

SENIOR ADULT MINISTRIES

MANUAL

CHURCH OF GOD USA MISSIONS DIVISION OF WORLD EVANGELIZATION
CLEVELAND, TENNESSEE

Unless otherwise noted Scripture quotations are taken from the
New King James Version of the Holy Bible.

Scriptures noted by NIV are taken from the
HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION©
1978 by the New York International Bible Society,
used by permission of Zondervan Publishers.

Copyright © 2012
Church of God – USA Missions
P. O. Box 2430
Cleveland, Tennessee 37320-2430
Website: www.usamission.com

Contents

Chapter One	Senior Adult Ministries	5
Chapter Two	The Word and Senior Adults	13
Chapter Three	The Challenge of Senior Adults	21
Chapter Four	The Self-Esteem of Senior Adults	31
Chapter Five	The Organization of Senior Adults	39
Chapter Six	The Opportunities of Senior Adults	47
Chapter Seven	The Rewards of Senior Adults	63
Chapter Eight	Senior Adult Activities	67
Appendix	Senior Adult Day	71

Statement of Purpose

To minister to the spiritual and material needs of the senior citizens of our constituency. Encourage involvement in ministry and boost activities in our local churches. Promote fellowship among seniors in our churches by chartering Senior Adult Ministries.

To encourage the appointment of senior adult coordinators in each state to promote senior adult ministries.

To seek care for our senior adults in their needs. To provide resources, data, and information to our churches to enable them to adequately meet the needs of our seniors.

To provide senior adults jubilees nationally and regionally to further provide fellowship, instruction, discipleship, and worship experiences for our seniors.

To sponsor a national talent competition to provide a vehicle for our seniors to express their God-given gifts.

To actively pursue a strategy of evangelism to win seniors to salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and also to promote the discipleship of all seniors.

CHAPTER ONE

Senior Adult Ministries

Many older Americans are living longer, fuller, more satisfying lives and are growing stronger in many ways in the process. Indeed, there is a growing recognition that aging can and should be a positive experience, and that seniors can take charge as they prepare for longevity of life.

The Administration on Aging reports:

The older population—persons 65 years or older—numbered 41.4 million in 2011 (the most recent year for which data are available). They represented 13.3% of the U.S. population, over one in every eight Americans. The number of older Americans increased by 6.3 million or 18% since 2000, compared to an increase of 9.4% for the under-65 population. However, the number of Americans aged 45-64—who will reach 65 over the next two decades—increased by 33% during this period.

In 2011, there were 23.4 million older women and 17.9 million older men, or a sex ratio of 131 women for every 100 men. At age 85 and over, this ration increases to 203 women for every 100 men.

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has more than tripled (from 4.1% in 1900 to 13.3% in 2011), and the number has increased over 13 times (from 3.1 million to 41.4 million). The older population itself is increasingly older. In 2011, the 65-74 age group (21.4 million) was almost 10 times larger than in 1990; the 75-84 group (12.8 million) was 16 times larger and the 85+ group (5 million) was 40 times larger.

In 2011, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 19.2 years (20.4 for females and 17.8 years for males). A child born in 2011 could expect to live 78.7 years, about 30 years longer than a child born in 1900. Much of this increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children

and young adults. However, the period of 1990-2007 also has seen reduced death rates for the population ages 65-84, especially for men—by 41.6% for men aged 75-84. Life expectancy at age 65 increased by only 2.5 years between 1900 and 1960, but has increased by 4.2 years from 1960 to 2007. Nonetheless, some research has raised concerns about future increases in life expectancy in the United States compared to other high-increase countries, primarily due to past smoking and current obesity levels, especially for women age 50 and over.

About 3 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 2011. In the same year, approximately 1.8 million persons 65 or older died. Census estimates showed an annual net increase between 2010 and 2011 of 916,837 in the number of persons 65 and over.

Between 1980 and 2010, the centenarian population experienced a larger percentage increase than did the total population. There were 53,364 persons aged 100 or more in 2010 (0.13% of the total 65+ population). This is a 66% increase from the 1980 figure of 32,194.¹

Pew Forum research indicates that by 2050, according to U. S. Census Bureau projections, one-in-five Americans will be 65 or older, and at least 400,000 will be 100 or older.²

These figures indicate the true story of the growing number of aged people in America since the beginning of the 20th century. This is the fastest-growing minority in America. There has never been such a concentration of elderly citizens. The church cannot fail to reach them.

How can one explain why so many people are living beyond the age of 65? One reason is that medical knowledge is greater and there have been many people cured of ills that at one time caused many deaths. Another reason is that the number of babies lost in childbirth has been lowered through medical science. A third reason is that sanitation and updated modern living have also added to longer living.³

Because of these positive steps, the average American will have 20 years of life remaining after retirement. God has blessed today's society with a large group of responsible, mature, clear-thinking senior citizens!

Longevity has become a way of life in America, and its ramifications will permeate and touch every aspect of our society.

SENIOR ADULT POPULATION IN THE CHURCH

While statistics in general show an astounding increase in the number of senior adults, the church membership shows an even greater percentage of people over 65.

A survey by the Gallup organization indicated that nearly one-fifth of Protestants are at least 65 and two-fifths are at least 50 years old. Catholic and Jews are somewhat younger, yet at least one-seventh of each religious group is at least age 65 and a third is 50 or older.

It is understood by these figures that aging and the needs of older adults are no longer one of the social issues facing religious communities. It is clear that older adults are becoming the majority in local congregations.

In 2006, the Gallup Poll published an article by Lydia Saad titled "Growing Old Doesn't Necessarily Mean Growing Infirm." The article stated: *Far from becoming frail and losing their independence, nearly half of Americans aged 80 and older appear to enjoy generally good physical as well as mental health, and most live in their [own]homes.*

The most used model of a church family—a husband, wife and children—may no longer fit the majority of church attendees. Instead, couples beyond their childbearing years are becoming the predominant family form, with single persons, often widowed women, a significant minority in many congregations. Corporate worship, programming, even approaches to congregational growth may take important new directions when it is fully recognized that a large percentage of members are older adults, not young couples with children. The traditional images of a congregation will begin to change.

RIGHT ATTITUDES TOWARD AGING

More and more older people are developing a positive attitude about themselves. Old age is as inevitable as the succession of summer and winter, so it must be faced with realism, yet with optimism. The senior with the mind-set to get the most out of aging will not fall into the bleak and gray pessimism that is so common.

It does not take long for observers to see that today senior adults are active, involved individuals. They live longer, are happier, and more productive. Since we now have more literature, and more medical and spiritual advice concerning aging, seniors today are taking a more positive attitude concerning their worthiness. Let's look at some of the changing ideas.

Challenges

Many senior adults approach their retirement years as an exciting new beginning instead of the end of their lives. They also consider this time of their lives a special opportunity for new adventures, new challenges, and new achievements. Just as challenges are given to college-age people and young married couples, older people are now seeing retirement as a personal challenge. They are challenged to fill the time they

once gave to employment, with pursuits that are more spiritual. However the motivation now is not money, but being involved in activities that contribute to better living for people. They are blessings to God.

Senior adults are challenged to this new life just as young people are challenged to build homes and raise families. The personal enjoyment and satisfaction from this challenge are worth worlds of self-respect. Older people are finding their place in society as giving persons, and they are pleased that others accept them and what they are doing. Seniors find challenges and meet them successfully!

Opportunities

Today's senior citizen is finding that age does not limit opportunities for service. In some areas, age may even be a plus. This manual is being written to help every senior citizen discover the great number of opportunities available and to find which of these opportunities will best use his or her talents and abilities.

The Bible teaches us that people are gifted. Spirit-filled people are endowed with certain talents. These God-given abilities do not automatically come to a halt just because a person turns 65. The joy of achievement is open to the aging as well as the young, although it may be on a more modest scale than in the past.

The only reason that gifts sometimes fail to work is that they are allowed to lie dormant in the individual. Senior adults must accept what God has given them and place it in service for the Kingdom.

Opportunities for seniors are limitless. In another chapter, we will list the varied opportunities available. Senior adults today are living longer and living happier because they are offering their assistance to a hurting world. That is our goal: every senior in service for the Lord.

Independence

A certain amount of independence comes with aging. What was important to a person in his or her younger life—career, raising the family, putting children through college—is now past. Fewer people occupy the home, the likelihood of large weekly and monthly bills has decreased (barring no major illnesses), and the children are grown and must spend time with their own families. The result is that seniors will have more time and more money at their own disposal than ever before.

This independence is a reward given for a conservative lifestyle. The extra time

allows one to be involved in daily activities such as eating, exercising, doing chores—without a constant rush that is so prevalent among the younger. It allows for “thinking time,” evaluation of the past and the present and how one’s own future can contribute to living conditions for others. It gives a senior a lot of testimony time in which one can verbally and non-verbally witness for the Lord.

Many older people are independent financially. While this does not solve all problems, it does add to their self-respect. They do not feel that they are a burden to the family or society. If used rightly, this new day of independence can be a great source of happiness for the senior citizen and a great resource for the church.

Crowning Years

A right attitude toward aging includes an understanding of these years as “crowning years.” Oriental people revere their aged. They feel that it is their responsibility to see to it that the last years of their parents are enjoyable ones. Most Orientals provide lodging, food, and other necessities for their parents. The children accept this responsibility because they feel that one’s last years are highly respected.

Various countries and societies care for the aged in a different way, but the point is that their last years can be happy years. These years represent what older people have worked for all their lives.

The true crowning of Christians will be done in heaven at the judgment of rewards. No effort here is made to take the glory away from that great day. God will surely fulfill His promise.

Increased Faith

It is amazing how much senior citizens teach us about faith. If one’s life has been dedicated to the Lord and there has been an example of Christlikeness through the years, that life alone testifies to the value of faith in God.

Many Christian senior citizens have won people to the Lord without saying one word—just by being examples of holy living. This is not to devalue testimony by word. Many of those good people who live exemplary lives also make themselves useful to the Kingdom by getting involved in verbal testimony of God’s salvation, His providential care, His healing power, and His constant mercies. One great reason these testimonies are so effective is that others (young and old) see proof of their testimonies by years of committed Christian living. New converts make good Christian witnesses but they do not have years of experience to back their words.

The increased faith of older Christians is not only valued in evangelistic opportunities, but also as encouragement to fellow Christians.

The faith that has brought them to a successful and happy retirement is faith that will keep the family through its struggles, will assist the neighbors when problems arise and will strengthen the church in times of adversity.

The faith of senior citizens has often been bedrock, holding churches together when the younger people would have left the church and given up the faith because of some temporary bad experience. Many senior citizens have pushed through such problems at some point and they assure the rest of us that by using our faith in God, we will survive.

Praise God for the increased faith evidenced in older Christians!

WRONG ATTITUDES TOWARD AGING

Many people enter into retirement with the attitude “I’m finished” or “I’ve lived my life, so I’ll just leave the future up to the younger generation.” This attitude can be so deceiving and can actually bring on death earlier. Let’s examine some negative attitudes toward aging that prove counterproductive.

Pessimism

It’s true that the world worships youth. People like to relive their youthful days, wishing them back. Cosmetics manufacturers have made billions of dollars by convincing people that using their products can bring back a youthful appearance. Quacks have offered “youthful medications” to bring back that youthful spirit and feeling. Many senior citizens feel that since youth has come and gone for them, they have nothing to look forward to. This pessimistic attitude can be harmful to the individual, the family, to the church and to God.

Fatalism

Pessimism can lead to depression and depression can lead to an entirely fatalistic attitude. If seniors feel unneeded, unwanted and unloved, they can easily and quickly develop this feeling.

The extreme result of fatalism is suicide. Often they feel there is no reason to live—life is over, live or die. Even medical doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists cannot help those who insist on living this way.

Low Self-esteem

Too many seniors think too little of themselves. They often feel that their suggestions and ideas are invalid and unacceptable. Sickness and illnesses among fellow seniors, causes them to believe that everyone places them in the same category. In short, their self-image takes a nosedive! Many now feel that their opinions are bypassed and soon they are convinced that their own contributions are worthless. This is wrong thinking.

Aging—A Necessary Evil

Everyone knows that old age is coming—even the youth. A worn-out adage is that “we prefer old age to the obvious alternative.” Instead of preparing to enjoy our senior years, we fight their coming. It’s like we are defeated. We know aging is obvious, so we accept this period of life as a necessary evil. No place in Scripture verifies this thinking. The Bible actually teaches that old age is a crowning time, a time when the meaning of life is unfolded, and a time when meaningful words of instruction can be given. Above all, it is an age to be respected.

