

**TRY GOOD NEWS
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Senior Visitation Field Guide

FOR CHURCHES AND MINISTRIES

**We EXIST to bring the HOPE and ENCOURAGEMENT
of God to the sick, aged and infirm.**

www.goodnewsministry.net

Good News Ministry

Development for a

Senior Visitation Ministry

Forward

The times we live have changed the way we are having to do things. In years past, when Grandma and Grandpa got old and frail, the family would simply take them in. Families crowded in, snuggled up and made the best of things. Grandma and Grandpa's wisdom was brought into our daily living situations and we, the younger ones, gave them our strength and support to help them adjust better in their failing years.

Now we have Mom and Dad both working, the kids running everywhere and no room in the Inn for Grandma and Grandpa. In fact, truth be told, Grandma and Grandpa don't want to live with their children anyway. So now, Grandma and Grandpa have moved into senior living alternatives. However, with all our busyness, many seniors have ended up neglected and seriously lonely and forgotten. Along with their physical abandonment issues, more importantly, they have become disconnected from any spiritual life and severely Spiritually anemic. The goal of this program is to create a vital spiritual connection with our most treasured resource, older people. With the increase of the largest population of seniors in history, "The Baby Boomers", we are faced with a great opportunity for the salvation of souls. Not to mention the chance to display of God's love and please our Heavenly Father.

The following program suggestions are designed to create a launching point for a local church to start a Senior Visitation Ministry. The ideas are by no means exhaustive in content or vision. These are merely some logistical ideas designed to meet some of the needs of the frail and infirm in nursing homes, hospitals and senior living facilities.

We, at Good News Ministry, have a big dream. We see, one day, churches all over this country and perhaps even in other countries, coming to grasp the need and truly experience the joy, adopting one or more care facilities for their church. And to that dream and prayer we wrote the pages in this following manual. The programs suggested have been designed to fan a flame of hope for the forgotten and lost.

It may be that you, the reader, may decide to be a one person ministry team, not necessarily connected with a larger church team. One voice, one cold cup of water . . .

*"as you have done it to the least of these
you have done it unto me."*

If you are not interested in being part of a larger church team and yet you may be considering ministering as an individual, family or small group undertaking, please refer to our **Individual, Family and Small Group Field Guide** at

www.GoodNewsMinistry.net

Yours in Christ's service



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Good News Ministry

"Bringing the love of God to a lonely world."

Good News Ministry is a Christian ministry bringing faith, hope and love to people who are battling some of life's most challenging circumstances. Good News Ministry was established in 1992 by Sam and Colleen Parsons, as a Christian missionary outreach, taking the gospel of God to people in hospitals, nursing homes, where-ever encouragement and the gospel of Christ is needed. Each month, Good News Ministry visits people in nursing homes and hospitals. Sam & Colleen also speak at Christian retreats, Churches and Civic Organizations, providing training for others who also see the need for such a ministry, have a heart to serve God serving others.

Good News Ministry Mission Statement

Our ministry purpose is to share the hope, and the encouragement of God to the sick, aged, and infirm. To visit the widows, orphans, and the prisoners with the love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, articulating the calling God has put on our hearts through God's Word, music, and a spirit of love and joy. James 1:27

Our Spiritual mandate is based on James 1:27

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

Our driving message is based on Proverbs 17:22a

"A cheerful heart is good medicine"

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What is a Senior Visitation Ministry

The Local Church Seniors Visitation Ministry is directly aimed at ministering to the spiritual, emotional and mental health of people in need, in hospitals, assisted living facilities, board & care homes and skilled nursing facilities in your area. These programs are also aimed at giving strong support for families, for the Activities Department personnel at local facilities and loving encouragement for the care-givers of the infirm, and aged.

Our goal at Good News Ministry is to introduce, help establish and help train people to have healthy senior visitation programs in their local church. We offer motivating and training for ministry volunteers. The following programs have been designed for the building up of the members of the local church, by introducing them into the joy of serving.

We believe the mission statement and general workings of any strong local Church Senior Visitation Ministry should consider containing the following spiritual mandate.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

James 1:27

The following material contained in this manual is by no means exhaustive, this is merely a skeleton frame; each church body will bring to the table their own personalities and creative additions. Good News Ministry purely hopes to serve as a kick start to some beautiful ministry opportunities and relationships.

A way to begin a Senior Visitation Ministry in your local church.

1. Senior Pastor of the local church

The Senior Pastor sees the need and selects the General Program Director person/persons who may have a passion for seniors. In some churches, it may start with a "*Seniors Pastor*" who may select a group of people to help find that one key person to be the General Director.

