



IDEAS FOR MINISTRY

**This is provided by the SAGE Ministries of the
KY Conference UMC**

PROGRAMS THAT WORK

Ideas for Older Adult Ministry

There are many ways for local churches and district committees to get involved in Older Adult Ministry. Perhaps these pages will generate some ideas for your church. The need for Older Adult Ministry is growing and the church must seek opportunities for involvement.

Caregivers Worship Service

Wesley Memorial UMC in Charlottesville offers a once monthly “Caregivers” service at 3 pm. It’s a very simple, visually oriented service for those who cannot sit through a traditional worship service. Some participants have Alzheimers, some are just aged. We use the King James Bible and simple themes. Dress in low key and if anyone wants to wander around, we don’t worry about it. “Old time” hymns are printed with large print words on card stock so they are light weight and easy to read or are on the wall by projectors in large print. We always serve communion using a very simple Great Thanksgiving.

Forever Young 55+ Group

That is the name that we chose for our 55 + group as it so accurately described the spirit of its members. Since most our senior members are active in many aspects of our church, we decided that this group would be primarily social, striving to reach out in Christian fellowship and fun. Often our meetings consist of a pot-luck dinner opened with devotion and prayer and followed by a program. Some recent programs have included a talk on fire safety by a representative of the fire department; historical talks on Abe Lincoln, John Wilkes Booth, Dolly Madison John Adams and Thomas Jefferson presented by a retired school teacher member; a tour of a local historical park guided by another member; a game night; an annual picnic and a Bunco night with donated prizes. One year we celebrated everybody’s birthday at a party that included children’s birthday party games, party hats, decorations and cake and ice cream. A recent highlight was a dinner catered by the Hospitality Coordinator and a hymn sing led by the Associate Director of Worship. Forty-three folks came out which tells us that this group likes to eat and sing!

Because we are a large church with five worship services each week, this opportunity to come together in a smaller group is very important to faith-building in our church family. It provides opportunities for us to get to know each other in a more intimate setting. Jesus believed in

Christian community and the Bible records many times when Jesus gathered people to share a meal or time together. Our Forever Young members enjoy our times together as we gather in His name to share this season of our lives.

Remembering Elderly and Homebound Members

In late 2008, the Boulevard UMC Mission Committee surveyed the congregation for new mission ideas. One message was loud and clear: We need to remember and honor our elderly and homebound members. These members, supporters of the church who would attend if able, are an important element in building, supporting and serving the church we now call home.

To celebrate these great Christians, we collect funds, purchase goodies, and assemble Easter and Thanksgiving baskets which are delivered by church members. Although the elderly and homebound members receive copies of weekly church bulletins and our monthly newsletter, this special visitation creates a wonderful opportunity for a personal update on church events and the latest news, as well as to thank and let them know they are always in the minds, hearts, and prayers of the congregation. As we prepare for the third year of this mission, we have more contributions and support than ever. What better time than Easter, and Older Adult Month, to remember and say thanks.

Older Adult Fellowship Reaches for the SKY with Fitness Fest!

The SKY (Seniors Keeping Young) fellowship at the Aldersgate Campus of New Creation UMC recently reached out to their surrounding community with a "Fitness Fest." Media announcements, posters, and word-of-mouth promoted the afternoon "drop-in" event geared for older adults. Held in the church's fellowship hall, the program emphasized activities and services available locally, including yoga, chair aerobics, "Faith 'n Motion" exercise classes, Wii workouts, line dancing, parks and recreation department programs, chiropractic and blood pressure screenings, and safety presentations by the local fire department and police.

Aldersgate's SKY group began two years ago with the goal of reaching out to a wide spectrum of older adults with fellowship and service opportunities. The "Fitness Fest" was one of many outreach activities that have helped SKY grow to fifty regular participants. Other activities include: computer classes in the church's computer lab; home-bound ministries; game nights; volunteering with meals-on-wheels, the food bank, and local homeless ministries; sponsorship of a baby shower for a local pregnancy crisis center; creation of "ugly quilt" sleeping bags for the homeless; and regular outings to museums, concerts, and plays.

Drawing Closer: Faith and Art

In an effort to reach out to seniors in the church community, The Center for Creative Arts, an outreach ministry of Shady Grove UMC in Glen Allen, VA, launched ***Drawing Closer***; an intergenerational class that explores the parallels between our faith journey and the creative process. The class provided an opportunity for seniors and youth to enjoy fun and fellowship while creating art on the church campus, and will also be offered at a local nursing home.

Drawing and painting are relaxing, meditative activities. However seniors are often reluctant to try something new, sometimes because of disabilities, or financial constraints. Even committing to an eight-week class seemed daunting when faced with the often unpredictable infirmities of aging. The idea of a relaxed faith-inspired class where they could interact with young people from the church enticed ten seniors to give it a try. The class provided a chance for young people in the church to minister to, learn from, and build relationships with the seniors. The youth also participated in an interactive training session at a nursing home where they learned about some of the disabilities of aging. Each class began with inspiration from Scripture, and was followed by an art lesson.

