

Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day 2007

Resource Packet

Abuse of the Elderly *“Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother”*

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**Prepared by the General Conference
Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day Committee**
Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries
Adventist Review
Children's Ministries
Education Department
Family Ministries
Health Ministries
Ministerial Association
Women's Ministries
Youth Ministries

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Dear Church Leaders:

Let me begin by thanking you for the part you will play in ensuring that this year's Abuse Prevention Emphasis Day is successful and a blessing to all the members in your church.

Our theme for this year is "Abuse of the Elderly." This may seem like a strange topic but as you read the material in this packet you will become aware that it is indeed a serious problem, one that has been overlooked for many years. Our senior citizens are our source of wisdom, history, and inspiration. Let us respect and honor them for the contributions they have made to our lives.

We would like to suggest that on this day you choose some of the senior citizens in your church and community and give them special mention; or you may decide to honor all the senior citizens in your church on this day.

The packet this year was prepared by General Conference Women's Ministries Department.

In this packet you will find -

- A Suggested Order of Service
- Sermon
- Children's Story
- Seminar with PowerPoint
- The Bible and Treating the Elderly with respect
- World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- The Toronto Declaration On the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse

We have tried to give you as much information as necessary so that you can be well informed about this problem of abuse of the elderly.

Feel free to adapt the material to fit your local preferences. We ask that you include other departments in your church to promote and present this program. At the General Conference nine departments work together to prepare this material (as listed on the cover of this program) and we are all committed to helping the vulnerable, unprotected and those in pain—whether emotional or physical—in our church and the wider community.

Our prayers are with you and we know that God will bless you and your congregations as you worship on this day.

Love and joy,

Heather-Dawn Small
Director

A Suggested Order of Service

Prelude

Call to Worship

Invocation

Hymn of Praise

Scripture Reading: Exodus 20:12

Offering

Prayer for the offering and the pastoral prayer

Children's Story:

Special Music

Sermon: Abuse of the Elderly "Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother"

Hymn of Response:

Benediction

'Sharing the Peace' Blessing

(In a 'Sharing the Peace' Blessing members of the congregation move around shaking each other's hands saying 'May the peace of God be with you, and protect you'.)

Postlude

Sermon

Abuse of the Elderly “Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother”

Introduction

The story is told of a young man who treated his parents in a very devious manner. When his parents were of an age when they could no longer work and needed his care and sustenance, he said to them, “I will not look after you. I am giving the money I would use to help you to the church; and because it is for God, I will not be dishonoring you, and I will be blessed.”

Can you imagine the shock on the faces of this couple as their son said these words to them? Who would look after them, pay for their medical bills, their food and shelter. And all this was being done in the name of religion! How could he feel that giving this money to God would be a blessing to him?

What would you say to this young man? Well, let me share with you what Jesus said; you can read this entire story in Mark 7:5-13. Jesus exposed the Pharisees as being self-centered and having no love for the very people they served. That they would excuse a child from the responsibility of caring for their parents by giving the money to the church was inexcusable. Jesus referred to it as honoring Him with our lips and not with our hearts.

The fifth commandment states “Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” Exodus 20:12 KJV.

The Amplified Bible gives us a clearer understanding of this text. It reads “Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you.” Exodus 20:12

Familiar words to many of us. We learned them at church school or maybe Pathfinders or maybe it was a memory verse in children’s Sabbath school. When you think of this text, what does it mean to you? “Honor your father and your mother.”

I want to share with you today a problem that is becoming more prevalent in countries around the world. And this is not a problem that is limited to any particular country, culture, race or class of people; this is a problem that stretches beyond each of these boundaries.

Over the years on Abuse Prevention Emphasis day we have shared information on child abuse, spousal abuse, caring for those who have been abused, and protecting the abused. On this day, however, we would like to focus on a different type of abuse—one that is a growing problem. And that is the problem of abuse of the elderly.

Now I know some of you may be saying to yourselves, “Abuse of the elderly, what is that?” Or you may be saying, “There’s no such thing as abuse of the elderly. Who would abuse an old person?” But let me share with you some information about abuse of the elderly and then we will discuss this some more.

I would like you to keep in mind our opening text; there is also one more we need to read before we discuss this topic some more. Turn with me to Proverbs 23:22. Solomon writes to his son to “harken to your Father who begot you and do not despise your mother when she is old” (KJV). The Message Bible paraphrase makes it even more understandable: “Listen with respect to the father who raised you, and when your mother grows old, don’t neglect her.”

This afternoon we will share with you a seminar and PowerPoint on this topic of abuse of the elderly, and what we can do to help. We’ll give you much more information and handouts so that you can understand the dangers of this problem. But for now let me share with you a few facts about this problem of abuse of the elderly and what God says about it.

According to the World Health Organization, abuse and neglect of older adults can be a single or a repeated act. It can occur in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority.

This abuse can be physical (such as hitting), emotional, verbal (such as name calling, putting down), financial (such as taking money or property), sexual, or spiritual. Some types of abuse of older adults involve violation of their rights. Financial abuse is probably the most common form of abuse of the elderly. And just as the young man in Mark’s story abused his parents in the name of religion, today religious people sometimes abuse their parents—sometimes intentionally, sometimes without thought.

As mentioned in Proverbs, neglect is also abuse. This would involve not doing something, such as providing the older person with food, shelter, medication, care, or meaningful and personal contact.

