

enrichment

WINTER 2002

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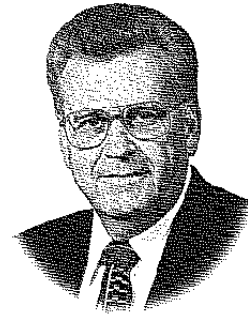
Boomers, Builders, and Beyond





ministry matters

BY GARY R. ALLEN



The Growing Segment

Those age 55 and over are the fastest-growing segment of our population. Their rate of growth is surpassing those under 20 years of age, and the peak of this growth rate of older adults will take place in 2010. This is an age wave.

THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE

The increased number of older adults is changing the landscape of retail sales, restaurant menus, the housing market, financial investments, and recreational facilities. The ship building industry is booming as it builds cruise ships for the anticipated increase in travel during the next two decades.

In the past few decades, society catered to the youth. The culture of the junior high through college set the standards and pace of media and market. Now there is a nearly equal emphasis on the needs and wants of older adults.

PREPARE TO MINISTER

For many years we placed priority on the youth of our churches, but often failed to meet some of their basic needs. Now we must place high priority on these older adults as well as our youth.

Older adults have unique needs and require special attention, just as every other age group in the church. Perhaps we take them for granted and assume too much about their spiritual growth and maturity. Many are lifelong learners and want to continue to be challenged. They want to be given opportunities to develop new skills and be utilized in church ministries. The

church must be intentional about its ministries to older adults.

THE VALUE OF OLDER ADULTS TO THE LOCAL CHURCH

Life Experience

Older adults are a rich resource of life experience. Too often they are brushed off as irrelevant and out of touch, but many are well informed, trained, and anxious to be utilized in ministry.

Workplace Skill Sets

Many older adults have obtained technical, relationship, and leadership skills in their workplaces that are transferable to the local church. These skills are often not realized by local church leaders, and therefore are not utilized.

Church Ministry Skills

Another area is church leadership and ministry skills accumulated over the years by personal experience and worker-training courses. The church needs to assess older adults to know their skills and experience and utilize this vast resource for more effective ministry.

Available Mentors and Coaches

Younger people and new converts need role models along with solid discipleship training. A mentor or coach is one who comes alongside and helps apply biblical knowledge to everyday circumstances. A mentor anticipates and directs the less experienced person. As a coach, they keep asking: "What else could you have done?" This coaching method enables

the one being coached to better analyze his or her motives and actions to learn to think for him or herself.

Financial Resource

Those over age 55 have 77 percent (\$4 trillion) of the liquid wealth in the United States. However, they are very guarded in how they spend it.

The boomers (those born 1946 through 1964) tend to be more selfish with their money. They spend it on what they like and want.

How does this affect the local church? The boomers' parents, the builders (those born before 1946), were more committed to the church and would more readily give to a building fund or missions fund. The boomers, however, are less committed to the institutional church and must be motivated to give to a need that has a specific purpose or out of a personal relationship. Boomers will spend generously on a missions trip where they are personally involved.

SUMMARY

Hopefully, this issue of *Enrichment* will help you better prepare for ministry to older adults and better utilize them in the ministries of the church. The local church must service every age group with meaningful ministry and opportunities for personal involvement. **e**

Gary R. Allen is coordinator of the Ministerial Enrichment Office and executive editor of Enrichment journal, Springfield, Missouri.



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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
Enrichment, 1445 Boonville,
Springfield, MO 65802.

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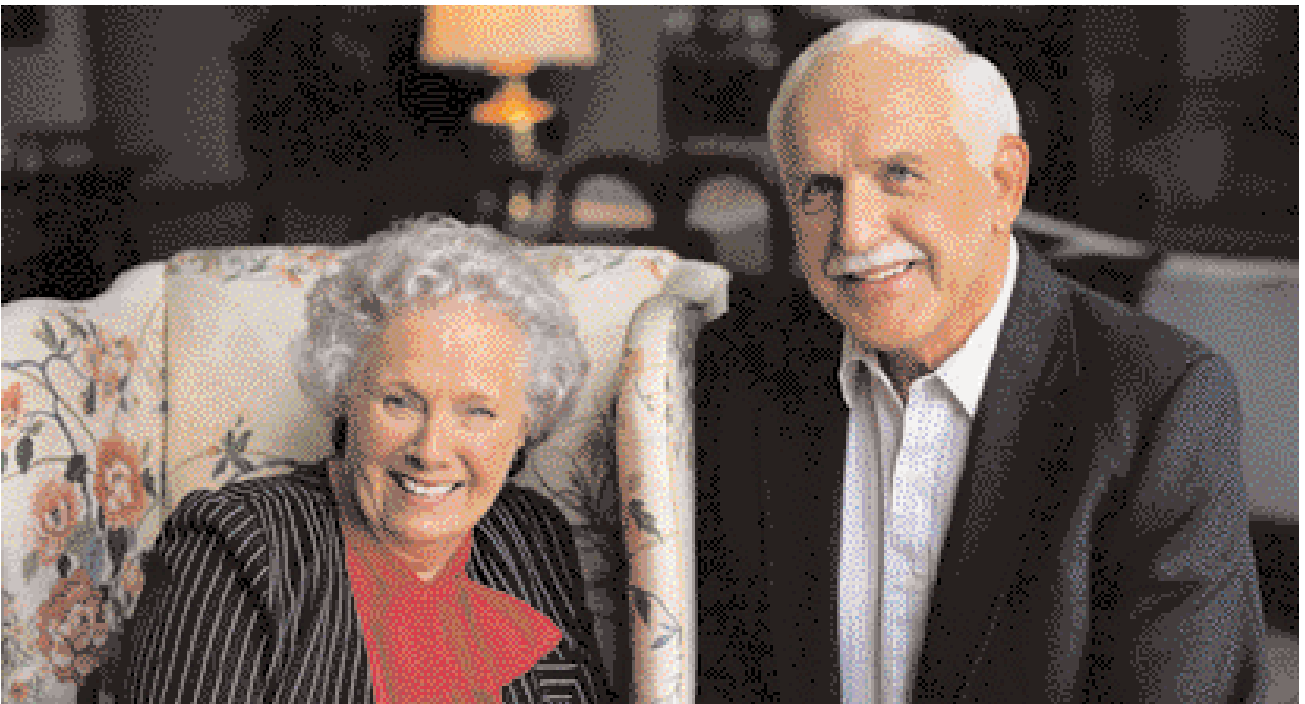
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Aging Americans



The following information is compiled from the Administration on Aging's "Profile of Older Americans: 2000." For additional information on aging Americans, visit the Administration on Aging Web site at www.aoa.gov or the U.S. Bureau of the Census Web site at www.census.gov.

PROFILE OF THE OLDER POPULATION*

The older population—persons 65 years or older—numbered 34.5 million in 1999. They represented 12.7 percent of

the U.S. population, about one in every eight Americans. The number of older Americans has increased by 3.3 million or 10.6 percent since 1990, compared to an increase of 9.1 percent for the under-65 population.

In 1999, there were 20.2 million older women and 14.3 million older men, or a sex ratio of 141 women for every 100 men. The sex ratio increased with age, ranging from 118 for the 65–69 group to a high of 237 for persons 85 and over.

BY 2030, THERE WILL BE ABOUT 70 MILLION OLDER PERSONS,

MORE THAN TWICE THEIR NUMBER IN 1999. PEOPLE 65+ WILL REPRESENT

ALMOST 13 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IN THE YEAR 2000 BUT ARE EXPECTED

TO GROW TO BE 20 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION BY 2030.

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has more than tripled (4.1 percent in 1900 to 12.7 percent in 1999), and the number has increased 11 times (from 3.1 million to 34.5 million).

The older population itself is getting older. In 1999 the 65–74 age group (18.2 million) was 8 times larger than in 1900, but the 75–84 group (12.1 million) was 16 times larger and the 85+ group (4.2 million) was 34 times larger.

In 1998, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 17.8 years (19.2 years for females and 16.0 years for males).

A child born in 1998 could expect to live 76.7 years, about 29 years longer than a child born in 1900. The major part of this increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children and young adults. Life expectancy at age 65 increased by only 2.4 years between 1900 and 1960, but has increased by 3.5 years since 1960.

Almost 2 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 1999 (5,422 per day). In the same year, about 1.8 million persons 65 or older died, resulting in a net increase

of approximately 200,000 (558 per day).

**Principal sources of data for the Profile are the U.S. Bureau of the Census, the National Center of Health Statistics, and the Bureau of Labor Statistics.*

FUTURE GROWTH

The older population will continue to grow significantly in the future (see Figure 1, page 8). This growth slowed somewhat during the 1990s because of the relatively small number of babies born during the Great Depression of the 1930s. But the older population will burgeon between the years 2010 and 2030 when the baby boom generation reaches age 65.

By 2030, there will be about 70 million older persons, more than twice their number in 1999. People 65+ will

13 percent of the population in the year 2000 but are expected to grow to be 20 percent of the population by 2030.

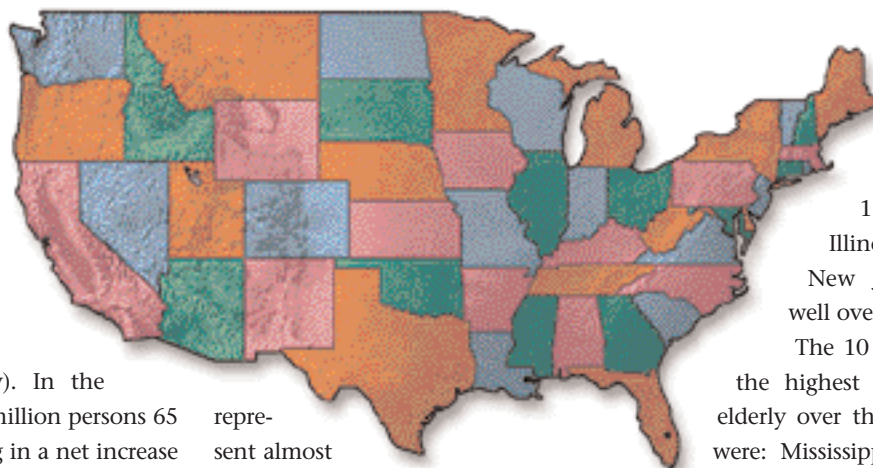
Minority populations are projected to represent 25.4 percent of the elderly population in 2030, up from 16.1 percent in 1999. Between 1999 and 2030, the white* population 65+ is projected to increase by 81 percent compared with 219 percent for older minorities, including Hispanics (328 percent), African-Americans* (131 percent), American Indians, Eskimos, and Aleuts* (147 percent), and Asians and Pacific Islanders* (285 percent).

**Excludes persons of Hispanic origin*

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

In 1999, 52 percent of persons 65+ lived in 9 states. California had over 3.6 million; Florida, 2.7 million; New York, 2.4 million; Texas, 2 million; and Pennsylvania, 1.9 million. Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and New Jersey each had well over 1 million.

The 10 jurisdictions with the highest poverty rates for elderly over the period 1997–99 were: Mississippi (19.1 percent);



represent almost

Louisiana (17.1 percent); the District of Columbia (16.5 percent); Arkansas (15.8 percent); West Virginia (15.1 percent); New Mexico (14.8 percent); Texas (14.4 percent); Alabama (13.3 percent); New York (13.2 percent); and North Carolina (12.7 percent).

Persons 65+ were slightly less likely to live in metropolitan areas in 1999 than younger persons (77 percent of the elderly, 81 percent of persons under 65). About 50 percent of older persons lived in the suburbs, 27 percent lived in central cities, and 23 percent lived in nonmetropolitan areas.

MARITAL STATUS

In 1999, older men were much more likely to be married than older women—77 percent of men, 43 percent of women (see Figure 2, page 9). Almost half of all older women in 1999 were widows (45 percent). There were over four times as many widows (8.4 million) as widowers (1.9 million).

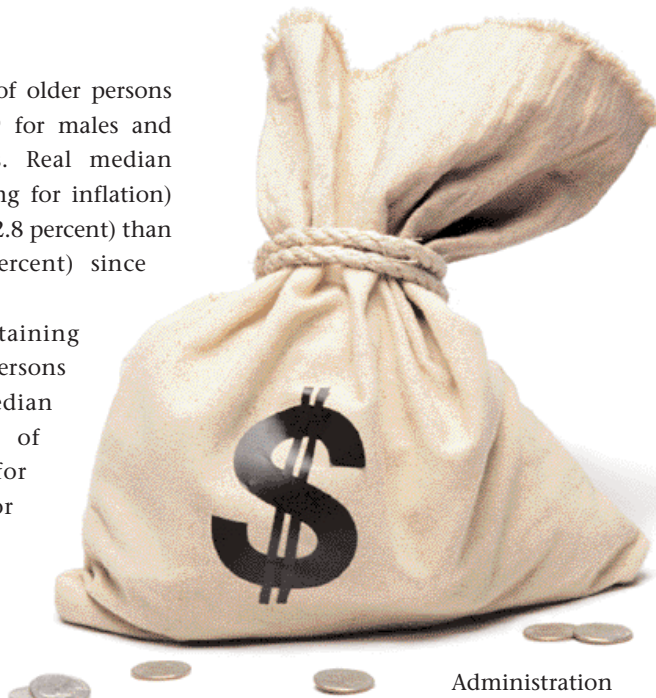
Divorced and separated older persons represented only 8 percent of all older

INCOME

The median income of older persons in 1999 was \$19,079 for males and \$10,943 for females. Real median income (after adjusting for inflation) grew more for men (+2.8 percent) than for women (+1.9 percent) since 1998.

Households containing families headed by persons 65+ reported a median income in 1999 of \$33,148 (\$33,795 for whites, \$25,992 for African-Americans, and \$23,634 for Hispanics). About one of every nine (11.5 percent) family households with an elderly head had incomes less than \$15,000 and 46.9 percent had incomes of \$35,000 or more.

For all older persons reporting income in 1999 (32 million), 34 percent reported less than \$10,000. Only



Administration for older persons in 1998 were Social Security (reported by 90 percent of older persons), income from assets (reported by 62 percent), public and private pensions (reported by 44 percent), and earnings (reported by 21 percent).

In 1998, Social Security benefits accounted for 38 percent of the aggregate income of the older population. The bulk of the remainder consisted of earnings (21 percent), assets (20 percent), and pensions (18 percent).

EDUCATION

The educational level of the older population is increasing. Between 1970 and 1999, the percentage who had completed high school rose from 28 percent to 68 percent. About 15 percent in 1999 had a bachelor's degree or more.

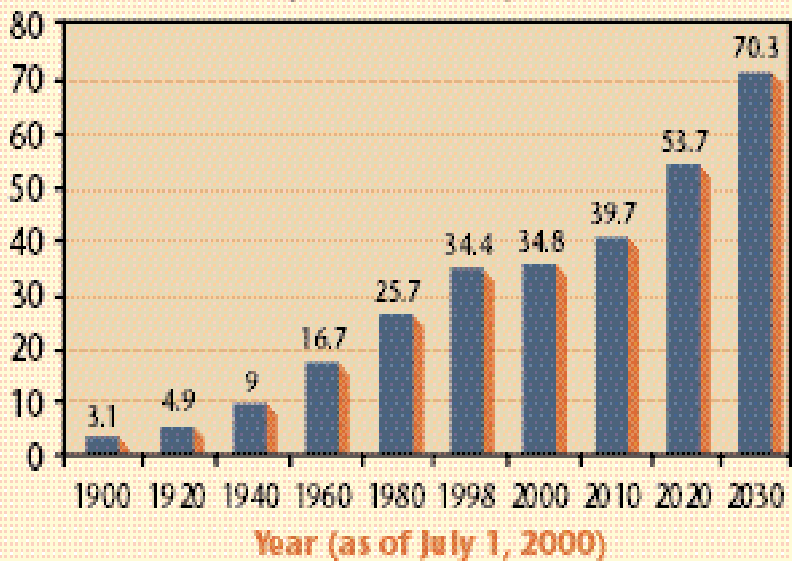
The percentage who had completed high school varied considerably by race and ethnic origin among older persons in 1999: 73 percent of Whites, 68 percent of Asians and Pacific Islanders, 45 percent of African-Americans, and 32 percent of Hispanics.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The majority (67 percent) of older non-institutionalized persons lived in a

Figure 1: Number of Persons 65+, 1900 — 2030

(numbers in millions)



persons in 1999. However, their numbers (2.2 million) have increased significantly since 1990, when approximately 1.5 million of the older population were divorced or separated (see Figure 2).

23 percent reported \$25,000 or more. The median income reported was \$14,425.

The major sources of income as reported by the Social Security

family setting in 1998. Approximately 10.8 million or 80 percent of older men, and 10.7 million or 58 percent of older women lived in families. The proportion living in a family setting decreased with age. Only 45 percent of those 85+ years old lived in a family setting. About 13 percent of older persons (7 percent of men, 17 percent of women) were not living with a spouse but were living with children, siblings, or other relatives. An additional 3 percent of men and 2 percent of women, or 718,000 older persons, lived with nonrelatives.

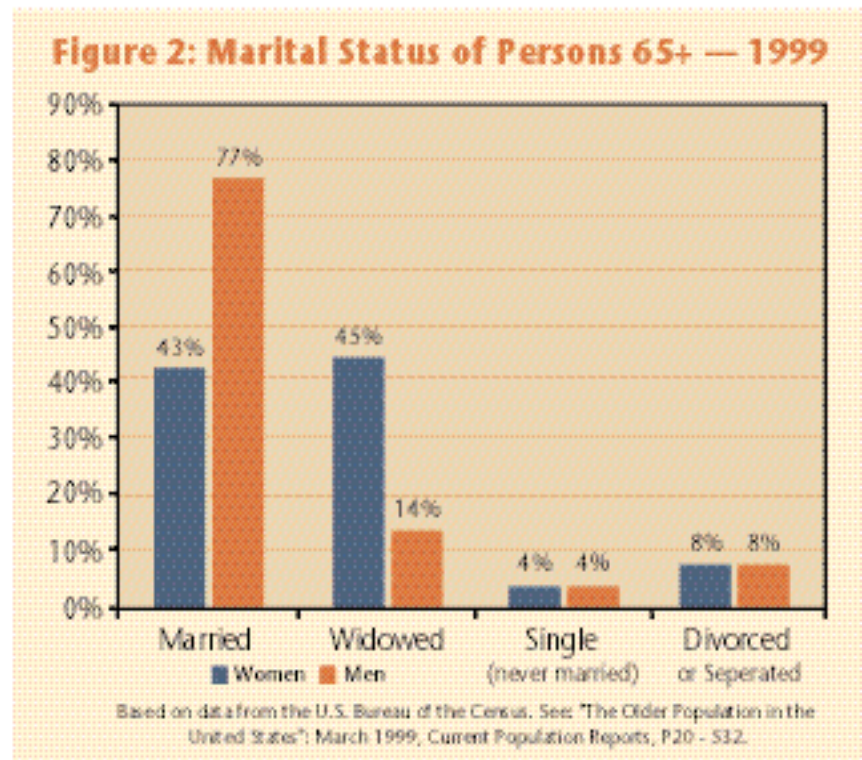
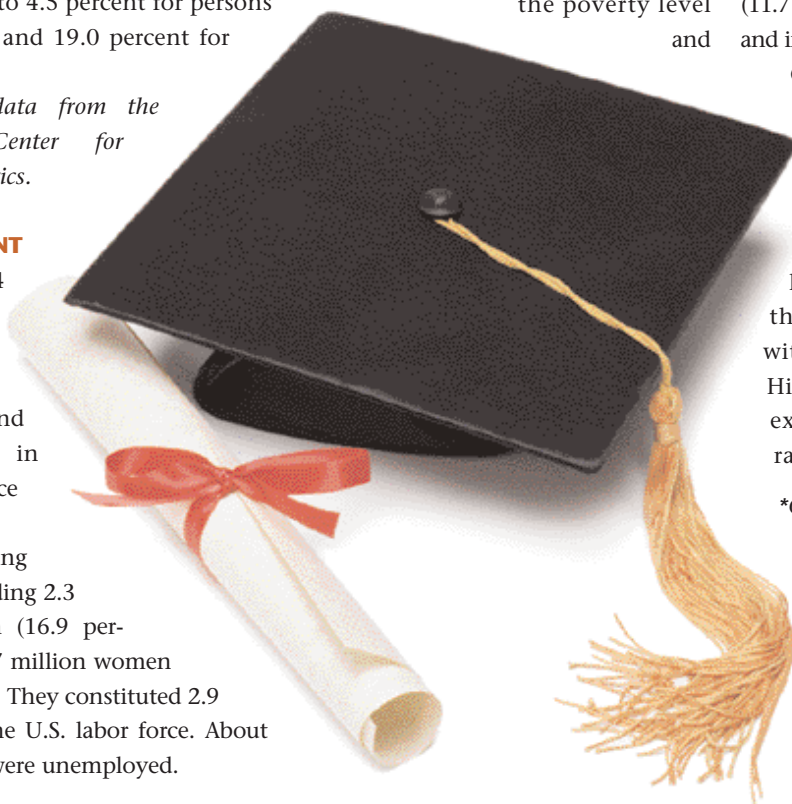
About 31 percent (9.9 million) of all noninstitutionalized older persons in 1998 lived alone (7.6 million women, 2.3 million men). They represented 41 percent of older women and 17 percent of older men. Living alone correlates with advanced age. Among women aged 85 and over, for example, 3 of every 5 lived outside a family setting.

While a small number (1.47 million) and percentage (4.3 percent) of the 65+ population lived in nursing homes in 1997, the percentage increases dramatically with age, ranging from 1.1 percent for persons 65–74 years to 4.5 percent for persons 75–84 years and 19.0 percent for persons 85+.

Based on data from the National Center for Health Statistics.

EMPLOYMENT

In 1999, 4 million (12 percent) Americans age 65 and over were in the labor force (working or actively seeking work), including 2.3 million men (16.9 percent) and 1.7 million women (8.9 percent). They constituted 2.9 percent of the U.S. labor force. About 3.1 percent were unemployed.



POVERTY

About 3.2 million elderly persons were below the poverty* level in 1999. The poverty rate for persons 65+ dropped to a historic low of 9.7 percent. Another 2.0 million or 6.1 percent of the elderly were classified as "near-poor" (income between the poverty level and

125 percent of this level).

One of every 12 (8.3 percent) elderly whites was poor in 1999, compared to 22.7 percent of elderly African-Americans and 20.4 percent of elderly Hispanics. Higher than average poverty rates for older persons correlated with living in central cities (11.7 percent), in rural areas (11.7 percent), and in the South (11.7 percent).

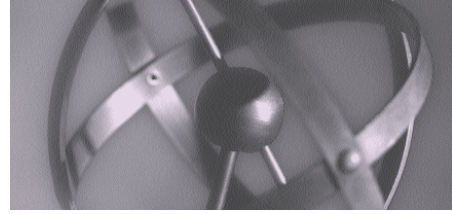
Older women had a higher poverty rate (11.8 percent) than older men (6.9 percent) in 1999. Older persons living alone or with nonrelatives were much more likely to be poor (20.2 percent) than were older persons living with families (5.2 percent). Older Hispanic women who lived alone experienced the highest poverty rates (58.8 percent).

**Calculated on the basis of the official poverty definitions for the years 1997–99.*

(Based on data from Current Population Reports, "Poverty in the United States: 1999," P60–210, issued September 2000, by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.) e

interview

WITH THOMAS E. TRASK



ASK THE SUPERINTENDENT— Senior Adult Ministries

Older adults are one of the greatest untapped resources in the Assemblies of God.



In this short but pointed interview, General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask underscores the importance of the church's role in providing quality ministry to the aging population of adults sitting in its pews and living in its community. It is incumbent that the church make a way for the growth, development, and giftedness of its senior-adult members.

HOW CAN THE CHURCH EFFECTIVELY MINISTER TO SENIOR ADULTS?

TRASK: When I was pastoring, as the church grew, I developed ministry to the various age groups: children, junior high, senior high, college and career, singles, young married couples, middle-aged couples, and senior adults. In doing this, I ministered to each segment of the church.

It's essential that a church provide its senior adults opportunities for fellowship, discipleship, and ministry.

HOW CAN PASTORS UTILIZE OLDER ADULTS IN THEIR CONGREGATIONS?

TRASK: Older adults are one of the greatest untapped resources in the Assemblies

of God. They have given generously to the church in the past, and they continue to give. The MAPS RVers are an excellent example of people who are being utilized because of their gifts and skills.

Senior adults have the resources, time, and energy to minister because they are retiring earlier than ever before. They still want to feel needed and useful and be a blessing to the kingdom of God. They want to be used. I tell pastors not to overlook this group in the church but to make room for them. The wise pastor will not let the seniors sit, sour, and soak. But rather, he or she will utilize their wisdom and experience.

HOW CAN OLDER ADULTS BENEFIT THE CHURCH?

TRASK: I have a great admiration and love for the senior adults in the church. They are more tolerant because they have had many life experiences, and they are more understanding. They have time to pray for their pastor and church. They love their pastor and are complimentary to his or her leadership. They overlook a pastor's

shortcomings and failures. When a church needs a project done, senior adults are the first to volunteer.

I've never understood why a pastor wants to remove the older segment of the church. They have borne the heat

minister to these people and confront them with the gospel.

Senior adults are not always an easy group to reach because they have become set in their ways. That's why it is important to reach children with the

respect and great admiration for him. He was a man of wisdom and passion. He was a people person. I watched him so I could learn from him. My life and my ministry have been greatly enriched as a result of his godly leadership. I also had

Find places of meaningful ministry for older adults where they feel valued and where their gifts can be used to benefit the church.— Trask

of the day. They have taught classes, have held offices, have come for workdays, and rallied around the church. And now, when they come to the time in their lives when they can continue to be fruitful, some pastors want to put them on the shelf. That is a mistake. Senior adults need to be utilized, and they will be some of your best friends. They understand the biblical principles of loyalty to the church and loyalty to leadership. They are a great resource to the church.

HOW CAN THE CHURCH REACH THE OLDER, UNCHURCHED COMMUNITY WITH THE GOSPEL?

TRASK: Many people didn't take time for God in their younger years. They were involved in their occupations and in raising their families. But now they've come to their twilight years. They have time to reflect and meditate on the reality of eternity, and they realize that life doesn't end at the grave. Many are asking, "Where am I going to spend eternity?" It is critical that we

gospel. The chances of a person becoming a Christian are far greater as a child than when a person is in his or her retirement years. But older adults need to be made aware of their need to prepare for eternity. The church must not overlook its responsibility and the privilege it has to minister to older adults.

Whether it's in retirement homes, nursing facilities, or senior housing projects, there are many opportunities to minister and reach senior adults.

WHAT SENIOR ADULT INFLUENCED YOU AND AFFECTED YOUR MINISTRY?

TRASK: Former General Superintendent G. Raymond Carlson had a great influence in my life. He was one of my college professors. He was also my first district superintendent. I pioneered a church under his leadership. I had great

a godly father who was a minister within this church who affected me greatly.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNGER PASTORS CONCERNING OLDER ADULTS?

TRASK: Our younger pastors must show appreciation to the senior adults in their

It's essential that a church provide its senior adults opportunities for fellowship, discipleship, and ministry.

congregations. The Scripture says to give honor to whom honor is due. Have a special service to honor the seniors in your church. Find places of meaningful ministry for older adults where they feel valued and where their gifts can be used to benefit the church.

If I were pastoring today, I would organize the older-adult group to be my prayer support. They know how to pray. They know how to touch God. Older adults can make a world of difference in a young pastor's ministry. **e**



THE *NEW* WORLD OF SENIOR ADULTS

Churches intent on reaching new seniors do well to identify needs, concerns, interests in their community, and then provide programming and activities that encourage involvement.

The statistics are mind-boggling:

- The senior-citizen cohort is growing three times faster than the rest of the American population.
- U.S. citizens over age 65 outnumber the entire population of Canada.
- Of all those who have lived to age 65—in the history of the world—two-thirds are alive today.

Our country is rapidly aging. Many social scientists believe this population shift will produce the most significant social revolution in American history. “It’s going to be of a significance that matches the dawn of the industrial age or the invention of the microchip,” says Ken Dychtwald, researcher and gerontologist.

If your church is concerned with presenting a relevant Christian message to your community, this “age wave” presents a stimulating challenge.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE AGE WAVE

Previous generations of senior citizens have been fairly homogeneous in nature. Churches could offer one senior-adult class and most older adults would be satisfied. But as life expectancy has increased (30 years in the past century; 13 since social security legislation), the age range of what most churches call senior adults can now be 40 years or more—hardly the makings of a homogeneous group.

In addition to extended longevity, there are at least two other dramatic changes occurring in today’s older-adult

generation. Forward-looking churches will do well to consider both in their strategic planning. The first change is that today’s “new seniors” are much different from their parents or grandparents in attitude and behavior. The second change is the emergence of an entirely new generational slice of the pie within the traditional older adult population—“middle adults.”

NEW SENIORS

Many of today’s older adults (regardless of age) are quite removed from the stereotypical senior citizen of yesterday. Their attitudes are different; their behavior is different. *U.S. News & World Report* notes: “What is important about this generation is its difference, not only in size, but in vitality and outlook.” A recent study of this generation by the MacArthur Foundation found that rather than being a time of despair and crisis, the new old are self-confident, in good health, and personally productive. George Brim, director of the study, concluded, “The sense [older adults] all have is that this is the best place to be.”

Unfortunately, most churches continue to operate on traditional assumptions that senior adults are inactive, inert, and ineffectual. As a result, the likelihood of these churches reaching the growing numbers of unchurched new seniors is nearly nonexistent.

What are the attitudes and qualities that distinguish the new seniors from

their predecessors? What are the implications for churches desiring to reach and assimilate them into active church life? Here are some of the most important.

- **New seniors have goals they want to accomplish.** Some of their goals are self-centered, others are altruistic. But new seniors have a clear sense of things they want to do. As a result, church activities that are not goal-directed or have no apparent purpose beyond passing the time will not attract new seniors. In contrast, church activities that are a means by which new seniors can invest their time meaningfully will find much interest.

- **New seniors feel 10–20 years younger than their chronological age.** Ask someone over 55 how old he/she feels and then how old he/she actually is. If the former is at least a decade less than the latter, you may be looking at a new senior. Not only is their self-image underage, their behavior is too. Churches with only one group of senior adults—who act at least as old as they are—will not attract new seniors. Churches with groups and activities that stretch the mind, spirit, and body in new ways will be much more attractive to new seniors.

- **New seniors look forward to the future.** New seniors believe some of their best days are still ahead. They spend time thinking, talking, and planning for tomorrow, not just rehearsing, recalling, and reliving yesterday.

Churches seeking to reach new seniors plan many and varied activities which imply that the future is bright and the opportunities vast.

- **New seniors would rather serve others than be served.** New seniors have discovered one of the great secrets of life: Through giving one gains far more than through selfishly seeking. New seniors want to pass on the experience and wisdom they have gained over their years. Church programs that allow participants to meaningfully give time, effort, money, and energy to others will attract new seniors.

- **New seniors spend time with others who share common interests.** New seniors often join organizations that reflect their passions. Such groups may have a purpose of service, compassion, or support. But their common denominator is action. Churches intent on

- **New seniors eat nutritionally and exercise regularly.** New seniors hold their physical bodies in high esteem and care for them as conscientiously as any other valuable property. Churches that show little concern for maintaining the temple of God imply that they expect the bodies of older adults to become frail and useless. Churches that help individuals to understand and care for the bodies God gave them will attract new seniors.

- **New seniors enjoy going out.** The experiences of life that are yet to be had—locally and beyond—call new seniors to a more active lifestyle than their traditional counterparts. Consequently, new seniors tend to have less time available for long-term commitments—including church activities.

- **New seniors have supportive friendships.** A great secret new seniors

and learn from others. Churches are wise to nurture meaningful human relationships—both within and across generational lines.

- **New seniors have a sense of humor.** The spectrum of life experiences can (and often must) be laughed at. New seniors know that life goes on—as it has for the decades of their own life—and will after they're gone. New seniors do not let the setbacks of life take away their ability to laugh. Churches can exemplify this healthy philosophy of aging by bringing the joy of laughter into their programs and activities.

- **New seniors view retirement as a time for work, study, service, and play.** New seniors believe that retirement is not the end of an old life, but the beginning of a new one. This new life is an opportunity to do new things, gain new insights, go new places, support new causes, meet new people. Senior-adult programming that assumes retirees desire only frivolity and play miscalculate on a critical assumption about the conclusion of work years for many people. In contrast, programs for retirement years that stimulate, challenge, and speak to issues of importance attract new seniors.

In summary, new seniors have a new view of aging. They will not be reached through the old-senior programs and activities of most churches. But they are reachable when the gospel is presented in a manner responsive to the perspective and priorities of this new group of older Americans.

MIDDLE ADULTS

A second change in the senior-adult demographic landscape is the emergence of a new generational cohort called middle adults. Whereas new seniors (of any age) are easily identified by their attitudes, middle adults are easily identified by their age. Men and women in this group are approximately 50–69 years old. They are often retired or partially retired. They are usually healthy and happy with their stage in life. They qualify, by virtue of their age, for many churches' senior-adult activities.

HOW WE CHANGE

Most of us know that young adults act different from older adults. They think differently; they hold different values; they pursue different priorities. The explanation for these changes is not generational, but gerontological. Considerable research has been done in the developmental stages of aging and found that our mental-processing methodology changes predictably with our age.

Senior-adult researcher, David Wolfe, summarizes the major changes that occur in our worldview as we age.¹ What implications might these changes suggest for an effective ministry with older adults? How would senior-adult ministry differ from younger adults?

YOUNG ADULTS

Heavily influenced by peers
Highly materialistic values
More objective
More extrospective
Perceptions in black and white
More rigid
More subordinated to others
More predictable behavior
More price sensitive
Simple ways of determining values
Detail oriented

MATURE ADULTS

Declining influence by peers
Declining materialistic values
More subjective
More introspective
Perceptions in shades of gray
More flexible
More individualistic
More discretionary behavior
More quality sensitive
Complex ways of determining values
Whole-picture oriented

1. David Wolfe, "Targeting the Mature Mind," *American Demographics*, March 1994, 32.

—Charles Arn, Ed.D., Monrovia, California.

reaching new seniors do well to identify needs, concerns, interests in their community, and then provide programming and activities that encourage involvement.

have discovered is that relationships are regenerative. To the new senior, people are the most stabilizing ingredient in an often incongruous life. New seniors go out of their way to be with, enjoy, help,

But middle adults most definitely do not consider themselves seniors.

Gail Sheehy, in her book, *New Passages*, discusses the middle-adult generation and observes: "American society is only in its infancy of this adult revolution.... The territory of the mid-fifties, sixties, and beyond is changing so fundamentally it now opens up a whole new passage and stage of life." In other words, there is such a difference in the worldview of middle adults (50–69 years) and senior adults (70+ years) that it is creating a generation gap as distinct as any other in America.

Why the term *middle adults*? Because that's just what they are. Upon entering this stage, most have 20–30 years of life ahead of them and are in their middle years of adulthood. If adult life spans the years between 20 and 80, the mid-point for many is 50.

EMERGING ADULTS

18–29 yrs.

YOUNG ADULTS

30–49 yrs.

MIDDLE ADULTS

50–69 yrs.

SENIOR ADULTS

70–79 yrs.

ELDERLY ADULTS

80+ yrs.

There are five lifestages of adulthood. (See list.) People at each stage have unique goals, challenges, and priorities. Some creative churches are restructuring their adult edu-

cational ministry around these lifestages with staff, classes, support groups, and outreach targeting each life-stage.

Many churches find their existing senior-adult group does not attract middle adults. It probably never will. Why?

1. Middle adults do not perceive themselves as seniors. Anything that remotely resembles an activity for "those old people" repels them. Even if the activity seems interesting, if it is for senior adults, most middle adults won't attend. It betrays their self-image.

2. Most senior groups are saturated. This means the group can no longer add additional new members, but only replace members who leave. Like a saturated sponge that can hold no more water, a saturated group can hold no more members. Groups of any age or size will saturate, but senior-adult groups

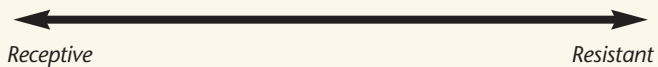
IDENTIFYING RECEPTIVE SENIORS

When considering an evangelistic strategy for older adults, recall Christ's words: "Open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (John 4:35*). There are some people in our communities whom the Holy Spirit has prepared; it is our responsibility to find those ripe harvest fields.

What about senior adults? Are all seniors equally receptive to becoming Christians and members of your church? Probably not. Some seniors will be more responsive to your evangelistic efforts than others. Identifying those receptive seniors whom God has prepared—those ripe unto harvest—is a key part of effective evangelism.

The Receptivity-Resistance Axis is a helpful tool for understanding why people are more or less open to accepting Christ and becoming His disciples at a given point in time.

"RECEPTIVITY-RESISTANCE AXIS"



Every non-Christian—including every non-Christian senior adult—can be located somewhere on this Receptivity-Resistance Axis. This continuum describes a person's openness to changing his/her religious lifestyle—to becoming a new creature in Christ. Some people are receptive—the good soil (Matthew 13:1–9). Other are resistant to the gospel—the rocky soil. When Jesus concluded this parable with, "he who has ears, let him hear," He was suggesting that the good news would not be heard and received equally. We are called to identify those who will hear, listen, and respond.

Not only does this R-R Axis help us understand that people are at different places in their readiness to respond to the gospel, it should be noted that people move back and forth on this axis over the course of their lifetimes. Sometimes a person will be receptive to the gospel, while at other times he or she will be resistant. A person who is resistant to the gospel today may be receptive 2 months from now.

What causes people to move back and forth on this R-R scale? It is transitional life events.

Transitional life events determine a person's place on the scale as well as their movement toward or away from receptivity to the gospel. The more disruptive the event is to a person's psychological equilibrium, the more immediate and dramatic will be their movement toward receptivity. The more stable and unchanging their life situation, the more resistant the person will be.

The key question is this: If some older adults in your community are open, interested, and receptive to the gospel, how do you find them?

The Senior Stress Scale on page 16 will help identify transitional events in the lives of older adults. These events have been shown to be indicators of a person's receptivity to Christian conversion. Seniors who rate high on this scale will be more receptive to conversion than those who rate lower.

The number to the right indicates the relative severity of the event. These transition events can and do compound on each other. A person who has experienced major physical problems (53) and retired (45) during the past year will be more receptive than had either event happened separately.

Events that occurred between 18–36 months ago should be counted at half the point value. The farther away in time the event occurred, the less influential the event is in determining a person's present receptivity. In contrast, the more recent the occurrence, the more receptive the person.

* Scripture references are from the *New International Version*.

—Charles Arn, Ed.D., Monrovia, California.

SENIOR STRESS SCALE

ADULT AGE LIFE EVENT	RANK
1. Death of a spouse	100
2. Divorce	73
3. Move to nursing/retirement home	70
4. Marital separation	65
5. Death of a close family member	64
6. Major physical problems	53
7. Marriage or remarriage	50
8. Realizing a personal lack of dreams/purpose	47
9. Financial loss of retirement money	47
10. Forced early retirement	46
11. Unable to drive	45
12. Marital reconciliation	45
13. Retirement	45
14. Spouse confined to retirement home	45
15. Change of health of family member	44
16. Gain a new family member	39
17. Change in financial state	38
18. Death of a close friend	37
19. Difficulty in getting medical insurance	36
20. Change in number of arguments with spouse	35
21. Mortgage over \$100,000	31
22. Foreclosure of mortgage/loan	30
23. Sense of not being needed	29
24. Outstanding personal achievement	28
25. Spouse begins or stops work	26
26. Significantly decreased contact with children or friends	25
27. Revision of personal habits	24
28. Significantly less contact with support group/s	24
29. Trouble with the boss	23
30. Minor physical problems	20
31. Change in recreation habits	19
32. Change in church activities	19
33. Change in social activities	18
34. Loans of less than \$100,000	17
35. Change in sleeping habits	16
36. Change in number of family get-togethers	15
37. Change in eating habits	15
38. Vacations	13
39. Christmas	12
40. Minor law violation	11

As you think and pray about the non-Christian seniors in your network of friends, neighbors and relatives, use this stress scale as one way to identify those whom the Holy Spirit may be preparing to invite into the Kingdom. Those who are in the midst of significant life-changes are most likely to be receptive to God's need-meeting love, as expressed through your church's senior-adult ministry. Watch...listen...be sensitive to these times of need...and then be ready to "give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

**Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

—Charles Arn, Ed.D., Monrovia, California.

are particularly prone to this phenomenon. A group becomes saturated because after 2 years together, the history, traditions, and relationships of members in the group have become so strong they inadvertently keep newcomers out. This describes the condition of most senior-adult groups in churches today.

3. When a church has only one senior-adult group, that group tends to attract only one narrow slice of the mosaic of persons over 55 years of age and excludes the rest. An important principle for successful groups—including senior-adult groups—is: The more things members have in common, the more likely the group will succeed. People who share interests with others in an existing senior-adult group fit in and come back. Those who don't, won't.

4. Most senior-adult groups do not prioritize outreach to prospective new members. In a recent survey we conducted of 500 churches, the leaders of senior-adult groups rated outreach as the least effective of all activities. The natural tendency for established groups—senior-adult groups in particular—is to turn inward. As a consequence, outreach becomes less and less a priority.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE ADULTS

Here are some of the life issues of middle adults that help us better understand them and better anticipate their unique needs and concerns.

1. They are at their peak of influence and possess considerable energy.

2. Their children have moved out (or soon will, they hope), and they are facing an empty nest.

3. They are anticipating, if not experiencing, the transition into retirement.

4. They are spending more time in leisure activities.

5. Their self-image is changing as they experience a decline in physical ability.

6. They are facing the aging of their parents and associated responsibilities.

7. Women, in the later stages of middle adulthood, begin facing the prospect of widowhood.

THERE'S ~~GOLD~~ SILVER IN THEM THAR' HILLS

A common stereotype about older adults is that they are caretakers, not caregivers; resource consumers, rather than resource providers. The truth, however, is that older adults represent considerable value to a local church. Here are a few ways senior adults are potential solutions rather than potential causes to common church problems:

COMMON CHURCH PROBLEM	THE HIDDEN TREASURE
1. Surveys indicate that a pastor's most common frustration is a lack of dedicated laypeople to do the work of the church.	1. Senior adults average two to three times as many available hours for church-related activities as any other age group.
2. Financial shortfalls are the most common reason for not adding buildings, programs, and/or staff.	2. In a given year, one senior-adult church member will give seven times the amount of money that a baby boomer member in the same church will give.
3. Members transferring jobs and/or moving to another community account for 3–5 percent membership loss each year.	3. Senior adults change their address an average of once every 12 years, compared to the national average of once every 7 years.
4. Low institutional loyalty is a common characteristic of baby boomers. Most churches find it difficult to solicit membership or even long-term commitment from this age group.	4. High institutional loyalty is a common characteristic of senior adults. When they join, they stay and are committed.
5. Biblical illiteracy is common among laity in many churches. As a result, pastoral teaching often remains at the elementary level.	5. Most senior-adult members have been Christians for years. Having experienced life's mountains and valleys, they have a wealth of wisdom to share.

—Charles Arn, Ed.D., Monrovia, California.

A NEW MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY

Consider broadening your church's older-adult ministry to include middle adults. You will at least double the size of your ministry and certainly broaden your impact in more lives. Here are five steps to get started.

1. Establish a task force of five to seven middle adults. Have the group develop a purpose statement for a middle-adult ministry that includes plans to function in four key areas: a) service, b) spiritual development, c) outreach, and d) fellowship.

2. Survey the middle adults in your church. Find out how many middle adults there are in proportion to your

total membership. What family and marital status are represented? What are their common concerns, needs, and interests? One way to learn more about the worldviews of middle adults is through the following questions: What do you wonder about most? (To what questions do you wish you had answers?) What do you wish for most? (If you could have anything you wanted, what are your dreams?) What do you worry about most? (What keeps you up at night, gives you ulcers?) Categorize their responses.

