

Re-igniting Seniors'
Ministry Fearor

Valuing & Validating Seniors
As Gifted Ministers During
Public Worship

Dr. Gordon E. Necemer

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Chapter 1 Proposition

Introduction

Each Sunday, when the author and his wife, Donna, travel in their motor home, they purposely seek an evangelical church which they might attend for worship and fellowship. Some time ago, while visiting a community west of Calgary, Alberta they attended a morning service at one of the larger churches in the area.

At the end of the service an elderly man, around 65 to 70 years welcomed them to the church. After a short conversation, the man said, "My wife and I were missionaries in Africa for over thirty years. We are now on permanent furlough because the Mission Board will not allow us to return since I have a heart condition."

“Well,” the author responded enthusiastically, “as a senior and a ‘well-seasoned’ servant of the Lord, you must be given numerous opportunities, during the public worship services, to share your stories or use your preaching gift for the edification and enrichment of the saints.”

“Young man,” the missionary responded with a sullen, defeated look on his face, “once a person becomes a senior, not much ministry remains open for the individual in this church or in many of the other churches in the Calgary area.”

As the author and his wife returned to their unit, he casually commented to Donna, “Is not that interesting! I have been thinking the same thoughts about the lack of ministry from seniors in the churches we regularly visit in the Vancouver lower mainland. You know, someone needs to do a study on validating and valuing seniors’ ministry in the local church.”

After arriving home about a week later, the author began documenting whether seniors’ ministry gifts, talents and abilities were being used during the public worship services in the churches he visited. Like the missionary he had met indicated earlier, he readily noticed that seniors’ gifts were rarely utilized during public worship services, and he decided it was timely to explore why this might be regularly occurring.

Problem

The problem that this study examines is this: Is there marginalization and exclusion of seniors, ages 65 to 80, from public ministry within the local church during public worship services?

Scholarlyⁱ and anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that seniors within evangelical churches rarely, if ever, engage in the public worship service as contributors by sharing their testimony, reading a poem or scripture, telling their salvation story, or using their musical gift.

After talking with many seniors in the local churches, the author got the impression that most seniors feel their “ministry” is no longer welcomed or valued because they have aged.

Aging, they believe, has disqualified them from ministry – even if they should offer their services – because it has robbed them of the vitality, the skills, or the insight to hold the interest of others in the community of faith.

Seniors agree that they are ministered to, and they have opportunity to exercise their gifts monthly during the regularly held “seniors’ meetings”. Beyond this, however, they assert there is little or no opportunity to exercise their gifts as approved, confirmed and valued members of the local fellowship. Like other congregants, seniors believe each part of the “body” is essential for edifying the church spiritually – at least in theory – but wonder why they have been excluded from ministry opportunities during the weekly public worship services. Scripture nowhere points to age or gift segregation in the church; rather, it teaches that the Holy Spirit gives gifts to whomever He wills for His divine purpose so believers could edify the church. The author, therefore, suggests that any exclusion of seniors from public ministry during the collective, public worship service is contradictory to Paul’s teachings in Romans 8:3 to 8 and in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. If it is, it would be on several fronts a misuse of available human resources, a denial of ministry opportunities, and a retraction of inferred, scriptural “full body believer ministry.” Because of these grievous implications, the author regards this issue and what might be done to correct this problem as significant and worthy of investigation. To gain insight into how this perceived problem might be corrected, the author plans to focus his investigation and study on local churches within the cities of New Westminster, Surrey, White Rock, and Langley, British Columbia.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is, therefore, threefold. First to explore whether seniors within the local church are using their talents, abilities, and gifts in active ministry weekly. Second, if they are not, to discover the various mitigating

factors inhibiting them from exercising their gifts during the public communal worship. And third, to explore a biblical-based theology that is age and gift-integrated.

The research question the author plans to study is: Are church leaders aware of the seniors' gifts and what counsel can be recommended to motivate local leaders to recognize, validate, and value seniors' ministry gifts during public worship services so seniors – and their gifts – will feel recognized, appreciated and useful as an integral part of church ministry for edifying others?

This study will draw on literature reviews of secular and religious literature, interviews with leaders and seniors of local churches, pastor and senior survey questionnaires, and weekly observation of public worship services to discover the presence, or lack of inclusion in public ministry of seniors 65 to 80 years.ⁱⁱ After identifying the possible extenuating influences which inhibit seniors from ministering in the local worship service, and establishing the validity of the existence of these issues, the author will invite participants in the study to develop a biblically-based theology that is age-inclusive and gift-integrated. On its completion, it is hoped congregations will adopt this as the ethos of ministry so seniors will be empowered to enjoy full participation in public worship services and, possibly, full participation in other ministries undertaken in the local church.

Relationship of the Problem to My Ministry

At present, the author is ministering as a Chaplain in two senior care centres, providing public worship on Sunday morning and Tuesday evenings. He recognizes each member who attends to be a bona fide gift to the church as an individual who possesses special talents, abilities or gifts – a word, a hymn, and the like – through which he or she could edify others in the church as he or she contributes enthusiastically during the service.

Discovering reasons that inhibit seniors from being “released to ministry” during the public gatherings and providing

profitable, biblical direction to eliminate these, could increase the vibrancy, enthusiasm and the love of God's people one for the other. Furthermore, it would also empower seniors to see that their place and value of ministry are not extinguished because of aging, but they can use them for the edification and enrichment of the rest of the members in the fellowship with which they meet.

Methodology

The general research method to be used in examining the concern stated in the "Problem" will be Historical/Descriptive.

This approach is followed because the Project Problem calls for an investigation into the way earlier churches integrated seniors into ministry. With this, the author will also need to explore when the decrease of ministry by seniors started and when it became as notable as it appears to be today.

The author also needs to review available biblical literature – scripture, commentaries, and related documentation – to discover if age and gift-integration within the local church is taught, and whether it should be the established, routine practice of today's local church.

Historical Research

This approach is suggested because the problem to be addressed necessitates investigation into the way earlier church fellowships integrated seniors into ministry, if they did, as the author supposes they may have. With this, the author will also need to investigate at what time the lessening of integration of seniors in ministry started and when it turned to be as notable as it appears to be today.

In attempting to support his claim that exclusion of senior body ministry is contrary to scripture, the author will need to examine scripture and biblical commentaries to verify whether

age and gift-integration is a commonplace, implicit teaching in it and whether this should be expected as a regular, welcomed practice in today's local church.

Descriptive

This is chosen because the author's topic hinges on describing what may be construed as a predominant, unscriptural, and unwholesome practice in many of the local churches in New Westminster, Surrey, White Rock and Langley, British Columbia. Evidence for support of claims made will be obtained by sending, through Canada Post, surveys to pastors of three or four churches of five denominations located within Surrey, those being Pentecostal, Baptist, Lutheran, Bible Covenant Church and Anglican.

Through these surveys the author hopes to discover whether seniors contribute during church held public worship services, the awareness pastors have of seniors' gifts and the encouragement by pastors of seniors' involvement in ministry. From a few interviews conducted with pastors in Surrey, most pastors interviewed admit they have little, if any, personal contact with their seniors.

With interviewing more pastors or leaders, the author will also interview seniors, ages 65 to 80,ⁱⁱⁱ who regularly attend Sunday worship services. His purpose is to discover their present ministry roles and their feelings about their present ministry within the local church Sunday to Sunday. From the information gained, he hopes to assemble a correlative study to determine if there are any common "threads" of concern related to this matter present in the variety of churches examined.

