Worship and Fellowship Suggestions for
2013 Older Adult
Recognition
Sunday
As Christians, we have the privilege of relationship to God through Jesus Christ. That privilege comes with an obligation – the obligation to share our stories of the faith with one another. The history of our faith is not limited to the Scripture stories. In our churches we have many wise and deeply committed older adults who have many stories of faith to share. They are a vital part of our church’s witness to the world.

In our churches, too often we are not intentional about engaging our older adults in ministry. Sadly in our worship and program planning, we often do not consider that our spiritual growth and church experience can take on new life as we age. We fail to remember that one of the blessings of aging is the opportunity to leave a legacy. There is a rich history and tradition in our churches and denomination that only those who have experienced it can pass on to younger generations and new church members. The stories of the faith learned and experienced by our older adults need to be honored and celebrated.

In April 2008, General Conference adopted legislation inviting congregations to celebrate Older Adult Recognition Day each year during the month of May. The Virginia Annual Conference was well ahead of this legislation when in 2006 the first Sunday in May of each year was designated as Older Adult Recognition Sunday. Through an Older Adult Recognition Sunday, United Methodists are invited to show appreciation and support for older adults who continue to enrich and strengthen our faith communities. This Sunday should also call the church to action in addressing the needs of older adults in the congregation and community.

Invite your church to celebrate Older Adult Recognition Sunday! Your congregation can choose the first Sunday in May or another date that best fits your need. Join your neighbors not only to recognize what older adults bring to our congregations, but also to help them continue playing a vital role in weaving a unique and lasting community fabric.

For additional resource help visit; visit the website for the General Board of Discipleship, select “Minister to People,” then “Older Adult Ministries. The direct link is: http://www.gbod.org/minister-to-people/older-adult-ministries

The following worship service suggestions are offered by the Virginia Conference Older Adult Council. Tailor the suggestions to your congregation. For more information about Older Adult Ministries, contact:

Older Adult Ministries Council
Center for Lay Leadership Excellence
Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church
PO Box 5606, Glen Allen, VA 23058
Phone: (804) 521-1100 or (800) 768-6040 ext. 153 or 154
Website: www.vaumc.org
One of the lectionary readings for Sunday, May 5, 2013, (John 14:23-29) sparked conversation among members of the Older Adult Council about memorizing Bible verses and passages as children. Many of the members could still recite scripture they had learned in children’s Sunday School. The discussion soon moved to the importance of being able to call upon these passages throughout all of life’s stages as well as the importance across our life spans of prayer. As a result, the materials which follow were written with two possible themes for a celebration of Older Adult Recognition Sunday in mind.

"Recite to Excite" based upon John 14:23-29

"Pray with Expectation(s)" based Luke 2:21-38

Call to Worship

Call to Worship From John 14:23-29

Leader: Jesus said, “those who love me will keep my word.”
People: Lord, Teach us to keep your word.
Leader: Jesus said, “the Holy Spirit will teach you everything.”
People: Come, Holy Spirit.
Leader: Jesus said, “do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid, be at peace.”
All: Lord, we rejoice in your love and Word and Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship From Luke 2:22-38

Leader: Simeon was devoted and the Holy Spirit rested on him.
Leader: The prophet Anna worshipped the Lord day and night.
People: We will worship the Lord.
Leader: We seek redemption.
All: Let us worship and praise the Lord.

Written by Joan Tipton, Farmville District

Prayer

God of wonder; God of joyful expectation: in our baptisms we have become partakers of your salvation, your light, and your glory! We pray that as our days stretch into the twilight of earthly life, that we might yet behold your salvation as brightly as on the day we first believed. We pray that our lives would not be dimmed by the passing of years, but brightened by the expectation of Your Son’s coming in glory. We honor those saints of the ages who have stood steadfast and unwavering in their faith. May we join them daily in worship, service, and prayer, that we might also be found faithful at your appearing. May we value their testimonies of life and faith, and may their stories point us toward a richer understanding of Your Word and Spirit. This we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Shepherd who feeds, comforts, and refreshes our souls. Amen.

