

Lifetime Ministries of ChurchHealth
Bellingham, Washington
www.chonline.org

“Unleashing The Power Of Age In Your Congregation” Seminar
Held 6/15/02 at Bethany Christian Assembly - Everett, Washington

A Ministry Report

Summary:

The “Unleashing The Power of Age In Your Congregation” seminar was held at Bethany Christian Assembly in Everett, Washington on Saturday, June 15, 2002. Approximately 40 persons attended the seminar representing churches from the Northwest District of the Assembly of God Churches. Most participants of the seminar were coordinators of older adult ministries, lay leaders or Older Adult Ministry Pastors of their churches. One senior pastoral couple was in attendance.

Participants opened the day in a time of worship and praise. The morning was filled with lectures and discussion regarding principles for “Unleashing the Power of age in Your Congregation,” the changes in society as a result of the “age wave”, and the spiritual journey of aging adults. Small groups were formed to discuss and define the physical, emotional and spiritual needs that aging people in their communities face. Participants were asked to determine the top needs of both middle adults (ages 55-70) and mature or older adults (ages 70+) by multi-voting. Those results will be discussed later on in this report.

Following lunch, the afternoon sessions included a discussion of the priority needs of aging adults, and ideas for programming that would meet those needs to create a powerful and effective older adult ministry.

Participants concluded the day by engaging in a simplified session in strategic planning of older adult ministries. Based on their stated mission, as well as the recent assessment of the needs of older adults, they were encouraged to begin the process of setting forth a plan of ministry that would fulfill their mission and meet the needs of older adults.

The table groups closed in prayer for the success and effectiveness of their older adult ministries.

Results of Small Workgroups:

Participants were divided into small workgroups to discuss and define some of the needs and issues facing middle and mature (older) adults in their communities and within their churches. Below is a sampling of some of the ideas generated. Listed to the right are the number of votes each item received in the priority voting exercise:

MIDDLE ADULTS (Ages 50-70):

Physical Needs of Middle Adults:

1. Upkeeping of premises – yard work, etc. (4)
2. For some – no longer able to drive (6)
3. Loss of hearing (3)
4. loss of eyesight (7)
5. chronic illness and other health issues (9)
6. physical care and concern for aging spouse, parents, grandchildren, even pets. (12)
7. user friendly homes (may be needed) (4)
8. safety and security in home (1)
9. sleeping disorders (2)
10. increased amount of medications (9)
11. dietary changes (1)
12. exercise (7)
13. empty nest syndrome, boredom (1)
14. academic stimulation (3)
15. retirement funding (7)
16. having fun
17. physical changes in health (16)

Social/Emotional Needs of Middle Adults:

1. Fellowship / activity (13)
2. Companionship (4)
3. spiritual (1)
4. sharing (3)
5. teaching (1)
6. needing to belong (16)
7. fun (5)
8. economic capacity (2)
9. loved and accepted (5)
10. need to reach out to others other than family (18)
11. assisting children (2)
12. assisting parents
13. dealing with retirement (6)
14. lack of structure (2)
15. budgetary matters (2)
16. physical capability (6)
17. loneliness (7)

Spiritual Needs of Middle Adults:

1. salvation (16)
2. dealing with substance abuse problems
3. dealing with hopelessness (1)
4. dealing with and accepting forgiveness (5)

5. challenge to go further – to grow (8)
6. involvement in ministry (14)
7. transitions (2)
8. losses: spouse, income, independence (5)
9. body ministry to those hurting (caring) (1)
10. keeping contact, connecting (1)
11. giving and receiving love (in Jesus name) (2)
12. mentoring (12)
13. spiritual depression (5)
14. type of music (2)
15. time of day, excluded due to work if early
16. less structure (4)
17. more analytical
18. more likely to church hop, bounce (3)
19. not as well versed on Bible (2)
20. Need more focus on eternity (1)
21. finances outlook weighing down and consuming thoughts (7)

MATURE ADULTS (age 71+):

Physical Needs of Mature Adults:

1. transportation – loss of driving privileges (17)
2. affordable housing (1)
3. medical (dietary) (8)
4. integration into church body (2)
5. financial concern (5)
6. funeral expenses
7. home maintenance (12)
8. pet care
9. security, safety issues (1)
10. high prescription costs (3)
11. sleeping (1)
12. family issues (4)
13. eyesight (1)
14. long term care (19)
15. chronic illness
16. handicaps – user friendly homes (ramps, etc)
17. access to buildings etc (church)
18. exercise (alternative ways to) (5)
19. loneliness (8)
20. having fun (1)
21. shopping (5)
22. swimming pool

Social/Emotional Needs of Mature Adults:

