



Facilitator Guide

A TRAINING RESOURCE for churches
offering spiritual care to older people

SPIRITUAL CARE SERIES





CONTENTS

» FACILITATING THE COURSE.....	1
» EPISODE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE AGEING JOURNEY.....	19
» EPISODE 2: SPIRITUALITY IN AGEING	35
» EPISODE 3: GOOD COMMUNICATION	49
» EPISODE 4: THE POWER OF STORYTELLING	65
» EPISODE 5: DEMENTIA	81
» EPISODE 6: A NEW HOME AND A NEW WAY OF LIFE	95
» EPISODE 7: LOSS, GRIEF, DEATH AND DYING	109
» EPISODE 8: ROLES, BOUNDARIES AND SELF-CARE	123

A training resource for churches offering
spiritual care to older people
featuring Professor John Swinton





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Welcome to the Spiritual Care Series

Conducting a Spiritual Care Series course means your organisation can provide your community of older people with high-quality spiritual care. The trained spiritual carer volunteer will provide the older people they are caring for with opportunities to share their spiritual journey and be supported by the compassionate presence of the skilled volunteer. This one-on-one individual support, attending to the spiritual needs of the older person is an essential component of the holistic care your organisation provides.

Volunteers are a major asset to their organisation. Spiritual care volunteers make it possible for a greater number of older people to share their treasured stories and to develop spiritually as they age. While a volunteer is not paid for their work, a successful volunteer programme of any type needs investment to succeed. We encourage you to build your spiritual care volunteers into an essential ministry within your organisation, ensuring their role is understood by all and they are properly trained and supported for their role within your community.

The Spiritual Care Series is a comprehensive, high-quality training course which has been developed in consultation with leading international experts and experienced spiritual care practitioners. Your recruitment and selection process should place a high priority on attracting and selecting those who demonstrate empathy, genuine care and the capacity to connect appropriately with older people.

Your Role as Facilitator

As a facilitator of this course, your role is to administer and support the learning of the group you are working with. All the material needed for conducting this course is contained in this guide. Please ensure you are also familiar with the contents of the Participant Workbook (PW). It's possible to complete each episode in 120 minutes; however, we recommend allowing 150 minutes.

If you are a larger organisation, you are likely to have a team of people who can assist in the roll out of the course. However, if you are a smaller organisation, such as an independent local church, you may have limited resources available to you, in which case you should allow a longer lead time before running your first course. This will allow you to fully familiarise yourself with the materials, as well as complete the administration tasks required.

One of the important characteristics of running a successful course is the need for facilitators to accept they will need to be flexible in their presenting of each episode. Given the suggested time frame for each episode is 150 minutes, group discussion and for a facilitator being on 'L plates' and learning the course, it helps to have thought through *ahead of* time how to handle things with the group if the discussion time starts getting away from you. Determine what is absolute *core material* (such as the reflections, video content, key processing of video content and practical work) and what areas may be *skipped over* to ensure you stay within the recommended 150-minute framework (this time includes a buffer for a 15–20 minute tea/coffee/comfort breaks, etc.).

Facilitators are wise to give themselves permission to adapt and adjust *on the fly* with a group, without feeling guilty if they drop, say, a 10-minute section they have predetermined as something they can skip or move to the pre-work between episodes.

If working with a co-facilitator (**which we highly recommend for smaller organisations**), then talk through honestly:

- » Who will cover which sections
- » Allocate time for each section and if necessary develop a separate run sheet
- » What approach will be used
- » What they regard as core material and what they may skip if time becomes an issue
- » How they will maintain time discipline in the section they lead. This is critical, as a common issue that can occur is for one facilitator to be focused, while the other may want to get sidetracked with anecdotes or allow discussion to go off on a tangent. This may cause internal tension for the disciplined person, who then has to try to 'make up' time
- » Ensure they debrief after each episode, discussing all issues that arose in presenting the session, plus a review on how they assess the development (using their discernment) of each participant, i.e. in their listening skills, pastoral interaction and group participation.

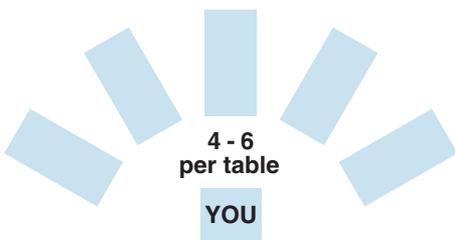
After running an entire course, review each episode and consider any changes you will make in future facilitating of the course. Remember, as the facilitator you have the latitude to be flexible with the materials in order to best suit the dynamics of the group being trained.

Acknowledging Relevant Contributors/Partners

Consider the important local acknowledgements you would like to give, especially at the start of the whole series. These could include any immediately relevant people and organisations who have supported the bringing together of this training. For example:

- » Your host organisation (where the training is being conducted)
- » Your co-facilitator(s)
- » Particular faith communities/sponsors
- » Participants themselves, for generously giving their time to attend these sessions, and for their own intentions to provide spiritual care to our communities.

Room Layout and Settings



Give some thought to the venue you choose for facilitation. There will be some pairs and small group work in each session, so you'll need a space large enough for people to spread out. Alternatively you can use 'break-out' rooms.

The recommended layout for each module is tables of four to six people, with the room organised in the way depicted in the diagram to the left. This enables the facilitators to easily get the groups to work as individuals, in pairs or groups of four to six participants. Divide the group into equal numbers of people per table.

Course Content and Session Planning

The course format encourages:

- » Participation for collegiate discussion and adult learning
- » Relationship development between participants
- » Experiential learning so that skill development takes place over the course

Episodes are designed with core and optional activities. Core activities must be covered to meet the course requirements. Optional activities can be included at the facilitator's discretion where time permits, or used as pre-work between episodes.

Given the tight time schedule of delivering 120 minutes of content per episode (i.e. within a recommended 150-minute period), it is critical that facilitators:

- » **Keep to the time schedule and core activities**
- » **'Park' engaged discussion until after the episode is completed**

Each episode contains:

- » A reflection that sets the theme for the episode topic
- » Four to five sessions using video content with breaks for discussion and practical activities
- » Recommended and optional activities to use in breaks
- » Summary and personal reflection
- » Episode reflection and pre-work for the next episode

The recommended individual episode time of 150 minutes includes a 30-minute buffer period that may be used for tea/coffee, comfort breaks, extended discussion periods, etc. Facilitators will need to decide in advance over what period they want to run the course that best suits their participants. There's considerable flexibility. Here are just a few examples:

- » One 150-minute episode a week over eight consecutive weeks
- » Over two terms with one 150-minute episode a week for four weeks covering Episodes 1–4, followed by a short break and then in Term 2 covering Episodes 5–8.

- » Four half-day training events over four weeks (two episodes per each half day)
- » Three episodes a day over three consecutive days
- » Three episodes a day, one day a week, over three weeks

Supporting Equipment and Material

EQUIPMENT NEEDED FOR TRAINING

- » Data projector or large flat-screen television
- » Laptop with an internet connection and/or a DVD player
- » High-quality audio speakers
- » Lectern or table for facilitator
- » Power board and extension lead

LEARNING MATERIAL AND TRAINING AIDS

- » Facilitator Guide (this document)
- » Participant Workbook (one for each participant)
- » Spiritual Care Series DVDs (if no internet connection available)
- » Name badges
- » Any relevant handouts

Episode Logistics

1. You'll need to get a few things organised for each episode.
 - » Arrange access to the internet for the room you will utilise for the training.
 - » Ensure you have ordered sufficient copies of the Participant Workbooks from your local distributor. Make sure you also have your own copy of the workbook as you will need this to refer to while facilitating the course.
 - » Volunteer application forms (optional).
 - » Pens, bottles of water.
2. Organise tea, coffee and other refreshments as you think appropriate. Note: an allowance for a tea/coffee/comfort break of 15–20 minutes has been included in the recommended 150 minutes per episode.
3. Download the PowerPoints for each episode on to your laptop. These will help keep the facilitator and the participants stay on the same page as you lead each episode. You will be sent a link to a shared drive where you can access the eight sets of PowerPoints.
4. It is recommended that you do a dry run through the Facilitator Guide to check your pacing. You don't want to run out of time.

Group Administration

We also recommend that you create a simple database or spreadsheet to capture information on course participants. This will allow you to contact participants from time to time over the course duration. Use the database to note their preferred communication method, e.g. email, mobile phone and/or text. You can also use this database to record attendance.

A couple of days before each episode contact participants by e-mail, text message or telephone to touch base with them about the course and any questions they have. It might be as simple a message as 'looking forward to seeing you on Monday for the next episode of our course'. This helps to maximise attendance and also to increase participation.

Participants must complete all episodes in order to receive a certificate of achievement. Where it is unavoidable for a participant to miss an episode, they may do a catch-up episode, either online or at another workshop. This will be at the facilitator's discretion.



SPIRITUAL CARE
SERIES

EPISODE 1: UNDERSTANDING
THE AGEING JOURNEY

FACILITATOR GUIDE

Brought to you by



Episode Topics for the Series

EPISODE 1: Understanding the Ageing Journey

EPISODE 2: Spirituality in Ageing

EPISODE 3: Good Communication

EPISODE 4: The Power of Storytelling

EPISODE 5: Dementia

EPISODE 6: A New Home and a New Way of Life

EPISODE 7: Loss, Grief, Death and Dying

EPISODE 8: Roles, Boundaries and Self-Care

LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR EPISODE 1

At the end of the episode, participants will be able to:

1. Explain what 'successful' ageing involves
2. Recognise how society sees ageing and culture
3. Acknowledge what influences our individual ageing
4. Recognise what is happening to the mind, body and spirit
5. Explore the role of spirituality in ageing

Episode 1 Timetable

The recommended 150 minutes per episode includes the sessions below, which have a **total content duration of 120 minutes**. The session times do not include the 30-minute buffer for tea/coffee, comfort break, etc. which can be placed at your discretion. Please note: no actual times of day have been inserted. This enables you to add the actual time you will set for this episode, whether this be morning, afternoon or evening.

