

ASSESSING THE CHARACTERISTICS, INTERESTS, AND
NEEDS OF THE SENIOR ADULTS OF THE
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF
OKMULGEE, OKLAHOMA

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem

The fastest-growing age group of our population is the senior adult. Even though Americans have historically thought of themselves as young, the "graying of America" is a rapidly expanding phenomenon. It is estimated that the median age will reach 35 by the year 2000 and approach 40 by 2030. During the same period, the number of adults aged 65+ will more than double to 52 million--one out of every six Americans.

Projections are that there will be 24.5 million senior adults by 1981, 28.9 million by 1990, and 30.6 million or 12.5 percent of the expected population by 2000. There will be a 60 percent increase of the 75+ population which will boost them to 44 percent of the 65+ population; thus, older senior adults are slowly moving to a majority position among older Americans (Howse, 1980).

Churches are slowly passing through the "youth-cult" stage of the present culture and are seeing, at least in the Baptist denomination, an evident shift from a preoccupation with the declining number of youth to an emphasis on a specialized ministry with the rapidly growing number of senior adults. Volumes have been written about senior adults and their characteristics but little has concentrated on the church's role in understanding and ministering to these special adults.

The church has an excellent opportunity to relate to and challenge this long-over looked group of the American society. Every effort should be made to meet this challenge.

Need for the Study

It is an incomplete education which equips the adult with knowledge and skill in making a better living. There must also be that education which provides the learner with knowledge and skill for living better. The church is one of the channels through which these skills can be learned. The church's role should be to meet not only the spiritual needs of the aging but also their educational, physical, and social needs.

Frequently the church makes the mistake of looking upon her ministry with the senior adult as a "granny-sitting" program. One of the 65 and over group reflected, "my church thinks I am just an old, wrinkled baby." A well-developed, meaningful program necessitates more than providing amusing programs and interesting trips. Too many times the older adult is placed in the position of being a spectator and doing what the younger segment of the church wants to do for him.

Most churches have the resources to provide an effective ministry with the elderly: money, facilities, leadership, caring attitudes, and ability. It seems that many times the only thing that has been lacking is an effective plan for developing such a ministry.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to assess the characteristics, interests, and needs of the active senior adults of the First Baptist

Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, in order to develop a program of ministry to these senior adults.

The research objectives of this study were to:

1. Identify the characteristics of the local senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee.
2. Assess the interests of the local senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, and
3. Assess the needs of the local senior adult of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Identification of the Need

Of churches surveyed in 1975 by the Research Department of the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 42 percent requested help in organizing and planning for a senior adult ministry. Forty percent indicated a need for leadership training (Kerr, 1980).

As a result of this survey, the Senior Adult Ministry Section of the Family Ministry Department was formed to serve those needs indicated by the survey. Kerr (1980), supervisor of this newly developed ministry section, stated two of its objectives as: (1) to create an awareness of the presence and the potential of senior adults, and (2) to provide for a better understanding of the aging process.

Available literature has been reviewed with the objective of ascertaining the characteristics of the senior adult of the 1980's. The information acquired has been organized and discussed under five subheadings: Life-Expentancy Trends, Education and Learning Ability, Popularity, Change, and Attitudes Concerning Age.

Characteristics of the Senior Adult

Life-Expentancy Trends

Total Population Ratios. Every day approximately 5,000 Americans

become age 64 while approximately 3,600 Americans 65 and over die. This is a net increase of 1,400 senior Americans per day or more than a net gain of approximately 400,000 per year.

As of 1976 the total population in American was 215.3 million. Of that number, 23 million or 10.5 percent of the total was over 65.

Weg (1977), Associate Professor of Biology-Gerontology of the Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, has pointed out in her summary of statistics that this phenomenal increase in life expectancy does not mean that older people are living much longer but rather that more people are reaching old age. The significant life expectancy increase has occurred in infancy and childhood.

Sex Ratios. Statistics show that more male babies are born than female, and yet women tend to outlive men. Senior adult women outnumber men. Weg (1980) states:

Male death rates are higher beginning at birth . . . so that by age 20 and thereafter, women increasingly outnumber men. The ratio of numbers of women in all ages reflect this, but it becomes more dramatic with increasing age and with time from 1950-1979 (p. 31).

