

Includes
practical song,
talk & service
ideas

**NICK &
BECKY
DRAKE
WORSHIP
FOR
EVERYONE**

**UNLOCKING THE
TRANSFORMING POWER
OF ALL-AGE WORSHIP**

**WORSHIP FOR
EVERYONE**

Nick and Becky Drake are widely recognised as leading practitioners and songwriters in the area of all-age worship. They have run Worship for Everyone as a ministry for over ten years, releasing a number of albums as well as running national conferences and training. They worship at Gas Street Church, where Nick is associate vicar.

Becky had a successful career in communications and PR in London before moving to Birmingham, where she now works as a school chaplain. She continues to lead worship and write songs under the Worship for Everyone banner. Nick is the author of *A Deeper Note* (Grove Books); is co-author of *Why Worship?*, the Spring Harvest book for 2021 (SPCK); and also teaches on worship through Worship Central and St Mellitus College, a training seminary for the Church of England. He recently completed his PhD in worship studies.

WORSHIP FOR EVERYONE

Nick Drake
and
Becky Drake



First published in Great Britain in 2021

Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
36 Causton Street
London SW1P 4ST
www.spck.org.uk

Copyright © Nick & Becky Drake 2021

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

SPCK does not necessarily endorse the individual views contained in its publications.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-281-08587-3

eBook ISBN 978-0-281-08588-0

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by Westchester Publishing Services

Printed and bound in Great Britain by Ashford Colour Press

eBook by Westchester Publishing Services

Produced on paper from sustainable forests

Contents

Introduction	vi
Part 1: The theory	
1 Our story	2
2 Forming a vision for all-age worship	12
3 A theology of Worship for Everyone: Old Testament	26
4 A theology of Worship for Everyone: New Testament	37
5 What makes all-age worship so difficult?	50
6 What do children need?	56
Part 2: The practice	
7 Using songs in all-age worship	68
8 Actions—why use them?	84
9 Delivering an all-age talk	89
10 Constructing an all-age service	95
11 Delivering Worship for Everyone online	106
12 Worship for schools	115
13 Next steps	126
Appendices	
Appendix 1: Sample all-age talks	132
Appendix 2: A sample service plan and script	139
Appendix 3: Suggested songs by theme	142

Introduction

If there were a treasure—something good, something with tremendous power—that had been hidden, perhaps lost a long time ago and now forgotten about, would you not want to unearth it? Blow off the dust from it, and give it room to let its power be displayed once again?

Churches hunt and pursue many things—from comfortable seating to excellence in music, from dynamic preaching to beauty in sacrament—but what if they had forgotten to put prayer, time, energy and resource into one of the very basics, something right under their noses all along, something that has huge impact because of the unity it displays that echoes God’s heart, something that should have a natural home in the church?

This book is about this long-lost treasure and how to nurture, pursue and facilitate it for your church. It’s about the hidden power of generational diversity in worship, what we call simply ‘Worship for Everyone’. Our society has become very good at separating people and pandering to individuals according to their ages and stages of life;¹ but the church should be a place where children and adults come together to be *one people*, experiencing together the promises, power and presence of God. In this special place where young and old gather, the unique power of unity across ages, generational diversity, is unleashed.

There was an article recently that spoke of this secret and described a hint of what can happen when this hidden power is released.² It was exploring the idea of bringing together children and the elderly in ‘intergenerational care centres’ across the UK. The article went on to say: ‘Twinning nurseries with care homes

Introduction

for the elderly would boost children's reading and social skills . . . [and] by playing and reading with children, the elderly are less likely to suffer loneliness.' It ended by calling for 'intergenerational action' to have a much larger role in tackling the challenges facing both children and the elderly in our society.

The book you hold in your hands, at the most basic level, is a prophetic call for 'intergenerational action' in our churches. We certainly don't have all the answers to your questions, but what we do have is the sense of a God-given calling to express what we believe is his heart, his desire and design for the *big family of God*, all ages and stages of life, to worship together. If generational diversity can have such a significant impact in everyday scenarios such as nurseries and care homes, how much more impact can it have when it's infused with the Spirit of God through the church at worship.

