



# WALKING alongside

strengthening congregational community ministries

## » Older Adult Ministry «

### » RESOURCES FOR THE JOURNEY

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It is estimated that almost one quarter of adults in the United States are over the age of 55.<sup>1</sup> Older adults represent a significant portion of our communities and congregations, often serving as some of the most active and committed members in the congregation. There is great need in the church to consider creating ministries tailored to our older adults, those who have invested much in the growth of the church and deserve to be served with a focus on their unique and individual needs and gifts.

#### Books

- *Designing an Older Adult Ministry* by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr (published by Upper Room Ministries). This book from the United Methodist Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries offers helpful material for developing and strengthening ministries as well as information about the needs and life issues of older adults. It also offers tools to help congregations evaluate current older adult ministries.

- *Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century: Step-By-Step Strategies for Reaching People Over 50* by Dr. David P. Gallagher (published by Group Publishing). This book provides insight, practical ideas, and successful strategies for older adult ministries. It provides worksheets and handouts, and it discusses the social, emotional, and spiritual needs of seniors.

#### Journal Articles

- "Why Older Adult Ministry?" by Donald Koepke. *Journal of Religion, Spirituality and Aging*. (2005), Vol. 17.3-4, pages 1-6.

This article describes an approach to the development of senior Christian ministries that focus on spiritual needs as well as psychosocial needs. This article also offers a basis for why congregations need to provide unique services for older adults.

- "Looking to Regional Church Bodies as a Resource for Ministry with Older Adults" by James W. Ellor. *Aging & Spirituality*. (2008), Vol. 20.1.

This article talks about the importance of intergenerational ministry within a church for strengthening a church and deepening faith. It highlights the necessity of acknowledging and addressing generational differences in order to overcome them.

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### Websites

- Christian Association Serving Adult Ministries – [www.gocasa.org](http://www.gocasa.org)

CASA is a resource for training and equipping congregational ministries for older adults. CASA provides leadership conferences, training events, retreats, and other educational resources such as books, manuals, and videos.

- National Council on Aging – [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

NCOA is a non-profit organization that focuses on leadership and advocacy for older adults. Their main mission is to improve the lives of older Americans.

- Center for Spirituality and Aging – [www.spiritualityandaging.org](http://www.spiritualityandaging.org)

The Center provides materials that teach spirituality and ethics as they relate to older adults and express the importance of advocacy for senior rights. They are committed to the understanding of aging as a spiritual journey.

- The National Presbyterian Church – [www.natpresch.org/older\\_adults.php](http://www.natpresch.org/older_adults.php)

This congregation is a great example of a church actively engaged in ministry for and with older adults. You can learn more on their website about their ministry which consists of teams that provide basic living needs, contact and visit members that cannot attend church regularly, deliver hot meals through the Meals on Wheels program, and provide one-on-one spiritual guidance to individuals through their Stephan ministry.

### Stepping Stones

*Brief descriptions of how to implement specific ministries. For each of the five broader areas above, many ministries can be envisioned. We have identified a few of these for each area and have articulated the steps for how that ministry might be planned.*

### Pathways

*Learn from the first-hand account of those already engaged in this specific ministry. Plus, develop networking contacts as go-to sources to explore solutions to challenges or celebrations of successes.*

### Food for the Journey

*A short devotional based on scripture that can be used in church bulletins, as a Moment for Mission during worship or as an introduction to a Bible study.*

### Footnotes

1. United States Census Bureau. *The Older Population in the United States: 2008*. <http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/age/general-age.html#older>.