



**AgeWell Sunday
Worship Resources**

October 2019



unitingagewell.org



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Introduction

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

Within these resources you will find: suggested order of service; readings; hymns; prayers; intergenerational activity and a sample address. Please adapt the material to suit your congregation(s). This particular Sunday service might be the time to have a shared-lunch, invite one of the Uniting AgeWell chaplains, staff, Board or Committee members to give a brief presentation, or have an intergenerational activity, for example, baby photos in the Church Hall with a 'guess who this is' game...there are lots of possibilities.

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

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

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Order of Service

Call to Worship

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

Leader: Through our lives, we celebrate life.

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

Opening Prayer

Almighty God,

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

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

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

Greeting

Leader: The Lord be with you

Response: And also with you.

Welcome and Introduction

Good morning everyone, and welcome to worship today.

A special welcome to visitors....

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

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

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

Hymn

(The chosen hymns are suggestions only)

TiS **462** Now we come, our heavenly Father

(ref. 2 Tim 1:1-14)

Prayers of Adoration

As the morning sun falls on tiled rooftops
and spreads warmth in the east-west alleys,
my whole being raises to give praise;
my every fibre rejoices in God.

Blessed be your name, Giver of sunlight.

Blessed be your name, Author of Life.

Glory be to you, Lord of our city.

Glory be to you, Renewer of life.

Amen

Prayers of Thanksgiving

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

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

All: Amen.

Prayers of Confession

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

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

Continued overleaf

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

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

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

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

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

Response: Amen

The Declaration of Forgiveness

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

Response: Thanks be to God

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

Intergenerational Activity

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

Readings

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

- Lamentations 1:1-6
- Lamentations 3:19-26
- Psalm 137
- 2 Timothy 1:1-14
- Luke 17:5-10

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

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

OR

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

Hymn

TiS **154** Great is your faithfulness *(ref. Lam 3:19-26)*

Opening the Word

Address or Sermon. See Appendix 2.

Hymn

TiS **156** Morning has broken *(ref. Lam 3:19-26)*

Offering

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

Offertory Prayer

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

We share our News, Joys and Concerns (Notices)

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

Brochures can be ordered from Uniting AgeWell Marketing & Community Relations, (03) 9133 5012 or mcr@unitingagewell.org.

Prayers of the People

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

Response: Hear our prayer

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

Response: Hear our prayer

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

Response: Hear our prayer.

(Other prayers may also be offered here)

The Lord's Prayer

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

Hymn

TiS **224** All hail the power of Jesus' name *(ref. Lam 3:19-26)*

Word of Mission

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

Blessing

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

Dismissal

Leader: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

Response: In the name of Christ. Amen

Hymn

781 Father, bless us as we go.

Resources:

- › International Year of Older Persons, Social Justice Sunday, 1999
- › Together in song: Harmony edition (Harper Collins, 1999)
- › Uniting in Worship books I (1988) and II (2005) (Uniting Church Press)
- › Uniting in Worship: People's Book (Uniting Church Press, 1988)
- › Australian Psalms, Bruce D Prewer (Openbook Publishers, 2000)
- › unitingagewell.org

Appendix 1

Intergenerational Activity

Creating our history of the last 100 years

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix 2

Address

Lamentations 3:19-26 and Luke 17:5-10

Recently at a Uniting AgeWell Chapel service, I was standing at a doorway when we were singing hymns. As I was singing, I noticed one of our residents who was sitting just a couple of meters from me. From where I was standing, I could see a streak of tear on one side of his face. I had seen him before, but I didn't really know him. After the service, I spoke with a woman who was sitting next to him. She turned out to be his granddaughter. She said that her grandfather, now in his 90's, had been in ministry in England and Victoria for over 70 years. Now Jim had been staying in our aged care community for a while, but this was the first Chapel service he had attended. She said he began to cry when he heard us sing his favourite hymn, "Great is Thy Faithfulness", because it was so familiar and meaningful to him. Since she couldn't visit him every Tuesday, she wanted to make an arrangement with the carers to make sure he could attend every Tuesday Chapel service. I was thankful that we could provide such a time for someone who had served God as a minister in the church, for most of his life.