Research Design

The research design chosen for this project is phenomenological because it systematically and rigorously explores a specific problem within a particular location, but with potentially strong, broad generalizability, to generate new

knowledge or confirm existing knowledge. Because the proposed project is concerned with “whether seniors are being excluded from active contributory ministry in the public worship service,” the author will need to discover if there is supportive evidence of this by interviewing seniors and pastors, observing regularly held Sunday worship services and by examining available literature on this phenomena.

Prejudices and Assumptions

In addressing this topic, the author presents the following “prejudices and assumptions” which may strongly influence his research approach and conclusions. First the author is a senior, age 65. Despite his short time of being at this stage in life, he has experienced numerous demeaning “put downs” because he is “old”. Most recently, for example, during a fall Harvest Banquet at the Baptist that church he and his wife attend, he invited some youth to join some seniors at a table for supper. At the end of the next Sunday’s morning worship service a board member approached him and sternly reviled him for making such a suggestion to the youth. Some weeks ago, while driving near his home, a middle-aged, upper classed person attempted to make a forceful, illegal entry into traffic even though this potentially could have caused a severe, untimely accident. When adequate room was afforded to the driver to pass the author, without hesitating he yelled at the author, “Get off the road, old timer, and make room for those who are younger and more competent to drive.”

Second, the author is one of many seniors attending a local Baptist church and who, from week to week, does no ministry during the public worship services despite his many years of being a born-again believer and possessing years of formal academic and theological training. The author, like many other seniors in this church, has made himself available for ministry, but because it is intensely leadership directed, no room for others to use their gifts is allotted.

Two examples of oversight of the author's gifts by the church are cited. First, he has fourteen years of theological training and has pastored in the past for a cumulative of six years. Yet, when the pastor is on holidays or away at conferences, instead of inviting him to share, the leadership chooses to invite an untrained youth or middle-aged parishioner to do pulpit ministry, to teach the Adult Bible Class, or read scripture. Second, the author has a fully equipped, up-to-date commercial printing company through which he prints for realtors and other local businesses regularly. On many occasions he has offered to print the church's advertisements or stationery at no cost, yet the leaders never recognize his gift in this area. Instead, it sends its printing needs to local commercial firms that charge high rates for the work and therein it bypasses the gift of printing readily available in the local church Sunday after Sunday.

Third, by ministering at Fleetwood Villa, a seniors' care centre in Surrey, British Columbia and by regularly visiting with other seniors of the community, the author is aware of their expressed concerns that when they attend public worship services in their home church, they are rarely, if ever, invited to share their gifts. This, they say, makes them feel as if they have no ministry value within the church despite when they were younger they actively participated in ministry. The radical change in ministry opportunity is perplexing because nothing has changed in their usefulness except their age.

Fourth, the author, having pastored a seniors' church – Harvest Christian Fellowship – and having granted the members unlimited opportunity to use their ministry gifts, recognizes the need for seniors to be included as contributors to worship. By stressing collaborative co-partnering in worship, members regularly were invited to lead the singing, playing their instruments, sing a solo, read a poem, share about an afternoon drive, or relate their salvation story. During the four years of worship at Harvest, most of the seniors indicated that the primary reason they stayed at Harvest was the warmth of inclusiveness during all public worship services.

Fifth, coming from a Pentecostal background, the author is aware of the biblical affirmation of the need for inter-aged and inter-gift ministry in the local church taught in scripture. With this, he is also familiar with “full membership body ministry practices”. While attending Cloverdale Pentecostal Church during his youth, it was commonplace for the author to see seniors singing solos, playing their instruments, praying publicly, sharing their testimony, giving a prophetic word or “message in tongues” as they were given opportunity by the pastor and directed by the Holy Spirit. This twofold conviction of the need and welcome of body ministry during worship by the whole people of God may be a major factor in compelling him to examine the need for seniors to be validated and valued as gifted ministers within public worship services of the church.

Definitions

Words and concepts that need to be defined in this paper include: ‘seniors’, ‘valued’, ‘validated’, ‘public worship service’, ‘ministry’ and ‘integrated gift and age services’.

For this paper, the term ‘seniors’ refers to individuals “chronologically 65 years and over, and who are the recipients of a government retirement pension”.^{iv} With this, the word ‘senior’ also applies those who are no longer involved in full-time employment as the priority for income. Physically, they are recognized by the graying of hair, the wrinkling and discoloration of the skin, slowness of mobility, and often they are encumbered with unexpected and undesired health problems that disable them from full body functions. Often seniors – especially those in their later years – are housed in seniors’ care homes.

The term “valued” connotes that the aged – seniors – are accepted and welcomed as part of society and the church, simply as they are with the retained usefulness, dignity, and gifts God instilled in them during the formative stage while they were “holden up from the womb” (Ps 76:1).^v By understanding “this possession of natural likeness to God,”^{vi} others within the

church will be empowered to relate to seniors with generous kindness that engenders acceptance of them^{vii} as they shun partiality because they desire to live righteously and demonstrate authentic brotherly love to them.

Validating the seniors' dignity and worth is never contingent upon their performance, the knowledge they possess, their socio-economic position or the commendation others might bestow on them. It is an innate, enduring life situation that demands the respect of others through free will service in and beyond the church. This desire to serve others for their good can never be extinguished even though its purity may have been defaced because of sin. In light of this, seniors need to be affirmed as possessing a reservoir for ministry that is waiting to be tapped into and then released as they are provided the "being experiences" of ministry which will provide significance and usefulness for those whom they seek out.^{viii}

In an article, "A Humanity of Human Dignity: The Future of Psychological Biblical Interpretation?" Michael Newhart asserts that "One cannot validate or appreciate his or her personal dignity until the person validates another's by extending dignity to the other through dialogue and discussion in which everyone has something to bring to the table."^{ix} The wise, godly, and compassionate pastor who preaches and believes that the church should practice "body ministry" will search out the resources these people possess and use them for the progressive spiritual betterment of the church and for the glory of God.

In using the term "validated", the author is suggesting that seniors, despite their many problems, discouragements, and limiting physical infirmities will be recognized and appreciated as contributing ministers within the local body. When this occurs, then they will be invited as active contributors during worship. This will happen as leaders listen to the seniors' stories, walk with them through their joys and difficulties, and allow them to contribute their ministry gifts in ways they feel comfortable and competent. Validating seniors will eradicate

negative, pejorative and minimizing attitudes towards seniors' ministry potential which are proactively espoused in "ageism".

As "validation" of seniors' increases within the local church, commensurately, so will their enthusiasm for ministry increase. Jesse Miranda, in *The Christian Church in Ministry* suggests validation of each member's gifts and ministry must be a natural flow among members of the local church. He writes:

The church is a redeemed community of believers. This redeemed community is formed because of what Christ has done for it; who it is in Christ; and what it is to do for Christ. Each member must accept a full share in the common life and purpose which unites all the believers. The believers must share what Christ has done for them. They must validate and encourage each other up in the Lord. The church has been called the body of Christ. Thus, we can refer to its ministry to itself as *body ministry*. We have chosen to talk about the body ministry of the church before discussing its ministry of evangelism. Why? Because the world will believe our words only if they see believers validating one another as they reflect love, unity, and godly living. Each believer, and the entire group of believers, must be an example in order to win others. A spirit of Christian community within the church is essential for the effective witness to others.^x

Validation of seniors' ministry gifts, by the church, indicates to them they are recognized as vibrant, potential ministers within the body because God has welcomed them into His Kingdom, He has endowed them with ministry gifts, and He has blessed them wisdom, knowledge, and skills that they can employ to mentor upcoming generations within the congregation. Validating seniors, furthermore, forcefully debunks all negative, beguiling, pirating, and destructive inferences that seniors have nothing more to offer. As validating

is accomplished, it positions them to participate as welcomed, uninhibited, and joyful contributors to the organization.