Two interesting comparisons might be stated in connection with these statistics: in 1976 females reported a higher number of visits to physicians than did males, and in 1964, 143.7 males and 20.3 females per 100,000 population who were 65 plus committed suicide.

Widowers are outnumbered by widows four to one: over 50 percent of the over 65 age group of women are widows.

Education and Learning Ability

Statistics have shown that America has experienced a dramatic growth of older Americans. They also speak volumes as to their life

situations. Education statistics and the changes that may occur as to the intelligence of senior adults may be vitally related.

Early data (1930's, 1940's and 1950's) of 65 and over I.Q. test scores were interpreted to say that intelligence reaches its peak in young adulthood and drops thereafter. A study by two research psychologists largely dispell this myth. They and other colleagues now promote an optimistic view of intelligence of the aged. They report, "intelligence does not slide downhill from adulthood through old age. By many measures, it increases as time goes by"(Baite, 1974, p. 35).

One of the most widely held myths is that the older adults are severely handicapped in their ability to learn. DeCrow (1975), Director of the Older Americans Project, states:

One of the strongest delusions in history is the still prevalent myth that older people cannot learn or that they typically suffer serious decline in mental abilities.

Common sense observation should dispell this notion, for hundreds of thousands of older adults are learning every imaginable subject in adult education programs over the years and decades (p. 7).

The consensus of leading learning theorists is that there is only a slight decline in learning, and it has little practical significance in real-life situations.

Popularity

In 1971, after the White House Conference on Aging, there was a new burst of enthusiasm and excitement regarding the senior adults. Many positive actions were taken, even legislation, and emerging new program and services were seen. The 1982 White House Conference on Aging will probably have a similar effect.

Change

For the senior adult, change becomes a way of life. They are in a "four-square" change: physically, through the change of muscle tone, skin, bones, and strength; socially, as they face loss of friends and spouses and as they find their activities curtailed through financial change or illness; mentally, as they learn to compensate for adjustments to be made; and spiritually, as they continue to need and give spiritual nurture. Change is a characteristic apparent in many levels of their lives.

Attitudes Concerning Age

The National Council on Aging and the Harris Polling Organization conducted an extensive study on the aged to determine the public's attitude about them and to document the older Americans' attitudes about themselves (Kalish, 1977).

The study revealed that 62 percent of the public perceived that most older Americans do not have enough money to live, yet only 15 percent of the elderly surveyed found finances a personal problem. Sixty-seven percent of the public believed that older adults spend much time watching television; only 36 percent of the senior adults stated that they spend considerable time in this activity.

Most senior adults are interested in volunteer work (approximately 6.6 million); however, they are not satisfied with giving full-time to uncompensated volunteer work.

Results of Previous Program Research

Many churches have begun either small or large scale programs for their growing numbers of senior adults--programs which have as their basis the two-way purpose of ministering to this special segment of the church, which Kerr (1980) states is usually 20 percent of the church's membership, and at the same time enriching the lives of the other members of the church family by calling on the senior adults' individual, unique strengths and skills which have been long overlooked.

The need to be worthwhile to self and to others is apparently a universal need. Sister Michael Sibille (cited in Weg, 1980), has discussed in her films on the psychosocial aspects of aging the great challenge that exists in helping senior adults regain a sense of usefulness.

One youth minister (Long, 1982), who now has a rapidly growing senior adult ministry, commented on his observation of the differences and similarities which have occurred between his two groups:

One is always aware of the insecurity of some teenagers mostly through their interaction with one another. They are so concerned about what other peers are thinking about them they do not often find it possible to concentrate on making someone else feel accepted, loved, wanted. The majority of our senior adults, on the other hand, go the extra mile in seeing to each other's needs, comfort, or enjoyment. In their security of knowing 'who they are,' they are able to be more relaxed with one another. Most teenagers have not yet reached that plateau.

The typical teenager may not always remember to show gratitude; the elder group goes out of its way to say 'thank you,' to be in an attitude of gratitude for the things (seemingly small things many times) which are being done for them.

Naturally, I realize that by having an interrelation of the two groups (youth and senior adults), we are helping to grow a more loving, aware group of future senior adults.

The basic format in our work with the two groups is similar: providing for their social, physical, mental, and spiritual needs and interests. Both groups enjoy retreats, musicals, seminars, fellowships; the topics and methods of presentation differ. One of the largest differences is my role; for instance, with the youth I feel sole responsibility; with the senior adults I many times feel I am their guest.

