

Senior Moments

Celebrating the Gifts of Mature Christians

Spring 2021

The Gift of Aging

By Dr. Rich Bimler, Ambassador of Health, Hope, and Aging



Do you realize that 10,000 people turn 65 every day in the United States? Wow, that must mean that the Lord really loves older people because he's making so many of them! The challenge we have, regardless of age, is to see aging as a gift from the Lord to be celebrated rather than a burden to bear!

More and more churches are catching on that we need a "climate change" in how we view older people. I commend Trinity Lutheran Church in Mission and Shawnee, Kansas, headed by Tom Perry and the pastoral staff, in emphasizing that "healthy aging" is changing the way we think about older people! As a *Peanuts* comic strip states, "Yes, we are old and in the way, and here to stay—and there's more of us coming your way!"

So how do we "celebrate" aging? First of all, we see every day as a gift from the Lord to celebrate and share,

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WELCOME!

Welcome to the first issue of the *Senior Moments* newsletter! This publication is a joint effort of the Mission Board of the Kansas District and my congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church, in Mission and Shawnee, Kansas. It will be offered quarterly starting with this issue and will have at least four printings. Our intent is to encourage and help establish enhanced Older Adult ministry throughout the Kansas District and perhaps further in the Lutheran Church. You may ask: why an enhanced ministry for older adults?

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"Is the glass half empty ...or half full?"

By Rev. Dr. Mark R. Schulz, Senior Pastor of
Trinity Lutheran Church

We are all familiar with this proverbial question that focuses our attention on our perspective regarding a particular situation. This proverbial question is applicable to the senior population in our congregations and communities as well. Too often we view the significant number of seniors in our congregations and communities as a problem, or at best as a group we need to find a way to care for.

But what if we viewed the growing number of talented, able-bodied

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getCONNECTED

Identify a Congregation Connector

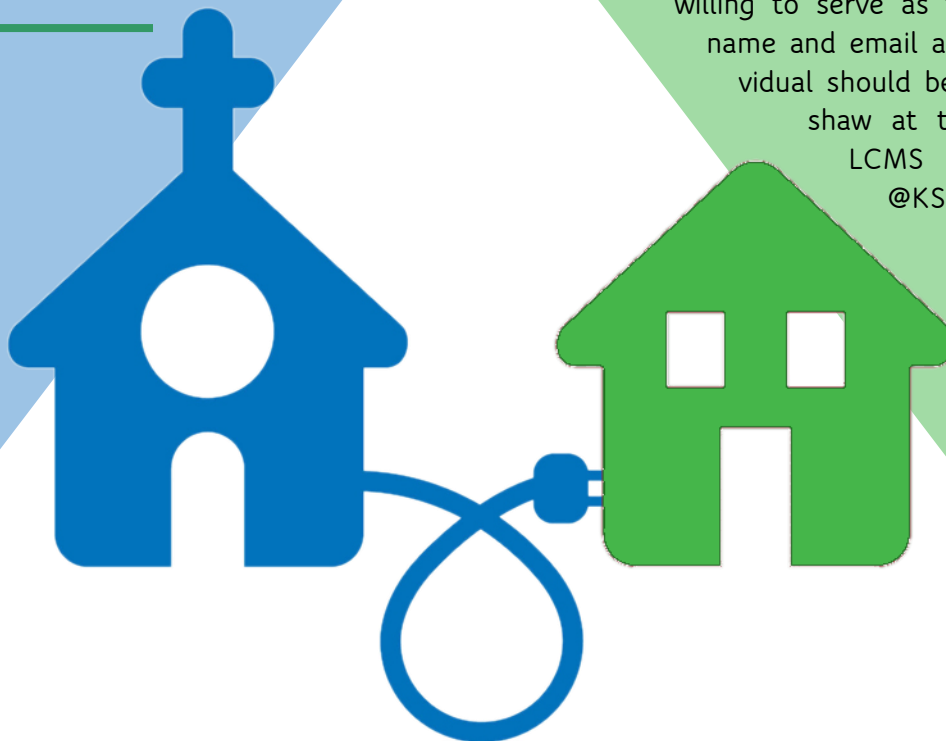
By Betty Amey, Older Adult Committee Member

