

Church of the Nazarene Northern Michigan District

**Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene, Cadillac, Michigan
June 19, 2004**

“Unleashing The Power Of Age In Your Congregation”

A Ministry Report

Purpose of the Seminar:

The purpose of the seminar was to convene pastors, church leaders, older adult ministry leaders, and persons interested in older adult ministries representing many churches to:

- Define the challenges and opportunities facing the church as a result of radical demographic changes in the next several decades,
- Discuss the issues,
- Determine resolutions and
- Derive strategies for effective ministry.

Summary:

The “Unleashing The Power of Age In Your Congregation” seminar was held at Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene, on Saturday, June 19, 2004, from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Fifty-four persons attended, representing fourteen various churches in Northern Michigan and Ohio. Most participants were leaders in Older Adult Ministries in the Churches of the Nazarene, Northern Michigan District. The Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene hosted the seminar. Pastor Frank LaLone, Associate Pastor at Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene, served as the primary convener and chairperson of the planning committee.

Celebration of Life:

A worship team led all participants in an opening worship session called a Celebration of Life. Worship leaders included Pastor Ross Corne, Mancelona Church of the Nazarene, Pastor Frank LaLone, Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene, and Pastor Paulette Zoulek, Wesleyan Church. Pastor Rich Thomas, Ludington Nazarene, delivered a devotional entitled “God’s Purpose in Long Life.”

Keynote Lecture:

The keynote lecture, delivered by Dr. Richard Bergstrom, was entitled “Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation.” The lecture discussed the radically changing demographics in our country and in the world as the numbers of people living longer increases dramatically. These changes call for a defined response on the part of church leadership. We must conclude whether the vast amounts of older adults in our society and church will be viewed as an “obstacle or an opportunity.” As churches look at the coming age wave, it would behoove them to recognize the needs of older adults and acknowledge the contributions they can continue to make. Dr. Bergstrom challenged participants to discover four biblical principles in order to unleash the power of age in congregations. Taken from Mark 2, the story of the paralytic who was carried to Jesus by his friends, Dr. Bergstrom suggested the following characteristics required by a church to be effective in ministering to and with older adults:

- Compassionate fellowship
- Creative freedom
- Corporate faith
- Leading to complete forgiveness!

Small Workgroups:

Participants were divided into small workgroups to brainstorm and discuss the needs and issues facing three groups of aging adults: Midlife (ages 50-65), Retired life (ages 65-80) and Senior Life (ages 80+). The following are the lists of needs that were generated:

Mid-Life (Ages 50-65)

Physical Needs:

Mental health
Memory
Forced retirement sometimes
Transition period
Rides
Housekeeping
Grocery shopping help
Aid in reading
Cooking
Help getting out of bed
Walking with people
Exercise geared to age ability
Handicapped equipment
Housing
Dressing
Mobility
Raising grandchildren
Fatigue
Blended families
Losing senses – hearing, eyes
Employment
Financial changes
Eating habits change
Starting more hobbies
Mild dementia; strokes
General health
Loss of independence

Social/Emotional Needs:

Kids leaving and returning
Marital adjustments
Babysitting grandchildren
Job market; job security; planning retirement

Transition period
Need to be needed
Companionship
Visiting
Telephone contact
Cards and notes
Encouragement
Social groups
Listener
Grieving outreach
Open heart, open doors
Show love
Sharing family albums
Sharing life experiences
Books on tape
Blended families
Loss of independence
Loss of loved ones
Comfort zone
Empty nest
Feeling inadequate/unqualified
Lack of education
Starting more hobbies
Volunteering
Mild depression
Senior center activities

Spiritual Needs:

Most not in church?
Used to be in church
Need to be needed
Church is a constant – support
Spiritual guidance
Transition period
Pray for them
Pray with them
Pastoral visits
Lay visits
Inviting them to church
Bible study – one on one or more
Bible Classes
Sharing experiences
Listen
Show love – be a friend
Read and share scripture

