was personal, tender, and caring.

After asking for permission from her mother, Sophie took her grandmother's Bible into her own home. She finds herself going to it when she is feeling anxious or worried, gaining comfort not just from the Scriptures, but from a sense of connection with her grandmother. Sophie has even shared this special gift with other members of her family. When her aunt was going through challenging times, Sophie took photos of those underlined verses and clipped meditations from her grandmother's Bible and sent them to her aunt to encourage and strengthen her.

I wonder if Sophie's grandmother had any idea what a legacy her personal Bible would become to her granddaughter and the rest of her family.

WHAT WILL THEY REMEMBER?

Being a spiritual elder means recognizing that time on earth is limited for all of us, and that how we live now will affect how others remember us long after we have died.

While many of us take the time to plan our financial legacy for our loved ones, how often do we think about what kind of spiritual legacy we will leave?

The hope is that those to whom we pass on our spiritual legacy will carry on our spiritual values for themselves or use them as a grounding for their own spiritual journeys.

We do this work knowing there are no guarantees that those to whom we pass on a legacy will embrace it as their own. Yet, as in the parable of the sower (*Matthew 13*), our role is to faithfully share our beliefs, desires, loves, hopes, and values—and then trust God to bring those seeds to life in God's timing, hopefully bearing spiritual fruit in the future.

NOW IS THE TIME

Just like leaving a financial legacy, leaving a spiritual legacy requires some intentionality of thought and action.

Here are a few intentional actions you can take now:

- **Live your life in a way that reflects your values.**
This is probably the most important thing you can do. The closer you walk with Jesus, the more you will come to look like him and Jesus' values will be apparent in everything you do.
- **Engage in regular spiritual practices and invite your grandchildren to join you in them.**
If you pray, read the Bible, go to church, volunteer, take spiritual nature walks, have spiritual discussions after movies, etc., inviting your grandchildren, individually or collectively, to join you will help them see that your faith is alive and richly supporting your life.

- **Share spiritual stories and wisdom.**

Just as we considered listening to children's spiritual experiences, we are free to share spiritual stories with our grandchildren. These include:

- Your personal expression of stories from Scripture and the church
- Your personal spiritual stories
- The spiritual stories of your other family members – your spouse, your parents, and your grandparents

Young people like to know about their heritage. That is true for their spiritual heritage as well as their cultural one. Understanding their roots helps young people make sense of their personal and spiritual identity.

- **Encourage faith-based discussions.**

Be open and honest about what you believe and why, while also being open to hearing your grandchildren's beliefs. Don't be afraid that you need to convince anyone or have all the answers! Just talking about faith will help young people know our spiritual lives are a journey. And it can be relieving to know that even elders don't have it all figured out!

- **Create meaningful traditions.**

Traditions can be as simple as always praying before a meal or attending church on special holidays. You can relate family traditions back to your faith and values while everyone is experiencing them. Where did this tradition come from? Was it a person of faith who started it? Does the practice hint at a deeper spiritual meaning? Traditions often outlive those who begin them and serve as powerful vessels for passing on enduring values.

- **Give a spiritually significant gift.**

Do you have items in your possession that are meaningful to your spiritual life or to the spiritual lives of those who came before you? Consider intentionally passing these items on to your grandchildren now or after you die.

- **Use your financial legacy for spiritual purposes.**

Consider donating to your church or to a cause that speaks to your spiritual values. Such generosity can become a source of pride, drawing family together to reflect on what truly mattered in your relationship with God.

These are just a few ideas. I am sure there are many more that could spark your imagination in how to intentionally leave a spiritual legacy.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who left you a spiritual legacy? How did they do that? How did you learn about it? What difference did it make in your life?
- What comes to mind when you think about leaving a spiritual legacy? What would you have to do now for that to happen?
- How do you respond to the idea of faithfully sowing seeds and patiently trusting God to bring fruit in God's time?

TO BRING TO MEETING #7

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you had this week that you would like to share with the Club.
- Paper and something to write with



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #6 Outline

LEAVING A SPIRITUAL LEGACY

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

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2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- What three adjectives do you think your grandchildren would use to describe you?
- Do any of those words reflect your spiritual beliefs, desires, loves, hopes, and values?

ACTIVITY: PLANNING YOUR FUNERAL

One action we can take now is to plan what our loved ones, especially our grandchildren, will experience at our funeral.

While we cannot control everything that happens at our funerals, there are some things we can pray over and make intentional choices about.

Be specific and think about what your choice for each of these will communicate to your family and loved ones.

