



# MINISTRY WITH THE AGEING

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE



LUTHERAN  
CHURCH  
OF AUSTRALIA

**CARE MINISTRIES**  
LOCAL MISSION



Take my life and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days,  
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing,  
Always, only for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages from Thee.

Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
Every pow'r as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine,  
It shall be no longer mine.  
Take my heart, it is Thine own,  
It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee.

#### **Acknowledgement**

This guide has been developed by the members of the Committee for Ministry with the Ageing.

#### **Published by**

Care Ministries  
Lutheran Church of Australia  
197 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA 5006 Australia

Phone +61 (0)8 8267 7300 | Email [careministries@lca.org.au](mailto:careministries@lca.org.au) | Website [www.lca.org.au/care-ministries](http://www.lca.org.au/care-ministries)

Copyright © 2022 Lutheran Church of Australia  
Version 2.0



# Contents

<b>MINISTRY WITH THE AGEING</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>AGEING AS YOUR PERSONAL JOURNEY</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Post-work years</b>	<b>8</b>
Healthy ageing	9
Healthy eating	9
Healthy mind	10
Keeping well	10
Ensuring financial security	10
More time for his kingdom	10
<b>As the years pass</b>	<b>11</b>
Supportive devices	11
Maintaining contacts	11
Using electronic devices	11
Housing changes	12
Supports in the home	12
<b>In the twilight of your life</b>	<b>13</b>
Choosing to stay at home	13
Transitional, respite and restorative care	13
Choosing residential care	14
About rights and powers of attorney	14
Final preparations	15





# Ministry with the Ageing

***'Do not cast me off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength is spent'***  
***Psalm 71:9 (RSV).***

The Lutheran Church recognises the continuum of our spiritual journey from birth to death. We appreciate that our faith community is the anchor from which we gain love, guidance, strength and security throughout our lives.

In the Scriptures, respect for older people is clear. In Leviticus 19:32 it is transformed into a commandment: 'You will stand up in the presence of grey hairs ... and fear your God'. In Deuteronomy 5:16, we are instructed to 'Honor [our] father and [our] mother'. Additionally, it was from Sarah's barren womb and Abraham's centenarian body that the chosen people were born.

As family, friends and faith communities, it is important to consider ways that older people can contribute to the mission of the church and derive spiritual enrichment and growth to the end of life's journey.

To assist you, Ministry with the Ageing suggest that the values espoused by the United Nations in 1991 – participation, care, independence, self-fulfilment, dignity – are helpful.<sup>1</sup> These values enable us to acknowledge the wisdom, knowledge and practical skills of older members of our faith communities, while thinking about ways we can minister to them until their final journey with Christ.

We hope this guide provides useful advice about the way you may like to minister with and to the older members in our congregations and wider community.

This guide also aims to provide entry points to begin conversations around ministering with the ageing. As we minister, we want to maximise the joy of the post-work years and to ensure that Christian support is provided later in a timely and useful way.

May God bless you as you age, and may he keep you in his care as you minister with and to our older Australians and New Zealanders.

<sup>1</sup> The United Nations Principles for Older Persons was adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1991. The statement lists 18 principles under the headings of Independence, Participation, Care, Self-fulfilment and Dignity.

## Participation

From the time our older church members retire or cease work, encourage them to allocate some of their free time to roles that provide personal enjoyment and use their creativity and wisdom. This may be in practical tasks around church - in committees, groups, or projects or in assisting older members to maintain contact with the congregation.

As they age there will be a danger that some will become frailer and potentially marginalised if positive and timely assistance is not provided. The lack of transportation is perhaps the prime reason older people are unable to attend church activities and services. We need to take steps to formalise arrangements with our older members to encourage them to maintain and continue their spiritual and community life with us.

Our church leadership is in the best position to assign a group of members to oversee those at risk, monitor their progress at church and ensure supports are available to maintain their contact with the many activities and services taking place. Should the time come when our older members are unable to attend church, pastoral care and community visits could be scheduled in their home.