From the author's perspective, Public Worship Service is any collective, congregational gathering, by the regular attendees of a local assembly, that meet regularly and "steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Such a definition includes weekly held Sunday morning and evening worship services, weekly Bible studies and weekly Family Night services during which the "whole people of God" meet as a mixed age and gift integrated body. It does not include weekly cell group gatherings, weekly men or women's fellowships, or other weekly get-togethers by which members meet as segmented, insulated and isolated collections one from the other.

These are disqualified for four reasons. First, the author concludes that Scripture does not directly or indirectly imply that some members of the "body" should be alienated one from the others when worship occurs. Jesus advocates collective gatherings, as against isolated ones, when He prayed for His people to be "one", as He met continuously with His disciples as a collective unit, as He taught the crowds by Galilee and as He blessed the children – in the presence of older people – publicly. Second, cell groups and the like do not fit with Paul's teaching that the body of Christ gathers, primarily to worship God, but also to love one another by endorsing and edifying each other – the arm meeting with the eye, and the mouth with the ear – as coworkers in the missional work of the local church. Third, segmented groups do not align with Paul's instruction that believers, collectively, should not forsake the assembling of themselves together but should be exhorting one another to gather regularly, "and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb 10:25). Fourth, small groups are outside of Paul's teaching. God "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). Collective body instruction is promoted over segmented

instruction because through it a singular, communal understanding of scripture and a compassionate acceptance of each other's gifts is engendered. As this happens, an unshakable unity within the body will be established. Fifth, Paul, like Christ, held all his services as a joint fellowship of all the people of God. Older people, with the sons and daughters as households met for worship, and when there was a need for baptism, whole households, collectively, were baptized. The church, for Paul, was community that participated in and enjoyed every aspect of worship together.^{xi}

Ministry, in this paper, is reflected by individualized, personal contribution during the regularly held public service. Group ministry – through congregational singing, through congregational Bible reading and prayer, by being a member of the choir, by playing in the orchestra – affords many the opportunity, collectively, to use their gifts. Despite the value of these ministry opportunities, they do not give parishioners – seniors in particular – the occasion to demonstrate their personal, God-given ministry gift and then be endorsed by the body as Paul advocates. The possible reason for disallowing individuals to “do the work of ministry”, as the Holy Spirit empowers them, is that too many pastors and congregations are looking for measurable, positive and profitable outcomes through ministry, rather than gleaning edification to good works through individual, gifted body ministry such as a testimony, a solo, an instrumental and the like. Ministry, by the whole people of God, through their individually endowed gifts, is commended to the church because this is God's implicit, intended will demonstrated by His apportioning to believers, individualized and diverse ministry gifts for the edification of the body (1 Cor 14:4).

Implicit in this is the suggestion congregant seniors should be given full opportunity to use their gifts of ministry to and for the body under guidance from the pastors/shepherds of the church.^{xii} Jesus continuously taught His disciples the principles of faith. After a period of instructing them, and recognizing they were adequately trained for ministry, He

endorsed their ministry gifts and commissioned them for service on numerous occasions. The following are offered as examples of Christ's recognition and commendation of individual's ministry gifts during public, religious gatherings. First, John the Baptist used the gift of preaching and servant ministry as he baptized Christ in the Jordan River (Matt 3:13-17). Second, Peter used the gift of speaking a Word of Knowledge as he affirmed, through the Holy Spirit, that Christ was the Son of Living God (Matt 16:18). Third, a widow demonstrated her gift of stewardship as she willingly, cast in all she had – two mites – into the treasury (Mark 12:41-44). Fourth, the twelve disciple's exhibited the gift of evangelism as they went out, two by two, and preached that men should repent (Mark 6:7-15). Fifth, Mary displayed her gift of devotional love to Christ as she lavishly poured expensive "ointment of spikenard" on His feet and then wiped them with her hair (John 12:3-5). And sixth, a young lad reflected a generous gift of hospitality as he sacrificed his lunch of five loaves and two fishes so Christ could feed five thousand lunch (Mark 6:36-43).

Possibly following Christ's example, Paul also provided recognition and commendation of individual's ministry gifts used in the local churches that he and others established. The following examples are provided as support for this claim. First, he recognized Timothy's gift of leadership and pastoral care by his call for Timothy to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands" (2 Tim 1:6). Second, he counsels the members at Rome to exercise their gifts – teaching, administration, giving, prophecy, exhortation – "according to the grace that is given to us" (Romans 12:6) for the good of the body. Third, he invites Dr. Luke on his travels to be his physician, and possibly, to journal his travels (Acts 19). Fourth, he affirmed Barnabas' mediation skills when he had to appear before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 11). Fifth, while in Antioch with Barnabas, he recognized and accepted the prophetic word of Agabus who "signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar" (Acts 11:28). At a later date, while Paul

was at Caesarea – in the house of the evangelist Philip – Paul again accepted the prophetic ministry of Agabus as he prophesied, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11). Sixth, Paul recognizes the presence and use of ministry gifts – tongues, healings, signs and wonders, word of wisdom – that were often demonstrated in the Church at Corinth, and provides godly, wise counsel against the misuse of them (1 Cor 12 and 14). Seventh, Paul, writing his second letter to Timothy, recognizes Onesiphorus’ gift of hospitality stating, “The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.” (2 Tim 1:16).

According to Don Cousins, membership gift integration should be a natural, regular part of all public services when the people of God gather in Christ’s name. He writes:

Every member of the body of Christ has at least one spiritual gift, and it’s to be used to serve others. “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10).

The body of Christ works as God intends only when every believer sees himself or herself as a contributor, not a consumer. But the very nature of how most of us “do church” seems to undermine this function. As church members gather on Sunday morning, more than 90 percent do so as consumers. They come to receive what has been prepared by the 10 percent. This is in stark contrast to what Paul writes, “When you assemble each one has a psalm, has a teaching, has a revelation, has a tongue, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification” (1 Cor 14:26). How different would our church experience be if everyone contributed something when we gathered together? Not only would everyone receive much

more, but all who took part would be blessed by doing so, for “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Some would offer a teaching, some a word of encouragement. Some would bring an offering above and beyond their tithe. Some would offer physical assistance to those in need. Some would prepare food or bring some other tangible gift to meet a need. The list goes on and on. Even the very act of praying and asking God to give us something to contribute would impact our hearts and minds as we headed off to church. We would be better prepared to worship, better prepared to hear the Word, and even better prepared to serve.^{xiii}

Groups Excluded from this Examination

For this study, the author has decided to eliminate some groups from his “sampling” to ascertain whether seniors’ ministry gifts are being valued and validated during public worship. This includes groups that are not yet seniors, volunteers within the community, para church ministries, and individuals attending small groups or doing short-term ministry ventures do not come within the definition of the “collective gathering of the local church” already stated.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Introduction