For example, "Faith" centered upon 1 Corinthians 13:12 "For now we see only a dim likeness of things. It is as if we were seeing them in a mirror. But someday we will see clearly." Students were then presented with an out of focus, upside down image and encouraged to draw the basic shapes. With successive images in clearer focus, the artists added more detail to their drawings. When they turned their work right side up, they were amazed to see that they had drawn a fully recognizable figure. Other classes focused on light, line, perspective, and negative space.

The laughter heard down the hall each day infused the whole building with joy! The seniors, who often struggle to get dressed and get out, enjoyed the class so much that we heard many accounts of how making it to class was a priority each week. The class ended with an exhibition of artwork and a reception. Frank Basil, our Youth Director wrote: "This was a great opportunity to help Shady Grove as a church draw closer together. I believe it helps for our youth to learn from our seniors and understand the love they have for Shady Grove and for our seniors to know the Church has a bright future. We must continue to draw closer as a church and to God to be the faithful disciples we are called to be.

Day of Discovery for Older Adults

The Older Adult Ministries of the Lynchburg District sponsors a Day of Discovery for older adults on the 2nd Tuesday of May each year at a local church. The day begins with registration and visiting exhibits which provide important information about services available to older adults. In addition, Shop the World Gifts of Tennessee offers fair trade items made by artisans worldwide. They were joined by Bethlehem Christians who offer olive wood products made by artisans in Bethlehem to support the Christian community in the Holy Land.

The period of visiting exhibits was followed by an Irish river dancing demonstration by Caitlin Uze, the reigning Miss Virginia. Participants then moved into the sanctuary for welcomes, announcements, a music program and a keynote address. Day of Discovery offers opportunities for fellowship, education and spiritual renewal.

Young at Hearts Ministry

Our “Young at Hearts” ministry began five years ago, focusing on older adults 60 and above. Most who attend are retired. This program extends to many outside the boundaries of our congregation. When we were designing our program, results from our Older Adult Survey showed the greatest needs expressed by this age group were for socialization, education, and entertainment. So, monthly we share a noon fellowship meal, have “chuckle” devotions shared with us, listen to or participate in interesting program presentations, and/or enjoy a game or two – one month education, one month service to others, and one month part time for “us.”

Another feeling expressed in the Survey was that this age group felt they were unable to contribute much to the church. So we developed a Telephone Ministry for our church family. Older Adults are given sections in the Church Directory and are responsible for calling the families when there are church events we would like to advertise. It is the responsibility of the event sponsor to write all information to be shared in the call. This has been a very successful program! The church family is reminded of events, older adults become a link with many irregular attendees, needs are heard and passed along, and older adults feel they are contributors.

This group has determined our purpose to be “development of a care ministry” that will help us grow in: Christian Encouragement (through monthly devotions and programs), Christian Outreach through our telephone ministry, monthly cards to the ill and shut-ins in the community, special occasion baskets (spring and fall) to the homebound and nursing home residents, and Christian Fellowship/Friendship (through meals, games, fundraisers, and day trips). Our highlight each year is a day trip to see a play at a local theater.. Many fund raisers make this an affordable day for all. Fellowship abounds this day with all ages. Our goal is to continue to grow (We are now 60 in number) and identify new ways we can serve and be served as “Young at Hearts”.

Smiles Group

The congregation at Miles Memorial UMC does several things for our older members and community, one of which is a compassion ministry known as the “SMILES” group. This group enjoys one or two monthly activities such as a play or lunch and tour of our local Botanical Gardens. This ministry makes small goodie baskets at Christmas and Easter for shut-ins and elderly with contributions from the congregation. Two of our choir members visit the local United Methodist nursing home and have a hymn sing for the ladies who reside there. Also our Lydia Circle visits the home at least once a year to play games, distribute prizes to the ladies, and provide a small dessert. These gestures of compassion are very much appreciated by the recipients and their families.

Aging Well

Church member Arlin Honaker, a widow of a United Methodist minister, first organized this group, believing that aging church members could benefit from the support and intimacy of a small group study. She began to look for resources that would specifically address the spiritual

needs of older adults and soon discovered Richard Morgan's book, *Remembering Your Story: Creating Your Own Spiritual Autobiography*. Designed as a resource for a 10-week class, the book served as a springboard for discussing life stories and spiritual legacies.

By the time the group arrived at the end of the 10-week period, class members asked if they could continue to meet. They had grown close to each other as they worked to create their spiritual autobiographies. Mrs. Honaker gladly obliged and even encouraged the participants to make scrapbooks and videos as a legacy for their descendants.

If you want more information on any of these ideas for ministry for those in the second half of life, please contact Sue Eaton – sueeaton@bellsouth.net or 502-315-9394. She has information on who is responsible for these ministries in their local churches and can contact them with your questions.