

# Older Adult Ministry

Iowa District West

July 2010

## **ANOTHER IDEA TO CONSIDER**

In my former parish one of the active and vibrant groups in the congregation was a group called GALA – “Getting A Life Again.” It was a group started at the request of some of our older members. The unique characteristic of each of those members was that they no longer had a spouse. They all were widows or widowers.

The members of the group got together most months of the year. They came together for devotions, encouragement, and mutual activities. Each month following a time of devotion, the group had a very short meeting and then continued with the chosen activity for the day. Sometimes they just stayed at church, had a potluck dinner and played games. Occasionally (usually at special times of the year), they would gather at the home of a member. They especially enjoyed the annual Christmas party. The home would be beautifully decorated. Christmas carols would be sung. A meal would be enjoyed, usually followed by Christmas cookies and Christmas candy.

On other occasions, the members of the group would gather at church and after devotions and a short business meeting they would car pool and head out to a selected location. Sometimes they would go to a restaurant and enjoy a meal together. At other times, they would go to a museum, a concert, or on a factory tour, or to a special park. Every month it was something different, something interesting, something enjoyable, something relaxing.

As each member returned to his or her home, he or she was glad for another special day. It was another time to be together with brothers and sisters in Christ with whom they could relate. The members of the group enjoyed one another. They experienced Christian fellowship. They encouraged one another. After having lost a spouse, they were beginning to find joy and meaning in life once again.

The organizational structure of the group was very informal. It had a simple constitution. It had several officers, the most important being the two individuals who

made up the activities committee. A fervent attempt was made to keep expenses low. The group didn't want to keep anyone away because of cost.

As an interesting tidbit, my wife and I were the designated "chaperones" for the group. Being that we were 10 to 15 years younger than most of the group members, they enjoyed saying, "We need someone to keep us in line." The reality was, my wife and I enjoyed the activities as much as anyone. We got close to the men and women who attended. This enriched our lives and it was also of great help to me when I was called upon to minister to the various members on multiple occasions.

If you don't have a group like GALA in your congregation, I encourage you to consider one. Just keep it simple. Have a spiritual flavor. Let the group develop naturally. Allow it to bring joy into your life and into the lives of others, through the lives, words and actions of fellow Christians.

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Rev. Curtis L. Foreman, Chairman  
IDW Older Adult Ministry Committee

PS: Don't forget the annual "Saints Alive" Retreat scheduled for August 20-22 at Camp Okoboji. The theme will be "An Unchanging God in a Changing World." The retreat, designed for seniors, will provide enrichment for those who attend. Contact Lori Gamble at Camp Okoboji for more information and for a registration form (712-337-3325).