Maintaining communication with the older adults in our congregations is extremely important as identified by the Older Adult Task Force. Many seniors are actively serving in God's kingdom with their many gifts. Others have needs. Our pastors have many responsibilities including serving the needs of the older adults, but a key individual in each congregation to connect with these senior adults would help in meeting these needs. The Older Adult Ministry Committee would like to identify one individual from each congregation that would be willing to assist in communicating with our seniors.

The Older Adult Ministry in the Kansas District needs the name and email address of one individual from each congregation who is willing to serve as a "Congregation Connector."

Responsibilities of a "Congregation Connector" might be to make the congregation aware of activities for seniors in the congregation or Kansas District, encourage the disbursement of this newsletter or other publications, and work with the pastor to have a personal connection with seniors.

The Older Adult Ministry in the Kansas District needs the name and email address of one individual from each congregation who is willing to serve as the connector. The name and email address of this individual should be sent to Jim Bradshaw at the Kansas District LCMS office, JBradshaw@KSLCMS.org.



Send name and email address of Congregation Connector to Jim Bradshaw: JBradshaw@KSLCMS.ORG.

Getting Started

Enhanced Older Adult Ministry

By Tom Perry, Older Adult Committee Chairman

This and the next quarterly issues of this newsletter will try to give suggestions and possible ways to consider how to enhance an existing older adult ministry or start a new one. Many of our congregations are involved in some unique and helpful activities, and many need assistance and a place to begin. A main ingredient in having an effective older adult ministry is designating staff or lay member/members responsible for the ministry. The influx of people pre-retirement age and beyond is exploding. The opportunity to fulfill our calling as God's children is at our doorstep. There is no age limit to be an active member of God's family. The things we are able to do change, but opportunities for being a source of significant influence to others remain. We need people to lead these ministries.

Some congregations have looked at three areas of focus. They are spiritual wellbeing, life issues, and health. Of these three, our congregations seem most comfortable and good at working with spiritual wellness. Many of our members have been studying the Scriptures for years and are ready to be challenged. A knowledgeable and effective teacher is of utmost importance. As regular weekly classes grow, they have the added effect of good fellowship and fraternity. Participation in these classes initiates the desire to make a significant impact upon the lives of others. This leads to service projects, charitable acts, worship assistants, homebound visitation and volunteering.

Helping older adults with "life issues" is another area in which our congregations can take a leading role. There is a great need for vocational support and reinforcing the ways a child of God approaches this stage of life. Retired persons possess a wealth of gifts which they can share with others. It could come in the form of talks about life issues such as wills, trusts, social security, housing options, etc. Many congregations have members who are experts and can be recruited for talks about these subjects.

The health of older adults is a very fluid thing. New issues pop up all the time. Workshops about how to deal with certain issues are beneficial. Talks about Alzheimer's, the benefits of movement, and disease prevention techniques are just a few. There are many doctors and health professionals eager to speak to a group at little or no cost.

The precautions we have needed to take the past year because of COVID-19 has made it difficult to implement many of these opportunities. Hopefully, we will be getting back to some sense of normalcy in a few months. Until then it is important to stay in touch with our members by phone, video conferencing, and protected visits. I would appreciate feedback of what will be most helpful to you going forward—send it to Tom@TLCMS.org. I will attempt to address them in further newsletters.

