



Older Adult Sunday Worship Liturgy and Celebration Ideas

The Presbyterian Church (USA) designates the *first Sunday of May* as the beginning of **Older Adult Week**, a time to honor older adults for their commitment to the life, witness, and ministry of the church. The timing may not work for your context...you may choose any Sunday for this celebration of Older Adults. The liturgy ideas, prayers and resources below can be used in a congregational worship or may be adapted for a retirement community or some other setting. Included are worship resources and ideas to celebrate and lift up ministry with Older Adults. The [Office of Christian Formation](#) provides these resources in partnership with the [Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network](#) (POAMN).

Liturgy Resources

Call to Worship

One: I was glad when they said to me "Let us go to the house of the Lord."

All: We come running and on walkers, with hurried steps and halting to join together as your called together people.

One: This is the day you have made for us, our Creator, a day for us to join in praise and worship of you.

All: We give thanks for this day and for this world, for this whole creation which you have called good.

One: You gather us together as our good Shepherd.

All: For your care of us all of our lives we praise your name.

One: Let us worship God.

(Rev. June Begany, POAMN Planning Guide 2017)

Unison Call to Worship (from Psalm 92)

One: It is a good thing to give thanks to the Lord,

And to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

All: To tell of your loving-kindness early in the morning

And of your faithfulness in the night season;

On the psaltery, and on the lyre, And to the melody of the harp.

One: For you have made me glad by your acts, O Lord;

And I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.

**All: The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
And shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.**

One: Those who are planted in the house of the Lord

Shall flourish in the courts of our God;

They shall still bear fruit in old age;

All: They shall be green and succulent;

**That they may show how upright the Lord is,
My Rock, in whom there is no fault.**

One: Creator God, You have planted your Word in our hearts

That you might harvest forth justice.

So root us in your love,
That we may always flourish,
Yielding all the fruits of the Spirit
From youth to old age;
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Jan L. McGilliard, POAMN Planning Guide 2016)

Call to Worship

One: Lord, you have been our dwelling place for all generations.

All: You have created the world and all that is in it.

One: We celebrate your never-failing love which you showered upon our ancestors, upon us, and will continue to shower on generations yet to come.

All: We give thanks for your promises to hear and be with us, as you have always done.

One: We celebrate the lives of all who have gone before, who have lived with these promises in their lives, who have had their faith strengthened.

All: We give thanks for the wisdom and the gifts those who have gone before us have shared with us.

Unison: Let us join our voices in praising God.

(Rev. June Begany, POAMN Planning Guide 2018)

Prayer of Confession (in unison)

Loving God, you provide everything we need, yet sometimes, we doubt there will be enough time, enough money, enough health, enough memory, enough compassion as we live out our days. We doubt when we need to have faith. We see the glass half empty when in fact it is half full. We know you are present, God with us, but in spite of ourselves we sometimes feel separated and lost. Forgive us when we rely too much on ourselves and not enough on you, for you are steadfast and strong, ready to meet our every need and receive every petition. Bless each of us, Lord, as we grow older, that we may mature in faith as well as in years. In your mercy, Lord, hear our prayers. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: Hear the good news! In every time and place, in every age and in every space we are forgiven in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

(Jan L. McGilliard, POAMN Planning Guide 2016)

Prayer of Confession

O Lord, you have created all of us, but sometimes we want to look only to youth and ignore our elders. Sometimes we act as though only the oldest, the longest standing members have anything to offer. Remind us, O God we are all your called out people. Forgive us when we forget that and ignore one group; by age or race or gender or ethnic origin. Help us to see you in each person. Restore us all by your grace into one family. *Time of Silent Confession*

Assurance of Pardon One: This the good news we have received that anyone, no matter what age or origin, or other status, is forgiven for when they have strayed from God and are now welcomed by God to the table God has spread before us if they put their trust in Jesus as Lord.

All: Thanks be to God for this good news.

(Rev. June Begany, POAMN Planning Guide 2017)

Prayer

For the gifts of age as well as youth, for experience as well as spontaneity we give you thanks and praise, O God. may we rejoice in the diversity you send this community as well as what you have given to each of us. Amen.

