



## DISCUSSION PAPER

### Ageing Society, Spiritual Care Response and Framework

#### Purpose

Our world is facing an unprecedented situation which impacts everyone on a personal, family, community and societal level as never before. Worldwide, the population is rapidly ageing as greater numbers of people live longer. As well as variety in generational age groups there is also a diverse mix of cultures and backgrounds represented in many countries.

This paper aims to increase awareness of the global ageing population, the impact of this for The Salvation Army internationally within a faith and mission context. Population ageing signals an urgent challenge far greater than the industrial revolution. Action is needed for the current ageing group as longevity is far too great a gift to waste whilst reiterating that it is not the number of years lived but how those years are lived which is vital in a Christian context (Arnold, 2013).

Mission planning must include strategies for older adult ministry outlining not only a practical response but also the Salvationist response to ageing in Christ and the spiritual journey. Spiritual formation and pastoral care can help all ages address questions of faith and gain insight to basic human issues and spiritual questions. Every age and stage of life on the Christian journey has its unique challenges and blessings. Important to understand is that the foundational groundwork of spiritual disciplines, goal setting and the character development necessary for ageing well in Christ must begin in youth.

The Salvation Army's ministry with the poor, marginalised and addicted people of local communities also continues for ageing people. People are living longer with chronic illness, disabilities and addiction issues. The Salvation Army has at its very root the mission of sharing the gospel along with practical care of all people. Also, as part of the universal Christian Church, there is an important role to play in validating older people, provision of pastoral support, spiritual guidance and equipping of leaders in this specialised field. This paper will not focus on health care needs as such but does outline one method of understanding different ageing needs beyond classification according to chronological age.

## Introduction

The World Health Organisation highlights, “The number of people aged 80 years or older, for example, will have almost quadrupled to 395 million between 2000 and 2050. There is no historical precedent for a majority of middle-aged and older adults having living parents, as is already the case today. More children will know their grandparents and even their great-grandparents, especially their great-grandmothers. On average, women live six to eight years longer than men” (2012).

- ❖ **2012 – 810 million people worldwide 60 years and over**
- ❖ **2050 – 2 billion people worldwide 60 years and over**
- ❖ **2012 – 33 countries’ life expectancy 80 years or more and 316,600 over 100 years**
- ❖ **2050 – 64 countries’ older population 30% or over & 3.2 million centenarians**
- ❖ **For every 100 women aged 80 years or over, there are 61 men.**

This is a new world, with significantly more ageing people and no clear guidelines or training within church ministry to meet this growing need. Helpage International and the United Nations Population Fund (2012), stress that the ageing population is not only occurring in the developed world but also in developing countries. Of concern is that “millions of older people continue to live in poverty, lacking income security, health care, access to basic services, support in emergencies and the full enjoyment of the human rights”. This is of significance for The Salvation Army ministry focus in 131 countries.

Also from a mission planning perspective, it is relevant to note that the majority of people in the 65 years and over age group are living in local communities, not residential care. The Salvation Army mission field is far greater than the residential aged care services currently provided which are of a high standard. The following statistics from 4 countries show this over a time period including 2013/2014.

- Australia: 7.8% of those aged 65 years & over are living in residential care.  
2.4% received home care at some point
- USA: 3.2% of those aged 65 years & over lived in institutional settings
- Canada: 8% of those aged 65 years & over living in care
- United Kingdom: 4.5% of those aged 65 years and over in communal living

Of particular significance is that the growth rate of those 80 years and over is greater than the rest of the population and tends to be the age of increasing frailty and care needs.

Therefore elder caregiving is the single most important human resource issue in the church, workplace and societal systems. The Salvation Army evidences excellence in ministry and outcomes in areas such as recovery programs, chaplaincy, aged care and other residential services and different Corps ministries as some examples, throughout many countries. How can these strengths now influence and support greater planning and provision for an ageing population?