Many older adults experience more than one form of abuse and neglect. The perpetrators may be children, a spouse, or even grandchildren. But it can also include friends, neighbors, care providers, landlords, or any individual in a position of power, trust, or authority. It can take place in the home, in a residential care setting (such as a nursing home), or in the community.

Now let’s go back to the story we found in Mark 7.

Would you consider what this man did to his parents as abuse? Well maybe you would and maybe you wouldn’t, but Jesus did as you see in this text. Jesus said that the Pharisees had made “the word of God of none effect through your tradition...” (vs 13). It is clear that it is the duty of children, if their parents are poor, to relieve them as far as they are able; and if children curse their parents as Jesus quoted in verse 10 (Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9), how much more those that starve them, ignore them, or abuse them in any other manner.

The basic element of abuse of the elderly is disrespect for and disregard of those who are now considered older persons. There are some cultures where the elderly are highly regarded, where they are honored and respected. Unfortunately, some of those cultural values are becoming more rare. But in other countries when a person reaches a certain age it seems as if they have outlived their usefulness. They are

seen as persons who have nothing to contribute any more; they are problematic and children and other family members would be happy to get rid of them. They are just too much trouble.

These sound like harsh words but we are dealing with what is a real problem for our senior citizens.

What does God expect of us? The commandment tells us to honor our parents. In Leviticus 19:32 we read "Rise up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord" (NIV).

What does it mean to honor and respect the elderly? It means a feeling or attitude of admiration and deference toward somebody or something, consideration or thoughtfulness, to treat a person with due care, regard, obedience, and courtesy.

The Bible gives us many examples of the manner in which God treated the elderly. These persons were advanced in age, yet God honored them.

The first person that comes to mind is Abraham. When God promised Abraham to make a great nation through him, Abraham was 75 years old. God could have used a younger man, maybe Lot who was much younger and had far more energy. But God chose Abraham. Why? Because God knew that Abraham possessed the maturity and the experience to deal with what God was placing on him. God knew that for many, many years Abraham would have to hold on to a promise without any visible evidence of it becoming true—and which as the years went by became more difficult to believe that it would come true.

The kind of person that God needed, he found in Abraham. The belief in God, the obedience to His every Word that Abraham possessed comes only as we mature. In Job 12:12 it says, "With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding."

Then there is Moses. Have you ever considered why God allowed Moses to spend forty years looking after sheep before sending him to Egypt as God's mouthpiece? When Moses slew the Egyptian slave master, he was a young man. Forty years of age, strong and self-confident. But this was not what God needed. He needed a man who would be obedient to His voice, always put God first, a man strong in faith and courage. These are the traits that God developed in Moses during the forty years in Midian; and when the time was up, when Moses had matured—a process that only comes with time—then God called him to the task.

Let's consider Noah. God called Noah when he was 600 years old. It is interesting to note that Noah had three able bodied sons. They were many years younger than Noah, strong and fit and quite able to do as God needed. Yet God chose Noah, the senior citizen. By doing this God showed respect for the elderly because He gave Noah the vision, the idea, the revelation of what would happen. To his sons was given the role of being Noah's support and strength. But the message came to Noah.

As you read your Bible you will find many such examples. Let me share with you one more, John the beloved disciple. We know that Jesus enjoyed his youthfulness and

did much to encourage him. But at what point in John's life did God give John the revelation of the future?

E.G. White writes:

"The history of John affords a striking illustration of the way in which God can use aged workers. When John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos, there were many who thought him to be past service, an old and broken reed, ready to fall at any time. But the Lord saw fit to use him still. Though banished from the scenes of his former labor, he did not cease to bear witness to the truth. Even in Patmos he made friends and converts. His was a message of joy, proclaiming a risen Saviour who on high was interceding for His people until He should return to take them to Himself. And it was after John had grown old in the service of his Lord that he received more communications from heaven than he had received during all the former years of his life" (Reflecting Christ, pg. 280).

Amazing isn't it? What a wonderful example of God's respect for the elderly. He may have been aged and enfeebled, but John was enriched with the experiences of his lifelong walk with God.

We read again on that same page from Ellen White that the elderly "may have made mistakes, but from their failures they have learned to avoid errors and dangers. . . . They have borne test and trial, and though they have lost some of their vigor, the Lord does not lay them aside. He gives them special grace and wisdom.

We also find the story of Elisha and the bears—what happens when the elderly are not respected. Elisha was apparently old, or at least approaching old age because we are told he was bald. When some youths made fun of him, they were killed by bears. Of course God would not want anyone making fun of His prophet, but He also wanted them to respect age (2 Kings 2:23-25).

In both the Old and New Testament there are many admonitions to care for the destitute, and widows are mentioned often; by definition, many widows are elderly. Throughout Jesus' ministry, He was particularly attuned to the needs of widows, raising to life the son of one widow, healing others, and showing respect and honor for the widow who gave her two mites.

Is it still God's intention that we regard the elderly with respect? The Bible says that God does not change; based on this alone we can answer confidently that it is still God's intention that we treat the elderly with respect and honor.

E. G. White tells us in the book *Daughters of God* (pg. 199) that God holds each child responsible if they neglect the care of their parents, and He notes of their disregard for their parents.

I know many of you may be patting yourselves on the back thinking that you have never hit your parents nor denied them the care they needed. But have you raised your voice to them in anger? Have you called them unkind words or names? Have you sat in a bus seat and left an elderly person standing? Do we neglect to seek their advice, or do we feel they are old fashioned and outdated in their thinking and

do not understand the times in which they live? If you are not sure, ask them. Let them tell you what they see, hear, and feel. Psalm 71: 9 and 18 sums up pretty well what many senior citizens would say to us: "Do not cast me away when I am old; do not forsake me when my strength is gone. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (NIV).