We have prayed that this book, in your hands, will not just be information but will lead to transformation—first of your own heart and mind and then of the church you belong to. In fact, over the last thirteen years or so, where we have been obedient to God in this call to write songs for, lead and speak on Worship for Everyone, one of the recurring responses we have received is that people feel we have *imparted* something to them of what God has placed on us. That is what we hope you come away from this book with—a renewed sense, born of a revelation of the truth of God and a move of the Spirit of God in your heart, of God-given vision and passion to take intergenerational action in your church. That you will build wisely the true big family of God in its local expression in your community.

A guide to the book

You can read this book any way you choose, although we have a suggested route that is the natural way the book flows. However,

Introduction

if you are reading this desperate for some practical help, then you can dive straight into some of the later chapters. For example, need some inspiration on how to do an all-age talk? Skip straight to Chapter 9. Or perhaps you need some tips for constructing services well—skip to Chapter 10. Still, there is a journey to the book, and you will get the most out of it if you are able to work through from start to finish. The book flows from vision and theology in Part One through to implementation and application in Part Two, concluding with appendices containing examples of talks, service structures and links to further resources.

This is not an academic book; we have tried to limit footnotes as far as possible. But in some sections, especially in Part One, it seemed appropriate and helpful to include signposting to further reading or clarification. Our main goal, though, is to keep the text in this book as simple and easy as possible to digest whilst also providing clues if you want to go deeper.

We have chosen to use the term *intergenerational worship* to be consistent throughout the book. There is a lot written elsewhere about why terminology matters and what the ‘right’ terminology is.³ The main thing to know is that a church can be ‘multigenerational’ without being ‘intergenerational’. A church that has people from different ages and stages of life within its congregation and may have multiple ministries split by age and stage (youth groups, children’s groups, ministry to the elderly, twenties groups and so on) is multigenerational.⁴ It only becomes *intergenerational* when those generations interact and inhabit the same space, having shared experiences and influencing one another in spiritual formation. Worship for Everyone is thus an *intergenerational* activity and goal, not merely multigenerational. It is about providing opportunity within a multigenerational community for cross-generational interaction.

The book begins with a couple of chapters exploring how your own past experience and your current vision for

Introduction

intergenerational worship can be interrelated. This is a key opportunity to stop and think about why you do what you do in your church. How is your intergenerational worship going? Take an audit—zoom out and think afresh. What is your vision? You will hear some of our personal story and be asked to reflect on your own.

We then guide you through some deeper thinking on a biblical foundation and framework for understanding intergenerational worship, exploring the importance of the presence of children throughout the Bible as well as broad themes like adoption and unity in the New Testament.

The journey continues by acknowledging how intergenerational worship can be difficult and identifying some of the barriers to it flourishing before framing the question more positively by asking, ‘What do children *need* to thrive in church?’

Having covered some of the theory and foundational questions for intergenerational worship, in its second half the book turns to application and more practical aspects. We explore everything from choosing songs to crafting talks, constructing whole services and more. It is in the practical that your theory will be embedded and vision and values displayed.

Finally, one of the things the coronavirus pandemic has taught us, or at least amplified for us, is the interconnectedness of work, home, church and school. The boundaries have often seemed to disappear between what had previously been seen as discrete areas of family life. It is crucial for the future of the church that we grasp hold of this cultural moment and the possibilities it invites and work at ministering to all of these areas whilst understanding the core things that unite them. Our final chapters therefore focus on the areas of schools and online ministry before guiding you towards the appropriate next steps for your context.