True, death comes. This is also Scripture. Death comes to young and old, rich and poor, just and unjust. However, being prepared spiritually for death and fully living out every day until it happens is what God wants. Since it is in God’s hand as to whether we live or die, we actually distrust God when we consider aging as unavoidable to be endured.

SUMMARY

The senior adult population is exploding. It appears that the senior adults already comprise the fastest growing minority in America. And the number of church seniors is growing at an even faster pace. This large group of people needs a place to work in God’s church. A majority of them are well qualified for Christian service and willing to be involved in ministry.

We need to counsel preretirement people as to attitudes toward aging. Some defeatist attitudes include pessimism, fatalism, low self-image and acceptance of old age as a necessary evil. Approaching later years in this frame of mind can cause unhappiness and can actually bring an early death.

On the contrary, if one develops a wholesome attitude toward aging, it can certainly be a plus. As seniors enter retirement, they should accept it as a challenge. They should look for opportunities for service, enjoy the new independence, and understand the blessings and respect they receive and deserve, and continue to live a life with increased faith.

Seventeenth-Century Nun's Prayer

Author Unknown

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself, that I am growing older and will someday be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord that I want a few friends at the end.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pains, but help me to endure them with patience.

I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessing cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a Saint - some of them are so hard to live with - but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And, give me, O Lord, the grace to tell them so. AMEN.⁴

s

1. Based on online data from the U.S. Census Bureau's (1) Population Estimates and Projections; (2) 2010 Census Special Reports, Centenarians: 2010C2010SR-03, 2012; and (3) Table 5, Population by Age and Sex for the United States: 1900-2000, Part A. Hobbs, Frank and Nicole Stoops, Census 2000 Special Reports, Series CENSR-4, Demographic Trends in the 20th Century. The National Center for Health Statistics' Hoyert DL, Xu JQ. Deaths: Preliminary data for 2011. National vital statistics reports; vol 61, no 6. Hyattsville, MD: 2012. The National Research Council's Crimmins EM, Preston SH, Cohen B, editors. Explaining Divergent Levels of Longevity in High-Income Countries. Panel on Understanding Divergent Trends in Longevity in High-Income Countries 2011.

2. Website: www.Pew Forum.com, 1-21-14

3. Aging Society (Washington: AARP).

4. www.sparkspeople.com

CHAPTER TWO

The Word and Senior Adults

Where do we get our philosophy about involving seniors in the Lord's work? There are definite statements in the Bible that deal with older people engaging themselves in Kingdom work. Yes! Our answers are found in the Word of God. We will take some jewels from its pages to present our case for spiritual involvement of senior citizens.

The story of the conflict between Joshua and the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16) gives an encouraging parabolic illustration of the joy of intercessory ministry that is open to octogenarians. In the fluctuations of that battle, the key to final victory was not in the hands of Joshua and his army battling in the valley, but in those of Moses, Aaron and Hur, all octogenarians on the mountaintop. As long as Moses held up his rod—symbol of his divinely given authority—the battle swayed in favor of Israel. But when from sheer weariness he allowed it to fall, victory turned to defeat.

It proved to be the weaponless hands of prayer on the mountain rather than the clash of arms in the valley that controlled the tides of battle. When Moses could no longer stand, he sat. When he could no longer hold his hands up, Aaron and Hur, on either side of him, held them aloft until victory was complete.

Old as they were, those three men were young enough to be God's hidden instruments in victory. Senior adults can pray and prayer is more powerful than arms. Through the ministry of intercession and the exercise of their spiritual authority, those three octogenarians strengthened the hands of the younger Joshua and his men who were struggling on the battlefield. What a model to emulate!

New Testament seniors also made their own contributions to the revelation of the gospel. In the beginning of the Gospel of Luke, the priest Zacharias and his wife Elizabeth were featured in a story about the conception of John the Baptist (1:5-25).

This story parallels in some respects the Old Testament accounts of the conception and birth of Isaac to the aged Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 17:1-21; 18:1-15; 21:1-7) and also the story of the birth of Samuel to Hannah.

This story of Zacharias and Elizabeth is followed by two other stories featuring elderly persons—Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38). The faith of these seniors is implicitly held up as a model for elderly persons in general and is affirmed as an important characteristic in the story, age notwithstanding.

The above accounts are historical examples. But just what do we gather from the scriptures about senior adults in our day?

1. Christian senior citizens are a part of God's family and they deserve every right that any other Christian enjoys.

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). This is a strong statement made by Christ himself and there is certainly no distinction as to age. He is speaking of His own Spirit—begotten children, regardless of whether they are young or old. Christians can enjoy abundant life even at an advanced age! Many do.

2. God is the giver of long life.

"So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days" (1Kings 3:14). Here is a precise promise made by God that He will increase life for those who keep His laws. There are many examples of those who have taken God at His word and are enjoying long life.

Isaiah 46:4 says, "Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you" Here is another clear statement that God's hand is upon the elderly. The Word is from the Lord and His assurance is that in old age He will keep and preserve us all.

Wisdom speaks twice in the Book of Proverbs concerning the aged: "For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you" (Proverbs 9:11). "My son, do not forget my law, But let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life And peace they will add to you" (Proverbs 3:1-2).

Again in Psalms we have this word from the Lord, "With long life will I satisfy him" (91:16). Long life is a truly desirable gift from God.

If these scriptures say anything, they show that God is the one who has power to lengthen our days. Not only does He have the power, but also He promises that people who live pure and godly lives will have long lives on earth.

Older Christian people who are called upon to give reasons for their long lives

recognize who is responsible and are not timid in giving God credit. It is easy to serve a God who makes such promises!

3. Senior adults are to be honored and respected.

Honor and respect for the aged did not begin with certain national or ethnic groups; it began in the mind of God. Leviticus 19:32 states the words of God, “You shall rise before the gray headed and honor the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.” Here, the Lord says that we should respect the aged by standing when they come into our presence. This statement is made in conjunction with an admonition to reverence God. This suggests that elderly people are close to the heart of God.

“The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, If it is found in the way of righteousness” (Proverbs 16:31). It is admitted here that some people have gray hair that are not among the righteous. The Lord makes it plain that the crown of glory goes to the righteous elderly. Again, in Proverbs God lets us know that we are to appreciate dignity. “The glory of young men is their strength, And the splendor of old men is their gray head . . .” (20:29). The beauty of the older man is not in a youthful look but in his maturity.

One of the 10 great commandments has to do with honor and respect to the elderly. “Honor your father and your mother . . .” (Exodus 20:12). Not only are we told to honor our parents, but as children, we are given a promise if we do “that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you.”

A few paragraphs above tell us that people can live longer lives by keeping God’s commandments. Now we are told that the children of these older people can enjoy longer lives by honoring their parents. Honoring and keeping God’s law and fruitful long life go together.

4. Death is inevitable, but we must follow God’s timetable for length of life.

We are taught that there is a “time to be born, a time to die . . .” The right to begin life or end life is not in our hands, but God’s. As long as God gives life, it is only right that man live it to the fullest. Simply because we will eventually die does not imply that in our last years we have to be cheated. God sees ahead far beyond our fallible vision and knows what is best for us.

Facing the fact that grief and bereavement will come to us, it will save us from falling into self-pity or thinking that we are the objects of special judgment. Grief comes to others and we have no grounds for believing that we will be the exception.

“Sorrow does color life, doesn’t it,” said one friend to another who had been bereaved. “Yes it does,” was the answer, “and I intend to choose the colors.” Such a reply was a good prognosis for the days ahead.

Paul had the right philosophy, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). Since one must either live or die, no in-between, Paul was secure in

his stance. If God chose to take him or even allow his enemies to kill him, he would be in a better world. He knew his salvation was sure, he had maintained his commitment with the Lord, and he was ready to go. In fact, he implied that might even be his desire at times. However, if God chose to leave him on earth (he didn't try to change God's mind—he was willing to do whatever God wanted) he would spend the remainder of that life, as he had for years, serving God and building the Kingdom.

To put it simply, it is not within our spiritual right to decide our future as to life or death. That is God's decision. We would have greater peace of mind if we would leave that totally to Him and not interfere. But it is our decision what we will do with those remaining years or months or even days. Perhaps the scripture “. . . whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31) would be applicable here. Whether young or old, deciding to do whatever one can to enhance the kingdom of God and build the church of God on earth is a very wise choice.

5. Older people are to be examples to the younger.

God has admonished the elderly to be models for the younger. It is important that the example is pure and godly.

Paul, an older person, wrote to Timothy, a young man, “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with all purity” (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

These two verses speak out about the unique relationship of the young and old:

- Even a minister who is concerned with and responsible for the flock is to be careful in outright rebuke of an older man. Give him every benefit of the doubt in a given situation. Because of his years of experience, he could know something about a given situation that a younger person would not know. If a rebuke has to be given (and sometimes it is necessary even to an older person), do not speak harshly, but gently.

- [Treat] *an older man as a father*. Often, this changes the situation. To view an older man, whether or not he has erred, as if he were your own father always suggests tolerance, gentleness, and longsuffering. One would never rebuke his own father harshly and, for that reason, he should be extra kind to all older persons. Paul says to exhort (encourage, help, assist) him.

- The older men are to *treat younger men as brothers*. Older people are not to overlook advice from younger men simply because they are young. “Treat young men as brothers” would have them to consider younger men as part of their own family. A reciprocal kindness from young to old is the ideal.

- [Treat] *older women as mothers*. Few people are going to mistreat their own mother. Paul is aware of that. He suggested that, when dealing with older women in the church, they be given a listening ear and godly respect. It is because of a mother's tender care that every person lives. Respect that relationship and treat all women as mothers.

- [Treat] *younger women as sisters, with all purity*. Paul, the wise preacher, recognized that there could be ill treatment and mistreatment even in the church.

(The church at Corinth proved that.) Paul was interested in the church's integrity and asked that a young woman be viewed as one's sister. Again, the family relationship was recommended.

- The point being made here is that older people are to be examples to the younger. It is important that the example be a Christian one.

6. The church is to care for widows.

The Book of James gives this instruction: "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (1:27).

James made the church responsible for those widows who could not make a living for themselves. The accountability for widows is the same as that for orphans. Sometimes the church accepts its role in providing homes for orphans but is not that keen on taking care of widows. The instruction from James seems to imply that they are equally needful and the church must not be slack in either duty.

While the admonition applies specifically to widows, it would seem that the church would also have some responsibility to widowers. If they cannot take care of themselves, God's people must recognize their labor of earlier years and minister to them.

7. Senior adults can be productive and useful.

Fifty-plus America is on the move. More and more people are toning up, slimming down, and attaining a fitness level belying their years, according to AARP's *Modern Maturity Magazine*.¹ The exercise bug is even spreading to people who have never bought a pair of running shoes, were spurned in sports as kids, or are carrying around excess weight and pain.

"Biologically we can reverse the aging process by 15 to 25 years," says Miriam Nelson, Ph.D., a Tufts University scientist and specialist in aging. "We can do that by becoming stronger. It is exciting that an older body can perform so well if you treat it right." Being productive not only involves having a strong body, but equally important is self-esteem. Dr. E. W. Busse of Duke Medical Center says the key word for the older person is *self-esteem*. Self-esteem is attained when there is a sense of productivity and usefulness.

Far too long the church has thought of older people as worn-out, tired, and about ready for the grave. Nothing is farther from the truth. Many are retiring early and are in excellent health. Their thinking is positive, they are alert, and they desire worthwhile goals.

The Bible says, "They [the righteous] shall still bear fruit in old age; They shall be fresh and flourishing, To declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:14,15). Of course, it is understood that these people are righteous people. The Bible does not give any such promise to the wicked

and unrighteous. Some may ask, “Then why do some unrighteous people live long—even longer than some Christians?”

While we will never understand all that is involved, it should be pointed out that the Christian’s life is productive. It is possible to live a long time and do very little for God. Methuselah is an example. He lived a long time and that is all we really know about him. But the Christian can have both a long and useful life.

8. The church need not have a generation gap.

There has always been a generation gap between the old and the young. It is not something that has suddenly developed, although the present generation has seen it widen perceptibly. The plain fact is that, whether they recognize it or not, both youth and aged need each other. Mutual cross-fertilization—both intellectual and spiritual—can result in great mutual enrichment.

