

Welcome to Issue 25 of LEAF's quarterly newsletter and diary.

In our lead article, Derek Copley looks at how the issue of ageism has left the church with an untapped resource of huge proportions in terms of the potential for older people give the second half of their lives to serve the Lord in a variety of exciting and different way. In November we have a seminar arranged to explore this whole area and if you are retired or approaching retirement (say over 50) we would encourage you to come to this and have your horizons expanded. You will find full details of the seminar overleaf.

We have our annual LEAF Celebration on Sunday 9th October – again you will find full details overleaf – and this year we are also designating this day as LEAF Prayer Sunday.

In our prayer focus, you will find some useful prayer pointers. I would encourage you all to pray regular for God's work in the New Forest area.

I would also encourage you to read the report from Carol on the Youth Initiative and to pray for her and the invaluable work that she is doing.

Do look through the diary and see if there are events that you can support in other churches than your own.



"An untapped resource of huge proportions"

On a recent visit to the Philippines, a young couple gently pushed their daughter towards me. She performed the most delightful curtsey in my direction. I was puzzled, and risking committing a cultural faux pas, I asked why this had been done. 'Oh' came the reply 'we like to show respect to the elderly' Elderly, I thought. Huh! I am only 64 – still middle aged really. In many Eastern cultures, ageism is not an issue – they respect and love those over 50 and want to hear what they have to say. They would not, as can happen here, be labelled 'surplus to requirements' and abandoned as useless.

Most focus in churches is on ministry *among* older people (and teenagers) not ministry *by* them. I prefer not to categorise people too much into boxes like 'young people' and 'older people', if this means we cannot then regard them as 'normal' church members. I appreciate that there are distinctives and difficulties, which must be borne in mind with these age groups (like immaturity among some of the young, and poor physical and mental health among some of the elderly).

But we ought not to pigeonhole them simply as people whose only function is to be recipients of pastoral care and entertainment. As well as providing many services to the old, there is scope for suggesting that the beneficiaries look outwards to the wider world. Yes, we are allowed to challenge them! And why not? There is no reason for robbing so many of them of the chance to make a difference for God. They just need to be envisioned.

Many of our own older people become self-absorbed because we expect them to be so, and we cater for them accordingly. Some segments of secular society now promote the 'living life to the full' concept, and maybe we can learn from them.

David Luckock is right when he says 'older people do not want things just done for them'. I would proactively encourage them to consider serving God overseas for a period of time, whether it be 2 weeks, 2 years, or 20 years. There are ministries of infinite variety for a range of people from the early retired to those well into their 70s. Many do not need to raise their support, as they have pensions. They do not need, in most cases, to go to Bible College. Some have business experience they can offer. Others, after a 6 week course in Teaching English as a Second (or Foreign) language, can gain entrance to many 'closed' and difficult nations. I favour the concept of people giving at least some of their retirement time to working in other cultures. Look at the many vacancies and opportunities listed by Mission agencies, and you will be amazed what opportunities there are for older people,

Because I am almost of retirement age, I can challenge older people when I preach. I think I am practising what I preach, as I have just embarked on a 3-5 year ministry of working in Central Asia among the suffering Christians.

And I want to mention a friend called Garth, who at the age of almost 70 has just begun on work among the overseas students in Bournemouth. They love this 'father figure' and he is able to witness regularly, and has made many friends. One or two have now become believers. He has been totally surprised at this new exciting work. Maybe we can encourage older people to expect the unexpected, and not to assume that life has to be humdrum.

There is a whole army of people who could do so much more for God – an untapped resource of huge proportions. Some are bored silly, and would love a fresh challenge. Others need a gentle push in the right direction. And, as with other church members (I hope!) we could, as part of our routine pastoral visitation, talk to them about their service for God, and ask the question 'have you considered...?'

Derek Copley

Our seminar on 12 Nov – The Best is yet to Come – will provide practical help and encouragement for older people to find new ways to serve God during the second half of life. (See overleaf)

LEAF is committed to the transformation of society and culture in the New Forest through evangelical Christians uniting together in prayer, worship, evangelistic activity, social action and speaking with a common voice to local government and media.

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Annual LEAF Celebration

Sunday 9th October 2005 at 6.30 pm

at Ashley Baptist Church

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F'kdoqj lqj #Z ruq #

with guest speaker

Rt Revd Paul Butler

Bishop of Southampton

The time for our annual LEAF celebration is rapidly approaching. We enjoyed a great evening together last Autumn at St Saviours church, Brockenhurst where Rev Steve Pittis was our guest speaker and we focused on *Taking Church into the Street*.

We are continuing this year with a similarly topical theme – looking at how the church must adapt to an ever changing world. We are very pleased to welcome the Rt Rev Paul Butler, Bishop of Southampton, as our guest speaker and he will be addressing us on the topic of *Changing Church for a Changing World*.

There is tremendous power and blessing in the church of all flavours and colours coming together in an expression of our unity in Christ. Our annual celebration is a great opportunity for this to happen.

This promises to be a great evening. Do be there, and bring your friends.

LEAF Prayer Sunday

Sunday 9th October 2005

Working to maintain and strengthen the unity of the church in the New Forest area is one of our core elements of LEAF's mission, and as well as coming together in our celebration evening we do all we can to encourage united prayer across the New Forest region.

We have therefore decided to make the day of our celebration, LEAF Prayer Sunday. As well as taking some time during our celebration to pray for the New Forest area together, we will be encouraging all LEAF churches and individual members to pray specifically for our region that morning.

See the LEAF Prayer focus for further details and prayer pointers.

Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. (Eph 6:18 NLT)

Wkh #Ehw #v # h #w #r #F #p # h #

a seminar to envision, encourage and equip all those in the second half of life

Saturday 12th November, 2005

10.30 am – 4.30 pm at

St Saviours Church, Brockenhurst

with guest speakers

Rob Merchant

Author of Pioneering the Third Age: The Church in an ageing population

David Heydon

Director of Outlook Trust: an interdenominational trust established to help individuals and churches reach older people with the gospel of Jesus Christ

Booking is required – There is no cost but an offering will be taken on the day. To book ring the LEAF office: 01590 682605

The article overleaf by Derek Copley describes the army of older people within today's church as an "untapped resource of huge proportions". And it is for precisely this reason that we have decided to set up this seminar.

Ageism is certainly alive and well within today's society – and many employers today would not dream of taking on anyone over the age of 50.

There has also been a great emphasis on youth ministry within the church and rightly so – to neglect this area is to neglect the future – but sadly this has, in many cases, led to older believers feeling neglected, useless, and "over the hill".

The fact is that, in God's economy, nothing could be further from the truth. Tomorrow's leaders need older people to father, mentor and encourage them, and God looks for just one thing from the life of every believer... fruitfulness. And fruitfulness has never had anything to do with age.

Perhaps the greatest example of this in the Bible is Caleb, a man who, at the age of 85, maintained he was just as strong and able to take on the enemy as when he was 40! (See Joshua 14:10-12)

When God looks at your life, he simply sees the potential for greater fruitfulness – that's why we called this seminar "The Best is yet to Come". No matter what your age, God has a plan and a purpose for your life – and when you reach the end of your professional working life, this means greater opportunity and scope for fruitful service, perhaps in new areas.

This seminar is suitable for anyone in the second half of life – whether still working but approaching retirement, or already retired from everyday working life. The aim is to envision you as to some of the possibilities for fruitful service, to encourage you to believe that God still has great plans for your life and to find out what he wants you to be doing, and to help you to see how you can equip yourself with any new skills you might need to fulfil your calling and destiny.

Do come prepared to be challenged and encouraged!