

There is More to Life

Introduction

This short module is part of the Following On programme, an initiative of the Mission, Ministry and Transforming Communities Departments of the Diocese of Lichfield. Each module is intended to be delivered locally, at no additional cost to the parish church.

This four-session module is designed for people in their late 50s and 60s, which for many people is a period of transition. As we enter a new phase in life, it is important to value all that we have already experienced, and to be open to the challenges and opportunities that await us.

As well as a copy of this booklet and the handout 'talkin' about my generation', (downloadable from www.lichfield.anglican.org/ourdiocese/transforming-communities-resources) each participant will need their own scrapbook. You may have noticed that scrapbooking is making a comeback as part of a rediscovery of home crafts and hobbies. It's a good way of recording important memories and experiences in life. Each week there will be something to add to your scrapbook and we hope that you will see this part of the programme as a great way of recording thoughts and experiences which have not only been important to you, but that perhaps in time you will want to pass on to others. For the first session, participants will need pencils and pens. There is a separate worksheet available for the third session.

Bible passages are from the NRSV. Written prayers are included which can be replaced by your own prayers if preferred. The concluding prayer below may be used at the end of each session. Each session is intended to last between 1 to 1½ hours, with additional time required for refreshments and general conversations. Approximate times are shown below:

Welcome & Opening Prayer	5 minutes
Scrapbook, show & tell	10-15 minutes
Theme	5-10 minutes
Self-Reflection	5 minutes
Bible Passage	10-15 minutes
Core Question	15-25 minutes
Action Point	5-10 minutes
Homework	5 minutes

May you know God's blessing in this new chapter of your life.

Lindsey, Ian, Majula, David
(*contact details given below*)

Concluding Prayer

For each step that I might take

Be my guide, O Lord of life.

For each load that I might bear

Be my strength, O Lord of life.

For each mountain I might face

Be my power, O Lord of life.

For each river that might impede

Be my safety, O Lord of life.

For each place where I might rest

Be my peace, O Lord of life.

For each sunrise and sunset

Be my joy, O Lord of life.

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Session 1: Spirituality, Discipleship, Worship

Aims of this session

- **To understand life as a journey**
- **To be open to changes in our spirituality**

Welcome & Opening Prayer

5 minutes

Spend a few moments introducing yourselves.

Before reading aloud together this full version of the Serenity Prayer, people could share any phrases that particularly appeal to them

*God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.*

*Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
forever in the next. Amen.*

Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971)

Scrapbook

10-15 minutes

The Gospel accounts of the feeding of the five thousand (Matthew 14, Mark 6, Luke 9, John 6) all mention that the disciples gathered twelve baskets of scraps. During our time together, each of us has the opportunity to gather together 'scraps' from our own life-story, reminding us of God's part in our journey of faith.

Using pencil or pen, begin to personalise your own scrap-book, for example by drawing a line down the middle of a page to represent your life, inserting significant dates and events as you wish. If time permits, share some of this with those beside you.

Theme: 'Behold, I make all things new' Revelation 21.5

5-10 minutes

In his ministry, Jesus valued people at every stage of life, and we should do likewise. In biblical times, there was a greater emphasis on community, with each generation passing on the wisdom gained through experience. Authority resided with the elders. Through changes in education, technology, and society, younger people now take a much greater role in leadership. Whilst in the UK in 1951, a man/woman aged 65 could expect to live another 12/15 years, now this has increased to 20/23 years.

As we enter different phases of life, so we develop habits and skills appropriate to the new situation. The way we relate to family and friends may change with a differing life-style and new opportunities. Leaving work can have a profound impact on our daily routine, even if we find ourselves as busy as ever. For some we invert being cash-rich and time-poor.

We may discover new ways of prayer, replacing patterns that may have sustained us for decades. There can be renewed energy for study and bible-reading, with the opportunity to address afresh some of life's big questions. To nurture our spirituality, we may draw on diverse sources of wisdom. As our understanding of the purpose of life develops to match our circumstances, so our Christian faith grows to meet the new challenges that we encounter.

Church services can help celebrate all that is past, with beauty and silence helping us let go of what we can no longer hold on to. Our sense of identity carries us forward during times of transition, enabling us to retain our integrity while much else may be changing.

Self-Reflection

5 minutes

Reflect in silence on these questions, illustrating your thoughts and/or making notes in your scrapbook if you wish.

- In what way has your Christian faith developed over the years?
- Do you associate any particular forms of prayer, bible-study or worship with particular phases of your life?