Radical youth have always challenged and clashed with conservative age. Youth demands change, age clings to the status quo, and each tends to be intolerant of the other. Genuine tolerance and Christian love and patience are needed.

There is a beautiful story in 1 Samuel 3. It tells of the calling of Samuel as a prophet of God. The Lord spoke to Samuel, a young man who was lying down in the temple of the Lord. Samuel heard the Lord speak but thought it was Eli, an older priest. This happened three times. Each time when young Samuel answered Eli, the priest assured him that he had not called. Finally, Eli instructed him that this had to be the voice of the Lord. Eli told Samuel to answer the Lord the next time he heard his name called. Samuel did so and that is the very time that God called Samuel to be a prophet and priest.

Here we have absolutely no generation gap. Eli, a very old priest, and Samuel, a very young person, communicate on a mature and spiritual level and with tremendous results.

Perhaps we have separated the generations too long. While it is obvious that good teaching and training calls for meetings of one’s own age, it is equally true that old people and young people need time together in worship and spiritual activities. Each can learn beautiful lessons from the other. Like Eli and Samuel, the young and the old must be spiritually in tune with God for this work. We are seeing a new day in the Church of God—youth and seniors studying, worshipping, singing, praying and serving God together.

This anonymous prayer could well be offered regularly by both old and young:

Lord, make old people tolerant,
Young folk sympathetic,
Great folk humble,
Busy folk patient,
Bad folk, good,
And make me what I ought to be.

9. Senior adults need not live in the past.

We will get more positive enjoyment out of the present if we refuse to spoil it by murmuring about the disappointments of the past or harboring unwarranted fears for the future.

Caleb is a good example of a man who refused to live in the past. Suppose he had decided to do so at age 85. He could have simply reminisced, talked of earlier victories, and been satisfied to wait on death. After all, he had lived an illustrious life.

Not Caleb! Catch his spirit, “. . . here I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as on the day that Moses sent me; just as my strength was then, so now is my strength for war, both for going out and for coming in. Now therefore, give me this mountain of which the Lord spoke in that day; for you heard in that day how the Anakim were there, and that the cities were great and fortified. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said” (Joshua 14:10-12). Can't you just feel this man's desire to serve God, regardless of his old age? He had a spiritual desire to get on with the work of the Lord.

And the next verse begins, “And Joshua blessed him, and gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh as an inheritance” (Joshua 14:13).

It is not wrong to think of the past and draw from experience lessons that are valuable. But God does not want us to spend so much time in yesterday that we do not have time for today. This is the day we have now to work for God.

Paul says to “forget those things which are behind”—keep looking forward.

10. Senior adults have a life of experience to share.

“Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding” (Job 12:12). Job asks these two questions and points out that the questions answer themselves. There is wisdom in maturity and long life does bring understanding not known by the novice.

This is a great lesson for the church of today to learn. Churches that recognize the value of experience in the aged and capitalize on this wisdom are churches that are deriving benefits both in numerical and spiritual growth.

Paul says that we are to be “redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Ephesians 5:16, 17). We could save a lot of time in our churches if the wisdom of the elderly saints was considered before launching into questionable programs and projects simply because they seem right for the moment. It is good to consider the wisdom of those who have lived through trying circumstances and are capable of discerning what is best for the church.

In every church, there are people who have grown old and pessimistic—whose personal attitudes depict defeat. They seem to be against any programs of the church and against any forward steps in spiritual growth. But these people are found in every age group. However, I do not believe they represent the majority of seniors in most churches.

God has blessed us with a generation that sees too much good in God and too much progress for the church to allow negative views to overshadow. We need to congratulate them for a life of victorious experiences and use their testimonies in our outreach to the unsaved.

SUMMARY

There are many conclusions we could reach by examining the Word of God closely. However, there are 10 declarations that are biblically based that should make any church see the need for a viable senior adult ministry:

- a. Senior adults are a part of God's family and they deserve all rights that any other Christians enjoys.
- b. God is the giver of long life.
- c. Senior adults are to be honored and respected.
- d. Death is inevitable but we must follow God's timetable for length of life.
- e. Older people are examples to the younger.
- f. The church is to care for widows.
- g. Senior adults can be productive and useful.
- h. The church need not have a generation gap.
- i. Senior adults must not live in the past.
- j. Senior adults have a life of experience to share.

Since the Scriptures give such importance to the senior adult, we must do no less in our churches. The understanding, wisdom, knowledge, care, love, and longsuffering exemplified by the Christian elderly can be appreciated and must be used by a church that is New Testament.

1. Aging Society (Washington: AARP), p. 15.

CHAPTER THREE

The Challenge of Senior Adults

Every day nearly 6,000 Americans become 65. This is not just a figure. This fact represents one of the greatest challenges for the Church of God. These are not people who are incapacitated and shut in. Only 5 percent of those over 65 live in institutions.

Here is the challenge. Let us give these older people responsible positions in the Kingdom work. Let us use every concerned person with talent, wisdom, and physical ability. Let us find a work that fits them and involve them. Let us not commit the sin of refusing to use what God has provided for us.

If we meet the challenge and do what has been suggested, it will cost us time and effort. It will not happen without a planned and concentrated effort. But it is not time wasted—it is an investment and a very worthy one for the Kingdom.

Few senior adults are happy doing nothing. At the time of retirement, some people may feel they would enjoy just doing nothing for a while. And for a short time it may seem the thing to do, it may give a sense of complete independence to a person. However, more and more senior adults tire of doing nothing and having no responsibility. They find that the relaxed schedule is too relaxed and they are not happy. It is true that they do not necessarily want an eight-hour-a-day job five days a week. While some would enjoy part-time work, most who are financially secure simply want to be involved with some phase of work or ministry that they can enjoy and that will not force them into a regular schedule. The church that sees this opportunity ought to get seniors involved.

MYTHS ABOUT OLD AGE

There are some common myths about aging. It is a proven fact that if a statement is repeated often enough by a considerable number of people, it comes to be accepted ultimately as truth, whether or not it can be substantiated. Some myths about old age should be exposed and discarded, for they have clouded the closing years of many people who could have been really enjoying growing old with God. Below is a list of some of the most common myths:

Myth 1—Most old people live in institutions—hospitals, nursing homes, etc.

Actually, only 5 percent of all persons over 65 live in institutions. The institutions are there if needed and they serve a good purpose for those who are sick and need full-time care. But most senior adults do not need that kind of care. Ninety-five percent live alone or with a spouse, friend, or relative and are able to walk, eat, exercise, drive, think clearly, and in general be responsible for themselves.

Myth 2—Old Age is a disease and is synonymous with disability and ill health.

Compared to younger people, older persons have fewer acute illnesses—1.3 illnesses per person per year for older people versus 2.1 illnesses per person per year for all ages. While 81 percent of all those over 65 have a chronic illness, compared to 54 percent of the rest of the population, many of these may be nothing more than hay fever or poor eye-sight.

While many older people do have their share of physical problems, too many people seem to think of 65-year-old people as 85-year-olds.

It is the experience of many that the two decades from 60 to 80 can be one of the most enjoyable and useful periods of life. Incapacity comes at no particular age, and can even be staved off through strength of purpose and a courageous attitude. Many conditions usually regarded as inevitable can be avoided.

Myth 3—After 65, everyone goes steadily downhill.

In some studies, there was no change in health over time. Certainly some people suddenly become sick and die. But this happens in young lives as well and is called illness, not aging. About half or more of any decline is due to boredom, inactivity, and the belief that decline is expected of an older person.

If there is a general feeling that aging is bad and degrading and if everyone around the older person makes him feel that his chances for living long are few, that in itself becomes depressing and causes the older person to deteriorate. Our job is to change this scenario.

Myth 4—Seniors typically live alone, lonely, and abandoned by their families.

In the United States, 80 percent of those over 65 live with someone. Seventy-five percent say they are not lonely. Fortunately, many senior adult couples live together after age 65 and are a great support to one another. Companionship is good for longevity.

Only a very small percentage of senior adults are abandoned by family. If a companion is deceased, the living spouse usually lives alone or with family members. While circumstances and living conditions may not always be ideal for everyone involved, neither are they always ideal for younger people.

The fact that some older people live alone or like to be by themselves a lot does not necessarily suggest loneliness. Actually, some senior adults, after raising a family and being involved for so many years in numerous daily tasks and responsibilities, welcome periods of quiet, peaceful solitude. As long as this is not extreme, it has no negative effects. They may be alone, but not necessarily lonely.

Myth 5—People should retire at a certain age. Older people cannot do a decent job.

All studies show that absenteeism, injuries, and frequency of accidents are lower among older workers. Many artists, musicians, writers, and other professionals continue to perform well until they die, despite their age. There is no reason to think that older people are useless.

- Winston Churchill was an older man when he brought England through its most dangerous days and did not retire until after he was 80. Dwight D. Eisenhower was 65 years of age when he was elected to a second term as president of the United States.

- President Ronald Reagan was elected to his first term in office as president of the United States when he was 69 years old. He took office at age 70 and served until he was 78!

- Colonel Harland Sanders franchised his “Kentucky Fried Chicken” in earnest in 1955 at the age of 65.

- J. Hudson Taylor, at 70, was opening new fields to the gospel and praying out new bands of missionaries to inland China.

- At 90, George Mueller was still expanding and enlarging a work, which not only housed 1,500 orphans, but published religious literature and sent out missionaries to half a dozen mission fields.

- Olga Kotelko started defying age on the track-and-field circuit at 77. At 92 years of age, she held 20 world records: long jump, triple jump, high jump, discus, shoot put, various sprints, weight throw, and javelin.

- Johanna Qyuaas was the oldest active gymnast in the world. At 86 years old, she was still as proficient on the parallel bars as any person half her age.

- In May 2012, Guinness World Records named Edith Wilma Connor the oldest

competitive female bodybuilder. She was 77. She won her first competition at 65.

Old age does not mean that life has passed.

Myth 6—The closing years of life will inevitably be less enjoyable and stimulating than earlier years.

Some of the happiest and most joyous people are senior citizens. Simply being older does not make them happy; the combination of living a Christian life and growing old gracefully makes for beautiful, joyous, and happy living.

Older people, contrary to popular opinion, can enjoy almost anything younger people enjoy. It is indeed a myth that older couples cannot mutually enjoy a normal sex life.

The church should provide social times for the elderly. Psychologists say that having fun increases length of life.

At one time people thought of retirement as a time when older people succumbed to a rocking chair on the front porch or under a shade tree, simply waiting on death. It is ridiculous to accept that viewpoint now when God has given added years for full enjoyment. Enjoy Life!

Myth 7—Memory inexorably declines with age.

The widespread belief that memory inexorably declines with age, and recent memory more rapidly than the remote, is strongly challenged by some researchers. It has been found that those who have habitually exercised their memories retained them longest. Indeed, that is true of all our faculties. Memory does not necessarily decline.

We have thousands of examples today of elderly people who use their mental faculties daily and are as alert as when they were 30.

Myth 8—Old folks spend all their time sitting around watching television.

A detailed study has been made of television viewers. Actually people over 60 spend less time watching television than people in their 20s.

It becomes obvious which age groups watch television most by noting which groups the sponsors of the shows target. There is strong appeal to the children, youth, young married couples, and the middle-aged. Of course, some commercials and some performers (for example, television-evangelists) do appeal strongly to senior adults, simply because they are people of means and who can buy into a product or assist in supporting. But seniors do not watch more television than young people.

Myth 9—Since physical aging is a natural process it cannot be altered.

Physical age does tell us that we are probably closer to the end of our life. We do not argue with the fact and seniors accept this. But because of better healthcare, life expectancy is increasing. God has so provided doctors, researchers, gerontologists and other interested people with knowledge concerning diet, exercise, bodily care, and preventive medication that we are naturally living longer. In the last 50 years, life expectancy has increased almost eight years in the United States. That in itself is a miracle! Dr. Herbert de Vries of the Gerontology Center of the University of Southern California had this to say, “The elderly can gain up to 30 percent of their youthful vigor just by exercising regularly.” This opinion was the result of 10 years of research and investigation into the manner in which exercise affects the elderly.

Although medical science is to be praised, we must remember it is God who allows this and supplies the wisdom needed to elongate life.

Incapacity can come at any age. We have to understand that, and it does come to the elderly. On the positive side, however, it is the experience of many people that the two decades from 60 to 80 can be staved off through strength of purpose and a courageous attitude. Many conditions usually regarded as inevitable can be avoided.