2. Senior's Pastor or Selection Committee

This main function will be to enlist the General Program Director, and with his or her help they will help select the individual Program Directors, as well as establish working guidelines for the implementation of the Senior Visitation Ministry. This Selection Committee may only be a temporary committee, depending on the activity level, interest in the seniors ministry and capabilities of the selected General Program Director.

3. The General Program Director

This position is the general overseer of all the programs and will need to be a person with an eye for detail and good people skills.

4. Other Program Director possibilities

Buddy Program Director

Pen Pal Program Director

Bible Study Teacher/Director

Special Events Program Director

Other team leader suggestions

Prayer Warrior Team Leader

Financial Advisor

Director of Communications

Logistics/ Benevolent Ministries Program Director

(probably only needed in the case help is needed to select a care facility or for moving someone into a new living facility)

Initial Ministry Volunteer Visiting Team Leader

Local Senior Visitation Ministry Program

1st Steps 1st . . .

We suggest each church, by whatever means, select a General Director to oversee all aspects of the ministry outreach. (Selection process could be by committee, or by the Senior Pastor, Selection committee, by a group of Elders, or perhaps your church may already have a *Senior's Pastor* in place.)

Locating the one main individual to oversee the operations of the Senior Visitation Ministry. It may be difficult to find such a person at first but remember, God loves this, it is pleasing to God to visit the widows. It is always hardest to get started, but once you are rolling you will find it will actually be a simple process. This key person, the General Director, will need to have accountability and support, perhaps it will work best under the Senior Pastor, or Board of Elders. We have found the Church's Missions Board works well. This key person, the General Director, will have to have a heart for seniors and a desire to understand their needs clearly. We suggest your General Director should be a mature Christian with a reputation of benevolence.

After the selection of the General Director the process of enlisting volunteers will begin.

The guidelines and job descriptions for conducting the various ministry responsibilities could follow Good News Ministry's standards contained in this manual, or each church can design their own set of rules and operation standards. The Senior Pastor, individual General Director, *Senior's Pastor* and or Elders could help develop these guidelines. Each church should use whatever methods and programs are best suited for their local congregation.

We strongly suggest each church should do a local area search to identify one nursing home, or perhaps, an assisted living facility, or a Seniors residential care home that their church may want to adopt. We suggest you start with only one care facility. Recruiting enough volunteers to do the ministry affectively and working out all the fine tuning details, bugs, etc. will take time. Your goal should be to develop an affective, healthy senior visitation program as God directs. As your ministry adds more and more volunteers, there will be more and more opportunity to expand the senior visitation ministry and other programs. You can add more facilities, as you find more volunteers. This selection process should be handled by your Senior Visitation Ministry's General Director.

This selection of a potential adopted facility can be started easily by simply contacting a couple of local facilities to see what their needs are and to find out if there might be an interest in such programs. Some facilities will require a volunteer training session with their staff to orient you to the workings and rules of their facility.

Flow chart

Local Church Senior Visitation Ministry

Senior Pastor / Elders /Seniors Pastor

General Director of the Seniors Ministry

Special Events Director

Volunteers to help supply gifts
Volunteers to go visiting on special days
Someone to take pictures

Bible Study Director

Bibles Study teachers
Worship leader
Volunteer page turners

Pen Pal Director

Individual Pen Pals
People to supply cards, stationary and stamps

Buddy Director

Individual Buddies to visit one on one

Financial Advisor

Living Trusts, Wills, Insurance

Special Care Director

Funeral planning and family wishes

Director of Communications

Web page/Facebook/e-mails/Twitter and all announcements concerning the special events and happenings of the ministry

Logistics Director

Helping people who need to find a care facility and need help moving. May enlist volunteers to help dispose of furniture or other belonging as in garage sales or estate sales.

How To Start a Senior Visitation Ministry

1. Begin with adopting a care facility

(see description of the General Director for how a facility is selected)

2. Organize a Special Event

We suggest the first introduction of your ministry would be to find a holiday event such as Mother's Day, Easter, Christmas etc. to officially kick off your outreach. This first entrance into the nursing home will help create an interest with the residents and start the process of relationship building. This event would be a great way to introduce your team to the residents as well as possibly excite your volunteers from your local church about the possibilities of the ministry. Take some small gifts along, perhaps a musical person, or praise/hymn CDs would add to the energy and create a fun atmosphere, bring children and may be even some gentle pets. This is to be a family affair.

