

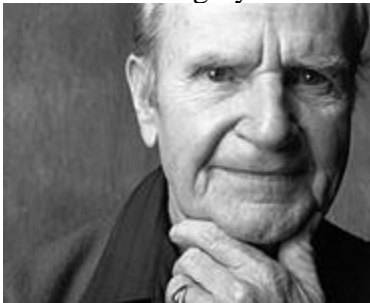
# Active Duty: Innovative Ministry Ideas for Seniors - David Gallagher

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by David Gallagher '67 (Moody Alumni Magazine)

Your church has a drama program that's understaffed, small groups without leaders and a library that's falling into disarray. Have you thought about asking seniors to help? By offering volunteer opportunities to the seniors in your community, you can involve them in meaningful service that gives them a sense of usefulness and draws them into the body of Christ. Here are 16 ways senior volunteers can serve in your church.

- **Evangelism Explosion:** Conduct an Evangelism Explosion clinic for seniors, providing training in evangelism and implementation of EE. After learning how to share their faith, seniors can conduct clinics for others in your church.
- **Small group leaders:** Who better to lead empty nesters, grandparenting or recovery small groups than a senior adult? Enlist several senior leaders with a strong faith background. For training, have them read *Small Group Ministry in the 21st Century* (Group), and look for the chapter titled "20 Tips for Seniors' Groups."
- **Pastoral assistance:** Seniors often have mature spiritual and biblical insight and can assist the pastor in a caring ministry. Ask a senior to set up a rotation plan of other seniors to make home and hospital visits, or sit with a family in the hospital during a loved one's surgery.



- **Home repair:** Seniors who were formerly electricians, carpenters, masons, plumbers or painters are tremendous resources. These seniors can help single mothers or financially disadvantaged families in the community improve or repair their homes, or simply act as "consultants."
- **Church library:** Many churches have retired librarians, former authors or seniors who just love to read. Recruit a few of these individuals to keep your library organized and updated.
- **Kitchen and cooking:** Some of the best cooks are grandmas and grandpas. Ask for volunteers to make dinners once a week for homebound seniors, new mothers or singles in the church. Keep these seniors on hand to staff the church kitchen during potlucks or picnics.

- **Cleaning and yard work:** Active seniors are often excellent at detail-oriented work, so employ them in assisting with your church's janitorial duties and keeping your flowerbeds and grass looking well-kept.
- **Financial planning:** You may have retired accountants and financial planners in your midst who can help your steering committees devise budgets and fundraising strategies. These seniors can also provide money management classes for other members who want to invest, buy a home or plan for retirement.
- **Missions and outreach:** Many seniors harbor a passion for missions and outreach or are retired field missionaries. Hold an "adopt a missionary" Sunday. Encourage seniors to make a commitment to pray for and write to a missionary for one year. Encourage active seniors to coordinate short-term mission trips.
- **Music and drama:** Making costumes or puppets, painting backdrops or helping children learn music are enjoyable opportunities for senior adults. Ask for volunteers who enjoy the arts or creative communication to donate their time before a big event.
- **Facilities:** Whether it's a broken sprinkler system or a leaky faucet, chances are a senior volunteer can fix it. Ask several seniors if they will be "on call" as handymen.
- **Worship:** Enlist seniors with a musical background to help lead worship, and ask others to offer prayers or read Scripture during weekend services.
- **Stephen Ministry:** Start a Stephen Ministry, a system for training and organizing lay people to provide one-to-one Christian care to hurting people in and around your congregation. Ask seniors to become Stephen Ministers, providing care to the church's bereaved, hospitalized, terminally ill, separated, divorced, unemployed, relocated, and others facing a crisis or life challenge.
- **Tele-Care ministry:** Train senior volunteers to care for people over the phone. Your church can provide a senior-staffed Tele-Care line that individuals can call to talk about their problems and receive prayer. Seniors can also call to follow-up with people absent from worship, living alone or in care centers.
- **Prison ministry:** Ask for senior volunteers to participate in sharing the good news with inmates at a local prison once a month.
- **Tutoring:** Enlist seniors to tutor children in local needy classrooms. Seniors can also volunteer their skills to tutor children from the church in various subjects.