We have neglected our elderly for too long. Our young people are missing the wisdom and gifts of the elderly. They will treat them as we do. Look at how many senior citizens in your church are involved in the work of the church in any way they can. Many of them want to love us and share with the wisdom of their lives. Take some time to get to know them; you may be amazed at their sense of humor and wisdom.

We need to look at this problem as individual families, and we need to look at it as a church.

In our families, are we seeing to it that our elderly relatives are being cared for? Perhaps past hurts have separated us. But that does not justify our neglecting them now. In Bible times they did not have old age insurance or pensions or any type of government social security as many countries do now. But we still need to see that they have comfort and joy in their old age. In the United States recently, there was a news story of an old man who lived alone. He died, and he was not even found for a whole year! Where was his family, his community, his church?

As a church, what are we doing for our elderly members, particularly the shut-ins. Does anyone provide transportation for them if that is needed? Do we visit them? Is Communion taken to them if they are unable to attend services? Does anyone check that they are receiving the care they deserve? How about helping with their house work or yard, or repairs to their home?

We have neglected them for too long and God is calling us today, at this time, to honor our parents and respect the elderly.

Returning once again to the text we looked at earlier in Proverbs 22, let us read once again, and read the verses that follow as well; in the Message Bible, we read: "Listen with respect to the father who raised you, and when your mother grows old, don't neglect her. Buy truth—don't sell it for love or money; buy wisdom, buy education, buy insight. Parents rejoice when their children turn out well; wise children become proud parents. So make your father happy! Make your mother proud!"

Whether abuse of the elderly is from greed—we think we can get their money—or it is because of anger, retaliation, or just plain old sin, it hurts everyone. Conversely, treating the elderly well, whether it is parents, others in our care, or church members well, we are all blessed. And that is what God wants for us. That is why He gave the Commandment, "Honor thy father and thy mother" in the first place. And that is why He rebuked the Pharisees in our story in Mark. He does not want anything to side-track His divine plan. Even today He says to us, stop the abuse of the elderly. Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you (Exodus 20:12,

Amplified). Then we can do as it says in Psalm 148:12, 13, "Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven."
In the last days of earth's history, the culmination of time, the young and the elderly work together. We read in Joel 2:28 and 29 (NIV):

"And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.
Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

God does not cast off, ignore, or "write-off" the elderly. He appreciates, empowers, respects, and values them. So should we.

Children's Story

By Deena Bartel-Wagner

Tony slumped in his seat and groaned. What could Mr. Sanders be thinking? A field trip to the Senior Center sounded totally boring. "I don't want to go see a bunch of old people," Tony said to his friend, Joey. "We won't have anything to talk about!"

"Yeah," agreed Joey. "Besides that, old people smell funny and half the time they can't hear what you are saying!"

"What makes this even worse is the assignment Mr. Sanders gave us to do ahead of time," said Tony. "How am I going to think up questions to ask these people? I understand that he wants us to learn about having respect for people older than us, but having to talk to them just seems scary."

Every time Tony and Joey talked about what they would do and say Tony felt like there was a boulder lodged in his stomach. He was worried that he'd be trapped at the senior center with nothing to say to the people and they'd just sit and stare at each other.

The days passed and finally field trip day had arrived. Sitting on the bus and staring out the window, Tony sighed as they pulled into the parking lot. Mr. Sanders stood up at the front of the bus and made one last announcement. "When you get inside, you'll be introduced to the person you are assigned to for today. Remember that your assignment is to learn about them and what their lives have been like."

Tony hung back and made sure he was at the end of the line as the students filed into the center. "Maybe there won't be enough people to go around and I won't have to talk to anyone," Tony thought silently.

It didn't take long for all of the students to find their partner and soon Tony was being led over to a man sitting near the window. "Tony, I'd like you to meet George," said Mr. Sanders. "I think you are going to have a great time getting to know him."

"Yeah, right," Tony mumbled, "Whatever."

"Hello there, young man," said George. "From the looks of your face, I'd say you don't want to be here."

Even though he was startled by what George said, Tony shrugged his shoulders and said, "You're right. I don't."

"Let me guess," said George. "You think we don't have anything in common, we can't see and even worse we smell funny."

Tony's mouth dropped open. "How'd you know Joey and I talked about that?"

George laughed, "Tony, we're not so different. When I was a boy your age I thought the same thing about old people. So see we have at least one thing in common."

Tony sat down in the chair next to George. "Maybe this won't be so bad after all," he said. "So tell me what it's like being old."

George sighed. "You know many people forget that people my age were young once. They don't remember that we could move quickly and hear things easily. We even liked to have fun!"

"What did you do for fun?" Tony asked.

"When I was your age, I loved to play soccer," said George. As Tony listened to George's stories, he forgot about being nervous.

"You look like you are having a good time after all," George said.

"I guess I am," Tony admitted. "We have a lot more in common than I thought we would."

"That's the problem with many people," said George. "They see someone who is older than them and think they don't have anything to talk about. That can lead to all kinds of problems."

"What do you mean?" asked Tony.

"Not talking can lead to misunderstandings," said George. "I have friends who have had people mistreat them because they didn't have any respect for older people. The disrespect comes because they've never learned that older people are just like them. Instead they are scared of them or they see them as an easy target. Some of my friends have been pushed on buses. Others have been hit or slapped, even by their own children. I had one friend who ended up in the hospital with broken bones because a gang didn't like it that he was walking down the sidewalk."