3. Set up a Bible Study Schedule

Next step in the process is to invite the residents to a newly regular scheduled upcoming weekly or biweekly Bible Study in your chosen adopted nursing home, or Assisted Living home. This can all be coordinated with the facility's Activity Director. The Bible Study should include worship time and regular Bible study time. Usually an hour program will be sufficient. You need to allow time in that hour for the CNAs (*Certified Nursing Assistants*) to get all the residents into the room. We also suggest about 30 or 40 minutes of singing time, and approx. 20 minutes of Bible teaching. You may also want a couple of volunteers to assist the residents in the turning the pages in their song books, to help them with the singing or holding their Bibles. You will need to bring Bibles with you if you intend for the residents to follow along in the text, and you will need to provide some kind of song books.

(Good News Ministry has hymn books with bold print available, check the web page, www.GoodNewsMinistry.net, for ministry materials)

4. All other programs,

(Pen Pal Program, Buddy Program etc.) will develop out of the Special Events and Bible Studies as you meet people and discern their need and openness.

General Director

The General Director's job is to oversee, tweak and encourage all the operations of all the programs.

The Job description

1. To oversee the selection of the adopted facility in the local church area and institute, and nurture a healthy relationship with the adopted facility's administrator and staff. The General Director may have to go through a required volunteers' training program at the adopted facility.
2. To over see the selection process for all the Program Directors and assist in finding and enlisting volunteers to work in all the programs.
3. To be intimately educated with all the inner workings of all the ministry programs.
4. To setup and oversee the regular meetings of all the individual Program Directors and assist them, if needed, in refining their programs.
5. To develop a strong relationship with the adopted Senior facilities and be able to coordinate any special events or address needs the facilities might have.
6. To know all the '*Hows and Why Fors*' of placing people in nursing homes, and be aware of the ramifications and needs of the people involved. This may mean walking family members through the process and meeting with the facility staff as well as the family when needed.
7. To be the voice of the Seniors Ministry to the higher ups at the church, be able to communicate and motivate the congregation to insure further volunteering. This may mean regular announcements, inserts in the bulletin, photo or video presentations, testimonies or fundraising efforts to support the workings of the program.
8. To watch over the continuity of all the programs, keeping in mind the original goals, according to ministry standards, and coordinate with other church programs.

Special Events Director

The Special Events Director should:

1. Be responsible to communicate the opportunities and all workings of this program to the church's Pastor and Elders, making sure the announcements of the opportunities are in the church bulletins, Sunday morning announcements, etc. via Director of Communications
2. Be responsible for raising funds, for buying special event gifts, cards gift wrapping, etc., and be responsible for storage for the special events supplies.
3. Help enlist, and encourage the enlisting of volunteers to help in the acquiring of gifts and gifts wrapping. Volunteers can also help coordinate the visitation times.
4. Be the contact person for the nursing home, hospital or assisted living facilities to be visited on the Special Events day.

Special Events Program

This program is aimed at bringing the love of God to nursing homes, hospitals, board and care homes, and assisted living homes on special days like, Christmas Day, Easter, Mother's Day and Father's day. This program hopefully can become a church wide project. This program may also be your first introduction to the overall ministry to interested parties in your congregation, by getting one time volunteers to support a one time event. This could work out to be the best way to introduce volunteers to your ministry program. We have found that once people sees the need and experiences the blessing of serving they find their hearts drawn to serve. Some ways it can be implemented are by having a congregation donation drive to supply the gifts, and help with the gift wrapping. Some families may volunteer to go visiting and handing out gifts on the special event day. Anyone desiring to participate should be welcomed and encouraged to join in the fun. It requires as little as a fifteen minute walk in the halls of a facility, or a couple of hours of giving gifts out room to room to each and every patient.

The benefits are overwhelming. . .

1. Our children learn the joy of giving.
2. We get out of ourselves and really see the meaning and practical application of the love of God.
3. This program will help introduce others in your local church family to the joys of being involved in your Seniors Ministry.

(Most facilities have a '*resident's birthday party*' each month. This would be a wonderful opportunity to minister in Jesus name, by supplying the Birthday cake, decorations and perhaps even special gifts for the residents.)

Bible Study Program Director

The Bible Study Program Director will need to be a strong man or woman of God with a good solid understanding of scripture and understand the power there in. They will need to be organized and consistent. The main responsibility of the Bible Study Program Director will be to coordinate the regular scheduling of Bible Studies and communicate with the Activities dept. The Bible Study Program Director will select all the volunteers and make sure all Bible Study supplies are available. i.e.: Song books, Bibles etc. The Bible study teacher will also be the eyes and ears for the other programs to see who is, and who is not attending the studies. The Bible study teachers also need to be on the look out for people who may need a buddy or a pen pal.

(Along with a Bible study is the need for a Worship leader, whether a guitar player or piano player or even a small vocal group. Worship is a key component to enhance your bible study interest.)

