



**AgeWell Sunday
Worship Resources**

October 2018



unitingagewell.org



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Introduction

Seniors' Week, celebrated early in October each year, is a time to celebrate the contribution Seniors have made/continue to make in our communities, within our families, and in the church, our faith family. It is an opportunity to acknowledge ageing, affirming that it is one of the stages in life (to be embraced, not ignored). It can also be a push to consider the practicalities of our worship services: are they 'Senior friendly'? (seating, timing, hearing aids, warmth etc).

Within these resources you will find a sample service, and additional resources which include a sermon, short commentaries on the lectionary readings, suggestions for other Scripture readings, suitable hymns, possible topics and links to a number of websites. Please adapt the material to suit your congregation(s). This particular Sunday service might be the time to have a shared-lunch, invite one of the Uniting AgeWell chaplains, staff, Board or Committee members to give a brief presentation, or have an intergenerational activity, for example, baby photos in the Church Hall with a 'guess who this is' game...there are lots of possibilities.

Within the context of faith, it is important to stress that whilst growing old can have its benefits (such as seeing great-grandchildren) it can signal much grief (death of friends, loss of particular body functions, moving into assisted care, inability to attend worship). Pastoral care should include all members of the church; look at ways to provide for the spiritual needs of the shut-ins, those unable to attend church. When visiting, ask if they would like to partake in Communion (portable Communion kits are easily available if your church does not have one). If someone is unable to attend but is still able to read, ask if they would like a copy of the sermon to read (print it in bold, using a large font size). If your congregation records the service, or has a down-load facility, see if this can be utilised. More seniors are staying in their own homes for longer, drawing on community services; this can be an opportunity for local congregations to offer pastoral care.

Seniors' Week is a time to remember and celebrate the many blessings we have received from God. Seniors are one of those blessings. Seniors' Week is also a time for us to give thanks for the many agencies that care for, and/or intervene on behalf of Seniors. We give thanks for our own Uniting Church agencies, especially Uniting AgeWell, and Uniting. Seniors' Week may spur us to donate money, or time (as a volunteer) to an aged care facility, to a senior neighbour, or to start up a program at our church.

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Order of Service

The Call to Worship

At this time, and in this place, and with those around us, let us worship God.

Leader: Through our lives, we celebrate life.

Response: Let us praise God for the gift of life.

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,

to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden:

cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,

that we may perfectly love you, and worthily live for you; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Greeting

Leader: The Lord be with you

Response: And also with you.

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning everyone, and welcome to worship today.

A special welcome to visitors....

In Uniting Churches, today is AgeWell Sunday. Today we are reflecting on what it means to be a faith community of people who are continually ageing. We are all together in this ageing transition process; we are all slightly older than we were at breakfast time this morning.

Some of us are experiencing faster ageing transitions than others, which can be uncomfortable, disorienting and hard to accept. This has implications in our church community for education, planning and pastoral care. As the people of Jesus Christ, we need to consider and prepare as a church community for the life-long transition called ageing.

Also today in Uniting Churches across Victoria and Tasmania, we acknowledge and pray for the work of Uniting AgeWell, the aged care agency of the Uniting Church in this Synod.

Hymn

(The chosen hymns are suggestions only)

TiS **154** Great is your faithfulness

(ref. Ps. 22)

Prayers of Adoration

God our Creator,
Our thoughts cannot contain you; our words fall short of your vastness; yet you are our God.
God of all ages,
your breath gives us life.
Your hands shape our being.
Your artistry in creation leaves us gasping in wonder; longing to experience that which is
of you.
In each person, there you are, if we could but discern you.
Accept us again, O ancient yet youthful God, as we gather to worship and adore you.
Amen.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

Younger Person: We give thanks, O God,
for a society where people can look forward to long lives,
for the wisdom of older people,
for their faith and experience,
for the sense that older people give us
of family, tradition and identity,
for the leadership they offer,
for the things they teach,
and all the ways in which they contribute
to our families, our community and our church.

Older Person: We give thanks, O God,
for the blessings of life,
and our experience of its different seasons,
for friends, family, children and grandchildren,
for the experiences and opportunities of our lives,
for our survival through struggles and griefs,
for your presence throughout our lives
and for the hope of the life to come.