"Wow! I didn't know things like that happened to people just because they were older," said Tony. "It's not right for someone to pick on you just because of your age. Is there anything I can do about it?"

"Sure there is," answered George. "You've made a good start today. Just coming and getting to know me will help you understand that people my age have feelings. Sometimes we may be having a bad day because we have more aches and pains, but we still like company."

"You can also help your friends to understand how important it is to show respect to us. You know the Bible talks about showing respect to those older than you and that this will help you to have a happier life."

"I see what you mean," said Tony. "I guess Mr. Sanders had a pretty good idea about having us come here today. I'm going to talk to some of my other friends who aren't here. I want them to understand what I learned today. I've got one other question for you, though."

"What's that?" asked George.

“Could we get together again,” asked Tony.

“Is this another class assignment?” asked George.

“No, I just want to hang out with you and see what else I can learn,” said Tony with a grin.

“Sounds good to me,” said George. “I’ll introduce you to some of my other friends. I know you’re going to like them, too.”

Activities to teach Elder Respect

1. Using a tape recorder, interview the senior citizens in your congregation. Ask them to tell you one story about their lives when they knew God was leading them. Some questions the children can also ask include when and where were you born? Who were your parents and grandparents? What do you remember about them? Did you have brothers and sisters? What do you remember best about them? What are some of the things you remember enjoying while you were growing up? What was your most exciting adventure?
2. Plan a story booking party. Use paper, crayons, markers and other art supplies. Have students and seniors make storybooks about one event in their lives that was really important to them. Split the group into teams and have them share the stories and books with each other.
3. Organize a group of children and seniors to have special music together in church. Plan practice times and pick a song that everyone can learn and sing together. Some suggestions include Jesus Loves Me; This Little Light of Mine; or Bless Be the Tie that Binds.
4. Role-play the following and see how the children would react. After the role-playing ask the children to discuss their feelings. How did the child who lived next to the elderly couple feel? How did the friends feel? When you make fun of someone who is older what does this take away from you?
5. Have one child imagine that he lives near an elderly couple. Two or three of his friends are visiting him and they see the two old people. The friends start making fun of the elderly people behind their backs. Ask the child “What, if anything, do you say to your friends? What might happen if your neighbors overhear what is going on?”
6. Help students who are interested in music create rhythm instruments such as maracas, wooden clappers, and music mitts. Then form a band with the students and the older members of your congregation. Practice and play special music on Sabbath.
7. If you have students interested in sewing, help them make "lap robe quilts" and deliver to an elder care home. Use this as an activity to introduce the

children one-on-one to residents they can adopt as a “grandparent.” Plan other activities that aren’t just tied to the holidays.

8. If you have students who are artists, have them create a mural of the young and the elderly in your church congregation. Celebrate all of the age groups by having an unveiling on a Sabbath when your service gives special recognition to the wisdom and leadership of those who are in the winter stages of their lives.
9. Have several elderly members of your congregation meet with your students and talk about the challenges they face everyday-difficulty buttoning buttons, opening tight lids on jars, turning the handle of a can opener, getting in and out of the tub, bending over to pick something up, etc. Other ideas they can talk about include the challenge of how younger people tend to ignore their wisdom and advice; being lonely; being fearful of scams and abuse. Have them also talk about some of the positive things about being older-they can travel; more free time to do the things they like; can volunteer to help in the community, etc.

Children's Activities



CIRCLE the smiley face if the behavior toward the elderly is respectful and a frowning face if the behavior is wrong.

1. Give up your seat for an elderly gentleman.



2. Punch your grandma when she refuses to give you money.



3. Make fun of the way old people walk and talk.



4. Help an elderly couple cross the street.



5. Read to an old neighbor who cannot see clearly.



UNSCRAMBLE the letters to find out what the Bible says how we should treat each other.

ELVO

PSASCOMNTEIOA

RECA

RGOIFEV

NKDI

YPAR

Ephesians 4:32
John 15:17

James 5:16
1 Corinthians 12:15

SEMINAR

Abuse of the Elderly

Slide 1:

Introduction

Recently a newspaper instanced that child abuse is rising in the United States, but instances of abuse of the elderly is rising twice as fast. This is one of the indications that treatment of the elderly needs to be an area of great concern to all of us.

There seems to be two views of age in today's society. The most prevalent view seems to be that of repulsion. Age is looked upon as an incurable disease. We fight against aging, we do not want to be reminded of what time can do to us. Thus, the aged elderly person is cast from society. They are made to feel useless, a burden to family, and often are cast off, a voided except on rare occasions of birthdays and Christmas morning. Another view is that age is beautiful. That age demands respect and dignity. That the elderly are giants of the forest, wise, full of experience, worthy of our praise and adoration. This is the view the Bible holds on age.

Slide 2:

Every person-every man, woman, and child-deserves to be treated with respect and with caring.

Every person-no matter how young or how old-deserves to be safe from harm by those who live with them, care for them, or come in day-to-day contact with them.

Older people today are more visible, more active, and more independent than ever before. They are living longer and in better health. But as the population of older Americans grows, so does the hidden problem of elder abuse, exploitation, and neglect

Every year an estimated 2.1 million older Americans are victims of physical, psychological, or other forms of abuse and neglect. Those statistics may not tell the whole story. For every case of elder abuse and neglect that is reported to authorities, experts estimate that there may be as many as five cases that have not been reported. Recent research suggests that elders who have been abused tend to die earlier than those who are not abused, even in the absence of chronic conditions or life threatening disease.