3. Conduct a demographic analysis of your community. Identify the number of adults in your community in


each of the five adult life-stages, including middle adults. Compile whatever other information is available that would help you better understand this group. Such information is often available at the local library or Chamber of Commerce.

4. Plan two high-visibility events targeted for and promoted specifically to middle adults in your church and/or community. A high-visibility event is a church-sponsored activity that is designed to be of interest to the middle adults you are trying to reach. Plan your event based on one or more issues identified in your research from Steps 2 and 3.

5. Survey the people who attend the event to learn more about their life interests and priorities. Additional responses to the three questions from Step 2 will help you gain valuable insight into their priorities. From this information you will have the key to planning exciting, need-meeting opportunities for your new middle-adult ministry for years to come.

A MAGNIFICENT NEW OPPORTUNITY

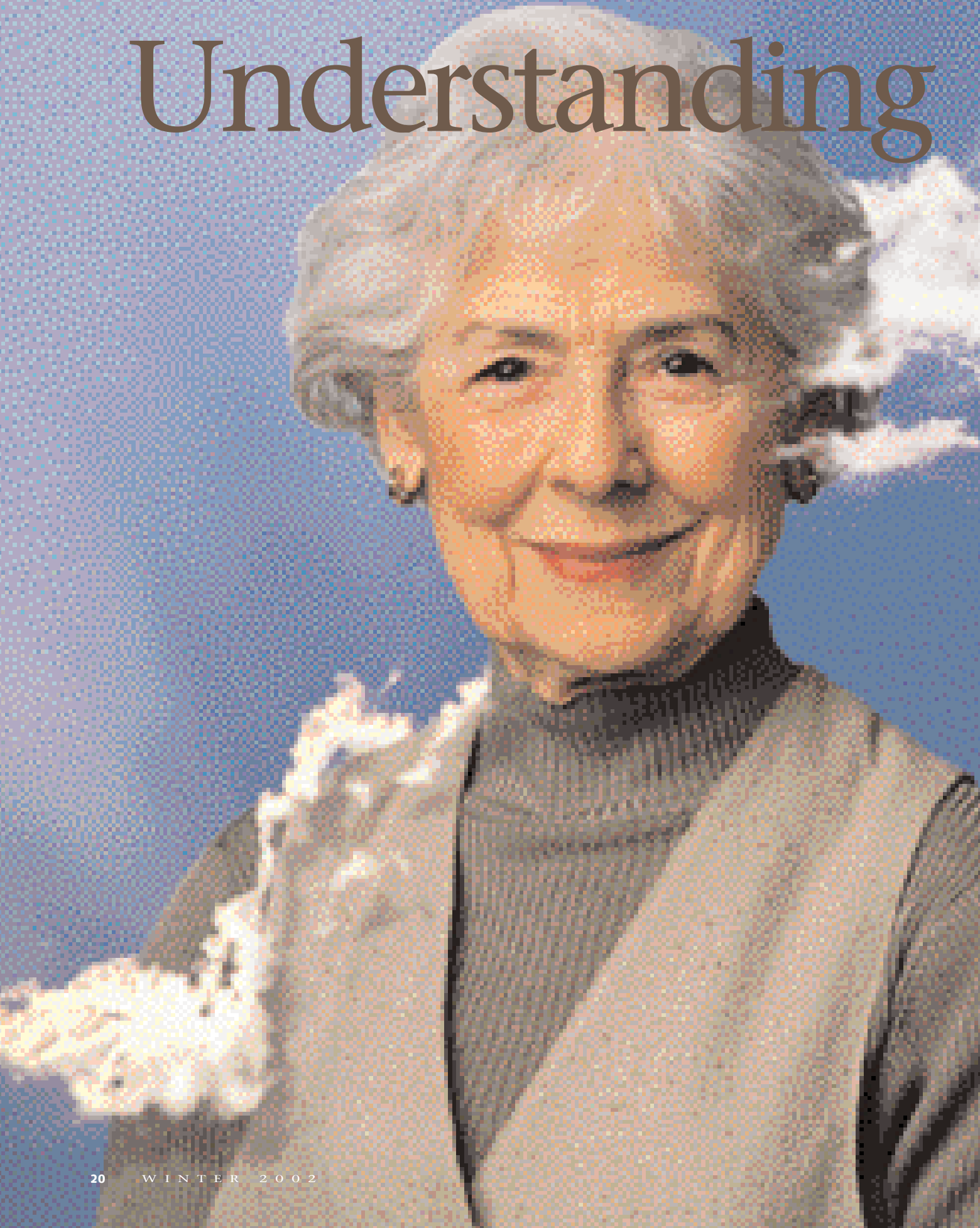
Think, talk, and pray about the new opportunity your church may be facing. It is the opportunity of creative new ministry and outreach to the “surfers of the age wave.” Older adults are here; and more are coming each year.

While some senior ministries reflect a culture of bygone years, yours can be a model of invigorating new life and growth. More and more churches are realizing that the graying of America presents new possibilities to influence and reach adults who truly are receptive to the good news. Why not join the excitement? Surf's up...let's catch the age wave. 

Charles Arn, Ed.D., is president of Church Growth, Inc., Monrovia, California. Charles Arn has written *Growing in Love. Along with his father, he has also written, Catch the Age Wave and Live Long and Love It. They have also produced The Grand Way, a video training series for senior adults.*



Understanding



Today's BY RICHARD D. DOBBINS Senior Adults

Confronting the ignorance and myths that cloud our understanding of aging and older people

Approximately one out of every five Americans is 65 years of age or older. And the numbers are growing.

As the years and quality of life are lengthened, old age is being redefined. For example, some sociologists are extending middle age up to 65. People from 66 to 75 are referred to as the young old. Those from 76 to 85 are considered the old, old. People over 86 years of age are referred to as the frail elderly. We spend one-fourth of our lives growing up and three-fourths of our lives growing old.

Although our society spends time and money helping older people understand teenagers, very little time or money is spent helping younger people understand those who are older. In fact, there is a tendency on the part of younger people to isolate older people from their activities. Perhaps this is a way that some have of not dealing with their fear of death. However, there needs to be a better way of dealing with death than dying young or pretending that you will never be old.

One healthy way of dealing with aging is to stay current with information about aging and maintain an ongoing dialogue with people who are getting older. After all, getting older is the price we all pay for living so long; and, when confronted with the other option, most of us are willing to pay that price.

Let's confront the ignorance and myths that cloud our understanding of aging and older people by circulating accurate information.

TEN POPULAR MYTHS ABOUT AGING

1. A majority of those over 65 are senile. Fact: Only 2 to 3 percent of those over 65 are institutionalized for any psychiatric illness.

2. A large percentage of the aged is living in institutions for long-term care. Fact: Less than 5 percent of those

over 65 and less than 10 percent of those over 75 are in long-term care facilities.

3. Aged drivers have more accidents than younger drivers. Fact: Drivers over age 65 have fewer accidents per driver than those under age 65.

4. Most older workers cannot work as effectively as younger workers. Fact: The majority of older workers can work just as effectively as younger workers. Our Assemblies of God MAPS program is evidence of this.

5. Most older people are set in their ways and unable to change. Fact: Most older people are able to change if they choose to change.

6. It is almost impossible for older people to learn new things. Fact: Sometimes older people learn at a slower pace, but their ability to learn does not decrease appreciably.

7. Most old people have no interest in or capacity for sexual relations. Fact: Most people over age 65 retain their interest in and their capacity for sexual relations.

8. In general, most old people are alike. Fact: Older people retain their uniqueness as individuals just as do people of any age.

9. Most old people are socially isolated and lonely. Fact: Less than 20 percent of retirees indicate loneliness to be a problem for them.

10. The health and socioeconomic status of older people will continue to decline as we move into the 21st century. Fact: The health and socioeconomic status of older people will improve as we move into the 21st century.

You perform a much needed and valuable service to your congregation by circulating this kind of information from the pulpit and through your church publications.

SOME ELDERLY PEOPLE NEED SPECIAL MINISTRY

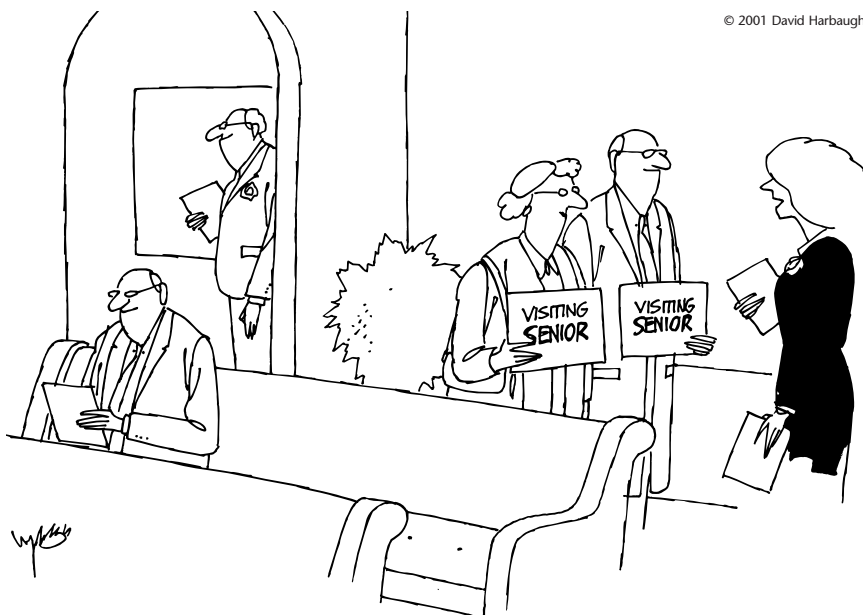
It is true that catastrophic illness, poverty, family, and community neglect do affect a significant but small percentage of older Americans. The church must address the needs of these people for spiritual, emotional, and practical support. This can be done by: expressing their concerns from the pulpit; pastoral visits and prayer; carrying in meals; volunteer transportation; and helping the elderly locate available community services.

Be familiar with community services that are available to your elderly through your local social services department. Publicize that information regularly in your church publications. Become acquainted with people in the social services system before these services are needed. This way, when a member needs the services and you contact the agency on their behalf, the staff there will be familiar with you and your church.

OLDER PEOPLE ENJOY RESPECT

The Old and New Testaments ascribe a place of honor and respect for those who are older (Leviticus 19:32; Ephesians 6:2). From time to time, encourage members to express their appreciation to older people in the congregation. Remind the older people that honor and respect carry a responsibility to show younger people a godly example of the stewardship of life.

There is plenty of excellent sermon material for challenging the elderly and honoring them at the same time in



© 2001 David Harbaugh

"You don't need the discounts. All of our seating is free."

Bible stories about: Enoch, Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Anna, Simeon, Zechariah, Elizabeth, and many others.

RETAINING SENIOR ADULTS

Senior adults are a great spiritual resource for the church. Through the years, they have learned the importance of prayer and can be counted on to undergird the church with prayer. Challenge them to do this. Since many of them have their days free, schedule specific times for them to meet for prayer. Show an interest in their prayer ministry. Let them know how much you depend on their prayers. Periodically recognize their prayer ministry publicly.

The senior adults in your congregation have time to get involved in many volunteer activities. Unlike young adults and those dealing with midlife madness, senior adults are no longer rushing through life. Providing

in worship. Standing for more than 15 or 20 minutes becomes tiresome for older adults. However, they do not want to be seated if this gives the impression they are not as involved in worship as those who are standing; or, that those who are standing love Jesus more than they do. Frequently giving people pastoral permission to sit or stand in worship will make older folks and everyone else more comfortable.

Insensitivity to these considerations has resulted in a silent exodus of senior adults from many congregations. With them go their volunteer services, their prayer ministry, and their financial resources. The wise pastor sees the folly of unnecessarily sacrificing these resources.

HELPING SENIOR ADULTS GET MORE OUT OF LIFE

Bring to your seniors' attention the guidelines gerontologists suggest for

aging deprive them of the joy of long-term goals. Many people have produced their most significant work in later years. These include Grandma Moses, Winston Churchill, Colonel Sanders, and Ronald Reagan.

3. Save enough money to maintain a standard of living during retirement. Studies show that poverty intensifies the effects of the aging process.

4. Establish and maintain warm relationships with people of all ages and from all walks of life.

5. Be adaptable and flexible.

6. Try new ideas. Start with recipes, rearrange your furniture, plant a garden, and tackle computer skills.

7. Keep a positive faith and philosophy of life. I wish everyone could face his or her later years with the flair of a friend of mine. He was in his midseventies when I asked him, "Tom, as you reached the place in your life where you knew you would not be here as long as

The last two or three decades of life can be our most productive and enjoyable years. They are God's gift to us. What we make of them is our gift to Him.

meaningful projects for them serves to keep them involved and to get many things done that the church budget may not be able to afford.

In planning your worship services, don't forget the senior adults. Music is a great bridge between generations. In catering to the musical preferences of younger people, don't forget to include songs and choruses that are familiar to your senior adults. They will enjoy singing the new choruses preferred by the young much more if some recognition is given to hymns and gospel songs that mean so much to them.

Be aware of the decibel level of your worship. Somewhere between the volume level that pleases the young and the volume level that pleases the old there is a balance that both find comfortable.

Create a worship environment that gives people permission to stand or sit

helping them get more out of the last third of life. Here are some of their suggestions:


1. Maintain sensible health benefits. These include diet, exercise, rest, and medical care. Seniors living alone have a tendency to neglect their diet and to get little exercise. Community dietitians can speak at your seniors meetings and provide valuable dietary information. Making appropriate exercise a regular part of your seniors meetings will also be helpful.

2. Keep involved in life. Encourage your seniors to stay mentally fit. They can read, go back to school, walk, and play. Jesus said work is an important part of life—not a curse (John 5:17). Having nothing to do and nothing to look forward to can lead to a premature death. Having a reason to live is related to living well and living long. Don't let

you had been here already, how did you deal with that?"

"Oh, that's easy," he said. "I began to realize that any day above ground is a good day and to see each day for the rich gift from God that it is. I determined not to let any concern about tomorrow rob me of my celebration of the moment."

Later, I thought, *Isn't it a shame we have to live so long to become so wise?*

The last two or three decades of life can be our most productive and enjoyable years. They are God's gift to us. What we make of them is our gift to Him. 

Richard D. Dobbins, Ph.D., an Assemblies of God minister, is a clinical psychologist and founder and clinical director of EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.



interview

WITH CHARLES ARN AND
TIMOTHY STARR

The Senior Surge—Leading in the Age Wave



CHARLES ARN



TIMOTHY STARR

The surging population of older adults in America has immense implications for the church. The senior brigade is growing three times faster than any other segment of the population. Forward-looking churches will do well to consider in their strategic planning the role older adults, both churched and unchurched, can have.

Stephen Sparks, director of Senior Adult Ministries for the Assemblies of God, visited with two longtime leaders in senior-adult ministry to get their insights on how the church can effectively reach and minister to older adults.

Charles Arn has been involved in research and communication of church-growth insights and principles for the last 25 years. For the past 10 years his interest has been directed in how the principles of effective outreach and church growth can be applied to the older-adult community.

Timothy Starr is director of Christian Seniors in Action, an organization committed to helping senior-adult leaders in the local church. He also serves as the senior-adult pastor at The Peoples Church in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and on the Age-Wave advisory board for Canada.

WHY IS MINISTRY TO SENIOR ADULTS IMPORTANT?

STARR: Today there are more people over 65 than under 18. As I visit churches, pastors talk about the growing number of gray-haired people in their congregations.

Many more people today are retiring in their midfifties. We want them to retire into active ministry. Ministry by senior adults gives a church an opportunity to further the gospel.

ARN: With an increasing number of senior adults comes an increasing number of non-Christian senior adults. Many churches are ill-equipped to understand, respond to, and effectively reach out to non-Christian older adults. The church needs to be confronted with this challenge because senior adults are much closer to death than others.

HOW CAN CHURCHES STRENGTHEN THEIR MINISTRY TO SENIOR ADULTS?

ARN: A few years ago, we sent a questionnaire to senior-adult leaders. We asked them to rate their church's strengths and weaknesses in four areas. The first area was ministry: How well was their church equipping senior adults for ministry? The second area was fellowship: How well did their senior-adult ministry provide a sense of belonging and fellowship? The third area was outreach: How would they grade their senior ministry in reaching nonbelievers? The fourth area was spiritual growth and development. How would they rate their ministry to seniors in helping them with their spiritual

walk? We discovered that most churches are fairly strong in fellowship. The weakest area was evangelism.

The phrase *rocking chair theology* suggests there are some older adults who feel they have put in their time, effort, money, and energy. They are encouraging younger adults to take over and let seniors sit back in their psychological, if not physical, rocking chairs. It's a shame because senior adults have so much experience, wisdom, and, in many cases, biblical and scriptural foundations and strengths.

We also need to strengthen our evangelism to senior adults. The typical mindset in most senior-adult groups is that the group exists for the benefit of the seniors. This is a caretaking and

assumption that pastors who have retired from being senior pastors have adequate knowledge and training to lead a growing senior-adult ministry in the 21st century. They have a good heart, but these pastors who retired into a senior-adult leadership role typically bring with them a retirement, caretaking, and self-service mentality.

STARR: Leaders and pastors may not be expecting enough from their senior adults. Senior adults have much to offer because of their life experience. Also, some senior adults have more money for ministry. While seniors may be busy with trips, recreation, and golf, they also have more time for ministry.

WHAT ARE SOME WEAKNESSES IN SENIOR-ADULT MINISTRY IN MANY CHURCHES?

ARN: Some senior-adult leaders assume they can do older-adult ministry today the same way it's been done in the past. Today people are living longer and the average life expectancy continues to increase. At the turn of the 20th century, life expectancy was 30 years less than it is today. In the early days of senior-adult ministry, it was fairly homogenous in nature. A church could have one senior-adult group, and all people who qualified by age were involved. Today, even the term *senior adult* is increasingly seen as politically incorrect. Churches that use the term

We surveyed senior-adult leaders and asked them to list their training for senior-adult ministry. The most common response was: Forty years in the pastorate.— Arn



self-serving mentality. This philosophy may be reflected in travel, trips, monthly potlucks. Some senior adults expect only the church staff to call on seniors who are homebound or in the hospital.

Leaders in senior-adult ministries have a great deal to do with the results of that ministry. Often the senior-adult leader or senior-adult pastor is a retired minister. We surveyed senior-adult leaders and asked them to list their training for senior-adult ministry. The most common response was: Forty years in the pastorate. There is a mistaken

Many senior adults can give much more than they are doing now. They can carry more ministry if it is expected of them. But sometimes leaders let senior adults relax and allow them to drift into a lackadaisical attitude. One man I know drives four cancer patients from a small town in Ontario to a major cancer center once a week. He does this to show the love of Christ and to quietly evangelize. We need more people to dedicate themselves to this type of ministry where they are touching unbelievers in practical ways.

senior adult to describe their ministry will keep some people away because of the term.

We suggest three age segments in senior-adult ministry. *Middle adults* describes people between ages 50 and 69. The issues, challenges, and lifestyles they have are typically different from the group we call *senior adults*—those between 70 and 79 years of age. Our third group, *elderly adults*, is 80 years or older. Each area requires a unique approach to leadership priority and training.

STARR: Smaller churches are limited in the number of seniors they have. If they have a program, it may be small. There's an experiment in Calgary, Alberta, where one pastor is serving three smaller churches, and in each church he has a senior program and helps them with hospital and homebound visitation of senior adults. The pastor visits each church every other Sunday. Each church supports him so he can be full-time in the ministry. And these smaller churches that would not normally have a pastor have one. He is also helping their mature adults do the work of the ministry.

One of the weaknesses in many churches is that pastors are neglecting ministry to shut-ins, even those in the hospital. Pastors may not be able to make hospital visits every day, but we can organize and train our seniors for this ministry.

WHAT DO CHURCH LEADERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT TODAY'S SENIOR ADULTS?

ARN: The most significant change in paradigms that could occur in the minds of church leaders toward senior adults is the potential they bring to helping the church accomplish its mission and purpose. There's a gold mine (or maybe the correct term is silver mine) in the church's older adults that is frequently overlooked.

Senior adults can make some unique contributions. Seniors typically give financially to the church six to seven times more than a typical baby boomer.

There are also time resources. Retirees have more discretionary time that can be used for ministry, but senior adults must believe what you are asking them to do is significant for them to invest their time.

Seniors bring spiritual maturity. Typically they have served Christ and the church for years and have experienced many of life's ups and downs. They can be a model of strength and a resource in the church. The ability to provide and share in a mentoring relationship with younger adults in any variety of life experiences they have faced can be a great asset.

WHAT ARE SOME PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR IMPROVING SENIOR-ADULT MINISTRY?

STARR: Pastors can encourage their mature adults to develop a bulletin, magazine, newspaper, or letter—a publication that addresses the needs and concerns of mature adults.

Pastors can plan a united senior-adult endeavor with other churches in their communities. For example, celebrate aging and character. Eight or more churches could come together and have

a great ministry together.

Once a year pastors can celebrate the Lord's Supper with their senior adults. We do that at The People's Church, and it is significant to have the pastor and his wife serve the Lord's Supper.

Have an annual senior-adult Sunday. Appoint a committee to plan this event. Make it a big deal. Give a boutonniere or corsage to all the seniors. Recognize the oldest senior. Sing hymns from the hymnbook.

Meet with mature adults and decide how they can help your church grow. Challenge them to reach out. Have people present positive views of what the church is doing and how it is ministering to people in the community. Include the needs of people that are not being served. Discuss how they can reach out into their community with the gospel. For example, seniors can take homemade cake or bread or something from the church to the newcomers in your community.

ARN: A church can plan a community-wide, high-visibility event specifically targeted toward older adults. This event needs to address interests, issues, or challenges that older adults face. This shows that the church has a relevant message to the issues of older adults. A Lutheran church close to us had a Celebration of Life

Leaders and pastors may not be expecting enough from their senior adults. Senior adults have much to offer because of their life experience.— Starr



There is a mistaken assumption that pastors who have retired from being senior pastors have adequate knowledge and training to lead a growing senior-adult ministry in the 21st century.— Arn



Sunday. It was not exclusively for older adults, but advertising was intentionally sent to senior-citizen centers. Many unchurched older adults attended. The sermon was about the importance of a wholesome, holistic life (including the spiritual, intellectual, and relational aspects of life). After the service, several organizations had booths for participants to visit. The hospital checked blood pressure and cholesterol levels. The Chamber of Commerce listed facilities and housing that were available. Several financial counselors helped senior adults with financial issues. Through this special Sunday, the church built a bridge to older adults in the community.

Another idea involves spiritual gifts and older adults. A spiritual gift-discovery process helps retired adults redefine themselves and rediscover who they are and their value to their church and community. Older adults need to learn about, explore, and discover their particular gift or gifts, and then ask how they can use their gifts in ministry. For many older adults this is a renewed lease on life that gives them a reason to get up in the morning and get out of their rocking chairs.

WHAT SUGGESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR A PASTOR WHO WANTS TO START A SENIOR-ADULT MINISTRY?

STARR: Pick three to five positive,

forward-looking senior adults, sit with them, and show the vision of what they can do to help people. Help them write a mission statement for their ministry. Encourage them, give them direction, and their ministry will grow.

ARN: Churches need to look at their activities with older adults in terms of a ministry rather than just a social group. When leaders of a church commit to an older-adult ministry, it provides an umbrella under which a variety of creative things can be done. Typically, there is a significant difference between an older-adult ministry and a senior-adult group. Many times churches believe their senior-adult group satisfies their responsibility to provide ministry to seniors. But with a ministry view or paradigm, it should encourage a church to go beyond just the existence of a group.

Churches that may only have one senior-adult group can start a second senior-adult group. New groups equal new growth. Many senior-adult groups and their members have been together for so long they have inadvertently become sealed off to any potential growth from outsiders. Rather than force open a group that is saturated, it's easier to establish an additional

older-adult group within the umbrella of the older-adult ministry.

ANY CLOSING THOUGHTS ON MINISTRY TO OLDER ADULTS?

ARN: Examination and clarification of purpose is the first step in a commitment to enlarge a church's senior-adult ministry. It's easy for a church to have a senior-adult ministry and never ask: Toward what end are we working? Many senior-adult groups simply provide ministry to those who are in the church who have put in their dues.

Senior-adult ministry is important. A church needs to define the reason and purpose for older-adult ministry. Hopefully, that purpose contributes to the overarching purpose of the church—to respond to Christ's command to go and make disciples. Unless the older-adult ministry is contributing to that disciple-making mission, it's irrelevant.

STARR: We need to remind senior adults to prioritize their time. Psalm 90:12 states, "Teach us to number our days." Moses was 100 years of age when he wrote Psalm 90. Psalm 71 is considered the mature-adult psalm. Verses 17 and 18 remind us that as long as God gives us the strength of life, we are to show forth His power and strength in our lives to others. **e**

BOOMERS, BUILDERS, AND BEYOND

Ageism is a pervasive, negative attitude toward aging and people who are growing old. In the church, ageism can be thoughtlessness toward the needs of the elderly or a failure to include them in the main ministry roles of the church.

Twenty years ago there was little need for an article on ageism. The word *ageism* is not even listed in the 1980 *Funk & Wagnalls Comprehensive Dictionary*. Today racism and sexism are recognized as the unwholesome attitudes they are. But unfortunately, ageism is alive and well—even in the church.

You might be thinking, *Not my church*. As you observe your congregation on Sunday morning, you probably see many adults over the age of 60. Are their needs being met or even considered? Are they involved in ministry

roles, or are they just filling pews?

Left unchecked, ageism has the potential to destroy a church's vital intergenerational relationships. No simple answers exist for removing the stigma of ageism. As with sexism and racism, it is not easy to stamp out negative stereotypes. But in the church—where the opportunities for mutual growth, development, and support are not only encouraged but commanded by Christ—we must accept the challenge to redefine age as wealth and the elderly as blessings.¹



BY ARLENE ALLEN

LEADING THE CHARGE AGAINST AGEISM

HOW HAS THE CHURCH RESPONDED TO THE INCREASE OF OLDER ADULTS?

In their book, *Catch the Age Wave*, Win and Charles Arn state, "Although some denominations have developed a system of retirement homes, they minister to only a very small percentage of church members. Other denominations have a senior department, but it usually is combined with other departments and given rather low priority. When one looks for an aggressive outreach program for older adults, it is very difficult to find one in the structure of most denominations today. To date, most local churches have not awakened to the opportunities and ministry potential in the present and future senior surge."²

Many churches and denominational colleges and universities are not adequately addressing the needs of the senior surge in their ministries and courses of study. Without a vision, nothing will be accomplished; dreams alone are not enough to accomplish the task if church leaders have little or no training in the area of senior-adult ministry. We must be alert to what is happening.

Another reason the church is not leading the charge for a more effective seniors ministry may be the attitude of many seniors themselves. Plans for retirement are often based on a worldly philosophy: We have served; now we want and deserve to be served. Many senior adults act like the rich fool who said, “Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry” (Luke 12:19, NIV).

Hugh Downs, a television commentator, said, “I believe now that the sensible person doesn’t ever retire; he or she just changes activities or occupations.”³

ENCOURAGE AND MOTIVATE SENIORS TO REMAIN IN MINISTRY

Nowhere in Scripture can we find the concept of retirement. Telling older adults they have earned the right to take it easy is a subtle form of ageism that encourages retirees to keep a low profile in the church. After retirement, seniors have more time for ministry. They need to be presented opportunities for ministry and trained how to accomplish these goals.

Church leaders need to reconsider leadership requirements that may exclude seniors from involvement in ministry. Many seniors travel more after retirement, often taking more vacations and enjoying visits with their grandchildren who may live in other states. Because of attendance qualifications for leadership, these seniors may be excluded from positions in their churches. Pastors would do well to look at shared leadership roles for seniors, thus making it possible for seniors to remain active in church while enjoying their retirement years.

Seniors are looking for meaningful ministry. Many may enjoy and be fulfilled with folding the church bulletin or helping out in the church office, but others may want more challenging ministry. Provide opportunities suited to the experience and interest of the seniors. Challenge them to continue growing spiritually. Depending on gifts and experience, seniors are ideal disciples of youth. Their spiritual growth should spill over into evangelism.

Seniors are most effective in reaching

IS YOUR CHURCH GUILTY OF AGEISM?

To determine whether your church is guilty of ageism, consider the following:

- Does your church intentionally focus on young families without intentionally focusing on older adults?
 - Does your church see older adults as liabilities or assets to your church’s ministry?
 - How many persons in your church are between the ages of 12 and 21? Does your church have a staff member assigned to this age group?
 - In contrast, how many in your church are 55 years or older? Do you have a staff member assigned to this age group?
 - What percent of your budget is spent on older adults? Is it proportionate to other ministries?
 - How many leadership positions are filled by people over 60?
 - Are older adults used in leadership and teaching roles to maximize their experience and wisdom?
 - Are your existing standards for those in leadership exempting seniors who visit their grandchildren or vacation more often?

Use your answers to detect any symptoms of ageism and take steps to rid your church of these archaic notions.

—Arlene Allen, *Springfield, Missouri*. Material adapted from *Catch the Age Wave*, A Handbook for Effective Ministry With Senior Adults by Win and Charles Arn, Baker Books.

THE LAMENT OF A SENIOR ADULT

If we listen closely, we can hear the lament of a senior adult. As youth in the church, we were eagerly pursued. We had a full-time youth director with activities, camps, parties, games, entertainment. And time moved on.

As college-age youth, we had the church on a string. We were sought after for our music and as teachers and future leaders. However, only 10 of every 100 stayed in the same community. And time moved on.

The church’s welcome continued into our young-adult lives. Its leaders were eager to have our young children attend Sunday school. We were candidates for every nominating committee and service opportunity. And time moved on.

As middle-aged adults, we moved into the power structure of the church. We were asked for our financial support. We ran the church. And time moved on.

Today, I am the same person I was as a youth—with a few more wrinkles, but greater wisdom and experience. There is no senior-adult director, even though there are twice as many “white heads” in the congregation as anytime before, and twice as many seniors as all the youth put together. Do you think that’s fair? Is that the way the body of Christ should function?

Well, we’re not totally ignored. From time to time we receive appeal letters asking us to include the church in our wills. But it will be many years before those wills take effect, for in this age of extended longevity we expect to live far longer than our parents.

What should I do with these years? I feel there is something I want to contribute, but I don’t have the opportunity. God is not finished with me yet.

Should I look for a church that has a dynamic senior-adult program? Or try to help my own church come alive in this area, even though there is a great deal of ageism to overcome? Maybe I should walk away from it all.

What would you do?

—Adapted from: *Catch the Age Wave*, A Handbook for Effective Ministry with Senior Adults, by Win Arn and Charles Arn.

UNDERCURRENTS OF DISCONTENT

Why is it so hard to plan a worship service that pleases everyone? No other ministry in a church reflects the values and philosophy of a church as clearly or as publicly as the worship service. Worship is the one ministry in a church where all the members participate.

We have long understood the need to study the different characteristics of our children to minister to them in Sunday school, children's church, and youth services. However, we tend to think that when we reach adulthood, everyone is the same. Not true.

Vital, growing churches in the next decade will be those that can successfully reach, win, and keep the boomer and buster generations, while continuing to minister to the builders.

Older Builders—prior to 1939

Younger Builders—born 1940–1945

Boomers—born 1946–1964

Busters—born 1965–1983

Generation-X—born after 1983

Of course, risks are involved in attempting to blend the generations, but the call of Christ to make disciples makes the risks worthwhile. Here are some things to consider when making changes.

- **Pace of the service.** Builders like worship services to move more slowly and predictably. Boomers like worship to move at a fast pace, and busters want it to move even quicker.

- **Brightness of lighting.** Builders prefer softer lighting for a worshipful feeling. Boomers and busters want brighter lighting so they can see people well.

- **Loudness of sound.** Builders appreciate being able to hear well, but dislike sounds that blast. Boomers and busters want the sound loud so they can feel it.

- **Length of service.** Builders have a longer attention span and are willing to sit through longer services. Attention spans of boomers and busters are shorter.

- **Formality of service.** Builders expect a certain level of formality and decorum, whereas boomers and busters like things to be flexible and casual.

- **Feel of the service.** Builders look for a worship service that is quiet and reverent. Boomers and busters want an upbeat

time of celebration.

- **Participation in the service.** Builders tend to watch and enjoy, while boomers and busters, who grew up in church, like to participate. Unchurched boomers and busters want to be entertained.

- **Type of music.** Builders love the hymnal and the familiar songs of the faith. They like their music slowly paced and reverent. Boomers and busters like to “sing a new song” to the Lord and like their music upbeat and loud.

- **Sermon form.** The builder generation usually likes a traditional message. Some like an in-depth Bible sermon, while others prefer a more evangelistic message. Boomers and busters usually prefer a message with life application. As one boomer said, “I’m more concerned about getting through Monday morning than how the people of Israel got through the Red Sea.”

- **Bible translations.** Older builders usually appreciate the formality and beauty of the King James Version. Young builders, boomers, and busters want to use translations that are written in modern English.

For church leaders who find they are dealing with the problems caused by the collision of changing generations in their churches, the best advice is to be open to change. Most churches seem to target one generation exclusively, while often ignoring the others. If we struggle and try to fight our way back to the way things used to be, we will expend a lot of useless energy and may drown in our own efforts. Instead of resisting, relax and seek to understand what is taking place. In making adjustments, we must not get caught in the flow of doctrinal error or spiritual compromise. We must stand for doctrinal purity with all the energy we have.

Blending these groups together is possible. We must begin with loving one another. It is the first time in our history both child and parent may be in the seniors program at the same time.

—Arlene Allen, Springfield, Missouri.

E N D N O T E

Bulleted content adapted from *Three Generations*, by Gary L. McIntosh, published by Fleming H. Revell, 1995.

other seniors. For years we have heard that if individuals aren't won to the Lord in their early years, it becomes more difficult to win them. This is no longer true. Seniors are living much longer past their retirement; their hearts are once again soft and open to salvation. We must become aggressive in evangelizing seniors.

Seniors cannot be placed into one group. Some seniors are active, some are slowing down, some are in convalescent

centers or are homebound, and some are terminally ill. Each needs to be ministered to in different ways.

Develop a profile of the seniors in your congregation and your community. Include age groupings, marital and family status, mobility and physical condition, needs, skills, interests, and hobbies. Structure your ministries based on these findings. A good seniors program will encourage seniors to invite their friends.

Our youth-oriented society often closes its eyes to seniors. Young people don't want to be reminded of their mortality. But in the closing-off process, the wisdom gleaned by seniors during their lives is lost. The church must no longer accept this loss. We cannot ignore our responsibility to minister to those in need, especially to those who have given so much throughout their lives. “The Christian who is pure and without fault, from God the Father's point of view, is

MAKING YOUR FACILITIES SENIOR-FRIENDLY

With the population aging at a rapidly accelerating rate, church planners and leaders must give attention to the special needs of those in their later years.

Temperature

With diminished circulation that often accompanies age, it becomes more difficult for seniors to keep warm. Older people may put on sweaters while young people in the room feel perfectly comfortable. Since a church cannot have individually controlled thermostats, the pastor should encourage older individuals to avoid sitting under fans or in front of air-conditioner vents and to bring a sweater if they are too cold or to remove it if they become too warm.

Manual Dexterity

Increasing stiffness and loss of dexterity in the fingers and legs can pose a constant and annoying problem to many older adults. More than half of those over 65 have some arthritis in their joints. Consider minimizing the number of steps leading into the facility. Ramps might be the answer to older structures. If possible, senior classrooms, restrooms, and other areas used regularly by seniors should be on the first floor. A nice plus for seniors is reserved senior parking spaces close to the front door.

Consideration must always be given to ADA requirements for the handicapped, which may include installing handrails along stairways and in restrooms, a chairlift, and wheelchair ramps.

Vision

Older people often have difficulty seeing in low light, and their range of vision tends to be narrower than that of younger people. Public environments should be well lit with bright and diffused bulbs. Glaring fluorescent tubes should be shielded or eliminated. All signs should be large enough for easy reading, and lettering should be simplified.

Hearing

Unlike problems with vision that may be obvious, partial deafness may not be evident to others. Today, more than 30 million Americans have hearing loss of varying degrees. These problems become more common with age, affecting 25 percent of the over-65 population.

As we age, we begin to lose the higher frequency range of our hearing—the range in which most warning signals and public-address systems are usually projected. Older adults often increase the volume on television in an attempt to hear more clearly. However, the issue is usually not one of volume, but of tone. We need to train sound operators in our churches that tone is important.

Consider providing sound amplification devices for the hearing-impaired. These are simple headsets that may enable those with hearing problems to better hear and enjoy the service.

—Arlene Allen, Springfield, Missouri.

the one who takes care of orphans and widows, and who remains true to the Lord—not soiled and dirtied by his contacts with the world” (James 1:27, *TLB*).

We must remind ourselves as leaders—and remind the seniors to whom we minister—that it is not how we start our Christian journey that will count when we

stand before our Lord, but how we finish.

“How far you can go in life will depend on your being tender with the young; compassionate with the elderly; sympathetic with the striving; tolerant with the weak and strong. Because sometime in life you are going to be all of these.”—George Washington Carver



“Young man, just who did you think you were talking to in there?”

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E N D N O T E S

1. Win and Charles Arn, *Catch the Age Wave* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press), 51,52.
2. *Ibid.*, 52.
3. Hugh Downs, *Fifty to Forever* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 19.

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enior adults are the fastest-growing segment of our society, growing three times faster than the national population. One of every three people in America is 50 years of age and older. More than 35 million people in the United States—one of every five—is 65 years or older. Every day, 5,000 Americans celebrate their 65th birthday. Every week 200 Americans turn 100 years of age. In the next few years, the number of Americans 85 and older

MINISTERING IN

will surge to more than 6 million. Experts refer to this senior boom as the Age Wave.

As pastors, these facts demand our attention. How are we and our churches responding to this explosion of older adults? What are we doing to reach and minister to these people?

BY STEPHEN SPARKS



**Senior adults are the fastest-growing segment
of our society, growing three times
faster than the national population.**

The number of senior-adult ministries in the Assemblies of God is growing. The 2000 ACMR indicates that approximately 3,300 churches have active senior-adult ministries. Last year, a new SAM group began almost every other day.

STEPS TO AN EFFECTIVE SENIOR-ADULT MINISTRY

Senior adults today are being mobilized like a mighty army to serve the Lord and His people. Many seniors are no longer content just being served; they are looking for creative ways to serve their churches and communities. Several areas are part of an effective senior-adult ministry.

Service

There is an untapped reservoir of ministry/service potential among older adults. Seniors are asking, "What am I going to do with my golden years?" Because of improved health practices and healthier lifestyles, people are living longer and living more meaningful lives. Many seniors are living more active lifestyles than ever before. Today's older adults are constantly changing with the times. For them, age is not an issue; it's an attitude.

The challenge, however, is to redeem these great resources known as senior adults. To do this is like mining precious stones in the kingdom of God. Even though many seniors may feel they have been there and done that, we are called to motivate them to service once again.

Many older adults realize that God's call for service is for a lifetime, not just until retirement. James said, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). Some seniors may have a rocking-chair mentality and insist that younger people do everything. Yet the Scripture teaches that all believers are called to ministry.

Older adults who are fulfilled have discovered the secret of a vital, Christian life—being involved in service. Many are involved in food banks, clothing rooms, helping-hand ministries, sewing, cooking and baking, transportation, auto and home repair/maintenance, visitation,

hospitality, and followup (cards, letters, phone calls). One senior-adult pastor said that his church's senior-adult ministry is known as "church mice." Members even wear T-shirts to identify themselves. They are involved in doing whatever needs to be done in their church.

Many older adults have a willing heart and an honest desire to serve. Senior-adult groups must be more than happy-time travel clubs. Service must be at the core of their purpose and intent.

Fellowship

Senior adults need to be reminded of the importance of being Christian friends to the saved and the unsaved. Jesus was a friend of sinners. Believers are called to be channels of His love. John, the disciple of love, reminds us: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7).

It is not uncommon to see older adults who have become isolated, withdrawn, irritable, or even difficult to love. Yet, all of us need love and all of us need to love. One of every four Americans suffers from painful loneliness. This statistic is even higher among senior adults. God wants to use seniors to reverse this famine of love. Older adults must be challenged to allow the Holy Spirit to rekindle love in their hearts and lives and share their love with those who need to know His love.

A church with an effective SAM will provide opportunities for fellowship. Older adults need to ask: (1) Do people in our SAM feel loved? (2) What can we do to help more people in our age group feel loved?

Plan for fellowship. A network of support develops between seniors as they fellowship with others. Many of them discover they face similar circumstances. Those who have lost a spouse and live alone can support one another. Those experiencing serious illness can find comfort in a listening ear. Who better understands than one who has experienced a similar need? Many have broken hearts because of their children

and/or grandchildren. Fellowship becomes a support group for older adults. SAM groups become channels of God's blessing and in so doing fulfill the command of Galatians 6:2, "Bear ye one another's burden's." Help others carry their load.

Discipleship

Adults are never too old to learn. Some time ago I spoke to a senior-adult Sunday school class. Many of them were well-seasoned saints, but they were ready to receive from the Lord.

As pastors, we are called to challenge mature adults to renew and continue the process of their Christian growth. Some assume that their lives will be over soon and there is no longer a need for spiritual growth. Is it really worth the effort? But the process of discipleship is for a lifetime. Successful aging must include spiritual growth and discipleship.

Are your senior adults simply growing older, or are they being challenged to continue to grow in Christ (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Peter 2:2)? Peter ends his second epistle with these words: "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).

There is a new hunger among seniors for a greater knowledge of the Word. There is also a tremendous depth to their personal devotional and study times. Many are taking correspondence courses to sharpen their knowledge of Scripture. They are reading more and are developing their personal libraries. They are attending discipleship seminars and workshops. Senior adults take pride in knowing they are students of the Word.

Senior adults love the hymns of the church because many of them are filled with theology and doctrine and teach eternal truth. Singing a hymn is like singing a sermon. Hymns become wonderful tools of discipleship.

Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). Paul

wrote, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV). Paul was saying, “Follow my life and you will see Jesus Christ living in me.” The end result of discipleship is to be like Jesus.

Evangelism

Are older people unreachable with the gospel? Research today indicates that evangelism is the weakest area for most senior adults. With the increasing number of seniors, many remain unreached

with the message of salvation. This presents an opportunity for outreach.

As ministry leaders, we are under a divine mandate to challenge senior adults to be soul winners. As long as there are lost souls, we are commanded to share His message of forgiveness and love. Senior adults are closer to death simply because of their age. We must lead them to Christ.

We need to train and equip mature adults in effective evangelism. The biblical principle of relational networks

of family and friends is the basic element of SAM outreach. (See the article, “The Power of the *Oikos*,” by Alan Johnson on page 86 for a detailed discussion on the biblical principle of relational networks.) Once an older adult has identified his or her circle of influence, he or she can share Christ’s love by simply being a witness before family and friends. Eighty to 90 percent of all people who come to know Jesus Christ as personal Savior do so because of a relative or friend.

In a sectional SAM rally, an 87-year-old retired minister’s wife shared that she was on her way home for a special reason. She had recently led her hairdresser to the Lord after several months of witnessing to her. Every Monday evening Dorothy meets with her new sister in Christ for prayer and Bible reading. This is what it’s all about...senior adults leading other people to the Cross. We are never too old to be soul winners.

SAM programs and events must be planned with outreach and evangelism in mind. We are not a country club meeting once a month to swap stories about our grandchildren. We are soul winners who are casting the net to reach the lost. Plan programs and events that will interest those outside the church. Have your senior adults invite their non-Christian friends to a nonthreatening event. Then allow the Holy Spirit to draw people to Jesus.

Luncheons, dinners, and banquets are tools for outreach and evangelism. They must be more than just a time for food and fellowship for the saints. If they are properly planned and bathed in prayer, God can use them to reach the lost.

