

Adult Ministry Plan for the Local Church
by Bob Chism, CAM

A Growing Epidemic in America: the Under-Utilization of Older Adults

Most churches lack a clear and compelling vision of what can be accomplished through older adult Christians on the plus side of midlife.

Churches invest heavily (and rightfully so) in staffing and programs for children and youth, but budgeting related to second half adult ministry is rarely a priority. Our culture has looked to younger generations to define what is cutting edge in methodology. However, in becoming enamored with the latest innovations, we often treat mature adults themselves as obsolete and irrelevant to today's culture.

Churches with paid leadership directed to senior adults are often targeting ministry to older adults while ignoring ministry through them. Many are stuck with a fun, food, and fellowship model that have done more to pacify rather than make disciples.

The ageism of our culture has unfortunately crept into the local church, stereotyping older adults with seven deadly D's: Decline, Dependency, Disease, Disability, Dementia, Dysfunction, and Death.

On average, approximately 70 percent of tithes in churches come from people over 50. Older adults are often valued for their tithes and potential gifts of estate, while discounting contributions of their wisdom, time, and talent...

Without vision people perish. This lack of vision for intentional servant hood in later adult years comes not just from blind spots in leadership but also from older adults themselves, who feel their time of serving came to an end at retirement....
Source: Adapted from Wes and Judy Wick, Co-founders of Young Enough to Serve (YES) and 2010 Christian Association Serving Adults (CASA) International Leadership Conference (ILC) Workshop Leader from the YES! website (www.yestoserve.org/)

"The challenge to senior pastors and church leaders is ministry to the whole person for the whole life". John Thill, Pastor to Mature Adults and Intergenerational Ministries at Rolling Hills Covenant Church, Rolling Hills Estates, CA and 2011 Christian Association Serving Adults (CASA) Network International Leadership Conference (ILC) Workshop Leader.

A Together Ministry Model Overview

Under the "together" model, many think older adults can be ministered to through other ministries. For example, my church home Village Church Gurnee (VCG), Gurnee, IL uses such a model.

The vision or mission statement follows:

"With God's empowering... lives will be transformed into Christ's likeness as we are inspiring and resourcing the adults of Village Church to bring them hope, help and confidence at every stage of life."

Key Areas of Life Cycle Focus

- Singles
- Engaged
- Newly-Wed
- Full Nest 1: Pre-School
- Full Nest 2: Grade School
- Full Nest 3: Middle & High School
- Empty Nest 1: 1 Retired
- Empty Nest 2: 2 Retired
- Frail Elderly

Areas of Ministry- Each area facilitated by a team

- Faith Foundation/Formations
- Man/Women-hood
- Marriage
- Family
- Work
- Community & World
- Sexual Integrity
- Stewardship
- Leadership

Level of Care

- Self Study
- Studies
- Mentors
- Pastoral
- Counselor
- Intensives

Source: Village Church of Gurnee Senior Associate Pastor-Men, Marriage, Family, Jim Young & adult team July 14, 2011 meeting.

Thirty healthy years of longevity has been added to the normal 21st century life cycle. This means many new unique uncharted social issues for the post empty nest life stage (mentoring, parental care, grand parenting, grief share, addictive behavior, military family support, wellness, finances, generosity, estate & legacy planning, finishing extremely well) which are all big issues.

"It is good to gather people of all ages together. However, there are times and places for ministering to people one on one exactly where they are", according **Boomers and Beyond** (2010) by Amy Hanson, PhD and 2009, 2010, and

2011 CASA Network ILC Keynote and/or Workshop Leader.

A Separate Ministry Model Sample Position

Second Half : implement and direct a full scale ministry for active adults by providing leadership, training, and mobilizing them in life step opportunities:

- For initial guidance, create two to three “Focus Groups” made up of eight to ten Boomers to cast vision and strategize how best to do ministry with their own age group and help bridge the “generation gap”.
- Facilitate the involvement of adults into volunteer ministry with office space and opportunities for service across the spectrum of ministries at this church.
- Provide and coordinate a wide variety of ministry opportunities and activities to encourage meaningful involvement, spiritual growth and facilitate the nurturing of relationships with others who are in similar stages of life.
- Foster intergenerational health by integrating active adults with other life stage ministries.
- Provide life stage support for issues significant to this segment of the congregation such as financial planning, health issues, aging with grace, care for aging parents, grand parenting, et al.
- Develop, implement and oversee coordinated in and outreach assimilation strategies for active adults.
- Provide training that will unleash/mobilize active adults to discover and use their gifts.
- Create partnerships with agencies/organizations outside the church that dovetail with the encore ministry focus.
- Develop budgets for the ministry consistent with current youth ministry investment.

Development: Identify, cultivate, and challenge partners; increase the level of generosity participation and ownership, through direct involvement and consistent financial giving.

- Provide necessary leadership to initiate and implement a development plan, to identify, cultivate, and challenge givers who have potential to support the ongoing mission.
- Work closely with high capacity givers to complete major gifts and major gift plans.
- Assure that gift arrangements are properly completed, and maintain ongoing commitment to givers, building generosity into their life.
- Plan and carry out special dinners, events, and stewardship training that will maximize partnership with and raise financial resources for its ministries.
- Maintain regular communication with the Pastor Team to assure effective administration and prompt response to each givers questions, concerns, and interests.