Introduction

As we turn to the opening chapter, we invite you to pray, to invite God to speak to you by his Spirit as you read this book. Whether you feel yourself an expert in intergenerational worship or a novice desperate for some help, a seasoned church pastor or a volunteer children's group leader, there is *nothing* God cannot do through your openness, availability and faith. As you approach this book, may these words echo around your heart and head and become your prayer for your community and your intergenerational worship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Faith as tiny as a seed,
Faith as small as it can be
Can move a mountain.*

*We believe in God,
We believe in God.
We've got faith,
Faith in him.*

*Nothing is impossible for God,
Yes, I believe it!*

Excerpt of the song 'Faith' by Nick and Becky Drake⁵

Part I

THE THEORY

I

Our story

For me, Becky, the early experience of church could have been enough to put me off Jesus for life. Growing up in a small Lincolnshire market town, I attended a traditional Anglican service each Sunday that consisted of several hymns from *The English Hymnal*, the same liturgy week in, week out and an incomprehensible sermon every time. There wasn't anything for children. There was no Sunday school, as there were very few volunteers and even fewer kids. My brothers and I made up the majority of under-sixties. The hour-long gathering was an endurance test for the three of us. We found countless ways to distract ourselves from the agitating boredom we all felt. My oldest brother would do a whole load of advanced maths on the hymn numbers set out on the old wooden hymn board and come up with some extraordinary sum. My middle brother typically fell asleep on my mum's shoulder, while I would study the patterns on the kneelers or scrape my fingernails into the wooden pews. Mum would do her best to engage us by flicking through the Bible to see how many times we could find our names—being called Rebecca, Matthew and Simon (with equally Biblical middle names), there were plenty of name-spotting points to be won!

As if this weren't a bad enough reflection of the Christian faith, even worse was the attitude of one of the church wardens. I will never forget the day I had brought my young friend to church. We were eight years old and utterly relieved as the end of the service came. As soon as we could, we darted out of the nave and arrived at the church hall first in line to get biscuits

Our story

and beakers of strong orange squash—the highlight of Sunday morning. As we opened the door and reached out for custard creams, we were greeted by the church warden with a harsh ‘Those biscuits are for the ladies!’ Deflated and embarrassed, we sat down, biscuitless, and waited for my mum to arrive. Clearly, in this church worship wasn’t for everyone but only for some (in this case, ‘the ladies’!), and certainly not for children like me.

Thank goodness for my parents, who faithfully lived out a genuine relationship with God throughout my childhood. At home, there was no question I couldn’t ask, prayer was part of daily life and my mum and dad modelled Jesus in how they loved us unconditionally. If only the way our little nuclear family lived and worshipped could have been reflected in the wider gathering.

Not only do I have my parents to thank, but also Spring Harvest—the second reason I count myself a Christian today. Spring Harvest, an Easter Christian conference that my family attended every year of my childhood, showed me that Christianity could be alive and relevant. It gave me Christian friends, engaging Bible teaching and songs to sing that would sustain me throughout the year. I felt thoroughly welcome there, and—even more than that—time and work had gone into planning this with every age in mind. The sessions were crafted to serve and facilitate my involvement. I learnt the joy of singing and dancing in worship; I encountered the Holy Spirit there for the first time when I was twelve years old, during sensitively led prayer ministry; I learnt to pray out loud for others over my teenage years. None of this happened through my home church—I learned it all purely during this one week of my year.

Furthermore, throughout my childhood, Spring Harvest was the one place I could be a missionary. I would happily take friends with me to the Butlin’s site we met in, and many were impacted by their time spent in worship. I genuinely looked

The theory

forward to this week of the year more than Christmas, and we wept on the way home each time (half grief at leaving my spiritual home behind and half exhaustion)!

Although the children's groups at Spring Harvest were dynamic and engaging for a young girl, the deepest, most lasting impact of these holidays was the time I spent together with my parents in the evening celebration. *Together* is such a key word and value when pursuing intergenerational worship. I so clearly recall the atmosphere of praise all around me. It felt uplifting and reassuring. I sensed heaven in the venue time and again over the years. I remember days we were invited forward together as a family for prayer ministry and times when I watched the whole room with their arms in the air. I also remember occasions I drifted off to sleep in my parents' arms, with a deep peace and sense of belonging. It wasn't necessarily that these sessions were crafted with children in mind, but just knowing that I was welcome and could join in with the whole body across the ages felt very special. I didn't understand everything I heard during those times in worship, but I still felt part of it, and I believe that my young heart and mind was being shaped and disciplined in that space in many unseen ways.