There is a new challenge facing North America. For the time first in its history, the population is increasingly comprised mostly of seniors – age 65 years and over. It is conjectured by many that this may continue for some considerable time. Jim Gilmartin, President of Coming-of-Age, and one of America's leading marketing strategists to seniors, suggests that "every seven to ten seconds a "baby boomer" in the United States will become 65 years old."^{xiv} With this projection, every year there could be over one hundred and twenty thousand "new seniors" added to its population. In 2006, the United States Department of State also recognized the change in population make-up. In an article published by the department entitled, "Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective", it concluded:

In 2006, almost 500 million people worldwide were sixty-five and older. By 2030, that total is projected to increase to one billion – one in every eight of the earth's inhabitants. Significantly, the most rapid increases in the sixty-five and older population are occurring in industrializing countries, which will see a jump of 140 percent by 2030. For the first time in history, and probably for the rest of human history, people age 65 and over will outnumber children under 5.^{xv}

Like the United States, Australia is also anticipating a vast increase in the number of seniors during the next twenty to thirty years. In a recent report entitled, *Ageing and Aged Care in Australia*, the Department of Health and Ageing reported:

Australia's population is getting older. Around 9 per cent of our population (some 2 million people) is aged 70 years or older. This is expected to rise to 13 per cent by 2021 and to 20 per cent (around 5.7 million people) in 2051, people aged 80 years and over currently make up around 4 per cent of the population and this proportion is expected to increase to 10 per cent by 2051.^{xvi}

Statistics Canada forecasts a similar trend of seniors' surge of numbers for this within the country stating: "According to the 2006 Census, of the 31.6 million people who live in Canada, 4.3 million (14%) are 65 years and older (see Table 3.1). Within Canada's senior population, 73% are between the ages of 65 and 79 years and more than one-quarter (27%) are 80 years and older."^{xvii} Two causes will contribute to this change. First the "coming to age" of the baby boomers, and second the increased life expectancy of individuals who have already become seniors. That life longevity is a reality among Canada's elderly is supported by Statistics Canada reports, indicating that, at present, there are five thousand three hundred and twenty four citizens over the age of one hundred years living in the country.

Win and Charles Arn, in *Catch the Wave: A Handbook for Effective Ministry with Senior Adults*, describe projected change as the “Gigantic ‘Age Wave’” that is now engulfing the western world.”^{xviii} Because of this, society and the church needs to recognize this change and adjust their present paradigms about how seniors are being regarded and treated. Concurring with the Arns, C. Anne Davis in “A Critical Agenda for Senior Adult Ministries” suggests, “By 2030, there will be so many seniors and the question will be, ‘will the present social providers be able to adequately care for them?’”^{xix}

With this certain, anticipated increase of seniors – also known as “gray-haired”, “retirees”, “aged” and the like – quickly becoming a reality, society and local churches, specifically, will be challenged on how they will adapt to the change and adopt practices which will show dignity and usefulness to them.

Societal Attitudes towards Seniors

Although it should be expected that seniors should and would be treated with honour and dignity because of their valuable contributions to society, such is not the case. For the greater part, negative overtures of contempt towards them are more the norm. Seniors, as well as millions of others in society – the mentally challenged, the physically disabled, those of low economic status and the like – for the greater part, have quite commonly become the ‘marginalized many’, seen to be old and then treated to be old. Once defined by individuals, or by society as being old, a person becomes indelibly identified with the negative stereotypical image of old age.^{xx}

Leslie Morgan and Susan Kunkel suggest “Social Aging” may be the “greatest promoter for society’s present negative, derogatory and defaming attitudes towards the aged.” They write:

However, society uses age to assign people to roles, to channel people into and out of positions within the social structure, as a basis for allocation of resources, and as a

way to categorize individuals. In its most benevolent form, using age to allocate opportunities is a reasonable mechanism. For example, our society has rules about minimum ages for employment; these laws were designed to protect young people from being exploited, and, according to some, they are good for the labor force because they control the flow of new workers into the labor market. In a more constraining way, however, age artificially and unevenly limits the opportunities of people. Gray hair and wrinkles, perhaps the most visible signs of aging, and the chronological age of 65—the most often-used criterion of old age—have no effect on physical functioning or cognitive capability. They do, however, have profound effects on social interactions and opportunities for individuals in the social world. Whether we would seriously consider someone as a possible candidate for a job or as an interesting partner in social interaction is, in fact, influenced by our assessment of the age of that person and what that person's age symbolizes to us. Again, it is not because age 65 or gray hair are symptomatic of competence or incompetence or of a boring or dazzling personality, or even that visible signs of aging are inherently unattractive or attractive. We make these assessments because we live in a society that has constructed the meaning of aging in particular (primarily negative) ways.^{xxi}

Understanding Marginalization

To appreciate the negative implications of marginalization of seniors, the term needs to be defined.

The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language defines the term as, "That which causes one to live on the margins of society by excluding him or her from entitlement to participating in a defined group or association."^{xxii}

port for the idea all ages should be together often.^{xxiii}

A Biblical Appreciation of Seniors in Worship

That depreciation of seniors and ignoring their gifts is not a fitting conduct of the local church seems an obvious conclusion when it is examined in light of scripture, yet it still happens regularly week after week in many local churches. Although some pastors may suggest the form of worship has changed over the years and seniors need to adjust to it, the author, supported by others, commends the biblical inclusive form of collective body gift ministry as the only means by which everyone who gathers in “community” will be endorsed as an inseparable, welcome and needed member in that community

Understanding the Church as “Family”

Of all the social organizations and networks in the world, the local church is revered as being the most gracious and inclusive group. By the terms, “brothers and sisters” often used during public gatherings, members and visitors alike, immediately are impressed with “the brotherly connectedness” that prevails throughout the gathering. From first impressions, the church is a tightly knit family meeting to love and enjoy God and one another. Full, inclusive acceptance of all God’s people, as is demonstrated in the Old and New Testaments, has been God’s plan from time immemorial.

Old Testament Teachings

Implicit from the beginning of creation God has always intended for humans to be in community as “family” (Eph 3:14). From the Creation Story (Gen 1:27), it is clear that God never intended for humans to be alone. Demonstrating His disdain towards this, He created Eve for Adam as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone so there would be an unending identification

with and reliance on one another. With this union, He inaugurated the first “family” and walked with it as friend with friend prior to the Fall. Implied in this metanarrative is God’s desire for, “humans to identify one with the other in close, loving and relationally interdependence”^{xxiv} similar to that which the Trinity enjoys continuously. From creation’s formative years, to the present, humans innately possess a gregarious nature with a desire to be together in community instead of being isolated and alone.

God’s intent for humanity’s social connectedness is further affirmed in the marriage covenant by which a man and woman become ‘one flesh’ in community and multiply this “community” by having offspring. Through families, God garnishes His world with blessings as children are taught the parent’s godly worldviews of righteousness. This is best demonstrated, in scripture, after He called Jacob, through a dream, (Gen 32:28) and chose Jacob’s twelve sons as the foundation blocks for the nation (Gen 35:22) He called Israel. From Israel’s beginnings, to the time it reached Canaan, the people traveled together, ate together, and worship Jehovah together in close community association as – during both good and bad times – as family over which was YHWH both God and Father (Jer 9:21).