Plans for the church's ministry should include taking stock of senior adults' capacities, helping them to set goals, and leading them to achieve these goals. Shock (cited in Weg, 1980, p. 36), gerontologist, has said, "be a high achiever. The competitive person with goals and a will to live outlives the others and enjoys life to the end."

Workshops and conferences on retirement, aging, stress, management, death and dying, problem-solving should be a "must" in every church's program planning. Opportunities for physical fitness, sports, crafts, and recreational times should be available.

One of the best ways to plan successful programs is to see what has been successfully done elsewhere. Mature Living, a monthly Christian magazine for senior adults, has a regular section entitled, "What's Going On," which lists activities which have occurred in various churches: (1) Holy Land Visit. Thirty-three senior adults visited the Holy Land, Athens, Greece, and Egypt. After seeing the pyramids, one senior adult said, "it looks better after 5,000 years than I do after 67 years," (2) A New Day Care Concept. The Twenty-Second Street Baptist Church in Tucson, Arizona, plans a re-location and new construction of church facilities. Included in the future plans is a day-care center for children and senior adults. The children will be taken care of in family fashion. The knowledge and wisdom of senior adults will be used in creative ways, (3) A Senior Adult Touring Choir. This 60-voice choir practices weekly and performs not only in its

local church but also around the state and in six other states, (4) A Musical to Honor Grandparents. Senior adults were honored on Senior Adult Day with a luncheon at the church, served by youth and young adults. The evening service was designated as Grandparents' Night with children grades three through six presenting the musical "Down by the Creek Bank," (5) Koinonia Homes. A senior Adult Complex, called Koinonia Homes, consisting of 31 townhouses has opened its doors. Costing more than \$1 million and located just across the parking lot from the First Baptist Church, which sponsors the program, the project is financed without the use of federal funds.

Summary

The review of literature has reflected considerable interest in the senior adult life cycle and its characteristics; consequently, a large body of knowledge has derived from these studies of the aging. There are, however, limited resources available in the area of the church's role regarding the senior adult.

The review of available literature as well as observations has shown that the existing successful senior adult ministries have started with a needs assessment survey. Senior adults have definite needs and interests and will choose the way they want to spend their time. Any program which would affect them must be so designed. These factors were kept in mind as this study sought to develop from a survey of the senior adults' needs and interests a ministry model which would be effective in the lives of this age group.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to assess the characteristics, interests, and needs of the active senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, in order to develop a program of ministry to the senior adults.

The objectives of this study were to:

1. identify the characteristics of the local senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee,
2. assess the interests of the local senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, and
3. assess the needs of the local senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee.

Definitions

The following terms which appear in this study are defined because of their special meanings:

Senior Adult Ministry was perceived to be an act of serving; the church doing all she can to make life full, abundant, and meaningful for her membership of older citizens through a comprehensive program.

Senior Adult Age as used in this study was those ages 55 and above. The American Association of Retired Persons' membership age begins at 55; the U.S. Older American Act, 60; Social Security accepts

62; and most retirement plans, 65. These citizens will be predominantly retired although the membership in most churches would have a substantial number of those who are semi-retired.

Active Senior Adult was perceived to be that adult who was mobile enough to engage in outside church activities and had done so at least once during the month preceeding the survey.

Assumptions

It was assumed that the subjects surveyed at two separate senior adult meetings were representative of the total active First Baptist Church senior adults.

It was also assumed that each respondent was capable of making an honest, unbiased, responsible response and did so voluntarily.

Selection of the Subjects

In order to assess the interests and needs of the active senior adults, it was decided to survey through a questionnaire those senior adults attending two regular gatherings of the group: A Sunday morning Bible study (held weekly) and a monthly social meeting (held the first Monday of each month). Because the questionnaire identifies the respondent, no subject completed more than one questionnaire. It was believed that these two gatherings would contain the majority of eligible respondents.

Development of the Instrument

To accomplish the three research objectives (to assess the characteristics, interests, and needs of the local senior adult), a

66-item, one-page (8 1/2 by 11 inches) questionnaire was designed to survey the local senior adults.