Worshipping together without generational borders is so rich for all these reasons. It's a space where we get to learn together, unite together, feel the sense of God's family together and reflect a more complete image of the body of Christ.

One of the reasons I am so passionate today about the whole family being included in worship is that I experienced both extremes so keenly as a child. At one extreme back in Lincolnshire I may as well not have existed in the church body, and at the other end I was welcomed completely, which was hugely significant for my life. We might think today that because our children's programmes and hospitality are more kid-focussed and engaging, because we have dedicated children's pastors and rooms set aside for the youngest, we are in a different camp

Our story

from the church warden I encountered as an eight-year-old girl. In some ways, of course, all of the above reflects a value placed on children that perhaps hasn't always existed in our churches. But I would also caution us to consider whether underneath the surface there are some similarities to what I experienced in my youth. Is our priority actually 'biscuits for adults' and everything that can mean in terms of our worship, or are we truly hosting a place where the newborn to the ninety-year-old are equally welcome in all aspects of church life and able to regularly worship together? Is our goal that we might encounter Jesus side by side? Or have we lost our sense of direction, and has it all become a bit of a duty? Perhaps our intergenerational worship, if we're honest, feels more like religious ritual than a spirit-filled, Jesus-centred gathering. Maybe some of us have given up on it altogether.

The fact is, it isn't easy. It is far easier to narrow our 'target market' and deliver an age-specific style of worship and teaching every week. It requires less thought, less planning, less mess, less distraction. If we make everyone in our congregation as comfortable as possible each Sunday, we'll feel it's been a success. However, John Wimber of the Vineyard Church once said, 'It's neat and tidy in the graveyard. It's alive and messy in the nursery.' I know where I would rather be!

We truly believe intergenerational worship, *Worship for Everyone*, is a vision that is worth chasing. Many have tried and have found it unsatisfactory, or too hard, and it can be tempting at this point to give up pursuing the vision. But let's not make that the end of the story! The goal isn't that we should create a monthly event that we'll have to endure, but to be part of a church community that delights in worshipping and experiencing God's presence together; that our churches might truly show a glimpse of the fullness of God's family, male and female, black and white, young and old; varied, beautiful, diverse.

The theory

We have wanted to write this book for a few years now, but a combination of hectic family life and ministry have prevented us. We've also partly delayed writing because we feel a certain trepidation! We are acutely aware that we are not giants in the world of intergenerational worship. We are essentially songwriters and parents. There are some incredible writers and theologians out there who have been studying intergenerational worship for years. But we believe that God has given us a vision that is bigger than us—and we are growing in our understanding of what it is, year by year. In some sense, we have come to see ourselves as 'commissioned' by God to both defend and promote intergenerational worship. We truly believe that God cares deeply about this issue. He cares that the church find ways to worship as a whole body—not just part. So, we believe a key element of our calling is to write songs for everyone, teach on how to do it and pursue it within our own community, as much as we can.

Worship for Everyone: how did it all begin?

If you're reading this and are somehow involved in church ministry—perhaps a worship leader or church pastor—don't let me fool you into thinking we always had a deep passion for intergenerational worship! It's highly likely you've picked up this book because something isn't 'working' in your church, or perhaps you feel stuck or lacking inspiration. Whenever we speak on this topic across the country, similar themes emerge. Do any of these statements resonate with you?

'When we have an all-age service, some people don't bother to even come!'

'The children are fine, but the adults look bored.'

'The adults are fine, but the children aren't engaged.'

Our story

‘No one enjoys these services! They are a trial to be endured!’
‘The action songs are cringey! The adults don’t want to join in.’

‘We don’t know what to do about the youth—how do you engage them in all-age services?’

‘We don’t have any skilled all-age leaders.’

‘I feel we *should* do this, but it’s not bringing us much life!’