Invite Christian professionals as guest speakers. They can provide a public service to your senior adults. Healthcare professionals, such as doctors or nurses, are excellent resources. Other community-service professionals—lawyers, politicians, insurance agents, financial planners, bankers, educators—can provide information that will benefit your seniors. Once your speakers have made their

HOW A SMALLER CHURCH CAN DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE SENIOR-ADULT MINISTRY

Small churches often work with limited resources, including finances and volunteers. This may prevent a church from developing various ministries if leaders view these as disadvantages rather than challenges that can be overcome. It is possible for smaller congregations to have active, healthy senior-adult ministries. The goal is to find creative ways to overcome the challenges. It doesn’t take an abundance of financial resources to create an environment where people can be accepted, loved, and ministered to. Nor does it take a large group. Here are several tips that can help you develop an effective senior-adult ministry in your church:

- Appoint a director who recognizes the need of ministering to older adults.
- Form a committee to help determine the needs of your church’s seniors. This committee can consist of as little as two or three people. Include seniors on the committee.
- Create a vision and purpose for your senior-adult ministry.
- Survey older adults to learn their interests and needs.
- Talk with senior-adult coordinators in your section or district to get ideas.
- Plan events based on the knowledge gained from surveys and interviews.

Choosing your first event will depend on the needs and interests of seniors in your congregation. If seniors enjoy fellowship, plan an event centered around fellowship. Potlucks or dinners are great for this. If prayer is a strong focus, meet together to pray for the needs in your church and community. For groups who express interest in travel, plan a 1-day trip to a local attraction.

Some success of your program depends on promotion. Keep in mind the following things:

- Plan events far enough in advance so seniors can fit them into their schedules.
- Announce the event in the church bulletin at least 2 weeks before its date.
- Create fliers to hand out or display at church.
- Write letters or postcards as reminders.
- Make telephone calls.
- Encourage members to invite a friend.
- Create a mailing or newsletter specifically for senior adults. List birthdays, anniversaries, special events, ministry opportunities, prayer requests.

It’s not finances and quantity of people that make senior-adult ministries a success. Start small, but start somewhere. It takes time to develop effective ministries. But remember, being part of a small congregation with limited resources does not prohibit an effective ministry that touches lives.

—Melinda Richardson, Springfield, Missouri.

MINISTERING TO “SINGLE” SENIOR ADULTS

Reaching and ministering to and with people in the local church in America today is more complex than it was in the 60s and 70s. This is true because of the diversity in people’s spiritual, cultural, and marital backgrounds. Also, there are more senior adults than there were 30 or 40 years ago. Included in this growing group is the single senior adult.

WHO ARE SINGLE SENIOR ADULTS?

AARP says that a senior adult is age 55 and older. Not many adults that age in the church seem to agree. Neither does George Barna.¹ He qualifies the top three age groupings of people this way:

- Seniors—Born 1926 and earlier
- Builders—Born 1927–1945
- Boomers—Born 1946–1964

Adults that are 60 or 65 do not usually want to come to the seniors group. They say, “Those people are older than I am.” Additionally, senior single adults fall into one of the following categories:

- Widowed
- Divorced
- Never Married
- Separated

WHY TARGET SINGLE SENIOR ADULTS?

1. There are more single senior adults in the church than before. Here are a few reasons:

- Men and women are living longer.
- Divorce is more common at older ages today.
- There is a tendency for older women to not remarry when they become single again.

• Some senior men and women have chosen not to marry at all.

2. Single senior adults have much to offer the church. Many single seniors have lived for God most of their lives. They have a rich heritage of experiences from which to draw. Their life situations have produced wisdom, knowledge, insight, and understanding that can only come from trusting God through the challenges of life.

Many single older adults have talents and abilities they have developed and used over a lifetime. These saints do not need to stuff bulletins, clean floors, or sort the mail—though they usually are willing to do so. Their greater talents and abilities many times go unused. Single older adults want to make their lives count for God.

3. Single senior adults have time flexibility. Time flexibility for single seniors is usually greater than for married older adults and younger adults. We must not overlook single senior adults when looking for volunteers for ministry opportunities.

WAYS TO MINISTER TO SINGLE SENIOR ADULTS

Some churches have ministry groups for senior adults that have regular meeting times, classes, activities, and training opportunities. These groups are comprised of both married and single adults and have people involved in ministry opportunities in the group itself.

Other churches, usually larger ones, have specialized groups for senior adults who happen to be single by chance, change, or choice. These groups include:

• Regular, ongoing meetings, including music, teaching designed for their specific needs, discussion, refreshments, and fellowship.

• A grief recovery/growth group for the widowed. This group could meet for a limited period of time, or be an ongoing study/support group for people recently widowed to enter at any time and leave at any time.

• A Divorce Recovery Group, which usually contains some senior single-again adults. These groups meet for 6–12 weeks with teaching and discussion targeted to the specific needs of those going through a divorce. Some churches also organize a followup support group.

Besides specific groups for the senior single adult, there are many opportunities for ministry both in and out of the church. Many times single senior adults are not thought of as quickly as married senior adults, due to the church’s emphasis on marriage and family. “Family Nights” and mottoes such as “The Family Church” do little to encourage or include the single older adult, who by this age is usually single-again due to the death of a spouse or the death of a marriage. These people need and deserve to be involved in the ministries of ushering, teaching, event planning, choir, maintenance, and serving on boards and committees.

—Dennis Franck is director of Single Adult Ministries for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.

E N D N O T E

1. George Barna, *Strategic Adult Ministry Journal*, Issue 138: 4.

presentations, have them share a testimony of how God changed their lives. Keep evangelism in focus. We are never too old to respond to the good news.

CONCLUSION

We are in the beginning stages of the Age Wave. There are more senior adults than any other segment of the population. They are filling our

churches like a mighty army of warriors. We must provide them an effective senior-adult ministry. The challenge for church leadership is to develop a SAM that provides service, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism. When these four ingredients are blended together, the church will witness an effective senior-adult ministry. **e**

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This article reflects material obtained from *The Grand Way*, a four-part video training resource for mature adults created by Drs. Win and Charles Arn (Church Growth, Inc., Monrovia, California).

BOOMERS, BUILDERS, AND BEYOND

BLENDING

**BUILDERS, BOOMERS,
BUSTERS, AND BRIDGERS**



If builders have been

the main leaders of

your church, qualified

boomers, busters, and

bridgers must be

allowed and encouraged

to assume key positions

of leadership through-

out the church.

A recent article in the real estate section of a local newspaper highlighted a new home development being built for multiple-generation families. Home builders and architects have become aware that families are once again living together as multigenerational units.

Throughout history it has been common for multigenerational families to live close together, even under the same roof. After World War II, the development of suburbs, freeways, and the resulting mobility of people broke geographic generational ties. Families began to live in smaller nuclear units rather than in extended families. As we enter the 21st century, once again families are finding it economically advantageous for several generations to pool their resources and live together.

This blending of generations is something that needs to be followed in churches, especially in worship services. Four generational groups are often found in churches today. The builders represent those born before and up to 1945. Boomers include persons born between 1946–64. Busters (Gen X) were born between 1965 and 1983. Our newest generation is being labeled the bridger generation because they are coming of age in two different centuries. The millennial generation, the Internet generation, and generation Y are other names used for this generation born in 1984 and later.

A number of churches today specifically target boomers, busters, or bridgers, but for most smaller, traditional churches, this narrow focus is not possible. Most pastors and church leaders know they must work with all generations in the same church without ignoring any of them. One popular approach used by a growing number of churches is to blend differing styles of worship hoping to please all generations enough so they remain in the church.

WHAT IS BLENDING?

When church leaders talk about blending, they usually think of the worship service. No other ministry in a church reflects the values and philosophy of a church as clearly or as publicly. Worship is the one ministry in a church where all members come and participate. The need for blending in other areas of ministry, such as Sunday school, is not as critical since individual classes allow each generation an opportunity to minister in their own manner.

From a technical viewpoint, blending is the combining of two or more differing philosophies of ministry. Usually the differing philosophies involved are called *traditional* and *contemporary*. The usual approach is to soften the contemporary music and speed up the traditional music so the service becomes acceptably blended.

A well-conceived and executed worship service is more difficult to accomplish than it looks. And a blended service can be the most difficult of all. A blended worship service is generally a temporary worship form on the journey to a new form that is just right for your congregation. The exact mix or blend of worship elements may change several times on the journey. Blending at its best is transitional; it is not the destination, but the journey. Where the worship service ends up stylistically may not be known for many years.

Until that new form of worship is developed, blending generational styles in one service has proved practical. At the least, blending allows a church to: demonstrate the unity of the church, meet different needs, provide diverse ministry opportunities, honor the past and the future, and give people time to change.

IS IT DISRESPECT—OR DISCONNECT?

Building Mutual Respect and Rapport Between Youth and Senior Adults

The meltdown of traditional families, along with the increased mobility of our society, has allowed more and more young people to grow up without family ties to their grandparents' generation. Many have no frame of reference for understanding that age group. More than ever, the lack of connection is not so much a matter of disrespect as it is a disconnect—from both ends of the age spectrum.

BRIDGING THE GAP

While some youth are slower to trust adults, a good look at their culture may explain their skepticism. It's not a society they have built. Consequently, many seem intent on setting their own direction, yearning for stability and attention from whoever is willing to offer it. Even though this generation does not dispense respect automatically, it gives it unreservedly to those who earn it through relationship. You can effectively span almost any gap between the generations, real or perceived, by building bridges of relationship.

THE ROLE OF MINISTRY LEADERS

It is imperative that senior pastors regard themselves as shepherds of the entire congregation, actively participating in key functions of students and senior adults, and communicating encouragement and support of their ministries from the pulpit. Youth pastors must allow their senior pastors to gain influence among their students by opening doors for them to address the teens in both structured and unstructured settings.

THE EFFECT OF GREATER VISIBILITY

Allow and encourage youth to fill a variety of ministry roles in the church. The more visible your teens are in ministry, the more likely you are to dispel the notion that students take more from life than they give. As you direct students into these outlets of ministry, set appropriate standards of character, conduct, and appearance.

A more solid intergenerational connection begins to develop when groups, miles apart in life span, start ministering more directly to each other through mutual service, shared experience, and unified prayer.

1. Mutual Service

Teens can be asked to host or provide ministry at a 50s-plus banquet. Older adults can be invited to assist with youth outreach events or join students in ministry at a local mission or youth institution. Leaders may find it beneficial to prime their respective volunteers before they step onto the other's activity turf—especially when they call on seniors to serve with teens—to avoid prejudicial reactions toward the styles and intensity of the youth.

2. Shared Experience

A deeper understanding and appreciation develops between the generations as they come face to face, sharing each other's life experiences. Adults and youth have a lot to learn *about* each other and *from* each other. Teens can teach technology to seniors who may want to learn more for ministry or personal purposes. Adults who have areas of expertise that may interest students can be invited to address groups of teens regarding practical life skills, such as interviewing for jobs, preparing for college, or managing credit. Once again, acquaint the youth and adults with each other's perspective ahead of time.

3. Unified Prayer

Regularly call your teens collectively to the altars, asking the older adults to come and stand behind them in prayer. When the occasion is right, ask them to turn and share specific needs, and have them call on God together for the answers. Adults may view teens in a softer light when they see tears flow for lost friends, because some of those adults also grieve over wayward grandchildren. Similarly, a teen with unsaved parents shares a common bond with senior adults whose middle-aged children are away from God.

Youth leaders should train students to respond swiftly when people step out—especially the adults. By standing behind those at the altar, placing a hand on their shoulder, and whispering a prayer along with the altar worker, your students will start a spiritual trend that leaves no one standing alone for prayer.

Perpetuate this kind of burden-sharing beyond services by recruiting adult volunteers to pray for individual students on a regular basis. An occasional note of encouragement will remind students someone is praying for them. You could work this both ways by establishing intergenerational prayer partnerships.

You do both generations a great service by providing opportunities for them to connect with each other on a personal level. By exercising your influence as a leader, you can bring people together for a look at life from a new and different perspective.

Carey Huffman is youth editor for Radiant Life Resources, Springfield, Missouri.

TEN STEPS FOR BLENDING

The following are vital steps that need to be taken by leaders who desire to blend builders, boomers, busters, and bridgers into one church.

The senior pastor's support.

What is endorsed from the pulpit will succeed, and what is not will fail. The pastor plays the key role in planning, educating, and leading the church toward a blended ministry. For blending to take place, the senior pastor must be committed to it and work to make it happen.

Going beyond simple endorsement of the strategy, a pastor must be comfortable with and able to mesh differing philosophies of ministry into a single new form. If your ministry has been geared to only one generation, you must be willing to: communicate to a blended audience, find and use new illustrations, change your wardrobe, develop a relational style, adapt your vocabulary to be meaningful to all members, accept criticism, support the musicians and staff both publicly and privately, share creative leadership with a worship team, and patiently give the process time. A blended worship takes planning, and a pastor must be willing to prepare sermons and plan worship services 2 or 3 months in advance.

Obtain lay leaders' support.

Lay leaders in the congregation must be willing to follow your lead. Their personal and group commitment to disciple making must cause them to see the needs and opportunities available in a blended church. They must team with you in a strategic, long-term plan to bring generations together.

A solid commitment to outreach and assimilation will undergird their willingness to try a blending approach to worship. Criticism will come from saints who feel they are being neglected. As this occurs, the leaders' commitment to finding and keeping the lost one will need to outweigh the pressure to minister to the 99 who are already in the church (see Luke 15:4-7).

Help the congregation see the opportunities and needs.

Existing congregations must develop a desire to reach all generations. Church leaders should plan to spend a minimum of 6 to 12 months creating such a consciousness before many changes or new strategies are implemented. Take time to build a solid, biblical foundation, share the vision for a new style of ministry, listen to people's concerns, adjust the proposed strategy, and pray.

Stress biblical concepts of love and acceptance.

Diversity and *variety* are two words that characterize the buster and bridger generations. The divergent views, desires, and expectations of builders, boomers, busters, and bridgers will require acceptance and love. Sermons, classes, and small groups should focus on these divergent ideas during the initial blending period. In particular, stress the "one another" commands found in the New Testament and structure opportunities for people from different generations to practice them in small groups.

Establish a model service in which blending can be practiced.

This service can be an evening worship service, a Sunday school class, or a small group. If this is not possible, have

an occasional praise or celebration service where new styles of music can gradually introduce the congregation to blending. The gradual approach will help people accept new ideas, which can eventually be used on a regular basis.

The model service needs to reflect a balance of traditional and contemporary styles in music, participation, relationships, and dialogue. It works best if the organization, transition, feel, and flow of the new blended service are well thought out and developed before you go public with the service.

Educate the generations so they understand each other.

A common term used in the 1960s to describe the gulf between builders and boomers was *generation gap*. Generation gaps had been relatively unknown in earlier times since the slowness of change created very little difference in viewpoints between past generations. The rapid pace of change since 1950 has made generation gaps real. Today the gap is more of a technology gap, due to the fact builders and boomers are slower to adapt to new technology than busters and bridgers.

How each generation views these gaps is different. Younger generations tend to focus on the intrinsic differences in values; older generations tend to focus on the immaturity seen in the

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"Last Sunday I asked the congregation to belt out the closing hymn. We have three sets of unclaimed dentures in the office."

personal habits and styles of younger people. Teaching from the pulpit must be geared to help each group see the value of the other. Key areas of concern are music, expression of worship, relational values, institutional values, and commitment levels. Everyone who speaks from the platform needs to affirm and honor each generation. Never criticize a generation publicly. The congregation receives its cues from its leaders. What is said and done during the main service will flow down into the rest of the church.

Meet with classes and small groups to teach about the strengths and values of each generation. These smaller forums allow for questions and answers as well as providing a safe place for people to vent their frustrations. By using these smaller forums, you will circumvent the possibility of an explosion of frustration in a larger setting that may damage the entire body. As needed, meet with individuals over breakfast or lunch to hear their concerns.

In many cases, outside speakers or church consultants can be a powerful change motivator. Being from the outside, they have several advantages: they can say things that could not be said by a member of the church family; they have a more objective outlook; and they are often viewed as an expert on the issue.

Foster common ground experiences.

Generations tend to drift apart in churches. The natural process of scheduling classes, small groups, and activities around life stages tends to segregate the generations and limit their communication. Offering age-graded activities is proper, and there is no need to blend every ministry in a church. It does, however, help generations understand and love each other when they spend time together. Leading up to and during the initial stages of developing a blended worship service, it is wise for church leaders to provide common ground experiences for generations.

A new-members class can introduce people to the values, goals, and history of all four generations. A mix of

bridgers, boomers, busters, and builders might attend a parenting class. The builders and boomers can share the struggles they went through raising children and answer questions. Since many bridgers and busters, in particular, came from homes where parenting skills were not well modeled, this could provide an opportunity to build bridges between generations. An effort should be made to make small groups intergenerational.

Organize a new-members task force.

The responsibility of this task force is to help new people develop several friends in the church, find a place to serve, and identify a class or group where they would feel comfortable. Representatives from each generation should serve on the task force. It is crucial that the task force include people who are newcomers to the church (within 1 or 2 years) because they remember what it was like to be a new member. They can help new people understand and fit into the existing church structure with a minimum of frustration.

Encourage boomers, busters, and bridgers to take leadership.

If builders have been the main leaders of your church, qualified boomers, busters, and bridgers must be allowed and encouraged to assume key positions of leadership throughout the church. This includes the worship team, new-members committee, worship committee, music committee, small-group committee, activities (social/sports) committee, as well as regular boards and committees, such as elders, deacons, or trustees.


Build a unified worship team.

To be most effective at reaching newcomers, the worship team that plans the blended worship service should mirror the percentage of differing generations found in the community around the church. If the community is made up of 16 percent builders, 34 percent boomers, 30 percent busters, and 20 percent bridgers, a worship team of

seven individuals should be comprised of one builder, two boomers, two busters, and one bridger. By making certain the worship team reflects the makeup of the community, it is more likely the degree of blending will be appropriate.

It is crucial that the platform worship team be intergenerational. The leaders on the platform influence the people who attend the service. When people come to a worship service, one of the first things they do is look around to find people like themselves. The people on the platform communicate a tacit message about who attends the church. In a blended worship service, care must be taken to have people of all ages up front. If the members of the worship team on the platform are only from the builder generation, then the service will naturally attract builders but not boomers, busters, and bridgers. If a church wishes to attract and hold busters or bridgers, then it must have busters and bridgers on the platform. If the senior pastor comes from the builder generation, it is even more important that boomers, busters, and bridgers be visibly present before the congregation.

CONCLUSION

Vital, growing churches in the next decade will be those that can successfully reach, win, and keep multiple generations. For this to happen in existing churches, leaders need to make bold, long-term plans for blending builders, boomers, busters, and bridgers into a unified church. Of course, there are risks involved in attempting a blend, but the call of Christ to make disciples makes the risks worthwhile. 

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Caught in the

BY KENN GANGL

When Dante was 35 years old and frustrated in his quest for a political position, he wrote the first lines of *The Inferno*. Many look back to those brief words penned in 1300 as the first recognition of what we today call midlife crisis.

*Mid way in life's journey I was made aware
That I had strayed into a dark forest,
And the right path appeared not anywhere.*

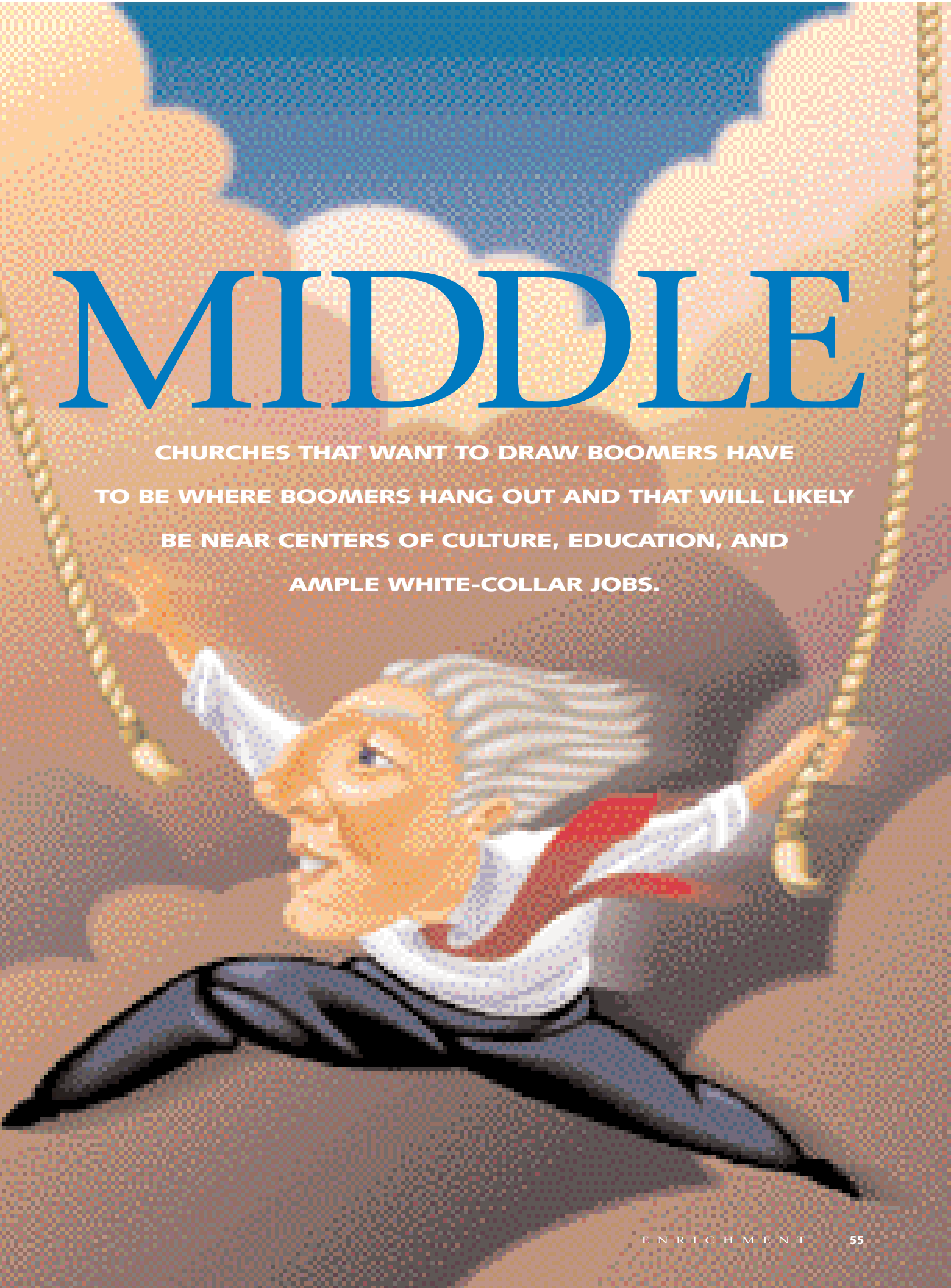
What exactly is middle adulthood? When the American Board of Family Practice asked a random sampling of 1,200 Americans when middle age begins, 41 percent said it starts when you worry about having enough money for healthcare concerns; 42 percent said it was when your last child moves out; and 46 percent said it was when you don't recognize the names of music groups on the radio anymore.¹ For purposes of this article, we will put an age label on middle adulthood—35 to 65. With an increasing number of boomers retiring in their early fifties and mid fifties, those boundaries might be narrowed in the years ahead, but for now a 30-year spread is about all we can handle. Obviously that puts all the boomers right into middle adulthood.

UNDERSTANDING THE BOOMERS

Born between 1946 and 1964, boomers now clog the veins of middle adulthood. The first boomer hit the age of 50 in 1996 and every 7 seconds for the following 16 years another baby boomer will turn 50. By 2010, one in every six Americans will be over 65 as the boomers move from middle to older adulthood.

What are they like?

Boomers tend to show low loyalty to churches, car dealerships, and stocks. They live in the world of what's happening now. If Honda comes out with a better product than Nissan, they think nothing of making an immediate switch. Dad, on the other hand, stayed a loyal Ford man all his life. Of course, he had limited options compared to his boomer kids.



MIDDLE

CHURCHES THAT WANT TO DRAW BOOMERS HAVE TO BE WHERE BOOMERS HANG OUT AND THAT WILL LIKELY BE NEAR CENTERS OF CULTURE, EDUCATION, AND AMPLE WHITE-COLLAR JOBS.

We have seen something of a trend reversal in boomer attitudes toward church, particularly in the first half of the nineties. Wade Clark Rube, a sociologist at the University of California at Santa Barbara, notes that a third of the boomers never strayed from church, and another 25 percent are defectors who have returned but are usually less tied to tradition and less dependable as members. *Time* magazine tells us that “the returnees are still vastly outnumbered by the 42 percent of baby boomers who remain dropouts from formal religion...two potent events that might draw dropouts back to the fold are having children and facing at midlife a personal or career crisis that reminds boomers of the need for moorings.”²

Boomers are also people of *high expectations*. Boomers’ parents lived through World War II, guided in turn by their own parents who had struggled through the Depression. Limited in experiences and possessions, they determined to make their children’s lives just the opposite—and they grandly succeeded. Grandpa was glad to make a pair of jeans last another 6 months. Boomers, however, want the right label in a strategically visible place—never mind the cost.

Boomers represent wide *diversity*. On one hand demographers like to characterize them as a rather homogeneous lot, but one of the characteristics of the group tells us that boomer watchers should be ready for preference swings one way or the other. The diversity shows itself in clothing styles, attitudes toward marriage and children, and behavior toward church membership. Many boomers have turned away from the faith of their parents, while others have found new levels of commitment.

We’re told boomers are *politically pluralistic*. Throughout much of the nineties we had a boomer president, and one would have expected to find he was elected largely by boomer votes. But in fact, a significant percentage of boomers would have considered their

politics more conservative than those of the president.

Boomers are *significantly influential*. Not only the previous president but also many of his advisers and official staff were part of this highly visible generation. Since they have now reached middle adulthood and have assumed leadership of corporations, churches, and culture, they will make significant political, financial, and religious decisions for this country for many years to come.

How do we minister to boomers?

We start by designing *need-oriented* churches. Boomers understand felt needs better than any adult age group in recent history, and they are quite prepared to make decisions on the basis of that awareness.

Transdenominational groups tend to do better among boomers. They may want labels on their jeans, but rigid labels on churches seem less popular. Over the past two decades many denominations have taken out key words so that a former Westside Baptist Church now calls itself Westside Fellowship and an Asbury Methodist Church may have adopted the name Community Faith Center.

Geographically boomers are essentially urban-centered. The type of employment they choose and the kind of lifestyles they follow favor clustering in the cities. There is still much to be done in rural and suburban churches. One could even argue that suburban churches are in a significant way “urban-centered.” But churches that want to draw boomers have to be where boomers hang out and that will likely be near centers of culture, education, and ample white-collar jobs.

Up until recently boomers wanted less emphasis on youth in church programs. That strange phenomenon came about because many of them married later and had their children later. A boomer couple welcoming their first child at age 32 did not deal with teenagers until their mid- to late-forties. When boomers reach that age, they will demand the same kind of

youth-ministry opportunities their parents wanted for them.

How do we involve boomers in ministry?

Four answers clamor for attention here and two sound very much like the past. Congregations wanting boomers to climb on board the service train need to *clarify the nature of God’s call* in their lives. This has always been true among evangelical Christians, but we have not always been required to define our terms quite as precisely. The other carry-over from earlier days is to *equip properly*. True, that certainly means a great deal more in the 21st century than it did even 25 years ago. But if we want boomers to involve themselves in ministry eagerly, they’ll need the preparation and equipment to do it right.

Unlike the past we can *emphasize idealism*, that is, what the church can be if its middle-adult boomers seriously support its ministry. We gave their parents straight doses of realism, often genuinely limited by meager resources. To put it another way, we did the best we could with what we had. Now having more has become part of the package.

But perhaps most important here is the *futility of guilt motivation* with the boomer generation. We trapped their parents over and over again, scolding them into attending prayer meeting, nagging them into teaching Sunday school, always threatening that their failure to do whatever the pastor asked somehow showed a lesser love for God. That approach was wrong; today it is also useless. All the principles we already discussed regarding motivation in learning apply directly and significantly to these middle-life boomers.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MIDDLE ADULTHOOD

Intimacy was our key word for young adults: What would serve as a comparable key word for middle adults? Doubtless such a question could be debated endlessly, but many adult-learning specialists would choose the word *career*. All the busyness and responsibility, all the change and

trauma of middle adulthood, tends to center in career. A quarter of a century ago we could have described men that way; now we find no clear line of gender separation.

Let's remember, too, that this does not apply exclusively to boomers. At the time I write these words, the oldest boomer has not yet turned 53, so we still face more than a decade's worth of younger generation folks holding down the older slots of middle adulthood. Some of the characteristics ahead sound different from what we have already said about boomers; we can account for that by allowing the camera to pan a wider portion of the field, shooting all three generations that form a part of middle adulthood.

Satisfied maturity

Folks in middle adulthood are finally really adults. True, they crossed that line years ago, but the full weight of family, job, career, community, and church responsibilities usually doesn't settle in until sometime after age 35. Middle adults are maturing adults; some haven't fully arrived, but they are well on the way.

Belonging mentality

The belonging need keeps surfacing as we look at adults, and it will not go away even in the older age brackets. All that moving around during young adulthood, all those efforts to figure out who they are, where they belong, what God wants them to do, where they will live—all that and much more are largely settled after the age of 35, even though lots of change still lies ahead. In this age bracket comes a feeling of stability and belongingness.

Security consciousness

In middle adulthood security means paying a lot of attention to physical and financial safety for one's family. A man in his late thirties, for example, may finally decide his 20-year-old dream of bungee jumping was never a good idea. The parents of two or three children have probably already begun saving for

college and their own retirement. Increasing numbers of single parents now have fewer options in the present and the future.

Every serious parent wants to safeguard against danger and disease. Fathers who take that role seriously work hard to protect their families. Since the earliest *Star Trek* days, I've often told my family that I am their "Chief Security Officer." The years have not changed that sense of responsibility just because it now applies on a daily basis only to my wife and myself.

Relative independence

This characteristic increases throughout this age group since adults are more independent at 55 than 35. Empty-nesters no longer build their lives around soccer practice, piano lessons, and Little League.

But the adjective *relative* is important not only because independence grows through the forties and fifties, but because none of us ever becomes completely independent. For most people job responsibilities continue and perhaps even increase during middle adulthood.

Physical transition

In terms of age, the psychologically critical number is 40. Our culture has made leaving the thirties a major continental divide in life. The physical deterioration of the body, though varying greatly from person to person, usually comes about 10 or 15 years later. Men who played full-court basketball since they were 10 discover they can't do it anymore as they approach 50. Women struggle through menopause and send their babies off to college. Whatever the specifics, people in later middle adulthood will likely discover their bodies no longer allow what seemed so much a part of their lives in earlier years.

Achievement disillusion

Throughout young adulthood everything seems possible. Money not available now soon will be. The mind begins to ponder—*They haven't made*

me manager of my department yet, but soon they'll see how important I am to the company. I've never been out of Nebraska, but someday I'll visit every country in Europe. Young adults can dream and plan anything—and well they should. By the end of middle adulthood, however, when retirement looms only a few years ahead, one begins to recognize what will not be possible. The nasty "what if" question clouds the mind and second-guessing life's choices becomes a hazard.

MIDDLE ADULT HIGHLIGHTS

Beyond the financial concerns and physical limitations, above the pain pills and cancer scares, and after the joyous frustration of raising teenagers, we find in middle adulthood some happy flags flying.

Significant Stability

Middle adulthood may be the time of greatest stability in family life—economic, domestic, and vocational. If a relationship between husband and wife has been adequately nurtured in earlier years, they survive the departure of the children with full awareness that they mean more to each other than ever before. Careers are finalized, salaries are up, and reputations are built.

Significant Contribution

Young adults probably stuff more knowledge into college and graduate years than any other brief period of life, but wisdom comes with experience and experience has a strange way of linking itself with age. There is something about youth, even in adulthood, that flaunts every small success as world-shaking. We all suffer from the disease but none more than those who achieve goals earlier in life.

Halfway through this age-group, adults tend to think they've seen and done it all; but the greatest contributions God can achieve through us are not only unlimited by age (consider Mother Teresa), but will likely occur in late-middle and older adulthood. The wondrous blend of maturity and

efficiency makes possible these significant contributions.

If all this is true, why does the widely researched midlife crisis occur in middle adulthood? Think back to the characteristics of the age group, some of which can have negative implications. People come to a place at which anxiety turns into negative action. But why?

We can identify several factors, not the least of which is workload. Sheer physical exhaustion from the demands of the job may be the largest contributor to a midlife crisis. Because of the maturity and efficiency of older and middle adults, people take advantage without really intending to.

Running a close second is responsibility. If responsibility increases about 10 percent a year during this age bracket, 100 tasks at age 35 explode to over 600 by age 55.

As already noted, physical aging is a factor that can contribute to midlife crisis. It doesn't have to come in the form of disease or illness; it may be that changing face in the mirror. Somehow becoming bald, overweight, and full of stress wasn't in the original plan.

Robert Samuelson tells us that "the ordinariness of middle age won't suit a generation that demands to be different. Middle age is bound to be relabeled, if not reinvented. Well, why not? The concept of middle age, as Yale historian

John Demos has noted, is relatively new. For most of our history, people pondered only the problems of youth and old age. The period in between was considered the prime of life. Who knows? Maybe they had it right."³

As Samuelson suggests, we cannot determine how baby boomers will change what we have come to know about these years. But one thing seems clear—spiritual and theological moorings must form the foundation, or the superstructure of life will eventually crumble. **E**

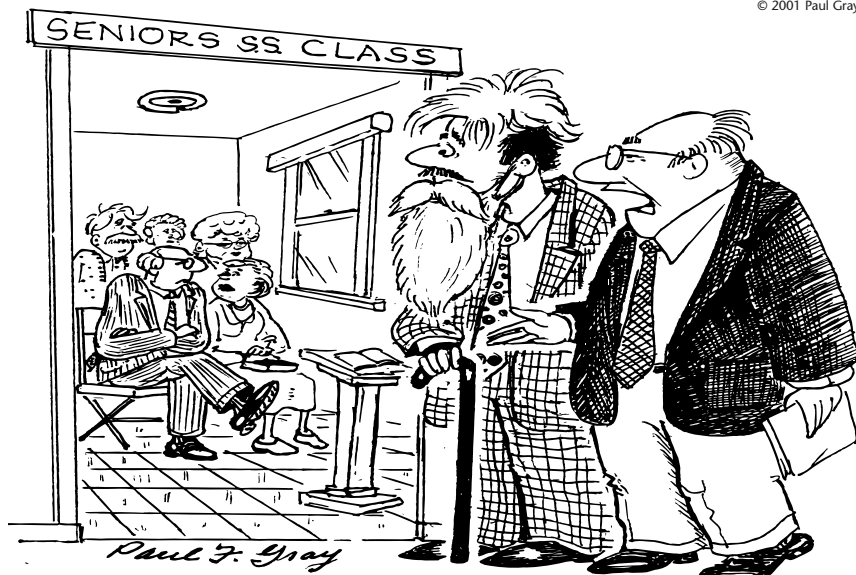
Kenn Gangel is distinguished professor emeritus at Dallas Theological Seminary, Dallas, Texas, and scholar in residence at Toccoa Falls College, Toccoa Falls, Georgia. This article was abridged from chapter 10, Ministering to Today's Adults, by Kenn Gangel, 1999, Word Publishing, Nashville, Tennessee. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.



E N D N O T E S

1. Melinda Beck, "The New Middle Age," *Newsweek*, 7 December 1992, 52.
2. Jordan Bonfante et al., "The Generation That Forgot God," *Time*, 5 April 1993, 46.
3. Robert J. Samuelson, "Middle-Aged America," *Newsweek*, 27 July 1987, 45.

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"Don't let them intimidate you, you're not that much younger. Get rid of that stuff and get in there."

THE NEW MIDDLE AGERS

What types of ministry will attract middle-aged boomers? One of the biggest mistakes ministry leaders make is assuming that aging boomers will be like aging builders and will be attracted to the same kinds of ministry. The following 10 aspects of how middle-aged boomers differ from the builder generation will help churches develop effective ministries to this growing segment of society.

1. Middle-aged boomers will continue to be different from middle-aged builders.

Fifties-plus boomers will not wake up one day and prefer older forms of ministry. Baby boomers who were raised on the Beatles and like music with a beat will not wake up when they are 55 years old and suddenly like hymns that are sung and enjoyed by the builder generation.

Baby boomers prefer informal, unstructured activities, with change and variety. They think the system is the problem. This is one reason why boomers find it hard to submit to organizations, institutions, and government.

Boomers are not going to wake up and be like their parents. They are not marching in their parents' footsteps. We can expect fifties-plus boomers to act and think much like they always have. Because they are growing up, they are becoming responsible. But their attitudes about challenging authority and appreciating music with a beat are not going to change. Their attitudes may mellow and mature, but they will stay the same.

2. Middle-aged boomers will continue to be offended by stereotypes.

This is one aspect of middle-aged boomers we need to take to heart. Fifties-plus boomers don't want to be portrayed as frail or sedentary. They don't think of themselves as older. A fifties-plus ministry should be more youthful in appearance and active, or middle-aged boomers will not come.

3. Middle-aged boomers will continue to aspire to be young.

Fifties-plus boomers have never desired to wear clothing that made them look mature. The notion of staying young forever is strong. They won't live forever, but they're going to redefine what it means to be mature. Any fifties-plus ministry that looks like it was designed for their parents will not attract fifties-plus boomers.

4. Middle-aged boomers will continue to see themselves as unique individuals.

Middle-aged boomers dislike senior discounts because it reflects a stereotyped ageism. Boomers have directed their own lives. They have been independent and have not followed the crowd. They have stood against traditions and trends, and they will continue to do that.

We must make fifties-plus boomers part of the decision-making process as we design our ministries to them. They want to set the boundaries. They want to determine what classes will be taught and what trips they will take. If we are going to minister effectively to middle-aged boomers, we must involve them in the process of developing the program, or they won't attend.

5. Middle-aged boomers will continue to search for the next new adventure.

Fifties-plus boomers are looking for new experiences. Aging boomers are doing things older people have never dreamed of doing. We can expect fifties-plus boomers to be attracted to ministries that provide adventure and new experiences. The more we do this, the more they are likely to come.

6. Middle-aged boomers will continue to spend money.

Many middle-aged boomers are experiencing the empty nest. Instead of downsizing after the kids leave home, fifties-plus boomers are buying bigger houses with libraries and exercise rooms—things they always wanted but couldn't afford.

We can expect fifties-plus boomers to be attracted to and support ministries that are high quality. High quality to baby boomers is attributed to how much money is spent

on ministry. The builder generation, because of the Great Depression and having lived through WW II, are more likely to participate in low-cost ministries. But the boomer generation that grew up in more affluent times attributes the quality of a ministry to the amount of money spent in providing ministry. Middle-aged boomers expect ministry to have a higher quality than that of preceding generations, and they are willing to help pay for it.

7. Middle-aged boomers will continue to accelerate their careers.

Fifties-plus boomers will change their lifestyles but will stay involved in the work force. A survey found that 61 percent said that they prefer to phase out of their work rather than just quit. Many baby boomers feel they will probably never retire. They will be attracted to ministries that make allowance for their work schedules.

With traditional seniors' ministries, we've assumed people were home and had free time. We can't assume that any longer. Middle-aged boomers won't be sitting at home looking for things to do; they're going to continue to stay busy.

8. Middle-aged boomers will continue to look back and leap forward.

Middle-aged boomers are nostalgic. They look back and remember the singers and bands they listened to, and the cars they drove. Aging baby boomers want to relive their youth.

We can expect fifties-plus boomers to be attracted to ministries that help them look back and remember the past, but also launch forward into new careers and adventures.

9. Middle-aged boomers will continue to search for balance in their lives.

As middle-aged boomers begin to have grandchildren, the importance of family and spirituality become major issues. Middle-aged boomers have spent the first 50 years of their lives searching for success; in the second half they are searching for significance and meaning. For many boomers, once they turn 50, they reflect on the past, searching for

meaning in how they raised their kids and in their work. In their reflection, there is a desire to rechart a new direction for their future, to try to rebalance their lives.

Every generation must deal with becoming the matriarchs and the patriarchs—the leaders for younger generations. But fifties-plus boomers seem to be wrestling with the transition in a way that others perhaps have not. There is a sense of uncertainty. People who were older than them have passed from the scene. Suddenly boomers are searching through a maze of uncertainty and are trying to bring balance to their lives, work, and family. They are searching again for a new spirituality.

We can expect fifties-plus boomers to struggle with the same spiritual and emotional issues that all generations have struggled with. They think they're young, but they're not. They're going to struggle with this issue and others. If we can minister to them and provide biblical answers, we will be able to touch their lives.

10. Middle-aged boomers will continue to break the rules.

Boomers have always changed the rules, reinvented things, and challenged things. And they are still going to do that. Creating meaning in their life's work seems a central issue for baby boomers. They are trying to decide what to do with the next part of their lives. Many middle-aged boomers are leaving their jobs and taking different challenges. They are recreating life; they are breaking the rules rather than staying in the same job or staying in the same area for many years.

Make a list of all the rules you normally would apply to a seniors ministry, and then develop a ministry that's totally different from that. Break the rules; do something different that would say to baby boomers, "This is a godly ministry, a biblical ministry, but it is a 'break-the-rules' type of ministry. We're going to do exciting things."

—Gary L. McIntosh is professor of Christian ministry and leadership at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, and president of the McIntosh Church Growth Network.

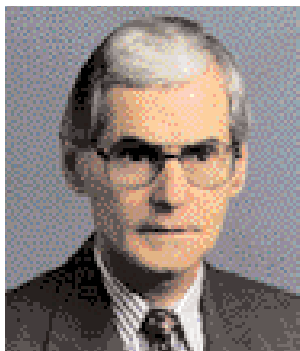
interview

WITH BILLIE DAVIS, AL SAUNDERS,
AND STEPHEN SPARKS

Investing in Senior Adults



BILLIE DAVIS



AL SAUNDERS



STEPHEN SPARKS

Many older adults are not growing, maturing Christians. We cannot assume since someone is over 50 and has been in the church for years that discipleship has taken place. Discipleship is a lifelong journey. What can a church do to help senior adults become devoted, obedient, reproducing disciples of Jesus?

During a recent Commission on Discipleship meeting in Springfield, Missouri, LeRoy R. Bartel, commissioner of the Commission on Discipleship, interviewed Billie Davis, Ed.D., distinguished sociologist and educator in the Assemblies of God; Al Saunders, national coordinator of Adult Ministries for the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada; and Stephen Sparks, director of Senior Adult Ministries for the Assemblies of God, concerning discipling older adults.

WHY ARE OLDER ADULTS NEGLECTED IN THE DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES OF THE LOCAL CHURCH?

DAVIS: My contacts with local churches lead me to believe that older adults are being neglected. Intentional discipling ministries seem to target those who recently have been saved and have come into the church. Many of these are unchurched people who have come in as seekers.

Most older adults have been in the same church for some time; or, because of our significantly mobile way of life, may have come from churches in other locations. Usually they are not perceived as candidates for discipling. This is the

outcome of a general misunderstanding of the meaning of *disciple* as a verb. In our headlong rush to make everything relevant to the culture, we have come to think of discipling as no more than a religious version of mentoring—and mentoring is traditionally connected with guiding a younger person toward success in some aspect of his or her life. Jesus' use of the phrase *making disciples* meant to help individuals develop strengths and gifts—not primarily for individual fulfillment or personal competence or career advancement—but for developing the church body. The work of Jesus is perpetuated when we make disciples.

Our current focus on the importance of change leads to a tendency to deprecate tradition. As a result, we have put many productive Christians into retirement in our churches. Many younger leaders never think to call older people to help them make plans for the future. Few senior adults will offer to serve or ask for opportunities to use their experiences, gifts, and knowledge because they fear rejection. Others have fallen into a do-nothing inertia. Most senior adults are reluctant to push in, so they do not seek opportunities to keep current and further develop what they have. An intentional, disciple-making plan that includes everyone is the church's only hope of successful and productive ministry to older adults.

