

53 Older Adult Ministry Ideas

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As you plan for intentional ministry by, with, and for older adults, keep in mind that every older adult is a unique individual and one ministry program does not meet all needs. Some older adults are “*Go-Goes*” (active phase), others might be “*Slow-Goes*” (less active and passive phase), while still others are “*No-Goes*” (inactive and homebound phase). Be sure to identify the needs and abilities of older adults in your congregation, know the resources available, and plan your ministry accordingly.

1. **Adult Day Ministry:** A one-day or several-days a week care ministry for older adults who are experiencing early stages of memory loss. Recreational and social activities for older adults who need daytime supervised care and a benefit of respite for caregivers.
2. **Age-Friendly Congregation Certificate (AFCC):** Participate in becoming a *champion* in your church and leading your congregation in the Age-Friendly Congregation Certificate Program. For more information about AFCC, visit: <https://encoreministry.org/afcc/>
3. **Brown Bag Lunch:** Facilitate a weekly or monthly lunch-time gathering for older adults in your church, invite guest speakers, and share community resources available for older adults.
4. **Caregivers Support Group:** Start a monthly support group for caregivers and provide learning, information, and sharing opportunities.
5. **Children of Aging Parents:** Provide support, networking opportunities, and resource information for adult children of aging parents.
6. **Church Library with Aging Resources:** Place in your church library reading materials about aging issues and older adult concerns. Include audio and large print books and a computer with internet service.
7. **Companion Services:** Older adults accompany other older adults for visits to the doctor, dentist, pharmacy, grocery store, etc., helping them along the way.
8. **Exercise and Fitness Classes:** Invite older adults to participate in “low impact” aerobics class, Yoga, Zumba, Tai Chi, Pilates, or some other form of exercise.
9. **Field Trips:** Provide opportunities for older adults to take educational, recreational, and historical religious trips and short-term mission opportunities
10. **First Aid, CPR and AED Training:** Provide First Aid, CPR and AED training opportunities for older adults and leaders of Older Adult Ministry. The American Red Cross offers classes for anyone, including older adults, who has a desire to learn how to help others during times of crisis. Visit: www.redcross.org

11. **Five Wishes:** Filling out Five Wishes yourself is something you can do for your family and the future you. Providing it as a program event with older adults in your church shows you care about them and their families' well-being, too. The organization that distributes Five Wishes is Aging with Dignity. For more information, visit <https://www.fivewishes.org/>
12. **Flowers for Homebound and Nursing Home Residents:** Following worship services, altar flowers are taken to homebound and nursing home residents.
13. **Fraud and Scam Awareness:** Provide information to older adults about frauds and scams taking place in your community and on the internet.
14. **Game Day:** Once a week or monthly, hold game day for older adults such as card and board games (include games that involve mental stimulation).
15. **Grand Pals:** Provide opportunities for older adults to serve as "foster grandparents" and to share their lives with children and youth who have few or no extended family members living in the community.
16. **Health Care Ministry:** Start a community faith nursing program (parish nurse) for the health and well-being of older adults in your congregation. Take blood pressure check-ups and visit homebound and hospital discharged members.
17. **Helping Hands:** Invite older adults to manage and supervise church food distribution, meal feeding, and clothing pantry for the needs of the community.
18. **Homebound Lunch Partners:** Invite older adults to visit persons who are homebound and to share lunch together one-day a week.
19. **Homebound Sunday School Class:** Facilitate homebound class members to participate in Sunday school with other members virtually by use of a speaker phone in the classroom or by using computer technology and the internet.
20. **Homebound Worship:** Facilitate homebound members to read scripture, offer prayer, or participate in other liturgy acts during Sunday morning worship services by videoing in advance or virtually by using computer technology and the internet.
21. **Intergenerational Retreat:** Invite older adults and youth to participate in a retreat together. Plan for games, hikes, meals, Bible study, and sharing.
22. **"Latch Key Kid" Ministry:** Invite older adults to provide a safe place and an after-school program at the church for children and youth until parents return home after work. Provide for tutoring and mentoring opportunities.
23. **Life Review Class:** Facilitate opportunity for older adults to participate in life review and reminiscence classes.
24. **Marriage Enrichment Retreat:** Invite older married couples lead and participate in marriage enrichment programs for couples of all ages and stages of marriage.
25. **Medical Equipment Loan Ministry:** Gather, clean, and store used medical equipment (walkers, canes, wheelchairs, etc.) for loaning to persons in need.
26. **Mentoring and Tutoring:** Invite older adults to serve as mentors for children, youth, and adults (e.g., youth during confirmation and for new church members).