Remember that just having these decisions made in advance will be a great comfort to your family in their grief.

Location

- Will your funeral be at your church, a funeral home, or another location?

Your Body

- Will you be buried or cremated?
- If buried, do you want your body to be in repose in the church prior to the service?
- If cremated, do you want your cremation to happen before or after your service?

Kind of Anglican Service

- Requiem Eucharist or Burial Office (Funeral service with no Eucharist)?
- Book of Alternative Services or Book of Common Prayer?
- Burial and Committal following the service or Interment of ashes?

Special Musical Requests

- Choir? Special soloists? Instrumentalists?

Hymns for the Service

- Any hymns you love that reflect your spiritual legacy?

Readings

- Anglican Services usually have two or three readings. A Gospel passage is always one, especially when there is Eucharist.
- Are there particular passages of Scripture or other appropriate, short non-biblical readings that you would like to have read at your funeral?

People Involved

- Are there specific family members or friends you would like to take part in the service (i.e., for readings, eulogies, etc.)?

Live Streamed

- Are there people who live far away whom you would like to have video access to your service live or afterwards?

Memorial Gifts

- If people want to give something in memory of you, should they give flowers, or would you like to direct them to give a donation to your church and/or other causes that are meaningful to you?

Something Specific for Your Grandchildren

- If your family is the type that might keep young people away from a funeral, you can request that they be there.
- You can also request that something age-appropriate be available for your grandchildren during the service, like a personal letter, a treasured book, a comforting toy, or a symbol of your faith, so that they can experience your love for them during this time of grief.
- Make sure to update these requests as the children grow.

Any Other Requests?

- If something is not mentioned here, make sure to add it to your list.

Once you make these choices, please put them in writing, have another person sign as a witness, and give this information to your loved ones and to your church or funeral home.

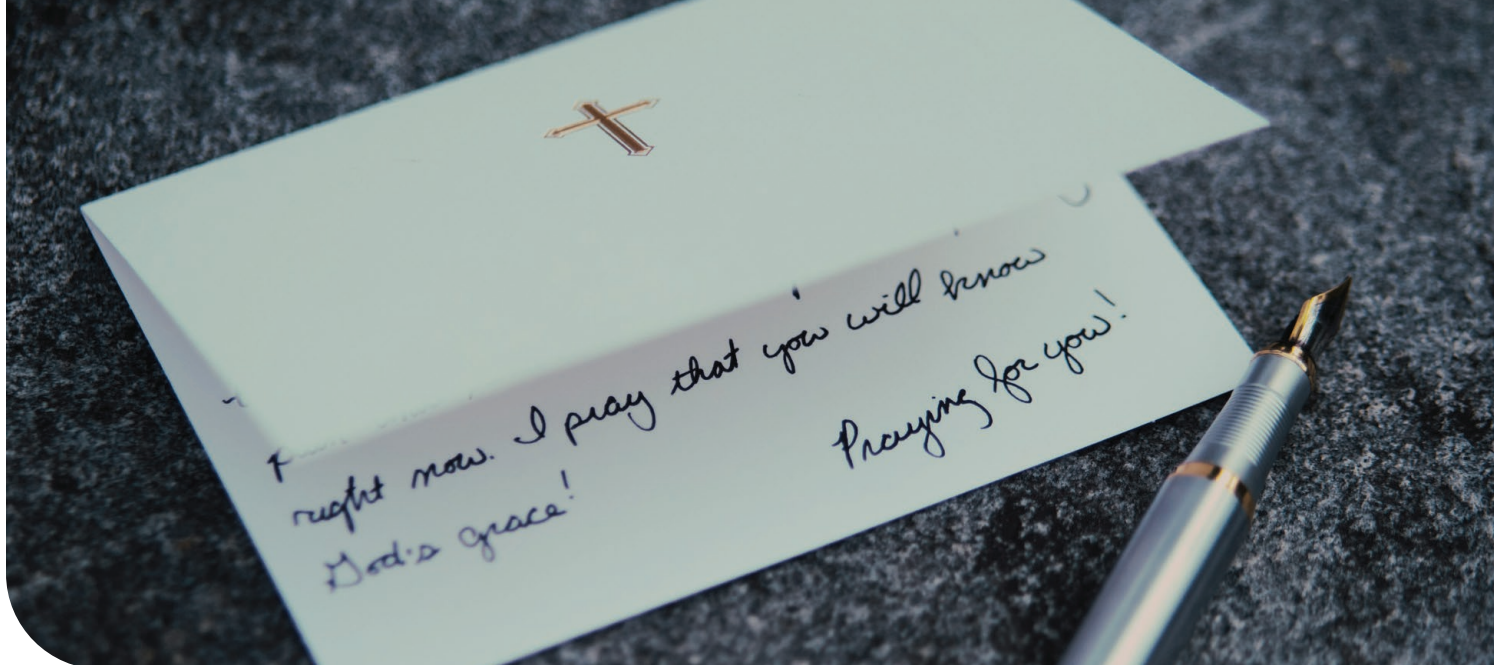
BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Continue working on your funeral plans if you did not finish
- Implement any other ideas you have for leaving a spiritual legacy
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #7