Bible Study Program

This program is designed to bring the Word of God into the adopted facility and equip, edify, and encourage. It will need to be conducted on a regular basis and will need to include worship music time, and Bible teaching. Hymn books will be needed, and you may want to try and enlist some volunteers to assist the residents in page turning. This program will need to coordinate with the adopted facility's Activity Dept scheduling. There may be opportunity to utilize a number of different organizations within the church in the rotation of Bible Studies, such as: The Men's Ministry one week, the Women's Bibles Study Group the next, the Youth group, the children's ministry, the MOPS group, etc. All of this can be coordinated through the Bible Study Director. However, consistency is a key to making this program really work.

Pen Pal Program Director

The job of the Pen Pal Program Director is to oversee the workings and success of the Pen Pal Program.

The Pen Pal Director will need to enlist volunteers who might want to write to someone in the adopted home. This might be accomplished through a Sunday school class project, through the Church's Christian School or simply, personally on an individual to individual basis.

The Pen Pal Program Director may want to go to the adopted facility and pass out the enclosed questionnaires. The Pen Pal Program Director may choose to work closely with the Buddy Program Director to help select potential pen pals, or perhaps with the Bible Study Director. It may work better by asking the Facility Activity Dept. to help select needy participants.

The Pen Pal Program Director will need to follow-up and make sure all the parties are staying involved. This may require follow-up calls and monitoring with the Buddy Program volunteers or simply by calling the pen pal volunteers themselves.

The good news for the Pen Pal Director is that there will probably not be hundreds of volunteers or hundreds of residents but simply a few to help encourage and monitor. However, these few are the ones we need to find. Remember, it is about giving not getting and some residents may not be able to write back. This being said, it is more of an encouragement ministry and sometimes one sided.

Pen Pal Program

The Pen Pal Program is a program designed to stimulate and encourage communication with senior residents and church family members.

The way we designed it to work, is like this, . . .Volunteers are enlisted at the local church who want to be encouraging to the residents by writing notes, cards and letters. The Pen Pal Director will then distribute questionnaires to seniors in the adopted facility. These questionnaires ask simple questions that help give a pen pal partner some ideas of interest or commonality. These questionnaires are simply ice breakers.

(see Page 12 for questionnaire example)

The questionnaires are then collected by the Pen Pal Program Director back and distributed to the church members who have volunteered to be pen pals. The Pen Pal Program Director will then coordinate and inspire the Church youth group/ Christian school students, Sunday school classes, or ministry groups i.e. Missions Group, Men's Ministry, Women's Ministry, Home Bible study Groups, etc. Each individual pen pal will be responsible to get their letters to their chosen pen pals. In some cases the Director may have volunteers who may even have to sit with the residents and write the notes for the senior, as well as read the notes to them. This might be the resident's Buddy or one of their own family members.

This program is aimed at forming relationships and encouraging friendships that create an exchange and lead people to loving relationships and a sense of deeper purpose for life. Our hope is that love will press through all the feelings of abandonment and sense of loss, that the love of Christ will permeate both parties lives, and that wisdom will be gained and imparted.

Senior Visitation Ministry Pen Pal Program

This questionnaire is a brief overview of interests simply designed to assist us in finding the perfect pen pal partner match.

What's your name? _____

Where do you live?

Street Address City

State Zip code

When were you born?

Where were you born?

Where did you grow up?

How many children do you have, if any? _____

How many grandchildren do you have? _____

What is your favorite kind of food? _____

What is your favorite color? _____

What is your favorite kind of pet? _____

What are your favorite hobbies? _____

When you go to church what kind of church do you attend?

If you could be any age, what would be it be?

Why? _____

(YOUR LOCAL CHURCH ADDRESS HERE)

Buddy Program

This program is designed to develop deep intimate relationships with people in need of a good Christian friend. It is one of the most time consuming of the Seniors Visitation Ministry but probably the most rewarding. This ministry requires a serious commitment from the volunteer. We believe this program will be the strongest spiritual connection of all the programs; for it is a one on one discipleship program. This is a crucial, part of the overall success of all of the Senior Visitation Ministry. This program is the heart and soul of the mission. The Buddy Program Director's main job is to identify and enlist volunteers for becoming a friend to a resident at the adopted home. This will require Godly discernment and wisdom. The matching of the right people is crucial and will have eternal ramifications for all the parties involved. The Buddy Program Director will need to coordinate with all the programs, the Activity dept. and especially with the individual buddies, to make sure the buddies are utilizing all the benefits of all the programs. I.e. Pen Pal letters, Bible Study attendance, Christmas Day/Special events gifts, Financial Counseling if needed, Special Care Program help such as funeral arrangements, etc. The Buddy Director will probably need to also enlist *Buddy* prayer warriors to hold these buddies up. We believe this will be the strongest program of all in the spiritual realm, with the most challenges and the most blessings. This Buddy Director will need to be a strong solid Christian with the definite gift of compassion and good people skills.