TOPIC AND SESSION	DURATION	TIME
Session 1: Welcome and Reflection	15 mins	
Session 2: Introduction to Course and Organisation	10 mins	
Session 3: Introduction to Ageing » Ageism » Qualities of a good spiritual leader » True/false quiz (optional) » Meaningful ageing » Seasons of life (optional) » Two stories – biological and spiritual	85 mins	
Session 4: The Role of a Spiritual Carer and Pre-work: » Pre-readings » Developing my timeline	10 mins	

FACILITATOR'S NOTE:

You may also choose to provide a meal for participants before you move into the content of Episode 1. This helps everyone do the 'meet and greet' stage and helps to build positive group dynamics. If you choose this option, you'll need 45–60 minutes in addition to the time allocated for this episode. Participants would need to be informed so they come early to enjoy the meal and get to meet other participants.



Episode 1 Outline: Understanding the Ageing Journey

KEY THEMES OF SESSION

MEANINGFUL AGEING

OUR BIOLOGICAL AND
SPIRITUAL STORY IN AGEING

ROLE OF A SPIRITUAL CARER

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS

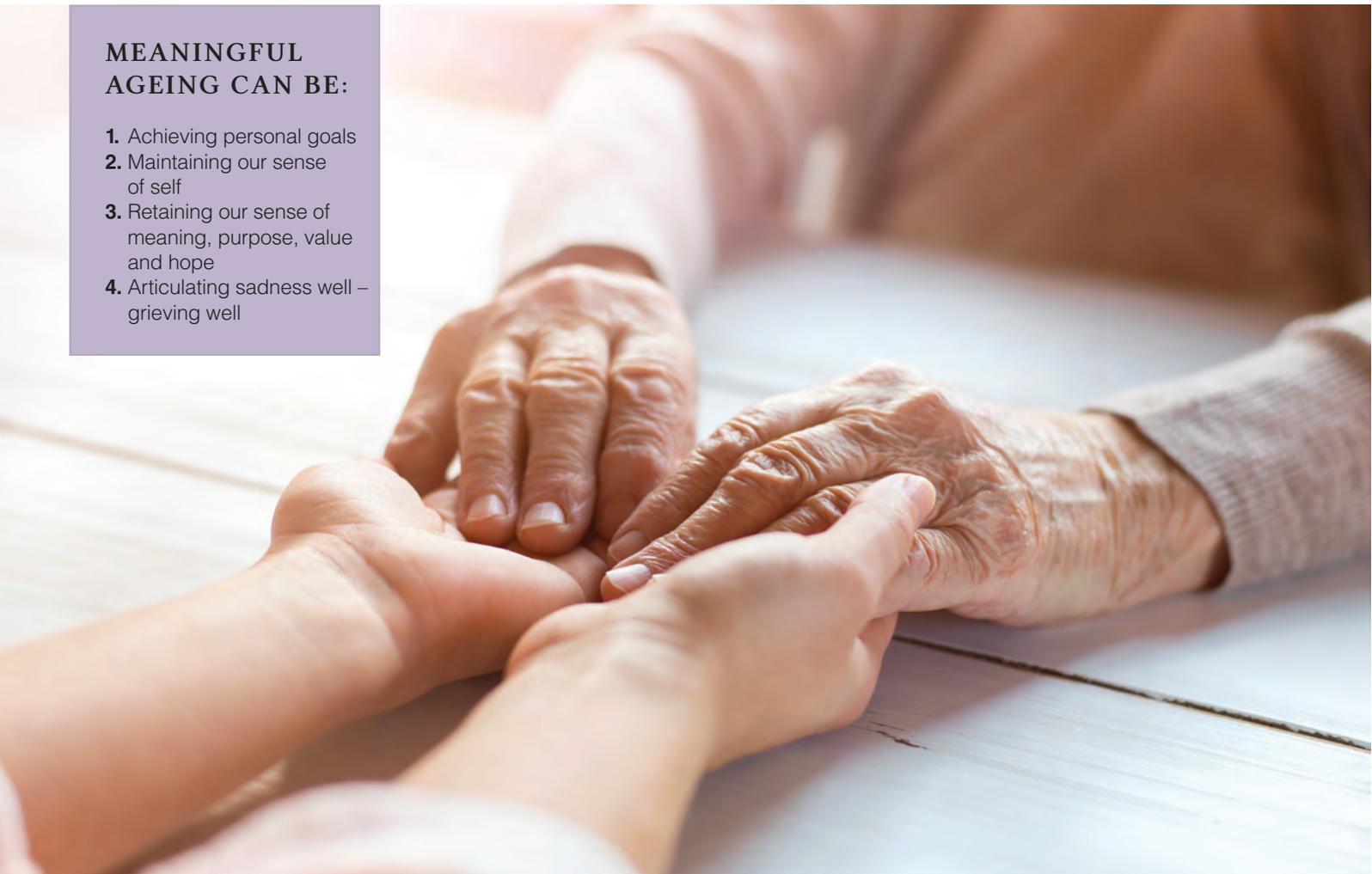
PERSONAL AGEING
JOURNEY REFLECTION

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION AND PRE-WORK

MEANINGFUL AGEING CAN BE:

1. Achieving personal goals
2. Maintaining our sense of self
3. Retaining our sense of meaning, purpose, value and hope
4. Articulating sadness well – grieving well



Session 1: Welcome and Reflection

TIME: 15 MINS

SESSION OUTCOMES: At the end of this session, participants will be able to

- » Explain the housekeeping requirements for the site they are in
- » Introduce themselves
- » Engage with the concept of 'Seasons of Life' as aligned to stages in life

MATERIALS:

- » Participant Workbooks

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION</p>  <p>5 MINS</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>Introduce yourself and welcome participants to the course. Give everyone a turn to briefly introduce themselves. <i>Note:</i> If more than ten participants are doing the course at any one time, then due to time constraints, just ask three participants to give their name and one sentence on why they are doing the course. Each week choose another three participants to do the same and continue to repeat until everyone is covered. Outline housekeeping, e.g. location of toilets, fire safety and any workplace health and safety requirements.</p>
<p>REFLECTION</p>  <p>5 MINS</p> <p>PW pages 11–12</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED INTRODUCTION FOLLOWED BY SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY</p> <p>Introduce reflection by referring participants to their workbooks to the session on 'Seasons' – they are aligned to four stages in life. Divide participants into four groups as follows:</p> <p>GROUP 1: SPRING GROUP 2: SUMMER GROUP 3: AUTUMN GROUP 4: WINTER</p> <p>Using the workbook explain how participants will complete the activity, i.e. allocate a season to each group and walk through the questions in the workbook for each group, making sure they understand what is expected of them.</p> <p>Explain that they will have five minutes for this activity.</p> <p>Answer any questions</p>



PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>DEBRIEF</p>  <p>4 MINS</p> <p>PW pages 11–12</p>	<p>SMALL GROUP FEEDBACK</p> <p>Each group has one minute to give feedback on their findings. An example of potential participant feedback:</p> <p>GROUP 1: SPRING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Children have an innocence and openness that God desires we should all live by» Children are trusting and have no cynicism» Children have unconditional love <p>GROUP 2: SUMMER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Be strong and courageous» Keep God's word central in your life and renew yourself daily in his truth» Be obedient to God's word <p>GROUP 3: AUTUMN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Relational tensions and ambition» Materialism and a desire for status» Complacency or questioning in spirituality <p>GROUP 4: WINTER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Powerlessness» Loss of dignity and independence» Loss of choice and decision making
<p>LINK</p>  <p>1 MIN</p>	<p>Facilitator links to the next session by pointing out that we will focus more deeply today on the ageing journey. However, we will first look at the course overview and an introduction to the organisation running the course.</p>

Session 2: Introduction to Course and Organisation

TIME: 10 MINS

SESSION OUTCOMES: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- » Describe the course outline and what is expected of them in completing the course
- » Recognise the mission and values of the organisation and how spiritual care helps to achieve this mission

MATERIALS:

- » Participant Workbooks
- » Organisational Handouts (where applicable)

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>COURSE OUTLINE AND DESIGN</p>  <p>5 MINS</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>Refer participants to their Participant Workbook for a copy of the course outline and walk them through the eight episodes for the whole series, explaining how each episode works.</p> <p>Then explain how Episode 1 works using the timetable. Your explanation should cover as an example for this episode:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There will be an introduction followed by a video from the Spiritual Care Series. » Each episode is usually broken into three sessions to allow for activity breaks where the participants will be able to discuss, practise and apply what has been covered in the video content. » Readings and pre-work will be given between sessions for episode reflection or as preparation for the next episode.



PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>EXPECTATIONS OF COURSE</p>  <p>2 MINS</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>Explain that for participants to fully meet course requirements they must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Attend all episodes. Where a participant is unable to attend they must make up the episode by reviewing the online video content and completing the assessments. Please discuss with facilitator.» Complete all pre-readings given between episodes.» Take part in all practical activities.
<p>INTRODUCTION TO THE ORGANISATION</p>  <p>4 MINS</p> <p>PW page 13</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>Introduce the organisation's vision, purpose and values and explain why this Spiritual Care Series is valued by the organisation and how it helps the organisation achieve its vision and purpose – e.g.</p> <p><i>'The Spiritual Care Series is designed to help the organisation meet the spiritual care needs of people in community and residential aged care and also to equip you to provide spiritual care.'</i></p> <p>Provide participants with brochures and handouts for your organisation (where applicable). Encourage participants</p>
<p>LINK</p> 	<p>Link to the next session by introducing the session 'Introduction to Ageing'. Explain that in this topic we will be using video content with breaks for discussion and practical exercises to apply what has been learned.</p>

Session 3: Introduction to Ageing

TIME: 85 MINS

SESSION OUTCOMES: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- » Describe what 'successful' ageing is
- » Recognise how society sees ageing and the culture of ageing
- » Explain what influences our individual ageing
- » Recognise what is happening to the body, mind and spirit
- » Describe the role of spirituality in ageing

MATERIALS:

- » Participant Workbooks

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>INTRODUCTION</p>  <p>2 MINS</p> <p>PW page 14</p>	<p>VIDEO SESSION WITH LARGE GROUP</p> <p>Introduce the video and explain how this works in conjunction with the workbook:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Group watches video clip together » Video is paused for discussion and/or other practical exercises » Workbook has questions that support video content as well as a place for notes for individual reflection or group discussion » Workbook guides practical activities <p>Note for the facilitator</p> <p>This guide has examples of typical discussion points and responses that could arise from a group session.</p>



PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>INTRODUCTION TO AGEING</p>  <p>20 MINS</p> <p>(NOTE: VIDEO DURATION IS 14 MINS)</p> <p>PW page 14</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP VIDEO VIEWING. 'HOW WE CAN BETTER CARE FOR OUR OLDER GENERATION'</p> <p>Watch part one of the video to the natural activity break. Encourage participants to make brief notes under the questions in their workbooks during the video viewing for discussion and future reference.</p> <p>Once you have paused the video, point out that the discussion was around (1) The qualities of a good spiritual carer; (2) Marginalising older people; (3) What is ageism?; and (4) Improving care of older people.</p> <p>First, refer participants to their workbook to review the 'Qualities that make up a good spiritual carer'. Next, refer to what was viewed in the video and what they noted in their workbooks. Ask participants to refer to their notes to answer the 'summary question' below:</p> <p>Summary question: Select one key thought from your notes answering Question 3 around what we could do differently to better care for older people?</p> <p>If time is short, ask three people in the room (e.g. one per table) to share their key thought and then briefly fill in key points not discussed from notes below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» Rethink productivity to conclude that contribution is not based on economic value; and older people still have purpose (e.g. with their knowledge and experience – older people work well in customer service roles and in teaching younger people)» Value older people (e.g. value their wisdom, their stories and what they contribute). Remember, ageing is a journey for all of us eventually, and it could be now for your mum or dad or even you» Offer quality of life and quality of care<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Respect and dignity▶ Giving people time and being kind▶ Paying attention to the 'right' things▶ Seeing a person's uniqueness and value.
<p>TRUE/FALSE QUIZ (OPTIONAL)</p>  <p>5 MINS</p> <p>PW page 15</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL) OR TAKE-HOME POST-WORK</p> <p>Refer participants to their workbook to complete a true/false quiz</p> <p>Facilitator reviews answers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(1) False – The response applies to 'Summer' not Autumn(2) True(3) False – We should always give people respect and dignity(4) True(5) True(6) True(7) False – Ageism is when people of a certain age or age group are thought to be inferior to people of other ages, and are unfairly or unjustly regarded, e.g. older people.(8) True – Ageing is a natural process that everyone goes through (except if you die young of course)(9) True

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>REFLECTION ON AGEING</p>  <p>5 MINS</p> <p>PW page 16</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY ON PERSONAL AGEING JOURNEY</p> <p>Next step is to refer participants to their workbooks and walk them through the individual reflection to help them engage with their own ageing journey.</p> <p>The following questions are those found in the workbook reflection. Please note that individual reflections do not need to be discussed or debriefed in the larger group.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the delights of growing old from your perspective? 2. What are the limitations of growing old? 3. What has been your ageing journey so far? 4. What do you envisage for your own ageing journey? What are your fears and hopes?
<p>MEANINGFUL AGEING</p>  <p>5 MINS</p> <p>PW page 17</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP VIDEO VIEWING</p> <p>Watch part two of the video to the natural activity break which asks the question – ‘How could you encourage your own meaningful ageing?’</p> <p>As before, encourage participants to make brief notes during the video viewing for discussion and their future reference.</p>
 <p>10 MINS</p> <p>PW page 17</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION</p> <p>After pausing the video, point out that (1) a definition of meaningful ageing was given and (2) practical ways were suggested for how you can maintain older people's self-worth and value.</p> <p>Summary question: Ask participants to share one key thought from the video that they could apply to maintain the self-worth and value of older people in their care.</p> <p>If time is short, ask three people to share one key point (e.g. one person per table) and briefly fill in key points not discussed from the notes below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Help them express their past losses and happy times to bring these into the present. Once they've integrated these into the present they can then set goals around them » To help people who are sad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Be with them and sit with them in their sadness ▶ Be present and be aware of your own reactions to what is shared ▶ Be patient and try not to interrupt, even if they are silent, because silence helps to recall memories ▶ Learn to dwell and be comfortable in their narrative of sadness



PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>SEASONS OF LIFE (OPTIONAL)</p>  <p>6 MINS</p> <p>PW pages 18–19</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED DISCUSSION (OPTIONAL) OR PRE-WORK ACTIVITY</p> <p>As a segue into the reflection on what was directed from the video, i.e. ‘How could you encourage your own meaningful ageing?’, you may choose to introduce ‘Seasons of Life’ (optional activity) before doing the ‘Reflection on meaningful ageing’. If you do the optional activity you can run both these reflections together. If you choose not to do the optional activity go directly to ‘Reflection on meaningful ageing’.</p> <p>Introduce ‘Seasons of Life’ concepts as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">» In our reflection we touched briefly on the Seasons of Life.» Walk participants through each season using the Participant Workbook.» Next, refer participants to the questions in their workbook. <p>Have the participants break into small groups and allow them four minutes to answer the two questions.</p>
<p>DEBRIEF SEASONS OF LIFE (OPTIONAL)</p>  <p>4 MINS</p> <p>PW page 19</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP DISCUSSION (OPTIONAL)</p> <p>Debrief small group activity by asking one person to share their thoughts from their small group (for both questions). Get a member from other groups to top up only what was missed.</p> <p>Example of group response to both questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The feeling of loss can be keenly felt physically, mentally, emotionally and even spiritually2. Some life experiences may be very rewarding for an older person where they have a caring family3. Spirituality becomes more important as people get closer to death4. The need for confession and dealing with unfinished business can become ‘front of mind’5. Loss felt by impending separation can also be keenly felt by those being left behind6. What are the issues people are processing in this season?
<p>REFLECTION ON MEANINGFUL AGEING</p>  <p>5 MINS</p> <p>PW page 19</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY</p> <p>Next step is to refer participants to their workbooks for an individual reflection exercise to help them engage with their own journey in meaningful ageing.</p> <p>Note to facilitator: Question for reflection is completed individually and does not need to be discussed or debriefed in the larger group.</p>

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>TWO STORIES IN LIFE</p>  <p>13 MINS</p> <p>PW pages 20–21</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP VIDEO VIEWING</p> <p>Watch part 3 of the video to the natural activity break. Before watching the video, refer participants to their workbooks and encourage them to make notes under the four questions listed.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is important about the biological story for a person who is ageing? 2. What is important about the spiritual story for a person who is ageing? 3. What did you learn about the inter-relationship between the biological and the spiritual story when a person is ageing? 4. What practical insights did you get for spiritual carers to support the biological and the spiritual story of older people in your care?.
<p>REFLECTION</p>  <p>10 MINS</p> <p>PW page 22</p>	<p>SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY</p> <p>Once you have completed viewing the video refer participants to their notes and ask them to briefly discuss their findings at their table. Use the Participant Workbook to outline the direction for this small group debriefing activity. Highlight that they must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Briefly discuss their understanding of the first three questions from the previous exercise 'Two Stories in Life' 2. Compile a list of practical insights on being a spiritual carer from their notes on Question 4; also from the previous exercise 'Two Stories in Life'. <p>Point out that each group will be asked to share their list with the main group. First group presents and others 'top up' only what was missed.</p> <p>Give groups time to complete the activity and answer any questions.</p>





PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>DEBRIEF</p>  <p>10 MINS</p> <p>PW pages 20, 21–22</p>	<p>LARGE GROUP ACTIVITY</p> <p>In the large group point out that it was important for the groups to answer Questions 1–3 to clarify their understanding of the video content. However, due to time constraints we will not be debriefing these questions. Should anyone have any questions about this these can be discussed after the session. The following is an example of responses that could be discussed then:</p> <p>1. What is important about the <i>biological</i> story for a person who is ageing?</p> <p>As people age ('winter' season), the biological story is one of deterioration and loss – e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Frailtyb. Cognitive declinec. Loss of mobility, strength and healthd. Death of loved ones <p>2. What is important about the <i>spiritual</i> story for a person who is ageing?</p> <p>As people age ('winter' season), the spiritual story is one of possibilities and hope – e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Increased sense of identity and personhoodb. Focus and attention increases toward the emotional and spiritual as physical and mental capabilities declinec. Rediscovering/reconnecting with spiritual heritage <p>3. What did you learn about the inter-relationship between the biological and the spiritual story when a person is ageing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Both stories run parallel however the physical story can be in decline while the spiritual story can become one of hope and possibilities.b. Medicine has the loudest voice in our society and can result in physical 'shouting down' of the importance of spiritual care. <p>Now ask one group to present their findings on Question 4. Once the first group has done this, ask the second group to add anything not discussed by the first group. Continue with each group until all practical insights have been covered.</p> <p>The following is a typical example of responses:</p> <p>4. What practical insights did you get for spiritual carers to support the biological and the spiritual story of older people in your care?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Value the personb. Support them in expressing themselves, to discover more of who they are/have been, and who they are becomingc. Encourage reminiscence on their personal historyd. Storytelling is sometimes enough, there is nothing to fix and there is not necessarily an 'end' point in the discussione. Be patient and don't finish others' sentencesf. Nurture their spirits as this encourages them to honour, love and respect themselvesg. Forgiveness may become important – provide a safe space for confession, accountability and reconciliationh. Focus on their emotional and spiritual needs
<p>LINK</p> 	<p>Link to the next session by pointing out that we have completed the video content for this session and will now discuss the role of the spiritual carer in this organisation.</p>

