



Older Persons Sunday

dignity and hope for all ages

Worship Resources

This booklet has been prepared by UnitingCare Australia as a resource to be used by Uniting Church congregations wishing to recognise Older Persons Sunday. In 2021 this is Sunday 3 October. Hopefully it will encourage local church to also develop their own resources and responses.

There are a number of resources about the work of UnitingCare Australia's work in ageing and aged care on our website, include on the page for Uniting Friends of Ageing <https://unitingcare.org.au/uniting-friends-of-ageing/>

For further information about Older Persons Sunday or the Uniting Friends of Ageing feel free to contact Warren Talbot at warrent@nat.unitingcare.org.au or 0466 310 243.

Resources may be used with appropriate acknowledgement.

Words printed in **BOLD CAPS** are intended for congregational responses.

September 2021

The wisdom of older people

Rev. Sharon Hollis

President, Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

One of the stories I love in the Bible is of Anna and Simeon faithfully watching for God's salvation. I love it because they remind me of the power of faith tested over time and of the wisdom of older people to know how to watch and wait for God's new thing and to embrace that new thing with love.

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.

More broadly, as a society we are gifted by the many contributions, diverse experiences and loving care we receive from the older Australians in our lives. In the Uniting Church, we believe all people should be treated with respect and dignity. I welcome the new initiatives of UnitingCare Australia in setting up Uniting Friends of Ageing, and Older Persons Sunday. Alongside UnitingCare Australia, we call for the changes needed to transform our aged care system to ensure older people can live their fullest life.

Introduction to Older Persons Sunday

Dignity and hope for all ages

Claerwen Little
National Director, UnitingCare Australia

Thirty years ago the General Assembly of the United Nations declared that 1 October each year would be recognised as the International Day of Older Persons (IDOP). The day is intended as an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the enormous contributions that older people have and are making as individuals, and members of families and communities. IDOP also serves to highlight the need for changes to policies and practices which neglect or discriminate against older people, ie ageism.

Members of the UnitingCare network are, collectively, one of the largest providers of residential and home-based aged care in Australia. This ministry dates back to the early days of colonial settlement right through to our active engagement with the recent Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. Along with *Uniting Friends of Ageing* Older Persons Sunday offers an opportunity for local churches to join the recognition and celebration of older people, as we work together to transform ageing and aged care.

The theme for the first Older Persons Sunday is “dignity and hope for all”. It would be all too easy, as a church or as a society, to think that this theme is merely stating the obvious. One of the major themes from the Royal Commission was ‘neglect’, both overlooking the concerns of older people but also direct discrimination. As good as most aged care services in Australia are, the Commission identified 148 detailed recommendations for change. These will take years to be fully implemented, and UnitingCare Australia is already working hard to ensure that this happens.

Although the date of 3 October 2021 has been chosen as it closely follows the UN International Day, the resources in this booklet can be used at various times during the church’s year. Local churches have busy calendars. If it is not possible to allocate a Sunday, then some prayers can be included on 3 October or at another time.

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.

A Service of the Word

The gathering of the people of God

CALL TO WORSHIP

At this time,
as we gather either in person or online,
and with those around us,
let us worship God.
Throughout our lives, we celebrate life.
Let us praise God for the gift of life.

HYMN

[Various Hymn suggestions later in this booklet.]

GREETING and WELCOME

Good morning everyone, and welcome to worship today.

A special welcome to visitors....

Today is Older Persons Sunday. 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 we think of and pray for the many ageing and aged care services provided by the members of UnitingCare Australia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

For thousands of years, the Indigenous people have walked on this ancient land. These many lands were taken from the First Peoples without their consent, treaty or compensation.

The Spirit of God has long dwelled with
the First People of this ancient land.

We honour the [name of the land or lands on
which the service is being held]...

and pay our respects to their elders,
past, present and emerging.

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.

PRAYER OF ADORATION

God our Creator,
Our thoughts cannot contain you; our words fall short of your vastness.
Yet you are our God.

God of all ages, your breath gives us life.
Your hands shape our being.
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 ever new God,
as we gather to worship and adore you.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF CONFESSION

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,

Amen.

