



Ministry Modules are intended for use with the Leader's Guide. Appendices and Resources referenced in modules can be found within the Guide.

Older Adult Worship Ministry



This Mission Module is provided through a Partnership with Association of Brethren Caregivers, of the Church of the Brethren, and Caregiving Ministries, a division of FamilyCare America, Inc.

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Purpose

The mission of the Older Adult Worship Ministry is to intentionally affirm the gift of aging and older adults in church life and service in the world. Today there are approximately 36 million Americans aged 65+. By 2030 that number will increase to 70 million. More than half of most church's memberships are adults 55 years of age or older. Older adults are an important and significant portion of the U.S. population and church population.

Goals and Objectives

- To raise the church's awareness of the need for intentional ministry for, by and with older adults
- To develop worship resources that assist Church families, congregations, districts and retirement communities in the establishment of older adult ministries
- To help people of all ages live their life-journey well ~ to move through the stages of life creatively, expectantly, meaningfully, and Spirit-filled ~ to age with wisdom and grace.
- To explore ways people can age with grace and filled with the Spirit.

Parameters and Limitations

This ministry does not:

- Provide physical or practical support for aging congregants.
- Offer a standardized program of spiritual development.
- Offer a substitute for church or duplication of religious sources.

This ministry does:

- Provide spiritual and emotional support for older adults
- Suggest means to develop worship services and support to honor the aging process.
- Provide resources and readings designed to promote personal spiritual reflection for the aging process.
- Offer resources and readings designed to promote congregational awareness of the aging process and opportunities to honor and celebrate older adults in worship services.



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Suggested Process for this Ministry:

The Older Adult Worship Ministry shall include all interested persons, young and old, within a congregation.

1. Educate the church as to what the Older Adult Worship Ministry is and how it can improve the inclusion of all church members of all ages.
2. Inform the congregation what can and cannot be expected from the Older Adult Worship Ministry. This Ministry is designed to offer help to people of all ages live their life-journey well ~ to move through the stages of life creatively, expectantly, meaningfully, and Spirit-filled ~ to age with wisdom and grace.
3. Survey the church for people who are willing and able to work in this ministry (see Appendix A).
4. Provide training to volunteers, informing them of the process of this ministry.
5. Implement the program with a coordinator.
6. Schedule regular meetings for volunteers to plan worship services and activities related to honoring older adults and to discuss and work out problems with the Older Adult Worship Ministry.
7. Implement program activities to promote honoring the aging process and older adults. This can include celebrating Older Adult Month (May), and other activities and worship themes through out the year to honor older adults and the aging process, and gatherings for older adults to meet and discuss spirituality in the aging process.
8. Periodically evaluate the ministry. (See Evaluation Tool, p. 19, Administrative Guide.)



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RESOURCES

Bachmann, C. Charles. Ministering to the Grief Sufferers. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964.

Geddes, Jim. The Better Half of Life: Growing Older Joyfully. Nashville: Broadman, 1987.

Hendrix, William L.. A Theology for Aging. Nashville: Broadman, 1986.

Howse, William L., and others. Achieving Wholeness Later in Life. Convention, Nashville: Convention Press, 1987.

Scherger, Carl J. Ministering to the Physically Sick. Fortress, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963.

Wimberly, Edward P. Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers. San Francisco: Jesse-Bass, 1997.

Worden, J. William. Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner. New York: Springer, 1982.



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Worship Resources- Scriptures about Aging with Grace

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

--Genesis 1:27

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.

--Deuteronomy 32:7 NIV

Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

--Job 12:12 NIV

What do you know that we do not know? What insights do you have that we do not have? The gray-haired and the aged are on our side, men even older than your father.

--Job 15:9-10 NIV

All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

--1 Peter 5:5b NIV

Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

--Leviticus 19:32

Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD.

--Psalm 25:7 NIV

If you decide for God, living a life of God-worship, it follows that you don't fuss about what's on the table at mealtimes or whether the clothes in your closet are in fashion. There is far more to your life than the food you put in your stomach, more to your outer appearance than the clothes you hang on your body. Look at the birds, free and unfettered, not tied down to a job description, careless in the care of God. And you count far more to him than birds.

Has anyone by fussing in front of the mirror ever gotten taller by so much as an inch? All this time and money wasted on fashion—do you think it makes that much difference? Instead of looking at the fashions, walk out into the fields and look at the wildflowers. They never primp or shop, but have you ever seen color and design quite like it? The ten best-dressed men and women in the country look shabby alongside them.