Bible on tape

Questions: What is going to happen to me; Death issues

Coasting – comfort zone

Retirement

Physical health affects spirituality

Insecurities affect

Less church hopping – faithful worship

Tendency towards bitterness

Start focusing on yourself and things you have or don't have

Volunteering

Perception of inability to perform due to age (Bible memorization, learn new songs)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical Needs:

Handicap accessibility

Meals

Home maintenance (outside and inside)

Medical needs

Shopping

Transportation - groceries, dr. appt., senior centers

Alerting family

Place to live

Mobility

Caretaking

Safety needs, hand rails, ramps

Monetary help and estate planning

Reading assistance

Ministry to assess physical needs

Joint problems

Understand medical terms

Loneliness at all times of the day

Change of housing – moving

Bereavement – loss of spouse

Separating anxiety

Lack of telling stories

Bookkeeping, records

Wheelchairs, walkers

Short-term memory loss

Hearing problems

Hair loss

Eyes getting cloudy

Heart playing tricks on us

Social/Emotional Needs:

Visitation
Loneliness
Depression
Language barriers
Patience
Fellowship
Financial
Family
Handicap needs – wheelchairs, ramps, canes
Holiday – special days
Relieving caregivers
Being available
Remove racial barriers
Fellowship
Purpose and mission
Mentoring younger people
Realizing they have something to offer
Physical touch of others
Someone to talk to. To share with. Reassurance
Continued education – technical, computers, photography
Dealing with depression
Reading assistance
Grief ministry
Fitting in – adjusting. You feel like a burden to family and friends
Getting there – transportation
Loss of friends
Diet changes – What can I eat at a potluck?
Losing control and feel useless
Inability to admit I need help (because of hearing, etc.)
Reason to ask for assistance – afraid of rejection or imposing

Spiritual Needs:

Group Bible study
Nursing home/ read, volunteer
Be a friend
Skill utilization (feel useful)
In-home visits
In home Bible Study
Tape ministry
Church outreach
Reaching non-churched
Just knowing the Lord (salvation)
Access to the scriptures through different mediums (audio, etc)
Continued service to the body of Christ (worship, leadership, etc.)

Willing to try something new (in ministry)
Chances to review the basics
 Outside of regular church
 What is a relationship with Christ?
 What are the basic tenants of the church?
Creative outreach
 Coffee clubs
 Book clubs
Grief ministries
Continued contact with other believers (even when homebound)
Keeping connected to church needs to get chance to continue to pray,
write notes, make calls, etc.
Recognizing and accepting
Accept what is at this time. He has a plan
Resting to share them
Not feeling well to get there
Not always being asked to help anymore.
Willingness to give into God's direction
Talents are off "key"
Need to be needed in church
Not able to go a fast pace.
They always want our tithe.
Comprehension
Can't change my past, but am still running the race and I want to finish
How do we impress others?

Senior Life (80+)

Physical Needs:

Health

 Food

 Exercise

 Sleep

 Medical

 Physical needs (eyes, hearing)

Companionship

Housing

 Independent living

 Assisted living

 Home help

 Meals on wheels

Transportation

Living assistance – ADL's – grooming, meals, dressing, walking

Communication

Changes in diet, taste, chewing abilities

Changes in dexterity, flexibility
Loss of endurance
Mobility – walkers, canes, ramps
Prescription drugs
Household help – snow blowing, lawn mowing, etc.
Dementia
Lack of energy

Social/Emotional Needs:

Fellowship, companionship
Senility, forgetfulness
Dementia
Assist with personal needs
Loneliness
Depression
Loss of home
Loss of family – spouse
Loss of friends
Loss of “treasures”
“Unmet wishes”
Help planning funeral
Help making financial decisions
Loss of freedom
Loss of control over finances
Loss of independence (driving, etc)
Change/loss of routine
Food choices, decreased appetite
No reason for living – motivation
“Tired of working in the church”
“Poor me” attitude
Fear
Illness
Being taken advantage of
Nursing home
Mobility
Support system
Worry

Spiritual Needs:

Prayer partner
Pastoral and layperson visits and calls
Communion for shut-ins
Taped church services
Written ministry
Team visiting
Can't read the Bible