Session 4: The Role of a Spiritual Carer

TIME: 10 MINS

SESSION OUTCOMES: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- » Recognise the value of being a spiritual carer
- » Consider and make a decision on whether or not to volunteer as a spiritual carer with the organisation that is running the course

MATERIALS:

- » Participant Workbooks
- » Organisation recruitment form (if applicable)
- » Pre-reading and reflection for Episode 2:
 - ▶ 'Ageing Well' – Elizabeth MacKinlay interviewed by Carmel Howard on ABC Radio National
 - ▶ 'Seasons of Life' by Ross Wakeley
 - ▶ 'My Personal Timeline'

PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL CARER</p>  <p>2 MINS</p>	<p>FACILITATOR-LED DISCUSSION</p> <p>Explain the typical role of a spiritual carer in this organisation – e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Visiting people in residential aged care or in their own homes » Offering spiritual and emotional care to those in need » Length of visits typically between 20–60 minutes per visit » Visits are done voluntarily on a regular basis » Spiritual carers may be supervised by a person from the organisation running the course
<p>SIGN UP FOR THE COURSE</p>  <p>8 MINS</p> <p>APPLICATION FORM</p>	<p>INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY</p> <p>If appropriate, hand out organisational volunteer application forms and explain that this is an opportunity to sign up as a volunteer spiritual carer with the organisation.</p> <p>Participants complete application form.</p>



PROCESS	CONTENT/METHODOLOGY
<p>PRE-WORK NEXT EPISODE</p>  <p>4 MINS</p> <p>REMINDERS</p>	<p>Discuss pre-work and online assessment</p> <p>Personal reflection activities on Episode 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» Complete Bridge online assessment and evaluation<li>» 'Seasons of Life' resource by Ross Wakeley (Participant Workbook)<li>» Completion of 'My Personal Timeline' (Participant Workbook)<li>» True/False quiz (Participant Workbook) <p>Explain that the pre-reading prepares participants for discussions and engagement for the next episode. The pre-reading for Episode 2 is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>» 'Ageing Well' – Elizabeth MacKinlay interviewed by Carmel Howard on ABC Radio National <p>Remind participants of the date and time for Episode 2. The topic will be Spirituality in Ageing.</p> <p>Answer any questions.</p> <p>Remind participants that they need to complete the Bridge online assessment before the next episode and advise them that they will also be given the opportunity to watch the video content again as part of the assessment (refer them to instructions on using the Bridge online LMS in their workbook and ensure you have everyone's email address).</p> <p>Thank participants for coming and close session in prayer.</p>



Participant Workbook

A TRAINING RESOURCE for churches
offering spiritual care to older people





CONTENTS

» INTRODUCTION	1
» BRIDGE DOCUMENTATION.....	2
» EPISODE 1: UNDERSTANDING THE AGEING JOURNEY	7
» EPISODE 2: SPIRITUALITY IN AGEING.....	35
» EPISODE 3: GOOD COMMUNICATION.....	47
» EPISODE 4: THE POWER OF STORYTELLING	65
» EPISODE 5: DEMENTIA	89
» EPISODE 6: A NEW HOME AND A NEW WAY OF LIFE	109
» EPISODE 7: LOSS, GRIEF, DEATH AND DYING	137
» EPISODE 8: ROLES, BOUNDARIES AND SELF-CARE.....	167
» RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL CARERS	187

A training resource for churches offering
spiritual care to older people
featuring Professor John Swinton





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Welcome to the Spiritual Care Series

BRF is the home of Anna Chaplaincy, an ecumenical, community-based ministry offering spiritual care to older people of strong, little or no faith. Anna Chaplains come alongside older people wherever they are living – in their own homes, retirement housing, or care homes. They build relationships of trust which enable the individual to share their stories and reflect on their lives. This is skilled work that requires training and support, which is why BRF is pleased to hold the licence to offer Health Television Network's exceptional Spiritual Care Series in the UK.

The Health Television Network's Spiritual Care Series has been some five years in the making from the original concept. This comprehensive training course has been made possible by the financial contributions of Australian aged care sector founding members, together with a number of generous individual donors. Significant research, development and content contributions have also been made by a wide range of international care providers and experts.

Episodes are designed with core and optional activities. Core activities must be covered to meet the course requirements. Optional activities can be included at facilitator's discretion where time permits or used as preparation between episodes.

In general, each episode contains:

- » A reflection that sets the theme for the episode
- » Four to five sessions using video content with breaks for discussion, as well as pairs and small group activities
- » Recommended and optional exercises to complete in breaks
- » Summary and personal reflections
- » Pre-work for the next episode

Following each episode of the facilitated group training, you will have an opportunity to watch the video content again on your computer or mobile device as a refresher. At the same time, you will be able to complete a simple online assessment via our Bridge LMS online platform.

The Spiritual Care Series aims to provide people with the skills and knowledge they need to undertake volunteer spiritual care. It is designed for people with or without experience in pastoral and spiritual care who are seeking to offer spiritual care in residential care homes, churches, family and other local community settings.

This course provides a balance between practical skills, reflective practice and principles of Christian care. A Certificate of Achievement will be awarded to each participant on successful completion of the course.

For general queries and support for the Spiritual Care Series, please contact BRF on **01865 319700** or at enquiries@brf.org.uk. Queries related to the Bridge LMS online platform should be directed to your course facilitator, who can get in contact with Health Television Network if necessary.



SPIRITUAL CARE
SERIES

EPISODE 1:
UNDERSTANDING
THE AGEING JOURNEY

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK



Episode Topics

EPISODE 1: Understanding the Ageing Journey

EPISODE 2: Spirituality in Ageing

EPISODE 3: Good Communication

EPISODE 4: The Power of Storytelling

EPISODE 5: Dementia

EPISODE 6: A New Home and a New Way of Life

EPISODE 7: Loss, Grief, Death and Dying

EPISODE 8: Roles, Boundaries and Self-Care

Contents of this Episode

PAGE 10 Understanding the Ageing Journey Outline

PAGE 11 Reflection: Seasons of Life

PAGE 13 Organisation's Vision and Purpose

PAGE 14 Introduction to Ageing

PAGE 15 True/False Quiz (optional)

PAGE 16 Personal Reflection on Growing Older

PAGE 17 Meaningful Ageing

PAGE 18 Seasons of Life (optional)

PAGE 19 Small Group Activity on Seasons of Life (optional)

