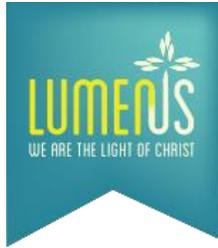


Pastoral Care for an Aging Population

“I have created you and cared for you since you were born. I will be your God through all your lifetime, Yes, even when your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you.” Isaiah 46:3b-4a



Lumen Christi is located in a community with stable housing and commerce. However, the aging of our local population may have significant impact on our parish and therefore must be given proactive attention. Seniors (age 55+) now comprise our largest demographic segment and the increase is accelerating. This will have a bearing on many aspects of the parish, including financial support in retirement, pastoral and physical needs, and staff support to name a few.

Areas of Discovery

- Communication in a faith community requires accepting responsibility for the acquiring and
- Local demographic studies show that since the year 2000, ages 55+ have increased by 26.7%. Projections through 2017 show that this age group will show the greatest growth, up by 10.6% and will comprise 27.6% of the total population.
- The parish's boundaries include 4 Senior Nursing Homes and 4 "Senior housing" complexes to which we provide pastoral care. We have around 50 individuals who are homebound.
- We have had 52 funerals for each of the past two years. 25% of our pastoral care minister's time is dedicated to death and funeral ministry.
- Our building is handicap accessible, and auditory support is available.
- Older parishioners have requested more programming around such issues as: end of life planning, memory care, support for care-givers, legal advice, spirituality of aging etc.
- 1 in 3 seniors will be struggling with a form of dementia; Alzheimer's being the cause of 70% of dementia with 70% of those who struggle with dementia, living at home, not in assisted care facilities.

Conversation Starters:

- What will be the pastoral or other program needs for the 55+ group as well as the age group that supports them?
- How can we balance the needs of young families with those of seniors? What opportunities exist for cross-generational sharing of gifts?
- The 55+ group tends to be more financially committed to the parish but as they decline in health, move into retirement etc, what kind of financial support can be anticipated?
- Are the other parishes in our area experiencing a similar pattern? Are there opportunities to create centers of excellence for various demographics so we are not duplicating services or leaving gaps?
- What kind of staffing will our parish need in the future?
- What kind of sacramental needs will this age group have?
- Is there a need to align parish planning with area development that may occur in the future?