

**Life Impact Ministries of the Christian & Missionary Alliance:
Retire & Refocus Ministry
Lancaster C&MA Church - Lancaster, PA**

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

A Ministry Report on the seminar held on September 25, 2004

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 the Lancaster C&MA Church on September 25, 2004 from 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

57 persons attended, representing various churches in Pennsylvania and the surrounding area. Most participants were leaders in Older Adult Ministries in the C&MA. The seminar was hosted by the Retire & Refocus Ministry of the C&MA. Joe Burchill served as the primary convener and chairperson of the planning committee.

A worship time for all participants was held in the opening session. Joe Burchill introduced folks to the Retire & Refocus Ministry of the C&MA.

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, numbers in parenthesis equals the number of votes:

A. Mid-Life (Ages 50-65)

Physical Needs:

- Eyesight (2)
- Hearing
- Hormonal needs (2)
- Arthritis
- Sagging – everything (1)
- Back / knees
- Weight gain (2)
- Graying hair (1)
- Our body is changing (10)
- Cholesterol
- Diet needs/changes (13)
- Aging body (2)
- More medications (1)
- Menopause (3)
- Activity, exercise (classes) (4)
- Involvement (16)
- Energy (6)
- More awareness begins (11)
- Doctor relationships (1)
- T.V. ads for meds – is it right for me.

Social/Emotional Needs:

- Choices: to retire: when (1)
- Where to live? Do I move, stay what will the children say (3)
- House: keep or downsize
- Empty nest (13)

- Stay married/divorce?
- New interests – midlife crises (14)
- New career – new jobs
- Extended family – reconnect
- Enough money to retire / income change (3)
- Sandwich generation>caring for child, parents
- What is my role in becoming a grandparent
- Travel – what to do in spare time (1)
- Challenge of finding joy with all that intersects at this time of life
- Family conflict – control of parents
- Caregivers / aging parents (19)
- Caregivers / grandchildren (3)
- 2nd career needed (4)
- relocation (6)
- death of spouse
- separation or divorce (1)
- estate planning (2)
- debt (1)
- menopause (1)
- need for affirmation (1)
- Less immediate attention to and from children (3)
- Re-evaluation / reflection (2)
- New marriage issues – widows / widowers (3)

Spiritual Needs:

- Have I/am I where I could be spiritually? (8)
- How can I share my spirituality? (2)
- How can I make time for this?
- How can I divide my time between my own spiritual growth and serving in various ministries? (9)
- Prayer and meditation scheduled.
- Need for accountability
- Re-evaluation – career choice and purpose in life. (9)
- Need for different age group and fellowships
- Communal connectedness after chasing American dream. (1)
- To be wanted in context of ministry (2)
- Need to pray – country
- Prodigal children (1)
- Rekindle spiritual fire (8)
- Materialism (5)
- Change with methods (1)
- Worship style (6)
- Traditionalism (3)
- Feeling needed within Church (5)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical Needs:

- Hearing loss (2)
- Vision loss (2)
- Sight and hearing loss (5)
- Arthritis – loss of balance, stairs
- Urinary incontinence
- Heart problems (6)
- Long swelling in feet sitting too long, short of breath
- Driving ability – can't see at night (1)
- Medications, side effects (2)
- Memory loss (3)
- Assistive devices
- Balance of proper diet, rest, exercise (12)
- Diabetes: timing to eat, what will be served.
- Change out body parts
- Loss of energy (7)
- Eat healthy (7)
- Exercise (8)
- Walking
- Drink lots of water
- Assisting others (1)
- Transportation (2)
- Visiting sick – nursing homes, hospitals
- Encouraging others (1)
- Help cut grass, trim for elderly
- Babysit (1)
- gets out for someone who never or seldom gets out
- take meal to sick or shut ins
- finances (15)

Social/Emotional Needs:

- show God's love to one another – give (holy) hugs and kisses
- friendship, affection
- feeling of belonging and worth (11)
- loneliness, depression (7)
- opportunities for creative expression (7)
- be honest with others (1)
- socialization – be there for others, listen
- read the Bible
- talk to each other
- maintain a patriotic spirit in America

