

INVOLVING SENIORS IN MINISTRY *Dave Gallagher*

Imagine having a treasure and paying no attention to it, acting as if it's of no value. That's exactly what's happening in churches across the country. Our churches are filled with priceless treasures—untapped human resources that amazingly many churches almost totally ignore. I'm talking about our seniors and the wealth of service resources they represent.

Volunteerism is what seniors are all about. Where once they *had* to work at a job, now they're able to *choose* to serve in ministries fulfilling to them. Seniors have served in various professions their entire adult lives, and now they have the time, skills, and resources to invest in your church's ministries.

I have found that shortly after transitioning from working full-time, people want a time of rest and change of pace—but only for a short time. When they've taken the cruises and had their fun, it doesn't take long before they want to help others. They sense that deep feeling of wanting to serve and share their wisdom and experiences.

Rather than retiring, today's adult over age 55 is thinking of *transitioning*. With our better health and medical care, those over age 55 may fully anticipate two, three, or even four more decades of active life. The church should provide meaningful opportunities for these folks to minister and serve others.

Senior adults today are vibrantly alive; they have energy and want to volunteer—especially in the church. I serve as the senior pastor of a congregation specifically designed to reach people over age 50, and the wealth of time, energy, financial resources, academic knowledge, spiritual wisdom, emotional strength, and (yes!) physical stamina is astounding.

Let me give you a few practical ways you might involve seniors in ministry.

- **Evangelism Explosion for Seniors**— Evangelism Explosion has started a new effort designed to equip seniors to reach seniors in sharing the gospel.
- **Small Group Ministry**— Seniors have plenty of time to invest in preparation for facilitating small groups. And their experience with life makes them ideally qualified for numerous topics, such as an “empty nesters” group, a grandparenting group, a “healing takes time” recovery group, and so on.
- **Pastoral Assistance**— What senior or associate pastor wouldn't love having some help? Who has more time and wisdom than a senior adult wanting to serve the Lord? The possibilities are endless, including things such as home visits, hospital visits, and distributing literature about your church ministries to new people moving into the community.
- **Home repair**— Seniors who were carpenters, masons, plumbers, or painters are incredible resources for helping the poor, widowed, disabled, single moms...everyone who needs home repairs but just can't do it themselves for some reason. All it takes is someone to organize it—another great task for a senior.
- **Kitchen and Cooking** — Didn't you look forward to going to your grandparents' home for dinner?
- **Cleaning and yard work** — Who has more time and patience with details than seniors?
- **Financial Planning** — Most churches have retired accountants and financial planners who are perfect for serving on a finance committee or helping members with filling out forms or doing taxes.
- **Missions and Outreach** — Many seniors have a deep passion for world and local missions and outreach.

- **Music and Drama** — Worship today goes beyond drums and guitars. Your seniors have valuable drama and music gifts that need to be utilized. Making costumes and preparing backgrounds for drama, acting and doing dramatic readings or prayer, puppets...All forms of creative communication are wonderful opportunities for your senior adults.
- **Property and Grounds** — Whether it's a broken sprinkler system or a leaky faucet, there are probably senior adults who've had to fix it at their own homes and can do the same for the church.
- **Stephen Ministry** — Stephen Ministry provides congregations with the structure, training, and resources to set up and administer a complete system for lay care-giving ministry in the congregation. It's a one-on-one care-giving and care receiving relationship that's especially good for seniors.

There are scores of other ways you can involve seniors in ministry. Take a new look at every ministry in your church and see how you can utilize the untapped wealth of wisdom and experience right before your eyes.

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