1. loss of friends, mates (9)
2. physical capabilities (2)
3. relocation (2)
4. loneliness, isolation (14)
5. loss of independence (9)
6. budgetary matters
7. pets
8. fellowship: activities (11)
9. companionship (6)
10. spiritual (1)
11. sharing (3)
12. teaching or learning (2)
13. allowing others to plan for us
14. needing to belong (11)
15. laughter
16. economic capacity (1)
17. loved and accepted and needed (8)
18. transportation (2) / (to church and activities)
19. intergeneration relationship opportunities (7)
20. conversational settings – opportunities (1)

Spiritual Needs of Mature Adults:

1. salvation (13)
2. knowing they are still respected and appreciated (15)
3. utilizing wisdom, talents and abilities (10)
4. more teaching on healing
5. worship (1)
6. testimonies for building mutual faith (2)
7. keep contact with others (3)
8. operation of the gifts of the Spirit (3)
9. challenge to learn and grow (2)
10. mentoring (1)
11. take church to shut ins and nursing homes (5)
12. writing letters, reading, tape ministry (1)
13. health issues (recognize changes with meds) (2)
14. how to evangelize (2)
15. dealing with losses (4)
16. type of music (5)
17. more structured service, traditional (5)
18. time of day, after dark in winter
19. get back to Bible study rather than support
20. not so willing to church bounce
21. suicide rate, meet needs, more prevention (2)
22. feel the need to offer experience to younger, offered and not taken upon it (11)

23. how to reach out
24. discouraged due to finances (5)
25. pot lucks: can't bring or carry so don't attend (1)

Top Priorities Identified:

Through a process of combining similar suggestions and multi-voting (each participant was allowed to vote for their three “top” needs per category), the following needs were identified as priorities:

Top Needs of Middle Adults (50-70):

Physical:

1. physical changes in health
2. care and concern for aging spouse, parents, grandchildren
3. increased medications (tied for 3rd)
4. chronic illnesses (tied for 3rd)

Social/emotional needs:

1. need to reach out to others – other than family
2. needing to belong
3. fellowship activity

Spiritual:

1. need for service opportunities/ministries/vision
2. opportunities for spiritual growth
3. Bible/Scripture orientation

Top Needs for Mature Adults (71+):

Physical:

1. Long Term Care
2. transportation – loss of driving privileges
3. home maintenance

Social/Emotional:

1. loneliness
2. needing to belong
3. fellowship and activities (tied for 2nd place)

Spiritual Needs:

1. salvation
2. involvement in ministry
3. mentoring

DESIGNING OUR FUTURE: Ideas for Developing Powerful and Effective Middle and Older Adult Ministries

A lively discussion followed the needs assessment wherein the presenters and the participants shared ideas for developing programs that would meet the needs of middle and older adults in their congregations.

The first question discussed was “What makes a successful Older Adult Ministry?” Participants answered the following:

Presenters suggested that a successful older adult ministry must:

1. Meet the real needs of people. It can't be done “the way we've always done it,” but rather must be new, fresh and responsive.
2. Ministry must fulfill a purpose and mission.
3. Ministries must bring people to Christ and help them grow spiritually – for their entire lifetimes.

Successful ministries are balanced:

1. Between activity (fellowship) and service
2. Between taking in and giving out
3. Between isolated age groupings and intergenerational experiences
4. Between meeting physical, social and spiritual needs – or body, mind and spirit

How do you get started?

1. Bring together interested people to begin the discussion. This is a must for middle adult ministries where typically participants want to be involved in the decisions and design of ministry programs.
2. Enlist the support of your leadership. You need for the pastor and governing body to be in full support of older adult ministries.
3. Develop a purpose statement. Define your mission. Be sure it aligns with the purpose and mission of the Church.

What are some ideas for successful programs or activities that meet needs?

Participants shared the following ideas from their personal experiences:

1. Survey the needs of the group and community.
2. women and men – who have enjoyed gardening on one acre.
3. Be entertained, trips. Minter Gardens field trip.
4. Take shut-ins to lunch, to the bakery. Get out in small groups.
5. Rotate seniors onto church board. Have a monthly honorary advisor.
6. Older people “never done” – go and do it.
7. Sunday night small groups
8. Older Geezer coffee
9. Supper club approach. Invite people for dinner or go out. Mix people up.
10. Dinner for 8 – specifically for singles/elders with young couples.
11. Benevolence funds for prescription medications.

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12. Physical: build studio apartment. Hire a person to stay in studio apartment to help out with maintenance.
13. Young people stay with older people as caregivers.