(Rev. June Begany, POAMN Planning Guide 2017)

Prayer (for the Retired)

Your love for us never ends, eternal God,
Even when by age or weakness we can no longer work.
When we retire, keep us awake to your will for us.
Give us energy to enjoy the world,
To attend to neighbors busy people neglect,
And to contribute wisely to the life of your church.
If we can offer nothing but our prayers,
Keep us faithful in the work of prayer,
So that we may live always serving Jesus Christ,
Our hope and our true joy. Amen.

(PCUSA Book of Common Worship, pg 912)

Prayer of Thanksgiving

For all the gifts you give us O God, gifts that come with age as well as those that are part of youth we give you thanks. In response to your greatest gift, Jesus Christ we respond with these gifts we offer. May the gifts and the givers be blessed and may the gifts be used to bring good news to your world. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

(Rev. June Begany, POAMN Planning Guide 2017)

Closing Prayer

Eternal God, For the gift of this congregation, we thank you. For the seasons of life, we thank you. For the honored older adults in our midst, we thank you. For all of us gathering together to fulfill Christ's mission, we thank you. Loving God, we leave with grateful hearts to go out and show others your love! Amen.

(Rev. Mike Fonfara, POAMN Planning Guide, 2014)

A Franciscan Benediction

May God bless us with discomfort At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships So that we may live from deep within our hearts. May God bless us with anger At injustice, oppression, and exploitation of God's creations So that we may work for justice, freedom, and peace. May God bless us with tears To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war, So that we may reach out our hands to comfort them and To turn their pain into joy. And may God bless us with just enough foolishness To believe that we can make a difference in the world, So that we can do what others claim cannot be done: To bring justice and kindness to all our children and all our neighbors who are poor. Amen.

(Shared by Rev. David Montgomery at 2023 POAMN Conference from [this](#) source.)

Scriptures Suggestions (or lectionary passages for the day)

Psalm 71 (18-19)

Psalm 23

Job 12:12

Isaiah 35:3-4

Jeremiah 31:7-14

Ephesians 1:3-14

John 10:1-17

Acts 2:42-47

Hymn Suggestions

How Can I Keep From Singing?

#821 Glory to God

Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee

#611 Glory to God

My Shepherd will Supply My Need

#803 Glory to God

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| Let us Talents and Tongues Employ | #526 Glory to God |
| Alleluia, Alleluia! Give Thanks | #240 Glory to God |
| How Firm a Foundation | #463 Glory to God |
| There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit | #408 Glory to God |
| My Hope is Built on Nothing Less | #353 Glory to God |
| Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine | #839 Glory to God |

Additional Worship Suggestions

Journey of Life Liturgy Resource

[This Quicksheet](#) content is another possibility for Older Adult Sunday Worship Liturgy around the theme of Journey of Life designed by Rev. Burnetta Armour.

Worship Leadership

Plan to have Older Adults lead worship by reading scripture, prayers, offering special music, or other expressions of leadership.

Sermon Ideas

Consider inviting a guest preacher who serves in ministry with Older Adults, is chaplain at a retirement center, or is a retired pastor.

Instead of having a pastor preach consider asking several Senior Adults to share "A Testimony to Light and Life" as suggested by Jan L. McGillard in 2016 POAMN Planning Guide.

Focus on wisdom and being wise in God's eyes. Bits of wisdom from the congregation could be shared especially regarding our relationship with God. And consider using Matthew 7:24-28, Job 28, Proverbs 1:1-7 or 1:20-33 as suggested by June Begany in the 2018 POAMN Planning Guide.

Planning and Leadership Idea

Match children, youth or younger members with older members at a planned community event. Ask the Older Adults to share what Bible verses or stories have been important to them with the others. Discover experiences that may go with these verses too. Then use some of these verses as the basis for a service for Older Adult Sunday. Perhaps the older adults could tell their stories as part of the service or as a time with children. The special verses might be printed or illustrated by these leaders for the bulletin cover or put up in the fellowship hall. Perhaps later in the year the younger members could be encouraged to share their own favorite or meaningful verses.

