



health, less growth, less willingness to change, and more conflict. It is a disconcerting trend in many ways. But there is hope! Below are some strategies to consider.

**Attract the Baby Boomers as they enter the "golden years".** The baby boomers, that huge demographic swath, are approaching their older years and may be drawn to a faith group. What religion means for them, however, is different than for past generations. Research indicates that they tend to be individualistic and therefore interested in a personal spirituality. Their religious involvement may not be as conventionally defined as their elders'. Boomers tend to want an environment that encourages self reflection and they want a "lived religious narrative". The three dimensions of a boomers religious quest? - Experience, self-authentication and community. Provide these and you may attract new members.

Amy Hanson in her recently released book Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over 50 refers to baby boomers as the "new old". Congregations need to give up stereotypes of aging and instead see this group as active, healthy and capable of making significant contributions. The exciting challenge will be to re-invent ministry so that it appeals to, and unleashes the leadership potential of, this group.

**Consider a Contemporary Worship Service.** FACT research indicates that those congregations that have changed to a contemporary worship have seen an increase in attendance. Yet not surprisingly, Oldline Protestant congregations continue to have the most traditional worship. There are ways to experiment with worship without alienating current members. Consider offering multiple services or a different style of worship on another day of the week, periodically or seasonally. By providing more options you may attract a more diverse audience. In addition, FACT research indicates that contemporary worship increases a sense of God's presence in worship, so why not try it? Everyone will benefit.

**Be a GREAT congregation for an aging membership.** Create a strong seniors ministry. Realize that there are sub-segments within the seniors market - 70 year olds have different needs than 90 year olds. Consider small group programs around issues that resonate with each group. Provide activities like gardening and book clubs that will bring folks together. Propose an "adopt-a-grandparent" or a grandparent/child mentorship program. Invite the elders to share their stories in worship services. Plan monthly outings and activities outside the congregation. Visit. Offer transportation to worship services, as well as for doctor visits and trips to the grocery stores. "Social networks are important and seniors need community, especially as they lose their spouses and close friends to old age," states Joel Thiessen, a sociologist at Ambrose University College in Calgary Canada. The key to building a successful senior ministry involves asking and answering the question, "What can we provide that community that they can't live without?" he concludes.

## Articles, Resources & Books on Aging Congregations

"Aging Congregations Pose a Challenge to Churches" <http://www.christianweek.org/stories.php?id=558>

"Aging Congregations May be Churches Biggest Worry" <http://pulpitandpew.duke.edu/aging-congregations-may-be-church%E2%80%99s-biggest-worry>

"The Church and its Elderly Members" [http://www.calvin.edu/worship/worshippers/older\\_adults/aging.php](http://www.calvin.edu/worship/worshippers/older_adults/aging.php)

"Approaches to Senior Adult Ministry" <http://www.congregationalresources.org/opage42.asp#advice>

Resources on Senior Ministry available at: <http://www.congregationalresources.org/ShowCat.asp?CN=35&SCN=36&SSCN=42>

Soulful Aging, Elder Care Ministry and The Senior Adult Ministries Quick Start Guide are all available at AdventSource at [www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org) or (800) 328-0525

Annual Survey to Track Baby Boomers Generation Attitudes about Aging <http://www.creativeministry.org/article.php?id=971Ministry> at [www.creativeministry.org](http://www.creativeministry.org) or (800) 272-4664

Spiritual Marketplace- Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion, by Wade Clark Roof

Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults Over 50, by Amy Hanson

For further information about FACT, or to learn how to join the Cooperative Congregations Studies Partnership (CCSP), contact David Roozen at [roozen@hartsem.edu](mailto:roozen@hartsem.edu)



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