PAGE 19 Reflection on Meaningful Ageing

PAGE 20 Two Stories in Life

PAGE 22 Small Group Debriefing Activity
and Pre-work for Episode 2

PAGE 23 *Ageing Well*

PAGE 26 *Seasons of Life: Practical Resources
As We Grow Older*

PAGE 33 My Personal Timeline



Episode 1 Outline: Understanding the Ageing Journey

KEY THEMES OF SESSION

MEANINGFUL AGEING

OUR BIOLOGICAL AND
SPIRITUAL STORY IN AGEING

ROLE OF A SPIRITUAL CARER

PRACTICAL ACTIVITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS

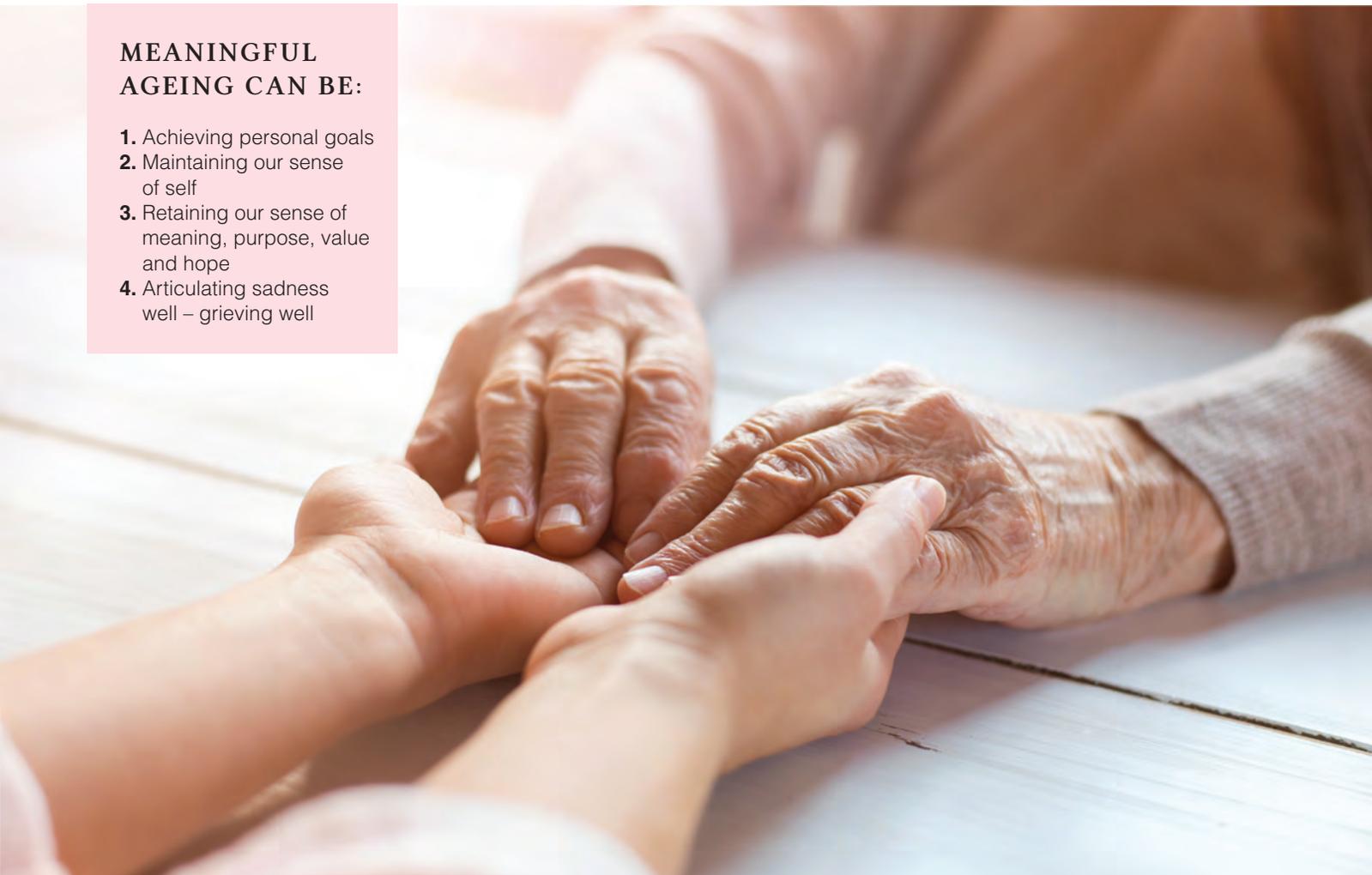
PERSONAL AGEING
JOURNEY REFLECTION

SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES

REFLECTION AND PRE-WORK

MEANINGFUL AGEING CAN BE:

1. Achieving personal goals
2. Maintaining our sense of self
3. Retaining our sense of meaning, purpose, value and hope
4. Articulating sadness well – grieving well





Reflection: Seasons of Life



You have been allocated a season as a group. Read the Bible text for your season and answer the questions allocated to your group.

GROUP 1: *SPRING – SEASON FOR LEARNING* MATTHEW 19:13–15

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. Jesus said: 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.

QUESTION:

Why would Jesus say, '*Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these*'? What do children bring that we could learn from?

GROUP 2: *SUMMER – SEASON OF EARNING* JOSHUA 1:7–9

'Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.'

QUESTION:

In this passage, Joshua is being advised by God at the start of his leadership role. What guidelines does this passage encourage young adults (at their career stage of life) to do?



GROUP 3: *AUTUMN – SEASON OF RETURNING*

JAMES 4:1–3

What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

QUESTION:

As illustrated in this passage, what types of issues arise in the middle-age period of life (e.g. when in a mid-life crisis)?

GROUP 4: *WINTER - SEASON OF REAPING AND GRIEVING*

JOHN 21:18 (JESUS SPEAKING TO PETER)

'I tell you the truth, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked; you dressed yourself and went wherever you wanted to go. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will dress you and take you where you don't want to go' (NLT).

QUESTION:

As outlined for Peter, how does this passage relate to a person in old age?



Organisation's Vision and Purpose



Note here your church, organisation or group's:

» **Vision or Mission**

» **Purpose and Values**



Introduction to Ageing



QUALITIES THAT MAKE UP A GOOD SPIRITUAL CARER

1. Awareness of my personal spirituality or my own personal faith in God
2. Ability to be self-reflective and open to personal growth
3. Compassionate heart
4. Hold a strong, positive regard for older people – respect and value others
5. Willingness to listen, not talk
6. An openness to and acceptance of others' beliefs and values



Your notes on *Introduction to Ageing* (video discussion):

1. Why do you think western cultures tend to push older people to the margins of society?

2. What is ageism?

3. How do we have to adapt as a society if we are going to really care for older people?



True/False Quiz (optional)



SELECT TRUE OR FALSE FOR EACH QUESTION

- | | | |
|-------------|--------------|--|
| TRUE | FALSE | 1. The 'autumn' season is a time of earning and building relational connections. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 2. A spiritual carer has the ability to be self-reflective and open to personal growth. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 3. To offer quality of life to older people, we should only give them respect and dignity, if we have time. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 4. During the 'winter' season, a major struggle for older people is their loss of choice and decision making. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 5. Western cultures marginalise older people as it places a high value on their economic contribution. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 6. Older people have a purpose as they bring wisdom and experience. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 7. Ageism is a progressive loss of capability as we grow older. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 8. The ageing process is a natural and progressive one that everyone has to go through. |
| TRUE | FALSE | 9. An effective spiritual carer understands the importance of being aware of their personal spirituality or their own personal faith in God. |





Seasons of Life (optional)

Seasons of Life is a concept of the stages of life that people experience.

SEASONS/STAGES OF LIFE

1. SPRING: THE SEASON OF LEARNING (PHYSICAL STAGE)

We enter this world and begin exploring and learning about our surroundings. Babies discover their hands, learn to grasp things and learn to crawl and walk. Positive role models are important. Our first 20 years are primarily focused on learning and developing our identity. This is largely a physical time of growth – experiencing and learning through senses, e.g. touch, taste, hear, see, smell.

2. SUMMER: THE SEASON OF EARNING (MENTAL)

It is in this season that we begin to build a life. We may find our life partner, start a family, seek or buy a home and begin to accumulate possessions. In this season the focus is usually on us. This season may be a difficult one if a person remains single but would like a partner/family. As we build our careers we gain valuable experience to help us in work and life. Also known as mental development stage or career development stage.

3. AUTUMN: THE SEASON OF RETURNING (EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONAL)

At some point, most of us will begin to tire of the pace of our *earning season* or a significant life event will lead us to question: 'Is there something more to life?' We may achieve our goals and make it to the top and, having climbed the ladder of success, we realise it was leaning against the wrong building. During this season relationships become more important and emotional development with it.

4. WINTER: THE SEASON OF REAPING (SPIRITUAL)

This is the season of reaping and/or loss. It is during this season, late in life, we have the opportunity to see the results of our efforts in the successes of others we've helped along the way or in the success of initiatives we helped to start. It is also the season of loss, where we can lose our life's partner, friends, family and our health. The winter season can also give us an opportunity to continue to flourish spiritually.



Small Group Activity on Seasons of Life (optional)



1. What is important to notice about the 'winter' season?

2. What issues are people processing in this season?

Reflection on Meaningful Ageing



Having viewed the video clip, individually reflect on the question below and write your response:

What could you do to encourage your own meaningful ageing?



Two Stories in Life



Your notes on *Two Stories in Life* (video discussion):

1. What is important about the biological story for a person who is ageing?

2. What is important about the spiritual story for a person who is ageing?



3. What did you learn about the inter-relationship between the biological and the spiritual story when a person is ageing?

4. What practical insights did you get for spiritual carers to support the biological and the spiritual story of older people in your care?



Ageing Well

AN INTERVIEW FOR ABC RADIO NATIONAL
BY CARMEL HOWARD WITH ELIZABETH MACKINLAY

ELIZABETH MACKINLAY: We have not, until fairly recently, had the gift of so many people being able to live longer, and so in a way this later life has been relatively unexplored. Often, we still hear the language of the burden of ageing, the negative things about growing older. But I believe that we need to be looking at ways that we can enable more people to live a fruitful, resilient, flourishing later life that is full of meaning.

CARMEL HOWARD: The question of what it means to nourish the soul is at the heart of Revd Elizabeth MacKinlay's research into the spiritual dimension of ageing. She's director of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies and professor of theology at Charles Sturt University. Her work has included extensive interviewing of older people and she's identified some core spiritual tasks of later life.

ELIZABETH MACKINLAY: I looked for themes: what were the important things that these older people were talking about? And the most important thing was where they found meaning in their lives. And that finding ultimate meaning or final meanings in life is a really critical task for people. And this is something that is very special, when I have the opportunity to accompany a person who is in the process of dying and journeying with them as they discover what has been the meaning of my life and being able to put that into a sense that is acceptable to them and to those they love.

So that's a central thing; meaning in life. Without meaning we have no hope and we can succumb to mental illnesses in that way, depression and so forth. But it's out of what lies at the centre of our being, where we find our meaning, that we respond to all of life, we have a sense of really important relationships with loved ones.

Or for the elderly, who have lost their most important life-long relationships, it may be that God becomes the centre of their being and the centre of meaning for them. But what is that God like? If the person has an image of a God who is a judgemental God, and they feel that they can't measure up to what that God expects, then they're going to respond to life out of that. They may be bitter, they may be angry. They may be feeling that they are worthless.

And that's the way they will respond to all of life. But for the person who finds hope in their God, or in close human relationships, what lies at the core of their being will give them the positive outlook on life that will help them to meet the challenges and to respond to those. And people may well respond through creation, or the environment, through religion as well as relationships. Or it's art, it's music, it's drama, it's prose, it's poetry, it's dance.

All of these ways in which human beings can express themselves. And the creativity that comes out of this is part of engaging with the spiritual and asking questions about why are we here, what's the meaning of life?

I found that all of the people I interviewed, independent living people, when I asked them, 'Do you have any fears as you face your future?' they all said, 'I fear becoming dependent. I fear facing a death that will be painful that I can't control.' So there was this sense of 'What if I become vulnerable? What if I can't be self-sufficient?'

And this is a very big issue for many older people. Seventy per cent of the people I spoke with said that they feared dementia, and I hadn't mentioned dementia at all. But there are so many myths out there about that.

The task, as people grow older, is not to eliminate suffering from the life experience



ELIZABETH MACKINLAY

is director of the Centre for Ageing and Pastoral Studies at St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra. She is both a registered nurse and a priest in the Anglican Church. She is a professor in the School of Theology at Charles Sturt University, and an active researcher and writer. She has presented many papers and workshops, including keynote addresses both nationally and internationally. Her publications include *The Spiritual Dimension of Ageing*, and a number of edited books.