*Note: More ideas for innovative ministries are listed in the Bergstroms’ book, Amazing Grays: Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation. The book is available for a suggested contribution of \$20.00 through the ChurchHealth offices at 360-676-4824, or on the web at www.chonline.org

Reflection and application:

Participants were then encouraged to assemble with their teams from their respective churches and spend some time reflecting on their stated purpose, objectives, and goals, and expected outcomes. Time was allowed for groups to discuss these together and to begin the process of writing a plan for their ministry. Workbooks included handouts the help facilitate this process. The outline encouraged participants to answer three basic questions:

- Why are we here? (Purpose or Mission)
- Where do we want to be in the next 3-5 years? (Vision)
- How do we plan to get there? (Plan for Ministry)

A resolution was then shared to encourage churches to continue to advocate for older adult ministries in the local congregations.

**Senior Summit
June 15, 2002**

RESOLUTION

Whereas God calls persons of all ages to be in mission, ministry, and service to others;
and

Whereas older adults, no less than persons of all ages, are called by God to be faithful
Christian disciples, and

Whereas older adults are called to share their faith, wisdom, and knowledge with persons
of every age and stage of life as it is written, "wisdom is with the aged" (Job 12:12 RSV);
and

Whereas older adults have much to teach and much to learn and are interdependent upon
persons of all ages; and,

Whereas aging is a natural progression in life and is part of God's good gift to life; and

Whereas there are more older adults now than at any other time in the history of the
world, and the numbers will continue to increase into the new millenium; and

Whereas God is granting the gift of longer and healthier lives due to improved medicine
and technology.

Therefore, be it resolved that we acknowledge our God-given responsibility to honor and
value the process of aging, to provide care to those who are in need, to construct ministry
opportunities that nurture, serve, and challenge; and to share the good news of the gospel
of Jesus Christ with each aging adult.

Be it further resolved that the participants of the Senior Summit encourages
congregations of the Assemblies of God and others present to lift up the needs and
concerns of older adults into the next century, and develop on-going intentional older
adult ministries.

The session was closed with prayer at the tables.

Evaluations.

Participants were asked to evaluate the day in four different categories. A scale of 1-5 was used, with 5 being highest.

Content of the seminar:	4.76
Presenters	4.76
Relevance of the seminar to your ministry	4.68
<u>Accommodations (facilities, lunch, snacks)</u>	<u>4.76</u>
Cumulative average for the whole seminar	4.74

Opportunity for comments was provided on the evaluation. Below are those comments:

What did you like best about today’s seminar?

Was all very informative.

Future demographics.

Good international opportunities.

Good information.

Two presenters -- so same person is not speaking all the time.

The practical teaching to stimulate the reaching of seniors.

The subject and content of seminar were very relevant.

Personable, informative, easy going, interactive.

Size and interaction.

Getting new ideas and how to direct them.

New ideas, enthusiasm, and motivation.

Interactive discussions.

I liked the way the information was presented.

The time to work together in groups with direction from the leaders.

Content.

Challenge of presenters.

The encouraging words.

Interaction of ideas.

I could hear the speakers! They had so many worthwhile things to say.

It broadened my knowledge of things we can do with or for seniors and groups.

Gus (the dummy) was fun!

It was all good – nice variety of activities and good timing.

What is one thing that you will add or change in your ministry with older adults as a result of attending this seminar?

Develop a more universal vision among our seniors.

Attempt to present some of these ideas in the work.

Organize our leadership.

Recognizing the needs of seniors.

Define what needs to be done to make this ministry more effective.

Ways to define the needs of our seniors group.

Try to involve the people on the fringes who hesitate to be actively involved.

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More strategic/specific planning.

Since we have this information we can be more bold in our ministry.

Do more spiritual planning – not just programs. Have objectives.

Consistency.

Help one get started.

We need to define our purpose in being a group of seniors.

I'm deciding whether this is where God wants to use me – this is influential.

Balanced aged-group ministries – the family concept – roles that are played by each age group.

What suggestions might you offer to improve the seminar?

Bring Senior Pastor and middle age people in.

It was studied and presented so we benefited.

It was great! I will encourage others to attend.

None.

Very well done already.

Thank You!

You are so great I can't think of any.

Good as is.

None – great job!

We wish to thank Pastor Al Baunsgard, Bethany Christian Assembly and the Northwest District of the Assembly of God Churches for inviting us to facilitate the “Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation” seminar. We hope that the insights shared during this day will inspire the churches involved to continue to develop powerful and effective ministries to and by older adults in the future. If we can be of further assistance in helping you fulfill that mission, we would be honored to do so. May God richly bless you as you follow His leading.

Thank you.

Richard L. Bergstrom, D.Min.
President, ChurchHealth

Leona D. Bergstrom
Director, Lifetime Ministries
(a division of ChurchHealth)

P.O. Box 2112
Bellingham, Washington
98227-2112
360-676-4824
Fax 360-676-0748
www.chonline.org