

Worship Suggestions Celebrating

The International Day of the Older
Person

Sunday 1st October 2017

The International Day of the Older Person

As Christians, we have the privilege of sharing a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This relationship can span a whole lifetime. From the very young to the very old, God is interested, active, and seeks always to draw us closer to Godself and to transform and equip our lives for a life of loving service. We might sense something of God's presence throughout the ages when for example we marvel at how tiny newborn fingers might curl around ours; and we might marvel too at the hands of very old, folded on lap, fingers long, with spots and deep wrinkles, and at the many years they have worked and lived. Both are beautiful. Both are made in God's image. Both witness to the majesty and wonder of our God to whom we are fully known, and fully belong.

In the Anglican Diocese of Wellington, which spans from the capital up the Island to Ohakune, and to which I belong, for the last five years we have embarked on a journey of change. Amazing change that strengthens and equips us daily to lean into our mission, and to proclaim with unity "*We are family, we are disciples, we care for the last, the lost, the least.*" It's a magnificent shift in church culture. It is a transformative shift that has flung open our doors to embrace all to whom the Body of Christ is not yet called home, and is making space in Herself to usher-in with a soft and repentant heart people who have been overlooked, ignored, or forgotten in previous times. It is a change that has brought the virtues of truth-telling, mutuality, integrity, and a renewed sense of fun and vigour as people in our Diocese walk the Christian way. Our older saints in the church are too challenged to catch the vision-line, and many have to the great benefit of our family.

Our older saints in the Church are some of whom have walked the Christian way for the longest. Many have walked it through harrowing times. Times of war and rationing. Times of ill health. Times of loss of family and friends to death. Through astounding advances in medical science, communication technology, the internet. Through a time when once the pews were full Sunday morning and children and young people flourished. Through changes in theologies, and in our society, how we seek more fully now to understand and accept difference. There are stories of faith to be told and heard here. There are lessons to be learnt. Testimonies to be shared. The footsteps of our older saints pressed into the sand of our hikoī with Christ on earth are valuable. Very valuable. If we remember to stop a bit, take a breath, and engage... O what a blessing awaits here. Let the words and prayers of our older saints bless us. Not only is it important in their lives to hand over the baton so to speak, it is important to for us to receive it.

As I see it, The International Day of the Older Person looks to gift the Church a space in its year to focus on the work of honouring our older saints and honouring our God who continues to journey with them. This simple collection of worship suggestions I hope might encourage you as a church to stop a bit, take a breath, and

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give thanks to God whose love and presence spans the ages, and whose Spirit remains at work in the hearts and lives of our older saints.

A special service of worship, in light of The International Day of the Older Person, provides the opportunity for a congregation to celebrate the gifts and contributions of older adults. 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 The International Day of the Older Person!

Let's not only 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, a gift of the work of the Spirit amongst us, to add to the korowai of Christ.

Your friend and neighbour in Christ,

Revd. Amy Houben

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This document was put together with the support of the Palmerston North Ecumenical Elder Care Ministry Support Group

Please visit this link to read up about The International Day of the Older Person:
<https://www.un.org/development/desa/ageing/international-day-of-older-persons-homepage/unidop2017.html>

Call to Worship

Leader: Simeon was devoted and the Holy Spirit rested on him.

People: Guide us, Holy Spirit, rest on us.

Leader: The prophet Anna worshipped the Lord day and night.

People: Bless us with the same desire Lord Jesus

Leader: Simeon and Anna had eyes to see and hearts to recognise your redemption.

All: Let us worship and praise the Lord.

Inspired from Luke 2: 22-38

Scripture Readings

First Testament:

Exodus 7:7 (One is never too old to be called by God – Moses and Aaron in their 80's)

Deuteronomy 32:7 ('Remember the days of old...')

Proverbs 17:6 ('Grandchildren are crown of the aged...')

Psalm 71:9-10 ('Do not cast me off in the time of old age...')

Psalm 139 (God knows us through and through)

Psalm 148 ('Praise the Lord!')

Second Testament:

Acts 2: 17-20 ('...God declares, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh...')

Luke 2:22-38 (Simeon and Anna)

Luke 1:36 (Elizabeth's pregnancy in her later years)

John 15:1-5 ('I am the true vine...')

Sentence and Collect

The Sentence of the Day

We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:18

Collect

**Ever-loving God, Rock Through all the Ages:
rest your Holy Spirit on the shoulders of every older adult in your Church,
that rejoicing in the knowledge of your truth,
they may find refreshment for the journey,
renewed joy in belonging to your Kingdom,
and recovery of sight to recognise you clearly along their way
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Written by Revd. Amy Houben

Prayers and Intercessions

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 Revd. Bob Weeks

God of the unknown, as age draws in on us, irresistible as the tide, make our life's last quarter the best that there has been. As our strength ebbs, release our inner vitality, all you have taught us over the years; as our energy diminishes increase our compassion, and educate our prayer. You have made us human to share your divine life; grant us the first fruits; make our life's last quarter the best that there has been. Amen.