- Take executive leadership to further resource the organization's development plan; educate and support each leader with respect to their development ministry roles. Review research and develop strategies used in matching high capacity givers.
- Give overall leadership in close consultation with the Senior Pastor to all current, deferred, and capital campaign activities.
- Provide supervision, training, and resources to the Senior Pastor, aiding in Moves Management integration of identified and assigned givers and/or major givers.
- Oversee the Foundation, work with the Foundation Board to raise support for, and help provide leadership to the Foundation.
- Provide leadership to Planned Giving efforts which would include education marketing, presentations, proposals, gift arrangements, and gift closure.

Qualifications Strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ as evidenced by spiritual maturity, a close daily walk with Him, a consistent vision with area of ministry and our mission statement.

Be committed to the theological stance of the Church.

- Understanding of the ministries of the Church.
- Proven knowledge, experience and success in not for profit development.
- College degree in business, communications, marketing or related disciplines.
- Highly desirable: advanced development training or experience, older adult training, research or experience, catalytic leadership style, church member.

Working With Church Staff and Volunteer Relationships

- Report directly to the Senior Pastor.
- Develop and be responsible for departmental meetings staff and/or volunteers, as needed.
- Be informed of and function within the guidelines.

Source: “**Job Description about Older Adults**” by Amy Hanson; “**What this Baby Boomer Senior Pastor learned at a CASA**” by Joe Boerman, Senior Pastor, Immanuel Church, Gurnee, IL; EFCA Encore Sample Job Description Resources; networking with Hal Lentz, Lead Pastor of Development and New Horizons, Whittier Area Community Church, Whittier, CA and Dr Charles Arn, Institute for American Church Growth, Monrovia, CA and 2009 and 2011 CASA Network ILC Keynote and/or Workshop Leader.

No matter the ministry model (together or separate), the following methods are essential parts in the development process:

- Volunteerism
- Relationship and Small Group Nurturing
- Evangelism

- Resource Directory

Volunteerism



More than half of adults 55 and over are interested in volunteering. The challenge is that many of them are having difficulty finding the right way to share their skills and experience.

Volunteer recruitment, development, & placement are strong decade change ideas that require sustainable volunteer management that starts with having in place the culture, strategy, tactics, attitudes, principles, and procedures. This is not easy given those with discretionary time are a diverse age segment composed of multiple generations.

Relationship and Small Group Nurturing
Relationships are the glue to meaningful friendships:

- Generation
- Marital Status
- Family Status
- Interests/Recreation
- Need
- Concerns/Problems
- Ethnic/Culture

Nine older adult “touch points” can be opportunities for and sharing the Bible. See page 66 White Unto Harvest (2003) by Charles Arn. Also, “life changes ”provide a window of opportunity, i.e. receptivity. See Stress Scale, page 120:

- Major Physical Problem

- Realizing a Personal Lack of Dreams/Purpose
- Retirement

Small group benefits include

- Community (sense of worth, belonging, loving, being loved)
- Personal Growth (spiritual, emotional, relational, intellectual)
- Support (in times of need and change)

For Nurturing Ideas see **The Graying of the Church** (2004) by Richard H Gentzler, Jr and 2011 CASA Network Keynote Speaker.

Evangelism

Intentional encore generation evangelism is one of the greatest areas for church growth for the next three decades based on trend analysis. “The large Boomer generation will become more receptive to the gospel.we are seeing indications that the Boomers may actually become more interested in spiritual matters in general and Christianity specificallyThe Baby Boomers have tried it all and found no joy. They may likely turn to the hope of the gospel” according to **LifeWay Christian Resources**.

Charles Arn in his book, **White unto Harvest** (2003), lists several researched reasons why older adults are both worthy and receptive to evangelism:

- Closer to eternity
- Receptive (touch points, life changes, and sweet spots)
- Care about others
- More discretionary time
- Geographical stable
- Give more money to their Church

Pastor Rick Warren in his book, **The Purpose Driven Church** (1999), explains, “The Bible determines our message, but our target determines when, where, and how we communicate.

Relationships (friends and relatives) account for 75-90% of how individuals come to faith/church membership.

Multi reflects multiple parts and inter reflects the parts connected. The Body of Christ is an interdependent body. The family of God is an intergenerational family. And our God is an intergenerational God. Today, most Churches are multigenerational rather than intergenerational

Period	Generation
Before 1946	Builder (includes the G I and Silent)
1946-64	Boomers
1965-1981	Busters or X
1982-2000	Bridger, Millennial or Y

After 2000 Z

We live in an age segregated society. Mobility has separated many families. The programming in many Churches is age specific.

One approach to breaking down age silos is to educate the body on each generation by class or small groups reviewing one or more of the following books:

- Baby Boomers and Beyond (2010), Amy Hanson
- Finishing Life Strong (2011) John Heide
- Heartbeat! (2011), Charles Arn
- One Church Four Generations (2003), Gary L McIntosh

Understanding all generations is an effective way to break down barriers, create unity, share faith, and demonstrate the value of each generation.

Resource Directory

The first step in developing a volunteerism, relationship, and small group nurturing, and evangelism model is to build a resource directory of slideshow/videos, articles, books, and authoritative individuals and organizations.

Adult Ministry Plan for the Local Church (Abridge Version)
The Center for Christian Leadership of Anderson University School of Theology (Church of God/Anderson, IN) provides an online Aging Ministries certificate (50 CEU) program. Anderson University is a member of the CASA Network Ministry Alliance. For a free copy which includes a resource directory email Director John H Aukerman: jhaukerman@anderson.edu.