



Great EXPECTATIONS

A Newsletter on Expanding Ministry *With* Older People

Does it take one to know one?

Must we wait until we are older people ourselves before we can really know what it's like to be one? Does it take one to know one?

Dr. John Morley doesn't think so. He knows senior adults because he has learned about and from them, devoting his medical career to serving them. He is director of geriatrics at St. Louis University and author of the column "Aging Successfully" for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

He can help us expand our relationships with the older people in our family and congregation. For example, some of our seasoned Christians who have contemplated retirement now know they must continue their employment longer than they originally planned. Others are looking again for jobs to boost their retirement income. But, in either situation they worry that they might not have the energies they need to do the work required. How can we encourage them?

■ **FIRST STEP . . .** Periodically throughout the year, monitor family conversations and the congregation's sermons, Bible class references, newsletters, bulletins and table displays. How often are we citing God's concern and ours for the women and men we call boomers? What is our Older Adult Ministry Team doing to sensitize us to this generation's frustrations over financial survival when they stop working? They want from us concrete evidence that we are aware of their anxiety.

■ **SECOND STEP . . .** Propose and arrange for more detailed adult group studies of Biblical sources like Paul's Letter to the Philippians. The apostle reminds us that one of the purposes for which Christ Jesus created His church is to overcome the isolation of our worry and stress. He does not want us to try to go it alone, companionless. He Himself is near at hand. In addition, He bonds us with brothers and sisters in the faith to shore us up when we falter and point us in new directions when we lose our way.

Paul pressed the early Christians, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:4-7).

■ **THIRD STEP . . .** Research ways we can make older people and boomers in our congregation more conscious of what Dr. Morley calls these "common sense strategies" to stay physically, mentally and socially capable at work (*Post-Dispatch*, 12/10/09, B2).

- Work smarter, not harder. Plan reasonable hours. If possible, around noon take a "power" nap.
- Plan downtime. Don't labor through lunch. Schedule diversions. Take appropriate water breaks.
- Improve sight, hearing. Get a doctor's evaluation. Take advantage of the "wonderful technology to battle vision and hearing loss."
- Exercise the brain. Watch less television. Read more good literature. Over learn (memorize) poetry such as the Psalms. Reflect on favorite Scripture verses.

We need not be an older person to learn how to know and encourage one!

The Church at Work

DCS

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