Of the 66 items, nine were listed under general information, 24 under the interest area, and 23 under needs. The general information section included the name, date, address, birthdate, telephone number, sex, employment status, and marital status. It was decided to request the name of the respondent because as the program was developed, the respondent stating an interest or need could then be contacted in order to be involved or to help in setting up a program.

Four sections appeared under the interest area: spiritual growth, mental growth, social growth, and physical growth. These individual sections included suggested options of interest as well as an opportunity for the respondent to add any interest which had not been listed.

Only two sections appeared under the needs area: opportunities to serve and services needed. Suggested options were also listed in these sections as well as opportunities to add any need which had not been listed.

Collection of Data

The questionnaire was distributed to the senior adults of the First Baptist Church in one of the regularly scheduled age group meetings on a Sunday morning and again at a monthly week-day senior adult meeting to any one who attended the second meeting and had not attended the previous meeting. The researcher, knowing the senior adults personally, conducted the survey. It was believed that the senior adults would feel more free to respond if the survey was conducted by someone whom they knew.

A statement of purpose was given to the senior adult gathering to help them understand why the information gathered by the survey would be useful. It was believed that there would be more commitment to the survey by the adults if they were aware that the results would be used to build a more comprehensive program for them according to their own interests and needs.

To help assure the senior adults' understanding of the items on the survey, each was discussed to make clear the intent of the individual sections and items.

Limitations

This survey of the church community included respondents from the over 55 active or Sunday School members only. (Active was determined to be that member who attended a church gathering at least once a month.) It was assumed that this group would have different interests and needs from inactive members (inactive because of health impairments, restrictions, or non-interest). The study did not include the entire membership of senior adults; therefore, the church should keep in mind that the interests and needs of at least two sections of this populace have not been surveyed: the homebound and the non-interested.

Although the interview method conceivably could be a more profitable method of determining the interests and needs of this section of the church community, the questionnaire method was used because of a time advantage involved. Because of the limitation of the questionnaire in perhaps getting answers only to the questions asked on the survey, several follow-up interviews were conducted to determine if the survey questions had been clearly stated to the respondent's satisfaction and

to seek any additional interests and needs not listed on the questionnaire.

In addition, there is the possibility of bias because the respondents were requested to sign their questionnaires. It was felt that the value of knowing which persons needed specific help or which ones were willing to give specific help outweighed the value of anonymity.

Analysis of Data

A tally sheet was made with a count of marks entered opposite each item. A chart was then composed listing the four interest areas and the two need areas with the items under each listed in order of highest preference. A separate analysis was made of the differences in the interest and need areas according to the sex of the respondents.

Summary

This chapter includes a description of the methodology used for this study. Definitions for special terms used were first given, followed by assumptions made and selection of the subjects surveyed. This instrument used to assess the needs and interests of the senior adults in question was described, followed by a discussion of the method of collection of data. Following a discussion of the limitations of the study was a description of the method used to analyze the data.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to assess the characteristics, interests, and needs of the active senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, in order to develop a program of ministry to these senior adults.

To make this assessment, a 66-item questionnaire was distributed to 135 senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma.

Return Rate

The questionnaire was designed by dividing interests into four main categories: spiritual, mental, physical, and social. The needs were divided into opportunities to serve and services needed. These divisions were preceded by a general information section which assessed the name, address, date, birthdate, sex, employment status, and marital status of each respondent. This questionnaire was distributed to 135 senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, at two separate meetings. Of those questionnaires distributed, 124 were returned (a 92 percent return rate); these 124 respondents were used to determine the results of this study.

Data Summary

Analysis of Respondents

After tabulating the results by entering beside each item on the questionnaire the number of persons whose sheet had that item checked, a chart listing the four interest areas and the two need areas in order of highest preference was prepared (see Tables I, II, III). The respondents were asked to check as many items as needed to indicate anywhere a need or interest lay; therefore each section might contain more than a 100 percent response.

Of those respondents, 85 were female and 39 male, a 69 to 31 ratio. Age group 55-59 had five respondents, 60-64 had 18, 65-74 had 61; and 75 plus had 40. The largest number (49 percent) of respondents was in the 65-74 age group: 19 male, 42 female; the majority marital status (65 percent) was spouse living; and the majority employment status (92 percent) was retired.

Of the 39 men surveyed only one was widowed and only one single (having never been married), leaving 37 (97 percent of the respondents) with spouses living.