- sense of purpose (16)
- grief, coping (2)
- issues – not able to relate, may not get along with others
- financial – didn't plan for retirement, can't afford meds, health care (8)
- self-acceptance (1)
- accepting limitations (10)
- anxiety
- varying mental skills
- change is threatening (3)
- want to be comfortable
- loss of friends and family (2)
- loss of independence (5)
- feel less needed
- free to be free
- dating

Spiritual Needs:

- afraid of dying process (3)
- anger over deterioration (3)
- relating to differences (3)
- staying involved in ministry (8)
- shut-ins – feeling isolated, connectedness to Church
- salvation – head knowledge, no heart experience
- worship style, theology of worship (13)
- feeling abandoned by God (3)
- still value in keeping fresh and new with God
- pursuing spiritual disciplines
- letting exhausting physical life lead to an exhausting spiritual life (2)
- absence of evangelism – others centered over me centered (1)
- rely on God
- daily devotions
- fellowship with the body (6)
- ask God's wisdom for a ministry, using out gifts (4)
- pray for each other, pastors, missionaries and to encourage them
- spiritual growth – never too old
- pray without ceasing
- need to be needed
- sense of purpose
- unchurched
- message vs. method
- been there, done that (tune out) (5)

Senior Life (80+)

Physical Needs:

- hearing impairment
- sight impairment
- mobility issues – transportation (17)
- health issues: heart problems, breathing, diabetes – loss of limbs (15)
- medication needs (6)
- Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, memory loss (3)
- general breakdown (1)
- sleep issues
- walking (2)
- diet (1)
- nursing home (12)
- hospital (1)
- arthritis (1)
- falling (5)
- broken bones
- osteoporosis
- bathing (1)
- cooking
- wheel chair
- fearful
- change
- physical pain
- loneliness (6)
- confusion (1)
- limited funds (1)
- TLC (3)
- Listening ear (1)
- Doing bills
- Medicare concerns (4)
- exercise

Social/Emotional Needs:

- fearful of death, security, scams, etc (13)
- trust issues (6)
- fellowship with believers (4)
- transportation
- remembrances: birthdays, anniversaries, past accomplishments (3)
- living with family, conflicts (1)
- out of touch, reality
- driving
- loss of spouse (17)
- feelings of rejection and depression (11)

- fears
- self-centered (4)
- leaving home
- love
- security
- loneliness (13)
- cut off from friends, family (5)
- someone to listen to them (3)
- visitation
- no purpose (9)
- dying, wills, etc
- giving up pets
- giving up possessions
- giving up hobbies
- money, funds are low

Spiritual Needs:

- respect (3)
- prayer (1)
- trusting God (1)
- inability to get to church (2)
- feeling useless to God
- fear of death (2)
- lack of fellowship (18)
- pastor visitation (6)
- where is God (9)
- difficult to reach, set in ways (2)
- coming to Christ
- transportation to church, attendance (12)
- lack of interest, no need(1)
- ministry to others (focus on others, not self)
- encouragement to be involved (6)
- mentoring to younger – impact on others (value)
- deeper walk with God, devotional life (due to physical needs) (4)
- joy in living (9)

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. Involvement with family, church, neighbors
2. Diet – needs changing
3. More awareness – aches and pains

Social/Emotional

1. Caregivers, aging parents
2. New interests – midlife crises
3. Family life – empty nest

Spiritual

1. Re-evaluation and purpose in life
2. How can I divide my time between spiritual growth and ministry
3. Rekindle spiritual fire (tied for 2nd)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical

1. Finances
2. Balance of proper diet, exercise, rest
3. Eat health

Social/Emotional

1. Sense of purpose
2. Feeling of belonging and worth
3. Financial – didn’t plan for retirement, can’t afford meds, health care

Spiritual

1. Worship style, theology of worship
2. Staying involved in ministry
3. Fellowship with the body

Senior Life (80+)

Physical:

1. health issues
2. mobility issues
3. nursing home

Social/Emotional

1. loss of spouse
2. fearful: death, security, scams
3. loneliness

Spiritual

1. lack of fellowship
2. transportation to church
3. joy in living

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 are in fact 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:

A. Diet

1. "Thin within"
2. Blood mobile – exercise classes, health fair screening.