Lack of fellowship with fellow Christians
Depression
Discouragement/uselessness
Not being able to share your spiritual gifts.
Lack of spiritual discernment (will fall for anything)
Lack of a support system
Inability to change (denying)
Trouble hearing in church
Limited opportunity for learning (discipleship)
Unresolved personal issues
Salvation needed
Be baptized
Sacraments
“Old hymns” – familiar music
Prayer “partners”
Opportunities to serve and be needed
Pastoral contact

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:

Midlife (50-65)

Physical

1. Exercise geared to age and ability
2. Transition period
3. Financial changes

Social/Emotional

1. Feeling inadequate/unqualified
2. Loss of loved ones
3. Job market; job security; planning retirement

Spiritual

1. Show love – be a friend
2. Need to be needed
3. Perception of inability to perform due to age (Bible memorization, new songs)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical

1. Home maintenance
2. Place to live
3. Bereavement – loss of spouse, loved ones
4. Transportation – to drs., Church, shopping, friends

Social/Emotional

1. Loneliness
2. Losing control and feeling useless
3. Purpose and mission (tied at #3)
4. Dealing with depression (tied with #3)
5. Realizing they have something to offer (tied with #3)

Spiritual

1. Continued service to the body of Christ (worship, leadership)
2. Willing to try something new (in ministry) (tied with #1)
3. Skill utilization - feel useful
4. Need to be needed in church

Senior Life (80+)

Physical:

1. Home help
2. Mobility
3. Companionship (tied with #3)
4. Communication (tied with #3)

Social/Emotional

1. Fellowship/companionship
2. Mobility
3. Illness (tied with #3)
4. Change/loss of routine (tied with #3)

Spiritual

1. Lack of fellowship with fellow Christians
2. Unresolved personal issues
3. Lack of a support system

The Times, They are A-Changin':

A second lecture, delivered by Richard and Leona Bergstrom, was entitled “The Times, They Are A-Changin’: How the Age Boom Will Transform the Church.” This lecture discussed some of the social implications of the “longevity revolution.”

The question was also asked, “How will these new re-defined attitudes toward retirement impact and transform the church?” The Bergstroms outlined 8 things that can be expected in the next few decades:

1. Increased longevity will drastically impact the composition of the church.
2. Today’s concept of “retirement” will be re-defined.
3. Expectations in retirement and old age will change.
4. Lives will be characterized as “cyclical” rather than “linear.”
5. The age boom will redefine “old age”
6. Ministry infrastructures that are sensitive to changing demographics will change.
7. There will be greater degree of diversity in values, lifestyle and population mix.
8. New retirees and baby boomers won’t fit into traditional categories.

What is the essential message to the church?

1. If we expect to reach the emerging generation of retirees and attract their interest in the church and kingdom ministries, then we must recognize the uniqueness of this new generation of retirees.
2. We have the opportunity to provide them with significant and meaningful involvements around purposeful relationships to replace those lost from career and family.
3. The involvements offered must be tailored to the goals and desires of this population group.
4. We need to be sensitive to the kind of language that we use in seeking to reach out to them and involve them:
 - a. Many of the traditional labels, with which a current generation of 70-100 year olds may in fact be comfortable,

- are not acceptable to the newly emerging generation of retirees;
- b. By using words that build upon their potential or their contribution, we may open doors that would otherwise be closed.
5. We need to create a completely new infrastructure that will capture the imaginations of new retirees, motivate them to live lives of purpose and direction, and release them to meaningful and significant service.
 6. We need to thoroughly understand and teach that God has a purpose for long life

Designing Our Future

The final lecture/discussion was focused on how to develop powerful and effective ministries for middle and older adults. It was concluded that ministries must reflect the following:

- Middle and older adults represent a rich source of wisdom, service and giving. Ideas were shared on how an older adult ministry group can equip members to pass on a heritage of faith, be involved in service, and be encouraged to give.
- Middle and older adults need the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond to its life-changing message of forgiveness and renewal. Ideas were shared regarding evangelistic outreach targeting middle and older adults.
- Middle and older adults need communities of faith surrounding them as they face unprecedented transitions, changes and loss. Ideas were shared regarding activities, caring ministries, lifelong learning opportunities, and purposeful planning.