Bible Passage: Genesis 11.27-12.9

10-15 minutes

11²⁷Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah was the father of Abram, Nahor, and Haran; and Haran was the father of Lot.²⁸Haran died before his father Terah in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldeans.²⁹Abram and Nahor took wives; the name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milcah. She was the daughter of Haran the father of Milcah and Iscah.³⁰Now Sarai was barren; she had no child. ³¹ Terah took his son Abram and his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, his son Abram's wife, and they went out together from Ur of the Chaldeans to go into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran, they settled there.³²The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran. 12¹Now the LORD said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'⁴So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan,⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.⁷Then the LORD appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.'⁸So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him.⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the LORD and invoked the name of the LORD.⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages towards the Negeb.

1. What were Abram's circumstances when the Lord called him?
2. What changes occurred for the extended family?
3. During this period of his life, in what ways did Abram respond to God?

Core Question

15-25 minutes

As we journey on in faith, in what way might we become a blessing to others?

Action Point

5-10 minutes

When Abram left Harran, he did not know where the Lord would lead him.

- Are there any areas in your Christian life where you have been settled, out of which God may now be calling you?
- Are there aspects of your private devotions, your public worship or your personal discipleship which are becoming unsettled, yet you do not know how God may be leading you?

As you travel on with Jesus in the coming days, listen for stirrings within.

Homework

5 minutes

Before we meet again, personalise your scrapbook with thoughts and/or illustrations of various phases in your journey of life.

Concluding Prayer (see front page)

Session 2: Life Long Learning and Active Aging

Aims of this session

- To reflect on the journey and stages of life
- To explore ways in which we can flourish at this stage of life
- To consider some of the practicalities of aging
- To identify ways in which we can choose our responses to aging and to the future

Welcome & Opening Prayer

5 minutes

Invite each person to name one thing they want to thank God for and one thing they are concerned about.

Share the following two prayers together or use prayers of your own:

Assist us, Lord, in living hopefully into the future.

*In the face of change, help us to set unnecessary fears aside
and to recognize our potential for creative response.*

*Help us to develop a reasonable optimism when confronted by “the new”
and to guard against our own defensiveness.*

*Be with us as we remember and celebrate former times,
and keep us from unreasonable yearning for them,
which takes us from the work you have set before us in our time.*

*All this we ask in the name of your Child,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Linda C. Smith-Criddle (Women’s Uncommon Prayers)

*Help us, Lord, to look at the past and present
so that we may better plan for the future,
and to face our strengths and weaknesses with honesty and wisdom.*

*Help us to be open to your guidance
as we discuss and plan for the future,
and grant us both generous imagination and practical plans. Amen*

Avery Brooke (Plain Prayers for a Complicated World)

Scrapbook

10-15 minutes

Share some of the things you have collected for your scrapbook with the other members of the group.

Theme: Journeying through the stages of life

5-10 minutes

We all know that many things change throughout our life; it is a journey with many different stages in the way. Many psychologists think that every person shares a pattern of development – that every human goes through certain stages of growth and development during their lifetime.

One of the most well-known of these was the imaginatively named Erik Erikson, a German born American psychologist who lived from 1902-1994. Erikson famously coined the phrase ‘identity crisis’ and regarded this as a stage every person goes through. He suggested that there are eight universal stages of development, as shown in the table found in the Appendix.

The first two of his stages refer to very early childhood / infancy, and in fact half of the stages take place in childhood with the central stage happening during adolescence. This might imply a lot of adult life where no changes take place at all.

However, Erikson's final two stages are worth reflecting on. We might debate exactly what ages 'mid-adult' and 'late adult' are, and probably they are different for each person depending on the course of their life and their own personality.

The choices at these stages, between generativity and stagnation, and integrity and despair, alert us to the possibilities and pitfalls of age. For many there is a great temptation to stagnate, to become fixed not just in daily routines, but also in thinking and beliefs. James Fowler, another twentieth century psychologist argued that the life of faith also contains certain universal stages. The difference is, he said, that most people only go through the first three stages, and become stuck.

- Do Fowler's stages of faith resonate with you? Can you think of people who might represent the different stages?
- What stage do you think best describes your own faith? Why do you think you are at that particular stage?
- Does Fowler's model give you any encouragement for the future, or next stages, of your faith journey?

Self-Reflection

5 minutes



Think of four 'snapshot moments' in your life. These might be from snapshots, from school photos, holiday photos, wedding, birthday or other celebration photos.

Reflect on who you were at each of those four moments- your hopes and dreams, joys, fears, expectations. Where was God in each of those moments?