B. Involvement with family, church, neighbors

- Block parties – group event
- Small groups / 40 days of purpose

Social/emotional need:

A. Caregivers / aging parents.

1. Volunteers for respite services (care for aging parents)
2. Mom's day out – service for adult day care
3. Support group for caregivers

B. New interests, midlife crises

1. Classes – 2nd half of marriage
2. Weekend retreat
3. Midlife crisis meeting with elders
4. Community college advisor re: empty nest
5. Forty days of purpose
6. Margin material
7. Time management – journaling
8. Spiritual identity in Christ
9. Early retirement – emotional change
10. Stabilize first before jumping into every opportunity

Spiritual need:

A. Re-evaluation and Purpose in Life

1. Transition class (retiring) – "Homebuilders classes"
2. Professional counselor
3. Provide small groups
4. Tool belt ministry (church & community)
5. Odd jobbers – doing physical work in Church
6. Using skills in a totally different way
7. Re-education – early retirement adult – place in active ministry

Ideas for Retired Life (65-80) Ministry:

Physical need:

A. Sense of purpose:

1. Coaching, mentoring
2. Making materials > missions
3. Stamp ministry
4. Mentoring young people
5. Preparations – mission trips (gift bags)
6. Tract ministry – nursing homes etc
7. Hosting college students
8. Fund raisers – youth missions, seniors prepare food.
9. Collecting

Social/Emotional need:

A. Finances

1. mentors, 1-on-1, classes, budgets, tax laws
2. Larry Burkett program
3. sponsor a day
4. C.P.A. led class 1 on1
5. Orchard Foundation (free financial planning – C&MA)

B: Health / diet and exercise balance

1. class on balance and boundaries
2. prayer walks in a group

Spiritual need:

A. Staying involved in ministry:

1. consistent visitation
2. legacy of faith awards
3. recognition of service
4. celebrate victories
5. constant visitation of seniors
6. find their passion
7. match gifting to ministry niche
8. use retired leaders in their gifting areas
9. prayer and praise lists given out
10. repent, forgive, deal with personal roadblocks

Senior Life (80+) Ministry:

Physical need:

A. Health Issues/Nursing Home

1. Visitation
2. Medical advocate: go to doctor visits, transportation
3. Senior companion
 - a. Set up medications
 - b. Check eating habits, nutrition

4. Parish nurse
- B. Mobility
 1. help adapt home setting
 2. make church handicap accessible
 - a. have wheelchair
 - b. class, restroom locations
 - c. ramps
 - d. parking spaces
 - e. valet parking
 - f. sanctuary seating

Social/emotional need:

- A. Loss of Spouse
 1. Automobile care
 2. House cleaning
 3. Home repair
 4. Donate to Gideons (memorial gift)
 5. Reach out: include, invite, call
- B. Moving: deal with belongings
 1. Finances: educate, paperwork, loss of income, refer to agencies benevolent fund.
 2. Grief counseling: support groups
- C. Fearful
 1. Law enforcement seminar (police department)
 2. Check home: windows, locks
 3. Visit, call
 4. education

Spiritual Need:

- A. Lack of Fellowship
 1. Visitation:
 - a) sermon tape delivery – listen to it with them.
 - b) Share scripture, Daily Bread
 - c) Read scripture to them
 3. Daytime fellowship at church - provide transportation,
 4. specialized monthly newsletter,
 5. telephone pals,
 6. portable fellowship

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?

Thank you.

We wish to thank Joe Burchill and the Retire & Refocus Ministry of the Christian & Missionary Alliance Church for inviting us to facilitate the “Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation” seminar. Thank you to the planning committee and to Lancaster Christian and Missionary Alliance Church 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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