

# Senior Ministry Inventory provides resources to minister to your congregation's seniors

**FACT: Over the past 20 years, the number of seniors who are over 65 increased twice as fast as the rest of the population, a senior expansion that will not peak until the middle of the 21st century.** An increase in the number of older adults will mark a corresponding increase in age-related illnesses and the need for family crisis intervention.

Home based care-giving will dramatically increase over the next 40 years as the frail-old (85+) are being cared for by the able old (65+). Fifteen percent of all seniors today have kids that are seniors. The oldest-old are the fastest growing segment of America's senior population and most vulnerable to the challenges we associate with old age—widowhood, declining health, and the difficulty of going about daily life without assistance.

By 2015 the largest population group in the United States will be single women 85 years old and older. Fifteen years later, by 2030, our nation will have a greater number of adults over 65 than youth under 18. There will be about 70 million older persons, more than twice the number in 1994, and many of these older persons will be over 90.

Four Lutheran organizations in Florida have joined together to focus on the needs of seniors in our congregations and in their neighborhoods. Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida, the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod, LC-MS Florida-Georgia District, and Lutheran Services Florida have been hosting awareness workshops to introduce pastors and lay leaders to the Senior

Ministry Inventory Model developed by Church Resources and to encourage them to initiate the Inventory process in their own congregations.

The Inventory is a research tool consisting of 174 questions that assess needs and preparedness for pre-retirement and retirement age individuals, and the congregations in which they worship. Two-thirds of all questions focus on medical, social, psychological, community, housing, legal, and relational needs of the individual. One-third of all questions focus on the faith needs.

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*“Even when I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me live to tell the people of this age what your strength has accomplished, to tell about your power to all who will come.” — Psalm 71:18*

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Every individual who completes the Inventory receives a confidential report that helps the individual identify specific life-arenas that need attention. Every participating congregation receives an anonymous summary report when more than 20 Inventories are completed to assist the pastoral staff and church council in preparing budgets and programs to meet specific, identifiable senior needs within their congregation and community. The Florida-Bahamas Synod, ELCA and Florida-Georgia District, LCMS receive a compilation report of the needs of older adults within all participating congregations.

Not only does the inventory help congregations meet seniors' health needs, but it identifies interests that seniors may have in helping others. This second arena has to do with

wholeness and other issues related to God's purpose, calling, spiritual gifts, commissioning, and ministry.

The challenge for healthy congregations in the 21st century will be to engage in active ministry those who are in active retirement. At the turn of the 20th century the average man in America spent only 3% of his lifetime in retirement. In the 21st century it will not be uncommon for both men and women to spend one-fourth to one-third of their lifetime in retirement and much of this will be in active retirement.

In Psalm 71 an old man pleads with God to sustain him in old age so that he can press on with his ministry. That is God's purpose for all of us... God calls us to ministry, to a full-time priesthood, until that day when he calls us to himself.

At least three congregations in Northeast Florida have responded to the offer to implement the Senior Ministry Inventory. Trinity Lutheran, ELCA plans on offering the inventory in the near future. Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran, ELCA and St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran, LC-MS have completed inventories and are ready to send or have already sent them to Church Resources.

LSS looks forward to working with each of our congregations in building ministries to meet needs identified by the inventory and to offer seniors meaningful ways to help others through the work of LSS.

**Congregations interested in learning more about the Senior Ministry Inventory may call Joe Chimelewski, LSS community relations/volunteer coordinator, 904.730.8234, [jchime@lssjax.org](mailto:jchime@lssjax.org)**