‘What is important about the spiritual journey for me is that it takes account of the fact that the person may be moving to a time when they are unable to do things anymore, but they are still important as a human being.’ Elizabeth MacKinlay

or to eliminate loss and disabilities. The task is to transcend these. To be able to move beyond the self, and in fact, Victor Frankl had a lovely way of expressing this. He talked about self-forgetting. That the person wasn't self-focused but was able to forget about themselves, really reaching out in love to others. And this is something that some people find easier than others to actually develop. And I think we can help with that pastorally. We still need more research in this area and it's an important area for development.

As well as that, I've identified moving from 'provisional life meanings' to 'final life meanings'. Victor Frankl was important in this, as he identified the fact that as we move through life we assign meanings to our life experiences, either intentionally or sometimes fairly unconsciously, depending on what the events are. And he said life's rather like making a movie. You shoot the individual frames of the movie, and it's not until you are faced with your own mortality that you suddenly can play the whole movie for the first time.

When you put all the frames together and play the movie you are able to see the relationship between events in your life and suddenly you get these 'aha' experiences: 'That's what that meant back there and I never realised it before.' Or even, indeed, needing to move back to look for forgiveness, reconciliation. These are powerful and important things for people moving into their later years to deal with and to come to a growing sense of their lives being worthwhile.

Another one of the tasks, for people in later life, because of the loss that naturally comes, it's important for them to be able to establish new intimacies, new relationships. And I use the term intimacy in its broadest term; the need to love and be loved by others and known as I am. And this does not only

involve sexual aspects; in fact, it might not be a sexual knowing at all. But it's a depth of intimacy with other human beings which is vital for the nourishment and wellbeing of people, no matter what age they are. If we're going to flourish and be resilient we need to be in community with others, not isolated.

What is important about the spiritual journey for me is that it takes account of the fact that the person may be moving to a time when they are unable to do things anymore, but they are still important as a human being. Taking a theological approach, if we understand the human being as made in the image of God, God loves us regardless of whether we are doing anything or not. God just loves us because we are. And to me that says it's okay just to 'be', even when we can't 'do'.

CARMEL HOWARD: Revd Professor Elizabeth MacKinlay. Like others we've heard from in the programme, her work has also drawn on Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development. After Erikson died at the age of 92, his wife and colleague, Joan Erikson, refined a final stage in the lifespan, which she published as *The Life Cycle Completed*. Elizabeth MacKinlay explains further.

ELIZABETH MACKINLAY: They've added a ninth stage 'gerotranscendence', where they look at the frailty that comes maybe in your 80s or 90s or older. Where life becomes more precarious. You know, some of my friends who are at that stage of life say to me from time to time, if I'm wanting to have lunch with them, that they may have to dip out at the last minute because they're just not really well today and can't do it. Life becomes more precarious.

And so this ninth stage, this time of frailty, they've suggested that in fact

sometimes there's struggle involved in this, that it is not easy. Hence the expression that ageing is not for sissies. You grow in this but you grapple with issues. It might be better to talk about that ninth stage as reversing the ways because the positive comes first in all the eight stages that Erikson set out.

It's integrity versus despair, or in the earlier stages trust versus distrust. It's despair versus integrity. It can be easier for people who are living with a lot of chronic illnesses and diagnoses which make life much more difficult for them, it may be easy for them to come down on the side of despair rather than integrity.

And it seems to me that the spiritual underlies all of this. And in my work, actually, I defined a spiritual integrity, which has got to do with a sense of being able to accept one's self, one's attitudes, one's values. It's realising your limitations. Learning to live with ambiguities and accepting uncertainty in life. We often hear people talk about 'you can't teach an old dog new tricks,' that old people don't change. But hey, older people are changing all the time.

Even if they may not wish to. Health changes, residence changes, relationship changes. All of these things. Change is a constant part of ageing.

CARMEL HOWARD: According to Elizabeth MacKinlay, reflection in later life can be especially beneficial when it's intentional and facilitated through programmes of 'spiritual reminiscence'.

ELIZABETH MACKINLAY: What we have done is develop this process of spiritual reminiscence where we are looking at the life meaning against the person's life story. Using various strategies to look at events across their lives. We can do this in all sorts of



community settings. And we have taken this a step further. We've done quite a bit of research in using this process with people who have dementia as well. And it works very well for them as well. And if you're working with a group of people in spiritual reminiscence, you can ask them also about the deeper things of their life. It may be that through this process, healing and wholeness can come. We've also found as we've worked both in community settings and in residential aged care that this is a really great process for people who perhaps are isolated in the community; getting to know people and deepening friendships. And it's a very special time. It allows each person to share of their story, and it's really good to be able to tell your story and know that it's being listened to by somebody else.

CARMEL HOWARD: You've been listening to *Encounter* on ABC Radio National, and a programme called 'Ageing Well'. My thanks to Elizabeth MacKinlay.

Radio National – 27 November 2011
abc.net.au/radionational/programs/encounter/ageing-well/3686464#transcript

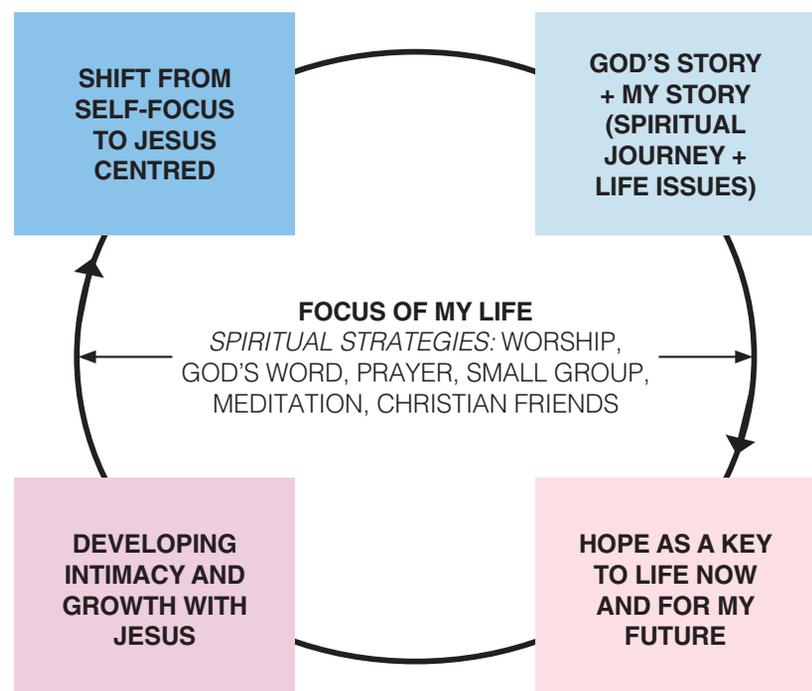
SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS OF THE AGEING PROCESS

Elizabeth MacKinlay notes the spiritual dimensions of ageing. The focus of our life's spirituality is our response to life and God. This expands to engage:

1. God's story and my story
2. Developing intimacy and growth with Jesus
3. Shift from self-focus to being Jesus-centred
4. Hope as a key to life now and for my future

Each of these areas of our life are:

- » Interlinked and cross-supporting
- » Developed by the spiritual strategies we utilise





Seasons of Life: Practical Resources As We Grow Older

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY, BY ROSS WAKELEY

Forrest Gump is a great film. I'm sure we can all relate to this quote about life – 'Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get.'

Has your life been like that?

God's word rightly tells us: 'There is a right time for everything: A time to be born; a time to die; a time to plant; a time to harvest. A time to heal; a time to rebuild; a time to cry; a time to laugh and a time to grieve' (Ecclesiastes 3:1-4).

Come with me as we explore the **four seasons of life** and some **practical insights** to help us enjoy all God offers us in our life.

I've discovered that life brings us all times of pain, failure and grief, plus our struggles with fear, our worth and our identity. Those things can define us, if we allow them to. They can rob our joy and hope. *There is an alternative.* Surrender it all to Jesus. He will take that stuff that so easily robs us. We'll experience being loved by God so we can love God. We'll walk free, to better look at life and love other people, as God enables us to have the same perspective as Jesus does.

SPRING: THE SEASON OF LEARNING

We enter this world and begin exploring and learning about our surroundings. Babies discover their hands, learn to grasp things and learn to crawl and walk. Our first 20 years are primarily focused on learning and developing our identity.

This critical season of life shapes the rest of our life –

- » If our parents give us **dependable affection**, our view of the world will be one of trust. If that does *not* happen, a child may develop a sense of mistrust in people. That leads to frustration, suspicion, withdrawal and a lack of confidence.

- » Wise parents provide **encouragement**, so the child takes risks and learns independence, which builds confidence. However, we are fragile people: if we're 'put down' as a child, we may develop shame and doubt about our ability to handle life and problems.

- » During the early teen years, boys and girls ask the question: 'Do I have what it takes? Do I have the courage, skills and friends to help me really make it in life?' Parents are crucial in **validating** their son or daughter, as teens often feel they *don't* have what it takes to be a man or woman.

- » Many fail to hear that deep encouragement. Too many hear:

'You are useless and you'll never make it!' That crushes the spirit of teens and they go into adulthood *looking* okay, but internally they are wounded and wanting *someone* to **validate** their worth and help give them an identity. We now seek a **partner**...

- » Having established our identity, we're ready to make long-term commitments to others. We start forming **loving relationships** – *our parents are usually our role models.* We make the sacrifices that loving relationships require. If we have unresolved emotional damage from earlier stages of life, it will often undermine caring relationships and we may retreat into emotional isolation.