Spiritual Wellbeing

1

Life Issues

2

Health

3

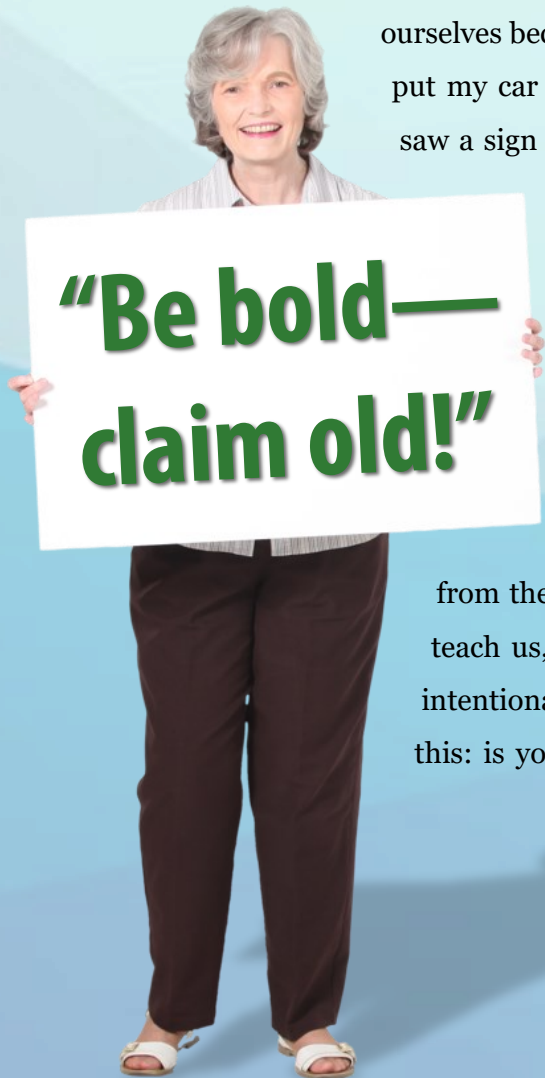
The Gift of Aging

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regardless of our age. Sure, it is a challenge to deal with our aches and pains and problems and disappointments. But the Lord has promised His presence in and through us. The Word and Sacraments provide us with His strength to accept the gift of aging—whether we are 5, 25, 55, or 105! A wise professor once said, “This is a country where it’s wonderful to be young. It must also become a country where it is wonderful to be old!”

So, people of God, especially us older ones: “Be bold—claim old!” The Lord still has plenty of opportunities for us older people. If you and I are still waking up each morning, the Lord has plenty for us to do!

Somehow, our society continues to believe that “growing older” is a negative activity, or even a disease. If that were true, we all have a terminal illness! You and I, regardless of age, can change this mindset by celebrating every day as a gift—and telling others also! We can continue to laugh at ourselves because we sure do strange and funny things, don’t we? (Now where did I put my car keys again?) Learn to laugh at yourself, before someone else does! I saw a sign the other day that said, “NO senior discounts. You have had twice as long to get the money!”



Trinity Lutheran Church and other churches in the Kansas District are becoming more and more intentional about bringing the younger and the older together, because that is how God designed living. We “olders” need the “youngers” to keep us fresh, to ask us questions, to learn from us, and to rub ministry shoulders with both the younger and the older. We “olders” need to ask for help from the “youngers” too, because they too have much to share with us and to teach us, as well as learn from us. All of us, young and old, need to be more intentional about putting people of all ages back together again. Ask yourself this: is your congregation allowing the younger and the older to rub “ministry shoulders” with each other, or are you dissecting the church by having age group worship and activities which separates rather than connects all of God’s people? Nothing wrong with having youth groups and older adult Bible studies, as long as we also have opportunities to do things together.

So where do we go from here? Let me suggest a few ideas:

The way to begin is to start!

Talk about our needs, our hopes, our gifts, together as the younger and the older. Let's rub ministry shoulders together, at home, at school, and during worship and other events.

Older adults, ask for help!

Too often we may feel like we do not want to bother people. Well, I say, "Let's bother people all we can" by asking for help with the things we are not able to do at this time in life. Remember Martin Luther who said, "When you're down and out, shout, 'Help, I'm down and out!'" (Note: this is a very loose translation from Luther!)

Start small.

