

Ministry to "Over 55" Adults

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INTRODUCTION

- The senior years are either coming, or are already here, for everyone – including you! How will we, or are we, to face them?
- Your presenters & our backgrounds

Ron  Ross 

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I. The Shape of "Seniors & Boomers" Today (Some facts about)



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Seniors in Canada

- Seniors (those 65 and older) are the fastest growing age group
- Approximately 5 million seniors according to 2011 census
- That number is expected to double in the next 20 years
- By 2050, it is estimated 1 out of every 4 Canadians will be 65 or older

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Seniors Globally

- Canada's population remains one of the youngest among G8
- Japan, currently the world's oldest country, has more than 20% of its population over 65
- Projections show that within 25 years that number will have doubled to 40%
- It is estimated that by the year 2020, there will be approximately 1 billion people globally over 60

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Centenarians in Canada

- According to the 2011 census, there are approximately 6,000 people aged 100 or older, which is a 25% increase from 2006
- This is the second-fastest growing age group in Canada
- Projections show that by 2031, there could be more than 17,000 and by 2061, close to 80,000 centenarians

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Baby Boomers in Canada

- Those born between 1946 to 1965
- More than 8 million babies were born in those 20 years
- According to the 2011 census, there are 9.6 million Boomers currently living in Canada
- Besides those born here during those years, this generation has benefited from immigration since the end of the 1980s
- The first Baby Boomers started turning 65 in 2011. More than 1,000 officially become seniors each and every day... a trend that will continue for the next 18 years

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What Defines Baby Boomers?

- Demographically, they form the single largest generational cohort
- Philosophically, they have redefined North American culture
- Sociologically, they connect through a unique generational identity bordered by dramatic historical events
- Economically, they are the wealthiest generation in North American history
- Spiritually, they seek authenticity, experience and personal truth

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What Defines Baby Boomers?

- They are longing for relationships and a sense of community
- They just want to have some FUN!
- Ministry can involve developing opportunities through which Boomers can make new friends, share life and party!
- "Who am I and What am I doing here?" are pertinent questions for people in the second half of life
- They have a unique opportunity to re-examine and re-assess their lives and determine a new direction for their remaining years

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What Defines Baby Boomers?

- Significance is the new capital... It is not enough to have financial security at midlife. What they hunger for is to make a significant contribution to the world
- The church can be a gateway for increasing levels of significance in society
- This may be the time that Boomers fulfill the dreams of that Beatles' song, "They say we want a revolution, oh no, we just want to change the world..."

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Baby Boomers and the Church

- It is estimated that about one-third of Baby Boomers in North America are Christians
- That means, in Canada, there are around 6 million lost and unchurched Baby Boomers
- As this generation ages, we have but a few chances to reach them

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Baby Boomers and the Church

"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" – John 4:35 (NKJV)

Time is growing short and they are ripening quickly! The point of Jesus' words were to send workers into the harvest before it was too late.

What is your plan?

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II. Needs of Seniors & Boomers



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Needs of Boomers & Seniors

- What some primary needs of adults 55+ that you've noticed?
- Do you observe any difference between the expectations of Boomers and older adults for their "senior" years?
- What are what you would call, 'some myths about aging' commonly held in our society?
- What do you see as necessary ministries the church should be addressing for adults 55+?

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Myths of Aging (Houston & Parker)

- Myth # 1: To be old is to be sick.
- Myth # 2: You can't teach an old dog new tricks.
- Myth # 3: The horse is out of the barn.
- Myth # 4: The secret to successful aging is to choose your parent's wisely.
- Myth # 5: The lights may be on, but the voltage is low.
- Myth # 6: The elderly don't pull their own weight.

— James M. Houston & Michael Parker, *A Vision for the Aging Church: Renewing Ministry for and by Seniors* (InterVarsity Press, 2011)

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Needs of Boomers & Seniors

- What is the value of someone suffering from dementia?
- "... 'An incontinent, dependent, person suffering from late stage Alzheimer's disease provides the person's family and her church with one of life's most important lessons, an opportunity to learn how to love a person unconditionally, without any expectation of something in return.'" (32)
- The Christ-like "opportunity" . . .
 - e.g. *"Hair Pulling Time, or Lovingly Supported? Recognizing the Stress and Toll of Raising 'Special Needs' Children and Responding with Care and Encouragement"*

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Gifts Boomers & Seniors Bring . . .

- Perspective
- Maturity
- Wisdom – it's not so much about 'aging' as, 'sage-ing'!
- History – tradition – value & worth
- Mentoring younger generations
- Prayer
- Note: The undermining effect of a technological & production-oriented society!

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III. Ministry Now & Ministry to Come



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Define Your Ministry Approach

- **Senior Adult (55+) Ministry . . .**
- **Is it to be Ministry to Senior Adults**
—or—
- **Ministry by Senior Adults?**

What is your perspective?

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A Comprehensive Ministry Plan

- S.E.N.I.O.R.S. . . .
- Spirituality
- Enrichment
- Nutrition
- Intergenerational
- Outreach
- Recreation
- Service

— Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., *The Graying of the Church: A Leader's Guide to Older Adult Ministry in the United Methodist Church* (2004)

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Ministry Future . . .

- What areas must the church address in the days and years to come to show genuine care for today's and future Boomers?

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Ministry Future . . .

- Who's responsible?
- The government?
- or —
- The church?



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The Mission Statement for all Seniors

For you have been my hope, O Sovereign LORD,
my confidence since my youth
From birth I have relied on you. . . .
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 71:5-6,18)

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BOOKS & RESOURCES FOR SENIOR ADULT MINISTRY:

- Bradshaw, Ron, ed. *A Leader's Guide to Older Adult Ministry in Canada* (Surrey, BC: Generational Ministries, 2012).
- Gallagher, David P., *Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century: Step-By-Step Strategies for Reaching People Over 50* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2002).
- Gentzler, Richard H. Jr., *Aging Ministry in the 21st Century: An Inquiry Approach* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2008).
- Houston, James M. and Michael Parker, *A Vision for the Aging Church: Renewing Ministry for and by Seniors* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, InterVarsity Press, November 2011).
- Starr, A. Timothy, *Aging Joyfully* (Belleville, ON: Guardian Books, 2012).

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