

## Senior Adult Ministry: Growing Aging Disciples

In Psalm 71: 17-18 it is written, "O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the nations to come."

In this Scripture, the Psalmist cries out to the living God not to neglect him in his old age, as he still has the opportunity to share the Lord to future generations. And this message is timelier than ever.

America is aging at a rapid rate. By 2040, over 25% of the population will be over 65 years of age. The leading edge of the Baby Boomer generation, (the 78 million born between 1946-1965) is turning 60+. This "age wave" has also impacted upon the church, as the average age within an ELCA congregation stands around 55 years old.

But instead of looking at the "graying church" with uneasiness, we should focus on "growing disciples." Because even as we age, we can share Jesus and his saving love with others.

As a local congregation begins to pray and vision about Senior Adult Ministry, may they consider these initial steps:

1. Invite those 55+ together to discuss the aging needs within the church and community.
2. Develop a Senior Adult Ministries Team.
3. Use the 5'S of Senior Adult Ministry to develop a balanced program.

*(continued)*

## The 5'S of Senior Adult Ministry

**\*Spiritual** - Develop bible studies, prayer groups, retreats, and worship services for seniors.

**\*Study** - Provide learning through educational forums, book clubs, classes, and discussion groups.

**\*Social** - Plan dinners, travel, recreational outings, game days, movie nights, and "field trips."

**\*Service** - Initiate a visitation ministry, a tutoring program, and encourage community volunteers.

**\*Self** - Promote light exercise (Seniorcise), walking groups, and relationships with local mental health agencies. Consider developing an adult day care, and planning intergenerational ministry activities.



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