SAUNDERS: Sometimes an unintentional, but incorrect attitude exists that older adults should already be involved in the local church. If they're not, it's too late to change them. Part of our problem also stems from the idea that discipleship is a program instead of a philosophy of ministry and a lifestyle.

Most ministries to older adults are event-driven. While this still appeals to many older adults 70 and over, it does not appeal to adults 50 to 70. Most adults 50 to 70 are interested in being equipped and released to do ministry.

SPARKS: In many churches, the correct words might be "presumed upon" or "taken for granted." Sometimes

opportunities and experiences in the church that will help them begin to grow in Christ.

SPARKS: Accept older adults as your responsibility, and be willing to spend time with them. This includes conversation, praying together, and reading and discussing the Bible together. Take them to church with you. Sit together.

WHAT CAN A LOCAL CHURCH DO TO INCLUDE OLDER ADULTS IN FELLOWSHIP?

DAVIS: The trend toward dividing church ministries into segments defined by age, gender, marital status, special needs, and significant interests has its

HOW CAN A CHURCH INSTRUCT OLDER ADULTS IN THE FAITH?

DAVIS: The basic difference between adult education and teaching children is that adults have definite ideas of what they would like to learn. Also, they have a foundation of past learning and experience on which to build. We need to ask questions and devise ways to make what we are teaching compatible with what they want to learn.

SPARKS: Anyone who teaches older adults has to recognize they have a deep desire to share their experiences. This is such a powerful learning tool for them. A wise teacher will not be in a hurry, but will provide opportunity for them

Sunday school provides an opportunity for building close friendships and providing the fellowship that older adults need.—Sparks

contemporary models of ministry and worship are emphasized and senior adults have been neglected. People sometimes ask me, "Would you please tell our pastor we are still here, and we want to be valuable to him?"

It's also a mistake to think that all older adults are only good for folding bulletins or stuffing envelopes. We have dozens of older adults who would love to be meaningfully involved in ministry. There are some seniors who have a rocking chair mentality, but most don't.

WHAT IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO DISCIPLE AN OLDER ADULT?

SAUNDERS: It is important to be real and transparent in discipling older adults. Honestly share the struggles you had as a new Christian and how you overcame adversity. Create a desire in seniors to become like Jesus by letting them see Him living in and through your life. Introduce older adults to other Christians and encourage them to participate in various learning

risks. Church leaders face the problem of trying to make everyone feel included and welcome. Outspoken reference to appreciation for older adults is one answer. Most advertising is successful because it tells people how they should feel. We need to say, "You are included. We need you. You are a blessing." Have members in classes of all ages introduce visiting parents and grandparents. Have older and younger groups host each other at fellowship events.

SPARKS: Older adults appreciate Sunday school. A Sunday school class is a marvelous way to include older adults in the fellowship of the church. One church I visited had over 100 older adults involved in 5 different Sunday school classes. Sunday school provides an opportunity for building close friendships and providing the fellowship that older adults need. These classes also gather for fellowship each month. They care for and minister to one another. Sometimes they eat together after church.

to share their stories. Older adults enjoy character studies from the Bible. Younger seniors enjoy topical studies and the discussion of current issues that affect them.

HOW CAN PASTORS ENCOURAGE OLDER ADULTS TO BECOME INVOLVED IN MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH?

SAUNDERS: Pastors need to find ways to involve older adults in using their spiritual, motivational, and vocational gifts. Today many adults are retiring between 55 and 60 years of age. Many of these people have vocational skills that have been perfected over years in the marketplace that can now be used in helping others on a volunteer basis. One example is the rising interest in parish nursing.

DAVIS: The first step in involving older adults is to ask them about their interests and experiences. One primary characteristic of older adulthood is what

Most ministries to older adults are event-driven.

While this still appeals to many older adults 70 and over, it does not appeal to adults 50 to 70.—Saunders

psychologists call generativity. It works on developmental stages. This is the opposite of stagnation. People want to pass on what they know and believe, just as they want to have heirs. They want to feel they have some influence on the future. Sunday school and other ministries offer opportunities to use experience and talents. We need to ask older adults to be involved,

group and correspond with missionaries supported by the church. For those who are able, make contacts with local schools and agencies for tutors, mentors, and foster grandparent programs.

SPARKS: Many senior adults are involved in MAPS RV ministry and HealthCare ministry. God wants them

disappointed if the Bible is not preached. They love to hear the cadences of the King James Version periodically.

DAVIS: Have some open discussion concerning music and worship routines. Do not define authentic by style of appearance and body language. Older people can be as authentic in business suits, sitting quietly, as

Older people can be as authentic in business suits, sitting quietly, as younger ones are standing in tattered jeans, swaying, and loudly expressing their emotions to God.—Davis

show them where they fit in, and help them develop relationships with others who have similar interests.

HOW CAN WE INVEST OLDER ADULTS IN THE WORLDWIDE MISSION OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH?

DAVIS: Probably the greatest mistake most local churches make is the failure to invest its older persons in distinctive, active ministries. We need to make the perpetuation of the church (Christian generativity) an acclaimed goal for senior-adult ministries. Develop a historic society to keep records of outreach ministries and their results. Have older adults act as spiritual grandparents to help sponsor children's missions activities such as BGMC and Coins for Kids. Ask older adults to form a missionary prayer

involved in four key areas—the four Ts: time, talent, treasure, and testimony. What a powerful contribution older adults can make to the evangelistic activity and missionary endeavors of the church.

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST OLDER ADULTS TO AUTHENTICALLY PARTICIPATE IN WORSHIP?

SPARKS: Sensitivity is a key issue. For example, too many new choruses at one time can be a problem. Long periods of standing are difficult for senior adults. They need the freedom to sit when they are tired. They need to feel we understand and appreciate what they enjoy. Seniors love to sing a hymn or gospel song once in a while. Older adults are people of the Word. They go away

younger ones are standing in tattered jeans, swaying, and loudly expressing their emotions to God.

SAUNDERS: One of the major tasks with older adults is to help them understand and appreciate other generational styles of worship. Encourage them to rejoice over the fact younger generations are interested in worshiping the Lord. Point them to whom we are worshiping. Worship has less to do with style and more to do with whom we worship. Wise pastors and worship leaders will include various styles and dimensions in the worship service. Finally, teach them that worship is not just what happens on Sunday morning. Worshiping the Lord “in Spirit and truth” is not a style; it's a lifestyle. **e**

A Burden or a Blessing?



TAPPING INTO THE MINISTRY GIFTS OF SENIOR ADULTS

ONE OF THE GREATEST OVERLOOKED RESOURCES A PASTOR HAS IS THE PEOPLE WHO BUILT THE CHURCH—SENIOR ADULTS.

The windows of the church need cleaning; the bulletin needs to be folded; the third grade Sunday school teacher is moving, and we need a replacement; the children's pastor needs help with his Easter outreach; and the parking lot needs new lines painted on it. Who can we ask?

Finding workers is a common dilemma for churches. We look for the obvious people to fill in

the gaps: the young and middle-aged. But one of the greatest overlooked resources a pastor has is the people who built the church—senior adults.

Many older adults are settling into a life of retirement. The common perception concerning seniors is: Their services have been rendered; it's time for them to rest. This viewpoint is endorsed by popular culture and has been bought into by the church.

BY DEAN FREIMUND



HELP SENIOR ADULTS DISCOVER THEIR SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Your senior adults may need help in discovering their spiritual gifts. Here are some things your seniors can do to help them in this process.

Steps to discovering your spiritual gift:

1. *Pray.* Ask God for understanding and wisdom about spiritual gifts, and for direction in discovering your own gift. Thank Him for His grace in giving you gifts, dedicate your search for and use of your gifts to His honor. Commit yourself and your unique gifts to the growth of His church.
2. *Study.* Read books, study the gifts passages in the Bible, know what gifts God has given to His body and how they manifest themselves. Talk with and observe people who have discovered and are using their gift. Ask them how they discovered their gift and what reinforcing events contributed to their discovery.
3. *Experiment.* Look around your church and identify areas of need. Examine your concerns. Remember, many are gifted in areas for which they have a particular concern. Then try it out.
4. *Ask questions.* What degree of satisfaction do you feel in the areas you are experimenting with? How do you feel about it? Positive feelings usually evidence fulfillment and are a clue in discovering one's gift. Negative feelings may indicate your gifts are elsewhere.
5. *Evaluate.* Are there positive results? Spiritual gifts are task-oriented—they are given for practical use in the body of Christ. In using your spiritual gift, do people enjoy the experience? Are you growing in confidence in using your gift? Are additional opportunities opening for you to use your gift? Are your efforts producing results?
6. *Verify.* Look for confirmation from the Body. Do other Christians affirm your own ideas of what your gifts are? If not, you need to reevaluate your thinking.

—Charles Arn, Ed.D, Monrovia, California.

PEOPLE WORKED UNTIL THEY DIED

There is no example or precedent for retirement in the Bible. The idea of retirement was unheard of until the 1930s and the initiation of social

security. Before then, people worked until they died. It was rare for anyone to use their social security because most people died in their sixties. But now, with people living into their seventies,

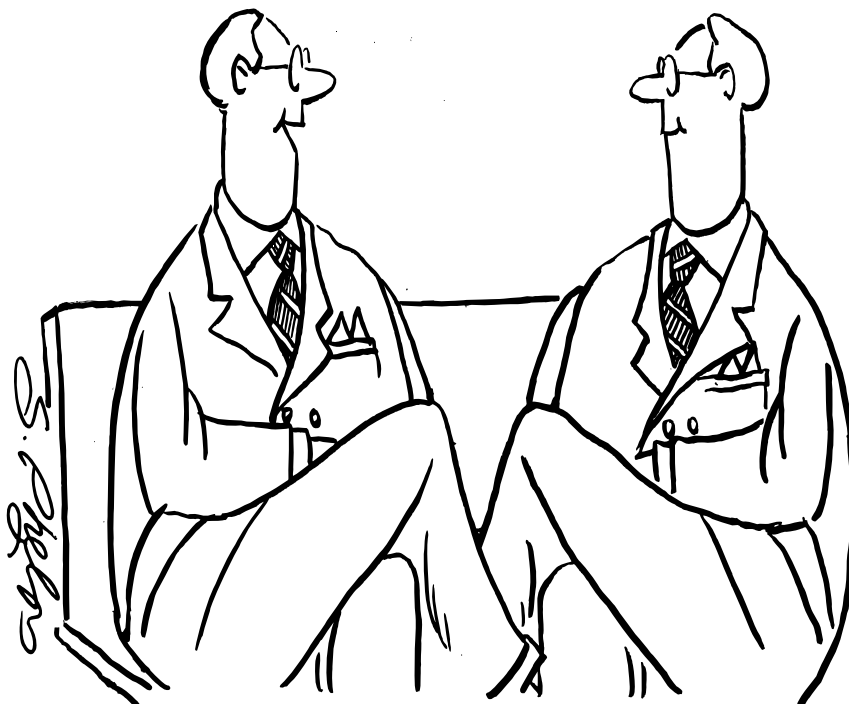
eighties, and beyond, retirement has become a popular concept in the Western world.

The Pentecostal movement enjoyed its greatest growth when the people who are now in their sixties and above were raising their families and were in the workplace. These people rolled up their sleeves and did the work of the gospel. They told coworkers about Jesus. They changed diapers in the nursery. They volunteered to do the cleaning, driving, setting up and taking down, and the other chores necessary to make the church successful in reaching and discipling people. Their day is not over; their time is not up. "They will still bear fruit in old age" (Psalm 92:14)*.

LOOK OUTSIDE THE BOX WHEN SEEKING HELPERS

How does a pastor match senior adults with the vacancies that plague the church? Sometimes the answers are obvious. If we ask the Lord of the harvest, He will help us "send out workers into his harvest field" (Matthew 9:38).

Knowing and understanding the various gifts of your older adults will help



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"Something tells me you will fit right in at our church."

in matching them with the tasks that need to be done. Many seniors are willing to serve, and the Lord may be speaking to them about their involvement in ministry.

People want to be needed, to feel they are important. We show senior adults how valuable they are when we ask them to help with worthwhile projects.

RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS

When recruiting volunteers, there are basic questions that need to be answered about the positions they're filling. The helpers need to know what they're expected to do, why it's important, where their authority and responsibilities begin and end, where they can get help, and how they will be evaluated and appreciated.

When our church needed volunteers in childcare, one man's vision led to several senior adults helping out one or two Sundays each month. Seniors have experience taking care of their children and grandchildren; why not ask them to give the regular nursery volunteers a break?

ANSWERING A CALL TO MINISTRY

One of the most powerful ways to find volunteers among older adults is to help people understand God's call on their lives. "The word *vocation* comes from the Latin word *vocatus*, meaning 'invitation'

or 'call.' According to Paul, God's call to every person, young or old, is to share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:13,14). The question older people must ask is: Now that I have lived for 65 or more years, have I completed my call? The answer must be never. In every circumstance, we are called by God to share in His glory. Each must grapple with the difficult questions: With what I have been given, what does God want me to do? And in what I do, how can I share in the glory of God?"¹ There are many ways a person can fulfill his or her call: interceding for the church, being an unofficial counselor/evangelist at a senior center or community club, serving as a greeter, being a foster grandparent, or many other opportunities.

Warren, a man in our congregation, felt called to be a minister since his youth, but God told him to wait. From his teens until his seventies he continually reevaluated this call, and God asked for patience. Recently Warren sold his business, and God said, "Now." Warren began pastoring in nursing homes and assisted-living centers. Last year he spent more than 500 hours and drove more than 3,000 miles ministering to those in nursing homes. He didn't retire; he just entered the ministry.

Harvey heard the testimonies of what was going on in the nursing homes. He had learned to play the piano when he was a boy, and he knew the ministry needed a pianist. Harvey had been retired from the grocery business for about 7 years and was enjoying his retirement. But he was lonely since his divorce two decades ago. He wondered, *Why not volunteer for this ministry?* Now, on Thursday mornings, he shares his gifts and his time.

Retirees can fill positions in the church, doing many of the same things they did in the work force. Many have been trained by their employers and have excellent skills. There are numerous examples of retired teachers helping in Sunday school. Carpenters can help the maintenance staff set up and dismantle props for plays and also make repairs to the building. Not only does this give them something to do, it builds their self-worth and saves the church money. It also frees the church's maintenance staff for more demanding projects.

As people grow older, they lose their strength. They may question their importance in the body of Christ. One example of someone who has a passion to be a part of God's vision for his church is Percy.

AN EFFECTIVE SENIOR LAY-MINISTRY PLACEMENT SYSTEM

Churches that put a priority on helping members find and use their spiritual gifts have a system in place to see that this happens. Here is how your church can have an effective lay-ministry placement system.

1. Have a staff person who is knowledgeable about the ministry opportunities in the church meet with the senior adult interested in finding a ministry. The staff person can review the person's spiritual gifts, the opportunities for using those gifts, and the initial steps in trying out a place of service.
2. A good lay-ministry placement system will have complete job descriptions or ministry descriptions for each position. This helps the prospective senior volunteer clarify expectations and assess his/her interest in the position.
3. Have the interested senior try a ministry for a short time without a long-term commitment. Look for ways people can get involved for 4 to 6 weeks and then evaluate their experience.
4. In the trial period, don't put the new volunteer into a leadership role. Rather, the new volunteer should be a helper, with a few opportunities to lead.
5. After the senior adult has had a chance to participate in the new role, have him/her meet again with the staff person to review the experience. Was it helpful or was it frustrating? What feelings does he/she have about possible involvement in this or other church ministries? How would other members who were involved in the experience evaluate the effectiveness of the person's contribution?
6. Identify a next-steps list with the senior adult. Be sensitive to his/her desires and time limitations. Most seniors, for example, do not want to make long-term commitments. Senior adults prefer short-term tasks.
7. Make all ministry positions (those filled by seniors, as well as others) 1-year positions. While they can return the following year, no one should be asked to stay longer.

—Charles Arn, Ed.D., Monrovia, California.

RESOURCING SENIOR ADULTS THROUGH A PRAYER MINISTRY

The senior adults in your church are a valuable prayer resource. Many of them want to do something productive for God and His kingdom. Here are some steps in developing this vital ministry.

1. Appoint a prayer coordinator. Senior adults need to have ownership of their ministry. This is one way to let them have ownership. In 1988, 83-year-old Alma Nelson came to our Assemblies of God mission in Leisure World Retirement Community. She announced she would begin a prayer meeting at her house on Wednesday at 10 a.m. To her disappointment, nobody came. The next week, though, five people came. The group grew and met weekly for the next 4 years.

2. Establish guidelines. Three principles guide our prayer meetings. First, each person is special; second, each person's participation is essential; and third, leadership must impart vision. Without vision, the prayer meeting becomes nonexistent.

3. Develop a structure. Three words describe our structure: *anticipation*, *adoration*, and *participation*. These encompass ministry to the Lord, to each other, for the church, and the lost.

Each attendee is encouraged to pray with anticipation, expecting great things from God as they dwell in His presence. Adoration and worship are essential. As our adoration ascends, we sense God's presence. This causes a unity of spirit as we agree in prayer.

Body life is also a theme of our prayer meetings. Each person participates and is encouraged to have humble and thankful attitudes. The Holy Spirit creates and conducts a beautiful, supernatural symphony of prayer.

Participation by each member promotes life in the prayer meeting. We are the body of Christ and members in particular. Each member is significant and needed.

Ken and Rob spend most of their time in wheelchairs—Ken with Parkinson's disease and Rob without legs or eyesight. These men have learned that prayer cannot be stopped by physical infirmities. Even shut-ins can be a part of a church's prayer ministry. Senior adults who may not be physically able to attend a prayer meeting can find a partner to agree with in prayer over the phone.

One of our members developed a categorized photo-prayer album with maps, pictures, statistics, and prayer requests. Prayer albums help the group stay focused while praying. It also provides information so the group can pray with purpose.

Our group prays by name for evangelists, pastors, teachers, and missionaries. We also pray that the Lord of harvest will send laborers into His harvest field. We pray for the persecuted church and the poor. We also pray for various situations we hear about on local TV and radio newscasts.

We have learned to pray the prayers of the Bible (Ephesians 1:15–21; 3:14–19; Philippians 1:9–11; Colossians 1:9–12). We pray that our church "may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (Colossians 4:12).

The 15 to 25 people who attend the weekly prayer meeting go home edified and encouraged. Each week we are seeing answers to our prayers.


—Leon Franck attends Leisure World Christian Assembly, an outreach of South Coast Christian Assembly, San Juan Capistrano, California.

Percy worked as a manager at a computer firm, but suffered several debilitating strokes 10 years ago at age 53. He was an elder and Sunday school superintendent before his stroke left him crippled and speechless. But this was not going to stop him from helping. He can smile, and he and his wife serve as greeters and help at the information booth. While his wife searches for an answer to a parishioner's question, Percy smiles brightly at the person and extends his healthy hand.

Our main greeter for the PrimeTimers is an example of how God uses someone who sees a need and fills it. The first time she visited our PrimeTimers service no one greeted her. She sat alone at one of the tables and left crying. Thankfully, a couple

coming late to the meeting intercepted her and prayed with her. I asked her to forgive me and to give us another chance, but she said, "The PrimeTimers are a rude, selfish group of people." Knowing that her perception was a reality in her instance, I asked her to help me change that. I let her know how much I needed a greeter so what had happened to her would not happen to anyone else. She now makes the nametags before our meetings. She watches for anyone who appears to be excluded. She bids farewell to everyone.

Older adults are being denigrated by secular forces, downplaying their value and the importance of their participation in society and the church. They're being persuaded to lay down their mantles of ministry and volun-

teerism. It's our job to convince them that as God continues to extend His kingdom on earth through the church, everyone needs to stay involved. "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18). 

Dean Freimund is senior-adult pastor at Bloomington Assemblies of God, Bloomington, Minnesota.



*Scripture references are from the New International Version.

E N D N O T E

1. Tim Stafford, *As Our Years Increase* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989) 59.

VÉRAISON

the Final Flavoring

PREPARING PEOPLE FOR RETIREMENT

By His choice of this spiritual metaphor—the vine—Jesus pointed us toward an incredible third life-stage that is available to every Christian passing through midlife. We must see it ourselves, and then help others see and prepare for it.

BY WARD TANNERBERG

There are times in life when one needs a fresh start—turning points on which endings are fixed and new beginnings are fashioned. Few times are more significant than the retirement years.

Today there are three times as many people over 65 as there are college students. And these numbers continue to grow. So do the issues people face when preparing for retirement.

Jesus clearly understood the issues of life when He told His companions, “I am the vine; you are the branches.” They threw puzzled looks at one another, glanced at rows of grapevines only recently awakened from winter’s sleep, then hurried after their Leader.

They were totally unaware that in a few short hours life would never be the same for them again. A similar lack of perception exists among those approaching retirement years. Men and women often find themselves emotionally and spiritually unprepared for what is ahead. For them, life will never be the same again.

By His choice of this spiritual metaphor—the vine—Jesus pointed us toward an incredible third life-stage that is available to every Christian passing through midlife. We must see it ourselves, and then help others see and prepare for it.

In the grapevine’s winter season, as much as 90 percent of its growth is cut back and tossed aside, making way for budburst in the spring. Once this budburst has started, the grape berry goes through three growth stages, very similar to that of human life.

THREE STAGES OF GROWTH

Stage One

Hormones are working overtime, making possible the growth and retention of the berry on the bunch. This is the grape’s adolescence, a time for forming and shaping what it will one day become.

Stage Two

Growth and visible change in the grape is slower, but much is happening just the same. The vine’s branches reach out and link together—not unlike our period of courtship, marriage, and family—as the bunch is forming on the vine.

Stage Three

This stage is full of sudden, dramatic change. Vinekeepers call it *véraison*—the final flavoring. Growth speeds up again in this most crucial period for the grape. Sugars rush to give the grape its sweetness. Color transforms what was mundane yesterday to unexpected beauty today. *Véraison* is like a miracle. The grape’s entire existence is for this very moment.

The vine and branch demonstrate God’s intention for today’s young (50–64), middle (65–79), and master (80+) seniors to power-walk their way through the 21st century. Jesus has high hopes for this aging generation. Our message needs to reflect this hope, offering a transforming balance to those who have been too preoccupied with simply getting through the day to give serious thought concerning what might be ahead.

PREPARING PEOPLE FOR RETIREMENT

Here are some important things for pastors and church leaders to consider when working with those approaching or already in their retirement years:

1. Find a place for everyone on the team. Both within and outside of the church, today’s older adults are victims of modern values. They are like the skinny

kid with glasses standing on the sidelines while teams are picked. His hands are stuffed in his pockets, wanting desperately to be chosen, but certain no one really wants him. Aged people often wind up with that same feeling—that nobody really wants them, even in the church.

The older we get, the less esteemed we become in a world focused on youthful beauty, strength, and accomplishment. People approaching the retirement years often find themselves struggling with matters of dignity and identity. They may feel forced out of society’s mainstream and, to some extent, even the church. Tragically, many fall victim to poverty, inadequate housing and health care, spiritual and emotional malaise. It is important to find a place for everyone on the team.

2. Help your congregation discard common stereotypes of aging. Senility or a lack of intellectual capacity is not inevitable for everyone. One’s retirement ought to be full of meaning and purpose. E. Stanley Jones, prolific writer and great Methodist missionary statesman to India, was working on another book even while he was dying. The book had to be completed by others.

Charles M. Sell, in *Transitions Through Adult Life*, tells the story of his 83-year-old

VÉRAISON—THE FINAL FLAVORING

While heading toward the uncharted territory of retirement and aging, men and women often decide to downsize and live with less. Whatever one chooses to sell or give away, there are seven principles you must never let go. Take them with you for maximum fulfillment through the over-50 years.

1. Establish your personal meaning and purpose in life.
2. Cultivate the sense of belonging and nurture a few deeper relationships.
3. Make an effective and useful contribution.
4. Give and receive affirmation and respect.
5. Demonstrate your personal worth and value.
6. Fuel your spiritual life.
7. Know that it’s not too late—it’s (almost) never too late.

Jack Rowe, M.D., MacArthur fellow and president of Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, observes, “Baby boomers are the first generation in history to enter midlife with the prospect of four more decades of life expectancy. The question is: What will we make of it?”

God’s final flavoring...are you ready for it?

—Ward Tanneberg serves as pastor of encouragement and executive pastor of ministries at Westminster Chapel, Bellevue, Washington.

father who, on his deathbed, was sometimes coherent, sometimes not. Yet, only hours before his death, he made provision for his regular offering to be taken to church the following Sunday. In life's final moments, he still believed he had something to offer. He left this life with dignity and integrity intact.

3. Help your congregation understand that aging is neither inherently depressing nor automatically wonderful. Old age is not for sissies, but the fact remains—it's all right to get older; it's just not all right to get old. Increase the level of your congregation's awareness regarding this lifestage. Prepare people for its joys and sorrows, disappointments and victories. Discomfort in addressing this subject must be overcome. And don't relegate it to a small, back room with wheelchair access. It should be discussed when and where most of the church family is present.

4. Make certain older people are not isolated from the larger church fellowship. Through teaching, testimony, and intergenerational contact, any church can change people's feelings and attitudes toward the elderly and toward growing older.

For many middle and master seniors, the church has always been the center of their lives. It is their primary place for fellowship, service, and worship. It's where their children were married and

grandchildren were dedicated. It's where they said goodbye to some of their friends. Yet today's worship expression in your church may lack a sense of connectedness with your older constituents.

Next Sunday, notice how many of your over-50 worshipers appear to be disengaged during the song service. The boomer, just now heading into his or her 50s, may be slightly better equipped, with one foot in traditional hymnody and another in the newer worship styles. Yet even younger seniors (a word that may cause them to tear up their invitation to AARP) are ill-prepared for the transitions in life that lie ahead.

5. Provide older adults answers to basic questions on life and death. Even after a long absence from church, men and women age 50 plus who had some earlier religious training or experience are ripe for evangelization at this later lifestage. Older people often see themselves as more religious now. They may be more open to the gospel than we have been led to believe, even though they may not be open to changing their religious heritage. They are very much into relationship and authenticity, sensing the need for people who genuinely care and a faith that transcends mere form, providing assurance that God really does love them. If you do this, you may win them.

6. Help senior adults see that second career choices and opportunities for

Christian service are genuine possibilities. A 53-year-old single parent in our church, with some assistance from our Single Parent Education Fund, is completing her college education.

On a Sunday over lunch, several young and middle-age seniors will participate in a Finishers Forum with men and women a few years older who have made career changes leading into Christian service and humanitarian ventures. They will dialogue with people whom the Lord has guided through significant life and career transitions into the most exciting part of their journeys thus far.

7. Teach people to risk intelligently. Moving from one's longtime home or changing one's vocation can be extremely stressful. Provide opportunity for people to dialogue with those who have done that. Encourage retirees to consider new opportunities carefully, to test the waters before plunging in. The world and the church are opening up to both long- and short-term volunteerism in ways not seen before. Encourage people to take time to find out what is right for them.

8. Teach people that disease or disability do not devalue human life. Value and productivity are often viewed synonymously in our culture. A sense that we are declining in position, power, place, or productivity—in vocation or church—can be discouraging. Spiritual struggles arise, faith problems, fear of death, eternal insecurity, all requiring studies in God's Word to reassure in the face of spiritual uncertainties. Make certain the opportunities for fueling spiritual life are there.

We are entering *véraison*—Stage 3. The final flavoring. There is no turning back. It is time for life's greatest and most mysterious adventure. Are you helping your adults prepare for it? **e**

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"The little kids get Oreo cookies, the teens get pizza, and we get frozen Metamucil on a stick."

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It is not an endorsement of these publications.*

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The Hireling Spirit

BY JAMES K. BRIDGES

Jesus drew a distinction between the shepherd and the hireling. The contrasts are major, but the deepest difference is in the nature of the two.

INTRODUCTION

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth; and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is a hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:11–14).

Every minister has likely, at some time, slipped into the ministry mode of a hireling rather than a servant leader. The hireling spirit is a human tendency that can assert itself when ministry becomes frustrating and exhausting. Avoiding this tendency takes a conscious effort and determination. Detecting the early signs of the hireling spirit can help us avoid damaging or ruining our ministry.

JESUS CONTRASTS THE HIRELING AND THE TRUE SHEPHERD

Jesus drew a distinct comparison between the shepherd and the hireling. The contrasts are major, but the deepest difference is in the nature of the two. The hireling acts and responds according to his nature; the true shepherd, according to his nature. Jesus said the hireling flees because he is a hireling. In contrast, the true shepherd stands and fights because he is a true shepherd.

By using the term *good*, Jesus showed further distinction between the shepherd and the hireling. The shepherd

is talking about is true and genuine. He is no "wolf in sheep's clothing." In contrast, the hireling is not a true shepherd; he is simply in it for a living or, as we say, for the money. Jesus is painting a picture of himself, for He is the true shepherd: "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."

These words of Jesus help us see the hireling in his true light. Let us look at the Master's teaching and observe the ways in which the hireling spirit can be detected.

THE HIRELING SPIRIT CAN BE DETECTED BY ITS LANGUAGE

The term *hireling* depicts the focal point of the employment. The hireling is there because he has been hired for a certain amount of money; and, if the pay is not right, he will not be around long. The centerpiece of conversation is the money that is being paid for the services rendered. He is constantly unhappy because the pay is never enough. You can tell when a minister moves to the hireling status. The first question he asks when candidating for a church is, "What is the pay package?" or "I will have to have this much salary before I would consider the church." The language used when differences arise between the pastor and the board is, "Why don't you buy out my contract?" The hireling's priorities are distorted, and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. It can be said of the hireling, "Thy speech betrayeth thee."

THE HIRELING SPIRIT CAN BE DETECTED BY ITS SELFISHNESS

A major feature of the hireling is his lack of concern for others. His primary concern is for himself, even at the expense of others. Jesus said the hireling “careth not for the sheep.” His care is for his own safety when he sees the enemy approaching. Paul gave Timothy the highest commendation as a true shepherd when he wrote in Philippians about: 1) his sympathetic nature—“I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state” (2:20); 2) his selfless nature—“for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s” (2:21); 3) his seasoned nature—“ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel” (2:22). For the church to survive, we must have ministers with the same spiritual quality as Timothy.

THE HIRELING SPIRIT CAN BE DETECTED DURING CRISIS

Jesus said “the hireling fleeth” when crisis occurs. The hireling spirit is a spirit of cowardice. He has no concern for the sheep. When the hireling sees the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep. He is more concerned for his safety than for the destruction the wolf will wreak on the flock. Paul, a model of a true shepherd, warned the elders at Ephesus to protect

the church as he had protected them from the enemy: “For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock” (Acts 20:29). To serve Christ as an undershepherd requires courage and confrontation with the enemy who comes in many forms. The minister of Christ must “resist steadfast in the faith” our adversary, the devil (1 Peter 5:8,9). Through the Spirit of Christ, every crisis can be faced with courage.

THE HIRELING SPIRIT CAN BE DETECTED BY ITS MOTIVE

The hireling spirit has only one motive—the profit motive. When he “seeth the wolf coming” he leaves in a hurry, because he knows the wolf will destroy the sheep, thus robbing him of his source of income. To the Ephesian elders, the apostle Paul stated: “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33). Paul ministered with the highest motive: “serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations” (Acts 20:19). He could say, for “three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31); and that his own hands “ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me” (Acts 20:34). This is the spirit of a true shepherd. He will take

oversight of and feed the flock of God not for filthy lucre, but because he is an example to the flock (1 Peter 5:2,3).

THE HIRELING SPIRIT CAN BE DETECTED BY THE ABSENCE OF LOVE

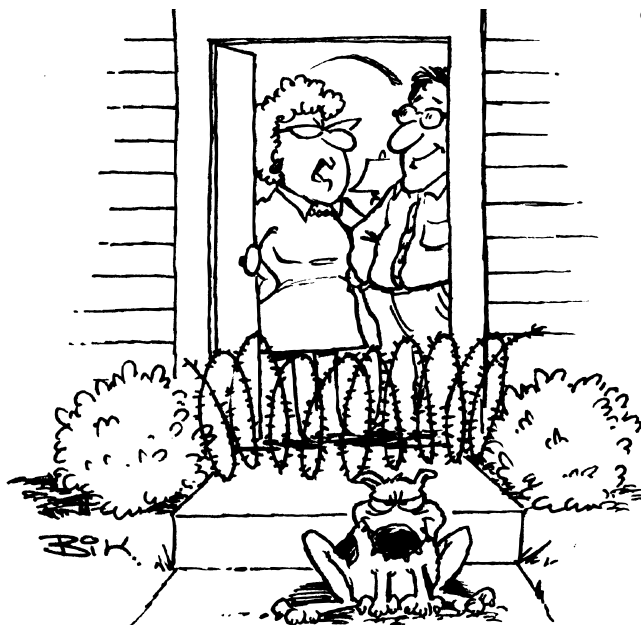
John 13:1 reveals the true nature of Jesus as the Good Shepherd: “Having loved his own...he loved them unto the end.” Love makes it possible for the true shepherd to “give his life for the sheep.” A hireling’s nature will not allow him to make such a sacrifice for others. The hireling spirit is consumed with “covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3:5). The presence of love in the heart of the true shepherd builds a powerful relationship between himself and his sheep, which cannot be known by a hireling. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine” (John 10:14).

When a pastor and church develop this kind of relationship—one which only love can build—it is a powerful bonding that the enemy cannot destroy. To see a pastor and his church so dedicated to each other that both would give their lives for the other is such a powerful defense no wolf could ever “scatter the sheep,” and no thief could get the chance “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10).

When we first detect that a hireling spirit may be developing within us, we need to immediately pray for forgiveness and adjust our thinking about our motivations and responsibilities to those we serve. If we sense a hireling spirit developing in a fellow minister, we may be doing him a great service by bringing it to his attention, praying with him, and offering to help him.

Let us protect the church from hireling leaders and loveless saints, so when the Chief Shepherd returns He will have a “well done” for our pastors and our churches. **e**

James K. Bridges is general treasurer of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



“Is it any wonder your congregation thinks you’re unapproachable?”

interview

WITH JOHN LINDELL

Pentecostal Priorities—the Key to a Vibrant, Growing Church



THOMAS E. TRASK



JOHN LINDELL

The story of how one church grew from 42 people in 1991, meeting in a Christian bookstore, to over 4,200 in 2001, meeting in a multimillion dollar complex, is nothing short of a miracle. This church's short history serves as a powerful reminder that God can and does break through into our cradle of humanity to perform the miraculous—a sovereign demonstration of His greatness. Though this interview is not a storyline of how the church went from infancy to adulthood, it does reflect on some of the Pentecostal priorities that helped make James River Assembly of God the fastest growing church in the Assemblies of God between 1991-2000. General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask visited with John Lindell, senior pastor of James River Assembly, in Springfield, Missouri, to discuss these priorities and why they are central to the church's Pentecostal mission.

TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THE GROWTH OF JAMES RIVER ASSEMBLY OF GOD?

LINDELL: I attribute the growth at James River Assembly to a sovereign move of God. In addition, the people have given themselves to some basic principles. They have a heart for the lost and have given themselves to serving rather than being spectators.

Evangelism has always been the centerpiece of the church's life and ministry.

PEOPLE FOLLOW A LEADER. WHAT HAS BEEN IN YOUR HEART AS YOU HAVE WITNESSED THIS EXTRAORDINARY GROWTH OF THE CHURCH?

LINDELL: People ask me if I have a vision for the church, and I tell them I am not a real visionary. But 10 years from now I want this church to be inch for inch, ounce for ounce, as solid a church in conforming to the principles we see modeled in the New Testament Church.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF BASING ONE'S STYLE OF MINISTRY ON THE BIBLICAL MODEL?

LINDELL: There are many ideas today on how to do church. If a pastor tries to copy different ministry models, but these models don't fit his church's personality, the people become confused. If, however, a pastor bases his model on the Bible, then he teaches people the authority of Scripture. A pastor has increased his own authority in leading them because he can say, "This is not my idea; this is the Bible's."

There are many benefits to a biblically based ministry that focuses on fundamentals.

YOU MAINTAIN A STRONG TRADITION FOR THE SUNDAY NIGHT SERVICE. WHY?

LINDELL: Many of our churches have moved into specialized ministries on Sunday. The adults are in one area of the building for Sunday school while the children are in another. In the process, we have split up the family during Sunday services. While God is touching

time around the altar where the Spirit of God can meet them at their point of need.

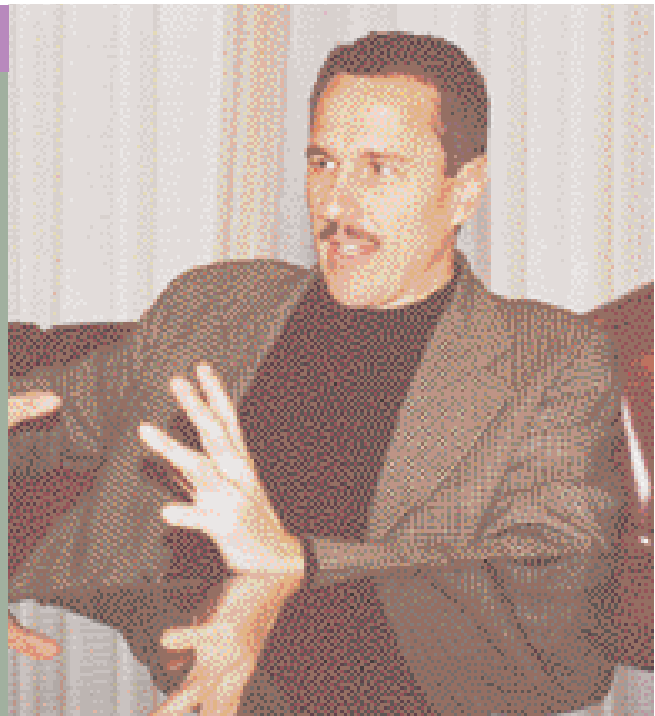
HOW DO YOU PLAN FOR THE SUNDAY NIGHT SERVICE?

LINDELL: I put every effort into making the evening service important. I have found that what is important to me as the pastor is important to the church. We have a full choir and orchestra that commit to being there every Sunday night. That is a huge commitment on their part. I'm thankful that I have a

continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). It is not right for pastors to neglect these things. Pastors must decide what their priorities are going to be. I've decided to focus on prayer, the Word, and leadership development.

From the time the church was small, I've operated on what I call planned neglect. I plan to neglect everything until my message is ready. I study Tuesday morning, all day Wednesday, Friday morning, and Saturday until I'm done, which is usually early afternoon. I spend

If I didn't teach the people to boldly approach the throne of grace, to find mercy and grace to help them in time of need, then what have I taught them?—Lindell



children through the children's ministries, they still need time with adults. We decided we would lose the heritage of the church if we didn't have our children participating with adults. When everybody is experiencing the same thing, sensing the move of the Spirit, heritage is transmitted. This is why we make the Sunday evening service important at James River. It is the one service of the week when our families can worship together.

Another reason the Sunday night meeting is important is that it provides people opportunity to spend

music pastor and choir who are willing to do that. I also give priority to the message. I don't want to preach old material on Sunday night.

YOUR PREACHING HAS BECOME A HALLMARK OF YOUR MINISTRY.

HOW DO YOU STAY FRESH WITH YOUR PREACHING?

LINDELL: I like to read and study. Commentator Adam Clark said, "You need to study yourself to death and put yourself back to life again." This is the calling of the pastor in a New Testament sense. The apostles said, "But we will give ourselves

approximately 8 to 10 hours in sermon preparation during the week. If it's a difficult subject, it can take up to 18 hours. The priority of my week is making sure I have adequate study time. If I'm not prepared, people feel they are getting leftovers, and they will feel the Sunday services aren't important.

ANOTHER STRONG TRADITION OF YOUR CHURCH IS ITS MIDWEEK PRAYER MEETING. WHAT BROUGHT THAT ABOUT?

LINDELL: At an Assemblies of God Theological Seminary conference, a

speaker said, "People talk about prayer in the school, but we don't have prayer in the church. Have prayer in the church, then we'll talk about the other." I left convicted. James River is a good church with a lot of good things happening, but I wasn't teaching the people to pray. Spurgeon said, "If God be near a church, it cannot help but pray. One of the first signs that God is not near a church is a slothfulness in prayer."

Frankly, I didn't know how to conduct a prayer meeting. I asked the Lord to show me what we could do. I concluded that if the church is going to pray, it would have to be at a time when the church meets, because people are busy. We tried to start an early morning prayer meeting, but people didn't come.

On Wednesday nights we were running over 400 in the sanctuary, and the Lord was blessing. I asked the leadership of the church what they thought about having a prayer meeting on Wednesday nights. They said, "The people love you, John, and they'll follow you. But in 6 months you will cut your attendance in half. You need to understand your strengths. God is blessing what you are doing on Wednesday nights. If it isn't broken, don't fix it."

But I couldn't get away from the fact we were not praying. If I didn't teach the people to boldly approach the throne of grace, to find mercy and grace to help them in time of need, then what have I taught them?

I came to a place where I said to the leadership, "I know what's best for the church."

At James River, I've tried to say, "Lord, whatever You tell me to do, I will obey." I felt I would be disobedient if we didn't have prayer on Wednesday night.

DESCRIBE WHAT WAS IN YOUR HEART AND WHAT YOU LEARNED AS YOU LEAD THE CHURCH IN THIS PRAYER EMPHASIS.

LINDELL: Pastor Cho says the pastor

has to lead the prayer meeting. I said, "God, You have to lead the prayer meeting." I'm from a Presbyterian background that likes a plan. To think that I would go in and just see what God would do was stretching me. To be completely honest with you, I was scared to death the first year.

During that first year, I rented a hotel room where I fasted and prayed all day. I said, "Lord, if You don't show up, I don't have anything, and it will get old in a hurry. But if You are walking the aisles of the sanctuary, then people will never get tired of that. Only You can transform people."

In our prayer meetings there were times when it felt we were rolling along on square wheels trying to get the thing moving. I would go home at times discouraged because of a lack of intensity on a given night or because it felt like the Spirit wasn't moving.

Other times the prayer meetings were glorious. The people come into the sanctuary at the end of a busy day and experience the Lord's presence. They realize that God is giving us a taste of what the prayer meeting can become. There is a strengthening that comes into their lives after spending time in God's presence. I wake up the next morning feeling refreshed with a power in my life that has come from the prayer meeting. God does things in my heart through the corporate prayer meeting that renew me in a way that nothing else can.

I have learned that leading people to wait on the Lord and have an encounter with Him takes time. We are asking people to spend 1 1/2 hours in prayer on Wednesday night when the average preacher spends 15 minutes a day in prayer. Prayer is a discipline that must be taught and that takes time.

I have also come to understand that the prayer meeting is like a baby who becomes a toddler, then a

preschooler, then an elementary child. We are in the preschool stage of prayer. A day will come when we will be fully developed.

We have had this prayer meeting for the last 3 years of our church's 10-year existence. What has surprised me most through all of this is the attendance has increased not decreased. The motivation for our prayer meeting has never been for what would take place this week or this year at James River. Now 6 years later and with over 300 prayer meetings, I believe God is saying: Those people at James River Assembly have been there when it was hot and cold, and they've been there when they didn't want to. They have waited on Me and called on Me. I will meet them.

WHAT IS THE FORMAT FOR YOUR PRAYER MEETING?

LINDELL: We typically have a worship time, helping people focus their minds on God. We pass out prayer cards as people come in. Everyone who has a need fills out a prayer card, and we pray for these needs for a month.

Any preparation I do for the service is in prayer. I allow the Lord to lay on my heart what He wants to say through me. I give a brief devotional. It generally moves people toward some area of what the Lord wants to do that night. There might be a need or some tragedy or emergency for which we ask the people to pray. We may pray for one another, but we always have a time where the people can seek the Lord on their own, at their seats or around the altar. We also pray for our city, state, and government leaders.

In December, the focus of our prayer time is very specific. We pray for the many outreaches the church organizes in the community as well as for the salvation of the large number of guests who will visit the church during the month. Last year we had more people saved in December in our Sunday morning

services than any other month.