These moments and so many more are part of your life journey which has brought you here, today.

Take a moment to think about this and the next stage of your journey. What advice might the person in the snapshot give you? What do you know now that you didn't then? How will you use that to make the most of the life and opportunities you have?

In what way do the snapshots, or your life's journey, show you that God is faithful?



Bible Passage: Psalm 23

10-15 minutes

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.*

*Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff –
they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.*

Psalm 23 is one of the best known Psalms, and has been set to various tunes. (You may want to listen to a version of it now). In a way, this Psalm tells the story of the journey of our life, and our walk with God. Although it focuses on the blessings God offers, and the care and provision God provides, it does so in the context of enemies, dark valleys and the need of restoration.

- What do you think of when you hear this Psalm?
- Do any of the verses recall particular experiences or times in your life?
- What promises or assurances does it offer for the future?

Core Question

15-25 minutes

What do you need for this stage of your journey / at this stage of your life?
What will help you continue to grow?

Action Point

5-10 minutes

- Some of the 'snapshots' of your life may shine more brightly than others. What do you think it was about these moments that made them so special?
- Looking ahead, is there an event you would like to arrange, a place you would like to visit, or a relationship you would like to mend?
- Some 'snapshot' moments happen naturally, but some are created intentionally. Can you commit to trying to bring one about in the next few months?

Homework

5 minutes

Share some of your life 'snapshots' with a member of a younger generation. This might be someone from your own family, your church family, or through a friend. Tell them about yourself at that point in time, and a bit about what the world was like. Invite them to share one of their 'snapshots' with you.

Concluding Prayer (see front page)

Session 3: From Generation to Generation

Aims of this session

- To explore how 'third age' today is partly shaped by the formative life experiences of the particular generation now approaching retirement – the baby-boomers
- To reflect on a model of good relationships between the generations in the Bible, through the story of Ruth and Naomi
- To explore what makes for the common good of all generations today, in the light of our faith and contemporary challenges

Welcome & Opening Prayer

5 minutes

Either spend a few minutes in open prayer, asking God to speak through your discussion and reflection, or (if you find written prayers helpful) begin with the following prayer:

*All-knowing and all-loving God whose Son
was greeted and blessed by the prophets Anna and Simeon:
Keep us always mindful of the wisdom and gifts
(but also the temptations) of older adulthood;
Enable us to continually grow in love of you
and service to others throughout our span of years.
Fill young and old alike with your Holy Spirit, that,
as a community of faith,
we may all share in the accomplishment of your work in the world,
and together reflect the fullness of your image
from generation to generation;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

(adapted for this session from the 'collect for older adults and their ministry' written by the Commission on Older Adult Ministries of the Episcopal Church of the USA. The original, unedited, version can be found at: archive.episcopalchurch.org/.../Collect_and_Prayers.doc)

Scrapbook

10 minutes

Spend some time sharing how you have developed your scrapbook in the light of last week's session.

- How have you added to your life timeline?
- What thoughts or feelings has that generated?

Theme: Talking about my generation

5-10 minutes

(Read the text below OR use the worksheet for Session 3 OR both – depending on how your group learns best)

How do you define your generation? Being a member of a 'generation' is a very familiar idea, but also a slippery one, since the word has so many meanings. We use 'generation' to talk about our position within our family, when we were born, or the attitudes or key life experiences we share with people of a similar age.

If you are a 'third-ager' today you are probably aged from your late 50s to early 70s, retired or semi-retired, and will probably be living independently. But 'third age' today is in many ways different to your parents' experience of this stage of life, and also to what the next generation is likely to experience. Each birth cohort will experience each stage of life differently. What it means to be a 'third ager' is unique to your generation.

The majority of 'third-agers' in 2013 are members of the 'Baby-Boom' generation, born in the 1940s and 1950s.¹ Though Baby-Boomers can differ widely in their attitudes, they share a number of common life experiences; for example: as the first children to grow up under the care of the

¹ Although in fact Britain's baby-boom occurred in two peaks – one in the late 1940s and the other in the mid-1960s.

NHS or as (when young people) enjoying greater social freedom than their parents' generation generally did when young. As the first generation to be labelled 'teenagers', Baby-Boomers have often been identified with a spirit of youthful self-confidence ('doing your own thing' rather than 'doing the done thing'). Many have continued to display this youthful self-confidence as they have aged (just look at Mick Jagger). Indeed, some observers note that growing talk of 'third' and 'fourth' age (in place of 'old age') not only reflects the fact that more people live longer, but also reflects the teenage generation's determination to stay youthful and reluctance to be labelled 'old'!