If God gives such attention to the appearance of wildflowers—most of which are never even seen—don't you think he'll attend to you, take pride in you, do his best for you? What I'm trying to do here is to get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting, so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way he works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how he works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all your everyday human concerns will be met.



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Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.

--Matthew 6:25-34 The Message

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

--1 Timothy 4:12

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.

--Proverbs 3: 13-18 NIV



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Worship Resources– Quotes about Aging with Grace

"A society for all ages is one that does not caricature older persons as patients and pensioners. Instead it seeks a balance between supportive dependency and investing in lifelong development."

--Kofi Annan

"How we view ourselves, how we perceive the world around us and how we interact with others can affect our overall well-being and our brains."

--Taking Control of Brain Health, AARP

"I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it."

--Charles Swindoll, *Attitude*

"You don't grow old; when you cease to grow, you are old."

--Charles Judson Herrick

"A new set of faculties seems to be coming into operation. I seem to be awakening to a larger world of wonderment-to catch little glimpses of the immensity and diversity of creation. More than at any other time in my life, I seem to be aware of the beauties of our spinning planet and the sky above. And now I have the time to enjoy them. I feel that old age sharpens our awareness."

--Delia Margaret Tighe Francis (1884-1978), written at age 91

"The Autumn of My Life," *Songs of Experience*, Ballantine Books, 1991

"From grandparents children learn to understand something about the reality of the world not only before they were born but also before their parents were born... Experience of the past gives them means of imagining the future."

--Margaret Mead

"In old age, faith seems to be the most marvelous possession anyone can have."

--Malcolm Muggeridge

"To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living."

--Henri-Frédéric Amiel

"Strength has ever to be made perfect in weakness, and old age is one of the weaknesses in which it is perfected."

--George MacDonald



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A Prayer of Thanksgiving for Older Adults

Can be prayed by the pastor or worship leader or in unison by the congregation.

God of all the seasons of life, we thank you for the older adults who live among us, reminding us of the seasons of age and experience, reminding us of the necessity of enjoying each day as your gift, and offering us perspective, courage, peace, and a vision of what it means to age with grace.

We recognize today that each of these dear brothers and sisters who live in our midst is a vital part of this family of faith, but that too seldom do we tell them of our gratitude. So we offer to them and to you our confession of that lapse and the loss we thus have sustained.

Now as we anticipate your grace, we also anticipate the grace of our ongoing journey with them. May we share with them our strength and eagerness and vision. May we learn from them dreams and wisdom and bravery. May we delight in each other. May we tell one another our own stories as they fit together into the story of your purposes and your kingdom on earth and in heaven.

May we simply hold hands with one another, creating ties that will bind us into the great communion of saints who have been, who are, and who are yet to be!

In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

*--Adapted from a prayer by Sonja Griffith
Member, Older Adult Ministry Group
Association of Brethren Caregivers*



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A CHORAL READING: BLESSING FOR AGE

Provided by The Church of the Brethren; an example of a worship activity to celebrate older adults. Churches may wish to replicate or adapt as appropriate.

Four Readers:

Reader 1: "You shall be a blessing!"

Reader 2: "In you, all the families of the earth will be blessed!"

Reader 3: God's words to Abraham

Reader 4: at age 75.

Reader 1: But I am old. How can I be a blessing?

Reader 3: My hair is no longer dark, my eyes are dim. How can I be a blessing?

Reader 4: I walk slowly and with a limp. I have to strain to hear. I like the old hymns. How can I be a blessing?

Reader 2: People become impatient with me in the grocery line. People speak to me as if I am a not-too-bright child. Their faces and their tones and their body language of disgust tell me that they surely do not think I am a blessing!

Reader 3: I am a curse. My old age is a curse.

Reader 2: Even my family sometimes thinks I am a burden.

Reader 4: I dream of the days in which I could run and work hard, play with abandon, and dance all night.

Reader 1: I dream of the time when I felt that my very youth and strength were blessings that I could strew about. I dream about the time when I could walk into a room, and my spirited presence would be a blessing by itself.

Reader 2: My dreams have grown old and faded. I can hardly call them to mind.

Reader 4: My strength is gone. My youth is done.

Reader 1: My work, now, is simply to sit and contemplate and pray.

