



IDEAS FOR OLDER ADULT MINISTRY

A Ministry for Older Adults in the
Kentucky Conference

Card Ministry Encourages and Connects Older Adults

By Aleeta Christian

Sometimes ministry sneaks up on you. This happened to us at Madison Street United Methodist Church in Clarksville, TN. The beginning was a request from a member of our older adult ministry. We have a board which meets regularly and in January, 2020, we decided to send birthday cards to members 65+.

But by the time we got this organized, we were at the beginning of a pandemic and sheltering in place. And it immediately became evident that our high-risk, older adults needed a more constant connection with our church, especially since the building was shut down and the Sunday Worship services were virtual.

Our now thriving Serendipity Card Ministry began with 12 volunteers and about 200 65+ older adult households. We divided the households into eight groups, and now each household receives at least one mailing each month. Sometimes it is a “Thinking of You” card, or sometimes something special, e.g. Advent calendars, valentines, and Easter Cards with cross bookmarks.

Various items are sent because each volunteer chooses what she wants to send to her group. In addition, our approximately 25 homebound members receive special attention from two card ministry volunteers. The ministry has sent cards to several special groups: e.g., Senior Care centers, the veterans’ home, and cards to our church’s mothers on Mother’s Day and our church’s teachers. Probably the most noteworthy group we have twice sent cards to, including \$5 Star Bucks cards, are the nurses in the virus units and emergency room at our local hospital. And we are also doing what we set out to do: sending birthday cards to all 65+ adults in our church.

This has been a remarkable, wonderful, satisfying ministry. In the last 11 months, the card ministry has sent more than 3,000 cards. Response has been both pleasing and surprising. A fold here is bulging with thank you notes and we frequently receive sweet phone calls from recipients.

Here are two wonderful examples: one older man told a volunteer that when he gets discouraged, he gets out our cards, reads them and feels better. Another volunteer received a phone call from a recipient saying that she was touched by the phrase, "I am thinking about you." The volunteers have learned that this kind of communication has an exceptionally positive effect during difficult times. Of course, those of us in the middle of this ministry are enthusiastically pushing forward.

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From the editor: This is an idea that will work in any church whether there is a pandemic or not. People are lonely, discouraged, and overwhelmed. Is your church doing anything differently by/with/for older adults as a result of the pandemic? Send your replies to: sueeaton@bellsouth.net. We will share what we learn on our webpage.