The ageing process is complex and diverse with differing critical support points requiring greater assistance. Despite these differences in ageing, all people require holistic care which incorporates physical, psychological/social and spiritual care. For the purposes of church ministry the following classifications can be helpful (Carlson, 2005).

**ACTIVE OLDER PEOPLE:** Transitioning from full time employment to retirement. Need to find meaning now outside work status. Need to match up gifts and needs both of the congregants and others they can minister to.

**TRANSITIONAL OLDER PEOPLE:** Feeling the limits of an ageing body and may have at least one activity of daily life limit. Many have decreased mobility. Activities of daily life include: eating, bathing, dressing, toileting, transferring (walking) and continence.

**FRAIL OLDER PEOPLE:** Fastest growing age group are those over 85 years in most countries. They may need assistance with two or more activities of daily life.

**CAREGIVERS:** They have primary responsibility for someone who needs assistance for activities of daily life. Many people affiliated with TSA would be in caregiving roles and need some different focus and support.

## Discussion

Care of older people as a human resource issue impacts both the workplace and the church. Most communities are not equipped or prepared to help meet the growing need within both multi-cultural and multi-generational age groups.

An added component in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is that due to medical advances and abilities to overcome many diseases, injuries and so on, there is now an expectation that life continues indefinitely. There is also constant scientific research and development seeking to defy ageing with bombardment of anti-ageing information and sales pitch which creates negativity around ageing (Arnold). The challenge for society and the church is recognising the lost vision of shared human experience of life where everything is finite and ageing throughout every stage of life.

Stoneking (2003) points out “by focusing solely on the abstract problem of ageing apart from the actual lives and voices of people growing older, the scientific management of ageing also denies our universal participation and solidarity in this most human experience”. This breakdown in solidarity helps clarify why the church has also evolved to a point where older people are segregated and not necessarily active participants in church life.

An interesting phenomenon has been occurring and continues to impact life within ageing. As people live longer, older age is now considered to begin earlier so that there is potential to live as an ‘old person’ for potentially another half a lifetime. Although there are greater numbers of older people, they have been excluded in many areas of life and great effort is expended through scientific endeavour to delay or halt ageing altogether.

In particular, Western culture has developed negativity towards ageing and older people over time which is exacerbated for women. In an era of longevity, women have potential to live longer, be alone and also have to contend with issues of body image as well as general ageism (Larsen, 1995). The strength of ageism is similar to that of racism or sexism resulting in incorrect assumptions and attitudes (Meador, 2003).

A helpful definition of ageism is that of “any attitude, action, or institutional structure which subordinates a person or group because of age or any assignment of roles in society purely on the basis of age” (Training.gov.au, 2011).

Examples of incorrect assumptions or attitudes towards ageing include inability to continue learning, forgetfulness, poor health, loss of beauty or attractiveness, cognitive deterioration, increasing mental health illness such as depression, decreased interest sexually and inability to contribute to society. This may not always be blatant but still very powerful. The powerful effect is evidenced through older people themselves absorbing the negative connotations. It is also played out by family members as well as health professionals acting paternally towards elders, negating their decision making capabilities (Meador, 2003).

Youthfulness and external beauty are today seen as optimum, with emphasis on only seeking positive, uplifting life experiences. This has contributed to expectations of healing where it is hoped that ageing, ill health and suffering can be avoided. A further challenge is that while seeking enduring youthfulness, there is denial of regular physical change that comes with increasing age (Meador, 2003).

Scientific and medical advances have contributed to longevity but the social, political and theological impact has not been examined carefully within post-modern influence. The power of the language used cannot be overestimated. In an era of economic emphasis, when reflecting on limited resources, economic language views ageing and death as a crisis. Questions arise as to how to use available resources where older people are perceived to be a drain through overuse of resources (Long, 2003).