Written by Rev. Bob Weeks, Harrisonburg District
Litany

Leader: Heavenly Father, full of gracious concern for all people,
People: Use us in your service, O Lord.
Leader: Wherever older persons have outlived their family and friends and are engulfed in loneliness and yearn for contacts with other people,
People: Use us in your service, O Lord.
Leader: Help those elders living alone in need of assistance to find willing persons who can help them with meals, reading, writing, transportation, housework, yard maintenance, or other tasks,
People: Use us in your service, O Lord.
Leader: When senior citizens lack sufficient funds to make ends meet and cannot afford both food and medicine,
People: Use us in your service, O Lord.
Leader: If there are older folk in need of persons to read Scripture, pray with and for them, or discuss questions of faith,
People: Use us in your service, O Lord, through Christ our Lord, we pray.
AMEN.

Written by Rev. David Lewis, James River District

Responsive Prayer

Leader: O Lord our God, You know that the younger ones among us usually give little thought to old age,
People: Whereas the older folk are often either fearful of its approach or dismayed at its presence.
Leader: Help us, O God, to regard old age in a balanced way
People: Mindful of both its disadvantages and its blessings.
Leader: Enable us to be sympathetic towards the elders who are infirm in body or confused in mind.
People: May we show patience, love, and understanding towards them.
Leader: Open our eyes to the opportunities of the more mature years,
People: As we witness the zest for life, the enjoyment of more free time, and the spiritual growth of seniors who are more blessed than some others.
Leader: Bless each of us, regardless of his or her age,
People: And assist us to live our lives in such a way that we will maximize the positive and avoid complaining about the negatives,
Leader: That we may glorify your name
People: And be a blessing to others. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Written by Rev. David Lewis, James River District
Hymn Suggestions

"Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah"  UMH 127
"I Want To Be Ready"  UMH 722
"Come, Thou Font of Every Blessing"  UMH 400
"He Lives"  UMH 310
"God Will Take Care of You"  UMH 130
"Rejoice, The Lord is King"  UMH 716
"Faith of Our Mothers"  Use music from UMH 710
"What A Friend We Have in Jesus"  UMH 526
"My Hope is Built"  UMH 368
"Blessed Assurance"  UMH 369
"Amazing Grace"  UMH 378
"Victory In Jesus"  UMH 370
"I Love to Tell The Story"  UMH 156
"O How I Love Jesus"  UMH 170
"It is Well With My Soul"  UMH 377
"How Great Thou Art"  UMH 77
"Grace Greater Than Our Sin"  UMH 365
"Great is Thy Faithfulness"  UMH 140

"Just A Closer Walk With Thee"  TFWS 2158
"I'll Fly Away"  TFWS 2282
"God is So Good"  TFWS 2056

Suggested by Rev. William Freeman, Richmond District

Sermon or Other Fellowship Activity

Here is an activity that might be quite informative and exciting for all of the church family. In the months preceding Older Adult Sunday, have a few in the church family visit with homebound older adults in your community. Ask permission to video tape/record the visit and ask some interesting questions such as:

- What are your first memories of attending Sunday School and Worship?
- What was Sunday School like in "those" days?
- What part did children play in the church?
- Until becoming homebound have you always attended church?
- Recite your favorite Bible verse.
- Share your favorite Bible story.
- Tell us what you enjoyed most as a member of the church family.
- What is something that you would like most from your church family today?
- What wisdom can you share with us today learned from your many years of experiences?

Share these treasures on Older Adult Sunday!

Written by Annie Pierce, Harrisonburg District
Children’s Message

Do you like promises? I do. There are lots of great promises, aren’t there? *Ask the children if they can think of promises they have made.*

When a baby is baptized in the church, their parents and all the other members promise to teach the baby about Jesus as they grow up. The members promise to be the baby’s church family. That means the baby has all kinds of church family aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins, who promise to love them and show God’s love to them. Maybe your parents have promised to do something you like to do, if you do your chores. Maybe someone you love, who lives a long way away has promised to come to visit when they can. Promises are usually about something good happening in the future.