Apart from personal contact with aged members, we need to be focused on their ability to negotiate our buildings safely and comfortably. They should have written resources that suit their eyesight and access to appropriate lighting and sound. The placement of walking aids is also important to prevent the risk of falls.

Consider wider spaces in between some of the pews or chairs, larger font in hard copy and on-screen material, and ramp entrances for those with frames or wheelchairs. Talk with your older members to see what would make it easier for them to negotiate your church.



## Care

We are blessed in Australia and New Zealand to have good supports available as we age. Families and support people will often assist older people to negotiate the 'system'. Caring for older people at church ensures their continued involvement in the special personal and communal journey we all experience there. As we get to the later stages of our lives, none of us will want to lose touch, so make every effort to keep your older members involved.

It is likely that they will enjoy attending intergenerational services, prayer, Bible study and other groups. They may wish to be involved with younger people and contribute their wisdom and life experiences with other parishioners ... this is a great gift.

## Independence

The desire to do our own thing is a fundamental right for most people. Those getting older, despite any physical and mental impairment, will still feel the need to make their own decisions and choose their own lifestyles. We, the church family, need to be aware that this is a strong driver. Assist these older members at church with choices that will maintain their independence, and ensure that any supports necessary are readily available.

## Self-fulfilment

Our churches have many groups and activities that can be a great joy for older members, so encourage them to participate. If church-related activities are not an option, consider how your older members can attend local community groups or activities. For example, local councils often provide transport to enjoyable activities.

## Dignity

As your members age they may feel undignified by their age-related problems. Respect and care will lift their spirits and assist them to feel comfortable in your church setting.

As your members get older they are no less God's children. There is an inherent dignity in knowing that we are all created in the image of God.

# *A Prayer for all Ages*

**God of all creation, you are timeless and beyond all ages.**

**We who are growing old** give thanks  
for the years you have given us –  
for family, friends and all those  
who have enriched our lives.

**We who are not yet old** give thanks  
for the older people in our lives:  
for grandparents, loved ones, friends  
and all who generously offer  
the wise counsel of their years.

**We who are growing old** pray that we may be  
patient with our ageing limbs  
and difficulties in everyday tasks  
we once did much more easily.

**We who are not yet old** pray  
for patience and kindness  
towards those who do not move as quickly  
as we would sometimes like.

**We who are growing old** pray for good health in our later years,  
and forbearance when our health fails us.

**We who are not yet old** pray for good health  
for those we love  
and compassion towards those  
who suffer ill health.

**We who are growing old** pray for prudence and sweet timing,  
in offering our wisdom to the next generation,  
while respecting their energy and creativity.

**We who are not yet old** pray for openness  
and humility in receiving  
the advice and guidance of our elders.

**We who are growing old** pray that we  
may face our death with serenity and dignity.

**We who are not yet old** pray that we affirm  
the sacredness of each person's life  
and accompany those who are dying  
with gentleness and deep respect.

God of endless love, help us to understand  
that we share a common life journey,  
a call to live life to the full  
and to strive to enable all creation to come  
to the fullness of the Cosmic Christ. Amen.



# Ageing as your personal journey

***'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly'***  
**John 10:10 (KJV).**

Life from birth to death is a journey that provides us with great discoveries, joys and challenges. By the time we reach our older age, we will have been gifted with maturity, peace and, for most of us, a sense of fulfilment from life's achievements and experiences.

In our youth we were lovingly cared for by our family before we, in turn, nurtured others. Now as we reach the final stages in life, we may discover new and exciting opportunities to play a greater role in assisting our families, friends and faith community. Later we may find that very support helpful as we navigate ways to make life easier for ourselves.

As we plan, prepare for and experience the later stages of life, we will find more time to contribute, reflect and grow our spiritual life. There exists a ministry mutuality in church life as we receive and minister to others in our faith community.

## POST-WORK YEARS

As you retire or cease work, it is not uncommon to feel strong emotions. Not the least of which may be a sense of loss, tempered with excitement about future goals.