The post-modern attitude of self-confidence in ability to accomplish whatever one sets out to do as well as control life seeks to defy ageing and in the process, devalues older people giving rise to a fear of ageing and perception that ageing is a problem. It is extra challenging to overcome thinking which has existed now since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that perceives ageing as a life problem to be solved. In contrast to negative attitudes regarding ageing is an expectation within older people themselves that they can continue their ageing years as fit and capable as in their younger years. This can be unrealistic and can be another form of ageism still perceiving youthfulness as ideal (Stoneking).

Another valid point is trying to live the second half of life as one has in youth or with middle aged ideals and capabilities. This inhibits new vision. Ageing does not simply mean one is no longer young. In a culture where there is always a striving for more of everything, deterioration and ageing is not a good contrast. In a culture trying to ignore ageing, it is easy to overlook the many differences in older people (Jung, 2003).

A strongly held pre-conception is that ageing means increasing physical and mental incompetence. This is due to lack of knowledge regarding the difference between normal ageing and diseases which impact ageing. For instance Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of ageing. It is a pathological disease. Many older people are living very full lives without contracting the diseases often associated with age (Jung).

Do we view ageing as negative or positive? Nouwen & Gaffney (1990) highlight, "the fear of becoming old in our Western world is, for the most part, determined by the fear of not being able to live up to the expectations of an environment in which you are what you produce, achieve, have and keep".

What does this mean for older people who no longer have working, parenting or other roles that validate them? A further negative message from advertising and media is that those who retire can spend their time in play, taking up games, travel or similar activities.

Research carried out in the United Kingdom shows indications that older people are certainly adept at learning new concepts and can be more malleable than younger people. What is important to understand is the demoralising affect, when belief from others is lacking or framed negatively (Coleman, 2004). This inhibits older people, lessening their self-confidence in ability to progress. However, as with all varying people's life circumstances, it is also important not to make unrealistic demands of older people.

Moving forward there must be ownership by all agencies, including the Church, within society, as well as individual effort in seeking answers as to how to age. It is vital for the whole community to find meaning within longevity. An important finding by Coleman (2009) in later research is that religious practice is not necessarily providing support to older people as it has in the past. Results are showing that a great number of older people do not have the opportunity to share concerns or converse with caring people regarding faith or what gives meaning. Even within churches, pastoral support and care is lacking for older people and there must be careful thought and new approaches sought to answer the challenge ahead. The churches of today can no longer assume that older people feel valued and will always be a part of the congregation.

### **Potential Church Response**

Rather than relying on concrete terms within a theological and academic approach which tends to focus more on issues such as policies and health, there does need to be critical engagement around the issues and the human experience of ageing. This lived human experience requires solidarity and all ages working together with clear theology encompassing the Christ story within the whole construct of ageing.

Houston & Parker (2011), recognise that "Not since biblical times has the church been faced with such a tremendous opportunity. What is the divine purpose behind the ageing population? Imagine the possibilities for a nation and the world if an army of spiritually inspired, successfully ageing elders entered the fray, grounded in the gospel. This contemporary gift of added years affords mature people the opportunity to reframe the second half of their lives. Age-restrictive traditions about vocation ministerial calling and love no longer apply as a new and growing wave of elders are empowered to dedicate themselves more completely to God-given recreated visions and purposes".

Within Christian perspectives, there needs to be teaching on what it means to love God and others for the whole life journey and seek God's will and purposes within all the experiences of life. This includes not only ageing, but loss and grief, regrets over life choices and not isolating oneself away from community. Within the reality of changing circumstances is the ability of God to create new and ongoing ways of Christian ministry for everyone (Arnold).

Furthermore, it is understandable that with greater numbers of people living longer, societies will be shaped by economic, social, cultural psychological and spiritual needs for all generational groups. Also influencing outcomes and quality of life for the generations too are individual capabilities, capacities, social support and English as a second language as well as lifestyle choices as younger people. The church can be influential in a balanced view of ageing but also include teaching to all ages about what it means to age in Christ and the impact of approach, attitude and choices made throughout life.