Myth 10—Most of the handicaps of older people are physical; after all, they are old.

The truth is that most handicaps of aging in our society are social, conventional, and imaginary. Perhaps more are imagined than one would guess.

Do you ever find yourself when walking or traveling with an elderly person trying to protect them and find your concerns are not greatly accepted? While our actions may be made with a very sincere caring spirit, the older person is trying to say something to us.

One 92-year-old senior did say something. These were his words: “In their solicitude for our welfare, our friends are often overly kind to us and tend to be over-protective. They are apprehensive about our going out by ourselves as we become less mobile. ‘You shouldn’t do that at your age’ is an oft-heard injunction. On the slightest pretext, they kindly rush to help us. But it is not always healthy to wrap the elderly in cotton wool too early.”

SENIORS ARE USEFUL TO GOD

God has a reason for everything He does. If a person is still living, he is doing so because God allowed him this privilege. Obviously, God does not want a person to live with no purpose. So it is within reason to believe that everyone alive today has purpose and the greatest possible purpose for living is to be useful to our Maker, God.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones, as an old man, was a fine illustration of his own teaching. He suggested the following steps for continuing growth and usefulness in later years:

- Don't retire. Change your occupation to something you have always wanted to do.
- Learn something new every day.
- Set yourself to be gracious to someone every day.
- Don't let yourself grow negative; be positive.
- Look around you for something for which to be grateful every day. Gratitude will become a settled habit.
- Now that your bodily activities are slowing down, let your spiritual activities increase. Old age provides increased opportunity for prayer.
- Keep laying up as the years come and go "the good store" of which Jesus spoke.

This "good store" is the depository of every thought, motive, action, and attitude, which we drop into the subconscious mind. It can be the deep subsoil into which we can strike our roots in old age and blossom at the end like a night-blossoming cereus.

There are figures to show that the most productive period of life lies nearer its end than its beginning, especially between the ages of 60 and 70.

The results of a study made of 400 noted men from different spheres of activity throughout history were reported in *Sunshine Magazine*. It revealed that 35 percent of the world's greatest achievements were by people in the 60-to-70 age bracket. A further 23 percent were made by those between 70 and 80. The octogenarian group (men and women in their 80s) accounted for a further 6 percent. No less than 64 percent of the world's greatest achievements were accomplished by people over 60 years of age!

God created man and with him the capacity to grow old and useful. It delights God to see men and women in their 60s, 70s and 80s become involved in worthy pursuits and activities.

Worthy activities do not stop with praying and worshipping God. When older people reach out to help others and make life more enjoyable for neighbors, God is happy. The gamut of blessing God is wide—all the way from a noble invention to simply offering a cup of cool water in Jesus' name. Perhaps the happiest community in the world is where the elderly are buzzing with activity that is God-honoring.

SENIOR ADULTS ARE USEFUL TO THE CHURCH

The church is God's one institution on earth which He uses to redeem man. The Lord himself started the church (Matthew 16:18) and He has led it through two millennia. It has withstood every possible storm and battle and still waves a victory banner.

God chose the channel of the church as a tool to propagate the gospel around the world. Once a person becomes a sincere follower of God, he senses a need of being a member of God's body on earth—the church. Thus, those energies can be used for God to help build His church.

Statistics have already been given as to the large number of older people who make up the local church. Practically all of those people have talents that can help any pastor reach the people in his community for God.

THE CHURCH IS CRYING FOR HELP

Pastors and leaders are begging for teachers, counselors, altar workers, and visitation workers. Very few pastors say they have enough workers. Sometimes because of this dilemma, Sunday school classes are merged, classes are dropped, and entire programs are abandoned.

In some churches, if a young person cannot be found who will do a certain job, it is decided to scratch the program or postpone it. Older people are often bypassed for several reasons. Some feel the elderly cannot do a quality job. Some feel that the elderly do not want to work, so they do not ask them. Still others think that people will not respond if their leader is above age 65. In most situations, none of these reasons are valid.

SENIOR ADULTS ARE READY TO WORK

Most Christian senior adults will not push themselves forward. They are too mature for that. However, a large majority is available and would like to be used in some capacity in the church.

Those who retain alertness and vitality into old age are not the ones who pamper and spare themselves. Instead, they live active and disciplined lives—giving themselves to the church and its ministries. It is inactivity that depletes vitality.

To wear life out in the service of Jesus is to open it to the entrance of Jesus' life [2 Corinthians 4:10]; it is to receive, in all its alleviations, in all its renewals, in all its deliverances, a witness to His resurrection.

Paul would encourage us to believe that although aging does erode our earthly bodies, if we are in service for the Lord and His church, the same powerful inner renewal he experienced every day can be ours. It will adequately enable us to fulfill the divine plan for us every day.

The church needs workers and healthy senior adults are ready to work. The only logical deduction that can be drawn from this is that the church—every church—should enlist senior adults and allow them to assist in building God’s church on earth.

SUMMARY

Contrary to what most people would think, studies show that happiness actually increases with age. New York Times states that extensive research indicates that people have a greater sense of happiness and fulfillment the older they get and the majority of these people desire to stay busy in worthy activities.

Such findings should not be a surprise to those of us who are Christians. One of the greatest gifts of God is the joy of service. Senior adults are useful to God. That is why He has allowed them to live. Not only should they be willing to be in service for God, but they can also greatly enhance the work of the local church where they are a part.

Some common myths about old age that should be abandoned are:

- a) Most old people live in institutions—hospitals, nursing homes, etc.
- b) Old Age is a disease and is synonymous with disability and ill health.
- c) After 65, everyone goes steadily downhill.
- d) Seniors typically live alone, lonely, and abandoned by their families.
- e) People should retire at a certain age. Older people cannot do a decent job.
- f) The closing years of life will inevitably be less enjoyable and stimulating than earlier years.
- g) Memory inexorably declines with age.
- h) Old folks spend all their time sitting around watching television
- i) Since physical aging is a natural process, it cannot be altered.
- j) Most of the handicaps of older people are physical; after all, they are old.

The church must work toward downplaying these myths, since they psychologically work against the good life for the aged.

Senior adults are useful to God. That is why He has allowed them to live. Everywhere the local church is crying for workers, church leaders and pastors need to see great potential in the senior adults of their congregations.

1. Peggy Scarborough, *The Treasures of Age* (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 1985), p. 15.

2. Leonard Albert, *Give Me This Mountain* (Cleveland, TN: Evangelism and Home Mission 1977), p.66.

3. Roger Hauser, *Activities with Senior Adults* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), P. 118.

4. Oswald Sanders, *Your Best Years* (Chicago: Moody, 1982), p. 35.

5. *ibid*, p. 72.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Self-Esteem of Senior Adults

The first chapter of this manual dealt with many scriptures that relate to senior adults.

There is without doubt a biblical basis which supports concern for our work with this age group.

There are several scriptures that specifically point out the self-esteem of the retired person. Since this is important to God, let us consider these three verses:

1. Job 12:12: *Wisdom is with aged men, And with length of days, understanding.*

Even though Job here puts the question about wisdom and understanding in old age in the form of two questions, the inference is strong that indeed older people are wise and understanding. There is no downplaying of wisdom among the younger. Job is simply stating that elderly people have had time to take all of their life's experiences and from them arrive at conclusions that are very wise. The treatment that older people have received and given during their own lifetime, along with what they have seen in other people, helps them to arrive at a level of understanding that is indicative of maturity. In short, their counsel is worth listening to.

2. Isaiah 46:4: *Even to your old age, I am He, And even to gray hairsd, I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you.*

This verse tells what God thinks of older people. They are not "done for," substandard, and surely not overlooked. God not only allows them to live a long life, but He promises to keep them and protect them. This verse alone ought to bring joy to older people who are tempted to question their reason for living. The Lord says seniors are worth something! That should settle any doubts about the question.

3. James 1:27: *Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.*

Many religions exist today, but James has pointed out what pure religion is. (The King James translation begins the verse with “Pure religion . . .”) Pure religion includes taking care of older people. The care of the elderly women is not the sum total of the verse. Care for older people would also mean a feeling of responsibility toward their worth and self-esteem. It means that the true church will provide opportunities for service to the elderly and will also provide tools for carrying out these responsibilities. That kind of church will have sympathetic leadership who will plan for active and worthwhile senior adult participation, not just talk about it or allow token involvement.

This self-esteem and dignity of man is not only scriptural, but it is fundamental to our American way of life. Dignity tops the list of desirable characteristics of older people. What the older person wants is not inactivity, but activity which satisfies the need for recognition, social status, and individual achievement. It must be a useful activity, not busying oneself with work that yields little and results in boredom and dissatisfaction. Self-expression that contributes to mankind builds self-esteem.

Praise and recognition are of great importance in restoring self-esteem and dignity to the aged. The productive senior citizen is worthy of this respect. Everything that is done in assisting senior citizens should place emphasis on the individual. “To enrich the life of that person during this time is the ultimate goal of every program of gerontology—to recognize the dignity of the individual living through later maturity, thus enriching the potentialities of this fascinating period.”¹

Adolf Hopp was 93 years old (and still painting his own Christmas cards) when he wrote the following:

Younger persons often get the erroneous impression that old persons are in misery, creeping along, helpless, and on their last leg, with nothing to live for and just waiting for death. The question arises: Is life a state of misery, distress and uselessness?

I for one can answer this question with the definite conviction that now in my ninety-third year, I am happier than I was at almost any time in my younger years. And I know that many older persons feel as I do. . . .

Now, how do I explain my state of happiness, the joy in life? Happiness is an attitude; it depends on how we ‘take things.’ I consider it a blessing to be able to live at my age, which gives me a totally different attitude than younger people have, a happier attitude. I have gone through the experience of a life and can look back on mine. They guess at things I am certain about. . . .

I just disregard what younger persons may call “the frailties of old age.”

Instead, I think of the many good things my 93 years offer: comparatively good health, sufficient means to live comfortably according to my liking, and an attitude of being satisfied with what I have.

Another reason for my contentment is that I can look back on a simple life that led me along the narrow paths of work and dutiful activity within the laws of the land in which I lived.

My family is another reason for my contentment. My children, two sons, have made their way to financial independence and are decent U.S. citizens. My grandchildren and great-grandchildren have grown up in normal, good health without any mental or physical defect. A religious person may thank God for that; others may ascribe it to good luck. Anyhow, it is a great satisfaction to me, which brightens the evening of my life.

Adolph Hopp did not suffer from low self-esteem. And no one has to, including senior adults today.

There are basic needs of the senior adult that, if supplied, can add greatly to his self-esteem. It would be an unkind society and an unsympathetic church that would seek to fulfill the needs of the more attractive younger set and overlook the needs of the elderly.

Just in the last 25 years, particular problems of the aging have come into focus with worldwide attention. It is obvious that society has not prepared older people for the inevitable losses in later life and that there is a tremendous need for counseling before and during retirement. If the senior adult can go into retirement with an awareness of the basic needs which he will encounter, he can better adjust himself to his circumstances.

SENIOR ADULT NEEDS

Younger people in our society seem to know what is expected of them, but this is not true for the older person. With few guidelines for the aged, and so much leisure time upon them, psychological problems come to the front. Many older people will have a more assertive attitude.

Psychological

While there are obviously some physiological losses in growing old, there are some gains. Some people adjust to the change by reconciling their goals to actual achievement. They simply accept the past for what it was and try to understand themselves as they relate to the future. They have an optimistic outlook that the future promises what the past has denied. "Growing old can bring about greater self-understanding and self-acceptance, along with some release from the stresses and disappointments of earlier years."²

Some specific needs of the senior citizen are . . .

- to be used.
- to receive respect.
- to have security.
- to enjoy privacy.
- to be loved.

Social

The older person has social needs as much as the adolescent or a person of any age. Each person needs to be an active and participating member of a group. Seniors must be made to feel that they have a meaningful role to play in society. Much attention should be and is now being given to new and meaningful roles for people in the retirement stages of life.

The older person has a need for companionship and a relationship with peer groups. It is recognized that the social needs of the aged are interrelated to his psychological needs.

Spiritual

Religious freedom and religious expression are important to older people. By this time of life, they are usually well established in their ideals about philosophy and theology. For many older people, worship is as much a part of life as eating and sleeping. Since spiritual life is so important, the church should desire to see the spiritual needs met. While the church may not be able to meet every psychological and social need, here is an area where the church can feel qualified to minister to the aged.