Something else I do is to recap my Sunday morning message. For example, right now I'm preaching through the Book of Acts. We have hundreds of people who need the infilling of the Holy Spirit. I get

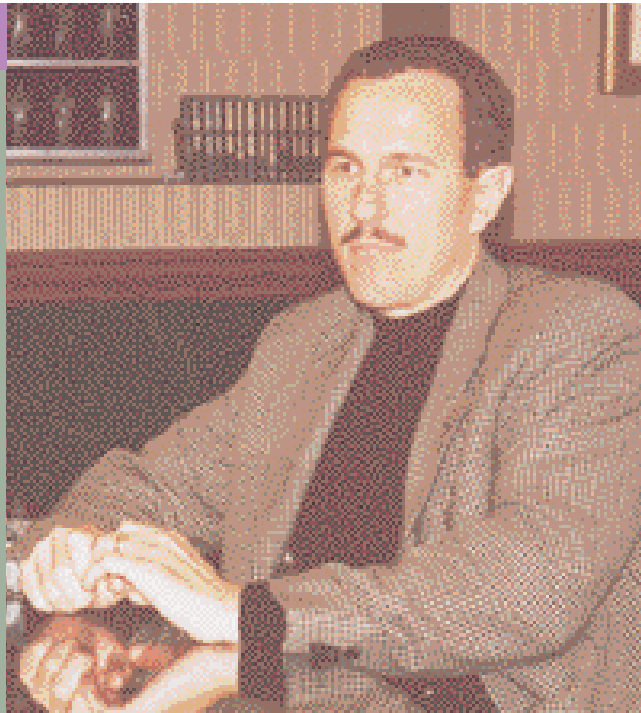
the mess in people's lives.

Those who doubt or downplay the validity of the altar make me wonder whether they remember the experiences they have had at the altar. There have been times when I was facing tough issues that I stood

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER ADVICE FOR PASTORS?

LINDELL: One concern I have in the Pentecostal church is that many of our younger generation view Pentecostal practices such as the altar, praying out loud, and the

Those who doubt or downplay the validity of the altar make me wonder whether they remember the experiences they have had at the altar.—Lindell



excited thinking about hundreds of people receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit and what that would do in Southwest Missouri.

WHY IS THE ALTAR IMPORTANT IN YOUR CHURCH?

LINDELL: Having been raised Presbyterian, I came into the Assemblies of God with several questions. Through searching the Scriptures, and the work of the Spirit in my heart, I've seen the validity in things that some people believe are outdated—such as the altar. Something special happens in a person's life at the altar. They are taking a step of faith saying, "God, I believe You to be the answer, and I'm going to step out in faith believing You're going to meet me." That is the beginning of the work of God in anybody's life. My workload as a pastor decreases when I invite people to the altar. Only the Holy Spirit can unscramble

at the altar and the Lord changed me. The next day I felt confident that God met me and gave me strength.

I use the altar every Sunday morning to call people to a public confession of faith in Christ. Prayer counselors join those coming forward—this establishes an important bond at the very beginning of the process. They are led to a prayer room just off of the sanctuary where their commitment to Christ is made. We ask every new convert to sign a decision card; we want them to understand the seriousness of the decision they have made. We explain the importance of obedience to Christ and that the first step in obedience is to be baptized in water. If we let people feel comfortable with not being baptized, then we have taught them to be comfortable with not being obedient to Christ. We baptize people every Sunday night.

baptism in the Holy Spirit as outdated and just a part of Pentecostal culture. I feel sorry for pastors who haven't settled their convictions regarding the fundamentals or the basics of Pentecostal ministry.

I had to settle the issue of praying out loud. I read my Bible to see what it said. In Psalms, praying out loud is mentioned quite often. I read the Old Testament and noticed the times men like Moses, who knew the will of God, still cried out to the Lord. Praying out loud has been the pattern of God's people from Genesis to Revelation—men and women calling on the Lord.

It is my prayer that the Lord will give Pentecostal leaders a fresh baptism in the Holy Spirit, and that we who traffic in Pentecostal truth will not become so familiar with it that we forget its power to transform our lives and ministries. **e**

The Power of the *Oikos*

BY ALAN JOHNSON

INTRODUCTION

A few years ago I was in northern Thailand teaching a seminar for pastors on church growth. I asked how God was bringing people to faith in their churches. Pastors began to tell how their believers had relationships with non-Christians, and out of these friendships they invited people to church. As people were exposed to the message of Christ and the warmth of Christian fellowship, they decided to become followers of the Lord. Incorporation into the Body was not a problem because they already had an existing network of relationships.

I then asked these pastors how they were structuring their current outreach, in light of the way God was bringing people to faith. Without hesitation they replied that they passed out tracts on Sunday afternoons. I asked my original question again and received the same answer as before. Again I asked how they should structure their outreach.

It stumped them. They were so used to passing out tracts, they could not see any other way to evangelize. They did not understand the difference between the way God was effectively bringing people to faith in their congregations and the less effective method they were using to spread the gospel.

The experiences these Thai pastors related concerning the way people were coming to faith in their congregations has been confirmed by research in American culture. Seventy-five to 90 percent of people who make decisions for Christ say a friend or relative was primarily responsible for their coming to know Jesus and their becoming a part of a local church.¹ This relational context for sharing the Christian faith is being

confirmed in church-growth research around the world. This is not simply a modern phenomenon—it is a scriptural method. It is a clearly identifiable strategy in the ministry of Jesus, the apostles, and the Early Church. Relational evangelism is our most powerful way to mobilize our people for outreach and to reach and disciple new people.

SHARING THE GOSPEL THROUGH RELATIONAL NETWORKS: DEFINING *OIKOS*

Acts 16 provides an excellent example of how the Early Church used relational networks to rapidly spread the gospel. In 16:11–15, as Paul shared the gospel, the Lord opened Lydia's heart (verse 14). In the tightly compressed language of Luke, it is easy to miss the sense of movement and change of scene that must have taken place. In verse 15, Paul baptized Lydia's entire household. Note again this same process with the jailer in Acts 16:25–34. We move from Paul's talking with the jailer in verse 31, to his sharing with the jailer's entire household (verse 32), and then baptizing all of them (verse 33).

The Greek word translated house and household is *oikos*. In Acts 16, Paul intentionally used the *oikos* as a vehicle for spreading the gospel. Rather than leading a single individual to Christ outside of his or her family and social context, Paul proclaimed the gospel not only to individuals, but to their families as well. He sought to bring people to faith and to follow the Lord in water baptism as a household.

UNDERSTANDING THE *OIKOS*

In Roman and Israelite culture, the

home was the fundamental unit. Michael Green, remarking on the strategy of the Early Church in evangelizing through the home, notes that “sociologically speaking, the early Christians could not have hit on a sounder basis.”²

Beginning in the Old Testament, the household was fundamental to salvation in God's economy. Noah and his house were brought into the ark; Abraham and his house were brought into the covenant; and David and his house were promised the Kingdom. In the Old Testament, the wife, children, servants, and resident aliens are all included in the house. In Deuteronomy 14:26, the word *household* is equivalent to the expanded description of Deuteronomy 12:12 with its sons and daughters, menservants and maidservants.

In Greco-Roman society, the household included one's immediate family and relatives, as well as the slaves and the *clientela*—freedmen who frequently took the family name and remained in the looser connection with it. This group owed loyalty to the head of the household and expected protection and assistance from him as well. In addition to these groups, there was often a class known as the *amici*—trusted friends to whom intimacy was granted and from whom reliable support and devotion were expected.³

THE MEANING OF *OIKOS* TODAY

In Greco-Roman culture, the *oikos* was one's sphere of influence, his social system composed of those related through common kinship ties, tasks, and territory.⁴ Today our *oikos* consists of those with whom we have common kinship (larger family), common community

(friends, neighbors), and common interests (associates, work relationships, recreation).⁵

The early Christian missionaries “made a deliberate point of gaining whatever households they could as lighthouses, so to speak, from which the gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness.”⁶

REACHING THE *OIKOS* AS A SCRIPTURAL METHODOLOGY

Because we have a tendency to read Scripture through the lens of the individualism in our culture, we often miss the fact sharing the gospel through the relational networks of the *oikos* is woven deep into the fabric of the Gospels, Acts, and the Epistles.

Oikos in the Ministry of Jesus

Jesus utilized existing relationships as bridges to spread His message. In Mark 5:19, Jesus told the man delivered from demons to go back to his *oikos* and tell what great things the Lord had done for him. In the case of both Levi (Mark 2:15–17) and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:9), they gathered their close associates around them to spend time with the Lord. John 4 has two examples: the Samaritan woman telling her friends about Jesus (4:39); and after the healing of the official’s son, his whole *oikos* believed (4:53). John 1 shows the natural connections as Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to the Lord (1:41), and Philip brought Nathanael (1:45).

As Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim the kingdom of God, He instructed them specifically in an *oikos*-based methodology. They were to find the worthy man (Matthew 10:11) or the son of peace (Luke 10:6) and use that home as a base of operations and sponsorship for their ministry in the community.

Oikos in Acts and the Epistles

In Acts, we find references to preaching and teaching house-to-house (5:42; 20:20), and to meeting in the home of Justus (18:7). The gospel is received in many households: Cornelius (10:2,22,30; 11:14), Lydia (16:15), the

jailer (16:31,32), and Crispus (18:8).

In the Epistles, there is a reference to Paul’s baptizing the household of Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16), and the rest concern churches that met in a house (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2).

For the Early Church, the household was the critical factor in spreading the gospel. The relational network of the household provided bridges to large numbers of people through which the gospel could spread and helped new converts stand as a group rather than as individuals in an often-hostile environment. Using the home as a place for evangelism allowed for dialogue and interchange between the preacher and listeners, a relaxed atmosphere, as well as the chance to offer hospitality.⁷

RATIONALE FOR USING *OIKOS* PRINCIPLES

The preceding sections have shown that the use of the relational network as a methodology for evangelism is scriptural. However, it is also practical. Arn lists the following advantages of using *oikos* relationships: It is natural, cost-effective, fruitful, a constant source of enlarging contacts, brings satisfaction to members, is most effective in assimilating new members, and has the potential to win entire families.⁸

Another reason why relational-based evangelism should be implemented is it helps the majority of our church members who do not have the gift of evangelism to creatively and effectively share their faith using their spiritual and natural gifts in the context of their everyday lives. There has been such an emphasis on evangelistic techniques that utilize speaking and monologue that many Christians think they are unable to share the gospel. Believers need to be taught that their life is a bridge to others who have not heard of Christ. Their goal is to build relational bridges so people can meet the Savior, not walls that keep Him hidden.

Another word picture comes from farming. Church members can be taught that evangelism is a process that starts

with cultivating a relationship with someone, planting the seed of the gospel through word and deed, and harvesting when the fruit is prepared. Our people can be taught to realize that their everyday lives and spheres of activity and relationships are their fields of ministry.

Another key reason for implementing a relational-based evangelism strategy is that it is the first step toward assimilating new believers into a church. This kind of evangelism produces a more stable convert because the network of relationship is already in place before his or her conversion. My experience in Thailand has shown that if a person makes a profession of faith without a preexisting relational connection—as through a large crusade or cold-contact personal evangelism—they very rarely become a part of the church.

Evangelism through relational networks gives seekers a chance to hear the gospel and to see and consider its implications in their lives. When they make a profession of faith, they are prepared to follow Christ in fellowship with others, because they have already been participating in fellowship prior to their conversion.

MOBILIZING EVANGELISM THROUGH RELATIONAL NETWORKS

If *oikos*-based evangelism is a scriptural methodology and is effective, then we need to develop an intentional plan and strategy for using these principles and methods in our churches. If we are going to mobilize our churches to use relational networks, the first thing we must realize is that *oikos*-based evangelism is not a program, but a principle and methodology. As a principle, it is something that energizes everything we do. As a methodology, it is something we can train people to utilize as they share their faith.

The second thing we must realize is that relational-based evangelism does not start by changing anything at a structural level or adding anything. Instead it becomes a framework for understanding outreach and training people to share their faith. All existing

activities—from Sunday school to the various groups of the church (youth, men, women), and all evangelistic outreaches—can be developed along relational lines. The change is within our hearts and minds first. To do this, it is necessary for leadership to cast the vision of reaching those in personal networks, and help their members understand their first ministry responsibility is to their network. An outward rather than inward vision must be inculcated into all existing groups and ministries.

While the vision is being cast, opportunities to reach their networks can be presented. Rather than spending money for advertising to invite people who have no connection with the church to attend an outreach function, instruct your members to work on those in their relational network.

To help your people focus on reaching their personal networks, Arn suggests seven steps.⁹

1. Identify your extended family—make a list of everyone in your *oikos*.

2. Develop a profile on each person of what he/she likes/dislikes, etc. This will help in planning how to build friendship and ministry to each person.

3. Focus your efforts on those who will be most receptive.

4. Develop a disciple-making plan.

5. Work your disciple-making plan.

6. Pray regularly and specifically for each person on your *oikos* list.

7. Accept your responsibility before God and others to minister to your *oikos* and to follow up on those who become believers.

Even in a congregation with only 10 or 20 believers, analyzing relational networks can result in a list of nearly 100 people. These are not strangers, but people who are already in contact with your members. By focusing prayer and ministry on them, you have a ready-made harvest field that is probably more receptive to the gospel than the general public.

REACHING PEOPLE BY USING RELATIONAL NETWORKS

The only limit to finding ways to reach personal networks is the limit of our

own creativity. Here are some ideas for preparing people to do evangelism and actual strategies for reaching people in relational evangelism.

Preach on *oikos*.

To help your people value evangelism through relational networks, build a common vocabulary and definitions to create understanding. You can then help them see its benefits. Preaching and teaching about outreach through personal networks create a shared understanding and value among your people. Pastoral leaders must cast the vision for reaching the lost in their members' personal networks. Too often we talk about the need of the lost in general, or they are somewhere else on a mission field or in another district. If we do this, our people will look past those who are in their own field of ministry and focus on those who are outside of their immediate circle of responsibility.

Model reaching the *oikos*.

People value what they see happening in the lives of their leaders. It is not enough to talk about reaching personal networks; they need to see us doing it and doing it with them. We will never take our people higher than where we are spiritually. Leaders set the ceiling of spiritual growth. Many pastoral leaders, both in Asia and the West, talk about and expect members to do something they do not personally do themselves.

Have members list the people in their personal networks.

Follow the seven principles noted above by Arn and have members list their circles of influence. The first step toward evangelism is awareness and identification. For believers to reach out, they need to know whom they will reach first.

Pray corporately and privately for your members' personal networks.

Pray specifically for people who are in regular contact with your own believers. Every believer needs to pray over his or her list. Also pray for these lists in corporate worship and in the subgroups

and prayer groups in your congregation. Concentrated prayer by name for hundreds of people who are in daily contact with your church members will impact your congregation and community.

Make reaching personal networks the goal of every existing group.

Some groups in our churches turn inward and focus on their needs. Pastors can work with group leaders to see that the focus of classes and groups becomes connecting with new people that are in the personal networks of group members. This approach can revitalize many groups that have stagnated. New believers ask questions and their problems stimulate mature believers into helping them.

Make every big event an *oikos* event.

During the course of a year, there are many big events in churches: Christmas and Easter programs, Mother's and Father's Day emphases, and others. Put an evangelistic focus on such events. Have people pray for those on their personal network to come to that event and hear the gospel.

Teach friendship-building skills and activities.

The longer people are Christians, the fewer relationships they have with non-believers. They need help and encouragement in building friendships with other people and a plan to make time for relationships with nonbelievers. The only way people are going to see Christ is through the lives of His people, loving and serving them. Relation-building activities can be as simple as having friends over for dinner, playing a sport together, playing table games together, going shopping together. Use natural events as *oikos* opportunities. There are many natural events that happen where church families gather formally or informally. These include birthday parties, fellowship dinners, weddings, etc. When our members look at life through the lens of reaching their personal network, such events become opportunities to build relationships and expose people to other believers and the gospel.

Have a neighborhood party.

Believers, as families or in groups of families, can invite neighbors for a meal. In such venues, it is not necessary to formally share the gospel, although that can be done through testimonies.

Use media tools in personal networks.

Believers can give away Christian books, tapes, videos, and correspondence materials through their relational networks. They can then make an appointment to

most of their relational networks are outside of the church. This is the critical period for leaders and spiritual parents to help new believers see it is their task, by God's help, to reach those people. Rather than just doing curricular-type work with a new convert, a mature believer doing the mentoring can go with the new convert to visit and meet people in his or her personal network. This provides early opportunities for the new convert, with a mature believer's help, to

to make spiritual ministry available for 'whosoever will.'¹⁰

God wants to use pastors to mobilize His people to reach out in love to those who are closest to them. As you cast the vision and train your people to touch their personal networks, be ready for an explosion of new babes in Christ. **E**

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Relational evangelism is our most powerful way to mobilize our people for outreach and to reach and disciple new people.

come back and pick the item up (if it is borrowed) and inquire about how the person liked it and their response to it.

Plan a community service day.

Find some creative way to serve people in your community. Service activities help create new relational networks as people see you really care. Serve those whom your members already know. Painting a home, taking care of the lawn, passing out care packages, visiting people in the hospital, looking after widows or single moms, taking meals to new neighbors, or helping with Little League teams meet needs in the community.

Use the empty chair at all small-group meetings.

The idea of the empty chair is often used with home groups, but is equally applicable to Sunday school classes and other groups in the church. This helps members focus on reaching those in their network outside their group. The last thing done in the meeting is to have an empty chair set in the group. Group members pray that in the next meeting Jesus would send someone to sit in that chair for the group to love and care for in His name.

Build *oikos* principles into early discipleship.

When a person becomes a new believer,

share his or her faith. A mature believer is a model for the new convert. It is an ideal see-and-do learning situation.

CONCLUSION

What I have shared about reaching people in our relational networks is not new, dramatic, costly, or difficult. It comes down to people caring for people. It includes Christians caring enough to build relationship bridges with love and compassion so someone can hear, understand, and respond to the good news of Jesus Christ. You do not need to start a new program, or add new staff, or radically alter things in the church. It does mean that leaders need to open themselves to the heart and passion of the Lord himself for reaching the lost.

Cad George, after consulting with thousands of churches, put it this way: "I have yet to be in a place where, from everything I could sense, God was not more willing to bless than the leaders were willing to receive. God wants to give you a spiritually healthy church with a positive, faith-oriented, biblically sound approach to your community. Maybe that means touching 10 more people than at present, or maybe it means 10,000. Your responsibility is to do whatever you can, humanly speaking,

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The Value of Maturity and Old Age

BY STANLEY M. HORTON

When I walked into the classroom in Bangalore, India, at the Southern Asia Bible College, all the students stood to their feet. Nothing like that ever happened to me in America. What they did reminded me of the command in Leviticus 19:32: “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.”*

Moses included this command in the middle of a long list of precepts, starting with a call for holiness from a holy God (verse 2). The basic meaning of holy is “separated”—separated from the world and dedicated to the worship and service of the Lord. God is holy not only because He is separated from all sin and evil, but because He has dedicated himself to carrying out His great plan of redemption. Our holiness must reflect His, and that is why He mentions His holiness when calling His people to be holy. Thus, verse 32 makes respect for the aged part of our reverence for God.

MATURITY AND RIGHTEOUS LIVING

The Bible, however, does not teach that age automatically brings wisdom. It

emphasizes rather the importance of upright living. Proverbs 10:31 states, “The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,” and 16:31 adds: “Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life.”

The Bible gives us many examples of godly men and women who pleased the Lord and gave wise counsel in their old age. The elders in Israel were so titled, not merely because of their office, but because they were men of maturity and experience. God also put His Spirit on the 70 elders who were chosen to aid Moses in the spiritual leadership of the people (Numbers 11:25). In his old age, Moses was anointed to give the people the Book of Deuteronomy. Most of the prophets were young when chosen, but many of them lived long and had increasing ministry as they grew older.

Joshua told the Israelites and their leaders, “I am old and well advanced in years” (Joshua 23:2). He then proceeded to counsel them and gave them a great challenge: “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.... But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15).

of love” (1:9). What an example he set for us all.

Job asked, “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?” (12:12). But he immediately followed it by stating, “To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his” (verse 13). Job recognized that if wisdom is found among the aged, it is because they know God and receive from Him. Elihu added, “It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right” (Job 32:9).

Solomon counseled the young to seek wisdom, for God gave him wisdom when he was young. He said, “For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).

Unfortunately, when Solomon was old, he ceased to look to the Lord for wisdom. He allowed his wives to turn his heart away and he worshiped other gods (1 Kings 11:4). His son Rehoboam forsook the wise counsel of the elders who had served Solomon and listened to the young men he grew up with. As a result, he lost the major part of his kingdom (1 Kings 12:8,16).

From what we read about many who, like Abraham, were old “and the Lord had blessed him in every way” (Genesis 24:1), we can be sure that many in Israel did deserve the command of Leviticus 19:32 and were worthy of respect for their wisdom. They were like Abraham, Gideon, and David, who learned from their mistakes, sought God, and of whom we read they died “at a good old age” (Genesis 15:15; 25:8; Judges 8:32; 1 Chronicles 29:28).

The fact so many others neither

The fact so many others neither learned from their mistakes nor sought the Lord for wisdom in their old age should warn us not to follow their example.

emphasizes rather the importance of righteous living. Psalm 92:12–14 compares the righteous to a flourishing palm tree or a growing cedar of Lebanon. Verse 14 states, “They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green,” to tell of the Lord’s

Daniel interpreted other people’s dreams when he was young. But in his old age, he was given a new ministry as God gave him dreams and visions that looked far into the future. As an old man, Paul the apostle wrote to Philemon, “I appeal to you on the basis

learned from their mistakes nor sought the Lord for wisdom in their old age should warn us not to follow their example. Job 28:1–22 tells of the extreme efforts people will make to find gold, silver, and jewels, but in all their seeking of riches they cannot find wisdom. But Job goes on to say that God is the only one who knows where wisdom dwells, so God says to humanity, “The

of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing” (1 Corinthians 2:6). The ascended Christ took people captive and gave them as apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge

so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:4). But the mature may still lack wisdom, so James tells anyone who lacks to “ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault” (1:5). James also calls for humility, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom” (James 3:13). This again implies that the people James is talking about are mature. Surely this can apply to the aged, whose lives, even more than their words, set an example for all. **e**

The Bible gives us many examples of godly men and women who pleased the Lord and gave wise counsel in their old age.

fear of the Lord—that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). The Book of Proverbs emphasizes the same thing (Proverbs 9:10).

Because true wisdom always comes from the Lord, the truly wise are humble. “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor” (Proverbs 15:33). As the Lord told Jeremiah, “Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight” (Jeremiah 9:23,24).

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND MATURITY

The New Testament draws attention to Christ, who is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24). Paul adds that he spoke “a message

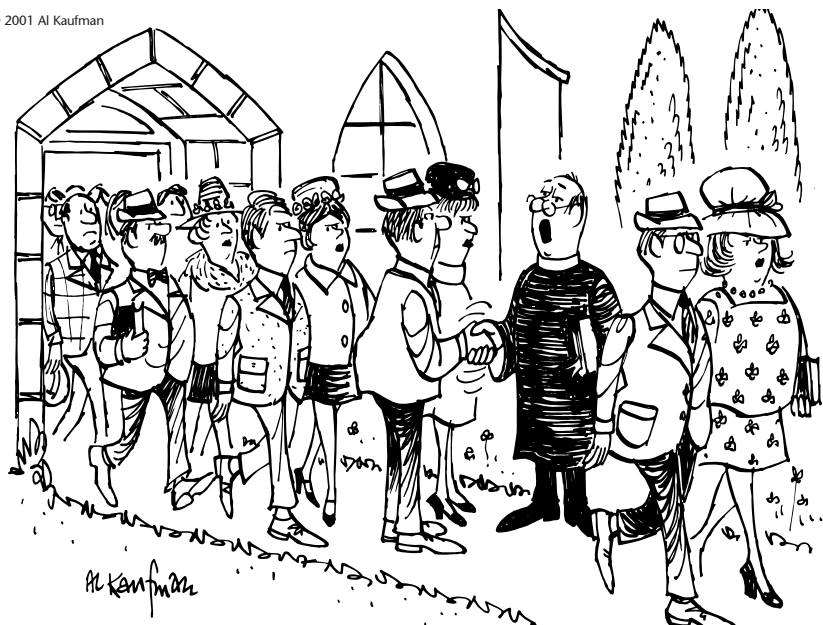
of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11–13).

James also lets us know that the testing of our faith produces perseverance, and “Perseverance must finish its work

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**Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

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“Nothing personal...nothing personal...nothing personal...”

Tax Court Addresses Clergy Income and Expenses, Again

BY RICHARD R. HAMMAR

Helpful guidance is provided for pastors and church treasurers in *Swaringer v. Commissioner*, T.C. Summary Opinion 2001-37 (2001).

Background. A recent Tax Court decision addresses the correct reporting of minister compensation as well as the substantiation requirements for business expenses. There is much in this decision that will be instructive for pastors and church treasurers. This article will review the facts of the case, summarize the court's ruling, and then address the relevance of the case to pastors and church treasurers.

Facts. A pastor reported \$28,000 as income from his church in 1995. The IRS audited the pastor's tax return and concluded that he understated his taxable income by \$24,000 and overstated several business expense deductions. The pastor insisted that the \$24,000 of unreported income came from

claimed that the pastor in fact earned an additional \$24,000 from the church. It came up with this amount by performing a "bank deposits analysis" to verify the pastor's church income. This analysis showed that the pastor made bank deposits of \$94,000 in 1995. After subtracting the pastor's reported church income (\$28,000), his wife's salary, and various other known sources of income, there was a remaining balance of \$24,000 that could not be accounted for. The IRS claimed that this entire amount represented additional but unreported income the pastor had received from his church.

The pastor insisted that the \$24,000 in unexplained bank deposits reflected nontaxable gifts from parishioners of the church. According to the pastor, on occasions such as his birthday, Father's Day, and Christmas, parishioners would give him money as gifts.

large amount of money given to a retiring church treasurer was taxable compensation for services rendered, or a tax-free gift:

A gift in the statutory sense...proceeds from a detached and disinterested generosity, out of affection, respect, admiration, charity or like impulses. And in this regard, the most critical consideration...is the transferor's intention.... The donor's characterization of his action is not determinative—there must be an objective inquiry as to whether what is called a gift amounts to it in reality. It scarcely needs adding that the parties' expectations or hopes as to the tax treatment of their conduct...[has] nothing to do with the matter... The proper criterion...is one that inquires what the basic reason for...[the donor's] conduct was in fact—the dominant reason that explains his action in making the transfer.

The court stressed that the pastor had the burden of proving that the amounts given to him by members of his congregation were nontaxable gifts rather than additional compensation for services rendered. The court concluded that the pastor failed to do so. It concluded,

The fundamental problem with [the pastor's] case is that we have no evidence as to the dominant reason for the transfers. Instead, all we have is his characterization of the transfers as gifts, which in itself has little or no evidentiary value. On the other hand, the evidence that we do have strongly suggests that the transfers were not gifts within the meaning of section 102(a). The transfers arose out of the pastor's relationship with

The pastor insisted that the \$24,000 in unexplained bank deposits reflected nontaxable gifts from parishioners of the church.

voluntary "gifts" or offerings from members of the congregation, which were not taxable. The IRS rejected this argument, and the pastor appealed to the Tax Court.

THE COURT'S RULING

The court's ruling is summarized below.

Understatement of income

The pastor reported \$28,000 of income from his church on Schedule C. The IRS

The court agreed with the IRS that these "gifts" represented taxable income to the pastor. It observed that section 102(a) of the tax code specifies that taxable income does not include "the value of property acquired by gift." However, the court noted that neither the tax code nor the regulations define a gift for the purposes of section 102.

The court quoted from a landmark decision by the United States Supreme Court addressing the issue of whether a

the members of his congregation presumably because they believed he was a good minister and they wanted to reward him. Furthermore, the pastor testified that without the gifts his activity as a minister was essentially a money-losing activity. In short, as the pastor recognized, the so-called gifts were a part of the compensation he received for being a minister. As such, the transfers are not excludable from income under section 102(a).

Overstated business expenses

The IRS claimed that the pastor overstated his business expense deductions by \$19,000. The Tax Court agreed. It noted that (1) the tax code allows deductions for ordinary and necessary expenses paid or incurred in carrying on a trade or business; (2) taxpayers have the burden of establishing that such expenses were paid or incurred; and (3) taxpayers must maintain specific records concerning certain types of expenses. With these principles in mind the court addressed the pastor's business expenses.

(1) *Car expenses.* The pastor claimed a deduction of \$9,300 for car expenses. The IRS disallowed \$8,000 of this amount. The pastor claimed that the deduction was based on the number of miles he drove in connection with the ministry. The court pointed out that to properly substantiate a deduction for the business use of a car, a taxpayer must have records to prove "the amount of the business use and total use of the automobile, the time of the use of the automobile, and the business purpose for the use. [Taxpayers] must maintain adequate records such as a log, diary, or trip sheet."

The pastor's records consisted of a document prepared by his secretary after the end of the year that contained headings as to the date of travel, the place of travel, the general purpose of the travel, and the mileage. But the court concluded that there were several "problems" with the information contained in this document:

It contains [the pastor's] transportation to and from his residence and his place of business which represents personal commuting and not deductible expenses. It also contains a trip to Los Angeles, California, that the pastor admits was erroneous. There are trips listed for which the stated mileage is obviously wrong. Furthermore, the reasons stated for the travel lack any specificity. In short, we do not find that the pastor's records satisfy the [substantiation] requirements....

The court noted that the pastor's records stated that the reason for many of his trips was to attend a "conference" without any description of the nature of the conference.

(2) *Travel and meals.* The pastor claimed deductions of \$2,100 for travel and \$1,500 for meals. The IRS allowed only \$650 for travel and \$500 for meals. The court noted that the tax code requires that travel expenses be substantiated "by evidence establishing the amount of the expense, the business purpose for the travel, and the time and place of the travel." It concluded that the pastor "introduced no receipts or other evidence to show the amounts paid or the business purpose of the travel. With respect to the meals, he contends that he is entitled to use the so-called per diem substantiation. But to use the per diem method in lieu of strict substantiation, a taxpayer still must substantiate the elements of time, place, and business purpose of the travel expenses.... As we have noted, [the pastor has] not satisfied this requirement."

(3) *Telephone.* The pastor claimed a deduction of \$2,000 for utilities which the IRS disallowed in full. The court agreed, "As we understand, the deduction claimed was for telephone expenses incurred on [the pastor's] home telephone. He has no records substantiating these expenditures as expenses incurred in his trade or business. He apparently did not keep the monthly telephone statements. He could have, but did not, obtain copies

of statements from the telephone company. In addition, the cost of basic local telephone service with respect to the first telephone line is a personal expense and is not deductible. We sustain [the IRS's] disallowance of the deduction."

(4) *Clothing and dry cleaning.* The pastor claimed a deduction of \$4,900 for robes and dry cleaning. He insisted that he was required to wear business suits that he would not otherwise have worn because of the nature of his employment. The IRS disallowed this deduction, and the court agreed. It concluded, "But, even if this were correct, the cost of clothing is only deductible if the clothing is of a type specifically required as a condition of employment and is not adaptable as ordinary clothing. This rule also applies to the maintenance of such clothing. There is no indication in the record that the amounts disallowed were for clothing that could not be worn in an ordinary way."

Negligence

Section 6662 of the tax code permits the IRS to assess a penalty against a taxpayer whose underpayment of taxes is due to negligence or a disregard of tax law. This penalty is computed by multiplying 20 percent times the amount of the underpayment of taxes that is due to negligence or disregard. *Negligence* includes (1) a failure to make a reasonable attempt to comply with the tax law; (2) a failure to exercise reasonable care in the preparation of a tax return; or (3) a failure to keep adequate records or to substantiate items properly. The term *disregard* includes any careless, reckless, or intentional disregard of federal tax law. The IRS assessed this penalty against the pastor on the ground that omitting the church members' "gifts" from his income, and the excessive deductions he claimed, were both negligent. The Tax Court agreed that the penalty was appropriate.

Negligence is a lack of due care or the failure to do what a reasonable and ordinarily prudent person

would do under the circumstances. The question then is whether [the pastor's] conduct meets the reasonably prudent person standard. We do not believe that the pastor's conduct meets this standard. The law surrounding the disputed items is not complex. With respect to the claimed deductions, the pastor was required to maintain records, which he failed to do. Furthermore, there is no indication that he sought the advice of a qualified tax advisor concerning any of the disputed items.

RELEVANCE TO PASTORS AND CHURCH TREASURERS

There are many aspects of this case that are directly relevant to pastors and church treasurers. Consider the following:

1. "Love gifts" usually are taxable.

This case demonstrates that "love gifts" made by members of the congregation to their pastor usually will constitute taxable income to the pastor. Of course, direct "person-to-person" gifts made privately by church members directly to their pastor ordinarily will be nontaxable, especially if they are small. For example, a \$20 bill that a family encloses with a Christmas card sent to their pastor would be a nontaxable gift. But when the church becomes involved, it is far more difficult to treat members' "gifts" to a pastor as nontaxable. In this case, the court concluded that the members' gifts (on special occasions, such as the pastor's birthday, Father's Day, and Christmas) amounted to taxable compensation for services rendered rather than tax-free gifts, since (1) the transfers arose out of the pastor's relationship with the members of his congregation, and were presumably made by members who believed he was a good minister and who wanted to "reward" him for a job well done; (2) without the gifts the pastor's ministry at the church "was essentially a money-losing activity." That is, the pastor's church salary was so low that church leaders must have regarded members'

"gifts" as additional compensation for his services.

Key point. *Since the members' "gifts" were taxable income to the pastor, it is possible that they could claim their gifts as charitable contributions.*

2. Substantiating the business use of a car. The Tax Court agreed that the pastor could deduct only \$1,300 of the \$9,300 in car expenses that he deducted on his tax return. The court concluded that the pastor failed to properly substantiate the remaining \$8,000 of car expenses that he claimed. For ministers or other church staff to use the standard mileage rate to claim a deduction for the business use of their car, they must maintain records showing "the amount of the business use and total use of the automobile, the time of the use of the automobile, and the business purpose for the use. [Taxpayers] must maintain adequate records such as a log, diary, or trip sheet." The pastor's records did not meet these requirements for the following reasons: (1) commuting miles were treated as business miles (commuting miles always are considered "personal" rather than business-related by the IRS); (2) mileage for some business trips was obviously wrong; and (3) some trips lacked a sufficient description of their business purpose.

Key point. *The court concluded that references to "conferences" as the purpose for a trip did not provide sufficient information to treat the miles as a business expense. Church treasurers who reimburse their pastor's business use of a car should keep this in mind. There must be sufficient specificity in the pastor's log, diary, or trip sheet to demonstrate the business purpose of each trip. Not much is needed to satisfy this test, but a single word such as "conference" may not be enough.*

Key point. *Most churches have adopted an accountable business expense reimbursement arrangement. Under such an arrangement, churches only reimburse those employee business expenses that are adequately substantiated. If you have an accountable reimbursement arrangement, take time to educate staff members who use their cars in the performance of their*

duties about the degree of specificity required to obtain a reimbursement of car expenses.

3. Per diem expenses. Some churches use "per diem" (daily) rates to reimburse staff members' travel expenses on out-of-town, overnight trips. As the court pointed out, the per diem rates only can be used to substantiate the amount of travel expenses. Staff members must substantiate the date, place, and business purpose of each expense.

4. Clothing. The court ruled that the pastor could not deduct the cost of purchasing or cleaning the clothing he wore in performing his ministerial duties. Pastors can deduct the cost of clothing (including cleaning expenses) used in their ministry only if the clothing (1) is of a type specifically required as a condition of employment, and (2) is not adaptable to general use (it could take the place of ordinary clothing). The ordinary business suits that the pastor wore in this case were perfectly adaptable to general use, and therefore could not be claimed as a business expense.

5. Penalty. The court imposed a negligence penalty on the pastor on the ground that the tax issues in this case were "not complex."

6. Self-employed. The IRS "conceded" that the pastor was self-employed for income tax reporting purposes. While most ministers are employees for income tax reporting purposes, cases such as this demonstrate that this is not true in all cases.

7. Summary opinion. The court's decision was a "summary opinion," meaning that it could not be appealed and cannot serve as precedent in other cases. Despite these limitations, most tax professionals view such cases as reflecting the position of the Tax Court. **e**

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Tough as Nails

B Y T . R A Y R A C H E L S

In my mail today I found a 4-page brochure detailing a seminar titled, “How To be a ‘Tough-as-Nails’ Negotiator.” It was coming next month at five California locations. The brochure told me what I could learn if I attended:

- How to get “an attitude,” show false anger, and other “first strikes” that’ll leave your opponent’s defenses wide open.
 - How to master the subtle art of intimidation.
 - How to signal “I’m tough, and I get what I want,” without saying a word.
 - How to ambush, use smoke screens, and other tough-guy tactics.
 - How to acquire an unyielding attitude that helps you resist pleas and appeals.
 - How to send rejection signals that leave nothing to the imagination.
 - How to use the “Madman’s Advantage” to give you the upper hand.
- And it promised “satisfaction guaranteed or your money back.”

Whoa! I thought. *What kind of meeting is this?* I pushed my chair back and wondered, almost out loud, *Is the kind of heavy muscle it takes these days to be tough, to get ahead, to make it in the marketplace. Do you really get ahead in life and business by bullying people or by building a tense atmosphere where you win at any cost? Is a leader’s success connected to making sure he steps on other people before they step on him?*

Out of the same batch of mail I pulled *Time* magazine. Inside I found a great article, “Character Goes Back to School.” These good words leapt off the page: “Across the country, schools both public and private, are turning to

programs of character education in hopes of inoculating kids with the values of civility and integrity, against the depredations of a popular culture that often seems to reward neither.”¹

“Character ed is now the hottest thing going,” *Time* said. One national politician advised that we begin by putting the Ten Commandments out front in the classroom as the essential model for teaching children.

The article highlighted “The Six Pillars of Character,” from the Character Counts model promoted by ethics educator, Michael Josephson. In brief, the model includes:

Trustworthiness. Don’t deceive, cheat, or steal. Build a good reputation. Be reliable.

Respect. Be tolerant of differences and considerate of others’ feelings.

Responsibility. Do what you are supposed to do. Be accountable. Persevere.

Fairness. Take turns. Share. Play by the rules. Don’t take advantage of others.

Caring. Forgive others. Help people in need. Express gratitude. Be kind.

Citizenship. Obey laws and rules. Respect authority. Stay informed. Cooperate.

Whoa again, I thought. *What a great moral antidote this is to the emotional domination, tough-as-nails attitude, reflected in the hostile and anger-provoking teaching seminars that tell how to beat up on one another to get what you want.*

Into the middle of this teaching opportunity comes the pastor, God’s on-site version of the tough-as-nails negotiator, representing the most powerful and compelling business on earth—to fix people’s attention on the character question from God’s point of view. The

heart of our message as spiritual leaders is to help put right side up the upside downness of our world. We can begin by pointing the people we serve toward the biblical starting line. It looks like this:

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand...

Do everything readily and cheerfully—no bickering, no second-guessing allowed! Go out into the world uncorrupted, a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living and of the living God. Carry the light-giving Message into the night so I’ll have good cause to be proud of you on the day that Christ returns.” (Philippians 2:1–4;14–16, *The Message*).

Get a tough-as-nails attitude—God’s attitude. Live it out in your home and on your job. Show it to your neighbors and among your friends. And preach about it from your pulpit. **e**

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E N D N O T E

1. Andrew Ferguson, “Character Goes Back to School,” *Time*, 24 May 1999, 68.

In Praise of 7-11 Congregations

A column devoted to ministry in the smaller congregation

BY GREG ASIMAKOULOLOS

As a 9-year-old, I pointed my Kodak Brownie camera at a half-built Space Needle. That black-and-white photograph is the first picture I remember taking. What would become the symbol of the Century 21 World's Fair was still several months away from its 1962 completion.

We are now living in the 21st century. In the four decades that have passed since that exposition of futuristic imaginations, science fiction has become science fact—color TVs, VCRs, fax machines, laptops, hand-held computers, cellular phones, the Internet, CD players, color photocopy machines, pay-at-the-pump gas stations, and satellite-navigation systems for cars. The information super highway now winds its way through communities that were once 100 miles from the nearest interstate. Megamalls and megachurches aren't uncommon in even midsize communities.

There are two vestiges of my childhood that still remain—the corner grocery store and the neighborhood

many happy memories of pedaling my Schwinn bike between these two landmarks. My spiritual needs were met at one; my physical needs at the other. Even in simpler times, there was something about the personal touch you felt in a neighborhood establishment that beckoned you back with frequency. You felt welcomed. You felt safe. You felt you were among family.

It is true that smaller churches (once the norm) have become overshadowed by bigger, newer ones. But smaller churches refuse to go away. A commonly accepted statistic is hard to ignore. Even though 95 percent of Americans attend churches with more than 1,000 in attendance, 90 percent of the churches in North America have less than 150 members.

It is also true that the mom-and-pop convenience stores no longer resemble Straight's market. The familiar storefronts of the 40s and 50s changed to hi-tech looking 7-11s, Circle Ks, White Hens, and gas station mini-marts. But the inherent concept of a convenient place to pick up

CONVENIENT PROXIMITY

The nearby convenience store is (as its name suggests) a convenient option. When you discover in the middle of the night you're out of cough syrup, it's a great relief to know you don't need to drive a distance to find a supermarket. The same is true of a local church. Your church is within a 5-minute walk (or drive) to people in your community who rest assured knowing you are there. The size of your building or Sunday morning attendance matters little. What counts is the fact life-changing ministry takes place inside. Obviously, many who live near your building don't attend. But when a need arises in their lives that prompts spiritual curiosity, chances are—like the local 7-11—you represent a place where help can be sought out. It is also likely that many who attend your church do so because it is within easy reach. In a complicated world where so much is a stretch (logistically and technologically), near is a definite strength.

OPPORTUNITY FOR RELATIONSHIPS

Mr. Straight was a friend of our family. Even though I was an elementary-aged kid, I greeted him or his wife when I stopped off at their corner market for penny candy or a bottle of pop. I felt safe. There was the feeling of family. He would ask how my folks were, genuinely concerned. More than merchandise was stocked on those old wooden shelves. There was also personal concern.

The cost of Tootsie Rolls and Coke has increased five times in 40 years, but the value of relational connectedness in today's world is worth far more than that. People leave large churches for smaller ones because there is a desire to know and

Small churches can't afford to be too picky. As a result, those who attend are not content to simply sit.

church. Curiously, in our sophisticated and technologically complex world, both have not only survived, they remain central to our lives.

Not far from where the Space Needle was being built, I grew up in a small town in Washington State. First Assembly of God (where my dad pastored) was down the street from Straight's market. I have

a quart of milk, a loaf of bread, and a carton of eggs remains its genius.

As a pastor for nearly 20 years, I've reflected on what the corner market and the smaller church have in common. The similarities are not only worth pondering; they serve to encourage those of us who shepherd flocks in places where pews are few.

be known. Having a pastor call you by name is a benefit those who have attended small churches all their lives take for granted. The same is true of having the pastor and his or her family to your home for Sunday dinner. But it extends beyond a personal relationship with the pastor. Members in congregations under 150 look out for one another. They have a built-in support network. They are in many ways an extended family. As with relatives, there are the challenges of getting along with kin. Nonetheless, a virtue of a smaller church is that you know who's on the platform and in the pew beside you.

BENEFIT OF LIMITED FOCUS

The White Hen store down the street from where I live is open all night. But its selection is limited. To some people that is a minus. But I view that as a plus. Since White Hen store owners know they can't do it all, they don't try. Rather, their limited inventory allows them to do what they do with predictable excellence. If I know what they carry, I can count on it to be there when I need it. Obviously, there are times when I need a full-service grocery. But I can understand why many people are content to shop at a smaller place because their tastes are not all that gourmet, nor their expectations all that demanding.