Job description:

1. The Buddy Program Director will need to enlist volunteers to be a part of the program.
2. They will then coordinate with the Bible Study Director, Pen Pal Program Director and the adopted facility activity department to find the person who needs a one on one buddy the most.
3. The Buddy Program Director will then contact the buddy volunteer and then the program starts.
4. The **buddy** will work out his own workable scheduling for visitations.

I must emphasis here, this is a serious commitment.

It could be a *drop-by-the-room* visit, lunch in the facility, or an outing like shopping or lunch out. Perhaps the buddy would want to attend the Bible Study together with his resident or attend another program like bingo or crafts together. This could be a good old fashion deep conversation or simply a one minute drop off with a cookie "*just to say, Hi, I was thinking about you!*" Perhaps the visit will be a fifteen minute visit, an hour, perhaps a walk, a talk or a cry, a prayer, a joke session or just sit and watch TV together. The buddy may even end up writing his/her residents pen pal notes. *The Sky is the limit!*

Financial Program Director

This program is aimed at assisting individuals and families with wills, family trusts, investments portfolios and insurance coverage. i.e.; long term care coverage, annuities investments, etc. The Financial Program Director will need to be a person well versed in financial matters. Our goal is to help churches find qualified volunteers to provide these vital services within their own body of believers. We believe most, if not all, of the training and introduction of investment/insurance options should be a non-profit/no charge service provided out of benevolence.

Special Care Program Director

This position is unique and specialized, because it deals with funeral and memorial service arrangements. This person will need to work with the Financial Director, family, funeral homes, and individuals who pre-plan their funeral arrangements. The Special Care Directors' responsibility will be to coordinate with the resident's family and *Buddy* in making sure the person's wishes are adhered to. They will also help the Logistic Director in property disposal, all under the direction of the family conservator.

Logistics Program Director

This program is aimed at making a smooth transition for people moving from one residence to another *i.e. from their own home into a nursing home*. The job of the Logistics Program Director will be:

1. To have a educated knowledge of available housing options in their general area.
2. To have a list of volunteers willing to pack and move people
3. To assist lining up storage or organizing the disposal or re-disposition of residents properties i.e. cars, houses, boats, clothes etc.

Director of Communications

Their responsibility will be to design a Senior Visitation Ministry web page/face book/e-mails/blogs etc. and to communicate with the church about bulletin inserts, announcements and special events, directing attention toward the Senior Visitation ministry. This position is a technical detail person whose job it is to update and inform.

**We suggest, all Program Director positions should be on a volunteer basis with full disclosure accountability, to maintain an impeccable reputation for the local church Senior Visitation Ministry.*

Activity Department:

Most senior living facilities have what is known as, an activity department with an Activity Director. These Activity Directors are responsible for all social programming and for the social well-being of their residents. We suggest your first person to contact would be the Activity Director.

For the most part Activity depts., in nursing home and assisted living facilities are given relatively small budgets to keep their residents occupied. These budgets are used for bingo prizes, entertainment, twilight dinners, decorations for holidays (i.e. Christmas trees and hearts for Valentines.) .

(Activity Directors)

Most Activity Directors have been gifted with special gifts and interests such as talents with arts and crafts, musical skills or simply great compassionate hearts. Their job requires tremendous organizational skills. It is in many cases a thankless job, low pay and long hours. It takes very special people to do what they do. Our experience with them has given us a tremendous respect and love for them. Most Activity Directors are strong patient / resident advocates. There are some Activity Directors you may encounter who are definitely in the wrong vocation, however, you will probably only meet a few of those. People who don't have a heart for the residents usually don't last long in this field. For the most part these Activity Directors and care givers are warm and caring people, or they would not even be in this line of work. Because most Activity Directors do not, generally, generate income for a corporation or facility, they are sometimes regarded as an expense, a costly commodity, and they are deemed expendable. However, the primary job of most Activity Directors is to try and keep their residents active and alert. Bottom line, this keeps the residents healthier longer, keeps them alive longer and this, in turn, does generate income for the facility in the long run. Most Activity Directors have to do mountains of paper work, thus not freeing them up for much one on one personal relationship with each of their residents. Usually, a facility has an Assistant Activity Director. It is his or her job to help run the activities and provide personal contact with the residents. This personal contact is where you come in and assist. Activity Directors and Assistant Activities Directors set scheduling for all manners of entertainment and special activities like Bible Studies, monthly Birthday parties and other social gatherings.