All: **Amen.**

Prayers of Confession

Leader: Gracious God, we know that there is
a time to be born, a time to grow old and a time to die.
We know that ageing is a part of life.
Yet sometimes we forget.
Sometimes we fail to embrace the life of our older people.
We confess that we sometimes do not hear
the voices of our older people; their needs and concerns.
In our busy daily life, sometimes we just don't stop and listen.

Response: **Forgive us when we close our ears to our older people.**

Leader: We confess that we sometimes become reluctant to share precious resources of life with our older people. In this competitive world, too often our priorities go to where we readily see new life, youth and the promise of worldly success.

Response: Forgive us when we participate in the unjust allocation of resources.

Leader: We confess that many Indigenous Australians never know old age, or become old before their time, through the struggles in their lives.

Response: Forgive us when we fail to notice and act.

Leader: Loving God, the Lord of Life,
bring to us the awareness that our life depends on each other.
We are called to uphold each other,
especially those who are weak, frail and vulnerable.
Fill us with your compassion, love and grace,
the grace that walks with us, embracing even our death.
In the name of Christ,

Response: Amen

The Declaration of Forgiveness

Leader: God is love.
Through Christ, God reaches out to us,
embracing the young and the old,
the strong and the weak, the living and the dying.
In Christ we are one.
Hear then Christ's words of grace to us.
"Your sins are forgiven"

Response: Thanks be to God

(If your congregation passes the peace, this is an appropriate point to do so.)

Intergenerational Activity

Additional resource: Practical intergenerational activity 'Creating our history of the last 100 years' (see Appendix 1)

Hymn

TiS 256 From heaven you came, helpless babe, *(ref. Ps. 22)*

Readings

(Choose from one or more of the following lectionary readings, or use other Bible readings, as a basis for the address or sermon):

- Job 23:1-9,16-17
- Psalm 22:1-15
- Hebrews 4:12-16
- 1 Timothy 5:1-5
- Mark 10:17-31

(Some congregations prefer to have the readings printed or shown on a screen)

This is the word of the Lord: **Thanks be to God!**

OR

This is the Gospel of our Lord: **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ!**

Opening the Word

Address or Sermon

Hymn

TiS **209** And can it be that I should gain *(ref. Heb. 4:14-16)*

Offering

Your freewill offering to the work of the extension of God's kingdom will now be received.

Offertory Prayer

We dedicate this money (and these gifts), Lord, for the work of your church, asking that you use all that we have, and all that we are, in your service. Amen.

We share our News, Joys and Concerns (Notices)

If possible, arrange to provide some Uniting AgeWell brochures for congregation distribution.

Brochures can be ordered from Uniting AgeWell Marketing & Community Relations,
(03) 9276 5712 or mcr@unitingagewell.org.

Prayers of the People

Leader: Almighty God,
We hold before you the older people of the world.
We thank you for the blessings which have come to us through those who
have gained knowledge and wisdom through the experiences of life.
We are grateful for their guidance, counsel, and leadership.
We pray that you will continue to bless the ill in our Uniting AgeWell
communities and everywhere.
Lord of all ages

Response: Hear our prayer

Leader: May Australia be a community of mutual respect and tolerance, compassion
and patience.
May we dare to dream of community where youth and age work and live side
by side with a mutuality which embraces life in its entirety.
Lord of all ages

Response: Hear our prayer

Leader: In gratitude we bring before you all community services and agencies and
their staff involved in caring for us as we grow older.
We ask that they will know their kindness renewed and find fulfilment in
their work.
We especially pray for our Church's Uniting AgeWell services;
for senior staff, managers, care staff, chaplains and volunteers,
as they seek to give excellence of care for all older people in their living and
their dying.
Lord of all ages

Response: Hear our prayer.

(Other prayers may also be offered here)

The Lord's Prayer

As our Saviour Christ taught us, we are confident to pray:
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Hymn

TiS 315 Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord (ref. Heb. 4:12-13)

Word of Mission

May the Lord of all generations, whose love spans our years,
keep us ever mindful of the wonderful gift of life;
childhood to fulfilment of age, that we so rejoice in each other, that we live our days with
respect, compassion and mutual responsibility; to the glory of Christ.