Helpful resources can be found! One suggestion is obtaining the Bergstroms' book, Amazing Grays: Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation, available online at www.chonline.org

Let's Get Going

Workgroups:

The final workgroup session placed participants at new tables to discuss ideas for programming that would meet the top needs for each age group identified in earlier breakout sessions. The following ideas were generated:

Ideas for Midlife (50-65) Ministry

Physical Need: Physical exercise geared to age and ability

Idea: Offer exercise classes, aerobics or dance

Physical: Transition period

Idea: Sponsor a job fair; talk about second career choices

Physical Need: Financial changes

Idea: Class on new Medicare drug cards

Social/emotional need: Job market changes

Idea: Identify gifts and interests for future endeavors

Spiritual need: Need to be needed

Idea: 1) Survey older adults to discern needs and interests and teach younger generations; 2) Share spiritual journey on short-term basis

Spiritual need: Perception of inability to perform

Idea: Teach general Biblical skills (not necessarily Scripture memorization)

Ideas for Retired Life (65-80) Ministry:

Physical need: Home maintenance

Idea: Develop "toolbox" ministry teams that are skill based to help with home repairs

Idea: Survey for home needs; go to the home to complete the needs

Idea: Educate Hospice into the need

Idea: Develop a check list to make sure needs are completed

Physical need: Place to live

Idea: "Rent a room" – take in boarders

Physical need: Bereavement

Idea: Funeral follow up – establish a schedule

Physical need: Transportation to doctor, church, shopping, and friends

Idea: Establish a driver pool

Idea: Define needs and develop a schedule to take person where needed

Social/Emotional need: Loneliness

Idea: Schedule home visits, phone calls; Get them out; Schedule trips; Do card ministry, prayer ministry, phone ministry, “host” groups

Idea: Go for a ride

Idea: Take them to visit others

Idea: Help with medical needs

Idea: Form a church group to oversee their needs

Idea: Church greeters to insure welcome

Idea: Routine visits

Idea: Invite them out for a meal, shopping trips, beauty shop

Social/Emotional need: Purpose and mission

Idea: Identify passions and spiritual gifts

Social/Emotional need: Dealing with depression

Idea: Sharing group; support group

Spiritual need: Continued service to the body of Christ (worship, leadership)

Idea: “Tie-in” to ministry - greeters, phone ministry, lead prayers, read scriptures. (Identify abilities and passions)

Idea: Devotional geared to the elderly

Idea: Have the youth meet elderly on music service

Idea: Have youth and elderly find spiritual time together

Idea: Take the person to a service

Idea: Read scripture.

Idea: Tape service

Idea: Pray for and with them

Spiritual need: Skill utilization - feel useful.

Idea: Train/disciple (take with, share, supervise, let go)

Spiritual need: Need to be needed in church

Idea: All of the above! Coach, mentor

Senior Life (80+) Ministry:

Physical need: Mobility

Idea: Church could get lists of handicap equipment that isn't being used and donate to others that need them

Physical need: Home help

Idea: Enlist and train teens to help clean (wash walls, windows, etc), mow grass, weed, snow shovel, clean snow off roofs, snow blow, rake, for anyone in need of help

Idea: Clean weekly

Idea: Bring in meals

Idea: Have teens do yard work

Physical need: Communication

Idea: Send cards

Social/emotional need: Fellowship and companionship

Idea: Adopt a grandparent/parent;

Idea: Visit once a week

Idea: Send cards

Idea: Have a birthday party and invite friends (get friends there)

Idea: Read book, Scripture

Idea: Write their story

Idea: Make a "life" scrapbook

Idea: Develop a shepherding group that can and will be available to visit or call persons who are shut-in. They would also make sure others knew the situation so they could be praying for them and ministering to their needs

Idea: Develop a book club. People would all read the same book and meet twice a month and discuss what the book meant to them.

Idea: Develop a coffee club to get together to fellowship. Someone could pick up those who can't drive.

