

Worship Resources for Congregations



God of the Ages and all Ages

A prayer honoring the aging process.

Loving God, in your image you created us--

Human beings in physical bodies destined to change as long as there is life--
these bodies, temples of your spirit,
not able to reverse the experience of time already past but carrying us into the future.

You share curiosity with us, divinely inspired, spurring us to learn,

discovering fragments of the heights and depths of creation and of our place in your world.

You call us to observe your likeness in all creation imagining your will on earth.

You invite us to prepare for our own future selves as we accompany the elders around us.

We give thanks as these elders serve as our mentor guides, encouraging coaches,
and pioneers who travel ahead helping us prepare for our own later age.

May the wrinkles of our skin be maps of our lives lived in faithfulness.

May creaks and aches within these temples, remind us of the mysteries that remain unseen by our eyes,
but held in your hands.

And may our awareness of our own mortality, reveal to us clarity of purpose and meaning each day.

Remind us, who are created in your image,

that it is the experience that age provides that draws us closer in your likeness.

All praise to you, God of the ages and all ages, present, past and future. Amen.

Call to Confession (LEADER)

We are created to age--to accumulate experience and value the processes of reflection, imagination and growth. And yet, we tell each other that we are headed down-hill. We make fun of those whose abilities and sensibilities were formed in former times. We are afraid of becoming dependent on others and of losing our minds. Let us confess to our creator our sin of trying to control what we cannot.

Prayer of Confession (unison)

God of smooth skin and gray hair, God of the weary and those who do not stop moving, forgive the many ways we deny the gift of years which we have been blessed to know. We ask for your forgiveness for our attempts to turn back or fast forward time. Forgive us when we cling to someone else's idea of beauty or the ideal age. Forgive us when we cannot be satisfied with the number of candles atop our birthday cake—some wishing for more, others wanting less. And forgive us when we dismiss the worthiness of others when we place expectations on them based on our assessment of their age.

Invite us into your courageous presence. Remind us of your steadfast love. Empower us to use our voice to reclaim our place as your beloved offspring. And open our eyes to see not the number of years, but the value of each person as we share in the richness of this multi-generational community. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness (LEADER)

God does not judge us based on the number of days and years that have brought us to this point. What matters is that we are loved. What matters is that we all belong. Just as we are. Each of us are naturally aging at the right time, just as God intended. May we live then, giving thanks for life to this point in time and rejoice in the anticipation and knowledge that God will be with us from this point on. May we live as God's forgiven! Amen.

Litany of Affirmation of Aging

LEADER: When youth is the measure of beauty and strength

PEOPLE: **Remind us, you created us to age.**

LEADER: When the number of years lived limits or denies a person's worth

PEOPLE: **Show us again all are worthy of your love.**

LEADER: When we are overlooked, unseen, and unheard because of another's judgement of our years

PEOPLE: **Help us find our voice with courage and grace.**

LEADER: When we do not fully understand the context around us

PEOPLE: **Unstop our pride to ask for clarification.**

LEADER: When we feel the distance of years between ourselves and others

PEOPLE: **Unite our generations in respect and love.**

LEADER: When we come to realize that we cannot do things alone

PEOPLE: **Strengthen us to ask for help.**

LEADER: And when we ask for help

PEOPLE: **Let us recognize the gift this relationship brings.**

LEADER: When we fear our future lives

PEOPLE: **Reveal your possibilities which lie beyond the horizon of our experience.**

LEADER: When we let go of ideas and things past

PEOPLE: **Invite us to let come the inspiration of your future.**

LEADER: There is much around us which dismisses the honor of lives based on one's age

ALL: **In community may we respect and celebrate the elders and youngers--**

all who connect generations past with generations to come.

May we be bold and claim the richness of life revealed at every age!

Sample Newsletter article:

March 2021

Dear Mission Partner--

In the past year we have lost the wisdom of many elders in our communities due to COVID-19. The numbers of those over the age of 65 account for far too many of the total deaths. And yet, many in our country remain unmoved. We have heard arguments that their lives were expendable and that cautionary conditions of quarantine were done to protect them at the expense of the economy. Then, when the eldest and most vulnerable among us were offered the first vaccines, again we heard the complaints of those who felt the jabs were wasted on individuals with nothing left to offer the world. Ideas such as these are rooted in our culture's ageism.

Ageism is when one assumes another's abilities or dis-abilities, value or worth, based on how old they think that person is. It can occur at any point along life's path. Ask a 25-year-old how they feel when an older person tells them they look 15. Or ask a 57-year-old about the underlying reasons why they lost their job and were replaced with someone 20 years their junior. No matter our age, ageism never feels good. It not only harms individuals, it is detrimental to our communities.

As an initiative of United Church Homes, the Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging is focused on ***transforming aging through engagement, education and advocacy*** with congregations and community partners.

Addressing ageism is one of the ways to transform aging. We need to name it. We need to examine our own internal age biases, as individuals and as communities of faith. And we need to help find ways to change the way we approach aging.

Why does this matter? Because how we think about our own aging affects the quality and length of our life. The ageist attitudes and expectations that are rooted in our culture already affect the systems and supports that are in place. As communities of faith, we can help to engage the conversations. We can help to shape the changes that need to be made. And we can advocate for those who are most vulnerable and empower the elder voices in our midst.

Your support of the Parker Center and United Church Homes helps to provide a weekly blog, a new monthly podcast and a resource for intergenerational small group conversations about aging—all available through our website. Thank You!

How we can help support your congregation's ministries with your older members? Let me know how we could partner together as we challenge and change attitudes and biases about our God-given gift to age.

Blessings-

Rev. Beth Long-Higgins, executive director

The Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging, United Church Homes

Blong-higgins@uchinc.org