Slide 3:

Elder abuse is the infliction of physical, emotional, or psychological harm on an older adult. Elder abuse also can take the form of financial exploitation or intentional or unintentional neglect of an older adult by the caregiver.

Slide 4:

According to the World health Organization, abuse and neglect of older adults can be a single or a repeated act. It can occur in any relationship where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in position of power and authority.

Slide 5:

What are the Types of Elder Abuse?

Physical abuse can range from slapping or shoving to severe beatings and restraining with ropes or chains. When a caregiver or other person uses enough force to cause unnecessary pain or injury, even if the reason is to help the older person, the behavior can be regarded as abusive. Physical abuse can include hitting, beating, pushing, kicking, pinching, burning, or biting. It can also include such acts against the older person as over- or under-medicating, depriving the elder of food, or exposing the person to severe weather-deliberately or inadvertently.

Sexual abuse can range from sexual exhibition to rape. Sexual abuse can include inappropriate touching, photographing the person in suggestive poses, forcing the person to look at pornography, forcing sexual contact with a third party, or any unwanted sexualized behavior. It also includes rape, sodomy, or coerced nudity. Sexual abuse is not often reported as a type of elder abuse.

Emotional or psychological abuse can range from name-calling or giving the "silent treatment" to intimidating and threatening the individual. When a family member, a caregiver, or other person behaves in a way that causes fear, mental anguish, and emotional pain or distress, the behavior can be regarded as abusive. Emotional and psychological abuse can include insults and threats. It can also include treating the older person like a child and isolating the person from family, friends, and regular activities-either by force or threats or through manipulation.

Slide 6:

Financial exploitation can range from misuse of an elder's funds to embezzlement. Financial exploitation includes fraud, taking money under false pretenses, forgery, forced property transfers, purchasing expensive items with the older person's money without the older person's knowledge or permission, or denying the older person access to his or her own funds or home. It includes the improper use of legal guardianship arrangements, powers of attorney, or conservatorships. It also includes a variety of scams perpetrated by sales people for health-related services, mortgage companies, and financial managers-or even by so-called friends.

Violations of Rights includes withholding information, interfering with mail, or confining a senior to an institution or hospital.

Neglect can be part of abuse. It includes leaving seniors without food, adequate shelter, assistance, or personal care.

Sometimes older adults harm themselves through **self-neglect** (e.g., not eating, not going to the doctor for needed care) or because of alcohol or drug abuse. However, one of the most difficult problems family members face is achieving a balance between respecting an older adult's autonomy and intervening before self-neglect becomes dangerous.

Slide 7:

Who are the Victims?

Abuse or neglect can happen to any older adult. In fact, contrary to commonly held

beliefs, most older adults who experience abuse or neglect are mentally competent, are not dependent on other people, and do not require constant care.

It can occur in any relationship, including one where there is an expectation of trust or where a person is in a position of power or authority. Abuse or neglect of older adults can take place in the home, in a residential care setting, or in the community.

Slide 8:

It has been estimated that roughly two-thirds of all elder abuse perpetrators are family members, most often the victim's adult child or spouse. Research has shown that the abusers in many instances are financially dependent on the elder's resources and have problems related to alcohol and drugs.

Did You Know?

- About 80% of abuse or neglect of older adults is hidden or goes undetected. Only about one in five cases of abuse come to the attention of community agencies or authorities.
- Abuse is not limited to older adults of any particular culture, ethnic group, social background, or religion.
- Spousal abuse can "grow old." It can start earlier in a relationship and continue into later life.
- Older women are the victims in about two-thirds of the cases of abuse or neglect that come to the attention of community agencies.

Slide 9:

What are the Signs?

Older adults who are experiencing abuse or neglect may —

- tell you they are being harmed
- show signs of depression or anxiety
- seem fearful around certain people
- become socially withdrawn (having less contact with people who they have been close to in the past)
- become passive and very compliant

Slide 10:

- have unexplained physical injuries
- lack food, clothing and other necessities
- show changes in their hygiene or nutrition (e.g. signs of malnutrition)
- suddenly become unable to meet financial obligations, or have unusual withdrawals from their bank or other financial institutions

Slide 11:

What are the Effects?

Slide 12:

What are the Effects of Older Adult Abuse?

Health Effects

- Abuse and neglect are a major source of stress and can have long-term effects on the health and well-being of older adults.

- The stress of abuse may trigger chest pain or angina, and may be a factor in other serious heart problems.
- Abuse has a significant impact on people at any age, but older adults can be especially vulnerable. In general, older adults have less physical strength and less physical resilience than younger persons.

Slide 13:

- Sometimes these signs are mistaken as a part of growing older or may look like other conditions. For example, mental confusion, depression or anxiety resulting from abuse or neglect may look like dementia.
- People may not realize that sometimes older adults are experiencing frequent falls or have long-term pain because they are being abused or neglected.

Some older adults may be very frail, or already have disabilities or impairments that leave them particularly vulnerable. Older bones break more easily and take longer to heal. An injury or accumulation of injuries over time can lead to serious harm or death. For example, physical abuse may result in a hip fracture.

Many older adults experiencing abuse or neglect are isolated. Individuals who abuse or neglect older adults often threaten, harass, or intimidate them. For example, some abusers threaten to not let older adults see their grandchildren. Others may prevent older adults from having visitors, or may threaten to leave them alone.