I wondered why this particular hymn resonated so closely with Jim. He was a very quiet, humble and unassuming gentleman who obviously had a deep, personal relationship with God. I likened Jim's life to the message from today's gospel reading. As one commentator says, the lesson from Luke 17:5-10 is, "one's relation to God makes obedience to God a duty to be fulfilled and not an occasion for reward".

I then looked more closely at the hymn, and realised that Jim's life, and the life of the hymn's author, had some similarities. "Great is thy faithfulness" is a 20th century hymn, but the story begins in the 19th century, in the southern US state of Kentucky. The year was 1893, and a young newspaper editor named Thomas Obadiah Chisholm surrendered his life to Jesus Christ. He was 27 at the time, and his dream became that someday he would serve God full time in the ministry. Eventually he was able to serve as a pastor in the Methodist Church, but, unlike Jim, his appointment lasted only one year. He was forced to resign due to poor health. He then moved to New Jersey and began selling life insurance, while remaining active in his local church.

Over the years, he wrote well over a thousand hymns and sacred poems, and he often submitted them to various publications, but only a few ever found their way to print. Thomas Chisholm finally retired at the age of 87. He spent his last years in a retirement home. In 1960, at the age of 94, he went home to be with the Lord.

It was a song that Thomas wrote years earlier, in 1923, at the age of 57, for which he is known today. And here's the link I saw with Jim's life.....

"Great is thy faithfulness" was written by a man who lived, by and large, an unremarkable life, knowing neither fame nor fortune. But he did know something about the day-to-day, morning-by-morning goodness of God in every area of life. And that's what makes this hymn so great!

Virtually every line of this great hymn is pulled from the Scripture. How closely the words resemble our reading from **Lamentations** today. They remind us of how the God we serve is faithful in every way – even when things don't work out exactly as we would like, we can see God's hand at work in every moment of every day.

Thomas Chisholm never achieved fame or fortune in his life.....neither did Jim.

But they each lived great lives because they experienced, and they understood, and they recognised, and they appreciated the morning-by-morning faithfulness of God in their lives.....

Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord God, to me.

Uniting AgeWell recognises that every one of our residents has a life story to tell. A story that helped shape them into the person they are today. That story may be based on family, friends, school, academic achievements, work, travel, community involvement, or like Jim, a personal faith, and our Chaplains love to spend time listening to those stories. It's part of Uniting AgeWell's charter of person-centred care. Uniting AgeWell works with older people to help them stay as well as possible and live full and rich lives as they are able. Uniting AgeWell was initiated by Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches who had the foresight to plan for the care of their elderly church family. Uniting AgeWell is still proudly an expression of the Uniting Church and all its work is infused with the Christian faith tradition.

This is reflected in the organisation's Vision, which says,

"Uniting AgeWell: the Church at Work.
A creative leader enabling communities to age well,
and individuals to live to their potential."

Everyone is equal, united by our common humanity and capacity for love and care. Everyone is welcome, regardless of age, race, nationality, religion, sexuality, gender, or social status. In particular, Uniting AgeWell welcomes people who have had to live on the margins of society at some time in their lives because of poverty, prejudice, disability or illness. At the heart of the organisation's work is a desire to honour the unique spirit of love, life and aliveness in every person.

Most importantly, the Uniting AgeWell communities are made up of many people.

It is a very large family:

- 1,400 aged care beds across 19 sites in Victoria and Tasmania – with new facilities at Preston and Hawthorn to be opened by early next year.
- 437 independent retirement living units, with 49 more as part of the Hawthorn complex
- 6,000 clients who live in the community and access services
- 1,400 home care package recipients
- 3000 staff and, most importantly.....600 volunteers

The contributions made by our congregation members are a unique part of Uniting AgeWell, and a powerful force behind the success of the organisation. Many Uniting AgeWell facilities grew out of church member's efforts, and their commitment continues.

Many volunteer hours are given by congregation and family members, and others, spending time with older people in programs offering companionship, and enjoying sharing activities in their daily lives.

Jim and the Chaplain at his facility, often spend time together chatting about a life spent in appreciation of the great faithfulness of God, perhaps reflecting on the verses from

Lamentations chapter 3, as written by Thomas Chisholm:

Great is your faithfulness. Great is your faithfulness,
morning by morning new mercies we see;
all we have needed your hand has provided:
great is your faithfulness, Lord God, to me.

Amen



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Uniting AgeWell is an organisation of the Uniting Church in Australia