Of the 85 women surveyed four (five percent) had never been married, 43 (50 percent) had spouses living, and 38 (45 percent) were widowed.

Analysis of Interest and Needs

Assessment of Interests

Social Growth. The data showed that of the four interest groups, this senior adult group indicated its strongest interest lay in the

TABLE I
INTEREST AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT
TOTAL RESPONSENTS-124

INTEREST AREAS			
SPIRITUAL	MENTAL	SOCIAL	PHYSICAL
1. Bible Study.... 99	1. Hobbies..... 51	1. Fellowship with own age group... 101	1. Jogging/Walking.. 57
2. Prayer Groups.. 40	2. Religions..... 41	2. Trips..... 76	2. Sports..... 16
3. Book Studies... 33	3. Arts/Crafts.... 38	3. Fellowship with other ages..... 46	3. Exercise..... 13
4. Share Groups... 31	4. Current Events. 40	4. Music..... 36	
5. Retreats..... 18	5. Back to School. 9	5. Films/Movies.... 20	
6. Conferences.... 11		6. Drama..... 11	
NEED AREAS			
TO SERVE		TO BE SERVED	
1. Visiting..... 45	8. Music..... 9	1. Visits from friends..... 20	
2. Telephone..... 41	9. Library..... 9	2. Home Repairs..... 16	
3. Transportation. 26	10. Lawn Work..... 8	3. Telephone calls from friends..... 15	
4. Witness..... 18	11. Speaking..... 7	4. Lawn Work..... 11	
5. Gen. Off. Work. 17	12. Mission Work.... 6	5. Transportation..... 8	
6. Teaching..... 15	13. Home Repairs.... 5	6. Health..... 2	
7. Child's Worker. 12	14. Youth Worker.... 5	7. Financial..... 1	

*Interest and Need Items are listed in order of highest preference.

TABLE II

INTEREST AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT
MALE RESPONDENTS-39

INTEREST AREAS			
SPIRITUAL	MENTAL	SOCIAL	PHYSICAL
1. Bible Study 32	1. Hobbies..... 27	1. Fellowship With Own Age Group.. 34	1. Jogging/Walking 21
2. Prayer Groups 8	2. Religions 12	2. Trips 24	2. Sports 13
3. Book Studies 8	3. Current Events . 10	3. Fellowship With Other Ages 14	3. Exercise 2
4. Share Groups 7	4. Arts/Crafts 4	4. Music 6	
5. Retreats 4	5. Back to School . 1	5. Films/Movies ... 3	
6. Conferences 2		6. Drama..... 1	
NEED AREAS			
TO SERVE		TO BE SERVED	
1. Visiting 13	6. Telephone 5	1. Visits from Friends12	
2. Transportation 11	7. Youth Worker... 3	2. Telephone Calls from Friends 8	
3. Witness 6	8. General Office Work 2	3. Lawn Work 2	
4. Lawn Work 5	9. Music 1	4. Home Repairs 1	
5. Home Repairs 4	10. Speaking 1	5. Transportation 1	

*Interest and Need items are listed in order of highest preference.

TABLE III
 INTEREST AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT
 FEMALE RESPONDENTS-85

INTEREST AREAS			
SPIRITUAL	MENTAL	SOCIAL	PHYSICAL
1. Bible Study 67	1. Arts/Crafts 34	1. Fellowship With Own Age Group ... 68	1. Jogging/Walking .36
2. Prayer Groups 32	2. Current Events .. 30	2. Trips 52	2. Exercise11
3. Book Studies 25	3. Religions 29	3. Fellowship With Other Ages 32	3. Sports 3
4. Share Groups 24	4. Hobbies 24	4. Music 30	
5. Retreats 14	5. Back to School .. 8	5. Films/Movies 17	
6. Conferences 9		6. Drama 10	
NEED AREAS			
TO SERVE	TO BE SERVED		
1. Telephone 36	1. Home Repairs 15		
2. Visiting 32	2. Lawn Work 9		
3. Transportation 15	3. Visits from friends 8		
3. General Office Work 15	4. Telephone calls from friends 7		
3. Teaching 15	4. Transportation 7		
4. Witness 12	5. Health 2		
4. Children's Worker . 12	6. Financial 1		
5. Library 9			
6. Music 8			
7. Speaking 6			
8. Mission Work 5			
9. Lawn Work 3			
10. Youth Worker 2			
11. Home Repairs 1			

*Interest and Need items are listed in order of preference.

social growth area: 291 entries appeared in this area. Of these entries there were 209 female responses compared to 82 males.

