



August 31, 1978

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Senior Adults Flaunt  
Young Attitudes, Drive

By Norman Jameson

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--They Ain't Dead Yet in Colorado Springs.

Nor have senior adults in Southern Baptist churches around the country given up the ghost. In fact, they're finding new life in clubs with zany names like ADY (Ain't Dead Yet), Keenagers, XYZ (Extra Years of Zest), Young at Heart, Golden Circle, and Mineral Club (Silver in hair, gold in teeth).

They are taking cross country tours, returning to college en masse, and jumping out of their role as the subject of ministry, becoming ministers, continually finding ways to reach out with their new-found spare time.

In St. Petersburg, Fla., they have their own choir and fully equipped craft shops. They give posh banquets in Louisville, Ky., and repair clothes for distribution. They sponsor a Bible teaching and preaching ministry in downtown St. Louis and they reach into the community in a myriad of activities in Sun City, Ariz.

Senior adults (never senior citizens) are a growing segment of the population. The U. S. Census Bureau estimates that by the year 2000 persons 65 and over will comprise 12.2 percent of the population, compared with 10.7 percent at the end of 1976.

Already, 13 percent of the members of Southern Baptist churches are in that category. Eighteen percent, or 2.3 million, are 60 or older, the age the Senior Adult Ministry section of the Baptist Sunday School Board uses to designate senior adults.

In some churches now, senior adults comprise over 30 percent of the membership and in at least one, Sun City, Ariz., First Baptist, the entire membership is composed of senior adults.

"Our people have a lifestyle of helping one another," says Melvin Ratheal, associate pastor in Sun City, a planned retirement community. About 20 members each maintain contact with six others who are less mobile, checking on them and taking them to the store or doctor.

Two deacons monitor in the lapidary shop, others are hospital volunteers and one lady takes a tape of the services to all who can't attend each week. Thursday is work day when members make lap robes, rework old clothing and take up food for a special project in Mexico.

"People talk about ministering to senior adults," Ratheal says. "Forget it. Minister with senior adults. They are people. The only thing that's different is that they're retired. They know what they want to do, they know what they like to do.

"They're ready when they're ready and you get ready for it. If you don't, then you've lost the opportunity because next week they may be gone to see their kids, they may be gone to the coast or somewhere else."

In other churches younger members have achieved a new awareness of the needs of their retired friends.

The "Helping Hand Ministry" of Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Smith, Ark., has more than 100 volunteers on call at all hours to help widows and disabled with transportation, emergency plumbing, painting, carpentry, nursing care and other services.

The Baptist Young Women at First Baptist Church, Dardanelle, Ark., adopted senior adults as "secret pals," remembering their special occasions with cards and gifts.

Young members of churches all over the convention are giving banquets, providing transportation for "Meals on Wheels" programs, equipping craft shops and giving daily assurance calls to the elderly. A major fear of the old, according to R. W. Bridges, associate pastor of the First Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky., is of dying alone and not being found for a long time.

Other churches provide transportation anywhere, anytime and especially to all activities of the church for the elderly who no longer drive. Some even have vans or busses equipped to handle wheelchairs and make rounds to homes or congregate living centers now sponsored by Baptists in 13 states and the District of Columbia.

A primary figure behind the new awareness of senior adults is Gary Cook, administrative coordinator of the gerontology program at Baylor University. As a student, he sponsored a resolution that begat the first Southern Baptist Conference on Aging, held in Nashville in October, 1974. Another is planned for May 12-16, 1980, at Ridgcrest Baptist Conference Center.

Southern Baptists have come a long way, Cook feels, since 1973. But recent advances such as increased agency participation, a Sunday School section with emphasis on senior adults, a special magazine, "Mature Living," Senior Adult Day (first Sunday in May) on the SBC calendar, are a result of the 1974 conference. Another is needed, he feels, to promote new advances.

Cook says seminaries must offer more classes on ministry to the aging. His own program at Baylor includes interdisciplinary classes in the psychological, sociological and biological processes of aging, as well as studies in health delivery systems, legal and protective services and communications problems the elderly face as they lose sight and hearing efficiency.

Cook has conferences planned for pastors on how to minister to the aging; for families of the aging; and a special summer school for the aging in May, 1979.

"Older people can not only learn, but a Drake University study shows that what they learn, they retain better," says Paul Adkins, director of the Department of Christian Social Ministries at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Adkins says attitudes must change toward the aging process. "Aging is not a disease," he says. "Old isn't a sickness. No one ever died of old age."

