



CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP
for the study and renewal of worship

Ministry Module

Ministry Modules are intended for use with the Leader's Guide. Appendices and Resources referenced in modules can be found within the Guide.

Long Term Care Worship Ministry



This Mission Module is provided through a Partnership with the Calvin Institute for Worship and Caregiving Ministries, a division of FamilyCare America, Inc.

**Caregiving
Minis⁺tries**



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Purpose

The mission of the Older Adult Long Term Care Worship Ministry is to offer meaningful worship to residents of nursing homes, to offer an avenue for these residents to grow spiritually and to be part of a worshipping community. This ministry shall be offered by trained volunteers who can minister effectively.

Goals and Objectives

- To offer meaningful worship to residents of nursing homes
- To offer an avenue for these residents to grow spiritually
- To offer an avenue for these residents to grow spiritually and to be part of a worshipping community.
- To train volunteers for effective worship
- To create a gift based ministry
- To create a worshipful environment

Parameters and Limitations

This ministry does not:

- Offer specific worship ceremonies or rituals
- Offer a standardized program of spiritual development.
- Offer a substitute for church or duplication of religious sources.

This ministry does:

- Provide spiritual and emotional support for older adults
- Suggest means to develop worship services .
- Describe a gif-based ministry approach for effective training of volunteers
- Describe how to create a worshipful environment



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Suggested Process for this Ministry:

The Long Term Care Worship Ministry shall include all interested persons, young and old, within a congregation.

1. Educate the church as to what the Long Term Care Worship Ministry is and how it can improve the inclusion of all church members of all ages.
2. Inform the congregation what can and cannot be expected from the Long Term Care Worship Ministry. This Ministry is designed to offer help residents of long term care facilities continue to grow spiritually and to belong to a worshipful community.
3. Survey the church for people who are willing and able to work in this ministry (see Appendix A).
4. Provide training to volunteers, informing them of the process of this ministry.
5. Implement the program with a coordinator.
6. Schedule regular meetings for volunteers to plan worship services and activities related to honoring older adults and to discuss and work out problems with the Long Term Care Worship Ministry.
7. Implement program activities to promote a gift-based ministry and to create a worshipful environment.
8. Periodically evaluate the ministry. (See Evaluation Tool, p. 19, Administrative Guide.)



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RESOURCES

Geddes, Jim. [The Better Half of Life: Growing Older Joyfully](#). Nashville: Broadman, 1987.

Hendrix, William L.. [A Theology for Aging](#). Nashville: Broadman, 1986.

Howse, William L., and others. [Achieving Wholeness Later in Life](#) . Convention, Nashville: Convention Press, 1987.

Scherger, Carl J. [Ministering to the Physically Sick](#). Fortress, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963.

Wimberly, Edward P. [Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers](#). San Francisco: Jesse-Bass, 1997.

Worden, J. William. [Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner](#). New York: Springer, 1982.



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How to Develop a Gift-Based Ministry

From: *Church in Nursing Homes: Developing a Worship Ministry*
Marlene F. Brands, Contract editor at Faith Alive Christian Resources

Here's an objective place to start: recognize that not everyone has the gift of ministering to the frail elderly. When you do that, you may be surprised at who *does* have that gift.

Be sure to include my eleven-year-old grandson, who has drafted a plan for a retirement village and who recognizes that "loneliness is a big problem." Add the soft-spoken fourteen-year-old boy who volunteers to serve coffee and cookies at my mother's nursing home. How about the retired high school principal and his wife who share programs from their 50th anniversary with each resident, whom they call by name? And then there's my uncle, who faithfully sends my mother devotions via e-mail.

This is a wonderful opportunity for intergenerational ministry. Look for those within your church family who show love and compassion for the elderly, and then:

- train them to minister as a team, using their unique gifts.
- network with other congregations to develop and train partner teams.

work cooperatively with nursing home staff to schedule and set up a time and place for worship.

Creating a Worshipful Environment

Unless a nursing home has a chapel or other space dedicated exclusively to worship, creating a worshipful environment is vital. It's the sensory cue my mother and her peers, especially those who may struggle with dementia, need to recognize "church."

Think of the stimuli you experience as you first enter a familiar place of worship. Then bring these cues to the multipurpose space at a nursing home.