Within the social growth area, of the six categories listed the item to receive the largest response was "fellowship with your own age group": 101 of the 124 respondents indicated an interest (81 percent).

The male percentage response was greater than the female in this area: 33 males representing an 85 percent interest of the group and 68 females representing an 80 percent interest.

"Trips" was the second largest response in the social category: 76 of the 124 respondents indicated an interest (61 percent). The male percentage response was again slightly greater than the female: 24 males representing a 62 percent interest and 52 females representing a 61 percent interest.

"Fellowship with your age groups" was ranked third in interest with 46 (37 percent) respondents replying. Fourteen males representing 36 percent of this population marked this area compared with 32 female respondents representing 38 percent of this group.

"Music" placed fourth in the rankings with 36 of the 124 respondents (29 percent). Only six males (15 percent) indicated an interest compared with 30 females representing 35 percent of this group.

"Films and Movies" placed fifth in the assessment of the women showing almost three times more interest than the men in this area. Only three men (7 percent) showed an interest, while 17 women (20 percent) voted for this category.

"Drama" created the least interest (9 percent) with a total of only 11 people voting for this area: one male and ten females.

Spiritual Growth. According to the data gathered, the spiritual growth area received the second strongest response: 232 entries. Of these entries 171 were female and 61 were male.

There were also six items listed in this area with "Bible Study" receiving the largest response: 99 entries representing 80 percent of the respondents indicating an interest. Thirty-two of them were male (82 percent) and 67 were female, although representing a smaller percentage of this group (79 percent) than the male. This area of Bible Study received almost half (43 percent) of the total responses in this area.

An interest in "Prayer Groups" was second in this spiritual growth area with 40 respondents (32 percent). Eight men (21 percent) responded to prayer groups while 32 women (38 percent of the group) responded.

"Book Studies" was third with 33 respondents (27 percent): eight of them male and 25 female.

"Share Groups" received 31 responses (25 percent) for fourth place with seven men responding and 24 females.

Only 18 people indicated an interest in "Retreats," representing only a 15 percent interest of the group: four men and 14 women.

"Conferences" received the smallest number of responses in this area: only 11 people, two men and nine women.

Mental Growth. This area was ranked third in the interest assessment with 179 entries: 54 males and 125 females. Five items appeared in this area: hobbies, religions, arts and crafts, current events, and back to school.

"Hobbies" drew the largest response with 51 entries (41 percent of the respondents indicating an interest). Data showed that the men indicated a stronger interest in hobbies than the women. Sixty-nine percent of the men (27 respondents) indicated this item as their highest response while only 28 percent of the women indicated their interest (24 respondents of the 85), thus making "hobbies" their fourth ranking choice in this area.

The study of "Religions" ranked second in this mental growth area with 41 responses (33 percent of the respondents). Religions was also the men's second-ranked choice in interest (31 percent of them) while the 29 women listed it as their third highest response (34 percent of them voting for this item).

"Current Events" Received the third largest number of responses (4) in the mental growth area, only one response behind the study of religions. Only ten men responded in this area (26 percent) while 30 women (representing 35 percent of this group) indicated their interest.

"Arts and Crafts" was ranked fourth with 38 responses (31 percent). Thirty-four women (40 percent) indicated an interest in this area while only four men (10 percent) responded to arts and crafts.

"Back to School" received the least interest response with only nine respondents: one man and eight women.

Physical Growth. This interest area received the smallest number of entries: 86. Thirty-six entries were made by the men and 50 by the women.

"Jogging or Walking with Others" received the largest response both by men and women. Fifty-four percent of the men indicated an interest in this physical exercise while 36 women (42 percent of the

respondents) indicated their interest.

"Sports Participation" was the second-ranked interest area: 16 responses, 13 male (33 percent) and 3 female (four percent).

"Exercise Group" was indicated as the least of the three items listed under physical growth, although it was listed second by the women. Only two men responded to exercising in a group while 11 women responded (13 percent), making a total of 13 responses in this area.

