

## Senior, or “Older Adult Ministry”

**Leviticus: 19:32**, ‘Stand up in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly’ and revere your God. I am the Lord.

**Titus 1:5**: The reason I left you in Crete, was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you.

### A. Introduction:

One of the exciting moments in the church is when you see a member of the congregation move from spectator to participant. Where they once only attended on the weekend and occasional seasonal events, they now feel they have found their purpose: God has given them a vision to start a new ministry.

If the following elements are included in the conversation, the process for determining the viability for this new ministry will be smoother.

### Church Pastor should consider these five things:

#### 1. Affirmation.

Your affirmation of this ministry is critical. After all, you are their shepherd and mentor from the pulpit or more. In their eyes you have been part of inspiring this idea and moving them to action. It won't make sense to them if you are less than affirming—in their mind, this is what you have been trying to get them to do and they believe you will share in their excitement. This may be easy to do, or you may be less than thrilled with the idea they have brought to you. No matter what you think of the idea initially, keep in mind that to this group, it is the best idea ever! It is probably born out of personal experience; therefore it carries sensitivities with it. Fueled by great personal passion, it is a strong, yet delicate matter: handle with care! (**Titus 2: 2-8**)

#### 2. Process.

Starting a ministry is a lot of hard work and calls for a thoughtful process to both outline the big picture and hammer out the details. Essentially, the start-up leader needs to think through and prepare a “proposal” for discussion. Addressing the following items (at the least there may be more) will bring clarification to the possible new ministry start-up:

- **Purpose:** To rely on the wisdom and strengths of our “Older Adult Population” to teach and mentor the younger population of our church and community. While at the same time provide key services and opportunities for our “Older Adult Population.”
- **Values:** To be in alignment with the values of EMBC. For this ministry in particular – we place a high degree of value on our older adult population, and respect their wisdom, teachings, and experiences (**Ephesians 6:3**)

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- **Needs Assessment:** Why is an “Older Adult Population” ministry needed:
  - Fully utilize our older adult population for edification of our church as well as the greater community.
  - Provide key opportunities to mentor and teach.
  - To gather and celebrate.
  - To receive support from the church and younger church population.
- **Alignment:** This ministry directly aligns with the church mission/vision of passing down history, learnings, teaching, experiences, and wisdom to other church populations. It also supports the churches vision/mission to provide opportunities to older adults to gather and celebrate. It further supports our mission/vision to provide key services to the older population, and supports community outreach.
- **Short-Term and Long-Term Goals:**
  - Short-Term:**
    - Set up a meaningful ministry that starts with well-defined goals to sustain this ministry into the future.
    - Start with agreed upon areas that can be supported and will flourish.
    - Leadership buy-in and coordination.
    - Follow-up on everything that is working well, or needs to be adjusted.
    - Set up sustaining meetings.
    - Quickly react to successes and failures.
  - Long-Term:**
    - Well documented and sustainable process.
    - Weed out inefficiencies and make changes.
    - Grow our church and people.
    - Love and caring.
    - Community outreach
- **Resources:**
  - Pastor: Sets up mission/vision, and is the leader.
  - Facilitator(s)/Leader(s): Implements the mission/vision of the Pastor
  - Volunteers: Handle tasks as directed for the ministry.
  - Participants: Engaged in the ministry, participate, attend, teach, outreach.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Goals of this Ministry.

You must lead the conversation for defining **goals**. What do they expect from you and from the church? What do you expect from them? Be sure to cover the following:

- **Finances:** Are they expecting the church will allocate financial resources to this new ministry? How much and when, or is there no budget for this? Can they fundraise? Are there guidelines for fundraising? Will the church office handle the money for this ministry or will they do it from their personal account?
- **Facilities:** Do they need to use the church facilities for this ministry? What kind of facilities availability are they expecting? What can you offer? What are the expectations for using the facility? How do they schedule for space? What if this new ministry has a space conflict with another ministry or event? Will you give them their own church key?
- **Marketing:** Will this ministry be advertised in the church and/or in the community? How often? Will there be a cost for marketing? Are there any guidelines for

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advertising a church function? Can they hand out flyers on the sidewalk Sunday mornings? Can they pay for their own ad in the newspaper and do you need to approve it?

- **Prominence:** Will this ministry be a priority for the church? How often will it be in the bulletin? Will you, pastor, promote it from the pulpit? Will you be part of and present at the ministry functions? Or is this a group that requires space only (like AA, or a regional ministry)?

#### 4. Leadership Training from the Pastor.

A purpose of the Church is to equip and develop believers for service in God's Kingdom. This includes raising up and training leaders. We want people to *own* what they are doing and *know* what they are doing. If this new ministry takes flight, your primary role will not be with the ministry itself but with supporting and developing the ministry leader. Items to cover in the first year of leadership training would be:

- **Casting Vision for the Ministry.**
- **Organizing the Ministry for Success.**
- **Building a Healthy Team.**
- **Dealing with Conflict.**
- **Making Use of Feedback and Criticism.**

#### 5. Follow-Up Plan.

After the first meeting is over, be clear on what will happen next. When will the next meeting be and what will be discussed? What do they need to work on between now and then? After that, if it is decided to start the ministry, immediately determine and schedule follow-up meetings for the next three months or more. Regular follow-up meetings keep critical matters at the forefront, which in turn keeps the new ministry on track for effectiveness. For your follow-up meetings, consider discussing the following:

- **Affirmation.** Yes, again. In case you have been busy, here is your chance to provide tangible, continued affirmation. Do they feel your support?
- **Process evaluation.** Where are we in all this? How is it going? What is needed? Are there any problems, glitches?
- **Expectations.** Are expectations being met on both sides? Are there any unmet expectations? Are there any disappointments or frustrations from the starter's perspective or the church's perspective? (This can be a difficult part of the conversation, but keeping short accounts by having open dialogue along the way will prove so much better than bottling up grievances that lead to a future "explosion.")
- **Leadership Lessons.** As a good listener you will be able to hear the heart of your new leader and discern their personal successes and needs. Acknowledge their leadership strengths and encourage them to continue doing that same thing. In the same way, if they are having a leadership struggle, hopefully you can help them identify what that struggle is and match it with a leadership lesson from your own experience that will aid them.
- **Celebration.** Taking time to celebrate all the good results along the way is a must! Are there any small victories to recognize? Any good stories of God changing people's lives or meeting their needs through this new ministry? Share them,

celebrate them, and praise God for them! <sup>2</sup>

## B. Target Populations and Logistics

**In 2022, 54% of Americans will be greater than 50 years old.**

Therefore, not only does the church have to plan ministry for older adults(65-74), maturing adults (75+), but also for **young** adults (50-64) for their numbers are growing.

As a result, the church must develop ministry ideas and ministry opportunities for three church groups.

We also need to strengthen inter generational relationships among children, youth, busters, boomers and builders.

Church leader's must realize that significant living is necessary in the second half of life. God is giving us more years and energy to serve while the church needs to develop communication tools to reach each targeted audience.

**Here are some principles that apply to all 50+ groups.**

- Get the facts involving your target group such as;
- Number of people over 50
- Home bound
- Number of males and females
- Needs and interests

**Now we are going to enter a new paradigm for ministry.**

The "Middle Adult" group do not perceive themselves as seniors and anything that remotely resembles an activity for seniors will repel them.

One indication is that they drive; they do not take the bus. ***A new approach is needed.***

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In addition, most present senior groups are saturated due to the fact that after a few years together a group stays to itself and inadvertently keeps others out.

### **Briefly, let us look at some characteristics of “Middle Adults”.**

- Middle Adults are at their peak of influence and possess great energy.
- Their children are growing up and leaving home (empty nest).
- They are looking toward retirement.
- They are spending increasing energy in leisure time activities.
- They are adjusting to aging parents.

During the next 18 years, someone in the U.S. will turn 50 every *eight* seconds.

### **Characteristics of and connecting with “Baby Boomers”**

**The four main values that surface in most congregations among boomers are:**

- Boomers value family driven ministry (children involved).
- Boomers value freedom (retired but free to travel).
- Boomer value Biblical preaching (raised on absolutes).
- Boomers value respect when church decisions are made.
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- Born between 1946-1964, 76 million middle adults were born. Yes, the “Boomers” are exploding on the scene.
- Connect with boomers in the church and community by participating in their activities periodically.
- Reach non-churched boomers by building friendships
- Enlist boomers to help you.
- Begin to educate all generations about aging issues without using the word “senior”.
- Provide internet resources for **solving problems with papers, and in person.**

The four main values that surface in most congregations among boomers are:

## Now we direct our attention to the “Older” or as we are referred to, the “Elder” generation. (Joshua 13:1)

- Life is a marathon not a sprint, and in our journey we have had experiences that required faith and endurance.

We have overcome depression, global war, technological change, and social upheaval. Yet, we are still here and we still have something to contribute.

Celebrating with “Older” adults can be a joy providing the church utilizes their experience and skills.<sup>3</sup>

### **C. Areas to serve or Key Services:**

(We can add these topics to the New Members Class for “Areas to Serve”)

- **Leading/Teaching:**
  - Sunday School (Adult/Child) Leading and teaching
  - Sunday Services: Delivering messages.
  - Teaching and Counseling: New Members and New Believers Classes.

(1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:3-5)
- **Alignment with Pastor/Deacons/Teachers and Counselors**
  - Be aligned with a Pastor/Deacon/Leader for services, prayer, and fellowship
- **Annual Older Adult Luncheon**

Invite older adults from your church and community to participate in a summer luncheon. Provide entertainment and games.
- **Helping Hands**

Older adults maintain a church food and clothing pantry.
- **Home Maintenance and Minor Repair**

Older adults with skills help others by painting, changing light bulbs, mowing lawns, home chores, carpentry, etc.
- **Homebound Worship Participation**

Homebound members read scripture, offer Morning Prayer, or participate in other liturgy acts by telephone hooked up to church sound system.
- **Living History**

Older adults share their life journey and faith story on tape (video and/or audio), in writing, and orally in worship and Sunday school class.
- **Mentoring**

Invite older adults to serve as mentors for children, youth, and other adults (e.g., youth during confirmation and for new church members).
- **Multigenerational Study Groups**

Invite children, youth, and adults to study and learn together. This might include Bible topics and/or current events.

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- **Stephen Ministry**  
A specialized visitation program whereby older adults visit people who are ill, homebound, and institutionalized or have other needs.
- **Sunday Afternoon Worship for Homebound**  
Monthly, quarterly, or twice a year, conduct a special Sunday afternoon worship service (include Holy Communion), for homebound members in the church sanctuary.
- **Telephone Reassurance**  
Older adults make daily telephone calls to others.
- **Visitation Ministry (Luke 18:3), (James 1:27)**  
Older adults visit other older adults who are homebound, lonely, hospitalized, institutionalized, and dying. <sup>4</sup>

### Bibliography:

#### Notes

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#### References

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