The following factors allow one to draw these conclusions. First, the continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant by which God guaranteed Abram and the following generations the land He gave Abram would be their possession from generation to generation (Gen 17:7-8). Second, God calls Israel his “first-born son” (Exod 4:22-23) and throughout its history – even when it rebels against Him – He provides for it and protects it with fatherly care. Third, Hebraic education – which was faithfully taught by the parents – including the annually celebrated feasts, linked each generation to its past history and “heroes”, to the religious demands taught in Mosaic Law, the Torah, and the Decalogue and to the God “who had proved himself to be the Almighty, the El Shaddai and the Rock of Israel.”^{xxv} Such practice was normative from the time Aaron

received instruction from the Lord “teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses” (Lev 10:11). Fourth, God’s stipulation marriage should only be between male and female of the Hebraic clan, “so shall not the inheritance of the children of Israel remove from tribe to tribe: (Num 36:6), and so unwavering allegiance to Jehovah – as Father – throughout the ages, might be maintained one generation to the next (Prov 17:17). Fifth, Jewish families often employed purchased slaves as providers for the household, but during the Year of Jubilee, they often offered them manumissions and invited them in as full members of the Jewish family and faith (Exod 20:8-10, cf. Judg 17-18) as a commemoration of how God brought them into “family” while they were slaves in Egypt. Fifth, through the lineage of Joseph – Mary’s espoused husband – which flowed back to Abraham, Israel’s familial connectedness is affirmed, demonstrating the significance of the family line (Matt 1:1-7).

Two classic, valued Old Testament examples of the whole people of God working and worshipping together come from Nehemiah’s account of rebuilding Jerusalem. After gaining permission from the king to travel to Jerusalem and to rebuild the city’s walls, Nehemiah accepts resources from ungodly nations and assembles his Jewish comrades for the work. Nehemiah 3 describes how Nehemiah assembled the workers in groups of their trades and abilities. After the groups were assembled, each member with a sword in one hand and a tool in the other, young and old according to his or her abilities, talents, and creative gifts, “and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work” (Neh 4:6).

Later, after the walls were rebuilt, Nehemiah held a dedication service with all the people – “men, women and all those who could hear with understanding” (Neh 8:2) – collectively joining him for worship. Throughout the dedication, Nehemiah did not direct it or restrict the attendees to participate as spectators. Instead, he gathered the Levites to act as worship leaders (Neh 4:4), he invited fellow leaders to join him

at the pulpit (Neh 8:4),^{xxvi} and he invited Ezra, the Scribe, to read the Law of Moses. To demonstrate his appreciation of the “labourers who helped build the wall” he invited older, mature and gifted workers to “cause others to learn the law” (Neh 8:7),^{xxvii} and he invited the entire congregation to worship YHWH joyfully with him (Neh 8:9).^{xxviii} Full confidence in the talents, abilities and gifts of hospitality is recognized by Nehemiah at the close of the dedication. Demonstrating this, he tells them, “Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10).

The possible reason the people, collectively, were excited to work and worship together was they mutually recognized “the hand of his God was upon him” (Neh 2:18), as he honourably directed the project and summoned them to contribute to its final good end through whatever means and talents or abilities they possessed. With this persuasion about Nehemiah’s collaborative and cooperative spirit, and the integrity of the work, the people quickly responded saying, “Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.” (Neh 2:18).

Teachings from Christ

From Christ’s earliest teachings, it is clear His primary purpose in coming to earth was to be the “redemptive intermediary between a Holy God and an unrighteous humanity” as He completed the Father’s will by seeking and saving the lost (John 3:16-21). With this, He desired that those, to whom He would give authority to be called the “Sons of God,” (John 1:13) would become a formative, integrated, and interconnected community, or “family”, and receive training regarding loving and honouring one another, the lordship of Christ, eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven.^{xxix}

For Christ this community – family – was to be the Church, a universal collective of like-minded, spiritually

Recommendations for the Congregation

Although a great number of recommendations have been suggested for pastors and for seniors to improve seniors' gifted body worship during the weekly services, further recommendations are offered for the collective congregation if there is to be a marked improvement in seniors' public activity.

Reflect on God's Purpose for the Church to be unified in Ministry

The congregation needs to reflect on God's purpose for establishing it, that being for instruction in the apostle's doctrines, the breaking of bread, fellowship and prayers (Acts 2:42). Indicated from these four "ministries" is God's underlying desire for the "body" to be unified in Christ as Lord (John 17) and with each other as "members of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10) that extends brotherly love one to another liberally by inviting one another to join in body ministry.

From these inferences, it is clear the local church is a community of like-minded believers, collectively gathering together because of God's love, grace, and mercy demonstrated in salvation equally to all. Because every believer has come to faith in Christ through the same process and have been sanctified unto good works, congregants need to set aside any spirit of competition that might arise within the body. In its place congregants need to fervently strive to be congenial one to another to the extent, if possible they are at peace one with another by "esteeming the brother or sister better than oneself" (Phil 2:3). As behavior of this nature is manifested throughout the entire fellowship, believers will begin to act as God's dear children who "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Eph 5:2). Within time, as this becomes a fully accepted practice within the church, the congregants will regularly "esteem one another highly in love for their works

sake” and ministry contributions (1 Thess 5:13). The final, commended outcome of this godly, discerned and dignified conduct will be that the church will be at “peace on with the other” and the labour of love will increase to the praise of God’s glory. Churches that harmonize with each other in such manifested acceptance of each other cannot help but grow numerically and spiritually as God’s shekinah glory continually overshadows the people because they are walking in obedience to the statutes of their God (2 Chr 7:1-22).

Share Public Ministry as Collaborative Coworkers – Not as Competitors

Very tempting by some members of the church – especially those who are “charter members” or those who have fulfilled a ministry role for a lengthy period of time – is to take ownership of a ministry to the exclusion of others. Such conduct can seriously constrict the progression of others in their gift use. Congregations need to continuously be refreshed in remembering that God gives, according to His providential timing the gifts that are required for spiritual edification and formation in His church (I Cor 14:2). Such being the case, in accordance with His administration of these gifts, He may need to disqualify one’s gift (John 13:30)^{xxx} to elevate another’s (Acts 1:24-25), or He may need to consolidate two or more gifts (Acts 11:28-30)^{xxx} for the profit of the church’s effectiveness in ministry. So congregations are prepared to accept this “ordering of the gifts”, a resignation from membership control over the gifts needs to be accepted and advanced.

Most congregations are accustomed to an orderly and controlled use of ministry gifts. Although Paul stipulates that everything, relating to the use of gifts, must be done “decently and in order”, and that the “spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophet” (1 Cor 12:32), sometimes such constraints may disqualify a person from exercising his or her gift, especially as related to the “manifestation gifts”.^{xxxii} Maintaining order is a

welcome concern of the body, but when this extends to human disqualification of the use of any or all of these gifts because of fear of abuse, the church may have moved to an unwelcome paranoia about God's orderly control over them. In order for congregations to more freely appreciate these manifestation gifts regular biblically centered teaching regarding the person of the Holy Spirit and in His work as related to the gifts for the church needs to be investigated.

Reflect on the Church Being “The Household of Faith”

If liberty in the whole people of God employing the Holy Spirit endowed gifts for the praise of His glory is to be a welcome and active element in the local church, congregations need to gain an understanding of the church being the household of faith – *tous oikeious tens pisteos*.