As a result of abuse or neglect, older adults often experience worry, depression, or anxiety. These signs may be mistaken for memory loss or illness, when really they are the effects of stress or worry. An older adult may also feel shame, guilt, or embarrassment that someone in the family or someone close has harmed them. Some abused older adults may start to eat less, use more medications or drink more alcohol to help cope with the emotional and physical hurt. They may have difficulty sleeping or sleep too much.

Some abused or neglected older adults may lose interest in life or become withdrawn. Some may have suicidal thoughts.

Slide 14:

Did You Know?

- Between 44% and 62% of abused older adults experience some level of depression. Up to 6% of abused older adults become severely depressed.
- Living with abuse and neglect can also significantly increase the person's chances of becoming ill or may make other health problems worse.
- Abused or neglected older adults have a 200% increased risk of early death. The stress of living in an abusive situation shortens older people's lives by several years on average.

Slide 15:

Financial Effects

- Financial abuse can have a negative impact on older adults' health and well-being. Many older adults who experience financial abuse also face emotional abuse.
- Financial abuse can lead to ongoing distress and financial strain in the older

person's life. Stolen or forged income checks can leave a low-income senior without money for food, medications, or transportation. Financial abuse may involve loss of a home through deceit, loss of beloved personal assets through theft, or loss of money from improper use of a power of attorney.

- When abusers steal or control older adults' money or other property, older adults may have fewer resources to take care of their own health, housing, good nutrition, and activities.

Slide 16:

Social Effects

The effects of abuse and neglect can carry from generation to generation. For example, grandchildren who witness such abuse may come to view negative behaviors toward older adults as acceptable and perpetuate disrespect. Abuse and neglect of older adults is not a private matter. It affects individuals, families, communities and ultimately society at large.

Slide 17:

Abuse and neglect of older adults is a complex area. The many forms of abuse and neglect are not acceptable; some forms are against the law. There is no one simple explanation for why abuse or neglect occurs.

Some situations involve spouses; some forms are against the law. There is no one simple explanation for why abuse or neglect occurs.

Some abuse and neglect may –

- Reflect ageism
- Be part of a cycle of family violence
- Be opportunistic behavior

Abuse and neglect may also reflect a lack of understanding and knowledge about older adults and aging. Stereotypes and misconceptions about aging and older people may lead to ageist attitudes that older adults are not deserving of respect. Some people use violence and control in their relationships with other people. Some people have negative beliefs about older people, while others do not treat older adults with respect.

Some people incorrectly feel they are entitled to an older adult's property, simply because the person is old, or because they are helping the older adult, or because of their position in the family.

Some people experience personal problems or stresses that may increase their risk of harming or neglecting others. Some simply become overwhelmed or do not know more positive ways of relating. Limited financial resources may create family tensions that may lead to abuse or neglect. It does not matter who the abuser is, or why the person is abusing an older adult. No one deserves to be abused or mistreated.

Slide 18:

Why Do Abused Older People Often Keep Silent?

There is no excuse for abuse or neglect. However, there are many reasons why

older people might keep silent. Some believe that the abusive situation they are in is a normal part of life. They may think that they are in the wrong or have caused the abuse.

In many cases, the person may be afraid of —

- What will happen to them (“Will the situation get worse?” “Will I be forced from my home?”)
- What will happen to the abuser (“Will he/she go to jail?”)
- What the neighbors, family, or community will think (“What will people say?”)

Some older adults may feel they have no place to go, or do not want to leave the home they love, and have invested in with both time and money. They may have concerns about leaving family members and beloved pets. These fears and concerns are real.

Slide 19:

The first and most important step toward preventing elder abuse is to recognize that no one-of whatever age-should be subjected to violent, abusive, humiliating, or neglectful behavior.

Slide 20:

In addition to promoting this social attitude, positive steps include educating people about elder abuse, increasing the availability of respite care, promoting increased social contact and support for families with dependent older adults, and encouraging counseling and treatment to cope with personal and family problems that contribute to abuse. Violence, abuse, and neglect toward elders are signs that the people involved need help-immediately.

Education is the cornerstone of preventing elder abuse. Media coverage of abuse in nursing homes has made the public knowledgeable about-and outraged against-abusive treatment in those settings. Because most abuse occurs in the home by family members or caregivers, there needs to be a concerted effort to educate the public about the special needs and problems of the elderly and about the risk factors for abuse.

Respite care -having someone else care for the elder, even for a few hours each week-is essential in reducing caregiver stress, a major contributing factor in elder abuse. Every caregiver needs time alone, free from the worry and responsibility of looking after someone else’s needs. Respite care is especially important for caregivers of people suffering from Alzheimer’s or other forms of dementia or of elders who are severely disabled.

Social contact and support can be a boon to the elderly and to the family members and caregivers as well. When other people are part of the social circle, tensions are less likely to reach unmanageable levels. Having other people to talk to is an important part of relieving tensions. Many times, families in similar circumstances can band together to share solutions and provide informal respite for each other. In addition, when there is a larger social circle, abuse is less likely to go unnoticed. Isolation of elders increases the probability of abuse, and it may even be a sign that abuse is occurring. Sometimes abusers will threaten to keep people away from the

older person.