In a survey taken among old and young people from different sections of the country, religious values were appraised by presenting each person with these statements:

- Religion is the one thing to be relied upon.
- There is a divine plan and purpose for every living person and thing.
- The Bible is God's Word and all it says is true.

Responses to these statements indicated that younger and older persons living in rural areas were more fundamental in their religious outlook than were those living in the urban centers. In both geographical areas, the young people were less committed to traditional religious values than were their elders. These responses also revealed a greater disparity in religious values between younger and older persons in the metropolitan areas than between the two generations in the rural areas.

These findings would indicate that older Christians have a deep faith in God and want their relationship with God to become closer as they grow older. They enjoy occasions to work for God and the church.

Elderly people need a quiet place to pray and meditate. A strong need is to talk to God, receive spiritual direction, and enjoy spiritual fellowship.

The church must offer services which are beneficial to the elderly. Using senior citizens is not enough; there must be a ministry to these people.

SENIOR ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships with other people are very important to senior citizens. After retirement in most cases, they do not retain a close relationship with those they worked with. This is a loss. They need to make up for it by establishing other relationships and deepening the ones they already enjoy.

Family Relationships

It is important that the family of retirees understand their situations. Most senior citizens do not want sympathy; they want respect, a sense of belonging, and a sense of worth within the family.

There is no hint here that family relationships were tense prior to retirement or that they were not enjoyable. The point is that now, as a retiree, the older person will be at home more and in the presence of family members practically all the time. One may wish to deepen a good relationship by planning more togetherness with spouse, children, and grandchildren.

Of course, seniors have to be aware that their own time availability will probably exceed that of younger members of the family. They must respect the fact that the family is not retired and that they have to support their own families. The quality of the relationship will be more important than the length of time spent together.

The biblical admonition is to raise our children “. . . in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). If this admonition has been followed, when a parent becomes older, he or she can be assured that they have responded positively to God’s Word and that they certainly have a greater chance of having an enjoyable, reciprocal respect with their children. All of this makes for good relationships in old age with family members.

Church Relationships

In many churches, especially small ones, the local congregation is seen as the “extended family.” Next to blood relations, the church is the closest relationship many older people have. The older person is an essential part of the church family. Involvement with younger and middle-aged persons, children and adolescents, even those who are not part of the elderly person’s “own family” is essential in fulfillment of life for all generations. In such situations, the benefits are mutual.

Intergenerational relationships provide older persons with a continuing contact with developmental issues and interests and with life-cycle issues. These same relationships offer younger persons the accrued experiences and wisdom of the elderly. Programming in the local congregations could provide occasions and opportunities for different generations to become involved meaningfully with each other.

The Outside World

Elderly people need and deserve a healthy relationship with their families and with their churches, but this is not all of life. They are also a part of the world from which they cannot and should not hibernate. No matter how close and wonderful the ties are with family and church, the elderly, like other age groups, do meet daily with people who are not Christians, people that they do not know, and people who will likely not be as kind to them as family and church.

Even in this environment, the senior citizen is important. A Christian senior’s presence and involvement should enhance the quality of community life. Unquestionably, many older people possess potentialities required for rendering significant service to the community, and many elderly who are so occupied testify to the satisfaction they obtain. Activity that contributes to human and community betterment is compatible with the work and monetary ethics characteristic of American culture.

It is very important that seniors do not shut themselves out from a big and growing world but that they maintain relationships with their community, town, and world as long as they live.

SUMMARY

Self-esteem is very important to all people, particularly the elderly. The Scriptures prove this to be true. We cannot overlook the basic needs of seniors. Like all other age groups, they have a peculiar set of needs that are psychological, social, and spiritual.

Relationships are very important to the aged. In order to live happily and productively, the senior adult needs to live out life with a good relationship with family, church, and with the outside world. Good relationships will ensure happy living and longer living.

1. O. Bruce Thomason, *Potentialities for Later Living* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1968), p. 68.

2. J. C. Gull and R. E. Hardy, *The Neglected Older Person* (Springfield: Thomas 1973), P. 62.

3. Thomason, p. 14.

CHAPTER FIVE

Organization of Senior Adults

Are you convinced that your church needs to be actively involved in senior adult ministry? This is not simply a ministry to senior adults, but a ministry of and with senior adults. No church is too small to become involved.

The church is a place where Christian seniors feel at home. It is reasonable to think that they would feel comfortable in identifying with a group from their own church where they have so many acquaintances. They are a part of the whole body of Christ. At the same time they need their own peer group with which they can identify.

Perhaps you are aware of the seniors and their need for organization locally. Maybe you want to do something about it and you are asking, "Where do we start?" The purpose of this chapter is to give information that, if followed, will bring together all your senior adults.

Action can begin with the pastor. Most pastors today are aware of the need for this ministry. The pastor is most likely in the driver's seat as far as the ability to surface this ministry before the council or congregation. He is likely to have no opposition from the church in providing for a vehicle by which the seniors can grow and produce. Practically every church has senior adults. It is now a matter of the church recognizing their power and equipping them for service.

Interest in starting a senior adult ministry group may begin with a concerned member, young or old. Some very strong leaders for the older groups are middle-aged people. Of course, many born leaders are from the older people themselves.

If you are a concerned member who wants to see a senior adult group in your church, feel free to discuss this with your pastor. He may be waiting now for a member

to see the need. You and the pastor may wish to bring your concern before the church. The result could be a new senior adult ministries group.

ORGANIZATIONAL GUIDELINES

The senior adult group needs to be organized, but not overly organized. There should be just enough organization to keep the club operating properly and smoothly. But there ought to be plenty of flexibility for both officers and members to be able to discuss plans and try them out. The more the seniors are allowed to be in on the planning, the more involved they will become. The structure given here may need to be altered to fit your local senior adult group. These are simple guidelines that have proved functional in other like groups:

Purpose

Every senior adult group should understand the purpose for which they meet. It would be useless to have regular meetings if there was no purpose.

The following is a general statement of purpose for all senior adult groups. It is within reason that, in certain churches, the local group, church, or officers may wish to expand the purpose to include other ministries.

The initial purpose of the senior adult ministries group is to respond to the Great Commission to take the gospel to every creature and to assist in the task of winning people to Christ. The group is to work with the local pastor to help the senior adults of your community meet their spiritual, social, temporal, and cultural needs, as well as the needs of others. Further, the group will give senior adults an opportunity to use their talents and to express themselves through various avenues of service and to provide Christian fellowship for the senior adults of your church.

Director

There are many churches across the country that have a full-time director and consider that person a very important part of the staff. If a church has the means to secure a good director, he will be the person who will have the general oversight of all senior adults. Of course, it would be understood that he is working under the supervision of the pastor.

However, most churches will have to appoint a volunteer director and rely on the work of that person and the officers to keep the organization alive. Sometimes, where a church has a staff but not a full-time senior adult director, the portfolio of senior adults

may be given to a person who is already on staff at the church, perhaps the assistant pastor.

In *Filling in the Gray Areas*, Arnold Godwin identifies some of the characteristics of a good director. “The senior adult ministry director must be a devout Christian, have knowledge of God’s Word and a good testimony. He must also be friendly and have a moral character above reproach. His family life should be in order, as his wife will also be needed in ministry. He must work closely with and be submissive to the pastor.”¹

Godwin also says that the director must have a love for people, particularly senior adults. He says that love will be the “motivating power behind the senior adult ministry.” Godwin also purports that the director should be young—between 30 and 40. Although many churches appoint senior adults as director, he feels that the energy required to make the program a success will demand a younger leader.

If a senior adult group decides to operate with a director it may not be necessary to elect officers since the work of the director would entail most of what officers would do. However, it is a good idea to have a secretary and chaplain along with the director. These persons assist in record keeping, calling and spiritual growth of the group.

Officers

The elected officers would be president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer.

The appointed officers would be program chairman, song leader, pianist, spiritual life chairman, membership chairman, and special projects chairman.

Duties of officers

1. President

- a. To oversee the entire work of the senior adult group.
- b. To appoint officers (committee chairpersons), along with the assistance of the other elected officers.
- c. To preside at all general meetings.
- d. To call special meetings as needed.
- e. To be in charge of special projects performed by the group.
- f. To plan an agenda for all general meetings.
- g. To give creative leadership.
- h. To promote harmony among the group and with the general church.

2. Vice-president

- a. To preside over general meetings in the absence of the president.

- b. To serve as public relations person for the group.
- c. To provide information for the church bulletin.
- d. To work with the president and the group on considering and screening new ideas to be brought before the group.

3. Secretary-treasurer

- a. To read and take minutes at all the general meetings and at officers' and leader's meetings.
- b. To receive the offerings at the general meetings.
- c. To pay the bills.
- d. To keep the books.
- e. To read reports at the general meetings.
- f. To collect any dues, if required, for membership.

4. Program chairman

To arrange for the program for all general meetings as voted on by the club members. If the program chairman cannot be present or for any reason cannot plan for a general meeting, he or she is to report to the president and see that someone is arranging for that meeting.

5. Song leader

To choose the music that is to be used at the general meetings and also any special music to be used.

6. Pianist

To play at all general meetings. If the pianist cannot attend a session, he or she is to arrange for a pianist or report the upcoming absence to the president.

7. Spiritual-life chairman

- a. To arrange in advance for someone to lead in prayer at every general meeting.
- b. To be responsible for handling all prayer requests.
- c. To compile a monthly prayer sheet to be used in the general meeting each month.
- d. To choose an appropriate Bible reading for each meeting.
- e. To assist in preparing the curriculum for the Bible studies and to assist with the arrangements for special activities.

- f. To cooperate with the pastor and general church in regular and special prayer emphases.

8. Membership chairman

- a. To take the initiative in recruiting new members.
- b. To send all new members a letter, welcoming them into the local fellowship.
- c. To see that all members are notified of each meeting.
- d. To contact personally all delinquent members who are consistently missing meetings.

9. Special projects chairman

- a. To work with the president and vice-president in planning all special projects, such as nursing home visitation, periodic literature distribution and visitation evangelism.
- b. To oversee the outreach ministries of the local group.
- c. To be responsible for the planning and execution of at least one special project per month.
- d. To give a report of the current project at the monthly meetings.
- e. To be prepared to give a report of special projects to the pastor, church council, or entire church, when called upon.

Regular Meetings

Regular meetings may be held as often as the local group decides—weekly, biweekly, monthly or quarterly. However, it seems that the groups who meet monthly have better attendance and member involvement. We recommend monthly meetings year-round.

Programs

The program for the regular meetings should not be so formal as to take away individuality or creativity. However, the president and the current agenda should be respected so that business can be carried out concisely, effectively, and orderly.

While the local club does have flexibility in program arranging, here is a sample program that could be used as a working guide for the group:

Fellowship time—a time of greeting one another
Music—several group songs
Agenda—carried out by president

- Reading of Minutes
- Secretary-treasurer's report
- Announcements—future meetings
- Announcements—special projects
- Recommendations
- Special music
- Prayer—emphasizing special requests
- Special program—arranged for that particular meeting

Newly formed senior adult groups often ask what types of programs are best. Ideas are endless for a good meeting. Here are just a few that have been effective with other senior adult groups:

1. Speaker

- a. Pastor
- b. Administrative bishop
- c. Governmental official
- d. Local civic leader
- e. Church staff member
- f. Young person
- g. Insurance person
- h. Social security representative
- i. Physician
- j. Respected elderly leader.

2. Films (Should be films that would be of interest to an older group.)

3. Skits (Acted out by members)

4. Bus tours

5. Installation service of new officers

6. Welcome meeting for new church staff members

7. Appreciation meeting of special church members

8. Holiday emphases or theme of the month programs

The local church should also add ideas that would be enjoyable for the group.

Committees

Committees are important in keeping a senior adult group alive. We have suggested four:

1. Program Committee
2. Spiritual Life Committee
3. Membership Committee
4. Special Projects Committee

Local chapters may wish to add other temporary committees from time to time. However, it should be noted that too many committees may actually hinder the work rather than help. It is not necessary to appoint a committee to do what one good member can accomplish. We suggest that these four committees be kept intact and, if other committee work is needed, that they be appointed temporarily for a particular task. When that project is completed, their work is done. This will keep the group from accumulating a long list of committees that, in actuality, will be doing very little. Keep the organization simple!

Financial Structure

Before we leave the chapter on organization, we should briefly consider the financial structure. Except for some special projects, there will probably be a very small amount of financial detail. In most all senior adult groups, the emphasis is on involvement and service, not money.