Assessment of Needs

Need to Serve. There were 223 responses in this area compared to 73 in the "to be served" area. Fourteen items were suggested as possibilities of opportunities for the senior adult to be used: visiting, telephone, witness, general office work, transportation, teaching, lawn work, library, children's worker, mission work, music, home repairs, speaking, and youth worker. Although all 14 items received some response, only two received over 30 percent of the respondent vote: "Visiting," receiving 45 entries (36 percent of the total respondents), and "Telephone," receiving 41 entries (33 percent of the total respondents). Being willing to provide "Transportation" for others ranked third in service with 26 entries (21 percent of respondents).

The next four items received less than 20 percent response from the senior adult groups: "Witness," 18 entries (15 percent); "General Office Work," 17 entries (14 percent); "Teaching," 15 entries (12 percent); and "Children's Worker," 12 entries (10 percent).

Those receiving less than ten responses were "Music" and "Library," nine entries for 7 percent of total respondents; "Lawn Work," eight entries for six percent; "Mission Work," six entries for five percent

"Home Repairs" and "Youth Worker," five entries each for four percent.

In this "Need to Serve" category, the male respondents did not respond to four items: teaching, library, children's worker, and mission work.

Need to be Served. Only seven items were suggested in this category as areas where the senior adults might need assistance. Financial, health, home repairs, lawn work, transportation, telephone calls from other church friends, and visits from other church friends. There were 73 responses with "visits from other church friends" receiving the largest response: 20 entries (16 percent of the total respondents). The male response was larger than the female in this area: 12 male (31 percent of the total respondents) and only eight female (nine percent of the total respondents).

"Home Repairs" received 16 entries (13 percent of the total respondents) for second place. Fifteen of these entries were women with only one man responding.

"Telephone Calls from Other Church Friends" was listed third with 15 entries (12 percent of the total respondents). This is the most equal response between the male and female respondents: eight male and seven female.

The remaining four items received less than ten percent response from the total number of senior adults assessed. "Lawn Work" was listed fourth: 11 responses (nine percent) with only two male responses, nine female. "Transportation" received eight responses (six percent): one male, seven female. "Health" received only two responses, both female, while "Financial" received only one response (female) from the 124 respondents.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to assess the characteristics, interests, and needs of the active senior adults of the First Baptist Church of Okmulgee, Oklahoma, in order to develop a program of ministry to these senior adults.

Because the fastest growing age group of our population is the senior adult, churches are experiencing a shift from a preoccupation with declining number of youth to a ministry with this senior age group.

Most churches have the resources to provide an effective ministry with the elderly but lack an effective plan for developing such a ministry. The objectives of this study were to assist in developing such a plan by:

1. Identifying the characteristics of the local senior adults,
2. Assessing the interests of the local senior adults,
3. Assessing the needs of the local senior adults,

To accomplish these objectives, a 66-item questionnaire was designed to survey principal criteria to be used in establishing a ministry to the senior adults: their interests and their needs. There were three main categories in the research instrument: general information, containing nine items; interests, containing 24 possible choices

in four different areas (spiritual, mental, social and physical); and needs, containing 23 possible choices in two different areas (to be of service, to be served).

This questionnaire was distributed by the author to 135 senior adults at two separate gatherings of these adults. The questionnaires were completed and returned by 124 respondents (a 92 percent return rate) who were used to determine the results of this study.

After tabulating the number of interest and need indications on the survey sheet, graphs were made showing the rate of interest and need of the total respondents and separately according to the sex of the respondents (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Appendices A and B were prepared listing the four interest area choices and two need area choices in order of highest preference. Separate charts were used for the total populace, male and female.

The assessment indicated that the largest group of respondents were in the 65-74 age group, female, retired, and had living spouses.

The survey also showed that the highest interest of both male and female respondents was in the social area with the physical area receiving the least response.

A study of all four areas indicated the two items of highest interest to both sexes were fellowship with your own age group and Bible study, respectively.

The respondents' need to serve far outweighed their desire to be served: 223 responses to 73, over three times greater.