It is now recognised that the personality continues to develop through to the mid-60s. Erik Erikson in his study of ageing, has highlighted the importance of the years between age 25 and 65. Attitudes and choices formed in these middle adulthood years impact whether people continue pursuing productivity and caring for their community and other younger generations coming along behind or if they stagnate (Slater, 2003).

It is possible to help older people develop strategies for not only coping with life changes and challenges but also maximise their quality of life. However, although many older people have over time through varied life experiences, learned to grieve, adjust, compensate and rebuild their lives, ageing can become a crisis of meaning (Simmons & Peters, 1996). This crisis of meaning has come about because of societal negative attitudes to ageing and the devaluing of older people generally.

## **God's perspective selected references**

### **Old Testament**

Genesis 1:26 refers to all mankind being made in the image of Father, Son and Spirit. Despite deterioration of the body, all people retain the dignity of God's DNA.

Psalms 71: 15-18 is shared by David in his old age where remembering and retelling of God's righteous deeds and saving acts is important to him and he reiterates how God makes good his promises. This is the testimony of one who has proved God over many years and through all the difficulties of his life. David understood too the importance of declaring God's power to the next generation.

Psalms 92: 12-15 talks of the ability to flourish like a palm tree and grow with strength like the cedar tree but the flourishing is only in God. In God we can all still bear fruit, stay fresh and green, despite old age and frailty. This is for all of life.

## New Testament

Acts 1:18 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” This verse does not talk of an age limit in witnessing in the Holy Spirit’s power but also there are older people who desperately need to hear the gospel.

1 Corinthians 12:14 The body, that is the church, is made up of many parts – this does not change with ageing – older people should continue to use their spiritual gifts and can still play a valid role in the church. This is also reiterated in Titus 2:3-4.

Ephesians 6:4: Timothy 3 and Titus 1 talk of the importance of respecting older adults but also older people being the right example of Christ likeness.

**Six Specific Categories** for the Church’s ministry to and with older adults are: spiritual enrichment, learning opportunities, socialisation, service opportunities, services needed and intergenerational mixing (Carlson, 1997).

## Spiritual Enrichment

As a person ages, there is great potential for spiritual development and growth, however, people work out their spirituality in different ways. Later life is an opportunity for taking time to reflect and acknowledge both the negative and positive experiences and focus on important relationships. There are two aspects within The Salvation Army ministry impacting older people who are affiliated in some way.

Firstly, there are those who do not profess the Christian faith or practice religion as part of their spiritual care and they need different support other than what is provided for those of the Christian faith. Secondly, there needs to be opportunities for Christians to continue maturing in their faith and have support in wrestling with faith issues. All older people still need purpose in life, love and affection, ability to adapt, to be creative and have opportunities of meaningful worship, reconciliation and seeking wholeness as life is reviewed.

Life goals in Western society tend to focus on the first half of life. For example, attaining education, career, material possessions, and extending family. The fast pace of life lived during those years can inhibit learning deeper lessons of life particularly if those goals are not realised. The life journey paradoxically involves loss and gain. A valid point raised by Huber (2003), is that of “core identity not being dependent on material possessions, status, relationship and even own bodies and minds”. This is particularly relevant in the challenges of dementia which impacts body and mind. Discovering the core involves spiritual work.

In fact, Nouwen & Gaffney (1990) understand ageing itself to be a spiritual task. There is hard work involved in order to traverse experiences of loss, grief, pain and suffering. Failure to process the spiritual tasks leads to what Huber interprets as bitterness, stunted spiritual growth of core self. This is where it is vital for the Church to make opportunities of engaging with and supporting the current mid-life generation in preparing for and processing the important spiritual tasks for longevity and ageing. The benefit of spiritual work is not only for individuals but the greater community too.

The relevance of spirituality and spiritual care is now better recognised in the medical field as vital in care of the whole person. Simply put, the spiritual dimension is where meaning to life is explored and supported. Along with Huber, Kimble (2002) refers to “spiritual thickness”. This is like a supply or stock of spiritual strengths which can be drawn on and built up to assist the ageing task.