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, forever and ever. Amen.



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #7

BEING AND GIVING A BLESSING

READING AND REFLECTION

“And Jesus took the children in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.”

Mark 10:16 NRSVUE

“I think that there is, on some level, for some people, a desire to want to believe in something, especially when you consider that more and more young people are growing up without religion. They still might be looking for the feeling that something out there wants the best for them.”

Brittany Luse on the podcast It's Been a Minute, episode on March 31, 2025

Gail* was the first person in our group to write a blessing for one of her grandchildren. She came to the meeting prepared to share it with all of us, and when she read it aloud, I don't think there was a dry eye among us. Not only was it beautifully written, but it also expressed her love with such specificity and encouragement. Gail's blessing gave us all the courage to try it for ourselves.

Since that first blessing, Gail has decided to take a year and write blessings for each of her many grandchildren, delivering them on their birthdays. I asked Gail if she would share a bit about her experience, and she kindly responded.

*Name and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

What did you think and feel when you heard the invitation to write blessings for your grandchildren?

At first, I doubted whether or not I could do this! Then you shared your grandmother's letter, and that shifted my thinking. I have been able to support my grandchildren in many ways, but writing a blessing felt different, a way to connect in a completely new way, a unique way to share some of my innermost feelings, my hopes, and my love for them. Why couldn't I write something that would show that love in a very different format? Once I started the first, the one that coincided with my eldest grandchild's birthday, I was convinced this could be a meaningful birthday gift with a lasting message.

What has it been like for you to write these blessings for your grandchildren?

It was a joy! I am grateful to have been inspired to write these blessings and for the opportunity to think about and focus on each grandchild with no distractions. Thinking about how to personalize the blessing made me feel closer to that particular grandchild. I tried to find a theme: a key as metaphor for the granddaughter turning 21, the life lessons learned when you commit yourself to a passion like dance, music, art, competitive swimming or the quest for academic excellence for some of the others, or in finding the perfect quote to inspire or encourage. So, I cast my mind back to gather the memories and milestones that have shaped each one of them.

How has preparing these blessings affected your personal spiritual life (your relationship with God, others, especially your grandkids)?

Writing the blessings has made me feel more connected spiritually. I feel as if I'm on a journey (even at my advanced age!) and this exercise has brought me closer to God, my family, and my grandkids. Even though I haven't talked to them about the blessings, they are aware that I'm writing to each one of them on their birthday. We are often together celebrating these occasions, and the blessing is tucked inside the birthday card. I suggest they wait to open the second card until they have more time to read it. I do feel a stronger connection because of this. It feels very personal. Perhaps the blessings connect them as siblings and cousins, too. Their mothers are now aware of the blessings and how I came to write them, and that brings us closer as well.

A SPIRITUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Blessings are a sacred responsibility and a meaningful opportunity for spiritual elders.

When we look back at Scripture and the story of Abraham, we see that God blessed him so he could be a blessing to others

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Genesis 12:103 NRSVUE

God's intention for Abraham, Sarah, and all their descendants was to bless.

What does it mean to bless others? Does it involve words, actions, or both? Is a blessing something we intend to do or just the outcome of a life well lived for the sake of others?

BLESSINGS AND CURSES

The way we live can be a blessing to others. But we can also choose to speak blessings intentionally. These moments—when we speak words of love, encouragement, and hope—can become powerful times of connection, both spiritually and relationally.

Spoken blessings are spiritually evocative speech, in which **a person invokes or speaks God's love and favour over someone**. A blessing often highlights the goodness we see in a person's life and character and can affirm their worth and belonging. It can offer hope for the future and recognize how God is already at work in their life. Sometimes, a blessing is accompanied by a gentle touch – like a hand on the shoulder – that deepens the personal connection and shows care and love.