Blessing

The blessing of Almighty God - the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit –
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Dismissal

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Response: In the name of Christ. Amen

Hymn

781 Father, bless us as we go.

Resources:

- International Year of Older Persons, Social Justice Sunday, 1999
- Together in song: Harmony edition (Harper Collins, 1999)
- Uniting in Worship books I (1988) and II (2005) (Uniting Church Press)
- Uniting in Worship: People's Book (Uniting Church Press, 1988)
- unitingagewell.org

Address

GENESIS 17:1-7,15-16, 1 TIMOTHY 5:1-5 & MARK 10:17-31

Play video here:

- YouTube: <https://youtu.be/hY6s7goZdWw>
- Download: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/c4ycy08p1e5ew21/Age%20Well%20Sunday%20Download.mp4?dl=0>

When I was a teenager, I thought people in their 60s were really old. Now that I have recently celebrated myth birthday, I'm not so sure!

So how do you know when you're getting old?

Well here's what some "old people" had to say.

You know you're getting old when.....

- All the names in your little black book begin with Dr.
- You look forward to a dull evening at home
- It feels like the morning after the night before, but you haven't been anywhere
- Your knees buckle but your belt won't

Scientific advances and the consequent progress of medicine, have made a huge contribution in recent decades to prolonging the average duration of human life. The term "third age" now embraces a large segment of the world's population: people who have retired from active employment, yet who still have great inner resources and are still able to contribute to the community around them. To this huge "third age" of "young old", that is, those aged between 65 and 75, is now added a so-called "fourth age", now called the "older old" – those over 75 years old. *And* those numbers are growing at a great rate. The number of people aged 85 years and over is projected to almost triple to 1.2 million by 2040.

So this lengthening of average life expectancy, and by the way, a decreasing birth rate, have given rise to an amazing demographic transition: the age pyramid that existed less than half a century ago has literally been turned upside down.

That's right - the grey nomads are taking over!! And that's not all bad.

Do you know? The most productive years of a person's life *can* be the retirement years! For example:

- **Moses** was 80 when God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt.
- **Abraham** was 75 years old when God called him to leave his home; 86 when his first son Ishmael was born to Hagar; and 100 when his son Isaac was born to his wife Sarah.
- **Socrates** gave the world his best philosophy at age 70.
- **The Greek philosopher Plato** was only a student at 50, doing his best work after his 60th birthday.
- **Michelangelo** painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel when he was almost 90.
- **Noah Webster** wrote his monumental dictionary at 70,
- and **Winston Churchill** became Prime Minister of Great Britain at age 65.

You see, growing old doesn't have to mean growing obsolescence. In fact, it can mean greater opportunity for many people.

However, this "silent revolution of an ageing population" goes far beyond just statistical data: it poses social, economic, cultural, psychological and spiritual challenges.

Now whilst the United Nations, and thousands of other government and community organisations grapple with trying to solve the problems of living in a contemporary, multigenerational society, Jesus makes an interesting reference in today's Gospel reading. As Jesus was setting out on his journey, verses 17-19 tell of a man running to Jesus, before it was too late, possibly with the expectation that he would be asked to follow Jesus on his way. He is a "young" man only in Matthew 19:20; he is a "ruler", that is, an important man in the community, in Luke 18:18; and simply "a man" in the Marcan story. Whatever the identity of this man, he asks Jesus "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" In answer to his question, Jesus quotes the Ten Commandments - but not all of them. The Commandments expressed by Jesus are those of the second table, which emphasise social obligations and human responsibilities.

On this AgeWell Sunday, the final commandment "Honour your father and mother" prompts us to explore further what God tells us in the Bible about how older people should be treated.

In his first letter to Timothy (1Timothy 5:1-2), St Paul instructs Timothy as to how people in his congregation should be treated. He says, "Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity".

Paul sees the church as a family, and as such, we must treat everyone in the church as family – the older men as fathers, the younger men as brothers, the older women as mothers, and the younger women as sisters.

Specifically, in traditional translations, God says *exhort* them (vs 1). Now that word is rich in meaning, and is translated in various ways in our New Testament. Sometimes it is translated "encourage", at other times, "support", "help", or "comfort". The word literally means, "come alongside and help".

So God wants us, as members of the church, to *come alongside* of each other, to *comfort* when one is hurting, to *support* each other, and to *help* in practical ways. This is especially true of older people.....St Paul says: we must treat them like family.

Uniting AgeWell is an organisation of the Uniting Church working in response to God's call to treat our older people like family.