In much the same way, churches with limited funds and members can't compete with multiple-staff congregations. But what they do, they can do with excellence and predictability so those whose taste in churches is "meat and potatoes" need look no further.

CONSTANT NEW CUSTOMERS

Convenience stores survive because of two factors. First, they have a committed clientele. Every morning on the way to his office, my friend, Marty, stops at the Circle K near his home to get a 16-ounce, to-go cup of coffee. That's his routine. The cashier at that Circle K can count on him.

Convenience stores stay in business for a second reason. They have a continual influx of new customers who just happen to be driving by when they

recognize a need or a hunger.

In a small church, the influx of new attendees will not likely match that of a mini-mart, but visitors should be anticipated. I drive by a small Presbyterian church near my office whose corner sign makes me smile. It says "Visitors Welcome and Expected." The key to a continual flow of visitors is more than a clever sign. It is the word of mouth of satisfied customers who find in a smaller congregation what neighbors, friends, and work colleagues are also hungry for.

INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

My friend, Terry, worked at a 7-11 store after going through a divorce. Because he had a master's degree and had held a prominent position before losing his marriage, he was reluctant to take the all-night job. He took it, though, because he needed the money and because the store manager was willing to hire him when other opportunities Terry had pursued fell through. Convenience stores are great places to find work because it seems they are always hiring. After-school jobs for students. Part-time jobs for retirees. Even those with limited English are given a chance to build an employment resume with an entry job at a corner store. Similarly, in a small church, opportunities to serve are constant.

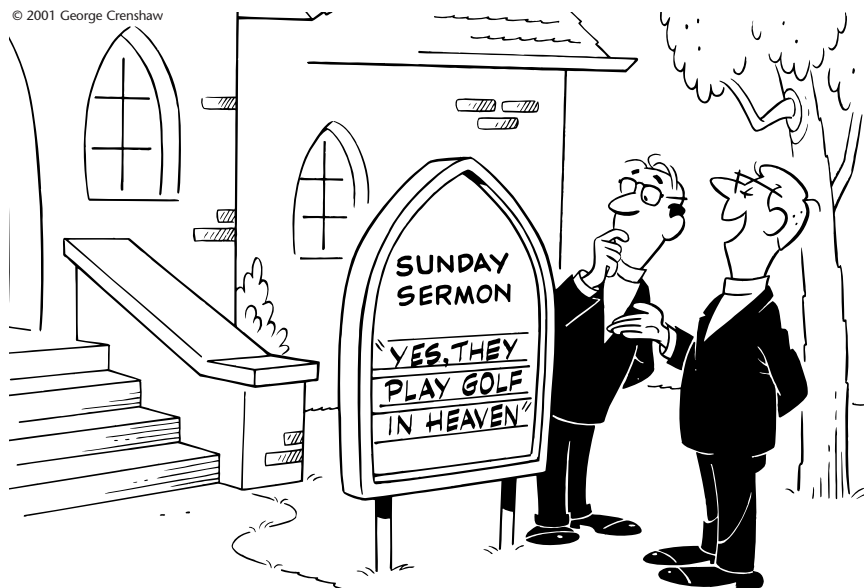
In some megachurches, those who want to serve the Lord with an average

voice can't sing special numbers or join the worship team. Smaller settings allow ordinary persons to learn as they go (and grow). Even if spiritual maturity is limited, a willing spirit and availability are the only prerequisites. Ushers, greeters, soloists, keyboardists, choir members, volunteer custodians, and the list goes on. Small churches can't afford to be too picky. As a result, those who attend are not content to simply sit.

There are undoubtedly more similarities between convenience stores and smaller churches. Both are icons of a simpler past and requirements of an increasingly sophisticated future. In that regard, I find it more than a little interesting there is a trend among Gen-Xers that would tend to support the place of the smaller church in American society. The children of boomers like me are not all that impressed with bigness or eloquence (normally associated with successful churches). They are more concerned with sincerity, integrity, authenticity, and interaction. And where would such qualities be most likely found? In churches like the one you most likely pastor. The world into which they were born may resemble *Star Trek*, but the values they embrace are more like *Leave It to Beaver*. **E**

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"Well, what do you think? It may just bring them in."

Stewardship of the Multibillion-Dollar Wealth Transfer

B Y R A N D A L L K . B A R T O N

As baby boomers enter retirement age and the army of senior adults swells in our churches, a church's stewardship ministry should include programs intentionally designed to meet the unique needs of an aging population. An important focus should include the multibillion-dollar intergenerational wealth transfer that will take place within the Assemblies of God. These God-given resources should be considered a sacred trust for Kingdom purposes. Consider the following stewardship opportunities.

TESTAMENTARY PLANNING

Only 50 percent of individuals who died in the United States last year had a last will and testament. Those who have wills may be surprised to discover that they do not currently reflect family circumstances or the estate and gift-tax changes taking place. Additionally, few attorneys recommend considering charitable gifts to ministries supported during a person's lifetime.

In response to our Fellowship's growing need for quality testamentary planning, the Assemblies of God has launched a national testamentary-service program to provide free wills for all Assemblies of God constituents who leave a portion of their estate to their local churches, district ministries, or national and affiliated ministries.

The program is designed to serve those with nontaxable, simple estates by providing individuals opportunity to update their estate plan and provide for their families and the ministries they have supported during their lifetime.

The program can be instituted in the

local church by contacting a certified stewardship director through your district. If no district representative is available, contact the Assemblies of God Foundation. Any Assemblies of God church can schedule a free testamentary-educational program in a senior-adult meeting, a Sunday school class, or any other time. This meeting is followed by individual interviews to gather information for document preparation. Christian attorneys are available through the Assemblies of God Foundation to prepare wills for constituents desiring to include a ministry gift as a final expression of faith.

REVOCABLE TRUSTS AND SENIOR ADULTS

While most individuals only need a simple will, many senior adults need to consider a revocable living trust. A revocable living trust is a legal document similar to a will, but with additional advantages. It allows your estate to pass to beneficiaries privately, without expensive court proceedings or probate delays. It also allows you to instruct your trustee how you want your assets managed during your lifetime in the event of illness or incapacity. In addition, estate taxes can be reduced or eliminated. If a person allocates a portion of his or her estate to ministry and appoints the Assemblies of God Foundation as trustee, a revocable trust called a *Stewardship Trust* can be made available.

Since a revocable trust is more complex than a will, the Assemblies of God Foundation provides full-time regional consultants to work with your senior-

adult group or to meet one-on-one to review current estate plans and determine if a stewardship trust is right for them.

Part of the process in establishing a trust includes transferring the title of all assets to the trust so the probate process is avoided. The assets within a trust will pass freely to your loved ones and ministries without the complications or delays of probate.

While some may be concerned about transferring title to their assets, a stewardship trust is designed for the living and provides protection. The individual who sets up the trust is still in control, and the trustee is required by law to carry out his or her wishes. The one initiating the trust can add to, withdraw from, or revoke the trust at any time.

Most senior adults need to consider the benefits of revocable trusts to help them effectively manage their possessions during their lifetime and maximize preservation of their estate in the event of unexpected illness or incapacity and upon their death.

PERSONAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The most misunderstood part of complete estate plans is the power of attorney. The most common are the durable power of attorney for financial and legal matters and the durable power of attorney for health and personal care.

A durable power of attorney for financial and legal matters allows you to designate an individual, family member, or friend to act on your behalf for legal and property matters if you suffer temporary or long-term incompetence, or even temporarily while you are out of state or country. Almost all such powers of attorney are "durable," which means they survive the principal's

disability (often a primary reason for having one). Many are drafted to go into effect immediately so the designee can act for the individual now; others go into effect only upon the incapacity of the principal, as established by their attending physician. Almost every senior adult should consider a power of attorney as part of his or her estate plan. Through a *durable power of attorney for health and personal care*, an adult declares his or her intent for another person to act on his or her behalf in making medical and personal care decisions in the event of incompetence or inability to make those decisions.

Often, it is wise to have a durable power of attorney for health and personal care separate from a durable power of attorney for legal/financial matters. The individual who might best help you make personal care decisions (where you will live, what type of medical care you might receive, etc.) is often different from the person you are comfortable with handling your financial affairs.

In many states, if a person does not have a power of attorney, families, friends, and pastors can be dragged into adversarial court proceedings that require separate attorneys to debate incompetence or guardianship appointment for a loved one. A durable power of attorney avoids this potentially unpleasant event.

A *living will*, or natural death directive, is your expression to your physician and family whether or not you desire to have your life preserved by artificial, extraordinary, or heroic measures in the event you have an incurable injury, illness, or disease where death is imminent and you can no longer make such decisions. While Christian adults have varied opinions regarding natural death directives, every believer needs to consider thoughtfully and prayerfully this important decision.

The Assemblies of God Foundation provides model forms for a durable power of attorney for financial/legal matters, a durable power of attorney for health and personal care, and living wills as part of its stewardship education program.

CHARITABLE GIFT ANNUITIES CAN INCREASE INCOME NOW

Many senior adults would substantially benefit from a charitable gift annuity that provides a high, fixed-income return, guaranteed for life, with special tax benefits. The Assemblies of God Foundation provides a fully underwritten annuity program for your senior adults.

Current interest rates for charitable gift annuities include 7 percent for age 65, 7.5 percent for age 70, 8.2 percent for age 75, and 9.2 percent for age 80. With declining interest rates in traditional certificates of deposit, bonds, and other fixed-income vehicles, gift annuities provide a wonderful way for senior adults to increase their income for retirement, receive tax benefits, and provide a gift to their church or other supported ministries at their death.

Every church needs to provide educational resources relative to the availability of Assemblies of God gift annuities. Information is available free of charge to every church or ministry from the Assemblies of God Foundation.

WHAT ABOUT RETIREMENT FUNDS?

Many individuals have a substantial portion of assets in pension plans, profit sharing plans, 401(k)s, 403(b)s, and IRAs. These tax-deferred assets can incur adverse income and estate tax consequences if not properly handled. Many senior adults have not integrated their retirement accounts with their overall estate plan, particularly charitable planning. As a result, individuals leaving a portion of their estate by will to their local church are unaware that their retirement funds will not be included in that gift by will. This is unfortunate, because retirement accounts are preferred types of assets to make charitable gifts, as charities do not have to pay income or estate taxes on these gifts—but families do.

Provide planning services that will allow your senior adults to make sure their retirement planning is coordinated with their estate and charitable planning.

CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUSTS

Many constituents have assets that have substantially appreciated in value, such as securities or real estate. When it might become preferable to sell the appreciated asset to more fully enjoy retirement years or diversify investments, unfortunately, capital gains taxes can be a hindrance.

Your congregation needs to be aware of a complex but beneficial tool called a charitable remainder trust. While requiring substantial planning, technical help, and legal and accounting assistance (all provided by the A/G Foundation at no charge), many would benefit from a charitable remainder trust. A charitable remainder trust allows a person to sell his or her property free of capital gains taxes and retain an income stream for his or her life (and even a term of years for children), with ultimate gifts designed to bless Kingdom purposes.

CONCLUSION

If we believe that every possession is a gift from God, then we need to be committed to the stewardship of those resources. The multibillion-dollar wealth transfer taking place in our Fellowship creates tremendous resource-development opportunities. Unfortunately, every day millions of dollars are lost through unnecessary taxes, estate expenses, litigation, poor investments, or spendthrift beneficiaries. This money could have been converted to ministry dollars.

In serving the needs of our senior adults and constituents, the Assemblies of God Foundation is prepared to partner with the local church to integrate solid, financial principles with total scriptural stewardship as a standard for every Christian. Quality counsel, provided at no charge, will provide a variety of planning options to save taxes, reduce estate expenses, and maximize the ability of those in our Fellowship to care for themselves, their loved ones, and the ministries they support. **E**

Randall K. Barton is CEO and president of the Assemblies of God Financial Services Group, Springfield, Missouri.

Whatever Happened to Happily Ever After

B Y D E B B I E L . C H E R R Y

It's Monday morning. You are at the office reviewing the stats from yesterday's services when your secretary tells you that Cinderella is here to see you. You hardly recognize her as she enters your office. Wasn't it just yesterday that you saw her in all her glory sitting beside her Prince Charming? But today, she's distraught, disheveled, and despairing. Midnight must have struck.

As she sits in your office crying, she tells you there is trouble in paradise. The prince's armor is tarnished and smudged, and he has fallen off his white horse. She feels her life consists of nothing more than keeping the castle clean and corralling the little prince and princess while he is out slaying dragons. The glass slippers have been lost under an unending pile of laundry. She is feeling unloved, neglected, taken for granted, and desperate. With tears in

ministers report that marital problems are the No. 1 reason people come for counseling. It is also the wives who make the initial contact much more often than their husbands. (This is true in my practice as well as other professional counselors.) Although marital problems are identified as the No. 1 reason for seeking counseling, many ministers do not feel they are adequately equipped to help couples with the skills necessary to keep a marriage strong and happy.

This article will describe a specific framework that helps the couple see quick progress in their relationship and gives them the encouragement needed to conquer the more difficult aspects.

INSTILLING HOPE

As you begin counseling the wives who come to you, strongly encourage the husbands to come as well. Rebuilding a

needed changes, but the actual work is up to them.

You should also be sure to instill hope that the marriage can improve, and that they can experience "happily ever after." I believe that marriages can be strong, happy, and healthy "until death do us part." You need to help couples believe in marriage as a forever commitment and realize they can maintain healthy marriages for a lifetime with just a few basic skills.

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF FEELINGS

Help the couple put their feelings into perspective. Couples may come to you stating they feel that they have fallen out of love. Most of them can tell you of a time in their relationship when they felt they were in love. Your first challenge will be to help them understand that the love that holds a marriage together is not a feeling, but a commitment. Feelings, although very strong at times, should not be the basis for a decision to marry or to end a marriage. Feelings can change from moment to moment and day to day. Just as our relationship with God is not measured by the feeling of love we have for Him, but rather by commitment, our relationship with our spouse should not be measured by feeling in love, but rather by our level of commitment and the fruits of our marriage.

Feelings are a result of thoughts and behaviors; therefore, they change as our thoughts and behaviors change. In the early stages of a relationship (dating, honeymoon, and early years) the couple exhibits positive actions or behaviors toward each other (spending time together, writing love notes, sending

Help couples believe in marriage as a forever commitment and realize they can maintain healthy marriages for a lifetime with just a few basic skills.

her eyes she wants to know, "Whatever happened to happily ever after?" She has come to you with high hopes and great expectations. She sees you as being the fairy godmother who will simply wave your magic wand, fix the marriage, and bring back "happily ever after."

Maybe it wasn't quite that dramatic. But if you are like many of the ministers I have talked to, you have probably experienced something similar. Many

marriage is most effectively done if both are committed to work on their marriage. Also, be sure to let them know you don't have a magic wand.

Although most people would never admit to holding this belief, many do hope for an immediate cure. The problems in their marriage did not occur overnight. They came about gradually and will need to be worked on and resolved gradually. You will be there to guide them and help them make the

flowers). They spend time thinking about the positive aspects of the other and the relationship. Over time, this brings about the feeling of being in love. However, as the relationship continues, often a couple's behaviors change (they begin to spend less time together, write to-do notes, and forget important dates), and their thoughts focus more on the irritants and negative aspects of their spouse. Eventually, this will bring about a feeling of falling out of love. As you help couples put their feelings in perspective, they learn they can exert some control over their feelings by making changes in their thoughts and behaviors.

The following back-to-basics approach presented here will help couples conquer these out-of-love feelings and replace them, with feeling in love.

REFOCUSING ON THE POSITIVE

Help the couple realize they must have demonstrated behaviors in the past that caused their spouse to fall in love with them. Relearning a skill is always easier than learning it the first time. As you help them identify the behaviors and thoughts that were present early in their relationship, you will likely hear things like: "We spent quality time together"; "We talked often and about everything"; "We shared our thoughts, feelings, and dreams with each other"; "We complimented each other often"; and "We focused on each other's positive traits." By the time a couple reaches your office, many of these thoughts and behaviors will have been absent for some time and will have been replaced with negative thoughts and behaviors.

How you proceed from here can make all the difference. What many counselors, ministers, and couples feel they need to do is to focus on reducing the number of negatives that are present in the relationship. In other words, if the couple complain of fighting constantly, you may feel you need to focus on what they are fighting about and help them resolve it. Although this is important, it is not the most effective starting place.

A more effective starting place is to help the couple change their focus. Most couples come to you focused almost entirely on each other's negative traits. Therefore their outlook is negative and their motivation to work on the relationship is low. Your job is to redirect their focus toward the positive aspects of their spouse and their relationship, causing their outlook to improve and increasing their motivation to rebuild their marriage.

Once their focus and interactions become more positive than negative, the couple will experience a renewed sense of closeness. This will result in their being better able and more motivated to work on and resolve the negative aspects of the marriage. The couple will view their marriage in a positive light and realize it is worth all the work necessary to get it back on track.

How do you move a couple's focus from negative to positive? You help them identify specific behaviors they each engaged in during the early part of their relationship and then have them start doing those things again. Here are a few suggestions: Have each person make a list that starts with "I feel loved when you..." and include as many things as possible that their spouse either did in the past, does

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"It might have been helpful to have picked a date for your wedding before we had this meeting."

every day, or could do in the future that would make them feel loved. Have them exchange lists and begin doing some of these things.

Another way is to have the couple sit facing each other and alternate telling something they like about the other. This can also be done in written form.

Finally, encourage the couple to have a date at least once a week and to spend that time talking and sharing. These exercises can bring a quick change by increasing positive interactions for the couple, which results in their feeling more in love.

A few weeks later, as you encounter Cinderella, you will likely notice her smile and tiara back in place as she reports that Prince Charming has climbed back on his white horse and shined his armor. The glass slippers have been found and were worn on their most recent ride through the kingdom. She is feeling loved, valued, and cared about and is ready to resolve those little things that need attention. You will know that it was a change in focus that first helped this couple begin the process of recapturing happily ever after. **e**

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We Worship God Because He is Faithful

BY TOM MCDONALD

Last Sunday I stood to lead the hymn, “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” as I have done dozens of times. The experience never grows old, for inherent in that hymn is an ageless message. I love to watch a congregation interact with the text. Invariably, I will see a mature saint and a college student engaging with an equal sense of awe. Clearly the message of God’s faithfulness is relevant to young and old. It transcends time and place, economic status, and ethnicity. The faithfulness of the Lord to fulfill His Word is something on which we can depend.

Theologically speaking, faithfulness is one of the Father’s irrefutable traits. The Scriptures indicate His capacity to be loyal to a thousand generations. In an age of accelerated change, it is comforting to serve a changeless Lord: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).*

The fathers of our faith all experienced God’s faithfulness. Moses,

account of deception and false accusation. God demonstrated His loyalty to Joseph by making a way where there was no clear exit strategy. Can you imagine being thrown into prison, falsely accused and humiliated?

the Father’s promises. He rested in His unsinkable belief that God would be faithful.

Don’t be too hard on the disciples; fear in a sudden storm is normal. Yet, how can we exercise faith instead of fear? We do this in two ways. Jesus

Neither sea nor solitude resulting from incarceration can withhold the promises of God from intervening in the life of a believer.

Max Lucado writes, “In order to experience God’s power, leaders must often endure hardship. Then they emerge to make their contribution.” Joseph triumphed over adversity and experienced God’s faithfulness.

The lessons of faithfulness, relative to barriers of the sea or prison walls, are not exclusive to the Old Testament. In Mark 4, we read of a busy day in the life of our Lord. Later, Jesus and the disciples crossed the Sea

was prepared in advance for any crisis. His devotional life was current and vibrant, and He knew the Word intimately. Scripture states, “Perfect love drives out fear” (1 John 4:18), and “Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). In short, stay in relationship; stay in the Word. This is what the apostle Paul did.

In Acts 16, Paul and Silas were jailed and were singing late into the night. God responded to their praises by miraculously shaking the prison doors. Fearing a jailbreak, the guard prepared to commit suicide. Paul intervened and even led the gentleman to the Lord. God’s faithfulness that day not only included provision, but salvation.

Neither sea nor solitude resulting from incarceration can withhold the promises of God from intervening in the life of a believer. When in your ministry have you experienced the trauma of a sudden storm or a prison-like entrapment? Clearly life is

If we really believe that our service to Christ will bear eternal reward, we will heartily embrace the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as pastoral musicians.

facing the crisis of Exodus 14, felt pressured. He had an enemy hoard behind and deep water ahead. But God was faithful. Implicit in that epic miracle is the insight that God’s dependability in the face of crisis is available, if we obey.

In Genesis 39, we read a salacious

of Galilee by boat. A sudden storm arose and the disciples were frightened. Meanwhile, the Master slept. When the disciples woke Him, He spoke, and the storm ceased. His subsequent question to the disciples is curious—“Do you still have no faith?” Obviously, Jesus had faith in

unpredictable. Calamity visits all of us. Still, we can overcome any obstacle as we actuate the promises of Scripture. Our Lord will keep covenant with us. We need not fear.

rose and sang “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name,” while every journalist present wiped tears from his or her eyes. God was faithful to His Word and to the evangelist’s unrelenting

congregants in the sanctuary, while 42 choristers crowded the loft. The faithful sang in spite of inclement weather.

Adapting a faithful mindset—one that prioritizes the use of time and the attitude(s) we choose to clothe our service to God with—begins with an intentional focus on our purpose in life. If we really believe that our service to Christ will bear eternal reward, not only will we be faithful; we will heartily embrace the fruit of the Spirit in our lives as pastoral musicians.

In sum, *we will* be faithful because He is faithful. **e**

Tom McDonald, Ph.D., is minister of music at The Church On The Way, Van Nuys, California, and commissioner of Church Worship for the Assemblies of God.

**Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

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“Legendary music minister Dean Wigglebaum is such a natural that when he walks, he leaves footnotes.”

Clearly the message of God’s faithfulness is relevant to young and old. It transcends time and place, economic status, and ethnicity.

A friend of mine used to say, “Nothing matters except how we react to it.” After two decades in ministry, I can testify that no trial or test is stronger than a promise from the Lord. And there are hundreds of promises in the Bible. Victorious believers are always keeping a vigilant eye for a relevant promise—as shelter in the time of storm.

God’s faithfulness is not only something to revere, it is something to emulate. As leaders we also need to reflect faithfulness in our behavior.

The colorful evangelist, Aimee Semple McPherson, was in Denver for a crusade. Approximately 10,000 people gathered to hear her preach. Afterward, she prayed for the sick while journalists cynically watched from the front row. In the healing line were twin girls. They were 5 years old and blind. She knelt and prayed for the first twin. Instantly she was healed. Now the pressure mounted. Again, McPherson knelt and prayed trusting in the Lord Jesus. Immediately the power of God manifested, and the second twin was healed. The crowd spontaneously

belief, for she was a faithful steward.

Wise pastoral leadership instills faithfulness as a core value into the philosophy of the church’s volunteers. My wife’s grandfather, Walter Motter, served First Assembly of God, Cleveland, Ohio, as minister of music for 36 years. On one occasion a heavy snow fell on a Saturday night. Two feet blanketed the city. On Sunday, the weather was so bad, there were only 8

Jonathan Edwards and the Great Awakening

BY WILLIAM P. FARLEY

A MAN ON FIRE FOR GOD

In July 1741, Jonathan Edwards accepted an invitation to preach at the neighboring town of Enfield, Connecticut. It was the height of the Great Awakening (1740–42), one of the most intense outpourings of God’s Spirit in American history. The fire of God was falling everywhere. Despite the fact he had delivered “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” to his own congregation with little effect, he felt led to use it again at Enfield.

His techniques were unimpressive. He always read his sermons in an even voice, but with great conviction. He shunned shouting and theatrical antics. Impressing the listener with the power of truth and his desperate need for God was Edwards’ goal.

Nothing in his style or presentation could account for what happened that day at Enfield. An eyewitness, Stephen Williams, wrote in his diary, “We went over to Enfield where we met dear Mr. Edwards of Northampton who preached a most awakening sermon from these words, Deuteronomy 32:35, and before the sermon was done there was a great moaning and crying went out through ye whole House.... ‘What shall I do to be saved,’ ‘Oh, I am going to Hell,’ ‘Oh, what shall I do for Christ,’ and so forth. So yet ye minister was obliged to desist, ye shrieks and cry were piercing and amazing.”

Williams continued, “After some time of waiting the Congregation were still, so yet a prayer was made by Mr. W. and after that we descended from the pulpit and discoursed with the people, some in one place and some in another, and amazing and astonishing ye power of God was seen, and several

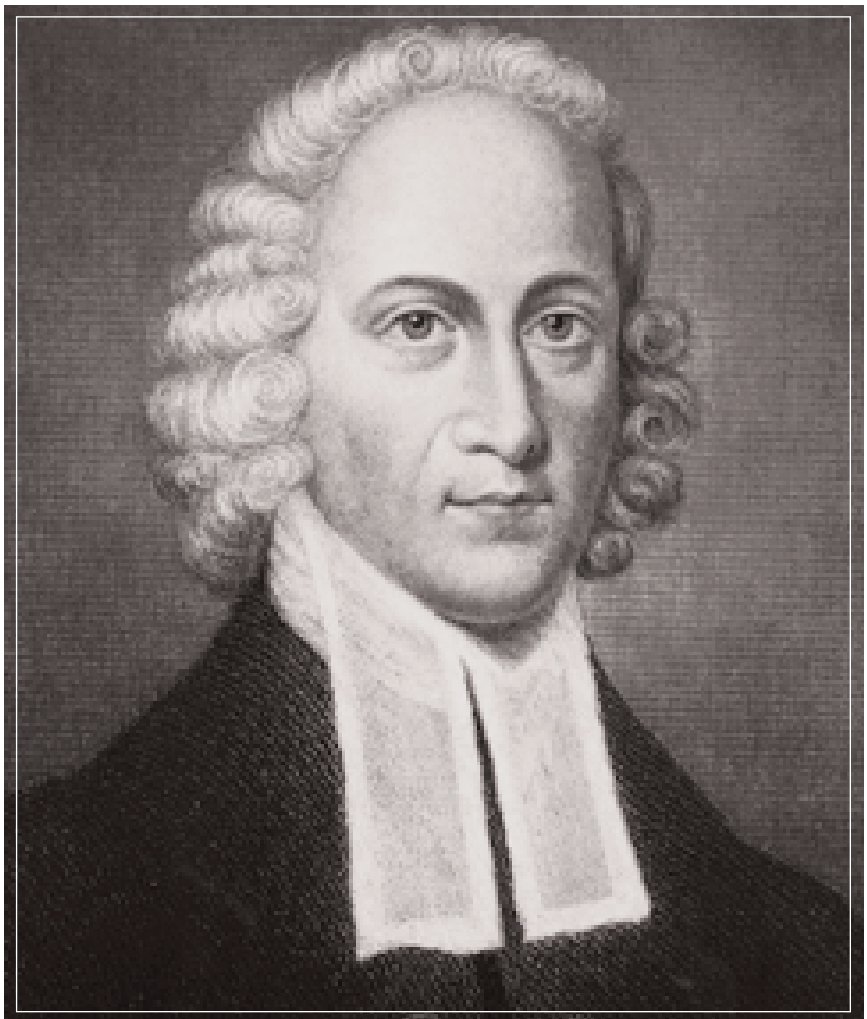


Photo credit: Billy Graham Center Museum

souls were hopefully wrought upon that night, and oh ye cheerfulness and pleasantness of their countenances.”¹

REACTIONS TO EDWARDS

Jonathan Edwards. Few names provoke sharper reactions. Some consider him America’s greatest philosopher, but he would laugh at this description. For Edwards, biblical exposition was the soul, sinew, and marrow of his life and purpose. He had no interest in philosophy for its own sake.

“Edwards divided men in his lifetime and to no less degree he continues to divide his biographers,” wrote Iain Murray.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones agreed. “He divided opinions. He has been denounced without measure.”

Oliver Wendell Holmes was sure that “if he had lived a hundred years later and breathed the air of freedom, he could not have written with such old-world barbarism as we find in his volcanic sermons.”

John Newton (1725–1807) was asked, Who was the greatest divine of his era? He replied unhesitatingly, “Edwards.”

The great Scottish preacher, Thomas Chalmers, wrote, “Never was there a happier combination of great power with great piety.”

Samuel Davies, one of the founders of Princeton College, spoke for many when he said Edwards was “the profoundest reasoner, and the greatest divine, in my opinion, that America ever produced.”²

Who was Jonathan Edwards, why does he provoke such reactions, and why is he important to us today?

A SHORT BIOGRAPHY

Edwards was born in East Windsor, Connecticut, October 1703. His father, Timothy Edwards, graduated from Harvard and was the village pastor.

Like all youngsters of his time, Jonathan was home schooled. Because he showed unusual intelligence, his father enrolled him at Yale at age 13. During graduate school, he had an intense conversion experience that radically altered his life and laid the foundation for all the profound and wonderful fruit that followed.

After graduation he married New England’s most eligible maiden, 17-year-old Sarah Pierrepont. They had 11 children, and the legacy of their posterity was phenomenal.³ Although several books have been written about their marriage and family life, it was Jonathan’s deep grasp of the Bible that links his name with Christianity’s greatest thinkers.

Jonathan soon moved to Northampton, Massachusetts, to become the assistant pastor to his grandfather, Solomon Stoddard. A few years later Stoddard died and Jonathan became senior pastor. He labored at Northampton for 21 years.

In 1735–37, a revival swept through Northampton. About it Edwards wrote, “A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion and eternal world became universal in all parts of

the town...the work of conversion was carried on in a most astonishing manner and increased more and more; souls did, as it were, by flocks come to Jesus Christ.”⁴

Overnight, the town was transformed. The citizens sang hymns in the streets, the tavern closed, the young people pursued God in bands, and it was impossible to get into church unless one arrived hours early.

Then in 1740, like a great flash flood, the Great Awakening rolled through New England, and Northampton was included. It was at this time that Edwards preached

SPIRITUAL CONFLICT

Wherever there is fire there is also smoke. Many excesses accompanied the revival as people experienced highly unusual spiritual phenomenon. Sometimes, during sermons, they screamed and dropped unconscious to the floor. Edwards’ own wife sat trance-like in a corner of their living room for long periods, unable to move, utterly overwhelmed by God’s love.

Reverend Wheelock’s diary for October 1741 is typical. “The zeal of some too furious: they tell of many visions, revelations, and many strong impressions upon the imagination....

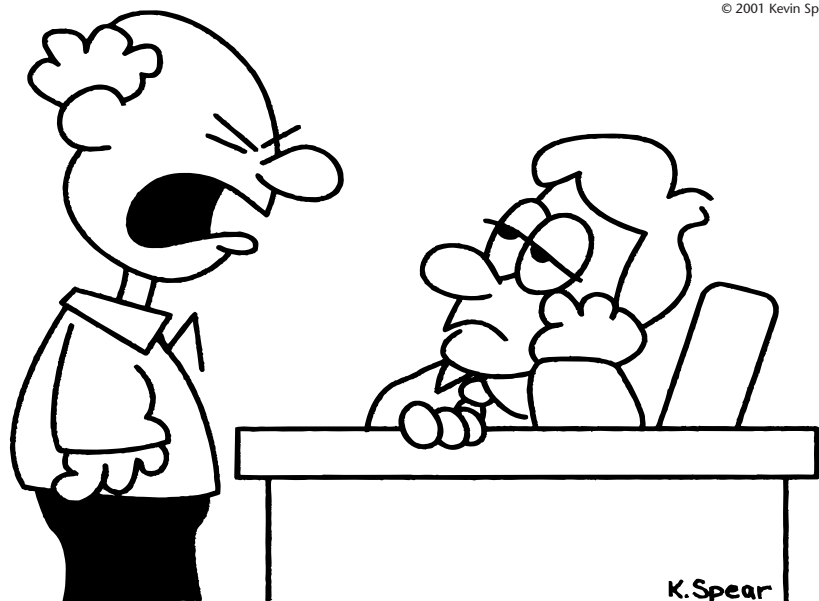
For Edwards, biblical exposition was the soul, sinew, and marrow of his life and purpose.

“Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” at Enfield with such remarkable results. It is estimated that 10 percent of New England was converted during this time. Imagine today 28 million converted in 2 years. Picture every church in your town doubling or tripling in the next 2 years, and you have some grasp of the enormity of what happened.

Preached twice with enlargement. Many cried out; many stood trembling; the whole assembly very solemn.”⁵ After another meeting he writes, “Thirty cried out. Almost all the Negroes in town wounded (convicted of sin)... I was forced to break off my sermon before done, the outcry was so great.”

As in every revival, some of these

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“I finally discovered my spiritual gift. I’m destined to be a prophet of doom.”

manifestations were from God, some from the flesh, and some demonic.

This mixture ensured much criticism. (Every age has its self-appointed Spirit-quenchers.) Edwards believed the essential work was from God. But he recognized that the entire work would be discredited and abandoned

47, still had eight children at home, and was trained to do nothing but preach. The only job he could secure was missionary work among an obscure Indian tribe on the western frontier of Massachusetts. In utter isolation, he ministered to this small congregation and faithfully used these

theologian of revival. No one else matches his penetrating insights. Everyone from Michael Brown to J.I. Packer cites Edwards when the subject of revival arises. Edwards' ministry was forged in the heat of revival, and he wrote hundreds of pages defending and analyzing it. "He was preeminently the theologian of Revival...the theologian of experience, or as some have put it 'the theologian of the heart,' " wrote Martyn Lloyd-Jones.⁶ His *Religious Affections* dissects the nature of conversion. "You are doing well if you can read it and still think you are a Christian," concludes Banner of Truth Trust.

Second, Edwards is important because eternity saturated his thought life. He constantly leads his reader to heaven, hell, or the judgment seat of Christ. His perspective was eternal, and his insights were amazing. Those who read Edwards lose their fear of death. They exult in the hope of sharing the glory of God, and they shudder at the horrors of damnation. Edwards' writing will enhance your concept of eternity and transform your ministry.

Edwards understood the smallness and frailty of man. He grasped the truth that man must become small in his own eyes to be happy or useful to God.

unless the church learned to sort the wheat from the chaff. He wrote prolifically to this end. His most important work on this subject was *On Religious Affections*, a Christian classic still in print today by at least three publishers.

REJECTION AND DEATH

Eight years after the revival, a controversy over Communion split Edwards' congregation. To their enduring shame, over 90 percent of the members voted to remove Mr. Edwards. He was

years to write most of his great theological treatises.

Eight years later, at age 55, he accepted a call from Princeton Theological Seminary to be its next president. A few months after the move, but before Sarah and the children could join him, he contracted smallpox and died. It was 1758.

TODAY'S PASTOR AND EDWARDS

Why does this 250-year-old theologian matter to us today? First, Edwards was preeminently the

Third, Edwards knew and loved a big God. Whatever you now think about God, He will be bigger, bolder, and more satisfying after reading Edwards. Some people go on vacation

Edwards' writing that draws his admirers; it is its penetration. It divides joints and marrow, redirecting men from themselves to God and His sufficiency.

Call 1-888-622-4170 for your free annual subscription. For His Glory, by William P. Farley, can be ordered from Pinnacle Press, P.O. Box 8146, Spokane, WA 99203 or by calling 1-888-622-4170.

E N D N O T E S

Edwards' relentless biblical logic corners his readers until they cry "uncle," gladly embracing their sinfulness, while increasingly exulting in God's goodness.

to get refreshed; I go to the 18th century and read Edwards. For there I find the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient God who is gracious and good beyond human comprehension. Edwards' favorite adjective for God was "sweet."

Fourth, Edwards understood the smallness and frailty of man. He grasped the truth that man must become small in his own eyes to be happy or useful to God. His relentless biblical logic corners his readers until they cry "uncle," gladly embracing their sinfulness, while increasingly exulting in God's goodness. It is not the sophistication of

Discover Jonathan Edwards for yourself. He is the Pentecostal's theologian. "The element of the Holy Spirit is more prominent in Edwards than in any other of the Puritans," concluded Lloyd-Jones.

Edwards' insights are the great tonic needed by the North American church. History is His story. Mine its treasures. You won't be disappointed. **e**

William P. Farley is editor of The Raven, a free monthly publication whose mission is to proclaim the faith and doctrine of the Reformers with a special emphasis on the felt power of the Holy Spirit, published by Pinnacle Communications, Spokane, WA.

1. Iain Murray, *Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth), 169.
2. *Ibid.*, xx, xvi, xv.
3. See Elizabeth Dodds, *Marriage to a Difficult Man* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press).
4. Peter Marshall, *The Light and the Glory* (Grand Rapids: Fleming Revell, 1977), 242.
5. Joseph Tracy, *The Great Awakening* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1976), 201.
6. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth, 1987), 361.

R E S O U R C E S

1. *Jonathan Edwards, A New Biography*, by Iain Murray, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Banner of Truth) is the best place to get to know this man. Read Murray's works at www.Jonathanedwards.com, or buy his works on CD-ROM at the same Web site.
2. *Christian History* magazine has devoted Vol. 8, #3. "The Great Awakening" to Edwards.

Adapting Illustrations to Your Taste

Four Recipes for Changing Ready-Made Illustrations To Fit Your Style and Purpose

BY CRAIG BRIAN LARSON

When a woman whips up a home-cooked meal, does she make everything from scratch? Not likely. Those zesty baked beans probably came from a can bought at the grocery store and prepared to the personal requirements of the cook by adding bacon, pepper sauce, and extra brown sugar.

Those who preach weekly often cannot prepare enough illustrations from scratch to consistently create well-illustrated sermons, but they can personalize the ones they find ready-made.

Here are four ways to adapt the heat-and-serve illustrations available in various preaching resources to your personal style and unique purposes.

CHANGE TONE

Sometimes the wording of an illustration clashes with our personality or viewpoint. Perhaps the writer is too sentimental for our taste. There may be slang, purple prose, or regional idioms we want to cut or add. Perhaps the illustration contains stuffy, academic, transitional words and phrases such as *moreover*, *furthermore*, or *in conclusion*. We can fix this with a bit of nip and tuck, or by adding some signature phrases.

Here, for example, is an objective, journalistic illustration:

The publisher's review of a recent book describes it as "a thoughtful, detailed discussion of every aspect of considering, preparing for, beginning, and conducting a successful and emotionally fulfilling extramarital affair." The book is called *Affair! How To Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship With Passion, Discretion, and Dignity* (by

Cameron Barnes, UPublish.com, 1999). For just \$19.95, plus shipping and handling, you can get a practical summary of the deception in our culture on the subject of sexual relations outside of marriage.

Here is how to change this illustration to have a passionate perspective:

Believe it or not, there is publisher that has the gall to promote one of its new books as "a thoughtful, detailed discussion of every aspect of considering, preparing for, beginning, and conducting a successful and emotionally fulfilling extramarital affair." Sadly enough, this depraved book is called *Affair! How To Manage Every Aspect of Your Extramarital Relationship With Passion, Discretion, and Dignity*. For \$20 you can buy the lies that the devil would have you believe concerning adultery.

Notice in this version how much the connotation of just a few words changes the tone.

BEEF UP

Some illustrations are too sparse for our tastes. We like to draw hearers in and have an emotional impact. For instance, we may find a story that does not develop a scene enough to make it moving. It may lack physical setting and sensory appeal. What this illustration needs is more body.

One way to beef up an illustration is to use our imagination to fill in incidental sensory details that are lacking. This is not dishonest as long as we do not exaggerate, change, or add significant events or dialogue to a true story.

When Max Lucado enhances a Bible story, he stays within the boundaries of what the Bible says but imagines what we could reasonably expect to experience if we lived the story. In *Six Hours One Friday*, Lucado writes:

"'Lazarus, come out!' It took only one call. Lazarus heard his name. His eyes opened beneath the wrap. The cloth-covered hands raised. Knees lifted, feet touched the ground, and the dead man came out. 'Take the grave clothes off of him and let him go.' "

In addition to sensory details, we may add a description of what we can reasonably expect people to feel, often with a qualifying statement like, "I imagine that at that moment tremendous fear welled up in her heart."

Tony Smith of Gainesville, Georgia, tells this story:

"I was sitting at my desk in my study after having scolded my 4-year-old daughter for misbehaving. I heard a gentle knock on the door. 'Come in,' I said.

"Bethany entered and then matter-of-factly said, 'Daddy, sometimes I am good, and sometimes I am bad. And that is just the way it is.' Then she left the room just as summarily as she had come in, acting as if she had completely explained her misbehavior for all time."

When I tell this story, I want Bethany's words to have a stronger impact so I choose to set them up more. My enhancements are in bold:

Tony Smith writes: "I was sitting at my desk in my study after having scolded my 4-year-old daughter, **Bethany**, for misbehaving.

Unknown to me, my little girl was sitting in her room doing some serious thinking. She felt guilty for what she had done, and she was searching for a way to justify herself. Soon I heard a gentle knock on the door. 'Come in,' I said. In walked Bethany, cute and innocent, yet with a determined look in her eyes.

"She said matter-of-factly, 'Daddy, sometimes I am good, and sometimes I am bad. And that is just the way it is.' Then she turned and left the room just as summarily as she had come in, acting as if she had completely explained her misbehavior for all time."

SALVAGE

On occasion, instead of abridging an illustration, we may only want to salvage a key element—a quote, image, or metaphor. For example, suppose in the following illustration I want to focus less on the writer and more on the words of the man to whom he is speaking:

D.A. Carson, an author and professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, used to meet with a young man from French West Africa to practice their German. He writes:

"Once a week or so, we had had enough, so we went out for a meal together and retreated to French, a language we both knew well. In the course of those meals we got to know each other. I learned that his wife was in London, training to be a medical doctor. He was an engineer who needed fluency in German to pursue doctoral studies in engineering in Germany.

"I soon discovered that once or twice a week he disappeared into the red-light district of town. Obviously he went to pay his money and have his woman.

"Eventually I got to know him well enough that I asked him what he would do if he discovered that his wife was doing something similar in London.

"'Oh,' he said, 'I'd kill her.'"

"That's a bit of a double standard, isn't it?" I asked.

"'You don't understand. Where I come from in Africa, the husband has the right to sleep with many women, but if a wife is unfaithful to her husband, she must be killed.'"

"'But you told me you were raised in a mission school. You know that the God of the Bible does not have double standards like that.'"

"He gave me a bright smile and replied, 'Ah, *le bon Dieu, il doit nous pardonner; c'est son metier*' [Ah, God is good. He's bound to forgive us; that's His job]." (*Bibliotheca Sacra* [October 1999])

Here is a way to salvage just one quote from this story:

Author D.A. Carson tells of a conversation with a friend who was committing sexual immorality. When Carson confronted him, the man replied, "Ah, God is good. He's bound to forgive us; that's His job."

I accomplished this by summarizing only what was needed to set up the quote and by changing from a first person to a third person account.

PARAPHRASE

Nip and tuck will not always put an illustration in our voice. The entire approach to the story may clash with our style.

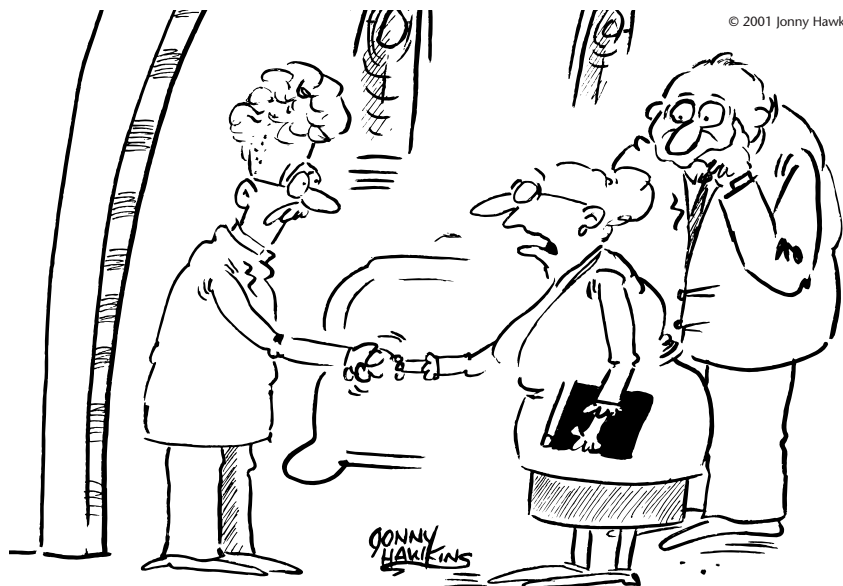
Other illustrations are in a written style—complex, long sentences, stiff-sounding transitions, formal wording—that will not connect with hearers in spoken form.