In fact, many senior adults, through special interest clubs and ministry, are finding new reasons to live. As Cook says, they may be retired from their jobs, but they're not retired from life.

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Pastors, Deacons Must Lead  
In Senior Adult Ministries

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8/31/78

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (B.P)--Pastors and deacons are responsible for ministry to the senior adults in their churches says a teacher in the study of aging.

Gary Cook, administrative coordinator for the gerontology program at Baylor University, says some pastors spend so much time in civic organizations and non-ministry pursuits that they have little left for the elderly and have in effect "thrown our old people out."

And the New Testament election of deacons in the sixth chapter of the book of Acts was not to run the church, but "to wait on tables and take care of widows," Cook says.

Cook has had a special concern for the elderly since he was a student at Baylor. Then he, with other members of the Baptist Student Union, visited retirement homes. While a teacher, Cook takes students to visit his elderly friends.

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Many of the 2.3 million Southern Baptists who are 60 and older can well take care of themselves. But for those who are not active members of a senior adult club or for whom retirement has signaled an end to meaningful activity, special attention is necessary.

"First of all, we need to realize that they are people just like us," says Gary Scott, homebound and senior adult director at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. "They have the same needs that I have, such as to be loved, to be needed, to have companionship."

A report from the first Southern Baptist Conference on Aging, held in 1974, says "It means much to an older person to be recognized as a real person by a young person." In view of that, teenagers and children participate in the homebound ministry at Travis Avenue.

High school juniors and seniors at First Baptist Church, Bowling Green, Ky., make books for homebounds at Christmas. The students write poetry, stories and Christmas memories, then personalize, print, sign and distribute them to the shut-ins.

Ironically, it is sometimes easier to get younger people involved in the activities of the senior adults than it is to get some senior adults interested. Senior adult ministers complain that persons 60-65 often feel they are too young to get involved in "old people's" activities.

Ralph Bayless, assistant to the pastor of the First Baptist Church, St. Petersburg, Fla., which has a very active senior adult program, has another problem. He says it is "rather difficult to get the men involved."

"Of course in this age bracket we have about three women to each man," Bayless says. "Even if they have a wife, and even if she comes, many times the man will not come. As we are letting them know what's involved, the men are beginning to see that this is not just a sewing circle." Senior adults have primary responsibility for the homebound and deaf ministries at First Baptist.

The Aging Conference report said "above all, provide them (senior adults) opportunities to serve and encourage their service."

R. W. Bridges, associate pastor at the First Baptist Church in Bowling Green, says with their senior program "we point to individual people whose physical lives have been extended because we have given them responsibility. These people need to stay active."

Only about five percent of the aged are in domiciliary care. Although a need for congregate living exists, Paul Adkins, director of the department of Christian Social Ministries at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board says individuals need to remain in the community where they are comfortable as long as they can meet their basic needs.

More state conventions (now 13, plus the District of Columbia), and individual churches are moving in the direction of providing congregate living facilities.

"Perhaps as Baptists we moved into this kind of thing because of the edifice complex we have," says Adkins. "But if churches would provide care for them (senior adults) in their homes, we would go a long way in meeting those needs."

Adkins, who is also chairman of the Southern Baptist Association for Ministry with Aging, sees a slow trend to minister to the 95 percent of the aging who he says are "in the shadow of our churches."

A major attitudinal change will come, he says, when churches begin working with older persons and not for them.

Another will come when we realize we are all aging.

Three sources for help in improving or beginning ministries with senior adults, are the Senior Adult Ministry section of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Family Ministry department; the Christian Social Ministries department of the Home Mission Board, and the state Baptist convention offices.



August 31, 1978

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Retirement Key:  
Planning Ahead

By Michael D. Creswell

COLUMBIA, S.C. (BP)--Senior Americans facing retirement should remember to get spiritual exercise available within the church, says a retired South Carolina couple.

Horace Hammett, who retired eight years ago as general secretary-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, and his wife Lorene, are in their 70s and work with more than 300 senior adults at First Baptist Church, Columbia, S.C.

Out of their daily contact with senior adults, and of their own experience, the Hammetts have derived six general suggestions to help retirement years be more fulfilling.

1-Plan Ahead. "We began retiring at least 10 years in advance," says Mrs. Hammett, "thinking of it and planning for it, not dreading it."

"It's not a death sentence--it's really a new life commitment time. We've had more fun in retirement, and we've enjoyed our creative opportunities without that sense of pressure that comes from a busy administrative job," Hammett said.