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

SHARING THE PEACE

May the grace and peace of God be with you all

And also with you!

[The peace is shared following local practices]

A PRAYER WHICH FOLLOWS THE PRAYER THAT JESUS TAUGHT

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.

The Service of the Word

SCRIPTURE READINGS

[A list of Scripture readings appropriate for Older Persons Sunday are later in this document.]

Loving God, may your word live in us

And bear much fruit to your glory.

PREACHING / CONTEMPORARY WITNESS TO THE WORD

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Together let us affirm our faith:

We believe in God who is creating all that is,

who knows our hearts and loves us as we are,

who speaks to us in our deepest beings,

**who calls people of all ages
to abundant life and wholeness.**

**Christ Jesus shows us the Way,
guiding us and healing our bodies and minds,
sharing our joys and sufferings,
crossing all human barriers and distinctions,
transforming the power of death into new life.**

**The Holy Spirit is the gift of God's life with us now,
giving us the courage to take new paths,
and the strength to continue the journey
in different stages and ages of our lives.
In solitude, vulnerability, compassion and love,
the Spirit reveals her presence with.**

Amen.

NOTICES AND CONCERNS

It would be appropriate during notices to briefly mention the reasons for observing Older Persons Sunday, the work of UnitingCare Australia members in ageing and aged care, any local aged care services known to members, and opportunities for members to be a part of Uniting Friends of Ageing.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

O loving Lord,

You are the source of life,
sustaining us in every stage of life's journey;
You are the mother earth,
ageing trees with time and nourishment,
and embracing each fallen leaf back to its roots.

O loving Lord,

Today we pray for our senior citizens,
keep those living in isolation in your sight, enfold others in your safety.
In this pandemic, we remember the frontline staff,
protect these ordinary heroes
as they leave home and care for the elderly.

O loving Lord,

We also 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.

Forgive us, Lord,

Through the prophets,
you have taught Israel - do not rebuke the elderly harshly,
but exhort them as if they were our own parents.
In Jesus, we have learned the Son of Man
did not come to be served but to serve;
and God made the old to have hopes and dream dreams.

Lead us, Lord,

Direct our energy about past regrets
into blessings to the people near us;
Turn our attention from fault finding,
to seeing each person made in your divine image;
Stop us from only using money to fix the problem,
Build the capacity of our families and communities for care.

Guide us, Lord,

since the ancient times, your grace rises in the presence of the aged,
and your blessing is honoured among the elderly.
Through ancient cultures, we have learned:
Respect for the elderly is the foundation of all social goodness.
Raise us in your grace, Lord, as we rebuild a culture of respect;
Send your blessings, as we honour life together with you.

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.

The Sending Out of the People of God

HYMN

[suggested hymns are made later in this document]

WORD OF MISSION

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;
to the glory of Christ.

BLESSING

And may the blessing of the one God
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer,
be with you and remain with you always.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve in all you do
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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Suggested hymns

TiS 154	Great is your faithfulness
TiS 209	And can it be that I should gain
TiS 315	Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord
TiS 781	Father, bless us as we go
TiS 182	Bring many names, beautiful and good
TiS 210	O for a thousand tongues

Suggested Scripture readings

These are suggested readings only.

They depart from the readings set in the Revised Common Lectionary for 3 October 2021.

Job 23:1-9,16-17

Psalm 22:1-15

Psalm 23

Psalm 103: 1-18

Hebrews 4:12-16

1 Timothy 5:1-5

Mark 10:17-31

Prayers suitable for use on Older Persons Sunday

A Prayer 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.**

(Uniting AgeWell)

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Prayer for aged care

Loving God,
we give you thanks for including service as part of nation building.
In your self-giving love for the world,
Christ came to serve the world to include all in your mercy.

We pray for families and communities,
give us time and commitment to reach out to those in need,
to include the elderly in our lives, to honour life with care and support.

We pray for Australia as a nation, give us the Spirit of life,
to turn away from ageism, to develop a culture of care,
to transform our service into compassion for life.

