

# BOOMERS and beyond

Connecting.  
Coaching.  
Communicating.

*Inspiration and Resources for Leaders in Second Half Ministry*

A publication  
of  
CONVERGE  
Worldwide  
(BGC)  
2nd 1/2 for  
Him



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## *Journey to Excellence*

*By Leona Bergstrom, Co-director, 2nd 1/2 for Him*

I recently attended a major national conference for leaders in aging services. The Philadelphia Convention Center was electric with excitement and enthusiasm as thousands of people gathered to discuss contemporary practices, product development and service delivery. Present were CEOs of large retirement communities and systems, healthcare providers, architects, financial planners, software designers, marketing professionals and lots of entrepreneurs.

Clearly the field of aging is singing the first notes of an impressive crescendo. Things are heating up as more and more people are growing older and opportunities abound for innovative and creative solutions to the challenges facing them.

In observing the participants at this conference, I noted vision, commitment and expectancy. There were no “gloom and doom” faces wondering what we were going to do with all of these *old* people! Together participants were mapping out a “Journey to Excellence” in which good care, respect, opportunity and quality are the norm, not the exception.



I noted a few characteristics of this group:

1. They “get” the big picture of our nation’s demographics. They are not in denial about the millions of people in our country who are steamrolling toward retirement age and beyond.
2. They are innovative, creative, visionary and committed.

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3. They believe in quality. In fact, most of the services are held accountable to strict standards of performance by accreditation or regulatory agencies.
4. They use a variety of reliable methods to determine the needs of older persons, and then set about to meet these.
5. They have not abandoned the old.
6. They celebrate the gift of aging.

I couldn't help but wonder what older adult ministries would be like if church leaders were on a similar journey of excellence. My experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church is that one has to look far and wide to find congregations who consider ministry to aging adults to be a priority.

This observation was confirmed at an informal discussion around a reception table at this same conference. I was talking with an executive in a senior living community in Pennsylvania. We were discussing my work with churches. Her observation was threefold:

1. Her experience in her local church is that there is nothing there for her. In fact, she is dropping out to find meaning in aging and spiritual growth in other ways.
2. What ministry there is for "seniors" is irrelevant and somewhat frivolous.
3. The church is focusing on the youth to the exclusion of its elders.

How did we come to such a point? Historically, the church was the vehicle for providing care and services for older people. But somewhere along the way we abandoned the care of our elders to the "professionals" and to the government or private businesses. Typically, churches maintained obligatory ministries in the church for seniors, but even those are dying out along with their members.

These are critical days for **2<sup>nd</sup> ½ for Him** ministries. We need to create new paradigms for ministry in our churches and districts that are fresh, relevant and effective. We need transformational leaders who will partner with other ministry organizations, denominations, academic institutions and policy makers.

Most churches today are struggling with the economic crunch and priorities for ministry. But actually, our biggest deficit today is not money, but leadership. The goal of Converge Worldwide (BGC) **2<sup>nd</sup> ½ for Him** ministries is to encourage, develop, train and nurture leaders who know and understand the opportunities at hand and celebrate them.

Won't you join us on this *Journey to Excellence*? Where do you begin?

1. Begin praying for a powerful and effective ministry with midlife and older adults in your local church.
2. Gather a small group of people interested in this ministry and begin to pray and strategize. Include your senior pastor and/or church leadership.
  2. Contact your district executive minister to see how churches in your region/district can work together. Perhaps sponsor a regional Learning Community to begin discussing the issues and developing strategies.
  3. Study the demographic trends of your community. Research the current thoughts about aging.
  4. Join CASA (Christian Association Serving Adult Ministries) and utilize the resources and training offered for leaders in midlife and older adult ministries: [www.gocasa.org](http://www.gocasa.org)
  5. Remember, "A small deed done is better than a great deed never started."



For more information on **2<sup>nd</sup> ½ for Him** Ministries, contact Richard and Leona Bergstrom at (206) 362-2621 or email [leonaberg@comcast.net](mailto:leonaberg@comcast.net) --LB

## 2nd 1/2 Learning Community Inspires Innovation

2nd 1/2 for Him ministries hosted 35 participants at a unique Learning Community on October 30 in Danville, Calif. Sponsored by Converge PacWest (NCBC), older adult ministry leaders from several churches and denominations in Northern California gathered to address critical issues and opportunities.

Participants shared their respective church models and programs spotlighting “What’s working?” “What’s stuck?” “What’s been the biggest surprise?” and “What has been the greatest area of learning?”



