

Beginning a ministry with older adults

After doing workshops at several churches I've come to expect the question. How do we begin a ministry with older adults? It's the question I hear most frequently. It is asked not because congregations are not already doing such ministry, but because most congregations realize that so much more can be done with our older adults than we are doing.

So I offer these suggestions, knowing they are incomplete, yet hoping they spark dialogue over the question.

1. Be sure to ask the people most affected by the ministry what they think. Older adults have much insight to offer!
2. As much as possible, emphasize doing ministry "with," rather than "for." Older adults are already seen all too often as incapable, when they usually are not!
3. Remember that all Christians have a call and a need to be of service to others. Older adults are no different than the rest of us in this regard.
4. Allow whatever ministry you create to uncover and enhance the specific gifts of the older adults included in this ministry.
5. Be creative! If your congregation has never done it that way before, that may be the best reason to try it that way now.
6. Remember it is not about having a program for older adults; it is about meeting the spiritual needs of older adults.

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