Extra Information:

Setting Ministries In Place:

To establish your programs, we suggest you quickly find a Special Events Director or a Bible Study Teacher. As well a worship leader to enhance your Bible study will greatly add attractiveness to your Bible Study. Your Bible Study group you will soon identify people who need a buddy or a pen pal. By observation and by listening to the staff you will find the ones with the greatest need and the doors of ministry opportunity will open. As you develop relationships with the residents and staff, by providing a consistency in your loving approach you will be able to discern the needs of your adopted facility and you can start adding other programs. Perhaps, at first the General Director may have to wear all of these hats, but by searching out more volunteers in your local church you will open up avenues of ministry and you will be helping to add to the healthiness of the residents as well as your local church volunteers.

Subtleties of Ministry:

Some additional things to keep your eyes open for, are the subtleties in each resident's room? Train your eyes and ears to look for in-roads into people lives . . . for instance . . . *Is there a Bible in their room, or pictures? Do they have a Cross hanging on their wall above their beds? Are there cards or letters from family or friends? Is the resident wearing a wedding ring? Are there flowers, or birthday cards in their room? Do they have favorite books lying on their bed-night stand, or music tape players or CD players? What kind of music do they seem to enjoy? Etc. Etc. Etc.*

The ministry is wide open and waiting for you to get involved. For further reading to help you in your decision to investigate a ministry such as this, read Henry Blackaby's *"Experiencing God"*.

Remember, loving obedience to God's Word pleases our Father!

"Pure religion which is pleasing to God is to visit the orphans and the widows, and to keep ones self from being defiled by the world."

James 1:27

Good News Ministry wants to assist you in reaching your local seniors with the love of Christ. We merely want to encourage and stimulate you to good works. We hope our general model will help put some healthy flesh on your local church's **Senior Visitation Ministry**.

If we can be of any assistance please contact us at:

Good News Ministry

P.O. Box 3193
CA. 92690

Mission Viejo,

www.GoodNewsMinistry.net . . . sam@goodnewsministry.net

Some Things to Remember:

The people in these care facilities are usually called residents, not patients. Some residents are long-term care, and some are short term Rehab patients. The facts are, in most cases, these people will live and die in these homes. Most of them have had their own homes sold out from under them, along with all their belongings, clothes, jewelry, keepsakes etc. Most of it has been given away, sold or stolen. Most of these people have only about \$ 35.00 a month to buy toothpaste and other hygiene products, as well as eat out, or purchase presents, or stationary or any other things they may want.

You may choose to simply walk in off the street and introduce yourself to the activity director, they welcome volunteers in most cases. There are confidentiality laws and rules, as well as safety considerations, so you must be sensitive to the leading of each Activity Director. You may also be required to attend a volunteer training to better understand each organization's expectations.

If you desire to take a resident out for lunch or church or the movies, you may need to clear it with administration. The first step would be to talk to the activity director before you suggest it to the resident, so as not to get their hopes up. There may be medical or other factors you may not be aware of. Their greatest need is for one on one relationships. A friendship! Someone to remember their name; talk with them about real life stuff, sharing life with them. Sharing the Bible is great stuff, but this ministry does not mean you have to be a Bible scholar. It helps to be a true disciple of Christ and be able to show your love.

This ministry is a giving ministry, not a getting ministry . . . if you go to get, you probably will be greatly disappointed. But if you go to give, you will get and find the precious reward of God's blessing.

*"They will know you are my disciples
by your love for one another."*

Scenarios

The following simple scenarios are used to paint some pictures of how a caring visitation ministry may benefit both the local church, the residents, staff workers and families members of local care facilities.

Establishing a Senior Visitation Ministry

The Pastor, Elders or the *Senior's* Pastor selects a man, woman or a couple to head up the Seniors Ministry for their local church.

*For the sake of this scenario we will call the General Director **Gary**.*

The new Senior Visitation Ministry General Director, Gary, takes the time to look around the local area for a potential facility the church might be able to adopt. Gary either drives the area, calls a few facilities or simply talks with some of the church members to see if there are anyone with any prior knowledge of a potential facility in the area. Gary narrows it down to two or three potential facilities and calls on them to talk with the Activity Directors. He sets up a meeting and meets with them to discuss how his church might serve them. He selects the best one, in his opinion, by seeking wise counsel and a lot of prayer. Gary then coordinates with the Activity Director to take the volunteer training, if the facility requires it. He then lines up with the Activity Director a Special Event visitation, for instance on Christmas Day or Mother's Day. At the same time, Gary sets up a regular schedule of Bible Studies to begin a week or so after the Special Events day. Gary then goes back to the church and starts the ball rolling by spreading the word. He may use the church bulletins, power point presentation, or simply he may start asking folks to volunteer for this one time Special Event. Gary then either starts preparing to teach the Bible Study or he finds a volunteer who will be able to be the Bible Study teacher. At the same time Gary tries to find a volunteer to play music for the Bible Study and perhaps the musician may even accompany the visiting members for the Special Events day just to add to the festivities. The Special Day comes and the volunteers are excited, as are the residents. They marvel at how blessed they all are for coming and sharing the love of Christ with these lonely people. Out of the volunteers for the Special Event day, Gary may even find some people who want to be actively involved in the ministry on an on going basis, and perhaps even volunteer to become the Pen Pal or head up the next Special Event. At any rate the ministry is off and running.

