



*Worship Suggestions for an*  
***Older Adult***  
***Recognition***  
***Sunday***

The Visions  
and Dreams  
That Fill Our  
Lives –  
Young and  
Old Alike

## **In Pentecost story from the second chapter of Acts, we read:**

In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.

*(NRSV, Acts 2:17)*

**Far too often, we think only of the dreams and visions for the future of our young men and women. We plan our church programs for those we feel can “grow” the church. We seek out “new” leadership for our committees and ministries. The money in our budgets goes to Christian education for our children, youth, and young adults and to activities to support these age groups and families. We are not intentional about engaging our older adults in ministry.**

**We fail to remember that one of the blessings of aging is the opportunity for new beginnings, new dreams and visions for the later years of our lives. Sadly, in our worship and program planning, we do not consider the unlimited potential and opportunities for ministry that older adults can offer to our congregations. Serving and ministering with and for others can take on new life as we age. But there is also the history and tradition of our churches and denomination that only those with experience can pass on to younger generations and new church members. The legacy of older adults needs to be honored and celebrated.**

**Celebrating Older Adult Recognition Sunday provides an opportunity to change our way of thinking, to share our dreams and visions together. There is so much for us to learn together, so many ways for us to support and care for one another, so many ministries for us to embrace – together, old and young alike!**

### **Why Is This Recognition Important?**

According to the most recent statistics from the U.S. Administration on Aging:

- About one in every 8 Americans is an older adult (12.3% of the population).
- Over 2.0 million people celebrated their 65<sup>th</sup> birthdays in 2002.
- The number of Americans aged 45-64 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 38% during this decade.
- By the year 2030, the older adult population will more than double – to about 71.5 million.
- People reaching age 65 have an average life expectancy of 83 years.

Within our denomination, we know that fifty percent of the membership of The United Methodist Church is 60 years of age or older.

## How Should We Celebrate Older Adult Recognition Sunday?

An Older Adult Recognition Sunday provides the opportunity for a congregation to celebrate the gifts and contributions of older adults, to honor the traditions and legacy of our elders. This Sunday should also call the church to action in addressing the needs of older adults in the congregation and community.

There are many times when a service of recognition of this type may be held. A few suggestions include:

- During the month of May, which is recognized as Older Americans Month by the U.S. Administration on Aging and Adult Abuse Prevention Month.
- The Sunday following Labor Day, which follows Grandparents Day.
- During the month of November, which is recognized as National Family Caregivers Month by the U.S. Administration on Aging.
- Pentecost Sunday
- Heritage Sunday

A Sunday set aside to recognize older adults gives every congregation the opportunity to challenge our inclusion of all people into the full life of the church. This can be a time when older adults can offer their gifts and graces to the congregation and to God as participants, liturgists, and leaders in this celebration. As you celebrate this special Sunday, let it be an opportunity for the congregation to focus on the needs of older adults. Use it as a time to address the accessibility of the church buildings, to look more closely at programs and ministries, and to listen...to listen to the voices of the older adults as they share their dreams and visions as well as their experiences along their spiritual journeys.

The following worship service outline is suggested based upon the theme of “*The Visions and Dreams That Fill Our Lives – Young and Old Alike.*” Tailor the recognition service to your congregation.

For more information about these materials, programs of the Older Adult Council of the Virginia Conference, or specific church needs for Older Adult Ministries, contact:

Lay Life and Work ♦ Disabilities ♦ Older Adult Ministries Office  
Virginia Conference of The United Methodist Church  
PO Box 1719, 10330 Staples Mill Road, Glen Allen, VA 23060  
Phone: (804) 521-1100 or (800) 768-6040 ext. 153 or 154  
Fax: (804) 521-1178  
Website: [www.vaumc.org](http://www.vaumc.org)



## Worship Suggestions

### Call to Worship

Leader: We gather together as the people of God,  
**People: With hopes, dreams, and visions.**  
Leader: As the Body of Christ, we honor the gifts of all,  
**People: Guided by the Spirit we minister together – young and old alike.**  
**All: Let our worship be only the beginning of what is yet to come!**

### Suggested Opening Hymns

*O God, Our Help in Ages Past*  
*Be Thou My Vision*

*The United Methodist Hymnal #117*  
*UMH #451*

### Old Testament Reading

#### Psalm 148

May be done responsively – *United Methodist Hymnal #861*

### Remembering Our Call to Minister Together:

*After each prayer and petition, our response will be: “Lord, hear our prayer.”*

Creator God, this and every morning we give you thanks for the visions, the dreams, the experiences that fill our lives from birth through our aging. We praise you for the gifts you give each person. Help us accept ourselves and honor one another as members of your family, regardless of age or other differences. Let us love with your love, which values every person. *“Lord, hear our prayer.”*

O God, help us to remember that we are all called to follow you, not be led by the culture of the world around us. Inspire us to greater understanding of one another’s needs, here in this church and in our community. Show us the way to be with each other. Grant us the compassion and patience to do your work, not as individuals or different age groups, but together, inspired by the example of Jesus. *“Lord, hear our prayer.”*

Gracious God, we give you thanks for those who taught us the faith, who shared their beliefs with us. We are grateful for all those who have set examples for us to follow. Help us to know that same fire of your Spirit. For those of us who are younger in years, let us learn from those who have traveled further on their journeys of faith. For those of us with much to share, let us be good teachers and models of your unending love. As we

learn from one another, we ask that we may all come to more clearly know your presence and power in our lives. *“Lord, hear our prayer.”*

O God, grant us the gifts of grace, hope, kindness, forgiveness and love to equip us for the years that lay before us. May fears and uncertainties be transformed into quiet confidence. May each new day be received as a sacred trust and lived to your glory. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

## **Children’s Story**

Invite an older member of the congregation to share what the church was like when he/she was a child, emphasizing how our traditions and stories are passed on from generation to generation, despite the changes in our world. Share the heritage.

## **New Testament Reading**

Acts 2: 14-21

## **Message**

*The Visions and Dreams That Fill Our Lives – Young and Old Alike*

There are visions and dreams as well as history that we all share and need to embrace – together. Message starters may include:

- What impact can the words of verse 17 have on your congregation’s ability to break down barriers to spiritual growth brought about by aging?
- What stand is God calling you and your church to take to make the dreams and visions of young and old alike come to fulfillment?
- In the Pentecost story, we don’t focus on verse 17 – on the dreams and visions of all ages – today. How can this be emphasized?

## **Suggested Closing Hymns**

*In the Midst of New Dimensions*

*The Faith We Sing* #2238

*My Hope is Built*

UMH #368

*Great is Thy Faithfulness*

UMH #140

*We Are the Church*

UMH #558

*(This hymn could also be sung by an intergenerational small group as the prelude, offertory selection, or benediction.)*

It is suggested that the recognition service be followed by a time of fellowship or the sharing of a meal. Feature several of the older adults in your congregation through music, the sharing of stories of the history of the church, or other program. Emphasize the need to be inclusive of all ages in the gathering. Decorate the fellowship area with items of historical significance to those older adults involved. These items will also share the legacy of the older adults.