‘I’m fine leading worship with adults but don’t know what to do when children are in the room!’

‘Do we really have to be together? Can’t we just keep separate?’

‘Our young parents are exhausted. They need a break from their kids!’

‘We’ve tried and failed and have given up completely now.’

If you’ve nodded your head to any of these statements, then be assured you are not alone. We would have been nodding along to several of these statements back in 2003, when Nick took up his first post as worship pastor at St Paul’s church in Hammersmith.

We were in our early twenties, and we had spent the previous three years in a Christian rock/pop band called Coastal Dune. (Don’t worry, you’re not alone if you’ve never heard of us—Battle of the Bands winners, 1999 Durham University!) We had enjoyed songwriting, performing across the country in a whole host of music venues, pubs, universities and underground clubs in Soho, and in between gigs, we were passionate about leading worship whenever we could. We had encountered the Holy Spirit in worship, and there was no greater joy than leading other people into God’s presence, standing on the truth of what God has done in Jesus. We’d spent our teenage years at Stoneleigh, Soul Survivor and Spring Harvest, and we knew what was possible when God’s people gathered together in worship. They were exciting times in the wider church and in our own lives.

The theory

So, when we arrived at this big London church, a new plant from Holy Trinity Brompton, full of people who were pursuing God and doing amazing things for him, we couldn't have felt more at home. Except that every single week there was a dedicated time of 'all-age' worship which felt to us like it jarred with the rest of what we were leading. The style was different; generally speaking it felt more dated and less varied. It often seemed like the goal was just a bit of a musical knees-up for kids! We inherited a bunch of songs that the congregation already knew, which stylistically seemed more like nursery rhymes—some set to Bible verses—and as we led the families in worship, it felt like we were being asked to be more like kids' entertainers. But then, when the children left the room, we would immediately relax and be able to create space for the Holy Spirit, through carefully selected and rehearsed songs with a variety of musical tempos, lyrical themes and grooves. All was geared at helping people to come face to face with Jesus—unlike the time of all-age worship, which didn't seem to have much of a goal, except perhaps to keep the kids happy and have fun. Not bad goals in and of themselves, but not much of an aspiration for true worship! And many of the songs felt a bit silly to adult ears or musically simple and predictable. As we looked at our congregation, the littlest at the front were fairly happy, but the entire back half of the room were not. This was not all-age.

What was our immediate solution?

We knew something didn't feel good and needed to change, but being young and lacking vision in this area, our solution was quite extreme. Nick decided to write to the PCC (the governing body) and request that the children no longer come into church! Looking back, we have often laughed at the irony of this and at how God uses the most unlikely leaders to bring change.

Our story

If you are a worship leader who dreads leading with everyone present, we have been there. If you're a church pastor who abdicates all responsibility to run the family services to someone else because you, in your heart of hearts, want nothing to do with them, then we fully sympathise!

Looking back, and this is a challenge for all leaders, we were only comfortable leading worship for a certain age group—probably around eighteen to fifty years old. Any younger or older and we weren't skilled or flexible in meeting their needs. And for some reason it hadn't dawned on us that God had called us to lead his **whole** church in worship! Without realising it, we had narrowed the calling down to a specific age group and type of person. Many of our churches have embraced a style of worship that works for one age group only and won't adapt their style or extend their skills and expertise to welcome everyone. And then we find ourselves wondering why children disengage or the youth are bored or the elderly don't want to stay. So, one question we have to ask ourselves if God has called us to lead his church in worship is: 'Am I willing to lead **worship for everyone**, or just worship for some?'

Thanks to our devoted vicar at St Paul's, Rev. Simon Downham, and the Associate Rev. Tim Stilwell, who both placed a high value on intergenerational worship, they graciously wouldn't accept that removing the children was a viable solution to the problem! So, if change was needed, *we* needed to bring the change.