The Baby-Boomers' determination to 'do their own thing' has also been reflected in their attitudes to faith. Baby-Boomers have frequently (though not always) rejected the idea of religion based on duty and convention, and have cast their faith in terms of a spiritual journey or quest for personal authenticity. It's noticeable, for example, that the largest single group of people engaged in the world of alternative spirituality and holistic therapies are female Baby-Boomers. There's some evidence (in the 2006 English Church Census) that older third agers (in their late sixties/early seventies) have been a fairly resilient churchgoing cohort, and some have returned to churchgoing in later life, though it is less likely that younger 'third-agers' will also return to church as they age.

Though there are wide variations in life experience, wealth and poverty between today's third-agers, Baby-Boomers have on average enjoyed more disposable income than any other generation, and greater ability to choose their own lifestyle free from parental or social expectations. Boomers who have enjoyed good health and a relatively full employment history have looked forward to an extended span of active retirement – though increasingly not the 'second adolescence' free from responsibilities many were expecting when they retired. For example, many third agers now care for ageing parents or grandchildren (sometimes both), worry about the prospect of a lengthy old age (fourth age) of their own, and how they will be cared for in turn. Some have asserted their right to continue to work well into retirement age, whilst others are concerned for younger generations struggling to find work or step onto the housing ladder.

For the writer (and Baby-Boomer) Ann Morisy,

*'Baby-boomers are poised to take more out of the system than they have put in. This apparently lucky generation will require younger generations to dig deep to provide the resources needed as it grows older and older. This impending crisis is scrutinised in newspapers and TV documentaries. So much action to sort things out will soon lead to the cry 'it's not fair!'... The issue of justice between the generations is part of a larger concern: how justice is to be spread out into the future as well as here and now.'*²

As this fact suggests, our identity as a generation is not defined solely by who we choose to be, but also by our relationships with (and responsibilities to) other generations. As we'll see in what follows, the Bible says a good deal about intergenerational responsibilities, and it's worth reflecting on this today at a time when it's widely agreed that the 'contract between generations' we've become used to over the post-war period is changing hugely.

Self-Reflection

5-10 minutes

Choose one of the following questions, or both if you have more time:

- Describing a generation always involves making generalisations. How far do you relate to the picture of your generation described above/in the worksheet? How has your generation's life experience differed to that of your parents' generation? (As a way into this question, you could draw a table in your scrapbook comparing your and your parents' home/family life, experiences of work, leisure, money, faith, life goals, and whatever else you can think of.)
- What would you say are the privileges that the Baby-Boom generation has received? What special insights or contributions will your generation leave behind? On the other hand, what have been the main challenges facing your generation? And what are its weak spots? (You

² Ann Morisy, *Borrowing from the future: a faith-based approach to intergenerational equity* (2011), p. 1

could lay these out side by side on a page of your scrapbook, with columns headed 'privileges', 'contributions', 'challenges' and 'weak spots'.)

Bible Passage: Ruth 4:13-22

(15 minutes)

The book of Ruth is one of the Old Testament's great short stories, encompassing love, loyalty, tragedy and danger, with dashes of humour and cunning. At its heart is the story of an older woman, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth; their commitment to each other and the part this played in God's bigger plan for his people. When Naomi's husband dies she vows to return to her homeland in Israel. Ruth, despite not being an Israelite but a Moabite, decides to travel with Naomi to support and help her. When they arrive Ruth gets work in a field owned by Naomi's distant relative Boaz, who is impressed by Ruth's commitment to her mother-in-law. Read the whole book at home during the week if you have time, or the suggested 'edited highlights' below.

Ruth – edited highlights

- Chapter 1:1-9, 14-18
- Chapter 2:1-7
- Chapter 3:1-9
- Chapter 4:13-17

For this session, focus on the following passage, near the end of the story.

4:¹³ So Boaz took Ruth, and she became his wife. He was intimate with her, the LORD let her become pregnant, and she gave birth to a son. ¹⁴ The women said to Naomi, "May the LORD be blessed, who today hasn't left you without a redeemer. May his name be proclaimed in Israel. ¹⁵ He will restore your life and sustain you in your old age. Your daughter-in-law who loves you has given birth to him. She's better for you than seven sons." ¹⁶ Naomi took the child and held him to her breast, and she became his guardian. ¹⁷ The neighbourhood women gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They called his name Obed³. He became Jesse's father and David's grandfather. ¹⁸ These are the generations of Perez: Perez became the father of Hezron, ¹⁹ Hezron the father of Ram, Ram the father of Amminadab, ²⁰ Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, ²¹ Salmon the father of Boaz, Boaz the father of Obed, ²² Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David.