Over the years you will have built a significant set of skills, knowledge and wisdom. With the blessing of extra time you will be able to use these strengths for the good of your community, family, friends and church.

As you contribute, you will experience great joy and interesting challenges at a time when you are looking for new experiences to use your skills while providing fulfilment in the years ahead.

## Healthy ageing

You will almost certainly have heard of the importance of practices that ensure you are physically at your best for the years ahead. Exercise is a key factor in this. The more you exercise, and the more you engage in activities that provide bodily flexibility and strength, the more you will improve your health. Working with weights, stretching, balancing and increasing your heart rate for short bursts improves health and resilience.

Those blessed with a garden will have a ready-made exercise program. And, of course, all of that extra time allows for the option of walking when you may have otherwise driven.

Because you will have more unstructured time on your hands, you may want to explore creative activities such as drawing, painting, photography, creative writing, singing, dancing, cooking and sewing. There are countless options available to unleash your creative self, particularly if you don't allow gender stereotypes to dictate these choices. And, of course, there are always new places to visit at home and overseas.

Your post-work years are a time to reflect and to enjoy the company of others in ways not possible before.

## Healthy eating

Now that you have the opportunity to refocus your life, you may like to consider what you eat. A healthy diet (less processed food and more fresh fruit and vegetables) can prevent weight gain and lead to an increased sense of wellbeing.

You may also find there is time to try new foods and investigate healthy eating information.

Check out the CSIRO and National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) websites.





## Healthy mind

Throughout your life you will have been constantly making decisions, analysing situations and learning new things. When you cease work you can invest time in keeping your brain active and engaging all of your senses in interesting ways. Doing puzzles, learning a new language or musical instrument or taking up study or sport are some of the many options available.

You may find fulfilment in volunteering in your community on a regular or ad hoc basis. These roles will provide new and interesting social networks and structure in your life.

## Keeping well

When your work life concludes, you will have more time available to visit health professionals to ensure that any illnesses are managed appropriately and that other health risks are minimised. Follow advice you are given on prevention or early treatment.

As with all stages of life you should take action to avoid the risk of illness. The early detection of heart disease, and the potential for stroke, memory loss or even cancer is important. And ensure that you have your flu vaccination before the onset of winter.

## Ensuring financial security

Your post-work life is a time when you will want to reduce any anxiety about your future financial status. It's a stage of life that extends 15 to 30 plus years and can be a time of enjoyment and fulfilment. Consider ways to manage your finances to achieve financial security or perhaps explore the implications of living on a lower fixed income.

Seek professional financial advice, preferably before you retire or finish work. Alternatively, other agencies can be accessed for useful information, such as the Australian Department of Human Services and Centrelink for the age pension (phone 132 300 or visit [my.gov.au](http://my.gov.au)) and, where applicable, the Department of Veterans' Affairs for access to war pensions (phone 1800 555 254). The New Zealand Government website is also a valuable resource and provides good information about financial management in retirement [www.govt.nz](http://www.govt.nz)

## More time for God's kingdom

Maintaining an active worship life will enable your faith journey to continue while highlighting the many opportunities available to contribute to the work of the church. Think about whether there are some congregational work, committee or group that you would like to join now to use your skills and experience.

## AS THE YEARS PASS

At some point you may notice that your physical and perhaps mental strength is not what it used to be. The thought of gardening, driving, shopping or undertaking normal day-to-day activities may seem a little daunting. You may worry that your memory fails you from time to time. Your family or friends may comment that you look a little unsteady on your feet, and they may wish to help more often. You may even find yourself becoming lonely at home as getting out and about becomes harder.

It is important for you to be confident that you are still a very important person in the life of your family, friends and church. The fact that you may feel a little more vulnerable is real, but it only means that it may be worthwhile to consider other aids or supports to assist you in your lifestyle.

### Supportive devices

There are many devices available to support you if your muscles are a little weak or balance-impaired. Taking advantage of a walking stick, frame, wheelchair or 'gopher' may ensure your safety and stability. They are very easy to obtain and can even be an accessory or fashion statement if suitably decorated. The government may be able to assist with funding these items.