He listed three aspects of retirement planning: A-Plan Financially. Investigate the many retirement plans available and participate in one, even if you plan to continue working past the age of 65 as many do. A reasonable income allows a much more flexible retirement lifestyle.

B-Plan Mentally. "Be ready for a radical changing of mental gears when you retire," counsels Hammett. He admits it was quite an emotional blow for him to be separated from his work, which often involved 12-hour working days and a hectic travel schedule, plus the warm emotional ties associated with the ministry.

C-Consciously Plan a Retirement Lifestyle That Suits You. "Don't confuse being busy with being happy," suggests Hammett. He dropped several places of community service after retirement, keeping only those he felt most interested in and able to handle.

2-Maintain Physical Exercise. "Maintaining your physical condition undergirds other things you do," Hammett observed, "and unless there's a health problem, a sensible amount of exercise gives a zest nothing else can replace."

3-Stay in Touch With People. "When older people cut themselves off from the rest of the world, they wither and die," says Hammett.

The Hammetts suggest getting involved in a church program, a church-sponsored senior citizens program or one of the many secular programs for oldsters. They read magazines and newspapers, and travel at every opportunity.

They entertain frequently, and usually use the "good" china and prepare a regular meal, as opposed to an informal pot-luck snack. "I enjoy that kind of thing, and I think it helps keep us younger," Mrs. Hammett says.

4-Take Time for Yourself. Retirement should be a liberating time, a time when you take time to do things you really like, they agreed.

Mrs. Hammett keeps her piano and voice talents in good form. Hammett restores antique organs and clocks and works with his coin collection. A storage room at their home is crowded with his future "projects."

5-Establish a Schedule. "Older people need three meals a day. They don't need as much food as they once did, but they do need nourishing food. And they need the order that comes from regular meals," said Mrs. Hammett.

6-Get Spiritual Exercise. "We didn't cut ourselves off from the church when we retired," observes Hammett. He suggests it's important even for ministers to remember such an admonition, since the retired church worker may feel he or she has given enough time to the church.

"Christian senior adults can make the retirement years a wonderful time of spiritual growth, since this kind of exercise knows no physical bounds," says Hammett.

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Church Kindness Brings  
Joy Tears to Jailed Man

By Judy Touchton

Baptist Press  
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ATLANTA (BP)--Mosie Alfred Harriell, alias Charlie Harris, broke down in tears when he heard of the kindness of Oakhurst Baptist Church members who offered their church building as security for a \$30,000 bond for his freedom.

"Me and my wife have no money. We needed help so much. Unless somebody was nice enough to help us I would have to die in jail," explained Harris, the name he has used since he walked away from an Indiana prison farm 10 years ago.

Harris, now 64 and suffering from heart and respiratory ailments as well as diabetes, had served 25 years of a life sentence for the murder of a policeman in Wabash, Ind., in 1943.

Along with his changed name, he is somewhat a changed man. He has remarried, worked as a carpenter, and stayed out of jail in the nearly 10 years since he escaped to Atlanta to start a new life. He's now incarcerated in the Fulton County Correctional Facility, awaiting extradition hearings.

When he thinks of Mosie Harriell it's like thinking about someone he once knew. He rattled off his Charlie Harris Social Security number. "See, I can say that one even without thinking...but I don't even know what Mosie Harriell's number was," he says.

Harris is not a Christian, by his own admission, and not a Baptist. He does not attend Oakhurst. In fact, he lives not near Decatur, the suburb east of Atlanta where the church is located, but in Forest Park, a south Atlanta suburb.

Harris is cut off from his wife, who works as a domestic, and is allowed only a ten-minute phone call to her about every four days and a short visit on Saturdays. The Oakhurst congregation also helped her pay the overdue power bill.

She and Charlie attended an Episcopalian church in Atlanta some in the past but not since they moved to Forest Park. "You always worry that somewhere along the line you'll meet somebody that will recognize you," Harris explained. "And in big churches, with those big crowds, I just never was comfortable.

"Oh, I say my prayers every day...even before this happened. Now, I say'em a couple of times in the morning and night. Yes, I believe in the man up above, but then, I've not been the best man in the world to prove it."

As he spoke through the metal grating separating him from the outside world, Harris hung his head, his aging yellowed skin creasing in the already-deep life lines.

"I've never been so active or interested in the church," he said. "But if I get out of here, I'm going out there (to Decatur) and be on the front row listening and talking to Mr. Weaver."

Oakhurst Baptist Church associate pastor Mike Weaver, who read of Harris' plight in the local newspaper, has visited Harris several times in jail.

