



Ideas for Ministry for and with Older Adults

For the Older Adult Ministry of
The Kentucky Conference

S.E.N.I.O.R.S

My ears are filled with the sounds of promise:

*“Good people will prosper like palm trees,
Grow tall like Lebanon cedars;
transplanted to God’s courtyard,
They’ll grow tall in the presence of God,
lithe and green, virile still in old age.”*

Psalm 92:12-14 (*The Message*)

Our churches are graying! As a result of better health care, nutrition, job safety, physical fitness, and medical technology, more people are living longer than ever before. As a result, many of our congregations are enjoying the blessing of increasing numbers of older adults.

Growing old is no longer synonymous with death. For many older adults, old age is not a time of disability or disease; instead it is a time of generally good health. As people live longer and retire earlier, the post-retirement period can last 25-35 years or more. We are witnessing a historically unprecedented expansion of free time in the last stage of life.

Older adults want to continue contributing to future generations and to feel valued because of their contributions. Congregations with a strong focus on older adult ministries realize that the wealth of experience, wisdom, and faith that often abound in older persons should not be lost or underutilized.

A helpful model for congregations seeking to plan ministry with older adults is the S.E.N.I.O.R.S. Ministry model, briefly described below. Let it be a guide for an effective ministry with and for older adults in your local congregation. I am available to help in any way I can and will be glad to come to your church if it would be helpful. Please contact me at the addresses at the end of this article.

Spiritual renewal is essential to life fulfillment. The church plays a vital role in helping older adults attain this goal. In addition, older adults can serve as teachers and mentors for the spiritual well-being of others. For older adults, spiritual guidance is made available through worship, pastoral care, Bible study, prayer groups, and support networks.

Ideas to plan and develop: worship participation, rituals to acknowledge transitions, Senior Sunday, study groups, prayer groups, healing service, retreats.

Enrichment

In a fast-paced and changing society, older adults need opportunities to continue the life-long process of learning and growing. The church plays a vital role in helping older adults grow in their faith and in their understanding of life and world issues.

Ideas to plan and develop: special concerns of older adults (financial, legal, medical), community issues and current affairs, fine arts and drama, field trips and seminars, technology training.

Nutrition and Fitness

The great majority of older adults live in the community and are cognitively intact and fully independent in their daily activities. Those who remain active may be individuals who exercise, eat nutritionally, and have a positive psychological view of life.

Ideas to play and develop: mentoring, foster grandparent, intergenerational visits to nursing homes and to homebound persons.

Outreach

A program of outreach and evangelism seeks to include all the older adults in its fellowship, recognizing that many older adults do not have an active relationship with any congregation.

Ideas to plan and develop: "Meals on Wheels," telephone reassurance, minor home repairs, home worship communion, nursing home worship and Bible Studies.

Recreation

Older Adults need creative self-expression as well as opportunities to develop and maintain self-confidence. Recreation adds an extra measure of zest to the lives of aging persons, enhancing both physical and mental well-being.

Ideas to plan and develop: tournaments (fishing, tennis, etc), walking groups, card and board game groups, parties and banquets.

Service

Many older adults delight in serving the needs of others. Encourage older adults to participate in the programs and services of their local church, community, and social service agencies. Mobilizing for peace and justice issues, feeding the hungry, and providing shelter for the homeless are just a few of the many possibilities for older adults to engage in service.

Ideas to plan and develop: various program emphases (disaster relief, mission, literacy, etc.), neighborhood watch, “Habitat for Humanity,” respite care, mobilizing for justice, prison ministry.

If you are interested in starting a group in your church, please feel free to contact me with questions, need for resources, training, etc.

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