We need a total overhaul, a paraphrase. To do that, reread the illustration several times, fixing important details in your mind. Then, either immediately, or after letting it percolate through your subconscious, retell the illustration out loud from memory (preferably with someone listening—maybe at the dinner table). Record your retelling and have an assistant type it for your notes. Finally, reread the original illustration and add to your paraphrase any important details you missed.

One advantage of writing out a paraphrase is it fixes the illustration in your mind, so you can tell it from memory rather than by reading it.

We might consider these techniques for adapting illustrations as spices in our cabinet. With them, we can adapt the recipe of any illustration to our own tastes and purposes. When we do, we have thousands more illustrations available and a far greater ability to connect with our hearers. **e**

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"The Lord is working through you. I saw a vision from God in your hair today."

The Demise of Certainty

BY RICHARD L. DRESSELHAUS

Over the years, I have sought to understand why there is skepticism and distrust of Christian higher education in some quarters within the church. This attitude surfaces in legislative sessions, in financial support (or lack thereof), and in casual conversation. Could it be a fear that inquiry leads to uncertainty?

THE PATH FROM CERTAINTY TO UNCERTAINTY

Admittedly, inquiry is the very essence of education. To explore, investigate, experiment, and question are essential to the educational process. However, if that inquiry is isolated from context, it will most assuredly lead to uncertainty. Is it this possibility (the demise of certainty) that creates the skepticism and distrust so often evidenced? I think so. Consider the path from certainty to uncertainty. It might be described as follows:

A Vibrant Certainty

This is the testimony of the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 1:12: "I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day."* Here is a deep, unwavering assurance. A belief system with no cracks. A faith well rooted, grounded, unmovable, and sure.

A Qualified Certainty

When John addressed the church at Ephesus, he reminded them that the Spirit had ought against them: They had forsaken their "first love." Jesus warned that in the last days "the love of most will grow cold" (Matthew 24:12). A once vibrant certainty has disappeared. That deep, sure, resolute assurance is gone.

A Threatened Certainty

At this stage, there is a focused battle for the soul. The previous assurance has been replaced. There is now another affection. The pull of the world has been forcibly expressed. This stage is reminiscent of Paul's word to Timothy about Demas: "Because he loved this world, [he] has deserted me" (2 Timothy 4:10).

An Abandoned Certainty

The desperate cry of the aged Solomon—"vanity, all is vanity"—is a sad example of this final stage. Faith has been eclipsed. The battle for certainty has been lost. The world has won.

I'll call him Joe—not his real name. He pursued his academic career with future ministry as a clear objective. The university seemed an appropriate place where his keen mind might be challenged. His faith was fervent; his certainty, solid. After a time Joe embraced a belief system exclusive of biblical faith. The world of tolerance and relativism and zero-based inquiry shattered his sense of certainty and eclipsed his faith.

I think, too, of a college professor in a "Christian" college (not one of our own), who wrote an article in which he stated, "Modern culture urgently needs a 'noble lie'—a myth that links the moral teachings of religion with the scientific facts of life." He goes on to explain that our Judeo-Christian "myth" has lost its plausibility. Society now needs a new "noble lie" which will replace the old—the implausible notions of a physical resurrection, thundering commandments from Sinai, and other antiquated and archaic ideas. To avoid a nihilistic (no meaning) vacuum

in society, this more tenable "myth" must be created. When asked who might do so, this professor suggests that the artists, poets, musicians, filmmakers, tricksters, and illusionists could devise such a scheme. However, he concludes, they must give birth to a "noble lie" so imaginative, compelling, and enticing that it will be irresistible to society. In this way, a new base for morality, a more contemporary base, will be put in place—(so he argues).

I was distressed. I wrote to the professor and simply asked: "When you go to church" (as a clergyman, I assumed he would) "exactly what or who do you worship?"

He responded: "I worship life."

I have wondered—did this professor in a "Christian" college begin with certainty? Was there a time when he embraced faith in a fervent way? If so, what became of that certainty?

In the late 60s, during the Civil Rights movement, Luther Gerlock, an anthropologist from the University of Minnesota, hypothesized there were factors in common within social subgroups that, if identified, could explain why some groups actually change society at large. Strange as it may seem, Gerlock chose the Black Power movement and the Pentecostal movement as his study groups. I became involved because he sampled by questionnaire some members of the congregation I served at that time. Having completed his study, he published the five common factors that are identifiable in those subculture groups that change society: 1) Something to believe; 2) impassioned spokespersons; 3) dedicated disciples; 4) loose, flexible

organization; and 5) persecution. (My summary and paraphrase.)

According to Gerlock, when these factors are present, a movement in society will change that society. So it has been. Who would argue that the Black Power movement changed our society? And who would argue that Pentecostals have changed our world? I mention this because it bears on the subject before us—the necessity of certainty. The conclusion is obvious—if the Assemblies of God family becomes unsure of its

“‘Not perhaps.’ Barth roared. ‘Say it. Christ is coming again.’”

Indeed, ours must be a sure and certain word. The appeal here is not for a spirit of dogmatism, intellectual inflexibility, arrogance, or mental rigidity—but instead a certainty birthed in brokenness and humility.

Second, as a church we must see that authentic inquiry is a friend of certainty. Ignorance is its enemy. College and seminary classrooms should be alive with inquiry. Options

truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). This is our anchor. All inquiry must be contextualized by Scripture. Like a dog on a leash, we are free to explore and discover, but we must always return to our Master—Jesus Christ, the Living Word.

Also, our inquiry must be contextualized canonically—that is, by the witness of our church. As Pentecostal people, we embrace the doctrines and values mutually accepted among us. This provides an essential parameter in the whole process of inquiry. We voluntarily, by conviction, choose to abide within these boundaries.

To explore, investigate, experiment, and question are essential to the educational process.

THE CALL IS CLEAR

Stay anchored. Honor the landmarks. Go with the tested and true. Respect continuity. Look for confirmation. Observe the great continuum of which you are a part. As you do, the life of certainty will be yours.

Back to where I began—there is an understandable fear that with increased inquiry will come a corresponding demise of certainty. And with that, weakened convictions, lack of fervor, and a general indifference. This cannot be the case. We dare not stop short of authentic inquiry integrated with certainty. Only then will we preach with great conviction, lead with great persuasion, pray with great assurance, comfort with great empathy, study with great insight, learn with great comprehension, and dream with great insight.

May we never cast away our confidence, yield to the speculative, embrace the uncertain, get caught up with inordinate curiosity, or be swept away by the myths and endless wranglings of men. Let us know, that we know, that we know, that we know. By His grace and for His glory alone. **e**

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**Scripture references are from the New International Version.*

doctrines and beliefs, and if its pastors and evangelists lose their passion in the pulpit, and if the dedication of our laity becomes lax, and if institutional concerns become preeminent, and if acceptability becomes the coveted ideal—our Fellowship will cease to fulfill its God-given mission and will retreat into mediocrity and shallow denominationalism.

MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING CERTAINTY?

What is the attitude that must be fostered in our schools, churches, and among our pastors?

First, each of us—regardless of position or station—must settle for nothing less than certainty. Paul’s testimony must be ours: “I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). We dare not give place to idle speculations, unsure confessions, lukewarmness, and indifference.

Elizabeth Achtemeier, in *Creative Preaching*, includes this helpful anecdote: “Once in a seminar with Karl Barth (noted Swiss theologian), a student ended a prayer with this statement, ‘Perhaps Christ is coming again.’”

should be explored. Contrary opinion, evaluated. But always with the goal of a greater certainty. Christian education that does not result in certainty is suspect. In fact, certainty must be its goal—that we might know.

Some would argue that the demand of certainty makes authentic inquiry impossible. Some might think: *Aren’t you rigging and prejudicing the process? Isn’t this a retreat to the safe harbor of indoctrination? Doesn’t the demand for certainty make intellectual freedom impossible?*

Such questions lead one to the third point of evaluation. Authentic inquiry must be well contextualized. Zero-based inquiry is meaningless. Every belief system rests on presuppositions. The atheist sets out to prove there is no God. The evolutionist sets out to show that species can move to higher levels. And Marxists set out to show the incompatibility of different classes in society.

For us the context is clear—the Word of God, written and living. Paul admonished young Timothy: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of

The Pastor-Evangelist

BY RANDY HURST

It is evident that Timothy was called and gifted for pastoral ministry. Yet the apostle Paul, his model and mentor, exhorted him to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5).

MODELING EVANGELISM

Luke opened the Book of Acts with an instructive phrase about our Lord: “Jesus began both to do and teach” (Acts 1:1). The order is significant. The tendency of modern education is to try to teach first and then expect students to do what they have been taught. Jesus *did* first; then He *taught*. The apostle Paul said: “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of

motivate the congregation to do outreach, he* must first model evangelism himself. How can a pastor model evangelism?

First, in the pastor’s family. Modeling a lifestyle of evangelism needs to begin in the home. Evangelizing and discipling our children are a major part of the ministry to which God has called us.

Second, before the congregation. One of the most important ways a pastor can model evangelism in the church is by giving regular public invitations to salvation. Even when no one responds to a salvation invitation, an important

Fourth, in the pastor’s world. There is a direct correlation between a pastor’s heart for the lost in his own community and his vision for the lost of the world. When a congregation observes that its pastor’s heart is burdened for the lost of the world, it affects how the congregation views the lost in its own community. An expansive vision and burden for the lost everywhere will also bear fruit in the local church.

MOTIVATING FOR EVANGELISM

The motivating power for evangelism comes from the Holy Spirit. What believers in a local congregation need as much as anything is encouragement and training.

Pastoral motivation to evangelize comes basically in two ways: through personal exhortation and public preaching. A pastor normally gets what he preaches. Merely preaching a sermon concerning evangelism once or twice a year is not enough to keep a congregation focused on outreach. To motivate a congregation to evangelism, a pastor must strategically and regularly preach the Word to that purpose.

It is not emotional or sensational things that most effectively motivate believers to practice evangelism. The two most powerful motivational factors are these:

A response to Christ’s sacrifice. To effectively evangelize, we need a continually fresh realization that Jesus died for us. Our Christian service is a logical and “reasonable” response to the sacrifice of our Lord (Romans 12:1). The apostle Paul took the Lord’s sacrifice personally, and that was the secret to the powerful motivation he had to reach the

The most effective evangelistic pastors I know make a direct personal impact on people outside the church.

Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1, NASB), and “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do” (Philippians 4:9).

This modeling principle can be seen throughout Scripture: Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, and Jesus and His disciples. It continued in the New Testament church: Barnabas and Paul, Paul and Silas, and then Paul and Timothy.

The greatest leaders in history have led by example as well as by command. Many of us can remember the people who influenced us most. The old adage is true: The most important lessons are caught rather than taught.

Evangelism in a local church begins with the pastor. Before a pastor can

thing is happening. People in the congregation witness their pastor’s passion and commitment to reaching the lost. Invitations to commitment should be done with conviction, faith, and earnestness.

Third, in the community. The most effective evangelistic pastors I know make a direct personal impact on people outside the church. Building relationships with unbelievers in the community, being genuinely interested in them as people, can result in many coming to Christ. Pastors should exemplify the Chief Shepherd, who became known as “a friend of sinners.” When a pastor is effective in personal evangelism, it sets the example for the congregation.

unreached. Paul revealed that his personal motivation came from the logical conclusion that “One died for all...and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” (2 Corinthians 5:14,15, NASB).

The work of the Spirit. Evangelism is primarily a work of the Holy Spirit. Convicting unbelievers of their sin is not our work, but the Holy Spirit’s. We are witnesses for Christ, but the Spirit is the One who convinces unbelievers of sin and leads them to confession and repentance. It is also the Spirit who empowers us to express effectively, through word and action, the truth and reality of Jesus in our lives.

The pastor who keeps his congregation focused on the Lord’s sacrifice and the power of the Holy Spirit—the One who enables us to obey our Lord’s commands—will be employing the two most powerful motivators for evangelism.

MOBILIZING EVANGELISM

Evangelism in the local church must be mobilized in two contexts—in worship services and through personal evangelism. The importance of regular public salvation invitations should be emphasized again. Whether or not someone responds to an invitation is not an indication that a particular sermon or service was a success. If no one comes forward, this is not an indication that the pastor’s message was ineffective. A person coming to Christ is a work of the Holy Spirit. We proclaim the gospel and give the invitation, but only God can open a heart (Acts 16:14). Paul said about his apostolic ministry, “I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6, NASB).

When a pastor commits to giving regular salvation invitations, God will send unbelievers to that church to respond to the invitation. It is not we who are building the Church, but Jesus Christ himself.

A young man who had just accepted a pastorate came to me for advice. I

encouraged him to give a salvation invitation at the conclusion of every Sunday service, even if no one came, for an entire year. When I ministered in the young man’s church about a year later, it had grown from a little more than 100 to more than 700. He said one of

Christ—how you know your sins have been forgiven, that you are a new creation in Christ, and you have an eternal home in heaven. The most effective witness we can give is not about *what* we know, but about *who* we know. The apostle Peter said we should always be

Before a pastor can motivate his congregation to do outreach, he must first model evangelism himself.

the major reasons for the growth was response to salvation invitations every Sunday. God had blessed them by sending unbelievers and backsliders to the church.

Minnesota District Superintendent Clarence St. John pastored for 21 years in Hibbing, Minnesota. He faithfully gave salvation invitations every Sunday for 7 years before seeing a breakthrough. Then, 50 came forward for salvation in 1 year. Two years later, even after erecting a new building, they still had to go to 2 morning services, as they had 377 come forward for salvation that year.

There are many approaches to training for personal evangelism. But, the volume of content sometimes taught can be overwhelming. This is a major reason many Christians do not get involved in personal evangelism. Many have been given the false impression that they must memorize great amounts of Scripture to share with unbelievers. Although Jesus quoted Scripture frequently, it is interesting to note that He did not quote Scripture to the Samaritan woman or to Nicodemus. We need to remember that we are not just imparting knowledge or convincing people of the truth of our religion. We are giving testimony to a relationship.

Following are a few suggestions that can help anyone become an effective personal witness:

1. Share from your own experience—and your personal relationship with

“ready to make a defense to every one who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence” (1 Peter 3:15, NASB).

2. Avoid religious argument and controversy in encounters with people. Instead, focus on a person’s relationship with God, on whether or not he/she has found the peace of knowing God’s forgiveness and the assurance of eternal life.

3. Seek opportune ways to invite people to church, where they can experience God’s presence and receive the ministry of the Word.

4. Pray for an unbeliever in his or her presence. This is one of the most powerful means of witnessing. Many times unbelievers immediately sense the reality of our experience with the Lord when they hear us speak to Him.

The pastor can model evangelism as well as motivate and mobilize a congregation. But as Pentecostal ministers and believers, we must never forget that evangelism is first and foremost a work of the Holy Spirit and that Spirit-filled believers are privileged to have a part in the miracles that God is working in people’s lives to bring them “out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). **E**

Randy Hurst is the commissioner for the Commission on Evangelism, Springfield, Missouri.

**While both men and women serve in the pastoral role, the use of the male pronoun for “pastor” appears in this article for ease of reading.*

Praying, Praising, or Pounding

B Y S T E V E N H U N T

The church of Jesus Christ should always be doing one of three things...praying, praising, or pounding." Those words by the late Mark Buntain, one of the great missionaries of this century, should serve as the theme for every pastor in America. It's an unbeatable combination as we seek to build God's kingdom where He has placed us. The words of Mark Buntain also remind us of the essential nature of the Kingdom—it is designed to grow. In Matthew 13, Jesus likened the Kingdom to a mustard seed—a small seed that grows into a tree. He also used yeast to illustrate the growing influence of God's mighty kingdom.

Every church in America should be growing. During my 11-year tenure at Bethel Assembly in Tulare, we have gone through two major building programs that included moving to our current 15-acre campus. This campus, next to one of central California's busiest freeways, is a beacon to all who pass by.

As I think of building, I view it as a necessary evil. The process requires vast amounts of time, effort, and resources. I want to share some hints that will help you avoid potential problems as you get involved pounding.

BEFORE BEGINNING A BUILDING PROGRAM

Because of the time and effort required, especially when relocating, significant thought and prayer must precede any building program. Several questions need to be answered by you and your leadership even before considering a building program.

Is God leading you to build?

It is imperative that God is the one leading the building program rather than to build

the pastor's or the board's ego. The best building program is in response to God's blessing in the congregation that necessitates construction of a new campus or additional buildings.

Have you maximized your current facilities?

Some pastors want to build a new sanctuary because their current Sunday morning service is at capacity. Building should be the last resort, not the first option.

One way to maximize the use of current facilities is to start a second Sunday morning service. Several churches I know have started a Saturday night service. To maximize classroom space, have two Sunday schools.

These options require additional staffing and more work, but they will delay a building program that may be even more taxing on the congregation and pastor.

Is growth forcing expansion?

As people see few empty seats, and parking spaces are more difficult to find, a building expansion is easier to sell. Here at Bethel, ministry was being limited because of our small building. We were on less than 1 acre with a sanctuary that comfortably seated 225 people. The two morning services were packed; the parking lot was too small to accommodate all of the cars; our classrooms were overflowing. We could not conduct outreaches because there was no place for more people.

When you consistently have to say no to ministry opportunities or outreaches because your facilities won't accommodate them, it's past time to consider building. Buildings should never limit your vision.

At Bethel, it became increasingly more difficult to encourage people to reach out to their family and friends; if visitors came to our services, there was no place for them. Members of your leadership team will soon become discouraged if they are unable to plan and implement new and exciting ministries because there is no room. Ministries often plateau and even decline when there is not adequate space.

As I talked with our leadership team and our people, there was an excitement about a building program because it meant reaching more people. As pastor, I didn't have to talk them into anything—they already saw and felt the need.

Is the leadership sensing the need?

A building program will only be successful to the extent the leadership of the church is behind it. You will have continual resistance throughout the project if people perceive that "this was pastor's idea." As we began to consider relocating to the new property, we met with every lay and ministry leader. We wanted them to develop ownership from the beginning and feel they had significant input in the new campus development. An extensive survey was done and then given to our architect who used the information to design the master plan.

These questions are not all-inclusive, but give a starting point and some important things to think about. Other practical considerations include having adequate parking, financial strength, and the spiritual climate of the congregation.

SHOULD YOU RENOVATE, SELL, OR RELOCATE?

A major consideration for any congregation is whether to build new buildings on

the current site, to renovate and add on to existing buildings, or to find a new site and relocate. As you consider this issue, there is one crucial question: Can we fulfill God's vision for our congregation where we are? The pastor and church leadership must decide if there is adequate land and space available that will facilitate the growth you believe God will bring.

For us, it was an easy question to answer. There was no vacant land available for additional buildings on our small campus, and the current facilities had already been expanded to the point where there was nothing more that could be done. Also, we had very limited off-street parking and no land adjacent to the property to enlarge the parking lot. With the steady growth we were experiencing and with the vision God had given us to reach a large segment of our community, we had no choice but to relocate.

We were fortunate to have a unique and wonderful situation. Eleven years prior to my coming to the church, a former pastor with great vision led the congregation in purchasing 35 acres north of our community on Highway 99. It was a great location for a church with tremendous visibility and accessibility, critical factors for a growing church. Also, the property was only 3 miles from our current site. By the time we began planning for the relocation, the community had grown and was bordering our property.

IF YOU HAVE TO RELOCATE, HELP YOUR PEOPLE WITH THE TRANSITION

Although there was a sense of excitement in most of our people, relocating is a major step. It is important to recognize that some people become emotionally attached to the old building. Two things helped the congregation make a positive transition to the new campus.

Share your vision early and often.

Before beginning the planning process for the new campus, I shared God's vision for our community. I reminded the people that God is not willing that any should perish, and we must also be "not willing." I shared my vision for reaching a significant number of people in Tulare

County, and to obey God's call we needed a larger facility. Throughout the building process, I never focused on buildings, always on people. The new campus and buildings were not the end, simply a means to an end. I continually reminded my church family that buildings are simply tools for ministry and should never be the focus of ministry.

A larger facility would enable us to fulfill God's command to reach more people. The church became excited about the new campus because it meant reaching more people with the love of Jesus. Whenever I talked about the new campus, it was always within the context of ministry enhancement.

Involve as many people as possible.

People in every department of the church were invited to be involved in planning the new facility. We used surveys in the morning services to get input that would be used to design the master plan.

As we began the actual construction, over 150 people were involved in some way—making coffee for workers, sweeping floors, doing cleanup, or painting. As they began to see the vision take shape, excitement grew, and an attachment for the new began to loosen the attachment on the old.

PITFALLS TO AVOID

I have learned a few things after our first building program that may help other pastors avoid the pitfalls that are often part of building programs.

Fulfill your calling; pastor the people.

The first rule of flying is—fly the plane. Pastors can become so involved with the building program they become consumed with an important but secondary issue and neglect their people. People should never receive a pastor's leftover time and attention. Give leadership to the project, but don't allow it to become your focus or distract you from your primary calling.

Expect problems and delays.

If you think your building program will move ahead like clockwork without any problems or delays, dream on. During

our first building program, we struggled for several months to obtain construction financing. One day I was reminding the Lord that this was His idea, not mine. I complained, "It shouldn't be so hard."

In His own gentle and inimitable way, He spoke these words to my heart: "My son, you must not expect it to be easy." He lovingly reminded me that there is a real enemy that wants to thwart His work, and we must persevere.

During that time I read something that encouraged me. "The size of the obstacles are in direct proportion to the size of your dreams." There will be problems to work through, but with God's help nothing is impossible.

Keep your vision alive...and the building is not it.

I've heard that 50 percent of pastors involved in building programs leave their church 6 months after the project is completed. As pastors, we must be careful that the new campus or building doesn't become our vision. I was excited when we moved to our new facilities because we could finally do all the things we had merely envisioned. I couldn't conceive leaving my congregation. God's vision to reach people will keep the building in proper perspective.

Listen to and encourage gifted people in your congregation to get involved.

Our current building project has had its problems, but knowledgeable people in the church experienced in the building industry have made my job easier and saved the church a lot of money. Turning the details over to trusted members of the congregation who are builders has enabled me to continue to be the pastor and not project manager. When gifted people in your congregation get involved, they will be excited about the building project, and you will keep your sanity.

I will be happy if I never become involved in another building program. But then again, God's call to us is to be "praying, praising, and pounding." And, it looks like we will need a new sanctuary before too long. **e**

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S E R M O N S E E D S



THE COMING OF CHRIST

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

INTRODUCTION:

Jesus will return to the earth again. Over 300 references in the New Testament teach this. The coming of Christ will fulfill many prophecies. Paul describes Christ's coming in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18.

MESSAGE:

1. **The concern of His coming (verse 13).**
Paul didn't want believers to be ignorant of the promises of Christ's coming (John 14:1–3). He will come as He promised.
 - a. We should not be ignorant of the plan of His coming (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).
 - b. We should not be ignorant of the person of His coming, "The Lord himself" (verse 16). He will come as promised (Acts 1:11).
2. **The company at His coming (verses 14,15).**
 - a. First, those who died in Christ (verses 14–16).
 - b. Second, Christians who are still alive

will rise to meet Christ in the air (verses 15,17). This is the fulfillment of Christ coming for His people.

3. **The Christ who is coming (verse 16).**
Note three words:
 - a. Awaken. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout." Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:51,52. It will be quick—"in the twinkling of an eye."
 - b. Alert. "The voice of the archangel." Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:52. We will have a heavenly body knowing no limitations.
 - c. Authority. "With the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." All Christians, both dead and alive, will be changed. Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:53–57.
4. **The change at His coming (verse 17).**
There are two important words.
 - a. Trip. "We...shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord." This will be a quick trip. We will immediately be with the Lord. We

will be like Christ (1 John 3:2).

- b. Triumph. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." This is the eternal life Jesus spoke of in John 3:16; 11:25,26.
5. **The comfort of His coming (verse 18).**
Comfort each other with the words, Jesus is coming.
 - a. When facing sickness, remember that Jesus is coming.
 - b. When facing sorrow, remember that Jesus is coming.
 - c. When saying farewell to our Christian friends at death, remember Jesus is coming.

CONCLUSION:

When Jesus spoke of His coming, He emphasized being ready at all times (Matthew 24:44). No one knows exactly when He will return (Acts 1:6,7). To be ready, we must live lives of holiness (1 John 3:3; Hebrews 12:14).

—Croft Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania

CALLED TO STARDOM

Philippians 2:12–18, NIV

INTRODUCTION:

God intends that His people live "without fault" in the world. So marked is the contrast that God's people will "shine like stars." The key to stardom is faithfulness.

MESSAGE:

1. **The gift of faithfulness (verse 16).**
We are placed in this generation for others. Consider the imagery here. The "blameless and pure...without fault" (verse 15) child of God stands in the darkness with hands extended to "hold out the word of life." This is giving. There is no thought of selfishly clutching the Word of life to one's breast. This implies:
 - a. Great responsibility (Luke 12:48).
 - b. Great obligation (2 Corinthians 4:3).
 - c. Principle: The faithful believer lives to give.
2. **The reward of faithfulness (verse 16).**
Paul's goals were not to build great edifices or deal in impressive numbers. Rather, he pleaded for the qualities of

faithfulness in the lives of the Philippian believers that would permit boasting in God's presence.

- a. The world's service. "It is difficult to sing when the audience turns its back unless the singer understands he is singing for someone else." Our world is not interested in this kind of reward.
 - b. The Christian's service. Our faithful service is unto Him.
 - c. Principle: To reproduce godliness in others is an incomparable reward in and of itself. It is acceptable grounds for boasting before God.
3. **The sacrifice of faithfulness (verse 17).**
 - a. Sacrifice of self is "reasonable service," not anything extraordinary (Romans 12:1).
 - b. Sacrifice of self by leaders affirms and enhances the sacrificial service of God's people, "The sacrifice and service coming from your faith" (verse 17).
 - c. Principle: Sacrificial living and service reproduce themselves from pastor to parishioner.

4. **The pleasure of faithfulness (verses 17,18).**

Ever seeking to teach reciprocity in the life of the church, Paul speaks of his joy in relationship with and ministry to the Philippian believers. He is convinced that they too should and do sense the same spiritual pleasure.

- a. There is true pleasure in partnership (Philippians 1:5).
- b. There is no pleasure greater than in the sincere fellowship of believers (Philippians 4:1).
- c. Principle: Rejoicing in the body of Christ should be the experience and possession of both the leaders and the led.

CONCLUSION:

The stardom sought so eagerly by our generation is shallow and shaky. God calls us, His people, to stardom of a completely different kind. It is the glow of a godly, pure, blameless life lived in obedient faithfulness to Christ.

—Don Corbin, Springfield, Missouri

S E R M O N S E E D S

HE SHALL BE GREAT

Luke 1:26–35

When God entered history to redeem sinners, He did it in a way incomprehensible to human reasoning. His Son would be great, but He would be rejected by the ones to whom He was sent.

MESSAGE:

1. Announced by an angel.

- It was a message that must be delivered in a supernatural way because it dealt with a supernatural mission.
- The angel was sent “from God.” This was communication direct from the throne.

2. Born of a virgin.

- His name must be Jesus; this identified

- His saving, redeeming mission.
- He must not be born as others, for that would have meant He would have been conceived in sin.
- More amazing words were never uttered: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee” (verse 35). In no other way could God have become man.

3. Reigning forever.

- He shall be great in the sense that God considers greatness. His name is exalted above every other name.
- He is the Son of the Highest in a unique sense—the only one in history who could bear this title.

- He will fulfill God’s promise that a descendant of David will always occupy Israel’s throne. He will reign over the house of Jacob, for Jacob’s descendants will finally accept Him as their King. But His reign will not be confined to Israel. It will encompass the world and the universe, and it will be eternal.

CONCLUSION:

Jesus’ birth cannot be compared with any other, for it was God’s condescension to become man so He could redeem man from his sin.

—*Kenneth D. Barney, Springfield, Missouri*

RESPONSES TO CHRIST’S NATIVITY

Matthew 2:1–12

INTRODUCTION:

In this text, we note three types of reactions to the birth of Christ. These are still the primary reactions we witness in people today.

MESSAGE:

1. Hostility and hatred (verse 3).

- Herod the Great was so intent on destroying Christ he killed many innocent victims.
- There are still people today who feel so threatened by Jesus they fight any

- attempt to get them to accept Him.
- Indifference (verses 4–6).**
 - Other than taking time to answer the inquiry of the king, the chief priests and scribes seemed too busy with their daily routines to be distracted by the possibility that the Savior for whom they had been looking had been born.
 - Much of the routine that lulls us into indifference is not bad. It has been put too high on our list of priorities and crowds the Lord out of His rightful place in our lives.

3. Adoring worship (verse 11).

- The Wise Men came worshipping and brought the best gifts they had.
- There are those today who, realizing the significance of Christ, worship Him, and bring Him the best gift they have—themselves.

CONCLUSION:

All of us fit one of these categories. This Christmas give Christ the place in our lives He deserves.

—*Martin L. Perryman, Ada, Oklahoma*

FORWARD IN THE NEW YEAR

Joshua 1:1–9

INTRODUCTION:

Moses had died. Joshua was taking his place. He felt he was unable to lead the people of Israel. However, God encouraged and helped him with this task.

MESSAGE:

1. The call (verses 1–4).

- God calls people.
- When we listen to Him, He will make us what we should be (Matthew 4:19).
- God hears and answers when we call on Him (Jeremiah 33:3).

2. The confirmation (verse 5).

- God would be with Joshua.
- He is with us (1 Corinthians 10:13).

- He is with us in time of trouble (Psalm 46:1).
- He will never leave us (Matthew 28:20).
- He will be with us to the end of this age (Hebrews 13:5).
- The courage (verses 6,7).**
 - Be strong in the Lord.
 - With Christ we can do all things (Philippians 4:13).
 - As we put our whole heart into what we do, God will give us the courage and boldness to stand for Him.
- The command (verse 8).**

Note four things about His Word.

- The sacred Word. “This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth.” Talk about His Word.

- The saving Word. “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night.” As we meditate on it, it cleanses us. (See Psalm 119:9,11.)
- The sure Word. “That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein.”
- The success-ensuring Word. “For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”

CONCLUSION:

We do not know what the New Year holds, but we know God who holds the New Year. Let us trust Him to lead and direct us in the right way (Proverbs 3:5,6).

—*Croft Pentz, Waynesboro, Pennsylvania*

S E R M O N S E E D S



PICTURES OF THE PRODIGAL

Luke 15

INTRODUCTION:

Why did Jesus come? He answered that question several times (Luke 5:32; 19:10).

Who would criticize a man for doing his job? The scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus. Jesus answered their criticism with several parables. The first two parables showed the Pharisees and rulers of Israel how they should have acted toward the lost. The third parable showed them how they did act. Jesus' words were stern rebuke and yet were full of hope, even for the hopeless.

Publicans: Tax collectors, despised, unmerciful, greedy. They collected taxes on contract.

Sinners: Without status, nonreligious.

Pharisees: The spiritual ones; those who championed religion but specialized in legalism. They codified the customs and traditions and woe unto anyone who did not measure up.

MESSAGE:

1. The lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7).

- a. One out of 100.
- b. Lost in the wilderness.
- c. The viewpoint of the searching shepherd.
- d. Cause for rejoicing: "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

2. The lost coin (Luke 15:8-10).

- a. One out of 10.
- b. Lost in the house.
- c. The viewpoint of the searching woman.
- d. Cause for rejoicing: "joy in the presence of the angels."

3. The Prodigal (Luke 15:11-32).

- a. The father's house—a place of limitation (verses 11,12).
 - (1) The younger son—inexperienced, unappreciative, impractical.
 - (2) "Give me"—demanding, rebellious.
 - (3) "What is mine"—liberty without responsibility.
- b. The far country—land of opportunity.
 - (1) "Not many days after"—haste, snap decisions.
 - (2) "Gathered all"—defiance.
 - (3) "Took his journey"—act of liberation.
 - (4) "Far country"—one of the world's great markets: Carthage, Alexandria, Antioch, Rome.
 - (5) "Wasted"—extravagance, real freedom, flamboyance.

- (6) "Riotous living"—undisciplined, uninhibited behavior.

Can you feel with him? Can you see what is going to happen? Do you yearn to warn him or have you turned him off?

- c. The far country—land of oppression (verses 14-16).
 - (1) "Spent all"—there are those who cannot see trouble coming.
 - (2) "Arose a mighty famine"—too often the devil holds off the famine until we have spent all.
 - (3) "Began to be in want"—still didn't see his true need.
 - (4) "Joined himself to a citizen"—identified with the far country.
 - (5) "Sent to feed the swine"—how low can you get?
 - (6) "Fain would have filled his belly"—became physically hungry.
 - (7) "With the husks"—beanpods.
 - (8) "No man gave unto him"—all alone in his misery.

Can you identify with him? What if he were your son?

- d. The father's house—a place of liberation (verses 17-20).
 - (1) "He came to himself"—saw home for the first time as it really was.
 - (a) Care of the servants.
 - (b) Abundance.
 - (2) "I will arise and go"—rehearsed, talked to himself.
 - (a) Confess his sin.
 - (b) Admit his unworthiness.
 - (c) Desire to serve others.
 - (3) "He arose, and came"—he did something about it.

4. The Prodigal's father (Luke 15:20-24).

- a. Yearning.
 - (1) "A great way off"—constant vigil.
 - (2) "Saw him"—recognition.
 - (3) "Had compassion."
- b. Receiving.
 - (1) "Ran."
 - (2) "Fell on his neck."
 - (3) "Kissed him."
 - (4) "Son said, Father:
 - (a) "I have sinned."
 - (b) "I am not worthy."

- c. Restoring—Didn't give his son time to finish.
 - (1) "Bring the best robe"—robe of righteousness.
 - (2) "Put a ring on his hand"—assurance, authority.
 - (3) "Put shoes on his feet"—peace,

slaves wore no shoes.

d. Rejoicing.

- (1) "Bring the fatted calf—kill it."
- (2) "Eat and be merry."

5. The Prodigal's brother (Luke 15:25-32).

- a. His estate—the height of assumption.
 - (1) "In the field"—away from the father. He was busy looking after what was his, building up himself.
 - (2) "As he came"—oblivious of his brother's return; unexpected.
- b. His estate—depth of anger.
 - (1) "Heard music and dancing"—how dare they make merry without him.
 - (2) "Called a servant"—why not go directly to his father?
 - (3) "Thy brother is come"—what a revolting development.
 - (4) "Was angry"—how dare we accept such sinners.
 - (5) "Would not go in"—I've got my name to consider, my reputation to protect.
- c. His estate—depth of accusation.
 - (1) "Father entreated him."
 - (2) "He answered."
 - (a) "I have served you many years"—served whom?
 - (b) "I have not transgressed your commandments"—kept and enforced all the approved taboos.
 - (c) "Never gave me even a little billy goat to make merry with my friends"—make merry with whom? I'm just not appreciated around here. I don't get proper credit.
 - (d) "Thy son devoured thy living with harlots"—how did he know the kind of life his brother had lived? Yet he disclaimed this brother. Why?
- d. His estate—the height of assurance.
 - (1) "Thou art with me"—God's presence abides with us.
 - (2) "All that I have is thine"—we are heirs and joint heirs; there is enough for all.
 - (3) "This thy brother is alive"—you are even richer because of it.

CONCLUSION:

Which one are you? How do you react toward sinners? Do you accept them or reject them?

—Warren McPherson, Springfield, Missouri

S E R M O N S E E D S

SOMETHING NEW IN THE NEW YEAR

Isaiah 43:19

INTRODUCTION:

As we enter a New Year, there are many new things we may have in Christ.

MESSAGE:

1. A new salvation.

- a. By a new Savior, Jesus (Luke 2:11).
- b. The old salvation was through an animal's blood (Leviticus 6:1–7).
- c. The new salvation comes through Jesus' shed blood (1 Peter 1:18,19).

2. A new life.

- a. Solomon was vexed because of the vanity of life (Ecclesiastes 1:2,3,14).
- b. Jesus brought to every believer an abundant life (John 10:10).
- c. The abundant life is exciting, fulfilling (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:22–24).

3. A new experience.

- a. The Holy Spirit prophesied (Matthew 3:11).
- b. The Holy Spirit promised (Luke 24:49).
- c. The Holy Spirit comes (Acts 2:1–4).

4. A new hope.

- a. Believers of old had an unseen faith (Hebrews 11:9,10).
- b. We have a living hope (Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 15:51–58).

CONCLUSION:

If you have not found salvation, a new life, a new experience of power, and do not have a living hope in Christ's return, you can have it today. Enjoy something new in the New Year.

—Terry Terrell, Burlington, Iowa

LITTLE KNOWN PEOPLE THAT GOD CAN USE

Luke 1:6,41,67; 2:25,26,36,37

INTRODUCTION:

Mary was not a member of a prestigious family. Joseph was a carpenter. Outside of the family or neighbors, quite likely he was unknown. Mary and Joseph were poor; they offered two pigeons at Jesus' dedication.

Four other persons had a strategic role in the birth of our Lord.

Zechariah and Elizabeth were the parents of John the Baptist. Zechariah had been selected by lot to keep the incense burning. Elizabeth, also of the tribe of Levi, was barren and growing old. God strategically brought them to this point in His plan. Unknown? Yes, but, "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless" (Luke 1:6).

Simeon was "just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him" (Luke 2:25).

Anna was a prophetess who became a widow after 7 years of marriage. At 84 years of age, she "served God with fastings and prayers night and day" (Luke 2:37).

Each of these were little known, yet their names are permanently inscribed in the Word. Why did God use these people? Are there any scriptural clues that identify common characteristics as to why God chose them?

MESSAGE:

1. Obedient—lived holy lives.

- a. As sin and evil escalate, the painful consequences of sin are obvious.
- b. The Old Testament law was a

demanding and disciplined system, based on sacrifice. The Old Testament also spoke of motivation from the heart (1 Samuel 15:22).

- c. Grace does not give license to practice sin (John 15:10).
- d. It is better to be a holy person before God, unknown by men, than to be known and not have a holy obedience to the Lord.

2. Devout—dedicated to His purposes.

- a. They knew His Word.
 - (1) Simeon waited for the consolation of Israel.
 - (2) Anna spoke "of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem."
- b. They experienced His Spirit.
 - (1) Elizabeth was filled with the Spirit and prophesied when she saw Mary.
 - (2) The Holy Ghost came upon Simeon, and he received revelation from the Spirit.
 - (3) Anna was a prophetess, anointed by the Spirit.
 - (4) Not either/or—Word/Spirit—rather it is both/and.

- c. They recognized His revelation.
 - (1) Many saw only a Jewish baby being brought to the temple.
 - (2) Galatians 4:4, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son."
 - (3) The Word/Spirit provides insight into what God is saying/doing today in the Church.

d. What is God saying to this generation? His Church? People whom God can use follow the Word/Spirit and respond to His purposes.

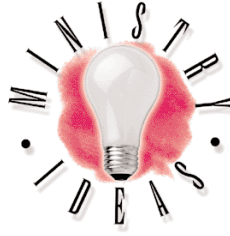
3. Faithful—confidently trusting in His sovereign plan.

- a. Each of them was faithful where God had placed them.
- b. They had no ulterior motives or hidden agendas. They were not looking for recognition.
- c. You will never be content when you get there, if you are not content where you are now.
- d. The most difficult part of trusting God is knowing His timing.
- e. Jonah wanted immediate judgment on Nineveh.
- f. Abraham called the father of the faithful (Hebrews 11:8–10).
- g. If you want God to use you, you will not be defeated by circumstances you cannot understand.
- h. The Psalmist said it eloquently, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning" (Psalm 30:5).

CONCLUSION:

We must avoid the cultural traps of determining significance on the basis of status, notoriety, or position. Our prayer should be for the Lord to use us, and our commitment must include being obedient, devout, and faithful.

—Maurice Lednicki, Springfield, Missouri



CHRISTMAS GIFT BAGS FOR THE ELDERLY

"Can you please help me? At the last minute, the group that always provides gift bags for the elderly residents backed out." This was the urgent plea from the resident coordinator for the North Little Rock Housing Authority, 3 weeks before Christmas.

We would need to provide a gift bag with fruit and candy for 638 residents at five complexes. After presenting the project to our pastor for approval, we solicited volunteers from our Mature Adult group.

We made computer-generated, stick-on Christmas labels that read, "Friends are one of God's special gifts...and special is what you are." We printed our church name, address, and phone number at the bottom of the label. Holes for ribbons were punched in the top of white gift bags; labels were applied to each bag; and each bag was filled with an apple, orange, a variety of Christmas candy, and the tract, *Dad's Last Sermon*, written by our pastor. The bags were tied with red ribbon and boxed for distribution.

Distribution was coordinated with the director of each housing complex. We divided into five groups, each assigned to a particular complex. We delivered gift bags to each apartment and wished the resident Merry Christmas from First Assembly of God.

The complex director warmly welcomed each group. The residents appreciated the gifts and expressed their thanks for remembering them at Christmas.

Our Mature Adults group expressed how happy they were to be part of this project and how rewarding it was to visit the elderly residents. It was a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the love of God in a tangible manner. This experience added a new dimension to our Christmas season.

—(Mrs.) Henry Alyce Tucker, director, Mature Adult Ministries, First Assembly of God, North Little Rock, Arkansas

EMPOWERING SENIOR CITIZENS

Empowering senior citizens to transform their world is the mission statement for our Primitimers Ministry at Calvary Church in Naperville, Ill. We believe in the giftedness of this vital age group. Our Primitimers give to ministries with their time, energy, and influence.

We offer activities and events such as monthly birthday breakfasts, summer boat trips, holiday gatherings, seniors conferences, and museum tours. But Primitimers is much more than programs and events; many of our

members are involved in every aspect of church life and ministries.

Primitimers are involved in hospital visitation, nursing home ministry, serve as nursery workers, and Sunday school teachers. Several mentor new converts in our discipleship ministry. They sing in the choir and work in our food pantry/clothes closet. Many of our seniors go on overseas mission trips. Others serve as ushers, greeters, and work at our information booths. Five of our seven deacons are Primitimers. Calvary Church's Primitimers are transforming their world through the power of Jesus Christ.

—Kris Heimer, Naperville, Illinois

HOMEBOUND MINISTRIES

The task of ministering to the nearly 100 names of homebound and disabled members was overwhelming. "Dear God, help me. This is beyond anything I can do," I prayed.

That prayer led to the beginning of Homebound Ministries, an organized visitation ministry reaching church and nonchurch senior adults. Any name given to us is placed on a list. Each person on the list is visited once we have their permission. We surveyed a majority on the list and discovered a variety of needs. Some desired visits at various intervals. Others wanted to receive the church bulletin without visits. Some wanted Communion from time to time, a way to relay prayer needs, or tapes of church services.

Once needs were identified, we developed a plan for visitation and meeting needs. A packet was prepared for our volunteers that included: a volunteer booklet; a background check system to acquire information regarding a person's integrity in working with our senior homebound (designed by General Council legal counsel, Richard Hammar); a training sheet (a procedure for visiting the homebound); and a how-to section on communicating needs of the homebound person to the church.

The need for volunteers was presented at a seniors get-together, and a notice was placed in the church bulletin. Within a week, we had a small army of volunteers. At the first meeting, we distributed the training packets, reviewed the contents, and assisted in filling out the paperwork. We divided our city into sections and assigned someone to each section. The overwhelming task melted into an army of God's people being His hand extended.

—Jacque Blauvelt, pastor of senior adults, Homebound Ministries, Central Assembly of God, Springfield, Missouri



HONORBOUND PRIME

HonorBound Prime is a chance for the retired men in our church to get together for fellowship, food, fun, and Bible study. On Tuesday mornings, the women—mainly stay-at-home moms and older women—gather for interaction, mentoring, prayer, and studying God’s Word. They meet from 9:30–11 a.m. The retired husbands of many of these women gather at the same time. The HonorBound Prime leader guides a discussion on a topic (usually current events, politics, or something health related). We then pray for needs followed by a Bible study.