The term *oikeious* designates one belonging to “a family”, either through natural birth or through adoption with a full welcome of the individual's personality, abilities and gifts which are invited for use in the family to the good of the collective community. Whenever the term is used in the genitive case, as it is in the New Testament, the term designates a spiritual kinship among members of the community wherein all everyone's activities are equally accepted as a welcome offering for the sole benefit of the “head” of the community because each member is fulfilling his or her task according to the gift he or she has received from the master.^{xxxiii}

Within the Greco-Roman culture of 1st Century AD, the household was the foundational corner stone for the sanctity and stability of society. In the household ethos there were three predominantly established division of authority, these being the Father over the child, the husband over the wife and the master over the slave (Eph 6). With these divisions there was established a clear unquestioned distinction made between who the “head” in each relationship and who was required to submit

to the head. At no time was there an anticipation or expectation that the roles would change.

Jesus borrows from this Greco-Roman concept of the household in establishing His church. But, instead of continuing the sharp, harsh and disparaging separation between Himself and his people, He formulates a new household in which the people of God have a common identity as sons and daughters, as coworkers and as heirs to the Kingdom. This is possible because through His death, burial and resurrection He, forever, has broken down the walls of partition and has made us one in Him (Eph 2:14). For this new creation, by this one act, the hierarchy of power previously known among the people has been demolished. Now, because everyone in the new household is esteemed as being equal before the Master and before each other, there is a new manifesto which calls the people to submit to one another because they have already submitted to Him.

Understanding this as the underlying principle for the church's existence deconstructs any and all competition for ministry among the people of God. Everyone, regardless of age, sex, colour, economic or social status, has a first place and fully welcome opportunity to use their gifts. Why? Because they are part of the household, they have been delegated as gift bearers by the "Head of the Church", they have an endowed and expected ministry role to fulfill, and they are doing it to the praise of His glory, rather to the accommodation of man.

As congregations unreservedly accept and implement this as a foundational principle of their existence, the local churches will become more fervent and excited to invite members – including discouraged, disconnected, and disassociated seniors – to participate in ministry by contributing their assigned talents and gifts for the good of the community and to the praise of His glory. Scripture teaches this principle, now the church needs to do so as well! A marked, accelerated tone in ministry excitement will take place as this happens.

Chapter 6 Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this paper, as stated in the Proposal, was to examine whether seniors' God given talents, abilities, and ministry-gifts are being employed within local churches during the weekly public worship services. If the evidence of the study demonstrates seniors' gifts are not being used, the author further proposed to investigate the mitigating factors which inhibit them from being employed. On completion of these two investigations, the author also proposed to provide biblically based recommendations whereby seniors' gifts can be endorsed and effectively used.

The investigation regarding whether seniors are using their gifts during public worship is important to the author because recently many seniors have mentioned their concerns why their gifts are not being used to the author. With this, the author, while visiting many evangelical churches in the Vancouver lower mainland, also noticed that seniors' gifts are not being used. Noting this lack of opportunity for seniors to

exercise their gifts in churches that expound that believers are gifted for ministry has also motivated him to research this issue.

The method used to gain insight regarding the validity of the claim was historical and descriptive. The research chosen for this project is phenomenological because it systematically and rigorously explores a specific problem within a particular location, but with potentially strong, broad generalizability, to generate new knowledge or confirm existing knowledge. Because the proposed Project is concerned with “whether seniors are being excluded from active contributory ministry in the public worship service,” the author will need to discover if there is supportive evidence of this by interviewing seniors and pastors, observing regularly held Sunday worship services and by examining available literature on this phenomena.

In order to discover if there were others who shared the same or similar concerns about the matter to be examined, the author did an extensive and intensive Review of the Literature available that is related to the topic. At the conclusion of the investigation conducted, which included the perusal of secular and religious books, journal articles, website and newspaper articles, it was clear that writers from both the secular and the religious persuasion also recognized that seniors talents, abilities, interests and gifts were being unjustly and shamefully ignored and forgotten because of a new phenomenon called “Ageism” which may have had its birth in the early to mid-1960s. This new dynamic of derision towards seniors developed as society eliminated seniors of contributory value within it because they possessed slow mobility, they lacked agility and competency in performing certain activities, they required extended medical care, or because they no longer held a full time job by which they could remain financial contributors to theirs and society’s good. As further thrusts to deplete seniors of their dignity and contributory worth, society started calling seniors, “The Oldies”, “The Aged”, and “The Old Timers”. The grievous concern, for the author is that seniors, for the greater number, as the influx of this derisive philosophy bombarded them, unfortunately accepted this belittling and

destructive commendation. Now, instead of enjoying the senior years as inventive and invited contributors within their sphere of influence, many seniors unfortunately spend their time in mundane, self-centered and regressive actions that affirm they have accepted that their productive years are ended.

Through the Review of the Literature the author also discovered that derision of seniors has crept into the local churches in North America. This, according to the authors reviewed, is clearly demonstrated by church leaders as they ignore seniors' presence in the church and their ministry gifts they bring to be used during public worship. With these aforementioned conclusions, the evidence from the Review of the Literature also demonstrates that secular and religious sources recognize that the seniors' population will not fade into oblivion. On the other hand, most of the documents examined clearly indicate that the seniors' masses will increase dramatically within the next 10 to 20 years, and programs by which they will be shown value, dignity and worth need to be started immediately.

Having obtained validation from the Review of the Literature that seniors within local churches of North America were being shunned and marginalized from active, public ministry during weekly worship service, the author examined to see if this was problematic in the local churches in the Vancouver Lower Mainland cities of New Westminster, Surrey, White Rock, and Langley, British Columbia. To gain an assessment of what was occurring, the author used three surveys namely, The Pastors' Seniors' Ministry Survey, The Congregant's Seniors' Ministry Survey, and the Author's Weekly Public Service Seniors' Ministry Assessment Survey.

Both the Pastors' and the Congregant Seniors' Surveys were mailed to randomly chosen pastors or seniors in the designated survey areas. Respondents were asked to mail the completed surveys in the #8 pre-stamped and pre-addressed envelope that was included with each survey received. With this, they were also requested not to mark their return with any

personal identifying marks so the results received could be anonymous.

To ascertain how pastors viewed the use of seniors' ministry gifts within the local churches of the survey area, 325 surveys were mailed and 175 were returned. To ascertain how seniors viewed the use of these within the local churches of the survey area, 250 surveys were mailed and 210 were returned. The results, from both the Pastors' and Congregant Seniors' Survey strongly indicate that there are a number of reasons seniors' ministry gifts are not regularly being welcomed or being employed during weekly public worship services. The strongest reasons for the lack of utilizing seniors' gifts, concluded from the responses provided, however, is because there is minimal, if any collaborative discussion between pastors and congregant seniors regarding their ministry gifts and their desire to use them during the public worship service. This is concluded because pastors and seniors alike, state they have not discussed seniors' ministry gifts once with the other within the last two to three years. That seniors' ministry gifts are not being used was further confirmed through the author's weekly viewing of public worship services. During the period of September 2013 to March 2014, the author visited 38 churches, of various denominations, in the survey area. During this time, of the approximate 804 seniors viewed in attendance, he saw only 13 use their gifts in public ministry.

