

# Resources for Celebrating Older Adult Recognition Day

OLDER  
ADULT  
MINISTRY



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**The material in this resource will provide you with information on how your local congregation can celebrate Older Adult Recognition Day.**



# **Golden Gifts of the Golden Years**

## **An Anchor for the 2014 Celebration of Older Adults**

In biblical times, old age was prized and considered to be a gift granted by God to only a few as a reward for their faithfulness. Therefore, being old was a sign that a person walked very closely with God. The gift of growing old was not only a gift given to the recipient but a gift for the whole community. The presence of someone old in the community was a blessing of wisdom, experience, and spiritual presence given by God.

Today, many senior adults have lived long lives of faithfulness and are a gift to our church. They have served the church in the past and will continue to serve the church into the future by nurturing and mentoring the faith of those who follow in their footsteps.

The theme of Older Adult Recognition Day, *Golden Gifts of the Golden Years*, is chosen to recognize the value of older adults. Gold represents the most precious of metals and is valued worldwide for its beauty as well as its rarity. Gold was traditionally given to welcome kings. The Magi offered gold to Christ as a heavenly king. As a family's treasure, gold was passed down from generation to generation. It became a legacy which was lovingly added to by each person who passed it on to the next in the line of inheritance.

Older adults are the church's legacy and inheritance. The gifts of older adults are golden. These gifts have been in the making for their entire lives. Older Adult Recognition Day is an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the gifts, talents, and contributions older adults make within and beyond the local church. The day also provides congregations with the opportunity to learn more about the issues and concerns related to aging and older adulthood. While the suggested day is sometime during the month of May, it may be celebrated at any time during the church year.

We hope the following resources will be helpful as you plan your congregation's celebration of Older Adult Recognition Day.

# How should a church celebrate Older Adult Recognition Day?

The opportunities are endless so every church is encouraged to customize their own observance. Typically, celebrations are focused around:

**Worship** – Include older adults in worship leadership. Ask older adults their favorite prayers, songs, or Scripture and use those in worship. Include the frail or homebound in leadership by recording their contributions to the service.

**Study** – Compile a memory book or devotional based upon older adult entries recorded or written by youth who have interviewed them. Or hold short-term fun classes or courses of special interest to older adults.

**Service** – Design a project or special day of service to benefit an organization in your community serving older adults. This is a perfect opportunity to find a project which addresses older adult poverty in the community.

**Fellowship** – Have a special meal or other gathering for older adults and invite friends, family, and other older adults to participate. For instance, hold a talent night featuring the talents of older adults in your congregation.

## Ideas for Observing Older Adult Recognition Day

**Sponsor Families** – Assign each older person in your congregation a family sponsor for the coming year. Ask the older person to pray for members of the family by name one day a week. Have the sponsor families and older adults gather for a get-acquainted meal and to visit with each other. Have them exchange a sheet with information on significant events or days in their lives, e.g. their birthdays, anniversaries, and ask them to send cards or visit on those dates. At the end of the year, have them write notes of what they enjoyed most about each other as an appreciation.

**Spiritual Biographies** – Interview older persons with a list of starter questions so that a biography of their faith can be written for them. The use of video or audio recording is a good way to do this, but every displayed biography should be in the same format. Display a timeline of their lives with pictures on bulletin boards or monitors in the church either all together as a group at one time or feature them individually once a month. Publish a biography book at the end of the year. Make sure the older adults approve their biography before publishing it and give them each a copy. This is an easy project to assign to the children and youth or the sponsoring families.

**Favors and Gifts** – Have different Sunday school classes make small gifts to give the older adults on Older Adult Recognition Day. For instance, the children can draw

pictures to match Bible verses of encouragement or hope. Have UMW/UMM groups make banners for the celebration. Use flowers to grace the altar and have children (especially from sponsor families) present these decorations to older adults.

**Older Adult Participation** – Invite older adults, especially those who do not currently design, plan, or participate directly in worship, to lead, conduct, or plan a special Older Adult Recognition Day worship service. Invite older adults to serve as speakers, lay readers, greeters, and ushers.

**Intergenerational Service Project Events** – Develop a service project which benefits older adults or choose an existing one and invite the entire church for a special day of service. Create work teams led by older adults and assign children, teens and young adults to work with them. If no single suitable task exists, survey older adults for their favorite service projects and invite members of the congregation to sign up to participate.

**Safe Sanctuaries® Check** – Ensure there are no accessibility issues in your church facilities that might limit full participation for those with disabilities. Consider the acoustics for those with hearing impairment, and use large fonts on overheads and large-print hymnals and bulletins for those visually challenged. Look at the number of steps into buildings and handicap provisions such as special parking, wheelchair friendly restrooms and pew space for wheelchairs or walkers.