However, since there will be some activities that involve money, it is safe to consider:

1. Budget: Regular operating finances should come from dues or offerings.
2. Extra needs: There will be certain times when a special need will be called to the attention of the club. If agreed upon by members, take action by asking for a special offering.
3. Fund-raising activities: senior adult groups are basically for service and fellowship; therefore, they are asked to refrain from involvement in fund-raising of large amounts of money. It could defeat their purpose.

THE TIME TO START IS NOW

This manual so far has pointed out the needs of senior adults and how they can be organized to help the church. Any church can follow the instructions and have a good senior adult group.

If you see the need, as a pastor or concerned member, begin now to talk about a senior adult ministries group at your church. Put it before the people. The opposition to it will be almost nil. The idea is to begin now. Let God use you to start something that will be tremendously effective in your church.

SUMMARY

Senior adult ministry groups should be organized. Where affordable, churches may hire a full-time director of senior adults. While this is ideal, most churches will have to settle for the work of a good organizational structure, which includes a director, president, vice-president and a secretary-treasurer. Also included in this structure, there needs to be a program chairman, song leader, pianist, spiritual life chairman, membership chairman, and special projects chairman.

A statement of purpose is necessary for the general church and to make every member of the group know the precise reason they exist. This statement must speak to the church's mandate to take the gospel to the entire world.

Regular meetings with planned programs are important to good organization. These meetings should include a time of fellowship, a business session, music, prayer, and a special projects report.

The organization of senior adult ministries groups should be kept simple and flexible and should be geared to meet the needs of the people.

-
1. "Filling in the Gray Areas," *Leadership*, Spring 1988.

CHAPTER SIX

Opportunities for Senior Adults

This chapter is the reason for this book. Opportunities are growing for senior adults to be involved in service to God and for the church. Growing churches are aware of the great potential in senior citizen's active participation. These churches realize that seniors should be more than just statistics on Sunday and people to be helped the rest of the time. Senior abilities are being used in growing the church.

We agree with one definition of the aged as: "A person who is still developing, still growing, still learning, still with potential whose life continues to have within it promises for and connection to the future." This being true, we are calling on these seniors to be activated as an army of workers for God.

Opportunities are limitless. Some are spiritual, some are social, and others do not precisely fit into either category, but they are ministries nevertheless.

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

The ministry opportunities here are those that are related to the church. They either directly or indirectly work toward soulwinning. Gaines Dobbins has said, "If children are the best chance for Christ, then certainly senior adults are the last chance." ¹

Music

Music is an integral part of the worship services in almost all churches. Throughout the ages God has used music to bring people to Him and to establish them in the faith. By listening to "psalms, hymns and spiritual songs" many people have been saved.

Music rendered by senior adults should not be segregated from that offered by others in the church. Many seniors sing in sanctuary choirs, ensemble groups, and serve as soloists. Singing groups need the blend of both the young and old.

Some churches, however, have enough retired people to have a senior adult choir. This choir could sing on special occasions or perhaps once a month in a regular service. This would give those who are musically talented a chance to be used and also to assist in training those senior voices that need help. Many senior adult choirs like to sing songs that were more popular in their earlier years, but they should not be limited to any one style. A new senior adult choir would bring excitement to any church.

Some senior adults who play musical instruments could fit into a local church orchestra. It is amazing how many older people once played in bands; but because of younger and perhaps better trained musicians, they are now on the sideline. Your church may have enough senior instrumentalists to form a senior orchestra. Even if the number is small, a church that has such talent should have a senior adult orchestra.

Ensemble groups were perhaps more readily used during the 1940s and 1950s. Pentecostal churches featured a lot of trios and quartets then. Many people are familiar with this kind of singing and, if allowed to arrange ensemble groups for certain services, would probably do a great job and be appreciated by the entire church. They just need a chance!

Bible Teaching

Older Christian people are usually very interested in the teaching of the Word. After all, some of them have been keen students of the Bible for most of their lives. Some have taught a great portion of their years. They have a built-in storage of biblical facts and knowledge that a lot of younger people still have to learn. They also have had a lifetime to prove the truths of the Word by consistent Christian living. Their example speaks loudly.

Some of the best Sunday school teaching ever heard has been by senior adults. Unencumbered by the responsibilities of younger people with children, they have more time for study and are usually well prepared.

Church of God seniors as a whole are fundamental in doctrine; they leave no room for modernistic ideas to be taught or implied. They are usually forthright in their belief, leaving no one guessing as to how they feel about the authenticity and power of God's Word. To most senior adults, God's Word is final and Sunday school students need to hear that. Good Christian education directors and pastors will not shelve a teacher because he is aging.

Currently, the church is reaping a lot of benefits from Bible study groups. Some of these are held at the local church, but many are being held in homes in order to direct the attention of the community toward serious Bible study. Again, senior citizens and their lifetime of knowledge can be used to great advantage. This is especially true if a Bible study group is started in a retirement community or an area where there is a lot of older people. This is a great opportunity to place an older Christian in service for the Lord.

Personal Witnessing

Those who have conducted surveys in housing projects for the elderly have found great numbers of persons with no faith in God or any relationship with a local church. Why not train our senior adults to reach out to these lost individuals? We are missing a great opportunity if we do not use our retirees; a great resource for evangelism in churches today. The Bible says that a Christian is to “bear fruit,” no matter the age.

Once a person accepts Christ as Lord, the senior adults have time to disciple that new convert. They can encourage him in Bible study, help him with perplexing problems, and make him feel a part of church programs.

If personal witnessing becomes an integral and regular part of any senior adult ministry, it will create keen excitement. Reports given of people being converted and bringing the converts to the meeting to give testimony will bring more joy than any other accomplishment. It will not only spark the group, but also the entire church.

Give the senior adults a chance to witness!

Church Planting

An older preacher retired a few years ago and settled in a small rural mountain community. Soon he found himself unhappy, complaining of unfulfillment. It dawned upon him that the little town did not have a Pentecostal church. (He also found out that the town, as a whole did not want one!)

This was a challenge to him at 70. He immediately found an old bus, made it into a small chapel, located it on his own property and started services. The number was small at first; his family, then 10, then 20, then 30. Within six months he had an organized church to pastor. The newly planted church was not only a monument to God, brought about by placing a retired preacher in an active role, but this church brought the news of salvation and Pentecost to many people.

Older people usually make good basic members in starting a new church. Sometimes, a mother church, in sponsoring a new work, may loan some of its well-established members until the mission work is self-supporting. Older people, if asked, can use their wealth of experience to plant the new church and have the option later of returning to their mother church.

Another advantage of using older people in the starting of a new work is that they have most likely come through several church building programs in their lifetime. Undoubtedly, a new work will have to get property and build or purchase an existing church and repair. Senior adults can give their counsel in planning, their time in construction and their knowledge of contacts in the area for assistance in getting the building completed. Older people may know the hidden “rough places” in planting a new church that may be overlooked by a less experienced person.

Church Advertising

Good Christian retired people make good advertisement for the local church. Somehow, when people see them, they immediately think of their years of service to God and people relate that to the person's local church. This is good advertising.

Older people can also advertise revivals and special services by personal contact and by distributing handouts. Popular places for distribution are shopping centers or anywhere people congregate.

Just before a revival, the entire group may want to mobilize and blitz the entire community with flyers giving information about the evangelist, the date, time, and place of revival. The person they invite may be the very one who responds to the gospel.

Hospital and Nursing Home Ministry

Hospital and nursing home ministry is certainly nothing new. Perhaps some would say that it is also not exciting. Although there is nothing glamorous about the work, it is very important in Kingdom ministry.

Older people love to visit, to talk, to fellowship, to feel needed. No one appreciates this any more than the sick and shut-in. Since most older people have lived through some illness or surgery, they can quickly identify with the suffering and fears of those who are in the hospital.

Hospital and nursing home visits should be brief. People doing this kind of work

must remember that the staff is following a planned schedule. Hospitals and nursing homes invite personal workers but expect them to be concise. Usually, a word of greeting and a short prayer is best. Even though the time spent with the patient is brief, the person visiting should never appear to be in a rush. Let each minute count.

Senior adults can really make a spiritual impact in hospitals and nursing homes. Pastors need to capitalize on this. If the pastor feels uncomfortable in doing this, he or the senior adult group could have a training class for those who would like to become ministers to the sick. Involving seniors in hospital and nursing home ministry will definitely be a plus for your church.

Telephone Reassurance

Everyone uses the telephone today, but there are people who almost never get a friendly telephone call. The telephone invades almost every nook and corner of every urban structure. It goes through locked doors and is almost always welcomed. It is not unusual now to pray for a person and even win him or her to Christ through a telephone call.

Here are some ways that the telephone can be an effective tool:

1. Contact absentees.
2. Reach hospital patients.
3. Reach shut-ins and the physically ill.
4. Share Christ with prospects.
5. Communicate with inactive members.
6. Reach active members to show appreciation for their work.
7. Contact visitors—thank them for attending church.
8. Welcome newcomers in to the community—invite them to church.
9. Notify church members of revival.

Leonard Albert, in *Give Me This Mountain*, lists eight steps to efficient telephone calling in evangelism efforts:

1. Be pleasant
2. Be expressive
3. Be attentive
4. Be distinct
5. Be natural
6. Be known
7. Be personable
8. Be efficient

The telephone can be a great tool for senior adults to use in evangelism.

Apartment Complexes

There is a real ministry for senior adults in apartment complexes. Apartments are being built by the thousands in large cities. Often, the occupants of apartments are new people to the community, college students, or young couples starting out in life. Many have no attachment to a church nor are they Christians. Surveys show that when people move into a community, the best time to win them to the church is during their first few weeks in the neighborhood. Every day after that it becomes harder to get the new people in church.

Senior adults can make this an evangelistic outreach. There should be a plan to reach these people and preach the gospel message. If the apartment complex is near the church, the appeal is even greater because some of these people may not have adequate transportation to travel a distance to church.

Counseling

Some senior adults are very effective counselors. Today's complex world is filled with people who seem to have no direction in life. Many have given up hope. Here is where the ministry of counseling by senior adults can be helpful.

An older person can help others from their own experiences. However, he must be careful not to have a ready-made answer for every situation. Some problems are serious and personal. But the older person can listen, try to understand, and empathize. His words of advice must be well chosen.

It must be understood that older people filling the role of counselor do not claim professional opinion. The older person must detect if a person needs psychological or psychiatric assistance. If he does, the senior must be quick to refer the case to the pastor or a professional.

Most troubled people simply need a listening ear. If there is someone who is willing to listen seriously, to help sort out the problems, and to give general direction, much good can be accomplished. Senior adults can thereby minister.

Visitation

Actually, we have already alluded to the ministry of visitation in the section on

personal witnessing, hospital and nursing homes, and apartment complexes.

The kind of visitation that comes into focus here is planned, concentrated visitation by the church to the community. Senior adults who have a burden for winning people can do it. Some helpful hints are important for effective visitation:

1. Recruit the workers. Don't use pressure to get people to visit. Use people who feel called to this ministry.
2. Select the areas to be visited. Mark off these areas. Don't try to cover too much area in one day.
3. Order tracts. Have plenty of material on hand that relates to salvation. Have doctrinal tracts for those who ask for them.
4. Train the workers. This may take time but it will be worth the effort.

This type of training will show the senior adult members the most effective method of sharing their faith in Christ with a lost world.

Giving

Giving is a gift! Romans 12:8 says, "he who giveth, let him do it with simplicity" (KJV) God has senior adults who love to give and are able to do so. The church should appreciate these people.

Senior adults have more money than any other age group in America. Many of them have worked hard and regularly for a lifetime and have been very frugal. They deserve what they have.

Another reason seniors are so blessed is that many of these people have tithed and given freely during their lifetime. God has honored them and they are still giving freely in their retirement.

One pastor of a rather large church (550 members) studied the financial record of his church and found that the senior adults gave more money (not just percentage wise) to the church than any other age group. This speaks of a mixture of confidence in God, love for the church, and belief in what they are doing. None of this group will ever starve; God will see to that!

There are some particular senior adults who seem to have a special capacity for giving. The more they give, the more they seem to have to give. Many special ministries of the local church would be hampered if it were not for these special saints. May the church always love and appreciate these givers and recognize their loyalty and consistent financial support.

Prison and Jail Ministry

This is a growing ministry today. The bad news is that prisons are bulging at the seams. Every state has the same problem—not enough room to house prisoners. The good news is that there is a great revival moving in the prisons of America. Prisoners are accepting the gospel message. Sunday school classes and even churches are being organized within prison walls!

