

13 recommendations for how to love older congregants and neighbors well amid COVID-19

1. Create a list of older adults in your community, particularly those who do not have family around, and send them a handwritten card, with a phone number inviting them to call you if they have basic needs, or simply want to have a conversation with someone. All ages can engage in this project. * Adding children's artwork inside of the card is an added plus for many!
2. Create a network of people who will make weekly phone calls to older members and/or neighbors. Create a phone tree, divide the list of older neighbors among the callers, and reach out to show them love. Remind them on the call that they are valuable members of your community, that they aren't alone, or forgotten during this season. Involve teenagers as well as other ages in this outreach.
3. Be a pen pal. This video breaks down what this could look like. This is also a recommendation that can be cross generational.
4. Find out which older congregants and neighbors have medication prescriptions that they need. Have a weekly volunteer who is willing and able to make prescription runs and deliveries.
5. Create, or resurrect, a prayer team for them to join and connect with each other through. Many older adults are prayer warriors, and are anxious to serve the Body, but may not know how. Creating a prayer team and distributing a prayer list to them, can assist them in utilizing their spiritual gifts. Empower them to bless us through their intercessor praying ministry. Make sure to keep the group informed when prayers are answered, because answered prayers should be celebrated! This is also a recommendation that can be cross generational.
6. Identify older congregants and neighbors who cannot leave their house to go shopping. Reach out to them and find out what their needs are and find volunteers who are willing and able to pick up and deliver these basic groceries, paper goods, and cleaning supplies.
7. Find out who is connected technologically and who is not. For those who are technologically connected, create a devotional with an encouraging word from scripture to send out via email or social media (at least once a week). And for those who are not, develop a mechanism to deliver hard copies to those without technological connectivity. Ring the doorbell, leave the devotional, and wave if you see them come to the door—just seeing someone through the window is encouraging for many in this season. A walk through the Psalms could be very helpful during this season.
8. Ask members to pull together funds to and make sure that older citizens get the gift of a door dash meal each week. Make sure to get all their dietary restrictions first and be sure that your restaurant order reflects these restrictions.

9. Create and share a “CovTalks.” Have church staff person or leader of older adult ministries record a Zoom conversation with a special guest resource person. These could cover a topic a week such as thankfulness, being creative at home, writing your personal history, etc. Then, make available the recording online for viewing.
10. Initiate a regular prayer time via free conference call that doesn’t require smart phones or computers for the non-tech people.
11. Identify older congregants and neighbors who have technology (computers, cell phones, laptops, or tablets) but need help navigating them. Assisting them will allow them to have greater connectivity to others. This about how you could walk them through using their devices over the phone. And, if they have access to Facetime, and know how to use it, you could ask them to show you their device on screen and guide them through the process of using their additional device.
12. Commit to praying for 3 older adults each week. And, then find a simple way to remind them that they are loved and are a part of a broader Body that is thinking of them and is also available to support them as needed.
13. Recommend walking routes in your area for older adults who still desire to get out and need to get a little exercise. Send them maps and encourage them to walk one trail a week. Then ask them to take pictures that can be shared with the broader congregation. The pictures could then be integrated into a broader congregational slide show each week and uploaded on your congregational website or used on social media. These journeys could also be used as times of prayer—prayer walks.