Ministry Placement Scenario:

Local Church Senior Visitation Ministry helping a church member:

Let's say a member of your congregation has a stroke and or a heart attack. The reality is, now that person is unable to live alone, at least for awhile, and they need nursing care or perhaps even hospitalization. The family of the church member may or may not know how to work through the complicated process? These are difficult matters to face and most people are unaware of what to do, or how to do it. Assisting people in these troubling decisions is where the Local Church Senior Visitation Ministry comes in. The following steps are designed to assist in maneuvering through these troubling situations.

(This next scenario assumes that there is already a local Senior Visitation Ministry in place)

Steps to take . . .

- #1. The family of the person needing help calls the local church, and is immediately put in contact with the Senior Visitation Ministry General Director. The General Director promptly speaks hope and encouragement into the family's situation, praying with them and reassuring them they are not alone.
- #2. The General Director, without delay, contacts the Ministry's Prayer Warrior Team and right away the sick or injured person and their family are covered in prayer.
- #3. The General Director then directly becomes involved by either accompanying the family, or by calling another ministry mission's team member (i.e. Logistics Director) who will accompany the family as they visit one, two, or three different facilities.
(your Senior Visitation Ministry should already have established a relationship with at least one of your local facilities.) The family, and or, the ill person are introduced to the Administrator, Activity Director and one or two of the residents for testimony about the facility.
- #4. After, meeting the staff and touring each facility, the General Director will then sit down with the family, and /or with the sick person, and discuss the different options.
- #5. All necessary legal paper work is worked through, together, with the General Director, and or, one of his or her staff members. The Senior Visitation Ministry Financial Program Director may then offer his or her services to help the family look at the financial ramifications and evaluate all the options and contingencies the family may face.
i.e. Insurance, Living Trusts, Property assessment, Do Not Resuscitate forms, Legal Agreements such as Power of Attorney, etc.

- #6. After all the primary living decisions are made, the Senior Visitation Ministry Logistics Director will offer his or her services to the family for their team to help with the physical moving of the patient. They might provide packers and movers, and may even help in the transportation needs of the ill person to the facility.
- #7. Upon arrival at the new living quarters, or soon afterwards, the patient could be introduced to a couple of ministry volunteers who will befriend the patient and their family. They will lovingly take them under their wing, to help them acclimate to the new living situation.
- #8. After a few initial visits, the initial 'Ministry Volunteer Team,' along with the General Director and the Buddy Program Director will discuss the patient's spiritual, emotional, mental and physical condition, as well as the over-all family dynamics. The General Director and the Buddy Program Director might then enlist a Buddy or two to adopt the patient, and befriend them from that point on.

(The Program Buddies will try to develop true friendships, and will work for the patient as a patient advocate. These Buddies will need to be people who truly can care about the patient's welfare and feel called to love them as Christ would have them do. This program is not a job, it is a ministry. The Buddies will try to make sure that part or all of the following programs are in place for the patient.)

Bible Study Group

Pen Pal Program

Doctor's visits and medications are monitored

Shopping and other outings are coordinated,

Birthday gifts and Holiday gifts are provided such as Easter or Christmas gifts, including helping the patient buys gifts for their families, or writing notes, letters, and send cards.

The Buddies will be the contact people to make sure all aspects of the patient's care are working. They will also work closely with all other Program Directors and the General Director. Perhaps the Buddies may even include writing letters or notes to the patient's family to keep them in the loop. This does not mean that the Buddies have to visit everyday, but it does mean there is an active regular relationship being established.

National Senior Visitation Ministry: scenario

Lets say, your father lives by himself in Cincinnati, and he becomes terribly ill, or frail, perhaps a stroke, pneumonia, heart attack, etc.

We'll further paint the scenario with . . .

You have a small house in California, without any extra room, and you can't afford to provide home care for your father in your small house. In fact, you and your wife both may work and would have to leave him unattended all day, every day. Your sister and brother, who live in Cincinnati, are not able to care for your father either. So, you have to get your father into a safe, healthy, living situation, yet, you don't have clue how to go about the whole process.