In light of the evidence gained from the Review of the Literature, the returned Pastors' and Congregant's Seniors' Ministry Surveys and the Author's Weekly Public Worship Assessment Survey it is concluded that seniors' ministry gifts and opportunities for them to use them during public worship gatherings for the edification of the local body is limited to the point of exclusion. For believers, who hold to and espouse a biblical worldview, negative and disparaging attitudes regarding seniors' ministry gifts must be disdained. Instead of this, local churches need to offer a continued welcomed appreciation and a positive invitation to the aged to use their gifts as valued and validated contributors in the church because biblical faith

opposes the diminution of humans – the poor the sick, the single, or the aged – for any reason. In God’s economy everyone is His image bearer, created and endowed with creative gifts, talents, abilities and ministries that are designed and provided to be used for the collective good of society. Local churches may have been unconsciously and insidiously infiltrated by the schemes, philosophies and practices of the world. If such has happened, they need to re-examine its practices in light of scripture, and reinvest and reinvent opportunities for seniors to be recognized as providing provocative, proactive and promising use of their gifts.

A higher expectation of conduct, for believers as the “people of God”, is continuously demanded within scripture. Those who have “an ear to hear what the spirit is saying to the church” need to immediately align with it, or face God’s wrath for their willful and continuous disobedience. The Church at Galatia was counseled by Paul to give heed to godly instruction over that of other men or angels (Gal 1:1-9). The author, like Paul, calls the local church to do the same by reading, understanding and implementing scriptural teachings as the first premise for godly conduct in all it does. As this is done, partiality towards seniors will be decreased, if not eliminated and their gifts will become valued and validated as an inseparable part of Kingdom ministry.

Marginalization of seniors that is commonplace within many churches today should be extremely disconcerting and bothersome to all believers because of the division it has brought amongst the generations. But beyond this, every part of the body, the pastors and the seniors along with the youth who eventually will be the aged in the church, must do their part to heal the breach that presently exists between the seniors and the rest of the body. Pastors need to fulfill their role as “shepherds” and walk among the elders close so welcomed invitations to be an active part of the body will be extended to the seniors as they are trained to use their charisma effectively. But the seniors, too, need to show some initiative to ministry by attending church regularly and becoming inventive in

participating as they yield to the direction of the Holy Spirit. As this happens, the congregation will become more aware of their connectedness as the household of faith and a stronger coalition toward collaborative, cooperative ministry will take place. At the end, when everyone works together for the glory of God, every member, including seniors, will be using their gifts effectively to build one another up in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ and the church will become a unified body walking as one in the love, wisdom and power of Christ as it should be!

The comments of John Calahan are worthy of consideration as part of the conclusion. He writes:

About a year ago a senior commented ‘Seniors need a church too!’ He was correct. Some seniors feel that the better years of life are gone and the better years of church life are gone too! Some seniors feel the disdain and rejection that occurs within their church. They have come to accept the fact that the church no longer highly values them. Surely you have heard that the church is looking for younger people. Some churches are even less interested in them except for their money and a number in the attendance count.

Would not it be great to honour our seniors as much as we do the younger generation? Should not the music be designed so that it ministers to them along with the youth? Would not it be great to treat all generations as equals? How about a sermon once in a while honouring seniors? God calls us to honour our aged parents, but he also calls us to honour our seniors. There are many ways we can do this. But, before we can do this we need to recognize that honouring our seniors honours God for, in reality, He is the “Senior of all seniors.”^{xxxiv}

To rectify the problem of seniors’ gift exclusion from public ministry, local churches need to “greet the seniors with a holy kiss” of encourage and hearty gift endorsement whereby

they will be resurrected from the despair of useless to a new life of ministry welcome and utility. Even the smallest grain of mustard seed faith extended by the leadership to seniors in this area could have a colossal change in the seniors' attitude about going to church that is presently held and expressed by many seniors. With this radical, attitudinal change greater interest in the church's ministry, by seniors, will arise and they will be step out with vigor to birth great works in the church for Christ and His Kingdom.

With this "holy kiss" of gift welcome, pastors together with the whole congregation, need to reflect on the biblical instruction regarding gift ministry within the local church. A number of recommendations for creating opportunities for gift ministry by the church, including seniors, have been offered in this paper. These suggestions, although they may be helpful, are extremely limited. With these recommendations, the author also suggests that a yearly seniors' ministry conference be held by local churches in the catchment area by which seniors' gifts can be discovered and used. So seniors' gifts can be further recognized and appreciated as valued, valid and then vigorously welcomed in the local church, a further investigation into the need and the possible creation of a "seniors' gift ministry" curriculum might be done.^{xxxv} The hope is that the seriousness of seniors' marginalization from ministry within the church will compel pastors and congregant to examine further how practical application of some of the recommendations contained in this paper might actively become articulated in the church so the problem investigated and demonstrated to be reality then can be rectified.

End Notes

ⁱ Provided partially in Literature Review.

ⁱⁱ This is defined both in the “Definitions” section of the paper and in the Literature Review. Victor Minichiello and Hal Kendig explain that “Ageism and acute marginalization of seniors with despairing attributes is accredited as starting at 65 years in North America, Australia and parts of Europe. Victor Minichiello and Hal Kendig, “Perceptions and Consequences of Ageism: Views of Older People,” *Ageing and Society* 20, no. 3 (May 2000): 261-263. Richard Ward and Caroline Holland also suggest that Ageism and marginalization become most prominent around 65. According to their investigation, it is during this time that body features change noticeably and radically and incite inferences that an individual’s ability to contribute to the welfare of humanity is ceasing. Richard Ward and Caroline Holland, “‘If I Look Old, I Will Be Treated Old’: Hair and Later Life Image Dilemmas,” *Ageing and Society* 31, no. 2 (February 2011): 288-307.

^{iv} *Canadian Oxford Dictionary*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Senior Citizen.”

^v Abbreviations for Old and New Testament Book names are located in “Books of Bible Abbreviations” on page 157 of this paper. Scripture cited within this document is taken from the King James Version of *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible*, 4th Edition (Indiana, IN: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Co., Inc., 1964).

^{vi} August H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA: The Judson Press, 1970), 516.

^{vii} In suggesting this, the author has not overlooked the immediacy of the influence of sin that distills within humans the need for first place acceptance before respecting others. The author believes that because mankind is created in the “image of God” he possesses kindness and justice as an implicit part of his character with the potential to offer these to his fellow man. However, his sinful nature may have destroyed this natural ability, so he offers these as a learned ability.

^{viii} Being experiences may involve possessions, but are essentially of nonmaterialistic origins. They are exalted feelings of the moment. They are not about tomorrow, but about the feeling one has in the present. They bring the mind Maslow’s description of what he called, peak experiences in which the means becomes more important than the end. He connected this idea to older people returning to their second childhood.

Being experiences are Natural experiences. They are as fresh as the dew-kissed spring morn. They are not sensual equivalents of fast food service. They are without regard to time, therefore, there is no motive getting them fast. They are experiences to be savored. They are beyond the wearing-down effect of the behavioral equivalent of the law of entropy, for unlike possessions and catered experiences, being experiences get better, produce higher highs, the more they are experienced. They become addictive. There is a decidedly strong spiritual quality about being experiences that derives from their timeless qualities, their frequently altruistic nature, and their hypnotic command of more, more, more, like a chant whose repetition raises one’s level of inspiration, rather than induces loss of interest and the onset of boredom. Once a person has discovered the world of being experiences with their whole being, there is no going back to dominance by the more mundane kinds of aspiration. That would be regression, not growth. David B. Wolfe and Robert E. Snyder, *Ageless Marketing: Strategies for Reaching the Hearts and Minds of the New Marketing Majority* (Chicago, IL: Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2003), 253-256.

^{ix} Michael Willet Newheart, “A Humanity of Human Dignity: The Future of Psychological Biblical Interpretation?” *Psychology and Bible Studies* 26 (2011): 8.

