

The Gift of An Aging Church
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The aging church is a gift from God. While some may look at a congregation of older adults as one which is declining and dying, they cannot see the vibrancy, potentiality and the renewal opportunities in a “maturing body.”

While we’re not saying that a church should abandon attempts to connect with young families with children and youth, why not examine another model of ministry where congregations filled with “gray hair” can grow in discipleship and outreach? Let’s consider the facts:

- **By 2060, almost 25% of the U.S. population will be 65 years or better. (Around 100 Million people.)**
- **By 2034, older adults will outnumber children in America. (Aging/Birthrate).**
- **The average age of a Lutheran Church member is around 60 years of age.**

Realizing these trends, how can the church engage older adults in discipleship growth and evangelism, which will lead to congregational renewal?

1. Intentional Discipleship Training (Life to Life)

- **Word-**

Deuteronomy 6:6-9- “And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates.

-individual reading, small groups, retreats, diads/triads

- **Prayer-**

Philippians 4:6- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

-prayer team, prayer retreats, prayer vigils, healing prayer

- **Worship-**

Hebrews 10:24-25- “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

-day worship services, hymn sings, large print materials, projection, home communions.

- **Witness-**

Psalms 71:18- “So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation. Your power to all those to come.”

-inviting other mature adults (senior centers, care facilities, retirement villages, pastoral and lay visitation)

-Area Agencies on Aging (Triple A's) www.n4a.org

-Department of Human Services-Elder Abuse/Care Screenings

-developing a “Support Group Ministry (widows, caregivers, retirees, children of aging parents, C.O.A.P)

-aging in place issues (transportation, house cleaning/repairs, shopping, visitation)

-Intergenerational

-Grandparenting

- **Service-**

II Samuel 19:31-32- "Now Barzillai the Gileadite had come down from Rogelim, and he went on with the king to the Jordan, to escort him over the Jordan. Barzillai was a very aged man, eighty years old. He had provided the king with food while he stayed at Mahanaim, for he was a very wealthy man.

-service within the life of the church

-service within the community (mentoring, tutoring)

5'S of Senior Adult Ministry-A Potential Ministry Model

- **Spiritual- discipleship growth**
- **Sharing- evangelism, faith sharing**
- **Service- church/community**
- **Social- recreational/travel**
- **Self- visitation, counseling, exercise**

God's Promise to the Aging-

Isaiah 46:3-4- "Listen to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from before your birth, carried from the womb; even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save."

APPENDIX

NALC Resources: missions.nalcnetwork.com/category/senior-ministry

2020 Mental Health Resources: mhanational.org/events/older-adults-isolation-during-covid-19

Recommendations for Additional Reading:

- “Catching the Age Wave: A Handbook for Effective Ministry with Senior Adults” by Charles Arn
- “White Unto Harvest, Evangelizing Today’s Senior Adults” by Charles Arn
- “Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century: Step-By-Step Strategies for Reaching People Over 50” by David Gallagher
- “Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century” by Richard Gentzler
- “A Vision for the Aging Church: Renewing Ministry for and by Seniors” by James Houston and Michael Parker
- “Aging as a Spiritual Journey” by Eugene Bianchi
- “One Church, Four Generations: Understanding and Reaching All Ages in Your Church” by Gary McIntosh

Books on Grandparenting Ministry:

- “Biblical Grandparenting: Exploring God’s Design, Culture’s Messages, and Disciple-Making Methods to Pass Faith to Future Generations” by Josh Mulvihill
- “Extreme Grandparenting” by Tim and Darcy Himmel
- “Passing on the Legacy: 7 Keys for Grandparents Making a Difference” by Catherine Jacobs
- “Please Pass the Faith: The Art of Spiritual Grandparenting” by Elise H.R. Remp

Senior Ministry Websites

www.seniorministry.org
aloaserves.org
retirementreformation.org

Grandparenting Websites

www.christiangrandparenting.net
www.passthelegacy.wordpress.net
www.legacycoalition.com

Intergenerational Ministry Websites

- faithwebbing.com
- crossgenlife.org
- genonministries.org