- Three generations of one family are featured in this immediate story. What does each of them bring to the wellbeing of the others at different times?
- In what ways did the faithfulness of Naomi, Ruth and Boaz in one generation contribute to the bigger plan of salvation which God was working out?
- In the days of Naomi and Ruth, the social obligations of families, and of young and old to each other, were quite different from those of today. Nevertheless, in what ways might the story of this mother and daughter-in-law help us think about mutual care and respect between the generations in the light of today's challenges?

Core Question

15-20 minutes

'History could describe us as the generation that could never recognise when it had had enough, and devoured the future as a consequence. Or our history could tell of how we became a pivot generation that faced up to the consumption that threatens the decay of the culture and the gouging of the land and sea, by behaving generously and imaginatively'.⁴

How might your generation be 'generous and imaginative' today in seeking the common good of all generations?

- In our individual lives/family situations?

³ Obed means 'one who serves'.

⁴ Morisy, *Borrowing from the Future*, p. 3

- In our churches?
- In our communities?

Action Point

(10 minutes)

What are you going to do in practice to begin making that contribution? Identify some practical actions which contribute to the common good of all generations. You could either agree to take a step as a group, or decide on an action individually and share it with other group members. See the appendix for session 3 for some further reflection on what this might look like.

Homework

(5 minutes)

On BBC Radio's *Saturday Live* programme there has been a weekly feature called 'Inheritance Tracks' in which invited guests choose a meaningful piece of music inherited from their parents/early years, and a second significant track they discovered for themselves and would pass on to their own children.

- What good things have you inherited from your elders (either your parents or someone else)?
Think not just about music, but values, formative experiences or opportunities in life and faith.
- What would you want to pass on to the next generation (either your own children if you have them or younger people in your church or community)? *Think again about key experiences/life lessons, values or opportunities.*

Add these to your scrapbook.

Concluding Prayer (see front page)



①

Life for me and my contemporaries in our '3 rd age' [you could stick a photo here]	Life for my parents' generation in their '3 rd age' [you could stick a photo here]
Home/Family Life:	
Work:	
Health:	
Leisure:	
Life Goals/Values:	
Money:	
How Faith is Expressed:	
Other:	

How are things at your stage of life today?

⇒ Jot down some ideas on the right.

Is this what 3rd age looks like for every generation? Or does '3rd age' change over time?

⇒ Jot down some thoughts about your parents during their late 50s - early 70s

'People resemble their times more than [they resemble] their parents' (Ann Morisy). Do you agree?

So how have recent times given today's '3rd age' cohort a set of unique experiences, opportunities and challenges as a GENERATION?



②

Most of today's '3rd agers' are **BABY-BOOMERS** (b. mid- 1940s to early 1960s)...

Boomers come in all shapes and sizes...



But also share some common life experiences, such as....



Being the first children to grow up under the NHS...



Being the first to be labelled 'teenagers', during times when 'you've never had it so good'....



3

What would you add about experiences which shaped your generation? (Add here)



Having more freedom than previous generations to 'do your own thing' rather than do 'the done thing'...



For those with good jobs and good health, having an extended period of active retirement (a 'second adolescence', some say)

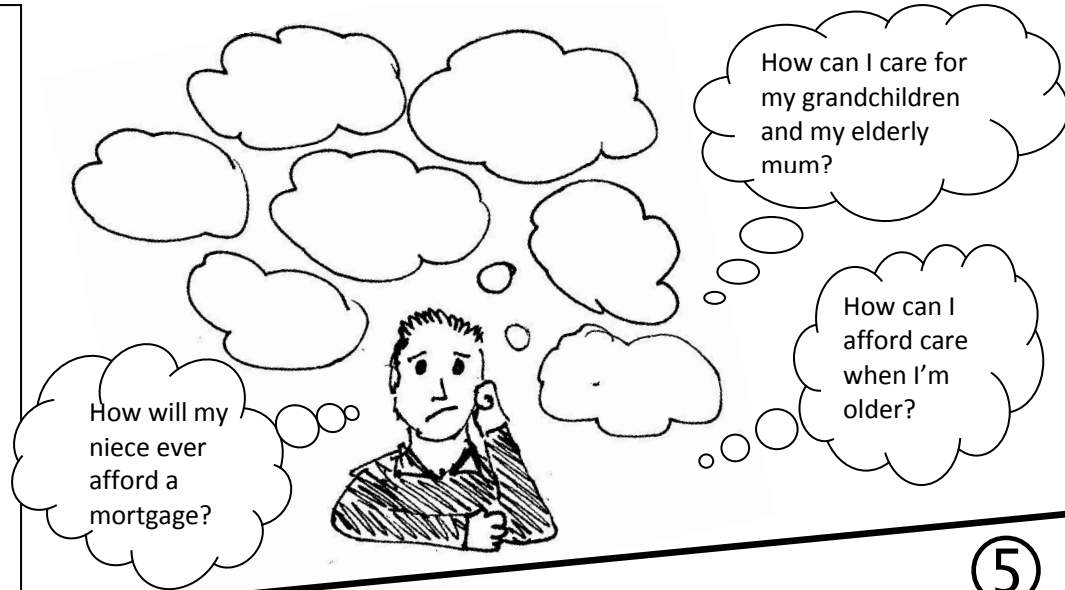
Indeed, the terms '3rd' and '4th' age may partly have grown in popularity because baby-boomers want to avoid the label 'old!'