It should also be considered that many older people must have questions within their longer years of life. Understanding spiritual needs and supporting the spiritual quest in ageing has the potential to transform a limited viewpoint of physical earthly life to an eternal perspective and purpose.

We all need encouragement to undertake the hard work of spiritual work in order to support development. Later life can be a time of learning through suffering, gaining spiritual maturity and growing through vulnerability. This is best done through the support of meaningful relationships and community (Stoneking). Also from a mission perspective, spiritual awareness helps clarity of vision in seeing other’s needs and opportunities of ministry to them which helps to highlight the importance of spiritual work (Atchley, 2006).

A further important point is that the church can assist and support people’s search for meaning in the process of ageing, becoming old and understanding death as a natural process of life. Society is lacking symbols to assist this process and the church has a vital part to play here. Not only the Judeo-Christian traditions but also other religious sacred writings and practices, can contribute to meaning making in ageing through their use of symbols and rites. Experiences such as meaning in life, death, exploration of evil and suffering as well as love, hope and components of healing can be encouraged. In particular though, the Christian story of Jesus’ death and resurrection gives meaning to suffering, grief through loss, healing, forgiveness and hope of eternal life. Involving all the senses along with the use of symbols can help in healing and ability to transcend life’s challenges (Kimble).

It is now being acknowledged that people who attend church generally cope and enjoy life more. This is because they have a support network as well as a faith structure and belief system. Importantly, congregations must not forget their own members once they are unable to attend church because of frailty in ageing. The strength of small groups within churches can be fostered and at times re-established depending on needs of the greater community.

The tasks of community, prayer, worship, service, teaching and sharing one’s spiritual story happen with different intensity at various ages and stages of life. When the final stage of life’s journey is drawing closer, the church has a vital role in not only taking the ritual and sacrament to the dying but that of the pastoral carer spending precious time being present. This is through being fully present, listening to the heart and concerns, perhaps facilitating reconciliation between family members and validating that life within God’s narrative (Hawley & Jewell).

Finally, in spiritual care, the ethical response to be addressed around death and dying is the subject of euthanasia and assisted suicide. Within that too is the understanding of personhood which is addressed further in a separate paper.

A Spiritual Assessment Tool asks a variety of questions covering spiritual needs and is helpful in formatting a plan and process for spiritual support. Also life review is helpful.



## **Learning Opportunities**

It is now understood that we can continue learning and it is generally acknowledged that participation in ongoing learning opportunities contributes to health, wellbeing and mental health. There are not only personal benefits but also broadening of social and community interactions. Agencies providing learning opportunities include higher education and vocational education providers as well as voluntary groups such as churches which may aim to meet a broad range of needs for older people (Anderson, 2008).

There are also now tighter regulations around not only working roles but also volunteering roles which require some qualifications and also attention to legalities such as Police Checks. This is important to note as despite previous working or life experience, qualifications do need to be current and policies and procedures adhered to.

There would also be an element of informal learning provided by family members for instance on the use of computers and other technology. There is a university group in the United Kingdom providing access to University studies for older people in residential care (Learning for the Fourth Age). Specific needs can be met through suggested topics as provided by the examples of the Project for Seniors and Lifelong Ministry (PSALM) in the United Kingdom as well.

Supplementing the earlier information on spiritual needs within ageing is stressing the importance of lifelong learning on the Christian journey. Again it is important to stress that from the moment of conversion, whatever age, continual learning and development as a disciple of Christ needs to be ongoing and maturing. This is vital for older people. Mathis (2014) stresses that “life experience may increase inevitably with age, but without some long-term pattern of receptivity and intentionality, multiplied experiences will only create more confusion than clarity”. None of us learns all we need to know of discipleship at the beginning of the journey. There needs to be both church community and personal planning for ongoing Christian development.