^x Jesse Miranda, *The Christian Church in Ministry* (Irving, TX: International Correspondence Institute, 1980), 128-129.

^{xi} This is concluded because: First, whenever Paul sent a letter of instruction or praise he addresses them to the Church of Corinth, the Church of Ephesus, and the Church at Philippi. Second, in writing to the Church at Colossae and Ephesus, the whole family is addressed – husbands, wives, children and slaves – as one, integrated and unified body meeting for instruction in righteousness. Third, Paul treats the church as a collective gathering as he discusses the “service gifts” of Romans 12 and the “ministry gifts” of 1 Corinthians 14. Fourth, Paul treats the church as a collective community/family in Colossians 3 – 4 and in Philippians 2 through which he teaches

graceful interpersonal relationships one towards another because they have put on the New Man in Christ. Fifth, there is no inference teaching in the Old Testament or the New Testament of a segmented meeting of the people of God in small groups. Sixth, when Paul calls the elder of the churches to meet with him, he invites all the elders collectively. He does not do it by regions or by districts, demonstrating the imperativeness that the whole body is together for both worship and teaching whenever gatherings are called.

^{xii} Colson emphatically states it is the Pastors' calling, as shepherd of the church, to train and disciple every congregant so he or she may become effective ministers in and without the church. He writes: The channel through which the Holy Spirit brings truth to the world is the pastor, who teaches it to the laity, who interns translate it and put it to work in the market place, infiltrating the world. The problem in the modern church, however, Ellul says, is that the channel is blocked. The pastor doesn't engage in the secular world in a day-in, day-out basis, and the lay people, who do, tend to keep their faith in a compartment separate from the rest of their life. So Sunday after Sunday congregations sit passively – like spectators watching the entertainment up front – missing the fact that they should be absorbing the truth and applying it to their lives, training to be effective soldiers of the cross. Every part of the church has to be geared for the training (disciplining and equipping) of the local unit that fight this battle. Evangelistic ministries should be directing new believer into the church particular. Discipleship ministries should be working hand-in-hand with local congregations. Specialized ministries – such as service to the disabled, to youth, to executives, to the inner city, to prisoners – should be guiding they meet in to local congregations, even as they are equipping those same local churches with the skill, resources, encouragement, and education they need to do effective ministry in these unique areas. Chuck Colson, *The Body; Being Light in Darkness* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1989), 285-287.

^{xiii} Don Cousins, *Experiencing Leadership: Letting Go of Leadership Heresies* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2008), 142-143.

^{xiv} Jim Gilmartin, email message to author November, 13, 2012.

^{xv} Paula Dobriansky, Richard M. Suzman, and Richard J. Hodes, *Why Population Aging Matters: A Global Perspective* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of State Publication, 2007), 5.

^{xvi} Australia, Department of Health and Ageing, *Ageing and Aged Care in Australia*, (Melbourne, AU: Department of Health and Ageing, 2008), 1.

^{xvii} Canada, Chief Public Health Officer, *The Chief Public Health Officer's Report on The State of Public Health in Canada, 2010: Growing Older—Adding Life to Years* (Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010), http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cphorsphc-respcacsp/2010/fr-rc/pdf/cpho_report_2010_e.pdf (accessed January 21, 2013).

^{xviii} Win Arn and Charles Arn, *Catch the Age Wave: A Handbook for Effective Ministry With Senior Adults* (Kansas, MI: Beacon Hill Press, 1999), 15.

^{xix} C. Anne Davis, "A Critical Agenda for Senior Adult Ministries," *Journal of Family Ministry* 9, no. 2 (1995): 38.

^{xx} Victor Minicheillo, Jan Browne, and Hal Kendig, "Perceptions and Consequences of Ageism: Views of Older People", *Ageing and Society* 20, no. 3 (May 2000): 260-261.

^{xxi} Leslie A. Morgan and Suzanne Kunkel, *Aging, Society and the Life Course*, 3rd ed. (New York: Springer Publications, 2007), 4, EBSCO Publishing, eBook Collection.

^{xxii} Bernard S. Cayne, ed., "Marginalization", *The New Lexicon Webster's Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language, Canadian Edition* (NY: Lexicon Publications, Inc.), 610.

^{xxiii} Holly Catterton Allen, "Bringing the Generations Together: Support from Learning Theory," *Lifelong Faith* 4 (2009): 3-4.

^{xxiv} Rod Wilson, *Counseling and Community: Using Church Relationships to Reinforce Counseling* (Toronto, ON: Word Publishing, 1995), 63.

^{xxv} C. F. Kiel and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Inc., 1971), 331.

^{xxvi} Nehemiah does not do the dedication intensely leadership directed, although he could have because he was the manager/director of the project. Instead, he invites active participants as he is shown by having Mattithiah, Shema, Anaiah, Urijah, Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, stand on his right hand; and having Pedaiah, Mishael, Malchiah, Hashum, Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam stand on his left. (Nehemiah 8:4)

^{xxvii} As a further indication of collaborative, member participation in the dedication, Nehemiah invites also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, so they could "cause the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place" (Neh 8:7).

^{xxviii} All the people collectively join in the worship as a demonstration of equal participation in the work of the Lord. Nehemiah said unto all the people, "This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law" (Neh 8:9).

^{xxix} This is concluded because of Jesus' continuous teaching of the Twelve regarding the Kingdom of God through both direct statements and parables.

^{xxx} Judas Iscariot's participation as "a disciple of Christ" was disqualified because Satan had entered into him and caused him to betray Christ to the High Priests.

By being disqualified, Matthias was elevated to being a disciple as a replacement to Judas.

^{xxx} Paul and Barnabas—after Paul’s salvation on the Road to Damascus—spent three years together in the work of ministry before Barnabas recommended Paul for public ministry before the Jerusalem Council. After hearing Barnabas’ recommendations regarding Paul’s lifestyle change and his attitude towards the gospel, and his effectiveness in declaring biblical truth among the Gentiles, the Council sent him and Barnabas to Antioch where they were both heartily welcomed by the church there.

^{xxxii} “Manifestation gifts” for this paper include “a word of wisdom”, “the word of knowledge”, “the gifts of healing”, “the working of miracles”, “prophecy”, “discerning of spirits”, “diverse kinds of tongues” and “interpretation of tongues” (1 Cor 12:8-11).

^{xxxiii} James H. Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament: Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton Limited, 1972), 440.

^{xxxiv} John Calahan, “Does Your Church Value Seniors?” *Never Thirsty* http://www.neverthirsty.org/pp/feature-articles/200907/does_your_church_value-seniors.html (accessed November 19, 2011), 3-4.

^{xxxv} A starting point for development of this curriculum could be Charles E. Fuller’s “Spiritual Ministry Inventory Quiz” which can be downloaded from http://www.exchristian.net/images/wagner_modified_houts.pdf.

As an adjunct to this, those considering to develop a curriculum of this nature are also encouraged to examine the materials presented by Dan Woodard in *Unwrapping God’s Gifts: Discover Your Unique Ministry Giftedness* published by the Native Evangelical Fellowship of Canada in 2003. This book discusses issues such as “Identifying Your Spiritual Gift,” “Developing Your Spiritual Gift,” “Identifying Your Team Role,” and “Using God’s Gifts – Being the Church.” This book was used by the author while pastoring Harvest Christian Fellowship, Maple Ridge 2007 to 2011 and is used by many North American Baptist Churches

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