4

Pause and Reflect....

As a Baby-Boomer, what sorts of opportunities and life experiences would you like to thank God for? (make notes here)

But it's not all plain sailing... what worries or concerns about the future would you add/remove to the thought-bubbles below?



5

As the thought bubbles show, your identity as a generation is shaped just as much by your responsibilities to / relationships with other generations as by your own choices or life experiences. For theologian (and baby-boomer) Ann Morisy, this balance of responsibilities is now under threat:



Baby-boomers are poised to take more out of the system than they have put in. This apparently lucky generation will require younger generations to dig deep to provide the resources needed as it grows older and older. This impending crisis is scrutinised in newspapers and TV documentaries. So much analysis without some action to sort things out will soon lead to the cry 'it's not fair!'... The issue of justice between the generations is part of a larger concern: how justice is to be spread out into the future as well as here and now'. (Borrowing from the Future, p. 1).

Do you agree? If so, how can the baby-boomer generation be 'imaginative and generous' in response? And where can we find inspiration in the Bible to carry us forward?

Session 4: Living Well to the End

Aims of this session

- To explore what it means to live well to the end of our lives
- To explore what living well means to us personally

Welcome & Opening Prayer

5 minutes

You may like to open in prayer with the following:

*Almighty God, give us wisdom to perceive you,
an intellect to understand you,
diligence to seek you,
a vision to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
and a life to proclaim you:
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

St Benedict

Scrapbook

10-15 minutes

You may like to share something new you have collected since last week.

Theme: Living well to the end of our lives

5-10 minutes

By the time you have reached this session you will have gone through previous sessions to discuss our journey towards the latter stages of life. This session hopes to make you think about how planning ahead can help all of us to live as well as possible to the very end of our lives. Many people feel uncomfortable discussing issues about death, dying and loss and you might ask why.

Most of us would like a 'good death' and this can mean different things to different people, but there is a consensus that most of us would like to be pain free and peaceful, not to be alone but be in the company of the people we love, and the majority of us would desire to end our days within our own home setting. There are many things we can do to ensure our preferences and choices can be achieved. Planning and being proactive is better than reacting to the situation we will find ourselves in.

Although physically we may grow weaker, there is every possibility for people to grow stronger in their spirituality, Jesus said ...*"store up for yourself treasures in heaven where moths and rust do not destroy"* (Matthew 6: 20). Mike Riddell writes about this treasure, as spiritual wealth that:

*'...retains its value and can never be taken away from its owner...The cultivation of such assets as humility, compassion, patience, mercy, peace, hospitality and love will prepare us well for the on-going life of the Spirit...Not even death can rob of these investments in spiritual currency.'*⁵

Prior to our modern society, within the context of a religious framework the meaning of 'good death' was more associated to how well your life had been lived in preparation for the journey after death. Therefore, there was a greater awareness of 'how we live'.

Compassionate Communities are being developed to encourage communities to support people to live well towards the end of their lives. Cultivating spiritual wealth as part of your Christian faith can contribute to creating Compassionate Communities⁶.

⁵ Mike Riddle, *Spiritual Journey*, p. 138

⁶ Compassionate Communities is a public health approach; it aims to enable all of us to live as well as possible within our communities to the very end of our lives. It encourages communities, which includes; family, friends, neighbours, schools, businesses, community groups, organisations, faith groups and Churches, together with local health and social care organisations to support people and their families who are dying or living with loss.