**Specialized Classes** – Invite older adults to share their hobbies and crafts with others by requesting that they teach introductory classes either as periodic (weekly or monthly) classes or a one-time demonstration class, e.g., a cooking class. This is particularly great intergenerational way of celebrating Older Adult Recognition Day.

## **Worship Planning**

### **Suggested Scripture and Sermon Starters**

**Exodus 7:7** – “Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.” ***We continue as disciples throughout our lives.***

**Psalms 71:18** – “So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come.” ***Importance of God through our whole lives.***

**Proverbs 16:31** – “Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.” ***Appreciation of those who bring the wisdom of age.***

**Isaiah 46:4** – “Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn gray I will carry you and will save.” ***God’s presence in our whole lifetime not just when we reach old age.***

**Luke 2:36-37** – “There was also a prophet, Anna... She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven year after marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and praying night and day.” ***The witness of older adults.***

**Acts 2:17** – “In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” ***Hope and ability to make a better tomorrow.***

**2 Corinthians 4:16** – “So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” ***In old age when bodies are feeble, spirits remain strong.***

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## Hymns

### ***The United Methodist Hymnal:***

<i>Great Is Thy Faithfulness</i>	UMH #140
<i>I Love To Tell the Story</i>	UMH #156
<i>Tú Has Venido a la Orilla (Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore)</i>	UMH #344
<i>Stand By Me</i>	UMH #512
<i>I Want Jesus to Walk with Me</i>	UMH #521

### ***The Faith We Sing:***

<i>I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry</i>	TFWS #2050
<i>You Are Mine</i>	TFWS #2218

### ***Worship and Song:***

<i>A Place at the Table</i>	WSM #3149
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# Litany

Leader: We gather today to give thanks for older adults.

***Children:*** They are gifts from God.

***Youth:*** We admire those who are older than we are. They have lifelong wisdom, experience, and knowledge.

***All Adults:*** We strive to also grow in wisdom, experience, and knowledge.

***Older Adults:*** We remember so many who have gone before us and who have taught us how to be faithful before God.

***Young Adults:*** We admire our older adults not just for what they do but for who they are as loving guides.

***Middle-aged Adults:*** We seek to follow in our seniors' footsteps and to become faithful like them before God.

***Children and Youth:*** We are thankful for the lessons in life older adults teach us.

***Congregation:*** We see their witness in the courage to overcome fear, the ability to see good in all people, what it means to forgive deep hurt, and the patience to wait on the Lord.

Leader: We hope to become like them one day, golden. We give thanks for the opportunity to learn from those who are the Master's teachers, those who have mastered life.

# Selected Resources

***Joy Boosters: 120 Ways to Encourage Older Adults*** by Missy Buchanan. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (2012). A powerful and practical pocket guide filled with ideas to encourage older adults on their spiritual walk.

***Parents & Grandparents as Spiritual Guides: Nurturing Children of the Promise*** Betty Shannon Cloyd. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (2000). This book explores the simple ways parents and grandparents can introduce children to the presence of God and nurture them spiritually — even through daily, routine activities as well as planned devotional times.

***Pilgrimage Into the Last Third of Life: 7 Gateways to Spiritual Growth*** by Jane Marie Thibault and Richard L. Morgan, Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (2012). This collection of Scripture-based meditations will inspire the reader to move fearlessly into the last third, looking forward to the opportunities this time of life can hold.

***Rediscovering Our Spiritual Gifts: Building Up the Body of Christ Through the Gifts of the Spirit*** by Charles V. Bryant. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (1991). This book identifies, defines, and discusses 30 spiritual gifts including giving, healing, hospitality, service, witnessing, and music.

***Remembering Your Story: A Guide to Spiritual Autobiography*** by Richard L. Morgan. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (Revised edition, 2002). Designed for small groups, this resource encourages and guides participants through 10 sessions of life review and future direction.

***10 Gospel Promises for Later Life*** by Jane Marie Thibault. Upper Room Books, Nashville (2004). This helpful resource invites readers to identify their own fears and learn to make the most of God's gift of longer life.

***Safe Sanctuaries®: The Church Responds to Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation*** by Joy Thornburg Melton. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (2012). This resource offers valuable, practical advice to help churches reduce the possibilities for abuse and exploitation of elders. Learn how your church can recognize and respond to issues of abuse, neglect, and exploitation of older adults.

***Talking With God in Old Age*** by Missy Buchanan. Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN (2010). This devotional resource sensitively addresses the worries, fears, and frustrations of older adults and extends hope, and encourages them to maintain an open dialogue with God.

## Other Resources:

***Mature Years***. Cokesbury, Nashville, TN. A large print quarterly magazine filled with articles and a Bible study based on the International Lessons. Especially written for older adults.

***New Beginnings: The Gifts of Aging (DVD)*** by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN (2005). Video looks at aging in our society and provides a glimpse at a variety of church ministries that are being enjoyed by older adults.