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Arn, Charles. *White Unto Harvest: Evangelizing Today's Senior Adults*. Monrovia, CA: Institute for American Church Growth, 2003. 151 pp. Paperback \$19.99.

Reviewed by Matthew Costner, a church growth consultant from Mississippi. He is a D.Min. student concentrating on Church Growth and Multiplication at Talbot Theological Seminary and is a consistent itinerant preacher all over the south and in Northern Ireland. He has written previously for *Neue Quarterly*, a Relevant publication, on church turnarounds. The most notable article was entitled, "Restart: The Uphill Battle of Rejuvenating a Dying Church ... and Why It's Worth It"

Charles Arn wrote *White Unto Harvest: Evangelizing Today's Senior Adults* following a study concerning how and why older adults, over age sixty, change their religious behavior. His desire is for older adults to go from being unbelievers and inactive in the Christian faith to being believers and active (21). This is important for any church and religious leader to know in order to be "more effective in outreach to this target group" (21).

Arn is president of Church Growth, Inc. in Monrovia, California. He is also a visiting professor at the Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University and an authority on dynamics of effective evangelism. In addition to *White Unto Harvest*, he has written eight books, and the latest is *Heartbeat Ministry: A Missional Guide for Reaching Your Community*.

In *White Unto Harvest*, Arn begins with a rather long introduction as he explains the generational demographics compiled from the Administration of Aging's "Profile of Older Americans" (10). He uses gerontologist Key Dychtwald's description of the "age wave" to indicate that the church at large demands a retooling of her ministry strategy (16). The book is divided into two parts—part one and part two.

Part one provides a summary of the research and key insights from the "New Adherent Survey." This is made up of eleven questions "designed to identify commonalities among older adults who made a Christian commitment or recommitment after their 60<sup>th</sup> birthday" (29). The questions identify several factors relating to the individual's change in his or her faith experience.

Question one deals with age, gender, and ethnicity (32–34), question two with commitment or recommitment (32–35), question three with childhood family commitment (41–42), question four with marital status when committed and whether spouse was already committed or committed after their conversion (43–46), question five with the primary reason for their commitment or recommitment (46–51), question six with the events prior (1 year) to the commitment or recommitment (52–60), question seven with why those who became committed to Christ after sixty did not do so earlier (60–61), question eight with reasons for joining present church (62–64), question nine with if they have friends over sixty who are not Christian and if so, why they think they are not (65), question ten with

how to better evangelize senior adults (66), and question eleven with the benefits to being a Christian and church member (66–67).

Part two builds upon what was learned in part one by recommending seven outreach steps to effectively reach older adults. Arn suggests that the best way to reach senior adults is to do the following: one, clarify the goal of your evangelistic endeavors so you know where you are going and when you get there (80–98); two, develop a potential disciple list from the present members' family, friends, and associates (99–104); three, build bridges to the community through events and activities (105–115); four, be sensitive to windows of receptivity focusing on those the Holy Spirit has prepared (117–122); five, train senior adults to share their faith (123–129); six, equip seniors to be effective disciple-makers so that as they walk this journey, they can help others along the way (130–137); and seven, create a place for newcomers so that they will become disciple-makers (138–144).

The stark reality in our world is that too often, some age groups are overlooked (ageism). Ageism is often a reality for senior adults in the church.

Arn gathers data from seven denominations to get a realistic perspective on their evangelistic efforts to senior adults. His purpose was to awaken church leaders to the reality that seniors are often overlooked. If they are to be reached, the denomination and church's evangelistic efforts must be improved. Arn ultimately wants to help denominations and churches by assisting them in improving their effectiveness in evangelism to senior adults (7, 21). His reasons that churches should target senior adults are because they are closer to eternity (76), receptive (76), caring of others (76), more available to volunteer and evangelize (77), loyal to the church (77), more geographically stable (77), and more financially able to give (78).

*White Unto Harvest's* main reason, however, for church leaders to rethink their evangelistic efforts to include senior adults is that *all* followers of Jesus are under His command to go and make disciples of *all* people (9, 75). He goes so far as quoting the apostle Paul when he said, "I have become all things to all people, that I may save some" (75). However, Arn also quotes Peter Wagner when early in the Church Growth movement he stated, "You can't go into a ripe wheat field with a corn picker and expect to bring in the harvest" (79). Effective evangelism looks different for each age group; however, the ultimate message of the Gospel never changes. Therefore, as stewards of the Gospel, we (the national church bodies, local congregations, senior adult ministries, and individuals) have a responsibility to share the Gospel with age-appropriate methods to get the greatest harvest (10).