Counseling for behavioral or personal problems in the family can play a significant role in helping people change lifelong patterns of behavior or find solutions to problems emerging from current stresses. If there is a substance abuse problem in the family, treatment is the first step in preventing violence against the older family member. In some instances, it may be in the best interest of the older person to move him or her to a different, safer setting. In some cases, a nursing home might be preferable to living with children who are not equipped emotionally or physically to handle the responsibility. Even in situations where it is difficult to tell whether abuse has really occurred, counseling can be helpful in alleviating stress.

Slide 21:

The fifth commandment states *“Honor thy father and thy mother that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee” Exodus 20:12 KJV.*

The Amplified Bible gives us a clearer understanding of this text. It reads “Regard (treat with honor, due obedience, and courtesy) your father and mother, that your days may be long in the land the Lord your God gives you.” Exodus 20:12

Slide 22:

Remember Your people, O Lord, especially those to whom You have given the gift of long life. Reward them now for the good they have accomplished in the past; forgive them for their failings. Make their last days happy, and give them Your grace that they may continue to grow through the challenges of their later years. Bring them and all Your children to everlasting life with You. Amen.

May God bless each one of us to be a caring loving people to those who have lived so many years. May God be with us as a church as we find ways to help people to be loved and cared, showing them the love of Jesus.

Slide 23:

Sources:

- Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, “Health and Abuse.”
- BC Health Files “Health Effects of Abuse and Neglect of Older Adults.”
- <http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/pubs/elderabuse/Fact-Sheet-4-Signs-and-Effects-En.pdf>
- <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/eldabuse.html>
- <http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/eldabuse.html>

Slide 24:

For more information, contact the General Conference Women’s Ministries Department, <http://wm.gc.adventist.org>

Appendix A

The Bible and Treating the Elderly with respect <http://www.bible.ca/f-elderly-treatment.htm>

I read recently in a newspaper that instances of child abuse were rising in the United States, but instances of abuse of the elderly were rising twice as fast. This is one of the indications that treatment of the elderly needs to be an area of great concern to all of us.

There seems to be two views of age in today's society. The most prevalent view seems to be that of repulsion. Age is looked upon as an incurable disease. We fight against aging, we do not want to be reminded of what time can do to us. Thus, the aged elderly person is cast from society. They are made to feel useless, a burden to family, and often are cast off, avoided except on rare occasions of birthdays and Christmas morning. Another view is that age is beautiful. That age demands respect and dignity. That the elderly are giants of the forest, wise, full of experience, worthy of our praise and adoration. This is the view the Bible holds on age.

In Proverbs 23:22, Solomon exhorts his son to "harken to your Father who begot you and do not despise your mother when she is old." In the story of Job, we find that Elihu the younger of Job's friends waited until the older men had spoken to Job. He also treated his communication to Job with admiration and respect, since Job was his elder. In Exodus 20:12 we find the commandment - to honor your -father and mother, that your days may be long in the land which the Lord your God gives you. In Mark 7:10-12, we find Jesus saying, "He who speaks evil of his father and mother, let him surely die." He goes on to say that the Pharisees had made void the law of God by their disgraceful treatment of the elderly.

I am reminded of Caleb, who at the age of 85 came to Joshua and took possession of that inheritance he had earned. Age demands an inheritance. Old age should be a time for ego integrity. The elderly have made their mark on life. They have performed well, and have confidence that their life was well spent in raising children, making the world a better place, and in training the next generation. They have a wealth of wisdom to share, experience to relate, expressions and advice on life to share. They await new experiences, and are getting prepared for the last experience of this life, and for a whole new world beyond death. They have earned our love and respect.

Nature herself teaches us that age demands dignity and honor. The older the redwoods, the more majestic. The older wines and cheeses are, the more they are praised and honored for taste. Should it not hold true that the older a man, the more he is to be appreciated by others. I am convinced that young people are missing one of the greatest opportunities available when they do not get to know the elderly and associate with them. All too soon these towering pillars of faith and wisdom will pass from our midst and the loss will be tremendous. In closing, let us remember 4 lessons that might make all the difference in the world on our view of the elderly.

First, age does not mean that someone is useless. I have been shamed by the failure of the young to use the talents of the elderly. I am inspired by their fighting spirit. In our efforts to destroy them we have tried to make them useless. They have

fought back saying, "I exist. I have something to offer you if you will accept it." I have been amazed at the elderly people who have accepted challenges of work in the church and done fantastic work. Get to know your elderly in your neighborhood or family. You might be surprised by their wit, humor, and their ability to guide you.

Secondly, allow them to share with you their life. Some of the greatest lessons I learned about life, I learned from my grandfather. He was 86 and full of cancer, yet he taught me some lessons on living. He was full of humor, wisdom, and was a strong man of faith in God. His advice I will never forget. I am reminded of Timothy as he learned from the Apostle Paul, an old warrior instructing the new recruit. Had Timothy now allowed Paul to share his life with him, the church might have been hurt, even destroyed where Timothy was concerned.

Thirdly, age carries with it only one promise. That when we are old we will receive the respect, dignity and honor that is due us. That someone will care and want to return the love and care that was given so long ago to others. It is the Golden Rule in effect. They now want others to do unto them what they have done unto others.

Fourthly, remember - growing old is not a disease or a woe to humanity. It is our right. It is a privilege allowed by God. It is an opportunity to be useful and productive a little longer in the service of our family and of our God. Truly age is beautiful.

Appendix B

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/pubs/elderabuse/Fact-Sheet-1-WEAADEn.pdf>

June 15 is World Elder Abuse Awareness Day

What is the Origin of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day? In Madrid in April 2002, countries throughout the world adopted the United Nations International Plan of Action on Ageing. The Plan of Action recognized the importance of addressing and preventing abuse and neglect of older adults. It identified that mistreatment of older adults was a violation of internationally recognized human rights.