Worship Accessibility Audit:

Be intentional to think about how accessible worship is to people of all ages and abilities and changes that could be explored and experimented with for Older Adult Sunday. This might include bulletin size, font size or style, layout, or language. It might include worship space lighting, sound, seating options or arrangement or what is printed or projected. You might think about who is in leadership, where they stand and what language is spoken. If a service is streamed what can be included to make it more accessible. The [Disability Inclusion Toolkit](#) resource could direct you to other resources for accessibility in all areas of ministry.

Creative Ideas for Celebrating Old Adult Week

Interview Older Adults

A variety of media might be used for this interview: video, audio, printed, or pictures and stories in a variety of ways. In the interview, include ways that the person has been active in the church and community. Share parts of their stories with the congregation and on the Celebration Sunday.

Sharing Social

Have the Elementary children or youth host an intergenerational luncheon or “tea” party after worship to celebrate older adults. The young people can serve as table hosts bringing food to the table, serving drinks, and making conversation. Place table tents with basic get to know you questions on the table to share with questions like – What is a favorite book you have read as a child? What hobbies do you have? Tell about a pet. Where is somewhere you would like to travel?

Birthday Party

Have the children or youth host a birthday party for all those over 90 (80 or whatever year) Invite those folks to stay after worship or some other time for birthday cake or cookies and drinks. Have the kids decorate the tables (and the cookies maybe). Then recognize these Older Adults in worship by name.

Mission and Outreach

Choose an organization that supports Older Adults that you can highlight and collect funds and materials which are needed. Perhaps something for a local senior center or retirement center can be brought forth at the offering.

Or highlight the volunteer hours that Older Adults donate to various programs in your church and community.

Or plan an intergenerational outing to a retirement community or a senior member’s house to do spring yard clean up, sing, or play bingo.

Resource Fair

Plan a “senior expo” or resource fair for Older Adult Week that shares services and resources available to older adults in your community and from your congregation.

Sunday School/Bible Study

Offer a special topical class around the time of Older Adult Sunday. Join older and younger classes together to listen to each other and share faith stories. Bring in a special speaker on a topic Older adults are requesting to learn about like end of life issues, preparing for aging place or moving, or spiritual practices.

Red Brick Church Memory Worship

Point Loma Community Presbyterian Church in San Diego CA has several 10 minute video worship services designed for sharing with people with Dementia. Consider sharing these with members to watch at home or share with leaders of a local memory care facility. Find them [here](#).

Book of Liturgy Resources

[Healing Liturgies for the Seasons of Life](#) by Abigail Rian Evans

Other Helpful Prayers

These prayers are from the *PCUSA Book of Common Worship* where you will also find the Psalms as responsive readings and other helpful worship resources.

For Someone who is Old

God of grace and hope,
we thank you for life, love, and good memories,
for the gift of age,
and for the wisdom that comes from experience.
We bless you for your constant presence,
for with you there is fullness of joy.
Give us the courage and faith
to accept life as it comes,
confident that the future is yours
and that we belong to you forever;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

For One Experiencing Dementia

God of compassion,
you have borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows.
Preserve your covenant of peace
with your servants in their distress.
Although the pain of their forgetfulness is great,
we rejoice that you remember them always in your grace.
Supply their every need
according to the riches of your glory in Christ Jesus. Amen

For Caregivers to Those Experiencing Dementia

God, our refuge and strength,
our present help in time of trouble,
care for those who tend the needs of those with dementia.
Strengthen them in body and spirit.
Refresh them when weary;
console them when anxious;
comfort them in grief;
and hearten them in discouragement.
Lord of peace, be with us all,
and give us peace at all times
and in every way. Amen

The resources in this Quicksheet were gleaned from past Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network [Planning Guides](#), congregational experiences, and Faith Formation leaders who are in ministry with Older Adults. If you are looking for additional ways to be in ministry with Older Adults and Expressions of Older Adult Ministry, please go to the [POAMN](#) website. There you will find downloadable ministry idea PDF's, support resources, videos, and the guiding principles for Ministry with Older Adults.

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www.pcusa.org/formation and www.poamn.org

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