Perhaps you've heard about your Local Church's Senior Visitation Ministry through your church announcements or through a friend. So, you go to your church to ask your Pastor for some advice. He then directs you to your home church's Senior Visitation Ministry's General Director. The local Senior Visitation Ministry General Director sits down with you and discusses your family situation. Together you search the Internet to see if a similar Seniors Ministry, perhaps close to where your father lives in Cincinnati, might exist. Or, perhaps you may decide to move your father closer to you. Your local Senior Visitation Ministry General Director may ask you some questions about your Dad, such as: *'Does your Dad know the Lord?'* or, *'What kind of church did your Dad grow up in?'* (Just for the sake of this next scenario . . . lets say, your Dad was raised Lutheran. And perhaps you've decided it would be best for your Dad to stay connected to his familiar surroundings in Cincinnati.)

As you and the church's General Director surf the web directory you find a Lutheran church in downtown Cincinnati that has a local Senior Visitation Ministry in place. You then contact them over the phone, or by E-mail. The Cincinnati Senior Visitation Ministry General Director talks with you and may ask a few questions to help him understand you, your family, and your Dad's circumstances a bit better. He coordinates with you to set a time to meet with you, perhaps even to pick you up at the Airport when you come into town. He may even, if you request, go ahead and line up some appointments for you and your family to investigate two or three of the nursing homes in the local Cincinnati area where their local Lutheran church's Senior Visitation Ministry has already established relationships. When you arrive in Cincinnati, you and the General Director meet with the nursing home staff, Administrator, Activity Director and perhaps even a couple of residents to get a feel for the facility. The Senior Visitation Ministry General Director then works it out to sit with you, your family and your Dad to help you work out all the details. The Director may then introduce you to his ministry team and the relationships begin.

These scenarios can be played out in a million ways, but the goal will always be the same, to bring the love of God to a lonely world. The ultimate goal of any Senior Visitation Ministry Program is to make sure all the people involved, including the family members, get to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and that their spiritual, physical, mental and emotional needs are being met. Plus . . . your local church gets to share the love of God.

Activity Department letter

(Church's letterhead)

(This is an example letter directed toward the activity department of your church's potentially adopted Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility. This is simply an idea of what you might say.)

Dear MR./ Mrs./,Miss _____,
(Activity Director)

My name is _____ and I am the Senior Visitation Ministry General Director for XYZ Church in your local town. I am writing this letter to see if I might be able to set up a meeting with you to introduce our exciting ministry. We want to assist you in any way we can to help you bless your residents. We have a number of volunteer programs we think could be a blessing to you and we would like to tell you about them. There is no cost for our programs, it is all on a volunteer basis. For instance we a Special Events Coordinator that may be able to provide gifts for your monthly Birthday celebrations, and special fun visitations on holidays like Christmas day, Easter, Mother's day, Father's day etc. We also would like the opportunity to provide a regular Bible Study with teaching and Hymn singing. We have a few people interested in starting a Pen Pal Program to encourage your residents and build loving relationships. Sincerely, our goal is to come along side of you, to encourage you as you minister to your residents. We realize we may need to go through some volunteer orientation and you may want to find out more about us and our church, so enclosed is a brief description of who we are and what we are about.

In the New Testament of the Bible in James 1:27 it says,

*"Pure religion which is pleasing to God
is to visit the orphans and the widows, and keep oneself from
being defiled by the world."*

Jesus said, *"They will know you are my disciples by your love for one another."*

We try to love everyone no matter their religion or even lack of religion we simply want to share our love with you, your staff and your residents.

Enclosed is a Statement of Faith from our church. We would love to invite you to come to one of our services, if you ever have the time, to check us out. We will be calling on you soon to see if we can set up an appointment. Thank you for reviewing our letter and material. I look forward to meeting you.

Sincerely,

General Director
Seniors Ministry
XYZ Church

In Conclusion:

The program suggestions made, in this little manual, are merely that, suggestions. Our hope and prayer is that at least these ideas will serve to open your hearts and encourage you toward serving the lost and lonely. Again we share the passage from James 1:27 . . .

*"Pure religion which is pleasing to God
is to visit the orphans and the widows, and keep
oneself from being defiled by the world."*

Service that pleases our Father, and it teaches us how to be more Christ like. It is a win win scenario.

Please review all we submit to you in prayer and sincere consideration.

Yes it is a big dream, to have every church in America adopt a senior facility . . . but we serve a great God!

*"All things are possible through Christ who
strengthens us."*

Yours in Christ service,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sam & Colleen Parsons". The ink is dark and the script is fluid.

Sam and Colleen Parsons
Good News Ministry