Unfortunately, in today's world, we often hear more curses than blessings. Like blessings, curses are also spiritually evocative speech, but they speak the opposite of God's love and favour. Curses include belittling comments, shaming, name-calling or blaming. A curse wishes harm, now and in the future. Sadly, these kinds of words are all too common in our society.

Try for yourself: see how quickly and easily you can think of a curse. Now try the opposite: see how quickly and easily you can think of a blessing. Typically, we tend to be more familiar with the first rather than the second.

CALLED TO BLESS

As Christians, God calls us to be people who bless, not curse. Both Jesus and Paul tell us to not only love our enemies, but to even bless those who curse us! (Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:14)

To help us grow as a people who bless, we can look at blessings in the Bible. Here are a few:

- **God Blesses:** All creation and Adam and Eve (*Gen 1:28-31; 5:2*), the Sabbath day (*Gen 2:2-3*), Abraham (*Gen 12:3*); Jacob (*Gen 28:14 and Gen 32*); Cheerful givers (*2 Cor 9:6-15*)
- **Priests Bless:** Melchizedek blesses Abraham (*Gen 14:19-20*); Aaron blesses the Hebrew people (*Num 6:22-27*)
- **People Bless God:** The Psalmists invite the people to bless God (*Psalms 34 & 103*)
- **Elders Bless Youngers:** Isaac blesses who he thinks is Esau (*Gen 27*) and then Jacob (*Gen 28*); Jacob blesses the Pharaoh (*Gen 47*); Jacob blesses his grandchildren (*Gen 48*) and all 12 of his sons (*Gen 49*); Micah's mother blesses her son (*Judges 17:2*); Naomi blesses Boaz (*Ruth 2:19-20*); Anna and Simeon bless the baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph (*Luke 2:25-38*); Jesus blesses the children (*Mark 10:16*).

All through Scripture, elders are given a special role: to bless the generations that come after them. There is something deeply spiritual about a blessing – it can carry God's love and encouragement in a way that stays with a young person, especially during tough times.

We all long to be seen through eyes that see us and love us. This is how we hope God sees us. Having a spiritual elder see and bless us, both in our character and in our potential, can connect us to God's loving vision of ourselves for our lifetime.

I appreciate Gail's willingness to share not just the joys but also the struggles she has encountered in her journey to bless all her grandchildren.

What have been the challenges in writing these blessings?

My original wariness stemmed from the fact that we are not an overtly religious family. My husband and I have always been connected to a church through music, and more recently, for me, in seeking a deeper connection. As a family, we always attended church, depending on where the "jobs" were. Our children were baptized, confirmed and until their teens attended church regularly. None of our adult children, nor their spouses, nor the grandchildren attend church. Would I, with these blessings, cause any discomfort or worse? I decided to trust my instincts and have faith they would be received in the spirit in which they were offered. The actual writing was not really a challenge because their lives provided me with everything needed to express the message of support, love, hope, and connectedness. At the same time, I did not want to come across as too preachy!

What have been the rewards?

The rewards are many! The timing of writing the first one seemed providential. My eldest grandchild was struggling, and I wanted to show my support but didn't know how. This was a perfect outlet, and once I started, the words just kept coming. That first blessing made me realize I should write a birthday blessing for each grandchild. The first served as a template for writing to the others. What a gift to me, as I thought about each grandchild, their individuality, personality, achievements, vulnerabilities, and to be able to weave all that into a personal message of affirmation with my hopes, dreams, and prayers for their future.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

If I'm being honest, I would like to know how the grandkids felt receiving their blessings, but that has not happened, and I may never know. I do know that's out of my control, it's not about me, and my part is done. Faith! The eldest grandchild's mum told me they placed their blessing where they can always see it, so of course, that feels special.

Thank you, Gail, for sharing your experience. May God bless you in all the ways you are blessing your grandchildren.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is your experience with blessings? What is your experience with curses?
- Which do you feel more comfortable giving: blessings or curses? Why do you think that is?
- How do you think being older might affect your ability to give a blessing? How do you think being older might affect the impact of your blessing on someone younger?

TO BRING TO MEETING #7

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you have had this week that you would like to share with the Club.
- Something to write with and paper to write on

THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #7 Outline

BEING AND GIVING A BLESSING

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

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3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

- Tell about a time when you received a blessing from someone older than you.

GROUP ACTIVITY: WRITE A BLESSING FOR ONE OF YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

Ask God to bring one of your grandchildren to mind. What do you think it would be like for them to receive a blessing from you?