A New Zealand Prayer Book, pg. 747

Father of all, you see every one of us as your child, no matter how young or old. You have known us every second of our lives. You gift us every breath, and you sustain us every day.

We hold before you this International Day of the Older Person every adult living in the late autumn of their lives *silence* ... no matter they be rich, or poor, comfortable or struggling; no matter they be well or unwell; no matter what creed, or colour, or faith they belong, we ask your blessing upon them this day.

God of love
Hear our prayer

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Loving God, we pray especially for older adults who are lonely: those whose loved ones are gone or those who have never enjoyed the relationships they might have had; those who feel abandoned and unsure of their worth; those who live alone, and who feel isolated even when they are in company. Give to each person the knowledge that you are with them always, and help us to befriend the lonely, sharing with them the companionship we have found in you.

God of love

Hear our prayer

Loving God, we pray for the sick... those afflicted in body, those in pain, those wrestling with disease, or coming to terms with frailty. We pray for the troubled in mind; those whose confidence has been crushed, those who face sorrow or suffering, those who feel their hopes have been dashed and dreams broken, the let-down, the betrayed, the abused. We pray for those who struggle to cope with the pressures of life, who are oppressed by false imagination, or facing the dark of depression. We pray for those afflicted in spirit: all who feel their lives are empty, or who feel they have lost their faith...

Living God, hold on to all who walk through the valley of tears. Minister the consolation that you alone can offer, and give the assurance that those who mourn will be comforted, and those who weep will laugh. Be that sure foundation in people's lives, that come what may, their knowing of your love and presence with them, will uphold their spirits, and be an endless source of comfort, peace, and joy.

God of love

Hear our prayer

We pray for the dying... That wherever these people are in this moment that you will come as close to them as their very breath and bring your forgiveness and peace. In a moment of silence we name those we know and care for...

God of love

Hear our prayer

Holy Father, we know, that every aging heart is held in your hands, young and vibrant to your touch. We see how you use the wisdom, knowledge and experience of the older generations to teach the young, to bring old insight to new problems, and to give love and security where there is uncertainty.

You trusted an old man to build an ark and save humanity from the flood. You brought a child to Abraham and Sarah despite their years, a child who signalled the beginning of Israel. You guided an aging Moses through the desert so he could lead thousands to the promised-land, you gave Zechariah and Elizabeth a son in their old age, a son who would prepare the way for your own, and you gave the aged Simeon

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and Anna the honour of first recognising the infant Jesus in the temple, seeing someone who no one else saw.

Your continued engagement with older adults is sure; and yet society is so quick to forget this generation. We apologise.

God of Love

Hear our prayer

We hold before you for blessing in thanks those people and organisations who care for needs of older persons in our city... [For the rest homes and hospitals. For Alzheimer's Manawatu. For Aged Concern. For Grey Power, and Senior Citizens, the Hospital and Arohanui Hospice For Chaplains and pastoral carers. For those who provide in-home care. For Mr... and the Aged Friendly City Committee.] For every person or organisation working to better the lives of our elders.

God of love

Hear our prayer

Written by Revd. Amy Houben

Possible Sermon Themes

'Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society' – The International Day of the Older Person 2017 theme

Gratitude

Mentoring

Joy in Believing

Living with the peace that passes all understanding

Forgiveness

Servanthood

Courage

Patience in longsuffering

A flourishing spirituality in the later years

Last lessons

Wonder and thankfulness

Living prayerfully

Being the family holder of faith

Being a grandparent

Legacy

The secret lives of retired faithful people

A new way of being old

The old and young need each other

Surrendering to God

The ministry of accepting help

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We are held in the memories of God (Alzheimers/Dementia related)
Spiritual needs of older Adults
The spiritual tasks of ageing
Embarking on a new ministry later in life
No one left behind

Hymns and Songs

Ask the older adults in our congregation what they most love to sing in church. Consider some of the older classic hymns and himene, and songs people may have sung at Sunday School.

Other Ideas

Ask an older adult to offer a testimony

Have the younger members serve a thankyou morning tea to the older adults

Make the leading of the worship service intergenerational (and consider offering this regularly)

Arrange to visit and build a relationship with your local rest home

Invite someone from your town/city to speak about their involvement in bettering the circumstances of older adults and offering support through their organisation

Use the Service as a catalyst to starting a ministry with a focus on older adults

Create and supply a spiritual biography resource for older adults to write about their faith journeys.

Have a panel discussion on the joys and challenges of growing old in Christ.

Books

'Creative Ideas for Ministry with the Aged' by New Zealander and aged care Chaplain Sue Pickering (Canterbury Press, Norwich, 2004)

'A New Zealand Prayer Book' The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (Genesis Publications, Christchurch, 2005)

Blessings

Go as beloved of God to grow old in Christ. Be blessed in years and be a blessing to God's Kingdom. Keep alive the gifts of wisdom received from older friends and become the gift of wisdom for those who follow. Remember you are God's children even into old age: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

To God's gracious mercy and protection, I commit you; the Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you and give you peace: and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be with you, now and always. Amen.

A New Zealand Prayer Book, pg. 863