FREEDOM COMES AS I ACCEPT WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT ME

*What marvellous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it – we're called **children of God!** That's who we really are... Let's not just talk about love; let's practice real love. This is the only way we'll know we're living truly, living in God's reality. It's also the way to shut down debilitating self-criticism... God is greater than our worried hearts and knows more about us than we do ourselves... Once that's taken care of and we're no longer accusing or condemning ourselves, we're bold and free before God!... **This is how God showed his love for us:** God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him... Not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they've done to our relationship with God... If God loved us like this, we certainly ought to **love each other.***

1 John 3:1,18-21; 4:10-11 (MSG, emphasis added)

'The Greatest Fear in the world is of the opinions of others, and the moment you are unafraid of the crowd you are no longer a sheep, you become a lion. A great roar arises in your heart, the roar of freedom' *Osho*



An old man told his grandson, 'There is a battle between two wolves inside all of us. One is evil. It is anger, jealousy, lies, resentment, greed, ego and inferiority. The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, humility, kindness, empathy and truth.'

The boy thought about it and asked, 'Grandfather, which wolf wins?'
'The one you feed,' he said.

SUMMER: THE SEASON OF EARNING

It is in this season that we begin to build a life. We may find our life partner, start a family, buy a home and begin to accumulate possessions. In this season, the *focus is usually on us*. In building our careers, we gain valuable experience to help us in work and life.

If we are *wise*, we'll have already discovered that *quality of life* – for now and eternity – is secured through a genuine friendship with Jesus. That will shape how we invest our time, skills and money.

In a culture where the media 'preach' that our worth comes from things, many walk the road of self-reliance. We use our career to develop our worth by improving our personal 'brand image'. Life is rushed: we give the bulk of our energy to moving onward and upward.

If our identity and worth are *not* secure in God, we'll find we are vulnerable. Our children can emotionally manipulate us – they may *actually* drive the decisions we make, as we want our family and friends to think: 'Wow, look at how successful they are.'

A healthy marriage involves *leaving* our childhood at home. As Genesis 2:24 says: 'A man leaves his father and mother and embraces his wife. They become one flesh.' Our relationships are stronger as –

- » We choose to **give**, rather than take.
- » **Forgive**, rather than hold grudges.
- » As we **ask questions** of those with godly wisdom, we are enriched.
- » Celebrate life, **honour** people and have an attitude of humility.



WORKING THROUGH ISSUES

Nick is a true inspiration. Born in 1982 with no arms or legs, Nick could easily have allowed his physical disability to define him. Nick chooses to allow God to actively help him daily overcome his issues and help others.

'I have the choice to be angry at God for what I don't have or be thankful for what I do have.' Nick Vujicic

- » Rest **secure** in God's love for us so in our emotional security, we can serve.

During this season, the transition from learning to earning can be challenging. We'll have stuff-ups. People will wound us.

Internally, as we continue to deal with our emotional issues, God will brilliantly help us, as we welcome his love and strength.

NICK VUJICIC SAYS:

'Faced with countless challenges and obstacles, God has given me the strength to surmount what others might call impossible. My life is given to sharing this same hope and genuine love that I have personally experienced with people all over the globe. I've been invited into very unexpected places to share about my faith in Jesus Christ, and literally millions have responded.'

'Travelling to over 44 countries, I've been extremely humbled by the opportunities to introduce Jesus to those I meet. Psalm 139:13–14 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well."

'In countless schools, churches, prisons, orphanages, hospitals and in face-to-face encounters with individuals, I get to tell them how precious they are to God.'

For more: lifewithoutlimbs.org

AUTUMN: THE SEASON OF RETURNING

At some point, most of us will begin to tire of the pace of our *earning season* or a significant life event will lead us



GENERATIONAL ATTITUDES IN WORK AND LIFE

	VETERANS (1922–45)	BOOMERS (1946–64)	GENERATION X (1965–80)	GENERATION Y (1981–2000)
WORK ETHIC AND VALUES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Hard work » Respect for authority » Sacrifice » Duty first » Stick to rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Workaholics » Efficient » Fight issues » Personal fulfilment » Seek quality » Question authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Eliminate task » Self-reliance » Like structure and direction » Sceptical » Often cynical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What's next? » Multitasking » Tenacity » Entrepreneur » Tolerant » Goal-orientated
MAKING CONTACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Formal » Letter/Memo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » In person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Direct » Immediate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Email » Voicemail
FEEDBACK REWARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » No news is good news » Satisfaction in job that's well done 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » We don't appreciate it » Money » Title gives recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Sorry to interrupt, but how am I doing? » Freedom is the best reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Whenever I want it, at the push of a button » Meaningful life

to question: 'Is there something more to life?' We may achieve our goals and make it to the 'top' and, having climbed the ladder of success, we realise it was leaning against the wrong building.

At this point, we're at a crossroads. We call it a **mid-life crisis**. Some people miss the opportunity to evaluate their life and deal with their internal emotional stuff or relational issues. They continue to **focus on themselves**. They trade in their spouse for a newer model or seek to recapture their youth in other self-destructive ways. In doing so, they ruin families, friendships, careers and lives. We've all seen this.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11).

Focusing on **significance** and **servicing** what matters in the *long term* **takes the focus off us**. We discover our *true worth* is from our friendship with God and that it's nurtured by our spiritual journey (this is far more than just *doing church*). If we take this 'fork in the road', it will lead to character growth and joy, rather than self-destruction.

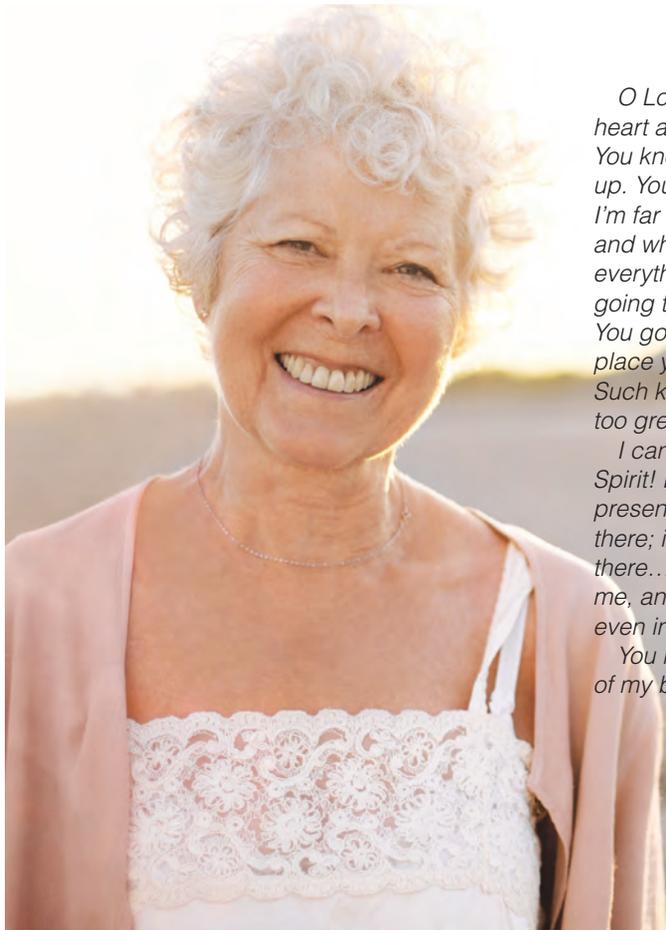
We're all walking the journey of life.
Loving and being loved. We hope to leave a positive legacy.

We'll also be dealing with being part of the '**sandwich generation**' – a term used to describe the middle-aged generation squeezed between the *simultaneous demands* of caring for our ageing parents and also giving support to our children as they begin parenting. In addition, in the later stages of our working career, the **workplace** is radically changing. We can feel we're becoming redundant in a *digital world*.

In this season, we have an active life, but our *focus* is off things and more on relationships. We have opportunity to constructively work through any issues with our *parents* from our past, e.g. resentment, anger and jealousy. Relationships transition with our *children*. We may find they need us less as their careers take off – causing a sense of rejection for us. We also need to guard against stagnation – our brain going into 'autopilot', when we need to rethink life's meaning.

PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS

*Lord,
make me an instrument of
your peace.
Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is error, truth;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood,
as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we
are pardoned.
And it is in dying that we
are born to eternal life.*



O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. You go before me and follow me. You place your hand of blessing on my head. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too great for me to understand!

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there... even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me... even in darkness I cannot hide from you.

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my

mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvellous...

You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!...

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

Psalm 139 (NLT)

CRISIS POINTS IN OUR LIFE AT THIS SEASON MAY LEAD TO US:

- » Changing our job, spouse or where we live
- » Leaving our church, as it's not answering our life questions
- » Becoming depressed from menopause or singleness
- » Awareness that retirement and my final season is near. This triggers a search to ensure that after our life, we have left a significant legacy of people we've mentored or achievements that outlive us
- » Internal confusion, if my identity isn't secure or my emotional pain isn't resolved
- » Financial struggles that add tension to my next season

WINTER: THE SEASON OF REAPING

If we've looked to God or lived for others in earlier seasons, we get a bonus, the *season of reaping*. It is during this season, late in life, we have the opportunity to see the results of our efforts in the successes of others we've helped along the way or in the success of initiatives we helped to start.

The *winter season* is also the period of retirement, life as a senior citizen and our death. If we have worked through the *lessons of life* effectively, dealt with our emotional baggage and developed a deep confidence in God's goodness and love for us, then we're people who finish life well with deep contentment.

My dad retired in August 1991. He and mum have lived out the reality of their

faith in God by continuing to enjoy life, relationships and serving other people. They can be deeply content with life.

However, this winter season is the **major time of loss in our life**.