Arn addresses the fact that his study sample was small and gave reasons why more may have not responded. Although he does well at articulating how to reach older adults in today's world, Arn seems to address a manifestation of the church's larger problem in that the seniors were not reached earlier in life.

If church leaders are not careful, they could interpret this book as a challenge to invest more resources into the senior adult ministry. However, churches do not have unlimited budgets; their resources are limited. It would be unwise to pour finances into fixing a symptom of a greater problem, when the greater problem can be addressed.

On a positive note, the solutions that he gives do not deal with finances but attitude in the local church. The attitude the churches must adopt is to be intentional in their evangelism to older adults.

He explains three different approaches to evangelism—informative transmission, manipulative monologues, and non-manipulative dialogue. He not only explains the approach, but he also stresses that the goal of evangelistic efforts is to make disciples (97), and making disciples happens over time. His statistics show that senior adults commit to Jesus over a period of time rather than during a decision-oriented event (85).

Arn models his strategy for evangelism after Jesus' example. Even though the book specifically focuses on the best methods for reaching unsaved and un-churched senior adults (88), some of the strategies would also be effective with other groups. The statistics Arn presents provide solid evidence to affirm what the average church leader would know. The book was written a decade ago. However, the information is just as relevant today as it was then.

My hope for this information is that just because the message is familiar, church leaders will not skip over this important aspect of evangelism but apply it to their local contexts. For any strategy to work, it must be put into practice. The fact remains that senior adult ministries will either be constructive, neutral, or destructive (143). If churches are not intentional about their evangelism strategies, their programs will not be relevant and thus will be destructive.

For too long, churches have left the senior adult ministry to volunteers that serve as no more than activity directors for their present group. Unless we put in place senior adult leaders who have a sense of mission and evangelism, we will have nothing more than a self-serving, irrelevant, inward-focused group of old people (143). As a pastoral leader, I want to exercise sensitivity regardless of age. The Gospel must be presented from an evangelistic and discipleship perspective. This will help individuals not only know what they believe, but also how to share their beliefs with others to make converts and disciples.

A church's responsibility is to seek and find the "lost," bring them into a relationship with Jesus Christ, and make disciples, so they in turn make disciples. As a pastor, it is obvious that many Christians, including pastors, staff, and leaders, enjoy and are more comfortable being around and ministering to those of their age. However, *all* people that are "lost" and have not committed their life to Jesus are going to hell if we do not awaken to the fact they need to be saved.

*White unto Harvest* is a must-read for pastors, staff, and leadership in a church. I believe it will change their attitudes toward the potential contributions of seniors. It will also help them to understand the approaches needed to meet the needs of senior adult members and give great insight on how to reach them and make them effective in their ministries as ambassadors of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:15). Arn's strategy will help senior adults focus on becoming ministers of the Gospel rather than simply receivers of the ministry.

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McIntosh, Gary L., *There's Hope for Your Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012., 195 pp., Paperback \$15.15 paperback.

Webster, William O., *A Place of Grace: A Resurrected Church's Journey to Vitality*. Xulon Press, 2013., 227 pp., Paperback \$13.94 paperback.

Reviewed by James R. Farrer. He is the founder of Vital Signs Church Consulting. He has worked with 18 different denominations, leading seminars coast to coast.

Seventy-five to eighty percent of congregations have plateaued in members or are declining in attendance. At least 3500 congregations close every year. With these statistics in mind, Gary L. McIntosh's book, *There's Hope for Your Church*, lays out a blueprint for church revitalization. William O. Webster's book, *A Place of Grace*, recounts the practical application of many of McIntosh's principles resulting in a Rust Belt church resurrection.

A myriad of conflicting reasons have been given for both membership increase and decline. However, empirical research on this topic was first undertaken on the foreign mission field where financial and human resources were slim. McIntosh is a leading interpreter of this knowledge. He also knows how people come to Christ and to the church in North America, after having coached or consulted with 1000 congregations and having served 83 denominations.

McIntosh is professor of Christian Ministry and Leadership at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. He has turned his experience into 22 books and 300 articles. However, *There's Hope for Your Church* is not a rehash of stale material. McIntosh distills his wisdom into this coaching guide for restoring vitality to congregations.

The book does not paint a smiley-faced picture of church renewal. In the preface, McIntosh bluntly reports that the process is "messy." Pioneer church consultant Lyle E. Schaller came to the conclusion that the central issue to the future of an organization is initiating needed change. Psychiatrist Karl Menninger has emphasized the anger and sense of loss that normally accompany change.