Self-Reflection

5 minutes

- What does it mean to you to live well until the end of your life?
- What are the things you would like to do?
- Are there dreams that you would like to fulfil, places that you would like to visit?
- Maybe there are relationships that you would like to restore or nurture.
- Maybe there are memories you would like to create.

Although some people may feel comfortable talking about death, very few of us make any plans. Discussing your wishes and making plans will not hasten death but will ensure when we find ourselves in end of life situations, rather than reacting, we and those around us will have some ideas of our hopes and wishes.

Have you thought about the practical matters, for example:

- How suitable would your home environment be if your mobility becomes limited?
- What can you change to make your garden more manageable?
- Have you written your will?
- Have you made plans for about your funeral arrangement?
- What about an advanced care plan, which will asks questions for considerations such as 'do not attempt resuscitation' (DNAR) in different circumstances?
- Is there anyone you would like to talk through these issues with or support you with making plans?
- Think about who needs to know about your plans and wishes?

How would you like to have your life to be remembered? It is not a question many of us stop to ask ourselves, mainly because we are too busy 'living' our life, but it is a question you are invited to reflect on now together with what is the meaning of your life.

Bible Passage: Hebrews 11: 1-11

10-15 minutes

'Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. ² This is what the ancients were commended for. ³ By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible. ⁴ By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain did. By faith he was commended as a righteous man, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith he still speaks, even though he is dead. ⁵ By faith Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God. ⁶ And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. ⁷ By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith. ⁸ By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. ⁹ By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰ For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. ¹¹ By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.'

Core Question

15-25 minutes

Reflecting on the Bible passage in the context of the theme above, think about and discuss; what is the hope in which you place your faith?

Action Point

5-10 minutes

It is only when we are comfortable about discussing our own mortality that we are able to support others living with death, dying and loss. What is the next step for you?

Homework

5 minutes

Think about: 'What I Value'

Make a note of your thoughts – you may like to express this with in your scrap book with words, photographs, momentums, drawings, pictures or artefacts.

Concluding Prayer (see front page)

Appendix – Session Two

ERIKSON'S STAGE	life stages relationships issues	Potential positive outcomes	Potential negative outcomes
1. Trust v Mistrust	infant / mother / feeding and being comforted, teething, sleeping	Hope and Drive	Sensory distortion / Withdrawal
2. Autonomy v Shame & Doubt	toddler / parents / bodily functions, toilet training, muscular control, walking	Willpower and Self-control	Impulsivity / Compulsion
3. Initiative v Guilt	preschool / family / exploration and discovery, adventure and play	Purpose and Direction	Ruthlessness/ Inhibition
4. Industry v Inferiority	schoolchild / school, teachers, friends, neighbourhood /achievement and accomplishment	Competence and Method	Narrow virtuosity / Inertia
4. Identity v Role Confusion	adolescent / peers, groups, influences / resolving identity and direction, becoming a grown-up	Fidelity and Devotion	Fanaticism / Repudiation
6. Intimacy v Isolation	young adult / lovers, friends, work connections / intimate relationships, work and social life	Love and Affiliation	Promiscuity / Exclusivity
7. Generativity v Stagnation	mid-adult / children, community / 'giving back', helping, contributing	Care and Production	Over-extension / Rejection
8. Integrity v Despair	late adult / society, the world, life / meaning and purpose, life achievements	Wisdom and Renunciation	Presumption / Disdain

Fowler's Stages of Faith	
3. Synthetic - Conventional	Most people move on to this stage as teenagers. At this point, their life has grown to include several different social circles and there is a need to pull it all together. When this happens, a person usually adopts some sort of all-encompassing belief system. However, at this stage, people tend to have a hard time seeing outside their box and don't recognize that they are "inside" a belief system. At this stage, authority is usually placed in individuals or groups that represent one's beliefs. [This is the stage in which many people remain.]
4. Individuative - Reflective	This is the tough stage, often begun in young adulthood, when people start seeing outside the box and realizing that there are other "boxes". They begin to critically examine their beliefs on their own and often become disillusioned with their former faith. Ironically, the Stage 3 people usually think that Stage 4 people have become "backsliders" when in reality they have actually moved forward.
5. Conjunctive Faith	It is rare for people to reach this stage before mid-life. This is the point when people begin to realize the limits of logic and start to accept the paradoxes in life. They begin to see life as a mystery and often return to sacred stories and symbols but this time without being stuck in a theological box.

Appendix – Session Three

On 'Living Bigger Lives' for Action Point Activity

It's difficult to generalise in one short paragraph about how to live a life that contributes to the common good, since everyone's circumstances are so different. However, here are some thoughts from two recent explorations of generations and the common good. How far do you agree with these?