When a couple gets married, they promise to love each other no matter what comes their way, right? They give each other rings to show everyone that they have made these promises. *(You might give each of the children a toy ring, or have them make a ring out of construction paper strips with a glue stick depending on time constraints or you can show them your own wedding band. If you make the paper rings, talk about them while you are doing the gluing.)* Our rings won’t last very long, but real wedding rings are made of gold or silver and they are meant to last a long time and show the couple are still keeping their promises.

Christians make a promise to follow Jesus when they join the church; do what he has taught them is good and to love God and love all of their neighbors around the world. Loving isn’t just a feeling in your heart, but Jesus told us loving is doing what he would do. Jesus has told us to keep the Word of Love. Our promise to Jesus can show just like a ring on our finger. Do you know how our promises to Jesus can show? By the way we treat other people. If we are kind and loving and caring our promises will show, just like a shiny wedding ring. We need help to do that, though. Let’s ask for help from the Holy Spirit to keep our promises to Jesus.

Let us pray: Dear God, we want to show love like Jesus, but we need help. Please send your Holy Spirit to teach us how to do that. We ask this in the name of your son, our brother, Jesus. Amen

*Written by Rev. Suzanne Schmid Spencer, Eastern Shore District*

This passage is in the Christmas story but such a testimony of the faithfulness of God to those who hear and believe – who trust God at His Word.

**FAITHFULNESS OF GOD**

Simeon and Anna trusted God:

- Story occurs 8 days after Jesus’ birth – Jewish Law required his circumcision and naming
- Mary and Joseph followed the law faithfully – respectfully honored God. They go to the temple knowing their son is special – God’s Son—but may have been wondering what might happen.

What happened?

- Simeon was old and waiting for the comfort of Israel. Scripture said he was there in the Temple “in the Spirit.” Jewish interpretation is that this location was for priests only; he arrives to this special area.
- Simeon moves “in the Spirit” to where Mary and Joseph are with the infant Jesus.
- Simeon had received a PROMISE that he would live to see the redemption (of Israel) prior to his death (the birth of the Messiah). Imagine hearing that specifically; and “believing what he heard.” We have no idea how long he waited and watched.
- There had been no prophets for 400 years. God seemed silent except for a few devoted ones as Mary, Joseph, Zacharias, and yet Simeon waited anticipating what was to come.
- Simeon believed God. He was confident, trusting and devoted.

**ANTICIPATION**

- Somewhere in his life, Simeon knew how to listen to and for God with confidence, a deep trust. His attentiveness to the Lord and the Temple exhibited his love and devotion to God
- Simeon knew that he would see Jesus. How?? We don’t know for sure, but he did get what God promised. Hearing and believing and waiting WITH ANTICIPATION brought the results God promised
Anna was a widow 84 years old who devoted herself to God and the Temple. There is no hint of resentfulness in the early loss of her husband. Instead she devoted herself whole heartedly to being in the Temple – likely faithfully serving.

◊ By “chance” she arrived at temple and saw the child with Simeon
◊ When she heard, she too knew and believed. She knew without hesitation and told all who were looking for redemption of Israel that He was born.

Both Simeon and Anna were older, but lived for God – responding and serving faithfully.

They had years of learning, listening, trusting and being aware of God working out the plans of the universe. What wisdom and what a testimony of developing a living relationship with our God to point of knowing how to be where He wants you to be that you might be blessed.

The people in the Birth event (Mary, Joseph, Shepherds, Simeon, Anna) were people who spent time with God; believed in God; and were open to hear and trust God.

Get the idea? Though God can speak to anyone any time, God frequently addresses those who are devoted to and spend time getting to know and serving Him and who know He fulfills His Word.

Written by Rev. Carol Bookwalter, York River District

Did you know that...?

• According to the Association of Certified Senior Advisors, by 2020 the number of people in the US over age 50 will grow by 74%. The number of people under 50 will grow by only 1%. In the United States today, persons over 65 now outnumber teenagers by nearly two to one.

• One in 3 adults over the age of 21 is from the Boomer Generation. The 55-and-older group will be the largest growing demographic over the next 25 years.

• If every church only reached out to older adults, each church could grow by 5% a year.