"When you're 64-years-old and have had the kind of life that I've led, you don't often see people like that and churches like that," Harris said of Weaver and Oakhurst.

"But like my wife said to me, 'Honey, those people are wonderful...that church is wonderful. We've got to go to a Baptist church. I didn't know there were such wonderful people. We've got to go to a Baptist church and see what it's all about.'"

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(BP) Photos to be mailed to Baptist newspapers by Atlanta Bureau of Baptist Press Sept. 1.



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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

**NATIONAL OFFICE**  
SBC Executive Committee  
460 James Robertson Parkway  
Nashville, Tennessee 37219  
(615) 244-2355  
W. C. Fields, Director  
Robert J. O'Brien, News Editor  
Norman Jameson, Feature Editor

### BUREAUS

**ATLANTA** Walker L. Knight, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30309, Telephone (404) 873-4041  
**DALLAS** Richard T. McCartney, Chief, 103 Baptist Building, Dallas, Tex. 75201, Telephone (214) 741-1996  
**MEMPHIS** Roy Jennings, Chief, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, Telephone (901) 272-2461  
**NASHVILLE** (Baptist Sunday School Board) L. Bracey Campbell III, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2798  
**RICHMOND** Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151  
**WASHINGTON** W. Barry Garrett, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

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### Paint Can Saves Life Of Baptist Missionary

MEDELLIN, Colombia (BP)--A five-gallon paint can probably made the difference between life and death for Southern Baptist Missionary Zach J. Deal Jr. of Virginia.

Working on the roof of a new church building under construction in Medellin, Colombia, Deal stepped back to get a better look at the roof tiles.

Deal's foot slipped on a loose tile and he plummeted headfirst toward the concrete floor 30 feet below. The paint can--which he had intended to remove for days--broke his fall and folded beneath him like an accordion, reported Joan (Mrs. Thomas L.) Norman, Southern Baptist missionary press representative.

He sustained a broken rib, fractured left wrist, facial cuts and bruises. He is recovering following surgery.

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### Nicaragua Work Continues Despite Political Unrest

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MANAGUA, Nicaragua (BP)--Despite successive days of political unrest, Southern Baptist missionary work in this Central American country is continuing on a normal basis.

A cable to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board from Stanley D. Stamps, missionary in Managua, said, "All Nicaraguan missionary families are well. Activities are normal."

The country has been under political tension since August 22, when leftwing guerrillas took over the national palace in Managua and paralyzed the government of President Anastasio Somoza Jr., demanding the release of the country's political prisoners.

In addition to Stamps and his wife, the N. Hoyt Eudalys and the Stephens L. Baumgardners are Southern Baptist missionaries stationed in Managua.

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### Louisville Broadcaster Joins Radio-TV Commission

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8/31/78

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A Louisville broadcaster, Robert Burns Taylor Jr., station manager of WHAS-TV, will become a senior vice president of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas, October 1.

The Radio and Television Commission, the broadcast arm of the Southern Baptist Convention, is the world's largest producer of syndicated religious radio and television programs for public service time.

Taylor, 44, who has been at WHAS since 1974, will have specific responsibilities in the radio and television areas of the commission's ministry in his newly created post.

He will be involved in production facilities, equipment procurement, and budget control for the Radio and Television Commission's four major television productions and seven major radio productions, as well as 33 other radio and television programs.

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The Radio and Television Commission's 43 programs are heard on nearly 5,000 stations. In 1977 these programs were given more than \$11.1 million worth of free air time.

"We feel the Radio and Television Commission is entering a new era of creative broadcasting with the coming of Mr. Taylor," said Paul M. Stevens, commission president. "Religious broadcasting in America is moving at a fast pace--some of which is not desirable. The Radio and Television Commission is anxious to provide itself with the kind of leadership that will measure itself against the highest call of God. Mr. Taylor, a deeply committed Christian, is that kind of leader."

Taylor, who began his broadcasting career in 1954, has served as production manager, WFIE-TV, Evansville, Ind.; operations manager, WLKY-TV, Louisville, Ky.; station manager, WAST-TV, Albany, N. Y.; vice president of division operations for Sonderling Broadcasting Corporation in New York; and station manager, WRAU-TV, Peoria, Ill.

A deacon and Sunday School teacher at Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, he has also been active in the Chamber of Commerce, the United Way, and the Humane and Zoological Society.

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(BP) Photo mailed to Baptist state papers by the Radio and Television Commission.

Hunger Convocation  
Program Set in N.C.