Reader 3: My play is to laugh with my grandchildren and listen to a song.

Reader 4: How can I possibly be a blessing?

Reader 3: Or can my very age and experience and even weakness be a blessing?

Reader 2: My prayers for you, when you are too busy to pray, are my blessing to you!



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Continued

- Reader 1: My laughter with your children is my blessing to them.
- Reader 2: My stories that tell of a time of fewer things and hard work and simple pleasure are my blessing to everyone.
- Reader 3: My faith in the teeth of difficulty and need are my blessing to the reign of God.
- Reader 4: My ability to still provide gooseberry pies and sugar cookies and really good porcupine balls (substitute any of the church's favorite foods) is my blessing to fellowship and nurture.
- Reader 3: My long view of friendship and enemies and what is important in relationships is my blessing to peace.
- Reader 1: My closeness to eternity and the dignity with which I prepare for my new life is my blessing of hope.
- Reader 2: My nearness to my God and my awareness that my body will join the earth while my spirit is set free is my blessing of eternal joy.
- Reader 4: My willingness to tell my truth, regardless of what you think of it, is my blessing for courage.
- Reader 2: What I see with the eyes of my heart is that everyone needs love, wants love, and despite how each one tries to get it, all are loved by god. And that is my loving blessing to generations yet unborn.
- Reader 1: My wrinkled hands would so like to rest on your heads and my weak arms would so like to wrap themselves around you as I bless you!
- Reader 4: But perhaps you see beyond my age and experience and weakness to the blessing that it has been to live and now to return to the creator of life.
- Reader 3: Perhaps you will allow me to be a blessing and give a blessing, as Abraham did, in his old age.
- All: We bless you, now and forever! Amen

--Sonja Griffith

Member, Older Adult Ministry Group

Association of Brethren Caregivers



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Example of Special Prayers,

May be placed within bulletin for Older Adult Month (May)

To be prayed in unison by the congregation:

God of all the seasons of life, we thank you for the older adults who live among us, reminding us of the seasons of age and experience, reminding us of the necessity of enjoying each day as your gift, and offering us perspective, courage, peace, and a vision of what it means to age with grace.

We recognize today that each of these dear brothers and sisters who live in our midst is a vital part of this family of faith, but that too seldom do we tell them of our gratitude. So we offer to them and to you our confession of that lapse and the loss we thus have sustained.

Now as we anticipate your grace, we also anticipate the grace of our ongoing journey with them. May we share with them our strength and eagerness and vision. May we learn from them dreams and wisdom and bravery. May we delight in each other. May we tell one another our own stories as they fit together into the story of your purposes and your kingdom on earth and in heaven.

May we simply hold hands with one another, creating ties that will bind us into the great communion of saints who have been, who are, and who are yet to be! In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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Example of Exercise to Celebrate Older Adults

Ways to Affirm and Celebrate Older Adults

To help affirm and celebrate the contributions of older adults (age 50 and up), ask each Sunday school class (children through adults) to:

Brainstorm/list things they like about older adults. (i.e., they take time to listen; they always have stories to tell, they're soft, etc)

Then, thinking about one's own family, neighborhood, or church, each individual writes a response to the following questions:

What I would miss if there were no older adults around?

What would life be like if there was no one living over 50 years old?

After individual writing and reflection, share responses with a small group or the rest of the class.

Close with a prayer, or guided prayer, based on the reflections given, to give thanks for older adults in our midst.

--Mary Cline Detrick

Pastor, Daleville (Va.) Church of the Brethren



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Example of Bulletin Insert for Older Adult Month



Celebrating Older Adult Month ~ May 2008

"Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time...be filled with the Spirit."
--Selected verses from Ephesians 5 NRSV

While we often associate aging only with older adults, in fact, aging is a life-long process. From the time of our birth, we are all aging. We age physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually throughout our lifetime. As people of faith, we believe spirituality to be a fundamental aspect of healthy aging. Aging is a spiritual journey!

"To know how to grow old is the master work of wisdom and one of the most difficult chapters in the great art of living."
--Henri Frederic Amiel

One of the greatest gifts the church can offer is to help people of all ages live their life-journey well ~ to move through the stages of life creatively, expectantly, meaningfully, and Spirit-filled ~ to age with wisdom and grace.



*--Deanna Brown, Bill Cave, Sonja Griffith,
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