

MINNESOTA BAPTIST CONFERENCE
2nd 1/2 for Him Retreat
Trout Lake Camp

**“Unleashing The Power Of Age
In Congregation”**

A Ministry Report – September 26, 2003

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 conducted as part of a Second Half for Him training retreat at Trout Lake Camp, Wednesday through Friday, September 24-26, 2003.

Eighteen persons attended, representing six Minnesota Baptist Conference churches. Most participants were lay-leaders interested in midlife and older adult ministries, while others were pastoral staff. The seminar was convened by the Minnesota Baptist Conference Second Half for Him, and was hosted by Pastor Fred and Shirley Tuma.

The retreat commenced with a short worship service featuring Scripture and hymns.

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!

The morning of day two featured a second session facilitated by Richard and Leona Bergstrom, and 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.

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 by the small workgroups:***

Mid-Life (Ages 50-65)

Physical Needs:

1. Stay in shape
2. Lifetime sports (golf, tennis, walking)
3. Medical help or need
4. Diet
5. Financial needs
6. Housing
7. Transportation
8. Security
9. Communication – computer
10. Government stability
11. Employment

Social/Emotional Needs:

1. Friends, companionship
2. Families
3. Purpose
4. Security – income, neighborhood
5. Employment/relaxation
6. Music
7. Someone to listen
8. Self-esteem
9. Government, social system that works
10. Entertainment
11. Retirement plan
12. Proper insurance

Spiritual Needs:

1. Church fellowship
2. Quiet times
3. Place of service
4. Pastor-spiritual leaders
5. Inspirational materials
6. Prayer
7. Bible Study
8. Commitment
9. Challenge
10. Accountability

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical Needs:

1. Exercise
2. Transportation
3. Health care
4. Disability services
5. Driving abilities
6. Homecare services
7. Chore services
8. Healthy diet

Social/Emotional Needs:

1. Financial
2. Connectedness to family
3. Raising grandchildren
4. Loneliness
5. Need for relationships
6. Companionship
7. Financial counseling
8. Productivity
9. Counseling on aging issues

Spiritual Needs:

1. Purpose in life
2. Pastoral support
3. Meaningful daily walk with God
4. Issues of life and death
5. Outreach and service opportunities
6. Bible study groups

Senior Life (80+)

Physical Needs:

1. Mobility
2. Transportation
3. Equipment
4. Medical
 - a. Drugs/proper dose; abuse
 - b. Visual
 - c. Hearing
5. Financial
 - a. Needs handling
 - b. Management
 - c. Social security
 - d. Retirement plans
 - e. Medicare
6. Care – who? How?
7. Right medical treatment
8. Proper diet
9. Recreation – gambling, proper kinds
10. Exercise
11. Proper light/sound
12. Shopping, cleaning, personal hygiene
13. Household care
 - a. Chores
 - b. Shoveling
 - c. Lawns
 - d. Laundry
 - e. cleaning

Social/Emotional Needs:

1. Worth
2. Respect
3. Loneliness
4. financial
5. Dying – process, preparation
6. Those left behind
7. Care – who? how? burden?
8. Sensitivity to loss of memory
9. Losses
 - a. Driving
 - b. Spouse
 - c. Family
 - d. Kids
 - e. Siblings

- f. Inability
- g. Travel
- 10. Maintain dignity
- 11. Recreation – proper/improper kinds
- 12. Visitation
- 13. Encouragement
- 14. Safety

Spiritual Needs:

- 1. What will happen after I die?
- 2. How do I face death
 - a. Doubts
 - b. How do I die gracefully?
- 3. Those left behind – passing on faith
- 4. Spiritual studies with others
- 5. Funeral planning
- 6. Large print reading materials – Bible, bulletins, study guides
- 7. Communion for shut-ins
- 8. Need for opportunities to hear Gospel
- 9. Need for church involvement/to be needed
- 10. Friends – reading to/writing letters/tapes of service
- 11. How to face, endure, suffering and pain

Top Priorities Identified:

Priorities were 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 numbers of votes received are indicated in brackets. The following priority needs were identified:

Mid-life (50-65)

Physical

1. Stay in shape/exercise (13)
2. Financial needs (12)
3. Employment (7)

Social/Emotional

1. Purpose in life (10)
2. Several issues tied for second place:
 - a. Friends/companions (9)
 - b. Families (9)
 - c. Security (9)
 - d. Retirement planning (9)

Spiritual

1. Church fellowship (17)
2. Place of service (14)
3. Bible study (9)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical

1. Health care (16)
2. Exercise (14)
3. Healthy diet (13)

Social/Emotional

1. Financial (13)
2. Connectedness to family (11)
3. Productivity (10)

Spiritual

1. Meaningful walk with God (13)
2. Purpose in life (12)
3. Issues of life and death (10)

Senior Life (80+)

Physical:

1. Financial issues
2. Proper diet
3. Medical

Social/Emotional

1. Losses
2. Worth
3. Loneliness

Spiritual

1. How will I face death?
2. Need for church involvement/need to be needed
3. Friends

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.