Connect a couple of young people together with a couple of older people, who have common interests like music, painting, hiking, watching the Royals win(!) and watch groups increase.

Disrupt the "aging concept."

Listen to yourself and others talk about growing older and point out to folks the falsehoods, stereotypes, and untruths you hear about aging. I can see a big sign in your narthex stating, "Age Out Loud" and "Aging is God's gift to all of us!"

Healthy aging is changing the way the younger and the older feel and see the gift of aging. Let's retire the word "retirement" now, because no one retires from life this side of heaven!



So let us all, "Go ye therefore, encourAGING people of all ages to celebrate God's gift of aging!"

Dr. Rich Bimler

Ambassador of Health, Hope, and Aging (AH-HA!)

“Is the glass half empty...or half full?”

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seniors in our congregations and communities as a blessing?

What if we prayerfully designed ministry opportunities that make use of their many gifts and invite them to engage in ministry with us in sharing the love of Jesus?

Such a perspective was shared with me by one of Trinity’s deacons, Tom Perry, several years ago. Tom passionately shared his “half-full” vision for ministry with seniors in our congregation and community. My response was, “Why not? Why not view the increasing number of seniors as a gift from God to expand ministry to other seniors and to others in our church and surrounding neighborhoods?”

From this initial conversation, an expanded seniors ministry has been developed at Trinity. While we still provide ministry FOR seniors in a variety of ways, we also provide ministry opportunities WITH seniors. We are very intentional about intergenerational opportunities. We look for ways that “mature-in-faith” seniors can share their faith and use their gifts in service to God’s kingdom. We design service projects that involve seniors in serving those around them.

It really isn’t hard. But it needs to start with the philosophical shift mentioned above—to see the glass “half full” instead of “half empty.” I encourage you to pray about this. Ask God to show you HIS vision for senior ministry where you are.

**“So even to 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.”**

—Psalm 71:18 ESV

Welcome!

(Continued from page 1)

In 2019 the Kansas District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod appointed a task force to look into the need for older adult ministry and ways to go about helping our congregations offer more for our older members. At the same time, we attempted to create and identify opportunities for our members to make great use of the skills God continues to provide. A comprehensive report was presented to the Kansas District Board of Directors. The report was accepted and an Older Adult Ministry Committee was established. A copy for the report is offered and encouraged for any congregation wishing to see it. Just visit the Kansas District website at kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry or ask Tom at Tom@TLCMS.org and we will send one to you.



For over five years Trinity has had the opportunity to have a part-time employee concentrating on ministry to older adults, thus, the connection with Trinity and the Older Adult Ministry Committee. In these newsletters we will have articles written by leaders in our Missouri Synod, the Kansas District, members of the committee, and local congregational leaders. We are excited to have Dr. Rich Bimler writing our first lead article and Rev. Dr. Mark Schulz, Senior Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church and a vice president of the Kansas District, giving his insight to older adult ministry in the local congregations.

We hope the information in these newsletters helps and encourages you and your congregations to look at the blessings and benefits of utilizing senior potential in a more effective way. We welcome your comments and feedback in making this a fun and useful tool. You may send your feedback and questions to me. May God grant you a blessed day!



*By Tom Perry
Kansas District Older Adult Committee Chairman
Senior Ministry Leader of Trinity Lutheran Church*





Older Adult Ministry Resources

The following is a small list of resources that may be helpful when building an enhanced older adult ministry. As the year progresses, we will add more to the list. If you have recommendations or needs, please feel free to contact us.

ALOA

aloaserves.org

Adult Lutherans Organized for Action is a national Lutheran older adult organization with helpful resources.

Hope-Ful Living

hopefulliving.org

This is a company which provides written devotions and resources.

Kansas District Website

kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry

This is a webpage on the Kansas District website.

Older Adult Task Force Comprehensive Report

Find it at: kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry

Tom Perry

Tom@TLCMS.org

Contact me with any questions, suggestions, or helpful tips.

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Gretchen Hollman, Editor and Graphic Designer