In her book *Borrowing from the Future* (2011), Ann Morisy challenges Baby-Boomers to become a 'pivot generation' who behave 'generously and imaginatively' to help generations to come.

Amongst other things, she says, this will require:

- Recognising that the Baby-Boomers have been an exceptionally lucky generation throughout their lives, and remain, on average, more 'asset-rich' than younger generations
- Deciding to 'discipline our desires' for more wealth or possessions – both for our own personal wellbeing and for the common good
- Focusing not on our independence but our interdependence as generations, and deciding not to define ourselves by wealth or status but by the contribution we make to each other
- Finding a new way of balancing work and caring/voluntary responsibilities in later life. In particular she argues that those beyond retirement age should step out of paid employment if they can afford to do so (to allow more younger adults into work in a time of high unemployment) and instead 'donate' work or social care or volunteering for the good of society
- Finding ways of passing your inheritance (not just money but also goods, values, etc.) onto others during our lifetime rather than leaving it until after death – new ways of living are most often created by those who are willing to sacrifice personal security
- Seeking to avoid a pattern of blaming and scapegoating for current challenges, and instead practice gratitude for what we have received
- Actively seek to campaign for policies or opportunities for younger generations, rather than becoming preoccupied with the needs of one's own generation

In 1996 four American researchers spent time looking at the lives of people in early and mid-life who had made a real contribution to the common good over a sustained number of years, either through work, their place of worship or in community life. What kept them focused and gave them the strength to make this wider contribution? Four common themes emerged:

- They shared the ability to create time to pause, reflect and assess what really mattered, rather than getting sucked into the everyday busyness of life
- They drew strength from being part of a 'tribe' (a network that provided security and encouraged good aspirations – eg, church or strong group or friends) but were also able to work well with people beyond their 'tribe'. In short, they looked both inwards and outwards rather than just inwards
- They were 'threshold' people – ie, they saw the connections between one aspect of life and another, or between the work of one circle of their life and another. They could bring people and organisations into partnership because they understood how each aspect of their life was related to another
- They paid attention to the language they used, the stories they told and the messages that their behaviour gave, so that their whole lives communicated the importance of living a life dedicated to the common good

Summarised from: Laurent Parks Daloz (and others), *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (1996)

How might some of the suggestions given here help you begin to engage in practical action for the good of all generations, and which contributes to 'intergenerational equity'?

The resources given below may assist as you consider how to follow on from this module.

www.saltleytrust.org.uk

St Peter's Saltley Trust is a charity supporting creative projects in Christian learning and discipleship and the churches' contribution to education in the area covered by the Anglican Dioceses of Lichfield, Birmingham, Coventry, Hereford and Worcester. The Trust's work on 'through-life discipleship', including a resource guide on discipleship at different stages of life, can be found at: www.throughlifediscipleship.weebly.com

www.compassionatecommunities.org.uk

Compassionate Communities is a public health approach, it aims to enable all of us to live as well as possible within our communities to the very end of our lives. It encourages communities, which includes; family, friends, neighbours, schools, businesses, community groups, organisations, faith groups and churches, together with local health and social care organisations to support people and their families who are dying or living with loss.

www.u3a.org.uk

U3As are self-help, self-managed lifelong learning co-operatives for older people no longer in full time work, providing opportunities for their members to share learning experiences in a wide range of interest groups and to pursue learning not for qualifications, but for fun.

<http://acts435.org.uk/>

Acts 435 is a website promoted by Archbishop of York which allows people to give money directly to others. Managed through a network of churches, their goal is to get 100% of donations quickly to those in need.

www.randomactsofkindness.org

Inspiring people to practise kindness and pass it on to others.

Books referred to in the programme

- Sue Brayne, *The D Word – Talking about Dying* (2010)
- Graeme Codrington and Sue Grant-Marshall, *Mind the Gap: Own your Past, Know your Generation, Choose your Future* (2011)
- Marie De Hennezel, *Intimate Death – How the Dying Teach Us to Live* (1998)
- Ann Morisy, *Borrowing from the Future: A Faith-Based Approach to Intergenerational Equity* (2011)
- Laurent Parks Daloz (and others), *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (1996)
- Mike Riddell, *Sacred Journey – Spiritual wisdom for times of transition* (2010)
- James Woodward, *Befriending Death* (2005)
- *City of Gold – Impressions of Heaven* (1997) CD and Book – features words of Adrian Plass, John Bunyan, C.S. Lewis, J. John and others

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