The International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (INPEA) introduced the first World Elder Abuse Awareness Day to support the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing. The INPEA is working with interested individuals, agencies, organizations, non-governmental organizations, governments and businesses throughout the world to promote this special day.

What are Canadians Doing?

This special day is a time to share information, learn more, discuss the issue of abuse of older adults, and become involved. Canada has been recognized internationally as a leader in raising public awareness of abuse of older adults and in developing innovative and respectful approaches to dealing with the issue.

Canada's Federal/Provincial/Territorial (F/P/T) Working Group on Safety & Security for Seniors has produced public information materials (e.g. poster, fact sheets, and promotional items) in support of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day. The Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse, as well as provincial, regional and local networks are holding many special activities in recognition of the day.

Many Canadians are using June 15th as an opportunity to recognize local and regional efforts that are being made to raise awareness of abuse of older adults.

Across the country, individuals, organizations, communities, and governments are:

- holding cultural, educational, art and social activities to recognize World Elder Abuse Awareness Day,
- developing municipal, provincial, and territorial proclamations to raise awareness,
- launching awareness tools such as posters and calendars,
- publicizing the day with multimedia information campaigns,
- organizing volunteer and educational programs, including information fairs, plays, workshops and conferences to help promote change, and
- developing multigenerational initiatives to help children and youth learn more about aging, ageism, and abuse.

In Canada, many people are working throughout the year to increase public awareness about abuse and neglect of older adults.

Want to Learn More?

- Canadian Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse www.cnpea.ca
- International Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse www.inpea.net

Appendix C

The Toronto Declaration On the Global Prevention of Elder Abuse

http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/alc_toronto_declaration_en.pdf

Abuse of older people has only recently been recognized as a global problem. INPEA's advocacy work and the emphasis given to elder abuse prevention by the World Health Organization have contributed significantly to raising awareness worldwide. Academic institutions, around the world, have also substantially contributed to enhancing understanding and raising awareness and have developed methodological tools to study the problem. However, much is still to be done.

On one hand more research is needed – for instance, along the lines of the seminal joint project “Global Response to Elder Abuse” which resulted in the publication “Missing Voices-Views of Older Persons on Elder Abuse” and on the other hand practical action at local, regional and national levels.

Twenty or thirty years ago, societies throughout the world denied the existence of violence against women and child abuse. Then, through research, came the evidence. As a result the civil society exercised the appropriate pressure for action from governments.

The parallel with elder abuse is clear.

This declaration is a **Call for Action** aimed at the Prevention of Elder Abuse. Points to be considered:

- Legal frameworks are missing. Cases of elder abuse, when identified are often not addressed for lack of proper legal instruments to respond and deal with them.
- Prevention of elder abuse requires the involvement of multiple sectors of society.
- Primary health care workers have a particularly important role to play as they deal with cases of elder abuse regularly –although they often fail to recognized them as such.
- Education and dissemination of information are vital – both in the formal sector (Professional education) and through the media (combating the stigma, tackling the taboos and helping to de-stereotype older people).
- Elder abuse is a universal problem. Research conducted so far shows that it is prevalent in both the developed and the developing world. In both, the abuser is more often than not well known to the victim, and it is in the context of the family and/or the care unit that most of the abuse happens.
- A cultural perspective is mandatory in order to fully understand the phenomenon of elder abuse – i.e. the cultural context of any particular community in which it occurs.
- Equally important is to consider a gender perspective as the complex social constructs related to it help to identify the form of abuse inflicted by whom.
- In any society some population sub-groups are particularly vulnerable to elder abuse – such as the very old, those with limited functional capacity, women and the poor.
- Ultimately elder abuse will only be successfully prevented if a culture that

- nurtures intergenerational solidarity and rejects violence is developed.
- It is not enough to identify cases of elder abuse. All countries should develop the structures that will allow the provision of services (health, social, legal protection, police referral, etc) to appropriately respond and eventually prevent the problem.

The United Nations International Plan of Action adopted by all countries in Madrid, April 2002, clearly recognizes the importance of Elder Abuse and puts it in the framework of the Universal Human Rights. Preventing elder abuse in an ageing world is everybody's business.

This declaration was devised at an expert meeting, sponsored by the Ontario Government in Toronto, 17 November 2002

More information at the following websites:

www.who.int/hpr/ageing, www.inpea.net and www.onpea.org

“Elder Abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person”. It can be of various forms: physical, psychological/emotional, sexual, financial or simply reflect intentional or unintentional neglect.

“In Ontario elder abuse will not be tolerated. That is why we are launching our comprehensive provincial strategy to combat elder abuse”.

Minister De Faria, Ontario's Minister Responsible for Seniors

More Information

http://www.helpguide.org/mental/elder_abuse_physical_emotional_sexual_neglect.htm

<http://www.elderabusecenter.org/default.cfm?p=basics.cfm>

http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/en/index.html

<http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/eldabuse.html>

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/pubs/EABrochure.pdf>

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/scs/elderabuseday.asp>

<http://www.ethicsforschools.org/elderly/abuse.htm>

<http://www.bible.ca/f-elderly-treatment.htm>

http://www.who.int/ageing/projects/elder_abuse/alc_toronto_declaration_en.pdf

Something to think about...

“How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong.

Because someday in your life you will have been all of these.”

– George Washington Carver