Loving God, we pray for the Uniting Church and our many community services networks.
Make us an instrument of justice,
so we may witness your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven.

Amen.

(Rev. Dr Ji Zhang)

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Prayer for a relative in Aged Care

Dear God

I pray for [name of person or persons]
May kindness be the daily fare,
For all our loved ones in aged care.
May laughs continue while we are apart.
May life be full of music and art.
May words of wisdom flow free
And plans about for when we see

One another...

Again...

For some tea and cake.
I smile at the thought of the réunion of love.
Whether here on earth or in heaven above,
Who knows what will happen? I'm sure I don't!
But I trust in You, Lord,

So please watch over

And thankyou for in my life.

Amen

(Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler)

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A prayer for workers in health and aged care

I anxiously watch them.
My anxiety is not just for the one I love.
I am deeply anxious for them.
They try to comfort me with their professionalism and smiles,
But I can see their own anxiety, so I pray...

Healing God,
You called these amazing people
to serve in your great work.
Thank you.
Bless them in their service.
Give them deep restorative sleep
when they get a break.
Help them to keep laughing when they can.
Give them wisdom
in the difficult decisions
and the complexity of treatment.
May I always see their humanity
and show my love and respect
for their dedication.

In these anxious times,
I pray for their families,
even as I know
they pray in their hearts
for my loved one.

Healing God,
Bring us all healing.
Amen

(Rev. Jon Humphries)

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A prayer for the elderly

Gracious God,
We remember and pray for the elderly
in our society.

We pray for all those
struggling with symptoms
of dementia in its many forms;
mood changes, memory lapses,
confusion and helplessness.

May they know in their hearts
your comforting embrace
amid their daily frustrations,
and continue to realise,
as names and memories fade,

that they are still loved by family,
friends, and especially by you.

We pray for those who care for the elderly in our society;
for family members, nurses, nursing home staff, doctors and hospice staff.

Help us all never to lose sight of the elderly in our community
and enable us to always treat them with the dignity and respect they deserve.

We make our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

(Rev. Hans Christiansen, Melbourne Grammar)

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A prayer for older people in the age of COVID

Loving and gracious God
beyond and before all ages:
we pray for older Australians,
their friends, family members and carers
in this challenging time of COVID 19 restrictions.

We pray for people living in aged care,
for the nurses, cleaners, kitchen staff, and doctors
who care for them every day.

We pray for older people living in the community,
family members nearby and far away,
home carers, friends, and neighbours.

May all know of your love and care at this time.

Help us, O God, to never lose sight of older people,
to cherish them with the dignity, respect and life you give to all.

In the name of Christ Jesus.
Amen.

(Warren Talbot)

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A Litany on Ageing, inspired by the Scriptures

Leader: Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be 120 years” (Genesis 6:3).

People: Dear Lord, we do need time to grow.

Leader: Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you (Exodus 20:12).

People: We pray that the long years will be good years.

Leader: The glory of youths is their strength, but the beauty of the aged is their gray hair (Proverbs 20:29).

People: Give us strength and experience.

Leader: Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you (Deuteronomy 32:7).

People: Remind us to ask, and teach us to listen.

Leader: Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life (Proverbs 16:31).

People: Day by day, we strive to be more holy.

Leader: Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old (Proverbs 23:22).

People: We are grateful for parents who teach and nurture in love.

Leader: So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come (Psalm 71:18).

People: We love to tell the story of Jesus and his love.

Leader: In old age they still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap (Psalm 92:14).

People: Yes, we too will soon know and understand God’s gift of growing older; give us wisdom so that we may serve others as we have been served. Amen.

(United Methodist Church USA, UMC Discipleship Board)

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Acknowledgements

Uniting Agewell – Worship resources booklet, October 2018

Affirmation of Faith – Pitt Street Uniting Church

Prayer following Jesus – David B Royer, Jonathon C Nelson, in *Flames of the Spirit: Resources for Worship*, edited by Ruth C Duck

Prayer of the People – Rev. Dr Ji Zhang

Some of the above resources include minor adaptations of style, layout or wording, made by Warren Talbot for this collection.

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