27. **Minor Repair and Home Maintenance:** Invite older adults with expertise to help others with painting, changing light bulbs, mowing lawns, home chores, carpentry.
28. **Multigenerational Study Groups:** Invite children, youth, and adults to study and learn together. This might include Bible topics and/or current events.
29. **Nursing Home Worship Services, Sunday School Classes, and VBS:** Invite older adults to participate in a Sunday School class in nursing homes and Assisted Living settings and lead Vacation Bible School for residents.
30. **Older Adult Choir:** Invite older adults to form a choir. Sing at church, nursing homes, retirement communities, and for homebound. Plan special events such as Christmas caroling throughout the community.
31. **Older Adult Devotional Booklet:** Invite older adults to compile a devotional book of scripture readings, meditations, and prayers for congregational use to use during the season of Advent or Lent.
32. **Older Adult Life Guides:** Invite older adults to serve as Older Adult Life Guides, persons who will “walk alongside” other older adults who need a bit of extra care, support, information, resources.
33. **Older Adult Newsletter:** Create a newsletter especially for the older adults in your congregation. Invite older adults to submit articles and include announcements about meetings and events. This can be done online as an e-newsletter and mailed weekly or monthly.
34. **Older Adult Recognition Service and Dinner:** During the month of May, Older Americans Month, is a special time to recognize older adults in your church. The 2nd Sunday in September, National Grandparent’s Day, is another good time to recognize older adults. Invite your congregation to plan a dinner, worship service, or other celebration to honor the faith, wisdom, and service of older adults.
35. **Prayer and Faith Perspective Practices.** Invite older adults to participate in regular group prayer and faith practices. This might include opportunities for sharing “acts of kindness” and “gratitude lists” by the group.
36. **Retirees Breakfast Fellowship:** Invite older adults to participate in a weekly breakfast fellowship for retirees.
37. **Ritual for Older Adults Moving from their Homes:** Invite older adults to visit with older adults who are moving from their home to long-term care facilities. Share in prayer, scripture, song, Holy Communion, and words of remembrance and thanksgiving for the years spent in the home. Within six months or so, follow up with a similar service in new home setting.
38. **S.E.N.I.O.R.S. Ministry:** A comprehensive ministry is the S.E.N.I.O.R.S. Ministry model which provides for intentional ministry in these specific areas: S = spirituality; E = enrichment; N = nutrition/health & well-being; I = intergenerational; O = outreach to the community; R = recreation; and S = Service
39. **Service Provider “Preferred List”:** Gather information as a *Preferred List* for older adults who need local services such as auto mechanics, plumbers,

electricians, and other local services. Service providers are all vetted before being listed by the church.

40. **Short Term Mission:** Invite older adults to participate in short-term mission opportunities such as Habitat for Humanity, Room in the Inn, and other community projects.
41. **Social Networking with Older Adults:** Start a blog, Facebook page, or other social networking activity with older adults for the purpose of spiritual well-being.
42. **Sunday Afternoon Worship for Homebound and Caregivers:** Occasionally, throughout the year, conduct a special Sunday afternoon worship service for homebound members in the church sanctuary. Include the choir to sing, Holy Communion, and a time of fellowship following the service.
43. **Sunday Morning Respite Care:** Train volunteers to provide respite care on Sunday mornings for homebound or “home-centered” older adults so primary care providers can attend Sunday morning worship services.
44. **Technology Classes:** Facilitate technology classes for older adults with different skill levels. Invite knowledgeable people of all ages to assist older adults in such areas as making websites, staying safe online, and using social media.
45. **Telephone Reassurance:** Invite older adults to make daily telephone calls to older adults who are lonely, homebound, or home-centered members.
46. **Transportation Ministry:** Invite older adults and other church members to provide transportation for older adults to attend worship and church activities.
47. **Ventures in Learning:** Facilitate classes in your church to include opportunities art, creativity, and learning new skills. Such classes might include drawing classes, watercolor and painting, pottery, writing, literature, science, geography, and history studies
48. **Visitation Ministry:** Invite older adults visit other older adults who are homebound, lonely, hospitalized, institutionalized, and dying.
49. **Walking Group:** Start a walking group: around the block, on trails, or along a lake/shoreline inviting older adults to become absorbed in the scenery and nature.
50. **Weekday Bible Study:** Invite older adults in your church and from your community to participate in a weekday Bible Study (include refreshments, joys and concerns, singing and prayers).
51. **Wheelchair Ramp Ministry:** Invite older adults to help build and/or assemble temporary wheelchair ramps needed by persons who are homebound.
52. **Widows/Widowers Support Group:** Start a widows (and widowers) support group for information sharing, networking, and socialization. For more information about a Widows Support Group, visit *Wings of Hope* at www.wingsofhopewidowsministry.com
53. **Writing Letters and Sending Cards:** Older adults write personal letters and send birthday, anniversary, and special remembrance cards to others.