

Michigan 2nd Half for Him
Algoma Baptist Church, Rockford, MI
October 15, 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 Algoma Baptist Church in Rockford, Michigan on Friday, October 15, 2004, from 9 am to 4 pm. 42 persons attended, representing 15 churches in Michigan. Of the churches attending, 8 had pastors or pastoral staff represented. This is by far one of the best attended seminars by senior pastors we have had to date – perhaps the Friday scheduling had something to do with it, but also the commitment of the pastors to participate. Most participants were leaders in Older Adult Ministries in the Michigan district of the Baptist General Conference. The Michigan 2nd ½ 4 Him Ministry and the district sponsored the seminar. Dave & Jean Mueller, 2nd Half for Him District Champions served as the primary conveners and chairpersons of the planning committee. Our thanks to Andy Husman and all the folks at Algoma Baptist for their work to make this a successful day.

Celebration of Life:

Dave Mueller led in an opening devotional.

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:

- Arthritis (1)
- Lower energy (10)
- Weight gain (3)
- Memory challenges (10)
- Hormonal changes (4)
- Loss of physical strength
- Beginning of physical challenges: eyes, ears (15)
- More medical needs (16)
- Medical insurance (4)
- Responsibility of aging parents (7)

Social/Emotional Needs:

- Depression (3)
- Job loss – difficult to find new job (12)
- Retirement concerns (12)
 - Money saved
 - Pension plans depleted
- Excluded from activities because of physical, financial issues (2)
- Empty nest (4)
- Marriage adjustments (2)
- Family issues (11)
 - Elderly parents
 - Kids returning home
 - Raising grandkids
- Fear of future (3)

- Estate planning (2)
- Downsizing (8)

Spiritual Needs:

- Greater awareness of our dependency on the Lord (9)
- Great appreciation for our daily blessings (5)
- Concerns about family: grandchildren, children (14)
- Salvation/hope (5)
- Acceptance of changing methods (13)
- Joy in trials, changes (7)
- Trust God in the changes (8)
- Using spiritual growth to help others (7)

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical Needs:

- Cost of meds (insurance) (10)
- Side effects of meds (1)
- Less mobile (1)
- Transportation (6)
- Falling down
- Hearing problems (2)
- Surgeries
- Over medication – health history (3)
- Elevator (2)
- Memory (6)
- Incontinence (1)
- Driving after dark (2)
- Decline in strength (11)
- Onset of “old peoples’ maladies” (2)
- Mental decline eg. Computer allergy (1)
- Physical decline related to spiritual health – how you react
- Death is real – friends, family die (7)
- Which nursing home will I go to (loss of control over life) (2)
- Decision-making crisis
- Will our money last? How can we help our kids financially? (11)
- Staying active (14)
- Hands on – one on one helps

Social/Emotional Needs:

- Family proximity (3)
- Lack of touch (esp. widow/widower) (3)
- Lack of mobility & people contact (3)
- Retirement shock (2)

- Financial limits (10)
- Snow birds = split community
- Intergenerational contact (3)
- Death of friends
- Death of spouse (11)
- Depression (7)
- Loneliness – isolated (9)
- Self-worth (loss of feeling needed) (6)
- Loss of independence (4)
- Volunteer work (2)
- Encouragement (3)
- Believe that God is still in control (3)
- Lack trust – fear new people
- Fear of society “out of control zone”
- Stay at home tendencies
- Lack of ambition, energy, drive (declining) (3)
- Seeking a new purpose – replaces my job (13)
- New partnership: unstable relationships in some marriages
- What do I do with my money?
- What legacy will we leave?
- How will we be remembered?
- Family tensions – adult kids (5)

Spiritual Needs:

- Breaking from plateau (2)
- Fellowship (4)
- Appreciation (7)
- Mission (4)
- Being used by God (12)
- Volunteer opportunities (7)
- Motivation, purpose (13)
- Heaven seems closer – friends, family dying (3)
- Ministry renewal, not retirement (15)
- Need to grow in spiritual wisdom so they can teach young adults (2)
- Change in religion “very hard”
- Keep from bitterness (3)
- Accept Christ (before too late) (5)
- Assurance of heaven (for believers) (3)

Senior Life (80+)

Physical Needs:

- Transportation: need help getting in, out to church, medical, dining (1)
- Hugs
- Daily life
- Tracking medical needs (7)

- Assisting with home chores, supplies, meals, safety, home, personal (8)
- Family assistance, church assistance
- Design facility: equipment, seating (2)
- Potluck, diet – doggy bags (1)
- Senior exercise program (2)
- Wheel chairs (1)
- Walkers (1)
- Elevator (2)
- Transportation (17)
- Telephone communication (4)
- One on one – check up care (7)
- Hugs (8)

Social/Emotional Needs:

- Dealing with loneliness (8)
- Daily call – phone or visit (1)
- Listening to them – informed
- Visits by school children, pet care
- Remembering special days, both sad and joyful
- Outings – provide transportation, companionship
- Social companionship (dating service)
- Dealing with change – family, social & personal relationships (10)
- Funeral arrangements
- Encouragement (8)
- Reminders – God loves you (1)
- Understanding – relate to circumstances, why me? (4)
- Financial needs (11)
- Make known available resources (3)
- Invite and take to activities (2)
- Remember birthdays (3)
- Loss of mate (12)

Spiritual Needs:

- Nursing home services (6)
- Transportation
- Provide church services, recordings, hymn selections (12)
- Design study sessions around their life needs
- Provide study materials for their use
- Large print = talking books = video (2)
- Give them respect and their place (assist at potlucks)
- Encourage them in their study and spiritual walk
- Encourage participation in worship service (4)
- Relationship to Christ (9)
- Can't see? Tape ministry (2)
- Can't hear? Hearing aids in sanctuary (1)
- Teaching ministry (1)

- Read scripture to elderly (3)
- Make scripture relevant (13)
- Literature (3)

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) More medical needs
- 2) Beginning of physical changes, eyes, ears
- 3) Lower energy
- 4) Memory challenges (tied for 3rd)

Social/Emotional

- 1) Retirement concerns, money saved, pension plans depleted
- 2) Job loss – difficulty to find a new job
- 3) Family issues: elderly parents, kids returning home, raising grandkids

Spiritual

- 1) Concerns about family: grandchildren and children
- 2) Acceptance of changing methods
- 3) Greater awareness of our dependence on the Lord

Retired Life (65-80)

Physical

- 1) Staying active
- 2) Will our money last?
- 3) Cost of medications (insurance)

Social/Emotional

- 1) Seeking a new purpose – replaces my job
- 2) Death of spouse
- 3) Financial limits

Spiritual

- 1) Ministry renewal, not retirement
- 2) Motivation, purpose
- 3) Being used by God

Senior Life (80+)

Physical:

- 1) Assistance with home chores, supplies, meals
- 2) Transportation
- 3) Tracking medical needs

Social/Emotional

- 1) Loss of mate
- 2) Financial needs
- 3) Dealing with change: family relationships, social, personal

Spiritual

- 1) Make scripture relevant
- 2) Provide church services – hymn selections
- 3) Hearing impairment: need hearing aids in sanctuary

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](http://www.chonline.org), 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:

- Denial: fear of loss of job, complicating medical condition
- Ministry solutions:
 - Support group: AA, Health fair organize parish nurse
 - One on one
 - Classes
 - Death, hospice, funerals
 - Computer correct info
 - Nutrition
- Medical maintenance
 - Exercise programs
 - Health fair: screenings, blood sugar, cholesterol, red cross blood drives
 - Guest speakers
 - Medical equipment closet

Social/emotional need:

- Wholistic impact
 - Gospel packet
 - Estate planning – wills, trusts
 - Financial assistance: budgeting/insurance/social security, government social services
- Once a month seminar: experts from community in attorneys, social workers, CPA, IRS.