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RIDGECREST, N. C. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Jimmy Allen, Bread for the World director Art Simon and Southern Baptist theologian Francis DuBose will deliver major addresses during the Convocation on World Hunger, Nov. 20-21, at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, near Asheville, N. C.

The convocation, a first for the SBC, will seek to raise awareness about world hunger and identify practical ways for churches and other Baptist bodies to tackle the problem. The two-day meeting will also provide information on hunger-related activities of various Southern Baptist agencies.

Allen, who initiated a special hunger emphasis at the 1978 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, will conclude the convocation with an address on "The Challenge for Southern Baptists Today." Simon will discuss the role of government in the fight against hunger, and DuBose, professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, will present biblical and theological bases for the right to food concept.

Other speakers include James Grant, president of the Overseas Development Council, who will analyze current hunger conditions; Ron Sider, author of "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger," who will share ideas about the implementation of the right to food concept; and Midge Meinerz, assistant for development for the Church World Service, who will discuss the role of the private voluntary organization in the fight against hunger.

Convocation coordinator W. David Sapp of the SBC Christian Life Commission said interested Baptists may attend by sending a \$25 deposit (\$15 for students) to Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, Ridgecrest, N. C. 28770. Total cost, he said, will range from \$47 to \$58, depending on accommodations, for meals, two nights lodging and registration fee.

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AARP Does Not Sanction  
'Adulterous Lifestyles'

Baptist Press  
8/31/78

WASHINGTON (BP)--The American Association of Retired Persons, responding to criticism of articles in an AARP publication, says it does not endorse unmarried retired couples living together.

Dr. Mary Calderone, noted sexologist, expressed apparent support of such persons living together in an interview in the August-September, 1978, issue of the AARP magazine, "Modern Maturity." A response by an associate editor in a question and answer column in the same issue apparently took the same view.

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Foy Valentine, head of the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, and Donald Ackland, who retired in 1968 as a Southern Baptist Sunday School Board executive, both wrote strong letters of complaint to AARP. Ackland is an AARP member.

"'Modern Maturity' has endorsed gross immorality, unmitigated adultery, in its support of living together without being married," Valentine wrote. "Your magazine has done a shocking and grave disservice to those of us who are 55 or over, to the members of the American Association of Retired Persons, and to the institution of marriage by allowing this living-together-without-marriage-is-great theme to permeate its pages."

AARP "absolutely does not sanction adulterous lifestyles for older Americans," Lloyd Wright, a spokesman for the 11.6-million-member organization, told Baptist Press.

"In reviewing the items in question, we can understand why that unintended interpretation (of AARP support for such cohabitation) might have been made," said Wright, public relations director and acting executive director for AARP during the absence of Cyril Brickhouse.

"We regret the lack of clarity in communicating our association's attitude on the issue and will take steps to correct it," he said. He also noted that an upcoming issue of "Modern Maturity" will publish a representative letter expressing concern of readers and an editorial response clarifying the AARP's position.

Wright said about a half dozen letters expressing opposition had come to his attention thus far even before the magazine had been distributed to its entire circulation.

"It was not our intention in publishing either the Mary Calderone interview or the response to a reader's question in one of our regular columns (entitled 'What Should I Do?') to sanction adulterous lifestyles for older Americans," Wright said.

"The answer to a question posed by one couple about grown children's avoidance of them was intended to support the proposition that older people have a right to their own independence," he said. "The reference to the 'children's unrealistic attitudes' was based on one psychologist's opinion. AARP does not share that view."

Wright was referring to an answer given in the "What Should I Do?" column to a couple in their 70s who had begun living together because financial conditions would hinder them if they married. They said their children were "shocked and have started to avoid us" and asked what to do about it.

The answer, in part, said, "The decision of what to do must be your own, but ask yourself--as one psychologist suggests--whether or not you are prepared to sacrifice your way of life on the altar of your children's unrealistic attitudes."

Part of the Calderone article quoted her as saying: "Changed sexual attitudes have freed older people. They are traveling and living together more and few question it. If people do question it, I suspect that such a couple wouldn't want to see people who are so uptight about something simple and lovely. Two older people who elect to share their remaining days in mutual caring help alleviate the loneliness older people can feel."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story mailed Aug. 24, entitled Mission Field 'Incredible' Among Northeast Students, figure in paragraph five should be one-third of the students in American colleges and universities are located in the Northeast and not the two-thirds printed. Thanks, Baptist Press.

EDITORS: Three-story package on SBC church ministries to aging at the beginning of today's mailing may be used in series, individually or as package.

Thanks, Baptist Press