A blessing is one of the greatest gifts a spiritual elder can offer. It can become a steady anchor—a source of love and encouragement—that a young person returns to again and again, even long after that elder is gone.

What would you like your grandchild to know and remember about themselves and about how they are loved?

STEPS FOR WRITING A BLESSING

- **Start by praying.**
Center yourself in God's presence. Imagine the grandchild you desire to bless being there together with you and God.
- **Talk with God about your grandchild.**
Tell God about what you love about them, what good qualities you see in them, what qualities could be encouraged to blossom in them, and what hopes and desires you have for them. Talk with God also about your concerns for your grandchild. Share with God what worries you have for them.
- **Ask God for words of blessing.**
Ask God to show you the good things to affirm and the blessings to pray for in this young person's life. If a Scripture passage or story comes to mind, consider using words or themes from it. Feel free to refer to the attached list titled *For Reference: Some Biblical Words of Blessing*.
- **Communicate your grandchild's value and their potential future**
Try to include what makes them unique, and if you can, speak to the future you imagine for them. If your grandchild is facing something challenging, feel free to reference it and speak to your belief and hope that they will persevere and come through.
- **Write down your blessing.**
It is okay to take your time crafting your blessing. Feel free to write and rewrite until it feels right – but remember, it does not have to be perfect. Ask God to guide you and let you know when it is ready.
- **If possible, write your final blessing out by hand.**
There is something especially meaningful about receiving a handwritten note, especially today, when most of what we read is typed on screens or printed pages.
If you choose to write your blessing in cursive, just be sure your grandchild will be able to read it!
- **Choose whether to read your blessing to them in person or to let them read it themselves.**
The most meaningful option is to speak the blessing directly to your grandchild, then give them the written version to keep and treasure

FOR REFERENCE: SOME BIBLICAL WORDS OF BLESSING

These can be used for reference or incorporated into the blessing you are writing.

The priestly Levitical blessing:

*The LORD bless you and keep you;
the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.*
(Numbers 6:24-26)

A familiar blessing from Paul:

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:7)

Another familiar Pauline blessing:

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)

From the Psalms:

May the LORD cause you to flourish, both you and your children. May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. (Psalm 115:14-15)

Paul gives a powerful spiritual blessing to the church

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Romans 15:13)

Isaac's blessing to Esau (that Jacob steals)

May God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine. (Gen 27:28)

Jesus blesses his disciples

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. (John 14:27)

Paul's dimension-exploding blessing over the Ephesian church:

I pray that out of his glorious riches he [the Father] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

Categories from which blessings can pour:

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As for the things that you have learned and received and heard and noticed in me, do them, and the God of peace will be with you. (Phil 4:8-9)

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING

- Finish the blessing you have begun.
- Continue to pray each day for your grandchildren using the Prayer Cards you made
- Read and Reflect in Preparation for Meeting #8

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.





THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Preparation for Meeting #8

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

READING AND REFLECTION

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.”

Matthew 16:24 NRSVUE

*For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Isaiah 55:10-11 NRSVUE

IN CONCLUSION?

The Grandparents Club was intentionally named. It is not meant to be a class, a book, or an event. It is intended to be a club – a place where people come together to enjoy each other’s company while engaging in and encouraging one another around a particular topic or activity.

We hope the Grandparents Club has offered a warm and encouraging space for your growth as a spiritual elder—so that you may become a spiritual ambassador and a blessing to your grandchildren and your whole family.

However, the journey does not have to end here! Over the last seven meetings, the Grandparents Club has introduced you to various themes intended to impact your spiritual life and your encounters with your grandchildren. There is more to learn about each of these topics.

As you review your journey so far and the materials from which each meeting has been drawn, note which of the topics or activities you might want to explore further.

Meeting 1: The Prayers of Spiritual Elders

References: *A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World* by Paul E. Miller. NavPress: Colorado Springs, 2009.

Activity: Making Prayer Cards

Meeting 2: The Spiritual Journeys of Children and Youth

References: *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving* by Lisa Miller. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2015.

Activity: Discussing actions to support the spiritual life of children and youth

Meeting 3: Reviewing our Life and Spiritual Story

References: *The Stories We Live By: Personal Myths and the Making of a Self* by Dan P. McAdams. New York: The Guilford Press, 1993.

Parenting from the Inside Out: How a Deeper Self-Understanding Can Help You Raise Children Who Thrive by Daniel J. Siegel and Mary Hartzell. New York: TargerPerigree, 2004.

