

UN International Day of Older Persons: The Ageing Mosaic

The International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) is a celebration of the older people in all societies, and a reminder to continue developing a society for all ages. It is an opportunity to challenge negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and aging. It is widely recognised that older persons are an asset to the society; their wisdom, value-system and experience helps in guiding and mentoring the present generation.....What is important is not merely adding 'years to life' but also adding 'life to years'.

"Imagine an Australian community where older people are valued and included in community life, enabled to maintain health & independence, are able to contribute their talents and wisdom, pursue their interests, nurture relationships, maintain their culture and spirituality and be in control of their future. Imagine if those who need support can receive it in a way that supports the above, and is provided with dignity and respect". (UnitingCare Australia submission to Productivity Commission - Caring for Older Australians, 2009)

In his life and teaching, Jesus emphasised the good news of God's love for all people. He particularly focused on the need to love our neighbours who were vulnerable, poor, or marginalised in society. This is a message of hope, based on the God-given dignity of all people. On Older Persons Sunday we are reminded of Jesus's ministry of welcoming and hospitality – and we commit ourselves again to sharing in that ministry with people of all ages in Australia.

VIDEO: The wisdom of Mary Oliver https://youtu.be/tR_GWzW-SGI (2.20)

OPENING PRAYER/CALL TO WORSHIP

God of all ages, your breath gives us life. Your artistry in creation leaves us gasping in wonder; longing to experience that which is of you. In each person, there you are, if we could but discern you. Accept us again, O ancient yet youthful God, as we gather to worship and adore you. Amen.

SONG: HaND76 We celebrate this life

WELCOME TO COUNTRY/WISDOM OF THE ELDERS Allen Edwards Sr

WELCOME

(Safe Church Statement) The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people are made in the image of God, and as such we accept every individual regardless of race, age, creed, sexuality and gender. As a Christian Community we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance and that our relationships with each other should express love and respect and not be abused.

Today is Older Persons Sunday. The Uniting Church's life is enriched by its many older members who remember faithfully and watch hopefully for where God is leading, and nurture and encourage others across the generations. We give thanks for their worship, witness and service.

PRAYERS OF WHO WE ARE

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.

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

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.

Forgive us for our failure to share.

We confess that many Indigenous Australians never know old age, or become old before their

time, through the struggles in their lives.

Forgive us when we fail to notice and act.

Loving God, The Giver 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.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

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. Thanks be to God.

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME

Today we are reflecting on what it means to be a faith community of people who are continually in a life-long transition we call 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.



The photo is of Charlie Chaplin at age 26, photographed 100 years ago. This is a poem by Kim McMillen he read on his 70th birthday.

As I began to love myself:

I found that anguish and emotional suffering are only warning signs that I was living against my own truth.

Today, I know, this is *Authenticity*.

As I began to love myself:

I understood how much it can offend somebody if I try to force my desires on this person, even though I knew the time was not right, and the person was not ready for it, and even though this person was me.

Today I call this *Respect*.

As I began to love myself:

I stopped craving for a different life, and I could see that everything that surrounded me was inviting me to grow.

Today I call this *Maturity*.

As I began to love myself:

I understood that at any circumstance, I am in the right place at the right time, and everything happens at the exactly right moment. So I could be calm.

Today I call this *Self-Confidence*.

As I began to love myself:

I quit stealing my own time, and I stopped designing huge projects for the future. Today, I only do what brings me joy and happiness, things I love to do and that make my heart cheer, and I do them in my own way and in my own rhythm.

Today I call this *Simplicity*.

As I began to love myself:

I freed myself of anything that is no good for my health – food, people, things, situations, and everything that drew me down and away from myself. At first I called this attitude a healthy egoism.

Today I know it is *Love of Oneself*.

As I began to love myself:

I quit trying to always be right, and ever since I was wrong less of the time.

Today I discovered that is *Modesty*.

As I began to love myself:

I refused to go on living in the past and worrying about the future. Now, I only live for the moment, where everything is happening.

Today I live each day, day by day and I call it *Fulfillment*.

As I began to love myself I recognized that my mind can disturb me and it can make me sick. But as I connected it to my heart, my mind became a valuable ally.

Today I call this connection *Wisdom of the Heart*.