## **Socialisation**

Older adult ministry is an opportunity to gain insight into life, for their spiritual issues are basic human issues asking questions about who am I, why am I, what has it all meant? Is my faith in God enough? What happens if I can't remember and am I diminished as a human being? It is vital that older people have opportunities to share their story of faith. Lessons and challenges from older people's lives could be helpful for developing intergenerational activities in the church and local community. It is important to have opportunities to simply talk, be creative and share meals together. We all need opportunities of sharing with others (Hawley & Jewell, 2009).

Houston & Parker (2011) point out, “The church is in a unique position to positively affect how seniors are viewed and treated and is therefore able to tap into a wiser reservoir of knowledge, faith and love found in the late life generations. Churches that foster the rich, intergenerational connection available only through our elders will ensure that their unique legacy of faith and love is made available systematically and intentionally to younger generations. The lives of the younger set are enriched, and seniors who become more actively engaged with life also benefit by aging more successfully”.

Socialisation rests on building connections with our communities, interfaith groups, council groups, senior service groups and basically being engaged with others in meaningful ways. It means more than knowing someone's name. It means being in relationship with others that allows time for nurturing, support and fun.

Remember, older people often lack human contact and support and the importance of sharing time together through stories and experiences. It is vital to not underestimate the up to date experiences older people are living through such as grief and loss. It may be helpful to run support groups and other group activities have day and evening options and intergenerational programs. Also don't forget the benefit of internet ministry and support in this technological age.

### **Service Opportunities**

Everyone needs to feel useful. There is also a great reservoir of gifts and abilities in the middle and older years of people and both professional and vocational working life experience that can be tapped into to help support ministry. As the warfare against evil continues and the race is not done until the final call all Christians regardless of age should be involved in some way in kingdom work. In the final season of life we are in a position to have great influence if we don't grow weary and we have an all of life calling (Houston & Parker).

A further way for the church to be supportive of older people is by working with other churches and agencies. Clusters of congregations can work together to provide voluntary caring and support services to frail and disabled persons. It would be helpful to conduct a simple audit to see what older people from the congregation are already doing in their communities.

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Specifically within The Salvation Army context, consideration could be given to policies and practices for retired Officers. It is understandable that different countries have unique laws or policies regarding pensions and retirement ages. However, there does seem to be unequal opportunities for ongoing service beyond retirement and also the wisdom and experience of many Officers could be utilized further in advisory capacities.

### **Services Needed**

This will vary from community to community and the various corps and social settings. Supporting ministry to those with Dementia will be very significant.

There is training available on leading Dementia Friendly Worship and creating Dementia Friendly Churches on the Mission Tools page. There is also an Alzheimer's Australia resource on providing a café service for those with dementia and their carers.

It is also important to build stronger links between corps and social expressions of The Salvation Army. In particular where there are residential aged care services, extra ministry support from Corps is valid in visitation, provision of worship and extra music or art focused groups. There could also be assistance in the pastoral visitation and spiritual planning with adequate training. It is possible to run groups such as a Playgroup or Mainly Music group within a residential aged care home where there is opportunity of interaction between young and old.

Godly Play is beneficial for those with Dementia, not only children. Godly Play is a Montessori Method of telling Bible stories, developed by Jerome Berryman, using parables, sacred stories and liturgical lessons about religious traditions using simple materials. Godly Play is used extensively with adults and children in many settings, from schools to hospitals, churches to aged care facilities. There are also three specific Salvation Army stories available on the Flag, the Mercy Seat and Social Justice.

Remembering Your Story – creating your own spiritual autobiography by Richard Morgan can be a helpful process.

Further training could be sourced or offered on pastoral care visitation, caring for those experiencing divorce, losing their job, caring for those living with HIV/AIDS, bereavement and so on.

It is vital that all involved in The Salvation Army ministry expressions understand the importance of spiritual care for all people. Understanding spiritual needs and self-care strategies, develops capacity and sustainability as well as resilience.