If you feel anxious about falls or health events happening in your home, an alarm pendant or monitor may offer a much greater sense of security. The latter can track your location and health status and can send information to carers or health professionals. The alarm pendant, on the other hand, is worn around the neck or wrist and can be pressed to request help in the event you feel unwell or suffer a fall.

### Maintaining contacts

If family members and friends move away you may feel isolated and lonely. Continuing to foster and grow your social contacts and networks can be an ongoing joy and a way to reduce the sense of loneliness that may come if families relocate or travel. Consider enjoying the company of younger people, who provide an alternative view on the world and will benefit from your experience and wisdom. There may be clubs or groups in your area or church that may provide an avenue for regular outings.

If driving is a challenge, consider whether you know someone who can be a chauffeur, or if taxi vouchers or transport packages are available.

Writing letters or sending cards may seem old-fashioned but they are a valued way of keeping in touch.

### Using electronic devices

Interestingly, the fastest growing computer use group is the over 65s. The single most important benefit of a computer is the way it can help you keep in contact with friends and family, whether locally or overseas. This can be by email, social media or video chat (Skype or FaceTime). You can also expand and build your interests by searching the internet.

Many applications, such as Google Translate, are now readily available to assist with communication for those who are hard of hearing or have visual impairments. There are also ebooks or ebook apps for tablets that are useful because the size of the print on the screen can be increased. Audio books are also a boon, as they provide the opportunity to listen to stories.

There are many easy ways to learn the basics of tablet-use once purchased (with help from younger relatives, friends or community-based classes). It is also worthwhile checking to see if one can be obtained without cost via a home care package. The government now sees tablets as being a way for families and friends to keep in contact.

## Housing changes

As you get older you may want to consider downsizing from your current home or moving into retirement housing. It is not uncommon for houses and gardens to seem too large when other family members have moved on. Houses can also be unsuitable if a partner is less able to manage stairs or housing gradients.

The Lutheran Church manages many quality residential care homes and villages with retirement housing. You can find a list of facilities and contact numbers on the LCA website.

Whether it is a Lutheran, church-run or privately owned village that attracts you, make contact to be shown around to see if the home may be a good option for you. A discussion about the financial implications may be useful during the tour.

Alternatively you may prefer to move to a new house – something smaller and perhaps still in the area you like living in. While looking at the houses available, consider planning for the future, because you or a friend may need a walking stick or frame later on. For example, avoid steps, gradients and upstairs rooms, narrow corridors or wet and slippery areas. If public transport is important, check out access points before committing to the purchase of a new home.

## Supports in the home

You may find that you need to have some services provided in your home. These may include meals, cleaning, gardening, transportation and nursing. The government provides numerous options and in many cases will also attach rails and ramps to make life easier in the short-term (for a minor setback) or long-term. Private businesses will do the same, but the costs may be greater.

To gain government support, a formal assessment is required so that the care and services best suit your needs. How much is paid for by these services depends on your financial situation, the number and types of services you receive and the service provider's fee. The choice of service provider is yours. The choice of the services is yours also, within the range of options available.

There are sometimes delays in gaining these home care packages because of the high demand. For this reason consider entering the waiting list earlier rather than later.

For more information about government support services, for Australia visit [www.myagedcare.gov.au](http://www.myagedcare.gov.au) and for New Zealand visit [www.govt.nz/help-in-your-home](http://www.govt.nz/help-in-your-home)

## IN THE TWILIGHT OF YOUR LIFE

At some time in the future you may find yourself feeling somewhat more vulnerable, either because of a sudden event or illness or because of the natural ageing process. A higher level of care in your home may enable you to manage better at home. For some, though, the option of more skilled care in a residential facility may be more suitable. There are excellent residential facilities to consider.

### Choosing to stay at home

If you choose to stay at home with some family, community and/or government support, there are a range of home care packages to choose from depending on your care and service needs. There is also short-term help available if you are unlikely to need an ongoing package.