Discussion groups led by Richard and Leona Bergstrom of Converge Worldwide (BGC) **2nd 1/2 for Him** Ministries, Dr. Alan Forsman of the Evangelical Covenant Church and Don Wilcox of Leadership Network focused on the trends and characteristics that make ministry to the current generation of midlife and older adults distinctive. Participants were encouraged through the mutual support found in sharing and brainstorming. Many new ideas for program development were generated.

Converge PacWest District Executive Minister, Dr. Don Reed, wrote, “Thanks for initiating the opportunity to engage around 2nd half issues in our region. Praise God for His encouragement to all of our ministries in so many ways!”

If you would like to host a 2nd 1/2 Ministries Learning Community in your church or region, please contact Richard and Leona Bergstrom at (206) 362-2621 or email [leonaberg@comcast.net](mailto:leonaberg@comcast.net). For a report of the Northern California Learning Community, please visit [www.chonline.org/bgc](http://www.chonline.org/bgc)

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### RECOMMENDED WEBSITES FOR 2ND 1/2 MINISTRIES:

Building Adult Ministries, sponsored by Christianity Today and CASA  
[www.buildingadultministries.com](http://www.buildingadultministries.com)

Senior Evangelism Partnership  
[www.seniorevangelism.org](http://www.seniorevangelism.org)

## 2nd 1/2 for Him Ministry

### Boomers and Beyond Newsletter

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly by Converge Worldwide (BGC) 2nd 1/2 for Him. Editor: Leona Bergstrom. To subscribe for free electronic editions via your email, please visit [www.convergeww.org](http://www.convergeww.org) and click on “lists.” To submit articles or ideas, please write to [leonaberg@comcast.net](mailto:leonaberg@comcast.net) or call (206)362-2621.

### Training

Our goal is to train leaders who are effective in leading the local church toward powerful midlife and older adult ministry. We are partnering with CASA ([www.gocasa.org](http://www.gocasa.org)) to provide excellent leadership training opportunities. 2nd 1/2 for Him leaders are available to come to your church or district for on-site training. Call Richard Bergstrom at (425) 216-4408.

### Resources

We are continually updating our resource list to provide you with up-to-date information. Check our website at [www.convergeww.org](http://www.convergeww.org), click on “U.S.” and then go to 50+ Ministries. Or go to [www.chonline.org/bgc](http://www.chonline.org/bgc)

### Converge Worldwide (BGC) 2nd 1/2 for Him

DICK AND LEONA BERGSTROM  
CO-DIRECTORS  
P.O. BOX 1493  
EDMONDS, WA 98020





## Creative Ministry Ideas for the New Year

### **GETTING-TO-KNOW-YOU DINNERS - Northshore Baptist Church, Bothell, Wash.**

2nd 1/2ers are signing up for the fourth round of "Getting-to-Know-You Dinners" and are enjoying the opportunity to meet others in the same lifestage. Eight people (couples and singles) are assigned to a dinner group that meets once a month for three months. Participants take turns hosting and facilitating the conversation. Here's one person's response:

*"The dinners are a wonderful opportunity to socialize with peers. They connect people who have similar interests and are at the same stage in life. Some people participate in these dinners that may NOT do anything except attend church on Sunday. These dinners are a shortened small group activity and have the potential for strengthening the body of Christ. In some cases we have had reunions with our past groups! In our current group we added an additional couple at the half way point and are now going to meet four times!"*



### **FOR THE LOVE OF PRODIGALS - Alderwood Community Church, Lynnwood, Wash.**



Pastor Tim Walton knew there were many in his seniors group whose hearts ached for their adult children who were not walking with the Lord. He offered a one evening program called "For the Love of Prodigals" and set up the room for the six or seven people he thought would attend. To his surprise, 120 people came! The fellowship was sweet and the sharing was rich. David Sanford, author of *If God Disappears*, shared his story of being a pastor's kid who "went astray" and then returned to the faith. The event revealed a need for parents of prodigal children to have a place to share their hearts. The church's 2nd 1/2 ministry intends to offer similar gathering several times a year.

(Picture by Akuman1 [www.flickr.com](http://www.flickr.com))

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**Mark your calendars for upcoming CASA Conferences (More information at [www.gocasa.org](http://www.gocasa.org))**

***Builders vs Boomers: How to Reach One Without Excluding the Other***

March 6-7, 2009, Brandon, Florida

***Annual Leadership Conference: Longevity in the Church: A Gentle Revolution***

September 16-18, 2009, Chicago, Illinois