We no longer need to fear arguments, confrontations or any kind of problems with ourselves or others. Even stars collide, and out of their crashing, new worlds are born.
Today I know: *This is Life!*

SONG: HaND14 Harmony

WITNESS

We celebrate the wisdom, creativity and courage of older persons. We have our own stories to name and celebrate, the spectacular along with the modest and understated. The community culture of Pilgrim has encouraged many creative and progressive things to become possible. And this community has so many people actively engaged in so many different ways - did you know Ruth is a clown in the Christmas pageant again this year? Helen has trained as a judge in the world of orchid growers. Rose continues to design for productions. And, and, and... so much to celebrate!!

Input 1

[2 Corinthians 4:16 - Though outwardly we are wearing out, inwardly we are renewed day by day.](#)
Collaborations - Norm Inglis and Helen Wiltshire

SONG: HaND 32 The Gift We All May Give (Helen Wiltshire, Norm Inglis)

(this song was awarded first prize in an international competition run by the Australian Hymn Book Company in 2013)

Input 2

[Job 12:12 - Wisdom belongs to the aged, and understanding to the old](#)

Rev Dr Don Bell and his doctoral supervisor Rev Prof Andrew Dutney reflect on Don's PhD completed this year that had a focus on hymnody - the theology, language, music, and history of hymns and how they are used in church settings.

SONG: Not in words of human wisdom (Donald Bell and Maarten Ryder)

[Psalm 71:18: "Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come."](#)

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (led by Genevieve and Marelle)

Marelle completed a second PhD in retirement, retired in 2018 as Chair of Church Council and remains actively involved in the work of committees and ecumenical activities and justice matters in the wider community.

"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. 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.

"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. 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.

We hold before you for blessing in thanks those people and organisations who care for needs of older persons in our city in their living and their dying... aged care facilities, chaplains and pastoral carers, those who provide in-home care, every person or organisation working to better the lives of our elders. We ask that they will know their kindness renewed and find fulfilment in their work. Amen.

Input 3 (2021 IDOP theme is 'digital equity for all ages')

Acknowledgement of those who have led us through the COVID wilderness in digital accessibility.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS

God, parent of us all, we hold before you every adult living in the late autumn of their lives... no matter if they be rich, or poor, comfortable or struggling; no matter if they be well or unwell; no matter to what creed, or colour, or faith they belong - we ask your blessing upon them this day.

God of love/**Hear our prayer**

Holy One, 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. The Biblical narrative tells of older persons whose stories have inspired the generations - an old man who built an ark and saved humanity from the flood; a child born to Abraham and Sarah despite their years; Moses - an old man who led his people through the desert to the land of promise; Zechariah and Elizabeth who had a son in their old age, a son who would prepare the way for Jesus; Simeon and Anna who first recognised the infant Jesus in the temple as the promised Messiah. Older persons have a special role in the unfolding story of salvation, of healing and hope; and yet society is so quick to forget this generation.

God of love/**Hear our prayer**

We lament for the Royal Commission into Aged Care findings. We hear stories of abuse and neglect; we hear of greed for profit at the expense of quality care; we hear of ill-fated policies shifting the duty from the government to consumers; we hear of a culture that keeps the aged away from their families.

God of love/**Hear our prayer**

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...

God of love/**hear our prayer**

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...*a silence is kept*

(Source: Revd. Amy Houben)

God, you are life for us: **holy be your name.**

**Your new day come, your will be done,
on earth as in your vision.**

Give us this day our bread for the morrow;

**and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Strengthen us in the time of test,
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the power and the splendour
and the fulfilment are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

OFFERING

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

SONG: HaND 33 The Love We Share (Norman Inglis/Helen Wiltshire)

BLESSING/BENEDICTION

May the Giver of Life 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.
Keep alive the gifts of wisdom received from older friends
and become the gift of wisdom for those who follow,
to the glory of Christ.
Remember you are God's children even into old age.
And may the blessing of the one God Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
be with you and remain with you always. Amen.

God's peace be with you. **And also with you.**

This service was prepared by Rev Sandy Boyce, and led by a number of people in the 9.30am community. Grateful thanks to Allan Forbes at the A-V desk and Greg Bassani taking the lead on livestreaming.

HaND (Here's a New Day) is a Pilgrim publication featuring the words of Helen Wiltshire, with music selected, arranged or composed by Norman Inglis. It can be downloaded free of charge from the Pilgrim website, <https://pilgrim.org.au/publish/downloads/Here%27s%20a%20New%20Day%20WEB%20VERSION.pdf>