Whether short-term, low or high home care packages are required, you will need to contact a government assessor. They can be accessed via the My Aged Care website or 1800 200 422 in Australia or the government website in New Zealand. In negotiating packages, it is wise to ask if financial contributions are needed.

The value of assistance from your family, your network of friends or a support person at this time cannot be understated.

### Transitional, respite and restorative care

If you suffer a setback, supported accommodation within a residential facility may be necessary for a period of time. There are three options available: after hospital or transitional care, short-term restorative care (rehabilitation) to help with getting independence back again and respite care if a carer at home needs a break.

In each case, you must contact an assessor to gain access to the care. If you are in hospital the social worker may well do this on your behalf.



## Choosing residential care

Later on, you may decide that residential care is the best option. If this is the case, you (or the hospital) will need to make contact with your previous assessment team. The reason you are likely to make this decision is if you believe your level of home support is inadequate and that skilled full-time care is required.

To enable you to make choices with all the options available, your family or support people may take the time to visit homes on your behalf. You may be able to join them in this so that you can decide what is best, given your needs.

At this time, having a person who is your power of attorney can be helpful because they can negotiate financial and other matters on your behalf. In essence this person can be your voice if you are unable to attend visits.

When you are happy with your new accommodation arrangements, a residential agreement will be drawn up for you, and then you must wait for an offer of accommodation.

## About rights and powers of attorney

It is vital that as you get older you prepare for your advancing years by organising a will, appointing enduring power of attorney for health and finance, and completing an advance health directive. There is no question that we all want to ensure that our right to self-determination is respected. These documents are important because you can select the people who you want to assist you in managing your affairs. It is important to note that even with these documents in place, your right to direct your affairs has to be respected by those you have selected. For them to do otherwise is unlawful and considered abuse.

When you cease work, it is a good time to consider preparing these documents, but it is never too late to do so. However, if you have any significant memory loss (as defined by a doctor) it will be too late for you to sign these documents. Therefore, it is wise to do this earlier rather than later. You can organise all of these with your family or friends, with or without legal advice.

Family and friends can assist you with investigating options for care, in negotiating with authorities and in encouraging you where there is uncertainty. But the final decisions regarding care, accommodation and monetary matters resides with you. Remember, even if a power of attorney or guardianship is in place, your wishes remain legally pre-eminent.

Generally speaking, the various aged-care homes or villages will expect to see these documents when you join them to be assured that your needs can be met.

## Final preparations

Journeying with your friends and family as you approach the end of your life is likely to be a great privilege. As death approaches, you will find many who would feel privileged to hear what you have to say.

You may want to share with your family and friends who is to be informed about your death, so prepare a list of names and contact details in advance. Share your thoughts about a funeral, including what readings, hymns or songs could be used and so on. It is also helpful for them to be familiar with your life story so that other people can get to know what your life was like.

Many of us will find great comfort in Bible readings, prayers and hymns that can be shared during the last precious days and hours. The church also has a rite that can be read at this time by a lay person or pastor.

---

**We hope you and your families, friends and faith community have found this book helpful as you manage the journey through the later years of your life.**

We are very aware that life's experiences provide a great platform for service to others, so we encourage you to use your energy, wisdom and friendship.

Be prepared to analyse your personal situation as time passes, and make those choices that will maintain your comfort, health and social contacts.

Importantly, we encourage you to continue your spiritual journey for Christ alone offers true love, joy and the assurance of eternal life.



***LOVE COMES TO LIFE*** when we see the image of God in every person  
– no matter how much age has wearied their body and mind –  
and honour them with patient care, dignity and respect.

---

**Dr Tania Nelson**

Executive Officer – Local Mission  
Lutheran Church of Australia  
197 Archer Street, North Adelaide SA 5006  
P (08) 8267 7300 | M 0418 981 464  
E [tania.nelson@lca.org.au](mailto:tania.nelson@lca.org.au)



**LUTHERAN  
CHURCH**  
OF AUSTRALIA

**CARE MINISTRIES**  
LOCAL MISSION