Exciting and helpful ideas were shared by presenters and participants. Many of the ideas shared by the presenters were from the book, Amazing Grays: Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation, and from their research with older adult ministries across the country.

Helpful resources for ideas to develop powerful and effective ministries 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 or by calling 360-676-4824.

Let's Get Going

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 by the workgroups:

Midlife (50-65)

Physical needs:

1. Stay in shape/exercise (13)
2. Financial needs (12)
3. Employment (7)

Ideas for meeting those needs:

1. Hold an exercise class at the church.

Social/Emotional

1. Purpose in life (10)
2. Several issues tied for second place:
 - e. Friends/companions (9)
 - f. Families (9)
 - g. Security (9)
 - h. Retirement planning (9)

Ideas for meeting those social needs:

1. Intergenerational night – tell your stories, play games

Spiritual

1. Church fellowship (17)
2. Place of service (14)
3. Bible study (9)

Ideas for meeting those spiritual needs:

1. Do the “40 Days of Purpose” study in small groups and supported by preaching on Sundays.

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical needs:

1. Health care (16)
2. Exercise (14)
3. Healthy diet (13)

Ideas to meet physical needs:

1. Hold blood pressure checks
2. Hold exercise classes at the church; support sports, volleyball and golf days
3. Hold classes for specific information on healthy diet

Social/Emotional needs:

1. Financial (13)
2. Connectedness to family (11)
3. Productivity (10)

Ideas to meet social/emotional needs:

1. Divorce groups. Singles, Grandparenting help. Intergenerational activities
2. Financial planning, tax help, wills
3. Providing service opportunities, tutoring at school, homeless shelter

Spiritual needs:

1. Meaningful walk with God
2. Purpose in life
3. Issues of life and death

Ideas to meet spiritual needs:

1. Mentoring, Bible studies
2. Tape ministries – libraries to use
3. Establishing relationships – one on one; classes, experts to teach

Senior Life (80+)

Physical needs:

1. Financial issues (management, social security, Medicare, retirement)
2. Proper diet
3. Medical

Ideas to meet physical needs:

1. Develop friendships that can lead to the ability to help in confidential matters
2. Hold blood pressure checks regularly at church or in homes
3. Provide transportation from younger older
4. Monitor meds
5. Parish nurse
6. Meals on wheels volunteers

Social/Emotional needs:

1. Losses
2. Worth
3. Loneliness

Ideas for meeting social/emotional needs:

1. "Pastoral" grief helps at gathered meetings and one to one
2. Visitation programs
3. Monthly/weekly dinners (congregate dining)
4. Regular events for congregate dining

Spiritual needs:

1. How will I face death?
2. Need for church involvement/need to be needed
3. Friends

Ideas for meeting spiritual needs:

1. "Pastoral" care
2. Video services to shut-ins – delivered by "younger elders"
3. 40 Days of Purpose in homes by "younger elders"
4. Congregate dining – for friendships

Strategic Planning:

At the end of the day, participants were encouraged to begin to think strategically about purposeful and effective older adult ministries by considering the following:

Define your purpose. *Why does your ministry exist?*

1. What is your church's purpose (mission statement)?
2. What is the purpose or mission of your senior adult ministry?

Discover your passion. *What are the core values of your ministry?*

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

Determine your potential. *Where do you 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 your plan. *How will you accomplish your vision?*

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

Determine your priorities. *What can we do first, second, third?*

- a. Which of the ideas generated is worth putting on the calendar for this month or quarter?
- b. What can we plan for the next quarter, year?

Deploy your personnel. *Who will carry out this ministry?*

- a. Who is the primary point person in this ministry?
- b. Who will be a part of the ministry team?

Thank you!

We hope that the insights shared during these days will inspire the churches involved to continue to develop powerful and effective ministries to and by middle and 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.

Richard L. Bergstrom
President, ChurchHealth

Leona D. Bergstrom
Director, Lifetime Ministries



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