Activity: *Listen to My Life*, a tool of the RealLife Process found at onelifemaps.com
Creating a Spiritual Life Map

Meeting 4: Growing as a Spiritual Elder

References: *Up* [Film] by Walt Disney Pictures; Pixar Animation Studios. Directed by Pete Docter, 2009.

Falling Upward: A Spirituality of the Two Halves of Life by Richard Rohr. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Where Prayer Becomes Real: How Honesty with God Transforms Your Soul by Kyle Strobel and John Coe. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2021.

Activity: Praying a Prayer of Recollection

Meeting 5: Coming Alongside Our Grandchildren in their Spiritual Journeys

References: *Spiritual Conversations with Children: Listening to God Together* by Lacy Finn Borgo. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2020.

The Mindful Grandparent: The Art of Loving Our Children's Children
by Marilyn McEntyre and Shirley Showalter. Minneapolis: Broadleaf Books, 2022.

Activity: Practicing Spiritual Conversations with Each Other

Meeting 6: Leaving a Spiritual Legacy

Activity: Planning Your Funeral

Meeting 7: Being and Giving a Blessing

References: Blessings in Scripture

Activity: Writing a blessing for one of your grandchildren

Which topics, references, or activities might you want to dig deeper into?

Your gathering of the Grandparents Club could continue:

- As book club, reading through and discussing one or more of the books listed above,
- As an activity group, working together through various spiritual practices, like creating a different life map or watching *Up* together,
- Or as a simply a place to regularly share how things are going for you as a grandparent and to give and receive prayer for one another.

If the group would like to continue, there are many meaningful ways to journey forward together.

Pray about it and bring any ideas that strike you to the next meeting of the Grandparents Club.

DON'T FORGET TO BLESS

The next meeting will close with an opportunity for everyone to share the blessing you have written or are working on for one of your grandchildren.

Please consider sharing whatever you have completed so far.

Even though these blessings are intended for grandchildren, hearing and sharing these words of blessing will likely bless and encourage the group as well.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- As you review the topics and activities from your Grandparents Club experience so far, what memories come to mind?
- Which topics or activities were the most impacting for you? Which topics or activities were the most challenging?
- How do you think and feel about the idea of continuing to meet as the Grandparents Club? What do you think would need to be in place to make that possible? And if the group chooses not to continue, how would you like to bring your experience to a close?
- What are you thinking and feeling about sharing your grandchild's blessing with the group? Ask God for what you might need to feel comfortable reading it aloud.

TO BRING TO MEETING #8

- Your Reflections
- Any experience with your grandchildren or with God you have had this week that you would like to share with the Club
- Your blessing for your grandchild, as much as you have completed



THE GRANDPARENTS CLUB

Meeting #8 Outline

CONTINUING THE JOURNEY

OPENING PRAYER

To be said together as a group:

God of the generations, you have called us to be spiritual elders, like Abraham and Sarah, like Anna and Simeon. Holy Spirit, grant that we in the Grandparents Club might come to bless the generations that follow us, as we ourselves grow closer to you in faith, hope, and love. We ask this through our Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

GROUP RULES

As a reminder from the last meeting, read over the group rules and make sure all agree:

1. Everyone is invited to share, but no one is expected to.
2. What is shared in the group is to be held in confidence.
3. We make space for everyone to share and avoid monopolizing the time.
4. We will pray regularly for everyone in the group as we continue to meet.

SHARE

Everyone in the group is invited to share a related experience from last week, whether it is from their personal prayer or from encounters with their grandchildren.

DISCUSS

What has this Grandparents Club journey been like for you?

- What was one highlight for you?
- What was one struggle?

Do we want to continue meeting as the Grandparents Club?

- If yes, is there a topic or activity we want to look at next?
- If no, how might we end well together?

GROUP ACTIVITY: SHARE THE BLESSINGS THAT YOU WROTE FOR YOUR GRANDCHILDREN.

Like God's love, the goodness of blessings is never contained; it pours out to all around.

Take turns reading aloud the blessings you have written for your grandchildren.

If they are incomplete, share what you have written so far.

If someone chooses not to share, that is okay, too.

Enjoy hearing words of blessing and love, and encourage one another in giving these blessings to your grandchildren.

IF THERE IS A NEXT MEETING

- Decide on when you might meet again and what topic to discuss

IF THIS IS THE LAST MEETING

- Thank each other for the support you have given each other and wish each other well

CLOSING DOXOLOGY

To be said together as a group:

Glory to God, whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus, for ever and ever. Amen.





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**CALLED TO LIFE
COMPELLED TO LOVE**