

51 Older Adult Ministry Ideas

Best Practices

As you plan for intentional older adult ministry, keep in mind that every older adult is a unique individual and one ministry idea does not meet all needs. Be sure to identify needs and plan ministry accordingly. Below are some helpful suggestions:

1. **Adult Day Ministry:** Develop a one-day or several-days-a-week adult day care at your church for older adults who need specialized care.
2. **Caregiving Support/Seminars:** Start a support group for caregivers and provide learning, information, and sharing opportunities.
3. **Children of Aging Parents:** Provide support, networking opportunities, and resource information for adult children of aging parents.
4. **Companion Services:** Older adults accompany other older adults for visits to the doctor, dentist, pharmacy, grocery store, etc., helping them along the way.
5. **Exercise and Fitness Classes:** Invite older adults to participate in low-impact aerobics class, Tai Chi, or some other form of exercise designed for seniors.
6. **Faith Care Connections:** Train volunteers to provide respite care on Sunday mornings for homebound or home-centered seniors so primary care providers can attend Sunday morning worship services.
7. **Field Trips:** Older adults take educational and informational, recreational, mission study, or work mission trips.
8. **Flowers for Homebound and Nursing Home Residents:** Following worship services, altar flowers are taken to homebound and nursing home residents.
9. **Foster Grandparents:** Older adults share their lives with children and youth who have few or no extended family members living in the community.
10. **Frauds and Scams Awareness:** Provide information to older adults about frauds and scams taking place in your community.
11. **Game Day:** Once a week or monthly, hold a game day for older adults. Include games that involve mental stimulation.
12. **Helping Hands:** Older adults maintain a church food and clothing pantry.

13. **Home Minor Repair and Maintenance:** Older adults with skills help others by painting, changing light bulbs, mowing lawns, home chores, carpentry, etc.
14. **Homebound Lunch Partners:** Older adults visit persons who are homebound and share lunch together one day a week.
15. **Homebound Sunday School Class:** Homebound class members participate in Sunday school with other members by use of a speaker phone in the classroom.
16. **Homebound Worship Participation:** Homebound members read scripture, offer morning prayers, or participate in other liturgy acts by telephone hooked up to a church sound system, videoing in advance, or Skyping.
17. **Intergenerational Retreat:** Invite older adults and youth to participate in a retreat together. Plan for games, meals, Bible study, and sharing.
18. **Kitchen Band:** Invite older adults to make musical instruments from household and other common materials. Play at nursing homes (and other long-term health care settings), retirement communities, church functions, etc.
19. **Latch Key Kid Ministry:** Older adults provide a safe place and an after-school program, including tutoring and mentoring opportunities, for children.
20. **LGBT Senior Ministry:** Older adults provide support for LGBT persons and programs in the church and community.
21. **Resources on Aging Issues:** Place older adult reading material in your church library. Include audio and large print books and DVDs.
22. **Life Review:** Older adults participate in life review and reminiscence classes.
23. **Living History:** Older adults share their life journey and faith story (video and/or audio), in writing, and orally in worship and Sunday school class.
24. **Marriage Enrichment Retreat:** Older married couples lead and participate in marriage enrichment programs for couples of all ages and stages of marriage.
25. **Medical Equipment Loan Ministry:** Gather, clean, and store used medical equipment (walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc.) for loaning to persons in need.
26. **Mentoring:** Invite older adults to serve as mentors for children, youth, and other adults (e.g., youth during confirmation and new church members).
27. **Multigenerational Study Groups:** Invite children, youth, and adults to study and learn together. This might include Bible topics and/or current events.

28. **Mutt Ministry:** Many older adults love dogs, cats, and other small animals but are unable to care for them. This ministry shares the love of gentle animals.
29. **Nursing Home Sunday School Class and VBS:** Invite older adults to participate in a Sunday School class in nursing homes and assisted living settings and lead Vacation Bible School for residents.
30. **Older Adult Choir:** Invite older adults to form a choir. Sing at church, nursing homes, retirement communities, and to those who are homebound. Plan special events such as Christmas caroling throughout the community.
31. **Older Adult Newsletter:** Create a newsletter for older adults in your congregation. Invite older adults to submit articles and include announcements about meetings and events.
32. **Parish Nurse Ministry:** Provide a health care ministry for older adults, including blood pressure check-ups and visiting members discharged from the hospital.
33. **Recognition Service and Dinner:** The congregation sponsors a special dinner, worship service, or other celebration to honor the faith, wisdom, ministry, and service of older adults. The United Methodist Church designates May as a special time to recognize older adults.
34. **Ritual for Older Adults Moving from Their Homes:** Older adults visit with others moving from their home to long-term health care facilities. Share in prayer, scripture, song, Holy Communion, and words of remembrance and thanksgiving for the years spent in the home. Follow up in the new home.
35. **Senior Adult Bulletin Board:** Place a large bulletin board in a strategic location where older adults congregate in the church. Post announcements about events, job opportunities, and photos of recent activities and events.
36. **Senior Adult Devotional Booklet:** Invite older adults to compile a devotional book of scripture readings, meditations, and prayers for congregational use.
37. **Senior Life Guides:** Invite older adults to serve as senior life guides who will walk alongside other adults needing support, information, and resources.
38. **Senior Theater:** Invite older adults to practice and perform skits and plays for the church and community.
39. **Service Provider Preferred List:** Gather information for a preferred list for older adults. Include local services such as auto mechanics, plumbers, electricians, etc.
40. **Short Term Mission:** Older adults participate in short-term mission opportunities (e.g., Habitat for Humanity, community projects, VIM, etc.).

41. **Social Networking with Senior Adults:** Start a blog, Facebook page, or other social networking activity with older adults.
42. **Stephen Ministry:** Create a specialized visitation program whereby older adults visit people who are ill, homebound, institutionalized, or have other needs.
43. **Sunday Afternoon Worship for Homebound:** Monthly, quarterly, or twice a year, conduct a special Sunday afternoon worship service (include Holy Communion) in the church sanctuary for homebound members.
44. **Telephone Reassurance:** Older adults make daily telephone calls to homebound or home-centered members.
45. **Transportation Ministry:** Older adults and/or other church members provide transportation for seniors to attend worship and other congregational activities.
46. **Visitation Ministry:** Older adults visit other older adults who are homebound, lonely, hospitalized, institutionalized, and dying.
47. **Weekday Bible Study:** Invite older adults in your church and community to participate in a weekday Bible Study. Include refreshments, joys and concerns, singing, and prayers.
48. **Wheelchair Ramp Ministry:** Invite older adults to help build and/or assemble wheelchair ramps needed by persons who are homebound.
49. **Widow/Widower Support Group:** Provide an opportunity for widows and widowers to participate in a support group for sharing, support, information, and socialization.
50. **Writing Letters and Sending Cards:** Older adults write personal letters and send birthday, anniversary, and special remembrance cards to others.
51. **Zoom to Stay in Touch:** COVID-19 caused us to develop new ways to stay connected. Use Zoom, GoToMeeting, or other online conferencing software for worship services, Bible study, Sunday school classes, and other events with persons who are homebound and other older adults. Youth or other members can help set up the virtual meeting software for those who are technology-challenged.

*(Prepared by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., DMIN, Director, ENCORE Ministry, Tennessee Conference
Email: rgentzler@tnumc.org Web: www.encoretnumc.org) Revised 2021*