

12 Trends for Second Half Ministry – David P. Gallagher, D.Min.

None of us can predict what adult church ministry will be like even five or 10 years from now, but you can begin to get a sense of direction by paying attention to demographic and social trends. The United States Census Bureau projects that by the year 2050 Americans over 65 will outnumber teenagers by more than 2 to 1. And the 85-and-older population could grow from 5.3 million in 2006 to nearly 21 million by 2050, which is when the youngest Boomers will have turned 85.

Here are 12 realistic probabilities that church need to be aware of and respond to in healthy ways.

**Increased generational conflict:** Expanding social alienation between the older and the younger in our society and in our churches may result in polarization. Churches will need to give serious attention to teaching biblical principles about aging.

**Specialized psychological services, financial planning, and elder law:** Pastors and counselors will have opportunities to promote optimistic mental health for middle and older adults. Larger churches will offer more specialized counseling services for an aging population and small group ministries in churches will need to focus on meeting needs. Elder Law is a relatively new area of legal practice that focuses on the legal needs of older adults and incapacitated people and their families. As people grow older they need to look seriously at not only the financial and health issues ahead, but also take steps to ensure that things are in order legally.

**Greater emphasis on good nutrition:** Massive demographic changes mean that restaurants will move from offering one or two “senior items” to a much larger variety of options for nutritionally conscious adults.

**Better physical fitness:** Fitness centers will offer more programs for middle and older adults who will want and need joint-friendly aerobic equipment as well as relaxation programs.

**Improved bionic aids:** Nearly invisible hearing aids and other technology will help control and hide the appearance of disabilities.

**More retirement communities:** Many middle adults will relocate to communities designed to accommodate active adults and older adults. “Lifecare” communities will expand – a comprehensive, pay-on e-price concept for providing long-term care for a controlled cost.

There will be more home health care and group homes for the aging.

**Travel focused on adventure and education:** Christian travel groups like LifeTree Adventures ([group.com/Lifetree](http://group.com/Lifetree)) and Educational Opportunities ([eo.travelwithus.com](http://eo.travelwithus.com)) already offer tours with a specific purpose.

**Generation-specific publications:** New publications will keep adults informed about life-improving innovations and medical breakthroughs.

**Advancements in direct and relationship-building marketing strategies:**

Technology will allow direct marketing to become extremely personal. The church will be able to tap into new technology for personalized follow-up of their members and friends.

**Survival strategies for those without partners:** Clergy and church leadership teams may have amazing opportunities for ministry to those who are single, widowed, or divorced.

**Unwillingness to surrender to the aging process:** Technology will continue to enable people to live longer and opt to replace nearly every limb or organ.

**Breakdown of traditional paradigms:** One-third or more of all Boomers will be unable to pay the cost of health care, and there will be an overstressed Medical system. Churches across the nation will have unprecedented opportunities to help people in need, many of whom will be elderly.

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**Resources**

**Books**

*Generation Ageless* (HarperCollins) by J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman

*Boomers and Beyond* (Jossey-Bass) by Amy Hanson

*Marketing to Leading-Edge Baby Boomers* (Paramount Market) by Brent Green

*Senior Adult Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Wipf & Stock) by David P. Gallagher

*The Joys of Successful Aging* (Moody Publishers) by George Sweeting

*Pastoral Care in Hospitals* (Morehouse Publishing) by Neville A. Kirkwood

## **Web**

Gocasa.org – The Christian Association Serving Adults (CASA)

<http://amyhanson.org/intergenerational-ministry/bridging-the-generational-divide/> Amy

Hanson blog

<http://www.churchgrowth.net/> Church Growth, Inc., New Senior Study Center, Charles

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## **Conferences**

LifeServe National Conference 2011, September 26-29, 2011, Louisville, KY  
(<http://lifeserve.group.com/>) Half-Track A: “Involving the 50+ Adults in Ministry” Dave Gallagher

- Energizing Seniors for Serving
- Involving the 50+ Generation in Ministry
- Prerequisites That Will Make or Break an Effective Adult Ministry

The CASA Network International 50+ Ministry Leadership Conference  
(<http://gocasa.org/>) INFLUENCING THE GENERATIONS! ILC-Anaheim on November 9-11, 2011 All events at the Doubletree Hotel Anaheim Orange County, Orange California USA. *Experience three transforming days at The CASA Network International Leadership Conference!*

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