Idea: Visitation

Idea: Red Hat Group or Equivalent

Idea: Out of house activities

Spiritual Need: Lack of a support system

Idea: Take communion to these people

Idea: Pray with them

Idea: Design a prayer group and a point of contact for prayer

Idea: Take the taped sermon to them

Idea: Youth group visit, sing, act a story

Idea: Prayer

Idea: Find the need and make the need known

Idea: Seek ideas from other churches

Idea: Bring in speakers for motivation on ministry to older adults

Strategic Planning

Participants were encouraged to begin to think strategically about purposeful and effective older adult ministries. In a session entitled “Let’s Get Going” participants were challenged to discuss the following:

Define our purpose. Why does our ministry exist?

1. What is our church’s purpose (mission statement)?
2. What is the purpose or mission of our 50’s+ adult ministry?

Discover Our Passion: What are the core values of our ministry?

1. What are the values that we can affirm within our ministry to older adults?
2. Write out 3-7 core values as a part of your plan for ministry.

Determine Our Potential: Where do we want to be in 2-5 years?

1. What vision do you have for your Senior Adult ministry?
2. What are the major objectives for your ministry?

Develop Our Plan. How will we accomplish our vision?

1. What goals do we have for our Senior Adult ministry?
2. What programs and ministries can we undertake to accomplish your vision?

Deploy our Personnel. Who will carry out this ministry?

Reflection and Evaluation:

Copies of the evaluations are enclosed with this report. All evaluations reflected a high degree of satisfaction with the presenters, facilities, and workgroups. Participants overwhelmingly appreciated the day and reported being challenged to think differently about aging and the potential of older people in congregations and community.

The following are some of the comments made when asked: *“What did you like best about the seminar?”*

- Exciting
- Brainstorming with groups
- Everything
- The process
- Information and encouragement
- Being well prepared and sharing
- Opened my mind to the need
- Liked it all
- The information about seniors that was made available
- The times of brainstorming and strategizing
- All the ideas
- The importance of seniors ministry
- Relaxed and yet kept it moving.
- Good spirit of presenters!
- No “best” part...it was all very good!
- The varied thoughts you’ve challenged us to bring forth
- Group talks
- Information about future age dynamics
- The way it was presented
- Opening our eyes to the needs and possibilities to all of us.
- It was very informative and I got some good ideas.
- I want to do God’s will in my life. I lean towards older adults and this seminar is helping to increase that flow in that direction. I want to be involved and will be!
- The information.
- The booklet.
- The info on three age groups that make up “seniors” and how they have separate as well as overlapping needs.
- Very interesting and good source of teaching in God-given way
- Straight forward presentation; Sincere attitude
- Information was good and especially liked work groups

- The presentations
- Keeping it moving
- The book with all the information in it
- The challenges we were given

The following are answers to the questions: *“What is one thing that you will add or change in your ministry with older adults as a result of attending this seminar?”*

- Combine teens with older adults
- Education of movement
- Specific – limited – touch ministries
- More communication
- Awareness
- To do the strategic planning as shown in the booklet
- Trying to form another group for the younger retired group
- More organized approach to ministry
- Continue to improve what we have going
- Renewed energy
- Survey needs of older adults to determine agenda
- Just starting!
- Try to meet the needs of older adults
- Always keep them first in priority and try to do more for them
- Clear understanding of need.
- Will use format to “discern” vision for ministry
- The expansion of senior adult ministry vision to minister in our town.
- Trying to mix younger people and older people with storytelling, scrap booking, etc.
- Trying to get older folks involved.

Other comments:

- The Power Point presentation and booklets to take with us were well put together.
- Liked both speakers talking at different times. Made it much easier to listen to. Different voices.
- We are in great need of this ministry and have a desire to make something happen.
- Thank you First Church of Nazarene of Cadillac! You did a superb job to accommodate us!

Thank you.

We wish to thank the Churches of the Nazarene in the Northern Michigan District for inviting us to facilitate the “Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation” seminar. Thank you to the planning committee and to the Cadillac First Church of the Nazarene for your wonderful hospitality!

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.

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