Ideas for Retired Life (65-80) Ministry:

Physical need: Staying active

- Exercise class in morning with senior leader
- Aquatic exercise
- Walking groups, coordinated with common meeting and then divide based on ability

Social/Emotional need: Financial - Will our money last?

- Seminar on money:

- BGC development reps; budget planning, e.g. SS class series: use community resources available
- Coupon group for saving
- Food coop ideas
- Gardening encouragement, share produce.

Social/Emotional need: Seeking a new purpose: What's next?

- Retreat event: introduce the idea of new purpose with retired adults
- Spiritual gifts assessment
- Aptitude tests, talent inventory
- SS classes
- Transfer life skills to others
- Church/community needs assessment
- Match our abilities with church and community needs

Social/Emotional need: Death of spouse.

- Establish group to provide care/support – need guidelines, training
- Provide grief support groups as needed.
- Address financial concerns.
- Anticipate needs.
- Learn from experience of those widows, widowers.
- Identify needs in specific family.
-

Ideas for Senior Life (80+) Ministry:

Physical need: Assistance with home chores, supplies, meals

- 1) Embrace community.
- 2) Work group of retired people to serve
- 3) List things you do well
- 4) Be a friend first: develop relationship then offer help

Physical need: Tracking medical needs

- 1) Ask if they are on an automatic Rx renewal program
- 2) Talk about senior resources for medication benefits

Social/emotional need: Loss of mate

- 1) Mentoring widow to new widow, deliberately including a person in activities
- 2) Adopt and pet and
- 3) Send a “thinking of you” card at regular intervals
- 4) Set aside a a set of cards for first year
- 5) Show Christ's love
- 6) Refer to resources

Spiritual Need: Make scripture relevant

- 1) Visit, share, pray, ask questions as to what they are struggling with
- 2) Use other Bible translations

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?*”

- *Well presented*
- *Very well balanced and informative*
- *The whole time equally balanced*
- *Great job of sensitizing us to the need and potential for adult ministry.*
- *All the information and being able to interact with others.*
- *Insights on the growing numbers of adults age 65+.*
- *Resources for further reading.*
- *Liked workgroups interaction.*
- *Made me realize 3 different types of seniors and differences of needs.*
- *This was a wonderful, exciting seminar.*
- *Did not have to take notes.*
- *Interaction.*
- *Great job – thanks for coming.*
- *Evaluating the various needs.*
- *Biblical model and resource list.*
- *Dick’s presentations.*
- *Work groups.*
- *Presentations.*
- *Sharing out ideas with others in our workshops.*
- *Well balanced – good flow.*

Other comments:

- *Very good!*
- *I liked it all.*
- *Very informative.*
- *Gave me some ideas to think and plan about.*
- *Great job, thanks for coming.*
- *I would like more information on national organizations to get information for seniors health and Christian organizations that cater to seniors and their needs.*
- *I enjoyed all of it – great speaking voices did not get bored – kept my attention.*
- *Thank you for joining us in Michigan!*

Areas for improvement:

- *Map to the church*
- *Sound system*
- *More stand up times.*
- *Keep the schedule so appropriate time is available for each segment.*
- *Condense.*

Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation,
Presented by Richard and Leona Bergstrom of ChurchHealth & BGC 2nd ½ for Him, Edmonds, WA

Thank you.

We wish to thank the Michigan district of the BGC and 2nd Half for Him for inviting us to facilitate the “Unleashing the Power of Age in Your Congregation” seminar. Thank you to the planning committee and to Algoma Baptist 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.

Richard L. Bergstrom
President, ChurchHealth

Leona D. Bergstrom
Director, Lifetime Ministries

CHURCHHEALTH

P.O. Box 1493
Edmonds, WA 98020-1493
(425) 774-8252
www.chonline.org