

10,000 boomers are turning 65 every day.

Pew Research Center 2010

## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Converge Worldwide has a unique ministry called 2nd 1/2 for Him, which exists to equip and encourage leaders who can develop powerful and effective ministries that address the needs and opportunities of an increasingly diverse group of age 50+ adults. They do this through ongoing resource development, leadership training, ministry leader networking and personal coaching.

## The Graying U.S. Population

By Ron Sellers *President of Grey Matter Research*

All you need to know about the direction our nation's population is headed is plastered on the U.S. Census Bureau website: *Fueled by Aging Baby Boomers, Nation's Older Population to Nearly Double, Census Bureau Reports.*

With advances in health care and the dramatic decrease in smoking, people are living far longer than they used to. In addition, the massive baby boomer population (people born between 1946 and 1964) is moving through the age spectrum like a pig through a python – and the oldest boomers are already nearing 70. The United States has a declining birth rate (Without immigration, our population would actually begin to decline). And around two out of 10 pregnancies are aborted – more than a million potential new members of the population each year.

In 1970, one out of 10 Americans was 65 or older. It took 40 years for that proportion to rise by a third, to 13 percent in 2010. In just the next 16 years, that's projected to increase by another 56 percent to equal two out of every 10 Americans – a far faster increase than we've experienced before. The proportion of the population that is 80 or older will also increase by 45 percent by 2030.

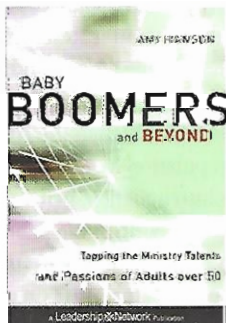
These older people won't just be the same as today's seniors. They'll be far more ethnically diverse. The ratio of women to men will become more equal than it is today. The increasing

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### *Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50*

By Amy Hanson. A Leadership Network Publication, published by Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2010



## The New Old

*Is the Church Ignoring One of America's Largest Generations?*

By Amy Hanson *Author of Baby Boomers and Beyond: Tapping the Ministry Talents and Passions of Adults over 50*

What do *USA Today*, Chico's clothing store, CVS pharmacy, and the government have in common? They are investing significant amounts of time, money and research into one of the biggest demographic shifts in America: the aging population. They are studying the baby boomer, and the impact this huge group

will have on society in their later years. And yet the Church is virtually silent on this topic.

If we want to be churches that are culturally relevant, we must begin to make this a priority. As I've traveled around the country and interacted with hundreds of church leaders, I've discovered several

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# The Bible's Retirement at 50

**T**he Bible says nothing about retirement. Christians just keep working until they die,” the speaker said with confidence. Oops! He must have missed Numbers 8:25 about the Levites who ran the Old Testament Tabernacle: “At the age of 50, they must retire from their regular service and work no longer.”

But what about Moses who didn't start his job as leader of Israel until he was 80 and kept working until he was 120? And then there was Abraham, claimed as the father of the world's three great monotheistic religions, who became the father of Isaac when he was 100. God is infinitely old. Jesus was crucified at 33.

When the U.S. Constitution was adopted on September 17, 1787, the average life expectancy in this country was 35. The minimum age requirement for a president or vice president was established as 35. Today's life expectancy is almost 79. If we applied the rules of inflation to presidential elections, candidates would have to have been born before 1938 to run for the White House in 2016.

Cultures on the map and centuries on the calendar change the way we relate to youth and age. Many people live in gerontocracies where old men rule. Others ignore the old and emphasize the young. It's easy to forget that in every time and place, the older were once younger and the younger will age.

While our American culture has enjoyed longer lives and youthful characteristics more than any other, we now have a large contingent of citizens in or near retirement. Younger Americans are increasingly from immigrant families. Our church demographics change with the national demographics, which means we will have older people.

There are over 150 biblical references to generations. The Bible respects the past and looks to the future. As we look to older Americans we take the counsel of Deuteronomy 32:7, “Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past. Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you.”

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Jesus was crucified at  
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## *The Graying U.S. Population*

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proportion of the very elderly (80 or older) likely means more people with disabilities and health- or age-related limitations. And although the typical dream has long been to retire and be free to enjoy “the golden years,” economists commonly project that many seniors will have to put off retirement due to limited savings, and that Social Security will be unable to handle the massive influx of those who do retire. Today, there are around 20 seniors for every 100 people of working age. In about a decade, that will increase to over 30.

This isn't just an American phenomenon. Other large developed nations (Russia, Japan, the UK, France, Germany, Ukraine, Italy, Spain, Poland

and Canada) have aging populations, and all except Russia will have an even greater proportion of their populations at 65 or older by 2030 than the United States will (and Russia will be about even with the United States). Massive developing nations, India, Indonesia, and especially China, also have sharply increasing proportions of their population that will be 65 or older in the next 14 years.

According to Jennifer Ortman, Chief of the Census Bureau's Population Projections Branch, “Changes in the age structure of the U.S. population will have implications for health care services and providers, national and local policy makers, and businesses seeking to anticipate the influence that this

population may have on their services, family structure and the American landscape.”

What she didn't mention is how ministry will be impacted by this massive demographic change. NAE churches already have some experience with this. A Grey Matter Research study showed that people who attend church in an NAE member denomination are 23 percent more likely than the American adult population in general to be 65 or older (churchgoers in general tend to be older). The graying of the American population is not just coming eventually in the distant future – it's on us *now*. It's time to consider what this means for your church or ministry.