We all face –

1. Loss of our youth
2. We lose our job and work connections
3. Loss of the world that has been familiar
4. Loss of our home as we shift to aged care
5. The loss of our independence
6. Loss of our sense of value to other people
7. Death comes and we lose spouse/friends
8. Decline in our health

In a culture where our *worth* is often valued for *what we do*, the final decades of our life are more difficult unless we are valued, loved and respected for **who we are** by people we love.

We walk the road *knowing* our value to God and *secure* in our friendship with him.

Some **key issues** to navigate are to *first* ensure we don't allow our primary focus to be on **looking backwards**. If we do that all the time, we rob ourselves of looking **forward** to the new aspects of our life and eternity with Jesus.



It can be so easy to enjoy *being passive* – sleeping like our border collie. It is important to think and **plan for our future needs**. Stuff like *where we'll live* – the transition from family home to a self-care village or aged care. It's easy to procrastinate and live day to day.

However, this frustrates our families, because we won't let any one help us tidy up our house, throw out decades of our accumulated stuff or actively plan the next stage of our own care. Living in **denial of reality** means we have abdicated from being responsible, so we become a disaster waiting to happen. *Is that a wise choice?*

As we become senior citizens, we tend to slow down our productivity and explore life as a retired person. It is during this time that **we contemplate our life**. If we see our life as unproductive or feel that we did not accomplish our life goals, we may be dissatisfied with life and have a sense of despair, often leading to depression.

Studies show that the **effects of ageing are minimised by staying:**

- » mentally alert
- » intellectually curious
- » physically active.

HOW?

- » A **healthy lifestyle** – body, spirit and mind – helps reduce stress and maintain health. There are activities

*Best way forward is always to **forgive them**.* In doing that we release our self and the other person from us wanting to hit back. We can't control what people do to us, but we can choose to not re-live that hurt. We can invite God to help us with the pain, give it to him – and our sense of injustice.

The world *is* imperfect. It always takes *two* to have a squabble. We can focus forwards and make the best of this winter season as we forgive. Let go of past stuff and give our self permission to enjoy life.

that cost little and can be done alone, or with friends, that give us a lift, and help us while dealing with emotional distress or mental illness.

- » We're wise to **maintain** our friendship with God; social customs; old relationships; family connections. We can also develop new relationships and be involved with our grandchildren. **Explore** community organisations, senior citizens centres, day respite programmes, social support outings and church small groups, or volunteer in the community, and *we gain* enjoyment from life.
- » Ensure we **don't confuse relationships with issues**. Too often, I see a parent have a squabble with their adult child over an *issue*. In anger or frustration, the older adult breaks the relationship, e.g. 'I'll cut you out of my will,' or 'Don't come here anymore,' etc.

COMMON EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS IN OUR WINTER SEASON

1. GRIEVING

There are numerous losses we adults face as we age. Changes in our economic, social and personal status related to our job; retirement; decline in health and the death of friends. The death of a spouse or other loved ones can be a profound loss, bringing on a grief process that may cause changes in our thinking, mood and behaviour.

There are phases of grieving:

Denial: We express disbelief or cannot acknowledge the loss of our loved one.

Anger: We get cranky that loss happened to us. We're alone and we feel deserted.

Bargaining: To try to regain some normal life, we make 'deals' in an effort to make life better for us.

Depression: We feel despair or hopelessness overcome us.

Acceptance: Over time, we move beyond the loss and begin to resume our previous activities and behaviour.

How long it takes often depends on us being willing to grieve well. Let it out.

These stages are normal reactions to a loss and should pass over time. If a person does not seem to get to the acceptance stage or shows prolonged signs of depression (longer than two weeks), pop into your GP for a chat. While grief and loss are emotionally difficult, many older adults adapt to the changes in their life and regain a sense of joy and happiness. The support of family, friends, chaplains and health professionals can aid in this process. *We're there to help.*

2. DEPRESSION

Depression is common among older adults – about 20% of people over 65. It's *not* a normal part of the ageing process and should not be ignored. Depression is often linked with medical problems or life traumas. Good news: depression is a treatable health issue.

Questions to ask yourself:

In the past month, have I been –

- » Upset at having little interest or pleasure in doing things?
- » Troubled by feeling down, depressed or hopeless?
- » Had difficulty sleeping or poor appetite and weight loss?
- » Felt irritated by little things?

A 'yes' means we're wise to talk to a GP. They assess our feelings and help us determine what help is beneficial.

Treatment – Many antidepressants exist and 65–80% of people will respond to the medication. Counselling is a useful part of treatment.

3. ANXIETY DISORDERS

They are common for older people: 11% of those over 55 are dealing with an anxiety disorder. This is more than occasional moments of nervousness, an increased pulse rate, sweaty palms or a queasy stomach. A sign we have serious anxiety is when the symptoms persist, or are so severe that they interrupt our normal activities.



Treatment includes verbal therapies, such as cognitive behaviour therapy; relaxation techniques or medication.

4. ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA

Over 940,000 people in the UK – one in 14 over 65 – are living with dementia, and this number is expected to grow over the next decades. The disease varies among each individual. In many cases, the younger the person is at the start of symptoms, the faster the disease progresses. For the carer, we see the *slow erosion* of the person we loved. Alzheimer's can be called 'the long goodbye'.

The person with Alzheimer's will experience stages as the disease progresses. *If our life is like a house, it's being slowly demolished.*

Early Stages – There is gradual memory loss (short-term memory is affected) and our behaviour and personality changes.

Middle Stages – The ability to perform routine tasks remains, while orientation to time, person and place, judgement and our abstract thinking will be affected.

Last Stages – This disease will eventually leave a person requiring total care in the last stages.

Treatment – When initially diagnosed, a person with Alzheimer's disease may respond best when cared for at home by family and with community support services, when possible. If severe dementia makes it too difficult or unsafe to care for an individual in their own home, then a residential programme, such as an assisted-living facility or nursing

home with a specialised unit designed to care for people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders, is our best option.

GOING HOME

We never need to teach kids *how* to have fun. They love stuff like splashing in a big puddle of water. They see such *joy in life*.

As we age, if we believe our 'going home' is death and then we rot, there is no joy to anticipate – only deep sadness. However, if we have the *confident hope* of eternity with **Jesus** and we have put our life in gis care, then **everything changes for the best**.

'Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in his love, than in your own weakness.' Mother Teresa





In heaven, majestic angels sing:
"'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty,' the one who was, and is, and is to come'... 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power' (Revelation 4:8, 11).

'Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal' (2 Corinthians 4:16–18).

'I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling-place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!"' (Revelation 21:3–5).

Thanks to BaptistCare

**Free booklets by Ross Wakeley—
wakeley.weebly.com**

LETTER FROM A MOTHER TO A DAUGHTER

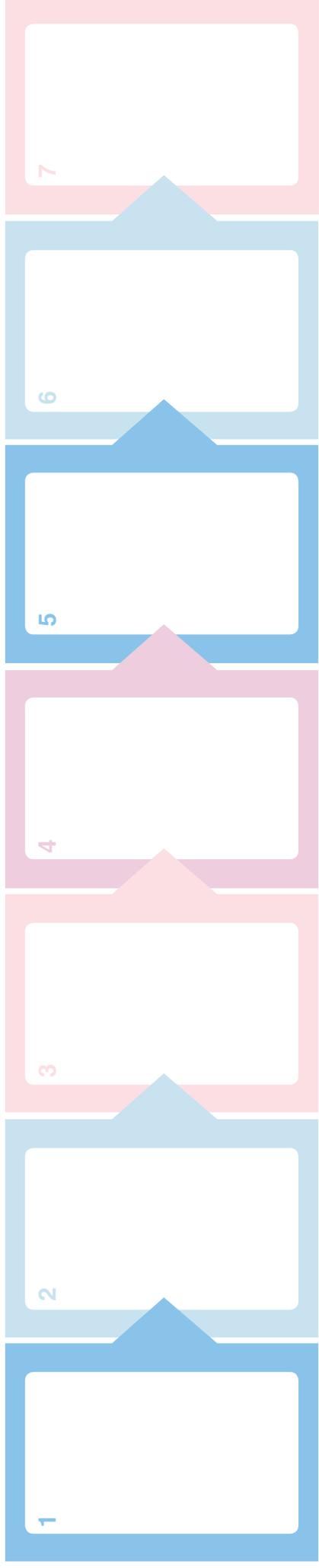
My dear girl, the day you see I'm getting old, I ask you to please be patient, but most of all, try to understand what I'm going through. If when we talk, I repeat the same thing a thousand times, don't interrupt to say: 'You said the same thing a minute ago.' Just listen, please. Try to remember the times when you were little, and I would read the same story night after night until you would fall asleep.

When I don't want to take a bath, don't be mad and don't embarrass me. Remember when I had to run after you making excuses and trying to get you to take a shower when you were just a girl? When you see how ignorant I am when it comes to new technology, give me the time to learn and don't look at me that way. Remember, honey, I patiently taught you how to do many things like eating appropriately, getting dressed, combing your hair and dealing with life's issues every day. The day you see I'm getting old, I ask you to please be patient, and try to understand what I'm going through.

If I occasionally lose track of what we're talking about, give me the time to remember, and if I can't, don't be nervous, impatient or arrogant. Just know in your heart that the most important thing for me is to be with you. And when my old, tired legs don't let me move as quickly as before, give me your hand the same way that I offered mine to you when you first walked. When those days come, don't feel sad, just be with me, and understand me while I get to the end of my life with love. I'll cherish and thank you for the gift of time and joy we shared. With a big smile and the huge love I've always had for you, I just want to say, *I love you... my darling daughter.*

My Personal Timeline

On the timeline below are spaces for seven key life events. Nominate the seven (7) key life events that have influenced your life to date and write one in each of the seven boxes below.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

What has been the **impact** of these **seven key life events** on **your journey** to date?

What can you do now and/or in the future to improve the journey ahead?