One-third of our PrimeTime men attend. They have a good time contributing their ideas and thoughts. We compare HonorBound Prime with the older Jewish rabbis, discussing theology and interpretations of the Torah in a New York City courtyard.

After the group disbands, some of the single men continue their discussion at a nearby restaurant for lunch.

HonorBound Prime is an excellent way for the PrimeTime men to enhance their faith, knowledge of the Bible, and relationships with other men their age.

—Dean Friemund, senior-adult pastor, Bloomington
Assembly of God, Bloomington, Minnesota

MATURE ADULTS PROVIDING SHOES FOR CHILDREN

I recently read about a teacher who made sure that each child in her school had proper-fitting shoes. After reading this story, I sensed this was a place our mature adults could make a difference. I wanted to provide shoes for Jay’s Kids—the inner-city ministry founded by church member, Jay Martin.

Our local Just For Feet store offered to provide good-quality, leather tennis shoes for an average of \$35 per pair. After presenting the project to the pastor for approval, we determined how many children we needed to provide with shoes.

We asked each person in our mature adult group to purchase a pair of shoes. The response was overwhelming. Our entire church became involved, giving enough to purchase shoes for 92 children. We also provided Thanksgiving dinner for the children and their families.

Our mature adults present the shoes to the children. They also assisted the children in trying on their new shoes. The energy of the children was contagious. It was exciting to see them strutting around the room in their new shoes. This has become our annual project.

—(Mrs.) Henry Alyce Tucker, director, Mature Adult Ministries,
First Assembly of God, North Little Rock, Arkansas

PIONEERS PRAISE CHOIR

“The Lord is my strength and my song!” (Psalm 118:14). This is the theme of our Pioneers Praise Choir; a song of life lived in Christ.

“They are one of the most effective ministries outside the four walls of our church,” says David Watson, pastor of Central Assembly of God in Springfield, Missouri. And they certainly sing as they go, and go, and go.

The Pioneers Praise Choir was organized about 15 years ago as a ministry for retired persons 55 years of age and older. Presently, the Pioneers Praise Choir’s average age is 76, ranging from 59 to 92. Experience and age complement the desire to honor the Lord through song. When the songs reflect a lifelong testimony, the joy and glory of the Lord radiate from the singers. L.B. Larson, director of the Pioneers Praise Choir, arranges music to meet the range needs of the mature voices. He has developed several programs that carry a message of hope and healing. Accompaniment is provided by several instruments, using the various musical skills in the group.

The Pioneers Praise Choir ministers during two seasons each year—March through July, and September through November. They rehearse once a week during each season, with social activities each quarter. The choir has elected officers who plan the yearly calendar and budget and present it to the church board for approval. Attire and travel expenses are funded by the choir members. Tour offerings are never required. Some churches do take an offering that is used to subsidize the choir fund. Close communication with the church’s music ministry optimizes music files and integrates opportunities for ministry within and outside of the church. The choir tours several times a year, mostly 1-day outreaches to Assemblies of God churches, other denominational functions, and community venues. We sometimes rent a tour bus. On closer trips choir members drive themselves.

—Jacque Blauvelt, pastor of senior adults,
Central Assembly of God,
Springfield, Missouri

SEND US YOUR IDEAS

Enrichment will pay up to \$50 for each published account of a program idea. Send your ideas, along with a detailed description, to: Ministry Ideas, *Enrichment* journal, 1445 Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1894.

E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: enrichmentjournal@ag.org.



CHRISTMAS AND TAX TIME

As we received our Christmas cards during December, we discovered that the Internal Revenue Service had sent a note reminding us that tax time was just around the corner. My mind immediately went to Luke 2, which tells about the first Christmas that also came at tax time. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem at the demand of the government to register and pay taxes. Certainly it was a stressful time for everyone, especially a young couple expecting a child and far from home. But into this frustrating time, Jesus came. He brought peace, hope, and love. Even today, Christ comes to help us be victorious over any situation.

—David G. Rose, North Richland Hills, Texas

ELDERLY HISTORICAL PEOPLE: POLITICIANS, SCIENTISTS, BUSINESSMEN

Bismark, who died at 83, did his greatest work after he was 70.

Gladstone was still a potential figure in political and intellectual circles when he was 80. He took up a new language at 70.

Faragut was 60 at the beginning of the Civil War.

Lamarck, at 78, completed his great zoological work, *The Natural History of the Invertebrates*.

Laplace, the astronomer, was still at work when he died at 78. He died crying, "What we know is nothing; what we do not know is immense."

Kelly continued to be a cancer specialist when past 80.

Franklin did not begin his philosophical pursuits until 50. He went to France in the service of his country at 78 and wrote his autobiography at over 80.

Vanderbilt increased the mileage of his ocean liners from 100 to more than 10,000 between his 70th year and his death at 83, and thus added over \$100 million to his fortune.

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EPITAPH OF A VERY HAPPY MAN

It is reported that in a small cemetery in New England the following epitaph was seen:

What I spent is all gone.

What I possessed is all left to others.

But what I freely gave away will remain with me always.

This certainly has to be a secret to happiness. We work to accumulate goods and wealth. Often, we hold on to these earthly possessions as if they will be ours forever. However, this is not God's plan for our lives. He expects us to be generous with others while we are alive. Who can better decide

what value to place on your money than you? You place this value as you decide how to dispose of your wealth.

Proverbs 22:9 says, "He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor." Today is the day to freely give gifts of love and adoration to the Lord Jesus and His church. These are gifts that bless the kingdom of God today and for eternity.

—David G. Rose, North Richland Hills, Texas

COME ON, GET WITH IT!

Not long ago I lost one of my best friends, a woman 86 years old. She was the most exciting lay teacher I had been exposed to.

The last time I saw her was at one of those aseptic Christian parties. We were sitting on eggshells, looking pious, when she walked in and said, "Well, Hendricks, I haven't seen you for a long time. What are the five best books you've read in the past year?"

She had a way of changing a group's dynamics. Her philosophy was, Let's not bore each other with each other; let's get into a discussion, and if we can't find anything to discuss, let's get into an argument.

She was 83 on her last trip to the Holy Land. She went with a group of NFL football players. One of my most vivid memories of her is seeing her out front yelling back to them, "Come on, men, get with it."

She died in her sleep at her daughter's home in Dallas, Texas. Her daughter told me that just before she died, she had written down her goals for the next 10 years.

May her tribe increase.

—Howard Hendricks

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SECRETS OF MULLER'S LONGEVITY

George Muller, though a man of delicate physical constitution, began evangelistic tours at the age of 70. For over 17 years, traveling an equivalent of eight times around the world, he carried much of the responsibilities of the orphanages—until beyond age 90.

As a young man, Muller's frequent and serious illness had apparently disqualified him from military duty. Many people thought he would die early or hopelessly succumb to disease. Yet at age 92, he said: "I have been able, every day and all the day, to work, and with that ease as 70 years ago."

He ascribed his marvelous preservation to three causes:

1. The exercising of himself to have always a conscience void of offense, both toward God and toward men.



2. To the love he felt for the Scriptures, and the constant recuperative power they exercised upon his whole being (Proverbs 4:20–22); and

3. To the happiness he felt in God and His work, which relieved him of all anxiety and needless wear and tear in his labors.

—Watchman-Examiner

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OLD AGE—IT'S LATER THAN YOU THINK

It's later than you think—everything is farther away now than it used to be. It's twice as far to the corner—and they added a hill. I notice I've given up running for the bus—it leaves faster than it used to. It seems they are making steps steeper than in the old days and have you noticed the smaller print they use in the newspapers? There is no sense asking anyone to read aloud...everyone speaks in such a low voice I can scarcely hear them. Material in dresses is so skimpy, especially around the hips. It's all but impossible to reach my shoelaces. Even people are changing—they are much younger than they used to be when I was their age. On the other hand, people my age are much older than I. I ran into an old classmate the other day and she had aged so much she didn't remember me. I got to thinking about the poor thing while I was combing my hair this morning and I glanced in the mirror at my reflection and, they don't make mirrors like they used to either.

—Anonymous

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THAT FIRST U.S. CHRISTMAS

It was December 25, 1776, and destiny was in the making. We were at war for our freedom from the British. The cities were in the hands of the British...only the woods, the snow, and cold were ours.

On that night, in the town of Trenton, New Jersey, houses were filled with German troops. To these professional soldiers, Washington's soldiers were simply a rabble-in-arms.

On this Christmas Day, Colonel Rall lay at Trenton with three Hessian regiments, 50 Jagers, 20 British dragons, and a detachment of artillery. At midnight, Rall gathered his officers about him and shouted, "Noch einmal! Glory to Gott and to the Foxhunter, freezing in the hills across the river!" It was a night of revelry.

But the despised Foxhunter was on the move. Drawing his coat tighter, Washington peered ahead into the darkness. He sat there thinking. It was the "fulness of time" for him; the

enlistments of 2,400 men still left to him were up on Christmas Day. It was now or never.

At 6 p.m. on December 25, his men assembled at the river and somehow they got horses, cannon, and men into the barges. Just after midnight, with nothing but chunks of frozen soup to gnaw on for rations, they pushed across the river.

Suddenly Washington struck. He could have chosen no better moment. Washington drove Ralls and his 1,400 men out into the cold. It was the turn of the war—every post along the Delaware River had been cleared of the enemy. Christmas Day meant war, good against evil, just as it did on the very first Christmas Day.

—Robert Strand, *Springfield, Missouri. Adapted from Moments for Christmas. Used with permission.*

WHITE AS SNOW

The gold rush town of Nome, Alaska, sits on the edge of the Bering Sea. Like many villages of the arctic, the ground on which the community sits is permanently frozen beneath the sponge-like tundra. Burying the dead is a real challenge. Sanitation landfills are unheard of. Garbage trucks do not haul off the kind of refuse we leave curbside in the lower 48. Instead, a typical front yard boasts broken-down washing machines, junked cars, old toilets, scrap wood, and piles of nondegradable refuse.

Tourists who visit Nome in the summer are amazed at the debris. They wonder, How could anyone live like that? What those visitors do not realize is that for 9 months of the year Nome sits under a blanket of snow that covers the garbage. During those months, the little Iditarod town on Norton Sound is a quaint winter wonderland of pure white landscapes.

The reality of grace is this: a blanket of forgiveness has covered the garbage of our lives. The prophet Isaiah declares that the blight of our sin (once red as crimson) is now white as freshly fallen snow. God no longer sees the ugliness of our discarded, wasted choices. But unlike the situation in Nome, our sin will not reappear once the snow melts. It is covered forever.

—Greg Asimakoupoulos
Naperville, Illinois

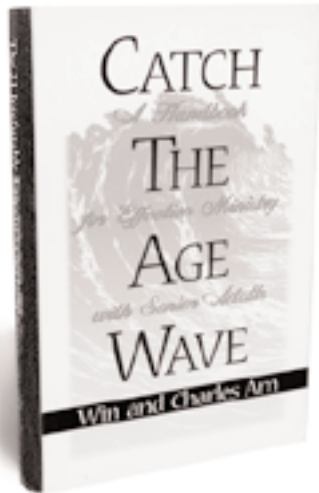
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E-mail: You may send your ministry ideas to: enrichmentjournal@ag.org.



book reviews



CATCH THE AGE WAVE: A HANDBOOK FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY WITH SENIOR ADULTS

Win and Charles Arn (Beacon Hill Press, 182 pp., paperback, \$19.99)

Senior-adult ministry isn't what it used to be. The assumptions and recycled programs that were the basis of local church ministry are being challenged. Win and Charles Arn are at the forefront as leaders in developing effective senior-adult ministry materials for today.

Catch the Age Wave is written in two parts. The first part helps the reader understand age-wave issues and how they relate to the church. You will learn about ageism and if your church is guilty of ageism.

Part two applies growth principles to senior-adult ministries. Here you will learn how to practice *oikos* evangelism, to incorporate newcomers, and to establish small-group networking.

The authors encourage the reader to stimulate spiritual growth among seniors, and they discuss how to stimulate intellectual development. Most churches provide recreational, social, and physical activities for their seniors. This book includes new ways of doing that. The appendix contains helpful growth ideas organized into four

ministry areas: spiritual growth, service, fellowship, and evangelism.

Catch the Age Wave is a great addition to any senior-adult pastor's library or an excellent choice for a first book on senior-adult ministry.

—Reviewed by Arlene Allen, Women's Ministries development and training coordinator, Springfield, Missouri.

THE GRAND WAY

Created by Win and Charles Arn (Church Growth Incorporated, video, \$99.50)

The Grand Way is a complete training resource to help mature adults discover and apply the four key ingredients of a

Each of the four modules takes approximately 2 hours to complete. These modules may be taught in a series of weekly sessions or in one concentrated workshop. Leader's notes make each module easy to lead. Participant worksheets provide guidance in applying the insights. The video in each session illustrates important principles.

The Grand Way is a great opportunity for older adults to grow in their Christian life. The wisdom, talent, energy, and enthusiasm latent in senior adults can be tapped for greater ministry in your church.

—Reviewed by Stephen B. Sparks, director of Senior Adult Ministries for the Assemblies of God, Springfield, Missouri.



successful Christian life. In the process, your mature-adult group(s) will establish solid foundations for "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry."

The resource kit includes an introductory brochure, four 15- to 20-minute videos and a 90-page instructional guide in a three-ring binder for leaders that includes master sheets for duplication for each participant.

Topics of the four modules are: "The Grand Way to Service," "The Grand Way to Outreach," "The Grand Way to Christian Growth & Discipleship," and "The Grand Way to Friendship & Love."

THE GIFT OF GRANDPARENTING

Eric Wiggin (Focus on the Family, 265 pp., paperback, \$12.99)

Becoming a parent is quite a step, but the idea of being a grandparent really stretches one's imagination. It's always with pride that one hears those magnificent words. As Eric Wiggin's first chapter title illustrates, grandparenting is "Absolutely Wonderful." But it is one of those stages of life where, like parenting, one may not be ready for the task.

Readers get a dose of Wiggin's own



life story, with illustrations from his grandparents and the impact they had on him. The author also addresses divorce and the different cultural values that today's children are facing. Wiggin is up-to-date, comparing teen cultures over the last century with teens of the 21st century. Chapter titles include: "The Split-Family Grandparent"; "Are Today's Teens Different?"; and "How To Invest in Your Grandchildren's Future."

The writer deals with the problematic areas of grandparenting—a grandchild's experience with drugs, alcohol, divorce, premarital sex, and jail sentences. This book will also help readers answer questions, such as, Should I take a grandchild in to raise on my own?

Those leading senior-adult ministries will want to recommend *The Gift of Grandparenting* to adults who are going to be or already are grandparents.

—Reviewed by John McClendon, pastor of senior-adult ministries, Northland Cathedral (Assemblies of God), Kansas City, Missouri.

HALF TIME

Bob Buford (Zondervan Publishing House, 192 pp., paperback, \$10.99)

"Teach us to number our days," prayed the Psalmist, "that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). The sensed need that inspired the Psalmist may be the same that motivated Bob Buford to write this provocative book. Buford challenges readers to seriously evaluate the direction of their lives.

Using the metaphor of any sport that divides a game into two segments, Buford divides life. The first half includes the years of accumulation of knowledge, experience, and wealth—indicators our culture uses to measure success. At the point we question the value and meaning of our perceived success, we begin the transition into the second half of life—the pursuit of significance.



Buford explains: "Much of our first-half misery can be traced back to a preoccupation with self. In the second half, you break free from yourself.... The first-half self winds inward.... The second-half self winds outward, unraveling itself from the paralysis of a tightly wound spring."

Buford draws deeply from life experiences and biblical illustrations to validate his theories. This book would be useful to anyone personally questioning the purpose and meaning of life and as a valuable counseling tool to recommend for someone with similar needs.

—Reviewed by Derald Musgrove, former Senior Adult Ministries director, Springfield, Missouri.

GOD'S PASSION FOR HIS GLORY

John Piper (Crossway, 251 pp., hardback, \$17.99)

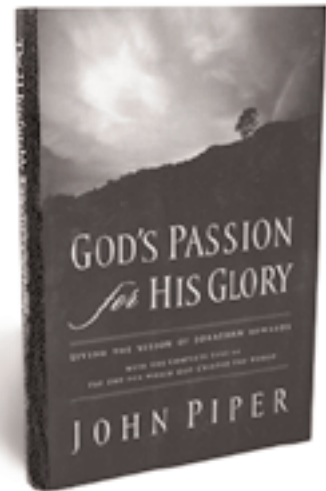
John Piper has opened a door to truth blurred and obscured by our own earthiness. He has set before us a perspective well worth the deepest contemplation by every minister of the gospel.

Piper, himself enamored with the writings of Jonathan Edwards, in particular *The End for Which God Created the World*, has spent years endeavoring to grasp the profound truths set forth by

Edwards. And this is what this book is about—the ultimate end toward which, in the divine mind, all is aimed.

Piper shows we have so much of man and so little of God. He insightfully says, "The sickness that needs healing is the main hindrance to the remedy." Speaking of the American church, he states that the precariousness of life and the weariness with successful superficiality will make the voice of Jonathan Edwards more compelling than it has been for centuries.

The early part of the book is a commentary on Edwards' work and views, while the later part is the actual book by



Edwards, footnoted with comments and insights by Piper.

Everyone who reads this book with an open heart and mind will gain an enhanced understanding of the ultimate end upon which his or her life and ministry should be focused.

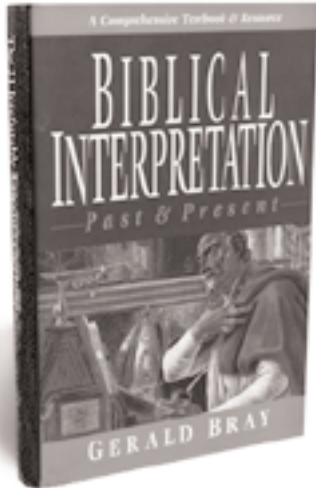
—Reviewed by R.L. Brandt, former executive presbyter for the northwest region of the Assemblies of God, Billings, Montana.

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION: PAST & PRESENT

Gerald Bray (InterVarsity, 240 pp., paperback, \$29.99)



book reviews



The need to assess the history of interpretation has never been as pressing. This book is an evangelical response to this need and builds on the conviction that “the Christian Bible belongs to the church, which is the primary place where it is read and used.” Sound interpretation should flow from Christians who honor the gospel and recognize that Christianity itself bears the imprint of interpretation’s history.

The book’s three parts cover periods or schools of interpretation. Each has five chapters and begins with a helpful summary of its contents and issues. There is an outline of the key facts of the period and a résumé of important writers. The chapters discuss the main issues of that period followed by a treatment of specific methods. Each closes with a case study of a notable passage or biblical book. At this point the reader can witness the important consequences of the debate.

The final section is particularly relevant. It traces modern trends that are of interest to theological conservatives who respect the authority of the Bible and seek to give it voice.

Bray’s book is well-researched and a quality resource.

—Reviewed by Robert Stallman, associate

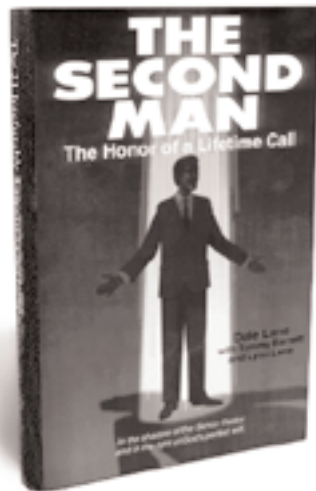
professor of Bible and Hebrew, Northwest College of the Assemblies of God, Kirkland, Washington.

THE SECOND MAN—THE HONOR OF A LIFETIME CALL

Dale Lane with Tommy Barnett and Lynn Lane (D&L Press, Inc., 184 pp., paperback, \$12)

Few books are addressed to the associate pastor, the No. 2 person in the church. Who better able to speak to this topic than the person who has served as associate pastor to Pastor Tommy Barnett since 1972.

The author validates the role of the



associate pastor and suggests that God has given a lifetime calling to some as the role of a subordinate. The authors point out that effectiveness and opportunity can be lost when an associate pastor uses this position only as a stepping stone, and failing to realize his or her full potential as an associate by always looking toward a future position as senior pastor.

The Second Man offers practical insight on staff relationships, leadership principles, failures, loyalty, vision, family life, balance, and integrity. I enjoyed Pastor Lane’s handling of the issue of

mobilizing and motivating the church toward outreach and the role the entire staff has working toward this purpose for the church’s existence.

When the pastor and associate are called to their respective positions, there is no limit to what God can do through the church.

—Reviewed by Donna L. Barrett, associate pastor at Bethel Temple, Parma, Ohio.

THE SEXUAL MAN: MASCULINITY WITHOUT GUILT

Archibald Hart (Word, 222 pp., paperback, \$12.99)

Christian men are confused about their sexuality, extremely secretive about inner sexual feelings, and rarely talk about their sexuality. The current surge in reports of sexual abuse, sexual harassment, and false memories of sexual abuse have increased sexual self-consciousness.

Archibald Hart surveyed 600 men who were typically married, fathers, church-going, God-fearing, decent, hardworking, honest, men—men committed to living a moral, Christian life. He has dared to be honest, frank, and forthright in proposing a view of what it means to be male, sexual, and normal.

Hart discusses misuses of sex, differences in male/female sexuality, male



sexual fantasy, what men want from their sexual relationships, managing sexuality in the workplace, overcoming sexual attraction to another woman, controlling lust, the effects of pornography, and steps to break addiction to pornography.

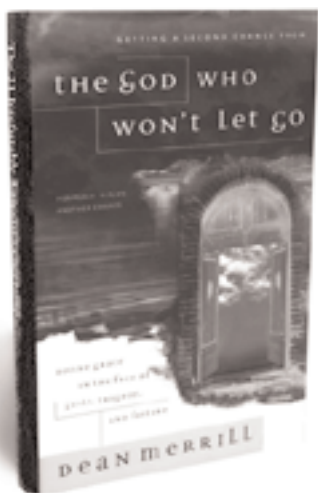
Hart presents a conservative, biblical view of male sexuality without adding to the sense of guilt Christian men often experience. This book is a valuable resource for both men and women and for parents of teenage boys. I recommend it as a discussion book for men's study or accountability groups. Christian men need this information and will find the guidelines for developing a healthy sexuality wholesome, helpful, and hopeful.

—Reviewed by Ronald Turner,
M.A.T.S counseling services coordinator,
EMERGE Ministries, Akron, Ohio.

THE GOD WHO WON'T LET GO

Dean Merrill (Zondervan, 153 pp., paperback, \$10.99)

In this book, the author explores the powerful truth of a God who gives second chances. By weaving true-life



illustrations with scriptural teaching, Merrill leads the reader through the steps involved in rebuilding a broken life

following the heartbreak that comes with sin. The underlying truth that “God is in the restoration business” comes through loud and clear in every chapter.

Valuable insights are offered regarding the stages involved in building anew. The author offers hope as he explores how facing personal failure and confessing sin open the doors to a bright future. This book brings a needed message to hurting people, reminding them that God desires to “restore the years that the locust hath eaten.”

Particularly helpful are the personal reflection questions. These cover aspects involved in the rebuilding process, such as examining one's concept of God, dealing with painful memories, and being used of God once again. Pastors will find this a useful tool and may want to have copies to give individuals devastated by personal failure in their lives.

—Reviewed by Clarence W. St. John,
superintendent of the Minnesota District,
Minneapolis, Minnesota.

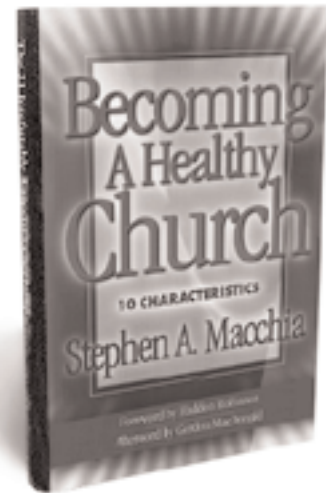
BECOMING A HEALTHY CHURCH

Stephen A. Macchia (Baker Book House, 239 pp., hardback, \$16.99)

Vision New England is the largest renewal association in the country. Founded in 1987, this cutting-edge ministry has grown to embrace nearly 4,000 congregations from 6 New England states representing 80 denominations. The staff includes 35 specialists who serve this large body of churches by providing healthy church philosophy and leadership development in a contemporary networking environment.

The reader takes a “printed page” tour of some of the pace-setting churches in the Northeast in a quest to discover the significant characteristics common in healthy churches. Dynamic pastors are introduced, leadership styles explored, programmatic

strategies evaluated, strategic planning models advanced, and the heart of healthy churches laid bare. The journey is inspiring, convicting, and thought-provoking. You will be glad you came along for the ride.



Each year 10,000 delegates representing member churches converge for 3 days of worship, celebration, study, and information. The conference, rich in resources, becomes the inspirational and motivational energy that propels Vision New England to lead the way in church renewal there and across the nation.

This is the environment in which Stephen A. Macchia discovered the 10 characteristics of healthy churches. These characteristics now become a diagnostic tool for every church in America that makes “health” a priority.

—Reviewed by Richard L. Dresselhaus,
D.Min., First Assembly of God,
San Diego, California.

A SERVICE

Enrichment reviews books we feel our readers would like to know about. These books are not always in accord with our point of view, and the reviews do not constitute a recommendation of the books. As a service to readers the Gospel Publishing House will supply any of these books, but books cannot be returned for credit.



news & resources

MISSIONETTES 2001 COINS FOR KIDS—SPANISH TRANSLATION

The 2001 Coins for Kids project can still benefit from your offerings. All funds received by December 31, 2001, will go toward the Spanish translation of Missionettes curriculum. The Hispanic population in the U.S. is the fastest-growing and largest minority in our country. Help reach thousands of young Hispanic girls with Missionettes by giving to Coins for Kids. Please send offerings to: Coins for Kids, National Missionettes Office, 1445 N. Boonville Ave., Springfield, MO 65802-1984.

NEW PRODUCTS TO BUILD YOUR MISSIONETTES MINISTRY

Three new units are now available for Daisies Club. Everything your sponsors need to teach Daisies about Believing (basic Christian doctrine), Loving, and Respecting is included in this packet. Other products include a Missionettes promotional video to encourage involvement of girls and leaders and a CD containing all theme songs—in

English and Spanish. Call 1-800-641-4310 for ordering information. Or check the official Missionettes Web site at www.missionettes.ag.org for more new products.

CHURCH PLANTING DAY, FEB. 10

The Home Missions Church Planting Department is working to change how pastors and congregations view church planting. The department's goal is to make every church plant a success.

"Planting a church needs to be viewed as a natural part of being a church," says Paul Drost, director of the Church Planting Department. "Just like having a child adds to the richness and blessing in a family, there's a natural excitement that comes from planting a church."

Drost is trying to ensure that every church plant is successful through a proven four-part process. "We are working with districts to provide a complete program for church planters," says Drost. "This program assesses workers' strengths and gifts, trains workers in specialized BootCamps, coaches workers

by providing planters with experienced church planting-coaches/mentors, and then assists churches in reproducing churches."

This is a vital change for the Assemblies of God. In the last decade, 50 percent of new church plants failed. "Helping leadership catch the vision, helping congregations get excited about 'birthing' a new work, and providing the training needed to succeed is what the Church Planting Department is all about," Drost says.

But all the excitement and training is meaningless if God isn't involved. "We need God's continued blessing," says Drost. "Feb. 10, 2002, is Church Planting Sunday. Please remember this vital ministry in your prayers and support."

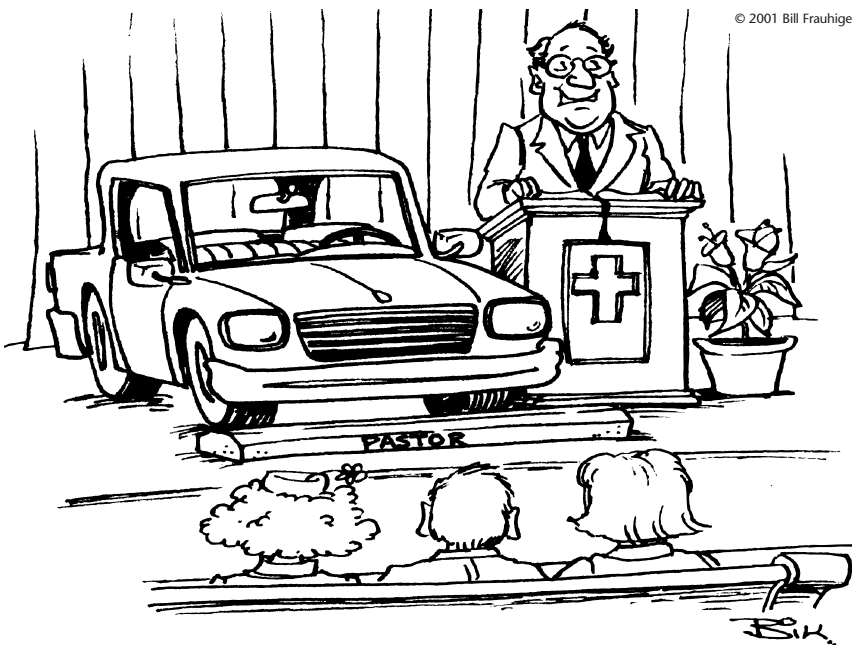
If you're interested in learning more about the Church Planting Department or about church-planting BootCamps, call 417-862-2781, ext. 3252, or E-mail: churchplanting@ag.org.

NATIONAL TEEN CHALLENGE DAY, DEC. 2

Did you know there is a government program that forces drug addicts to either go to church or be sent to prison? It's true. It's called the U.S. court system. And when the court system has access and the center has room, drug addicts and alcohol abusers are given a choice: prison or a Teen Challenge center.

The Teen Challenge ministry is one of the greatest success stories of the 20th century. At least 7 out of every 10 men and women who enter Teen Challenge overcome drug and alcohol addiction through Christ.

At Teen Challenge, those with life-controlling problems are introduced to the Bible and spend hours studying God's Word, attending chapel, and going through the life-changing recovery program. Teen Challenge helps



Pastor Cliff was fed up with people taking his parking space.

turn criminals into Christians.

But now it's your turn to help turn lives around by partnering with Teen Challenge. Sunday, Dec. 2, 2001, is National Teen Challenge Day. The prayer and financial needs of Teen Challenge are great—and as we enter the 21st century, expansion is needed at every level. We ask that, on Dec. 2, you pray for Teen Challenge and challenge your congregation to become regular prayer and financial supporters of this remarkable ministry.

You can learn more about Teen Challenge by calling 417-862-6969 or contacting Teen Challenge International, USA, at: tcusa@teenchallengeusa.com.

HIGHLANDS-HILLCREST 2002 CALENDAR NOW AVAILABLE

The 2002 Highlands-Hillcrest "Celebrating America's Children" calendar is now available. The 2002 calendar is in full color, with more pages and features. You and your congregation will enjoy this calendar every day of the year.

To receive free calendars for you and your church families, call 417-862-2781, ext. 2182, or E-mail us at: benevolences@ag.org. Visit our Web site at: benevolences.ag.org

NEW HIGHLANDS PRO-LIFE LITERATURE AVAILABLE

A new hard-hitting pro-life, anti-abortion brochure is available for pastors and others to give pregnant women contemplating abortion.

This brochure, plus a new Baby Bootie Club brochure, and the new 113-page *The Best of the Baby Bootie Club Ideas* book, is available as you present the Highlands Child Placement Services ministry in your church on Baby Bootie Club Day, Feb. 17 or anytime throughout the year.

To order this free material, call the Benevolences Department at 1-417-862-2781, ext. 2182, or E-mail us at: benevolences@ag.org

LIGHT FOR THE LOST WEB SITE

The updated and improved Light for the Lost Web site is now online. Visit

www.lftl.ag.org to find out important LFTL information, such as banquet locations and district tours. Download a LFTL logo for advertising in your church bulletin from our Promotion Tools page. Councilmen can even make contributions online through our secure connection.

Other site information includes up-to-date convention registration information, helpful hints on how to promote LFTL in your church, and literature testimonies from around the world.

2002 LIGHT FOR THE LOST CONVENTION

If you want your church to have a passion for the lost, it starts with you. Come join Light for the Lost for our national convention as we ignite our passion for those who need Jesus. Councilmen from across the country and missionaries from around the world will meet in Springfield, Mo., April 26, 27, 2002. Speakers will renew your vision for the lost as they share the miracle of God's love working through their lives. It's not too early to make plans. If you want to be a part of this exciting time of worship and fellowship, watch our Web site at www.lftl.ag.org for more updates about speakers, activities, and online registration, or call us at 1-800-988-0292.

AGTS AWARDS FIRST DOCTORAL DEGREES

The 28th annual commencement of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary marked the first year a doctor of ministry degree was awarded by an Assemblies of God institution worldwide. The ceremony was held June 8, 2001, in the Evangel University chapel. Thomas E. Trask, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, delivered the keynote address.

One hundred degrees, including doctor of ministry, master of divinity, and master of arts degrees were awarded at the AGTS commencement to graduates from 28 states and 8 foreign countries. AGTS alumni currently serve in all 50 states and 125 countries.

Highlights of this year's graduation activities included a public symposium that featured the D.Min. graduates on June 7, 2001, in the AGTS chapel. The D.Min. in Pentecostal Leadership is a professional, in-service degree program designed to shape leaders who will change the world in the power of the Spirit. One phase of the program is the writing of a doctoral project embodying field research from the participant's own ministry context. The symposium was an opportunity for each graduate to present a brief report of this important research, followed by a reflective response.

PENTECOSTAL EVANGEL PUBLISHES 64-PAGE VISITORS EDITION

History was made during late summer when the *Pentecostal Evangel* produced its largest issue ever—a 64-page Visitors Edition. The issue highlights more than two dozen national ministries and departments within the Assemblies of God.

Also in the edition are a welcome from General Superintendent Thomas E. Trask, what to expect in an Assemblies of God church, the Fellowship's statements of faith, and background and statistical information. The previous Visitors Edition had a distribution of 350,000 copies before it sold out.

Subscribing churches and individuals received the issue as their Sept. 23, 2001, edition. A large overrun was printed without a cover date, allowing churches to purchase additional copies for use in visitor packets, new member classes, and community outreaches.

This special edition is available for 35 cents per copy, when a minimum quantity of 50 is ordered. Orders for the new Visitors Edition can be placed by calling GPH Customer Services at 1-800-641-4310.

PE BOOKS RELEASE ON HOLY SPIRIT WELL RECEIVED

Within weeks of its release last May, *Questions and Answers about the Holy Spirit* was living up to *Pentecostal Evangel* managing editor Ken Horn's expectation as the "most exciting book project yet" published by Pentecostal Evangel Books. Before the month was out, several



news & resources

hundred copies of *Questions and Answers* had been sold.

The book's 22 chapters are divided into 3 sections: The Holy Spirit in History, The Holy Spirit in God's Word, and The Holy Spirit in the Christian's Life. *Questions and Answers* can be used for small group studies, Sunday school classes, or personal devotions.

Its \$6.99 price makes the book affordable enough for churches to stock as a resource tool. *Questions and Answers* can be ordered by calling 1-800-641-4310 and requesting product #02-3032.

The initial press runs of the first two releases from PE Books, *Strategies for Victorious Christian Living* and *Family: How To Have a Healthy Christian Home*, are exhausted. PE Books is an imprint of Gospel Publishing House.

MORE THAN \$500,000 DONATED TO KEY BEARERS SINCE 1996

Donations received last April pushed the cumulative amount given to the Light for the Lost Key Bearers program past \$500,000. The outreach was started

in 1996 to supply free copies of the *Pentecostal Evangel* to the incarcerated throughout the United States.

Nearly \$52,000 was provided for the ministry during its initial year. More than \$128,500 was received in 2000, providing approximately 600,000 copies of the *Pentecostal Evangel* and Spanish-language *Evangelio Pentecostal* to more than 500 prisons and jails. Thanks to Key Bearers, an estimated 2.5 million *Evangelos* were distributed from early 1996 through June 2001.

Every dollar donated to Key Bearers sponsors at least four copies of the publications. Several inmates typically share a single copy. Churches and individuals needing more information or desiring to become Key Bearers can visit the *Pentecostal Evangel* Web site at pe.ag.org or contact Light for the Lost at 1-800-988-0292.

EVANGELIO PENTECOSTAL PAID CIRCULATION SURPASSES 10,000

By mid-spring, paid circulation for *Evangelio Pentecostal* had climbed past

10,000. Hundreds of churches in the United States and several other countries currently provide the quarterly Spanish version of the *Pentecostal Evangel* to their members.

The rise in *Evangelio Pentecostal's* circulation from zero to nearly 10,500 occurred in less than 18 months, following the introduction of paid bundle and individual subscriptions in early 2000. Nearly two-thirds of the churches subscribing to *Evangelio Pentecostal* also provide the weekly *Pentecostal Evangel* to their adherents.

For just 25 cents per copy, a church or ministry within the United States can receive a bundle of 25 or more copies. A minimum bundle subscription of 25 copies to a U.S. address annually costs \$25. International bundle subscriptions of 25 or more copies are 50 cents per copy.

U.S.-based churches not receiving *Evangelio Pentecostal* are invited to enjoy a trial bundle of 25 free copies by calling *Pentecostal Evangel* promotions coordinator Ron Kopczick at (417) 862-2781, ext. 4107, or by E-mailing rkopczick@ag.org. The trial offer is available until July 31, 2002.

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY HELPS AVAILABLE

The Senior Adult Ministries office has a variety of materials to assist those interested in beginning or maintaining a senior adult ministry.

The following resources are available free of charge from the SAM office:

Starter packets are for leaders and churches interested in beginning ministry to seniors. They contain valuable information needed at the inception of a senior adult ministry. Topics covered include: Starting Senior Adult Ministry, Choosing a Form of Organization, Senior Adult Ministry Survey, Names of Senior Adult Ministry Groups, Working

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Ideas for Senior Adult Ministries, 100 Ideas for Ministry with Seniors, along with copies of *PrimeLine* and a sign-up sheet for your group.

Primeline is a four-color, four-page newsletter for those over age 50. It contains articles on ministry, health, finances, humor, educational opportunities, practical living, and more. This is a free subscription.

To receive starter packets and/or *PrimeLine*, send your name and address to: Senior Adult Ministries, Assemblies of God, 1445 N. Boonville Avenue, Springfield, MO 65802-1894, or E-mail: SAM@ag.org.

SAM MATERIALS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE THROUGH GPH

Two senior adult resources available through Gospel Publishing House are the *Senior Adult Ministries Manual* and *Proven Program Plans*. These can be ordered by calling 800-641-4310.

Senior Adult Ministries Manual is a handy three-ring binder that contains all the information needed to help you prepare, organize, develop, and administer senior-adult ministries. It also comes with a multitude of programs,

ideas, and planning helps to assist you in implementing your program. Order item #740-001, \$17.95.

Proven Program Plans features a full year's supply of monthly programs seniors will enjoy. Each program plan has a theme, a suggested menu, decoration ideas, and an inspirational aspect. The book also includes helps on planning and serving a meal, starting a prayer chain, and other useful insights. Paperback. Item #740-101, \$9.95.

SAM WEB SITE

Visit the Senior Adult Ministries Web site: www.sam.ag.org. The site includes information about *Primeline*, tips on health, finances, ministry, and practical living related to senior adults. It also has links to other Web sites of interest to seniors and to those who lead senior-adult ministries.

PARACLETE AVAILABLE ON CD-ROM

All issues of the now out-of-print *Paraclete* from 1967-95 are available on CD-ROM. *Paraclete* was a journal that focused on the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. *Paraclete* on CD is an excellent

resource for researching Pentecostal themes and issues. Articles written by top Pentecostal scholars make *Paraclete* an indispensable source of sermon and Bible study material. The articles on this CD are in PDF files and require Acrobat Reader software that can be downloaded for free from the Internet. One of the features of this CD is that a search for words or phrases searches all issues of *Paraclete*. This CD is both PC and Macintosh compatible.

To order the *Paraclete* CD, call 1-800-641-4310 and ask for item #751-300. The cost of the CD is \$20, postage included inside the U.S. See ad on pages 33, 132.

ENRICHMENT JOURNAL SUBJECT/ AUTHOR INDEX AVAILABLE ONLINE

An index of all *Enrichment* journal articles from 1995 through Fall 2001 is available on the *Enrichment* journal's Web site: www.enrichmentjournal.ag.org. This index is in PDF format and requires Acrobat Reader software that can be downloaded from the Internet for free. This index can be downloaded to your computer's hard drive or printed and placed in a notebook for future use. **e**

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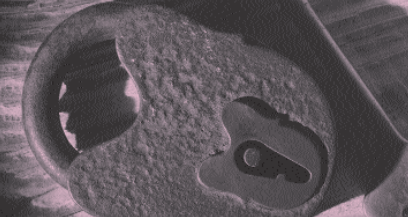
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in closing

BY STEPHEN SPARKS

Have You Ever Missed a Great Opportunity?

Consider these:

- An irate banker demanded that Alexander Graham Bell remove “that toy” from his office. That toy was the telephone.
- A Hollywood producer scrawled a curt rejection note on the manuscript that became *Gone With the Wind*.
- Henry Ford’s largest original investor sold all of his stock in 1906.
- Roebuck sold out to Sears for \$25,000 in 1895.
- Michael Jordan was cut from the basketball team during his sophomore year in high school.

Someone once said: “Of all sad words of tongue and pen, the saddest are these, it might have been.”

We are at the beginning of the age wave. There are more senior adults than any other population segment in America today. The numbers will continue to increase. While addressing a conference of senior adults, Charles Swindoll said: “There are really only two kinds of people. Those who are 55 and older, and those who will be 55 and older.” He is right.

The age wave deserves our attention. Two very important questions demand answers. How is your church responding to this explosion of senior adults? What is your church doing to reach and minister to today’s seniors? The millions of people represented by the age wave are waiting for someone to reach out and touch them for eternity. We

cannot miss this opportunity.

Solomon wrote: “To every thing there is a season” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The NIV translates this verse: “There is a time for everything.”

Being born and raised in New England has given me an appreciation for the seasons of the year. I enjoy the uniqueness of each one. There is a similarity between the seasons of the year and the seasons of our lives. If we are blessed with many years of health and life, we will experience spring, summer, fall, and winter—the senior adult years.

Winter is a season to reflect on how good God has been and to remember His faithfulness. Many senior adults are living testimonies of His blessings. Thanksgiving is a way of life. Lead your seniors in times of thanksgiving. Give them opportunity to tell their stories of God’s faithfulness.

Winter is also a time for senior adults to reevaluate their lives and take inventory of the God-given gifts. There’s more to this season than simply slowing down, taking it easy, letting someone else do the work, and waiting for the Social Security check. The church needs to look for ways to redeem the senior adults’ ministry gifts.

Senior adults are a reservoir of untapped resources. Let them know there are opportunities of ministry waiting for them. Many older adults are ready to present to their church the gifts they possess. Match senior adults with



ministries that are available in the church and community. Remind them that the call of God is for a lifetime, not just until retirement.

As the director of Senior Adult Ministries, I observe a stirring among our older adults who want to be actively involved in their churches. Senior adults represent a field of ministry gifts ready for harvest. They are ready to be involved in the end-time harvest.

The harvest is waiting. Jesus said: “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2).

We have the tools, the resources, and the laborers. Senior adults can be motivated to move from their comfort zones and reach out to other seniors. The challenge is for leadership to develop senior adult ministries that provide opportunities for service, fellowship, discipleship, and evangelism.

Lead your senior adults through the season of winter. They will find it a marvelous experience. Teach them to travel light, letting go of the things of this world. Help them to focus on their treasures stored in heaven and remind them that one day they will hear: “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:21). **e**

Stephen Sparks is Senior Adult Ministries director, Springfield, Missouri.

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