Use the following ways to engage residents the moment they approach the worship area:

- Arrange a podium or small table and chairs to simulate a sanctuary setting. Plan for easy access for residents in wheelchairs.
- Hang a worship banner at the front or by the door. Consider rotating banners to reflect the church year, giving residents yet another point of orientation.
- Light a fragrant candle. The sense of smell may capture the attention of a resident with limited vision or hearing. (You'll want to check first with staff to make sure none of the worshipers has fragrance allergies.)
- Play familiar hymns as people gather. Sometimes a piano or organ may be available, but residents will appreciate a variety of instruments. This is a great way to involve members of your congregation who may not otherwise feel gifted for this particular ministry.
- Welcome worshipers by name. Nametags are a must for the team and for residents and will add intimacy to the routine of greeting one another.
- Involve the residents as greeters, ushers, and so on. Remember that we all have gifts to share!

So the team is in place; a worshipful environment has been created. Now what? The team will need information about the diverse characteristics and needs of the elderly in nursing homes and training to incorporate the key elements of worship into a brief service.



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Special Worship Considerations for those in LTC Facilities

From: Louis M. Tamminga

Louis M. Tamminga is a retired pastor in the Christian Reformed Church, pastor director of Pastor-Church Relations Services, and volunteer pastoral caregiver for missionaries with the denomination's World Missions and World Relief agencies.

- 1. Some of your worshipers are a bit hard of hearing.** Remind yourself to speak clearly, distinctly, and evenly—a little louder and slower than you normally would. Make sure that you speak into the microphone and that your mouth stays close to it. Rev. Peter Van Egmond, chaplain of Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ontario, says that though guest preachers are aware that some worshipers are hard of hearing, they still often talk a bit too fast and move away from the mike.
- 2. Remember also that some residents suffer from cognitive loss.** They may easily lose the thread of your presentation. So use concrete language, use word pictures and apt illustrations, and be brief. When announcing Scripture passages and hymns, allow time for the worshipers to look them up.
- 3. Your audience will readily relate to a time-honored traditional structure of the order of worship.** So keep the liturgy simple and direct. Lead the worshipers deliberately from one part to the next. It is generally best to tap into what is familiar to the congregation. Connect them with noble memories. Singing from the traditional treasury of the church's hymnody will be an uplifting experience to them. On the other hand, don't underestimate your audience. Many are knowledgeable church people and seasoned listeners. Van Egmond says that a dozen years of ministry in the Brampton Holland Homes have taught him that the elderly are not adverse to doing something different or learning new songs. "Many of them have mellowed with age," he says, "and broadened their sense of appreciation and humor." It is always good policy, of course, to consult with the resident chaplain.
- 4. Keep in mind that your hearers size you up as a person.** You don't only speak the gospel, you portray it. You add a lot to your message when you invest something of yourself. Worship services are very important to the residents, and they deeply appreciate your coming out to lead them in their services. So mingle with them before and after the service. Rev. Vernon Geurkink, chaplain of the Christian Care Center in Wyckoff, New Jersey, points out, "Worshipers intuitively sense whether the guest preacher wants to connect with them. Remember that many are being wheeled in by nursing personnel—sometimes as much as half an hour early. It means a lot to them to have the guest preacher come by before the service and shake their hand." Geurkink points out that those in rest homes see a guest preacher and a performing group as links to regional church communities. A touch of personal fellowship affirms that wonderful reality. Rev. Harvey Kiekover, director of pastoral care services at Holland Christian Home, Grand Rapids, Michigan, remarked, "The better church leaders understand what is important to the elderly, the richer their own ministries will be."
- 5. Remember that you minister in an ecumenical setting.** "Be sensitive to those of other faiths," says Geurkink. "The basic gospel truths mostly transcend denominational lines." He points out that some residents may not have been in church for decades; they attend the services as part of the activities offered by the home. Try to make them feel at home.
- 6. Some groups and other visitors take children along.** A splendid practice! The elderly enjoy the presence of children. And with a bit of encouragement, children will quickly mingle with all those wonderful grandpas and grandmas.

The elderly share with us the majority of life's needs . . . but there are also needs that become more pronounced with old age. Some are trying to come to terms with their mortality. Some have remorse for past sins, real and imagined. Some find it hard to accept life's closing chapter. Some are shaken by the breakdown of life. Some suffer discomfort and pain. Some are not sure of their salvation and worry about their final destiny. Guest preachers do well to stress salvation by grace and God's unfailing promises. "Bathe them in grace, assure them with passion that God forgives, that God cares," says Geurkink. Kiekover tells of Sid Youngsma, now with the Lord, who wheeled himself around in the halls of Holland Christian Home, telling all who would hear: "God's grace is wonderful, and, the best is yet to come."

Perhaps all age groups have more in common with the seniors than they had imagined. . . .