Uniting AgeWell works with older people to help them stay as well as possible, and live full and rich lives as they are able. Uniting AgeWell was initiated by Presbyterian and Methodist congregations who had the foresight to plan for the care of their elderly church family. Uniting AgeWell is still proudly an expression of the Uniting Church and all its work is infused with the Christian faith tradition. This is reflected in the organisation's Vision, which says: "Uniting AgeWell: The Church at Work. A creative leader enabling communities to age well, and individuals to live to their potential". Everyone is equal, united by our common humanity and capacity for love and care. Everyone is welcome, regardless of age, race, nationality, religion, sexuality, gender, or social status. In particular, Uniting AgeWell welcomes people who have had to live on the margins of society at some time in their lives because of

poverty, prejudice, disability or illness. At the heart of the organisation's work is a desire to honour the unique spirit of *love, life and aliveness* in every person.

This way of seeing the world drives the way Uniting AgeWell plans, resources and provides the services offered. As a church organisation, Uniting AgeWell is *not* driven by market forces to make money for shareholders. Any surpluses are reinvested into *improved* facilities and services.

Most importantly, the Uniting AgeWell community is made up of many *people*.

It is a very large family.....

- 1400 aged care beds over 19 sites in Victoria and Tasmania – with two new sites now under construction;
- 540 independent retirement living units, with 49 more on the way;
- 4,500 clients who live in the community;
- 2,500 staff; and 700 volunteers.

Uniting AgeWell's Customer Promise, Customer Charter, is a reflection of Jesus' final Commandment. Its key promise is to put the customers at the heart of everything the organisation does – to treat people like family, to honour and exhort them. It says "we will always treat you with respect and dignity and ensure you feel valued and supported".

The contributions made by our congregation members is a unique part of Uniting AgeWell, and a powerful force behind the success of the organisation. Many Uniting AgeWell facilities grew out of church members' efforts, and their commitment continues. Many volunteer hours are given by congregation members and others, spending time with older people in programs, offering companionship, and enjoying sharing activities in their daily lives.

The author Abraham Herschel said that "the affection and care for the old, the incurable, and the helpless, are the true goldmines of a culture".

So God calls us as a church, to treat older people like gold....to come alongside and help seniors, to visit them, to spend time with them, *not* to dismiss them or ignore them. To honour them. To value them. To give them the proper recognition they deserve.

It is good to know that 2000 years after Paul wrote his instructions to Timothy as to the way to value the older people in his congregations, the Uniting Church, through Uniting AgeWell, is following the word of God, and valuing our seniors as part of our church family. Amen

Appendix 1

Intergenerational Activity

Creating our history of the last 100 years

You will need to supply one work sheet for each group plus pens/pencils/textas

Invite people to form into groups of no more than three, ideally with people of significantly different ages. Explain that they will be invited to join in a task that will require the experiences and working together of different generations in order to complete it successfully. Hand out the worksheet.

Explain that across the top of the sheet different decades have been grouped together into an era. Down the left hand side of the sheet is something to be identified for each of the eras. When the leader says “Go”, the challenge is for each group to talk about, and then write into the relevant box, an appropriate answer. From “Go”, allow 3-4 minutes for the groups to fill in as many boxes as they can. After 3-4 minutes the leader says “Stop” and asks for an indication as to how people have been going with the task. Do they still have some blank boxes to fill in? Presumably the answer will be “Yes”. Now invite each group of three to join with another group of three to help each other fill in any of the gaps they have on their respective sheets. Again after 3-4 minutes invite people to “Stop” (Note: if groups finish before this time, encourage them to talk a little bit more about some of their responses).

By way of wrap-up, the Leader could get an indication as to how many groups managed to complete the task. There might be encouragement to complete the sheets over Morning Tea. If time allows, there is also the possibility of inviting sharing of some of the responses. The leader might also seek responses around the question “What do you know now that you didn’t know 10 minutes ago?” The activity could be concluded with the leader commenting on how fantastic it was to see people of different ages engaging so well together, perhaps even learning more about each other. Finish by thanking the whole congregation for their participation and encourage them to thank the other members of the group they have been with before returning to their seats.

Resource prepared by Chris Barnett, Children and Families Ministry Co-ordinator, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

	1920s, 30s, 40s	1950s, 60s	1970s, 80s, 90s	2000s
A favourite TV/radio show				
A popular song				
Something unique to the era in a primary school				
A sporting hero				
A significant technological advance				
A typical church social activity				
A song people liked singing in church				
A fashion item				
A famous band				
The most successful VFL/AFL team				



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Uniting AgeWell is an organisation of the Uniting Church in Australia