

“Renewing the Church through Senior Ministry”

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The Opportunity: America and the Church are aging at a rapid rate

- 10,000 people are turning 65 each day
- By 2030, there will be more older people than children/youth
- The fastest growing group are those over 85
- The average Lutheran Church member is 60 and higher

Is this really an opportunity? Dr. Charles Arn, a pioneer in Senior Ministry, writes in his book, *White unto Harvest, Evangelizing Today's Senior Adults*: “The American Church is graying, as well. This is not necessarily a bad sign, or a sign of impending doom. It is, however, a warning that the Church must consider its modus operandi. Just as American businesses are realizing that the age wave demands a retooling of their marketing strategy, American Churches must realize that the age wave demands a retooling of their ministry strategy.”

So how should the church respond? A personal ministry story.....

The facts are clear. If the church is going to renew and thrive in the future, there needs to be ministry with mature adults. But is the church ready and interested?

- **Ageism**
- **Caretaking**
- **It's all about the youth**
- **Rocking Chair Theology**

But the Church is called to disciple and evangelize middle age and aging adults. **God has provided us this asset for ministry!**

Holy Scripture says.....

- **Psalm 71:17-18** — *“O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even in my old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me; until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.”*
- **Proverbs 16:31** — *“Gray hair is a crown of glory, it is gained in a righteous life.”*
- **II Timothy 1:5** — *“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwells first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.”*

The need is there..... How are we going to respond?

1. Share this aging information with the church leadership
2. Begin to develop a Senior Adult Ministry team
3. Develop an aging ministry based on the five **S**'s of Senior Adult Ministry
 - **Spiritual** — bible studies, prayer groups, retreats, senior worship
 - **Study** — “Lunch and Learning,” speakers, educational sessions
 - **Social** — dinners, trips, travel, outings, intergenerational activities
 - **Service** — visitation ministry, tutoring, community volunteering
 - **Self** — exercise (walking), counseling, support groups
4. Get to know community resources — area agency on aging, senior centers, Department of Human Services, elder abuse agencies, personal care providers, transportation services, food banks, hospital auxiliary, wellness centers, etc.
5. Invite! Invite! Invite! “Aging” events should be open to all!

Selected Senior Ministry Resources

Books

“Catch the Age Wave” — Dr. Charles Arn

“White unto Harvest” (senior evangelism) — Dr. Charles Arn

“Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century” — Richard Gentzler

“Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century” — Dr. David Gallagher

“Aging Successfully” — Dr. David Gallagher

“Forty-Sixty” (a study for midlife adults) — Richard Gentzler and Craig Miller

“A Covenant of Aging” (bible study) — Brad Hales

Websites

www.senioradultministry.com — Training Resources and Certification

www.anderson.edu/sot/ccl/aging.html — Aging Ministry Certification