Senior adults have a message for prisoners. The local church is right on target when it allows and encourages senior adults to become actively involved in prison and jail ministry. In prison, men and women have time on their hands. Many are repentant of sins committed that have brought them to prison. They need and many times want someone to let them know that they are still loved. Who can witness better to the incarcerated than senior men and women who have lived over six decades and have likely encountered and overcome the problems these people still have? The senior's testimony can be life changing to the prisoner.

Altar Workers

In some local churches the best altar workers are older people. They are compassionate, considerate, and willing to take time with people who need to pray. Too often, the altar call is given in our churches and by the time the last person arrives at the altar, the first one to come has already left. While it doesn't take a lifetime to reach heaven in prayer, there are some people who really need to get a grip on their lives and it takes some time for them to pray through. Here is where the senior adult can help. He or she perhaps knows the burdens of people and can pray most effectively for those in need.

Particular care ought to be given to the unsaved at the altar. A wrong word or even a wrong gesture can hurt a person for the rest of his or her life. The right word can bring salvation to the same person.

Some senior adults may be great altar workers while some may need training. As a project, the senior adult group could designate one month as a training session for potential altar workers. In these training sessions the senior adults could study and memorize appropriate scriptures, study the importance and how-to of using the Bible at the altar, learn how to avoid unnecessary doctrinal discussions and how to encourage the seeker to come to a decision for Christ.

Perhaps every senior adult would not be the best altar worker, but with proper

training, everyone could be a better worker. This could be a giant help to a pastor who needs more men and women who know how to deal with people in the altar.

Greeters

Greeters are the first people that a newcomer sees when he visits a church. If a greeter makes a positive impression on the new person, he is likely to return. Greeters see to it that everyone gets a hearty handshake, a smile, and a personal greeting. Although the church is not basically an organization for social interchange, it should have the characteristics of a large family and an atmosphere of friendliness.

Why not use senior adults for greeters? If used, the senior adult group could not only serve as greeters, but also make a follow-up call the following week to the newcomer.

Senior adults know how to give individual attention and that is what the new person needs. Eye contact is very important. The senior adult should greet the people one at a time, ask for names and repeat the names back to them to be sure he pronounced them correctly.

To be a greeter is indirectly a ministry opportunity. If the person is made to feel comfortable in the church setting, he is more likely to respond to the message.

Prayer

The Church of God has had a special prayer emphasis since 1986. Hundreds of churches and thousands of members have been called to their knees in prayer and because of this emphasis, great spiritual things are happening. Churches are growing, some at an unbelievably fast pace.

In many of these churches senior adults are giving themselves to intercessory prayer. Prayer meetings are being held day and night, and senior adults are staying for hours to pray for the church and for God to send revival.

In one church the pastor spontaneously called for a 6 a.m. prayer service on Monday. There were 26 people who attended and about two-thirds were senior adults—some in their late 70s. This speaks of the power of a senior Pentecostal prayer group.

Senior adult meetings can be turned into prayer meetings. Along with other prayer emphasis, which the church might have, at least one of the monthly meetings each year could be a prayer service. Needs could be presented individually and time could be spent in intercessory prayer for these needs. Prayer results should be printed in the church bulletin, giving glory to God for victories won, conversions, healings, and Holy Spirit baptisms.

Prayerborne Division

Because of the great emphasis on prayer in the Church of God, a Prayerborne Division of God's Intercessors has been developed. Prayerborne is named after America's Airborne Division which is noted for its ability to wage physical wars successfully. Prayerborne has two goals:

1. To recruit as many senior adults (55 and over) as possible—both men and women—to form local Prayerborne Divisions of God's Intercessors.

2. To train and instruct the members of their local Prayerborne Division to pray. They should be encouraged to pray on a regular basis, at least once a week together and daily at home, for their family members, their pastor and his staff, for their state officials and for their national leaders. They should pray by name—praying that God's will prevail in every aspect of their lives and their work for Him.

Already many Prayerborne members have solicited hundreds of others in the local churches to pray with them. What is happening? Retired ministers and laymen are leading prayer services all over the country and God is hearing their prayers!

HANDS-ON-HELPS OPPORTUNITIES

Senior adult groups or individuals may wish to consider becoming involved in the ministry of helps. Helps Ministry is a practical and hands-on type of service. Christians are to be Jesus' hands and feet reaching out to others. Here are examples of projects in the helps area.

- Literacy
- Adopt-a-grandchild
- Latch-key callers
- Library helpers
- Hospital volunteers
- Office help
- Shopping for the homebound
- Reading to the visually impaired
- Distributing toys to needy children at Christmas
- Meals on wheels
- Provide transportation
- Tape ministry for shut-ins
- Physical fitness class

- Letter writers
- Church cleanup
- Church historian
- Church decorations for special occasions
- Journalism

The following agencies can provide contacts for valuable volunteer services

Administration on Aging
U.S. Department of Human Services
Washington, DC 20205

American Association for Retired Persons (AARP)
1225 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036

Foster Grandparent Program
Action
Washington, DC 20525

National Center for Voluntary Action
1735 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

National Council for Senior Citizens
1511 K Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

National Council on the Aging
1828 L Street, NW
Washington, DC 20006

Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
Action
Washington, DC 20525

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)
Action
Washington, DC 20525

Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA)
Action
Washington, DC 20525

SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

All worthy senior activities are not directly spiritual. God does not expect seniors to quit living socially and cease having fun because of their age. Senior adults enjoy fellowship and often plan activities just for the sake of being together.

Travel

Traveling together is a great social opportunity for active senior adults. They may travel by bus, van or a caravan of cars, but the fact that they go together is healthy. They may wish to take frequent short trips, an annual long trip or both. This provides time for a close relationship with the group. For most groups, two short trips (100-200 miles) and one long trip (500-up miles) each year would be practical.

Retreats and Conferences

Older people need to be involved in church retreats and conferences. It is likely that a large group of senior adults will attend such meetings if they are aware that others their own age are attending. These retreats and conferences may be designed just for senior adults or they may be general meetings of the church. In either case, older people ought to attend because they are still a great part of the church and their travel to and from such meetings can be very enjoyable.

Patriotic Celebrations

Christian senior adults are good citizens. They are good for their community, their city and nation. They support the government with prayers and finance. They have a higher voter turnout than any other age group. They realize that our freedom was blood bought and they are loyal and respectful to our nation's founders.

Because of this deep respect instilled in the older people, they enjoy patriotic celebrations. Why not? Some remember battles fought in years past.

The seniors could sponsor a Fourth of July celebration in an outdoor setting and invite the community people. The ladies could bring a covered dish and the men could make homemade ice cream. Lawn games would be in order. Even a mini-fireworks display could be planned, if desired by the group. The church minister of music may be contacted to present a concert of patriotic music. As a benediction all present could stand and sing "God Bless America."

Crafts and Hobbies

There are a variety of crafts and hobbies that would be enjoyable, relaxing, and therapeutic for senior adults. Perhaps every person would have a favorite. No one in the group should be forced into doing something he or she prefers not doing; the opportunities should be there for seniors to choose.

Here is a brief list of crafts and hobbies: Ceramics, clay modeling, sewing, quilting, woodcarving, photography, and painting. Of course the list is endless.

Some active groups designated a certain morning of the week for meetings. Their usual place to assemble is the church fellowship hall.

Some groups meet at 9a.m. for doughnuts, coffee, and juice. Someone leads in a Bible study. There is still plenty of time for crafts, after which a luncheon is served. It gives a full morning of fun, fellowship, study, and crafts for the senior adults.

This schedule may not be practical in every church. It seems to work best in a small town where most seniors live near the church.

SENIOR TALENT

Senior Talent is an annual competition sponsored by USA Missions. The purpose of the competition is to foster fellowship among Church of God senior adults across local, district, and state/regional boundaries and also to promote the various God-given talents enjoyed by our senior adults.

Presently the music division has 15 categories and the art division has seven categories in the competition. It is hoped later to add categories. Individual states are responsible for arranging district, regional, and state competitions. The state winners are eligible for the national competition at the Smoky Mountain Jubilee.

SUMMARY

The opportunities for senior adult involvement in today's church are limitless. We have mentioned a few under the headings of Ministry, Hands-on Helps, Social, and Talent available.

Ministry opportunities:

- Music
- Bible teaching
- Personal witnessing
- Church planting
- Church advertising
- Hospital and nursing home ministry
- Telephone reassurance
- Apartment complexes
- Counseling
- Visitation
- Giving
- Prison and Jail ministry
- Altar workers
- Greeters
- Prayer

Hands-on Help opportunities available:

- Literacy
- Adopt-a-grandchild
- Latch-key callers
- Library helpers
- Hospital volunteers
- Office help
- Shopping for the homebound
- Reading to the visually impaired
- Distributing toys to needy children at Christmas
- Meals on Wheels
- Provide transportation
- Tape ministry for shut-ins
- Physical fitness class
- Letter writers

- Church cleanup
- Church historian
- Church decorations for special occasions
- Journalism

Social involvement opportunities:

- Travel
- Retreats and conferences
- Patriotic celebrations
- Crafts and hobbies

1. Roger Hauser, *Activities with Senior Adults* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987), p. 54.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Rewards of Senior Adults

There are definitely some tangible rewards in doing a job well. When senior adults are hard at work in ministering for the Lord, everybody gains. We are promised that in God's Word.

REWARDS TO THE CHURCH

Some churches do not seem to have time nor a place for senior adults. While they may be engaged in ministry in other ways, they fail to see the need for whatever effort and finance it would take to organize and mobilize their senior adults to ministry.

Other churches quickly note that senior adults are mature people. They know that if they support this ministry, they will also be winners. The bottom line for having a senior adult ministry is to raise older adults to a higher plane of living. Gerontologists have one common goal: to determine ways to enhance the quality of life in later years. The message of Christ speaks directly to that issue for all humanity.

What are some of the rewards to the church for providing a ministry for senior adults?

Service Involvement

What pastor does not wish to see his entire congregation involved in service for the Lord? Rather than have a group of older people simply sitting around complaining and talking of years gone by, the wise pastor will train them and send them out to serve. The more people serve the church, the more good it will accomplish.

When senior adults serve by singing, visiting, praying, and winning people to Christ,

the church is the benefactor. Not only does the corporate church benefit directly from this service, but the example the older people set is good for the rest of the congregation. Involved people are happy people and happy people make a good church.

Church Growth

A natural result of an active senior adult group is church growth. Church growth ought never to be a painful process, even though it does require hard work. Church growth ought to be a natural result of every member finding his place and using his gifts and talents for the Lord.

Senior adults are a part of the whole church. As they pray, counsel, visit, advertise, and give to the church, other people will want to become members. When these people become Christians, they become loyal supporters of the church. It boosts the self-esteem of older people to know that they are an indelible part of the growth of the local church.

Churches that are stalemated and need to grow ought to put older people to work!

New People

New people spark any church. It would be a very selfish congregation that would not appreciate new people joining them. In fact, if new people do not come in, the church will eventually die because people continually move and transfer away.

New faces spark any church. As people see them, they are pleased that they had a part in winning them. Sometimes, it is difficult to know precisely whom God used in a conversion. This signals a message to all of us that God uses many people (some of them senior citizens) in growing His church. A continual flow of new people to a church is worth working for. Senior adults know that.

REWARDS TO THE INDIVIDUAL

The entire church is blessed when seniors go to work. But there are also rewards for the senior individual who has availed himself of opportunities to work for God. The greatest pleasure some people have is being involved in soulwinning and soul-keeping.

A Feeling of Worth

Society would tell older people that they are used up, done for and are now simply waiting to die. One of the rewards of ministering in old age is the feeling of worth it produces. Seniors are needed by God and are gifted to perform tasks that perhaps no one else can accomplish.

This feeling of worth does not come by sitting on the sidelines watching the world go by. It comes by discovering abilities, continuously pressing toward a goal, and daily hammering away at ministry. Even if there is no money gained, seniors can have a deep feeling that they are worth something to God and to society.

A Feeling of Belonging

All of us like to be a part of something—something larger than ourselves. This is characteristic of people of all ages. Being a member of a strong Pentecostal church and being a part of a senior adult group gives a true sense of belonging. What could be greater than belonging to a good church and working with Christian people? When older people live in that atmosphere, life is happier and longer for them.