## **Intergenerational Focus**

Houston & Parker (2011) point out, "The church is in a unique position to positively affect how seniors are viewed and treated and is therefore able to tap into a wiser reservoir of knowledge, faith and love found in the late life generations. Churches that foster the rich, intergenerational connection available only through our elders will ensure that their unique legacy of faith and love is made available systematically and intentionally to younger generations. The lives of the younger set are enriched, and seniors who become more actively engaged with life also benefit by aging more successfully".

Age segregation has become the norm in communities and the church which inhibits development of community. Clarification of terms is pertinent to understand what is meant by intergenerational.

According to the Effective Ministry website, "Intergenerational ministry includes the key components of intentionality and interaction amongst the generations. It's important to emphasize here that mutual and influential relationships and a degree of consistent regularity of engagement are the crucial characteristics that distinguish a truly intergenerational community in comparison to multigenerational, or even trans-generational settings wherein several generations may be in proximity with each other, but not necessarily in intentional relationship".

Importantly benefits of intergenerational church community are not only for older people but impact younger people, particularly helping to deepen their faith journey as they are supported through that process and observe and share with older people.

Some helpful core points suggested by Effective Ministry are:

- Manage age segregation
- Build social capital
- Create structures that span life stages
- Develop intergenerational serving ministries
- Rethink the place of church wide services
- Make a philosophical paradigm shift in core values
- Begin where you are
- Keep intergenerational values in balance with age-specific ministry

A full research paper written by Sarie King is available at <http://www.effectiveministry.org/why-intergenerational-ministry> which covers the issues, developing intergenerational ministries and simple ideas to help you get going in your setting.

Intergenerational worship opportunities are to be encouraged and supported. The purpose of worship for everyone is to honour God with the whole of life, to love and know love within community, to grow in relationship with Christ, develop in ministry service and prayer life and to go out to others in sharing the gospel message. In order to support those with special needs, there needs to be safe access, handrails, large fonts on the screen or written materials, hearing support, light, temperature etc.

An all age worship approach helps cater for different learning styles as well the different levels of education, income, health, interest, ability and attitudes within people. Surely the aim for Christians is to have well-rounded elders who are wise through God, share wide interests, hobbies, sports, read widely and entertain hospitality. They dwell in a deep interior world of frequent prayer, Scripture and understand the sacrificial life (Houston and Parker).

## **Response**

An intentional missional response from The Salvation Army needs to be updated to include ageing, frail aged and vulnerable people in both social and Corps contexts of ministry and policies. It is vital to recognise the discrimination against older people in most countries, where there is lack of access to jobs, health care, they are subject to abuse and denied the right to own and inherit property and lack basic income and social security.

Include older people within priorities and planning, review the current offering and approach to ministry and consider redesign to meet needs into the future.

Develop, fund and appropriately resource a comprehensive plan that addresses the six essential ministry needs of older adults and engage with and support the current mid-life generations in preparing for and processing the important spiritual tasks for longevity and ageing.

Explore partnership with agencies such as the The Salvation Army Colleges for higher education teaching on Ageing and Pastoral Care.

Continually reflect on embedded practices particularly in the area of frail, cognitively impaired older people. A constant process of assessment, interpretation and practice is required (Stone & Duke, 2006). The early years of life are now understood to have significant impact in ageing.

We conclude with another quotation from Helpage International, “In summary, population ageing is a megatrend that is transforming economies and societies around the world. It is a cause for celebration and a major opportunity for all. Older people’s activism shines throughout this report, and their increasing economic weight is a growing political reality. The report shows the wealth of productivity, contributions and leadership of those aged 60 and over. It demonstrates that with the right measures in place to secure health care, regular income, social networks and legal protection as we age, there is a ‘longevity dividend’ to be reaped by current and future generations. Older person are the world’s fastest growing population group, amid rapidly changing family structures and the possibility of declining family support systems”.

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