We began by looking at the habit we had fallen into as a worship team. The truth was, the worship we were leading when children joined us was geared at preschoolers and everyone else suffered it. Some of the songs didn't even sing to God or about God. We sang Bible stories about characters from the Bible but didn't actually sing to God himself! So of course people weren't able to engage in any meaningful way. The songs were perfect

The theory

for a toddler group or nursery-age Sunday school—but not effective or helpful for an intergenerational gathering. We will speak more about this later in the book, when we explore the key traits and attributes of Worship for Everyone songs and why getting the right songs matters so much.

So, as songwriters, the starting point for us was rethinking the songs we used for all ages. Songs, of course, are so much more than they seem. The songs we sing carry with them a set of values, a culture and a theology. Without knowing it at the start, we had stumbled into something very important; by changing our songs, we would begin to change our culture and change the whole worship experience of our church.

And that's where we began to change our style of songwriting. We began to write with the goal of uniting the church, rather than dividing it. We began writing songs that could release worship *for everyone*—both children and adults in the room. The more songs we wrote, the more God began to birth a deeper vision for what was possible.

So, as this chapter ends, we invite you to start thinking about what *your* story is. You've heard a bit of our background now, but each of you reading will have your own story to tell. What was your church experience growing up? Have you largely worshipped in age-and-stage programs, or have you experienced intergenerational (often called *family* or *all-age*) worship? If it is the latter, has it been a positive or negative experience for you? What brings you to this book? Why are you still reading it now? All of this matters!

When we gather intergenerationally, ultimately vision is everything. Without vision, the people die (Prov. 29.18), and without God's vision for all-age worship, it will surely die (or feel deadly!) in our churches. So if you've never had a vision for all ages, or you're so sick of trying that your energy has gone, that's where you need to start. It's time to get a vision!

Our story

The encouraging thing is, I'm guessing you wouldn't be reading this if your vision had truly died. The fact you've got this in your hand now is an indication of some desire for something more meaningful in your all-age gathering. In the next chapter, we're going to explore vision and guide you to create anew or re-establish your church's vision for Worship for Everyone.

Prayer for vision

Holy Spirit, please lift my eyes and fill my heart with fresh faith for what is possible in worship. I don't want myself or the church community I'm a part of to be limited by my own experiences. Speak to me and show me your desire, your heart for intergenerational worship in my church. Amen.

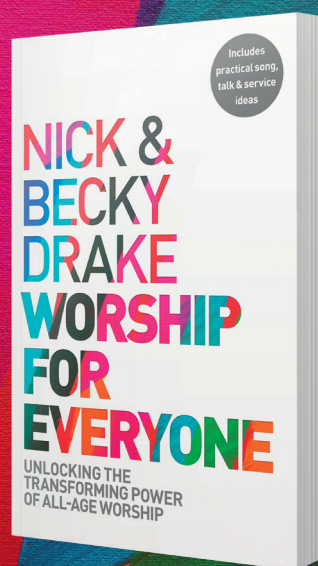
ALL-AGE WORSHIP IS IMPORTANT FOR MOST CHURCH LEADERS, WORSHIP TEAMS, AND CHILDREN'S WORKERS - BUT HOW CAN YOU TRULY ENGAGE EVERYONE SO THAT IT CAN THRIVE IN YOUR CHURCH?

Worship for Everyone offers an inspiring vision crucial for bringing longevity and life to all age worship as well as a practical guide bursting with ideas and resources. Advice, service plans, songs, Bible readings and more are all included, to help you make all age worship engaging and significant for every generation.

Nick and Becky Drake are widely recognised as leading practitioners and songwriters in the area of all-age worship. They have run Worship for Everyone as a ministry for over ten years, releasing a number of albums as well as running national conferences and training. They worship at Gas Street Church, where Nick is associate vicar.

AVAILABLE NOW

978 0 281 08587 3 • £12.99



 spck.org.uk

 [/SPCKpublishing](https://www.facebook.com/SPCKpublishing)

 [@SPCKpublishing](https://twitter.com/SPCKpublishing)

 [@SPCK_publishing](https://www.instagram.com/SPCK_publishing)