A Feeling of Accomplishment

Productivity leads to a positive self-esteem. Seniors must remain productive. Before retirement, an individual gained esteem by money, position, and accomplishment. Therefore, with these withdrawn, something must be found as a replacement. This is why it is important that churches offer a ministry group to seniors. This group can provide service and responsibility that rewards with accomplishment.

William Menenger has stated that “people who stay young despite their years do so because of an active interest that provides satisfaction through participation.”¹ Even a little accomplishment is better than doing nothing.

REWARDS TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The most important reward for any kind of spiritual labor is that it is pleasing to God. If God places His divine approval upon a project, that is reward enough. He is using finite men in Kingdom work.

God is surely pleased when a sinner comes to Him truly repenting of his sins and commits himself to a Christlike walk. But just think of how many people may have been involved in the sinner getting saved. The example of an older Christian, the fervent and fresh testimony of youth, the godly concern of a young couple and the willingness of a courageous preacher to give a message forthright and clear. Who convinced the person to be saved? All had a part. All are a part of God’s great Kingdom.

May each of us so spread the gospel that the kingdom of God gets larger on a daily basis. May every senior adult take his rightful place in ministry and thereby enhance God’s kingdom.

SUMMARY

There are many rewards of an active senior adult group. Some of the rewards to the church are increased service involvement, church growth, and new people attending the church.

The senior adult is blessed with a feeling of worth, of belonging, and of accomplishment. There is also a reward to the kingdom of God. Its number increases and its influence is far-reaching.

When older people minister, the whole world is better!

*The best years that a man may know
The best years that bloom most fair
Are not the years when fortune smiles
With treasures rich and rare,
Nor when the cheers of fickle crowds
Arise from shifting throngs,
Or when in place life swings and sings
In lilting, laughing songs;
But when man's heart with love is fixed
And faith defeats his fears
And when in strength he bends to serve—
Lo, these are man's best years.*

Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave--just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:26-28).

1. Roger Hauser, *Activities with Senior Adults* (Nashville: Broadman, 1987) p. 52.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Senior Adult Activities

ANNUAL SMOKY MOUNTAIN JUBLIEE

The Annual Smoky Mountain Jubilee sponsored by USA Missions is the highlight of the year for senior adult activities. The convention is planned with the senior in mind to include exciting worship services, fellowship, encouragement, senior adult awards, fun-times, lots of door prizes, talent competition, and workshop classes.

The registration information for the convention will be mailed directly to the attendees from previous years and the state office will have information for those who have never attended before.

This annual conference takes place at the Gatlinburg Convention Center in the beautiful city of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. The Great Smoky Mountains serve as a scenic backdrop to this convention and attendees of the conference also are allowed free time to visit the unique shops and area restaurants.

NATIONAL TALENT COMPETITION

Talent competition is a way to recognize the talents of our senior adults. Many have been accomplished in various areas of the arts while in their prime. It is the purpose of this program to encourage and motivate the seniors to continue using their talents for their local church. The Senior Adult Talent Guidelines are available from USA Missions Department, and are automatically mailed to each entry for national competition.

1. To enter the national competition, one must win in the state competition in the state where they reside.

2. The participant must also be a registered delegate at the Smoky Mountain Jubilee in order to be eligible for the national competition, which is conducted at the annual Jubilee.
3. To be fair to all contestants, the Guidelines will be closely adhered to.

SENIOR ADULT DAY

The Church of God has set aside the fourth Sunday in September as the suggested date to celebrate Senior Adult Day. (Another date may be more appropriate for some churches). This annual celebration will give congregations an opportunity to honor the seniors among them and to promote harmony and understanding between all age groups of the church.

Each year a theme is chosen and materials are available to support that theme.

Purpose of Senior Adult Day Celebration

Awareness

A Senior Adult Day can help provide an opportunity to inform those in your congregation that later years can be both meaningful and fulfilling. It is certainly a time of celebration.

Recognition

Senior Adult Day provides an opportunity to recognize the accomplishments—both past and present—of senior adults.

Attitudes

Senior Adult Day can help church members form positive attitudes toward older persons, as well as toward their own aging process.

The fact that 85 percent of senior adults are living happy and fulfilling lives is cause to celebrate and can help dispel negative stereotypes of growing older.

Personal Growth

Senior Adult Day should emphasize the positive aspects of growing old in the Lord. The common bond that believers of all ages share should be emphasized with special attention being given to the faithfulness of God in the lives of your seniors.

This day is a celebration of the victories that God has done and is still doing in the lives of senior adults.

See Appendix, "Planning Your Senior Adult Day"

APPENDIX

Planning Your Senior Adult Day

1. **Establish** a date and place it on the church calendar.
2. **Select** a planning committee. If your church has an organized senior adult group, the director and the officers, along with representation from other age groups, could make up the planning committee. If you do not have an organized group, then a special committee with as wide a church representation as possible should be appointed.
3. **Develop** a workable program. Use this guide to help you plan a program that supports the theme. You will not be able to follow every suggestion in this guide. Choose those that best suit your seniors.
4. **Make** sure your planning includes activities which will appeal to senior adults.
5. **Advertise** and inform the people of your church and community about the upcoming special event.
6. **Hold** regular meetings and prepare a checklist to ensure that every task is completed on schedule.
7. **Show** your appreciation to all who worked to make the day a success.

Responsibilities of the planning committee include:

- Deciding on activities for Senior Adult Day
- Appointing special committees to carry out plans
- Coordinating all planning through regular meetings
- Considering appropriate special recognitions
- Ordering any support materials that may be needed

Special committees to consider:

- Program
- Publicity
- Music
- Fellowship/meals
- Transportation
- Special arrangements/special functions

IDEAS FOR SENIOR ADULT DAY

Listed below are 38 ideas for Senior Adult Day. You may use as many of them as you like to make your Senior Adult Day special. As you read through the list, you will probably think of other ways you can use and honor senior adults. Incorporate your own ideas into these and make this a day that your church will never forget.

1. Set a high attendance goal for senior adults in Sunday school.
2. Plan a breakfast before Sunday school or serve light refreshments (beverage and Danish or fruit).
3. Register each senior who attends and present each with a nametag and corsage or boutonniere.
4. Combine the senior adult classes and invite a special guest speaker for Sunday school.
5. Make the morning worship service the focus of the celebration. Use as many seniors in the service as possible. They can read scripture, lead in prayer, give testimonies, receive the offering, serve as ushers, serve as greeters, and present special music.
6. Sometime during the service have a senior share "Stories of a Lifetime" or special events from the past with the congregation. Oftentimes remarkable stories and events are lost because no one took the time to document these stories. Some of those that are most remarkable are the most simplistic related to the history of the community or church.
7. Arrange for a senior adult choir. Special music is available for senior adult choirs, or you may wish to sing favorites from the hymnal.
8. Invite a retired minister to bring the message.
9. Invite a person from the community who identifies with senior adult ministry to be the guest speaker.
10. The pastor should meet with all seniors and formally organize a Senior Adult Ministry group.
11. Take 10 minutes of the morning service to tell recent accomplishments of senior adults.

12. Recognize senior adults who have made a special or significant contribution during the past year.
13. Elect an outstanding senior adult and/or senior adult couple for the day.
14. Present a copy of *Like a Mighty Army* to the senior adult director.
15. Treat all seniors to lunch at a local restaurant.
16. Plan a covered dish lunch for the entire church family following the morning service.
17. Plan a reception following the evening service.
18. Present each senior adult (or selected seniors) with a special gift as a token of appreciation.
19. In the afternoon, visit those seniors who were unable to attend the service. Take them an audio or video recording of the service if one is available.
20. The Sunday evening service could be an old-fashioned sing featuring best-loved hymns and brief devotional thoughts and testimonies by senior adults.
21. Use senior adults as teachers in all classes during Sunday school.
22. Choose a senior who may be in need and designate the morning offering for that person.
23. Have seniors sit with their extended families. Recognize the senior with the largest family present.
24. Recognize the person who has been saved the longest. Have that person give a testimony.
25. Recognize the oldest person present. Honor with a gift.
26. Reserve a special section of the church and have all seniors sit together.
27. Ask a youth, man or woman, to offer a special prayer for senior adults during the morning service.
28. Invite retired mayors, political figures, doctors, lawyers, teachers, and community workers to participate in your special day.
29. Present a senior adult musical in the morning or evening service.
30. Assign senior adults to all leadership positions (teachers, ushers, musicians, and speakers) on Senior Adult Day.
31. Allow seniors to give personal testimonies.
32. Present an accurate recorded history of the local church and the roles seniors have played.
33. Prepare a historical photo display. Gather pictures of seniors when they were younger.
34. Initiate an *Adopt a Grandparent* program in which seniors are assigned to couples or families and honored on their birthdays and anniversaries.
35. Pay tribute to individuals for outstanding contributions and achievements. Show special attention to those who excel in community service, jail ministry, hospital visitation, nursing home ministry, and other ministries of encouragement.

36. Pick a senior to honor with a “This Is Your Life” presentation.
37. Read poetry that a senior has written or sing a song one has composed.

IDEAS FOR AN EXTENDED CELEBRATION

Your senior adult celebration does not have to be limited to just one day. You can plan an entire week of activities for your seniors or you could spread the activities over the entire month. Whichever you choose, make sure that your celebration culminates on the Sunday you have designated as Senior Adult Day.

1. Sponsor a picnic on a Saturday honoring all seniors.
2. Plan a covered dish dinner or banquet for seniors catered by the young adults of your church. Consider providing transportation to and from the dinner as a special treat.
3. Ask the church’s middle adults to host a cake and homemade ice cream social following the midweek service.
4. Sponsor a Saturday outing or a day of games at the church fellowship hall.
5. Make a short visit to each senior’s home.
6. Have the youth prepare a small basket of goodies for each senior. The baskets or bags may contain a small bottle of hand lotion, homemade cookies, fruit, cologne, decorative soaps, shaving cream, disposable razors, lens papers, a handkerchief, toothpaste, mouthwash, or a bookmark. Using various combinations of the items above, you can make different baskets for the men and women.
7. Have the men of the church take care of any special needs that your seniors might have—minor home repairs, yard care, auto needs.
8. Plan a visit to a nursing home. Let your seniors be involved in the visit. Hold a worship service, if possible.
9. Coordinate a visit to your local jail and let the seniors participate in ministering to the inmates.
10. Plan a short out-of-town trip for your seniors.
11. Ask the Women’s Ministries or Men’s Fellowship (or both) to present each senior with a coupon for a meal at a local restaurant.
12. Take the senior women shopping.
13. Plan a fishing trip for the senior men.
14. Have a communitywide senior adult meeting. Feature a health-care professional as the speaker (or some other community figure). Serve lunch and have a short devotion. This could be a great evangelism tool.
15. Set a special night to meet and present every senior with a personalized giant print Bible. Have the pastor speak briefly to the senior adults.
16. Let the children of the church write thank you notes to the seniors. Some

of these could be read on Senior Adult Day. They can be personally delivered to each senior on Senior Adult Day.

17. Ask the Women's Ministries to send a card to each senior expressing appreciation for their dedicated work and faithfulness.
18. Survey the community for resources available to seniors.
19. Establish a senior adult advisory council.
20. Sponsor a senior adult talent contest and showcase various talents like baking, sewing, music, writing, woodcarving, crafts, Bible knowledge, art, and gardening.
21. Sponsor a senior adult weekend with a Friday evening service, a Saturday breakfast or picnic with fun time, and Sunday services that honor seniors. Finish the weekend with a Sunday luncheon.
22. Sponsor an in-house retreat much like a youth lock-in.
23. Plan a fishing trip for seniors. Take teens along for baiting hooks while young and middle adults prepare a picnic lunch.
24. Get the seniors involved in ministry. Make a list of things for them to do and let them choose.

OUTSTANDING SENIOR ADULTS AWARDS

At each National Senior Adult Convention (Smoky Mountain Jubilee), USA Missions gives awards to outstanding senior adults in three categories: senior adult single, senior adult lay couple, and senior adult ministerial couple.

Winners of these awards are chosen from a slate of nominees that are submitted by each state. The winners are announced at the Smoky Mountain Jubilee.

Pastors make nominations to the USA Missions director of each state or the state overseer. From these local church nominations, a state winner is selected in each category and sent to USA Missions. USA Missions will select the national winners.

Copies of the forms for nominating outstanding seniors may be obtained from your state USA Missions director.

For copies of handbook, go to www.usamissions.com and download.