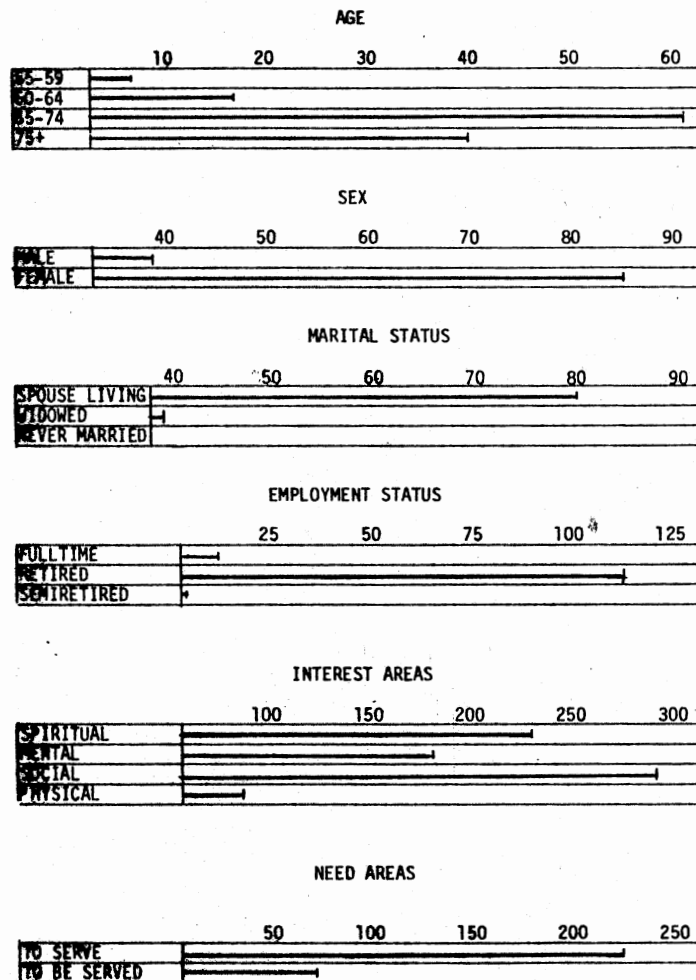


Figure 1. Characteristics Composite of Total Respondents

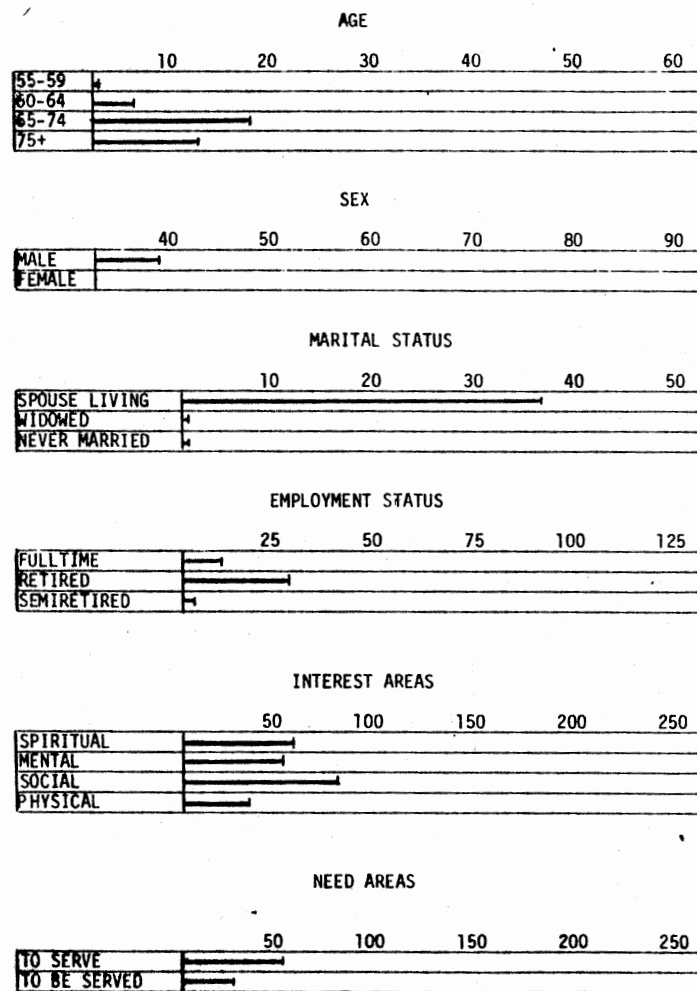


Figure 2. Male Respondent Characteristics

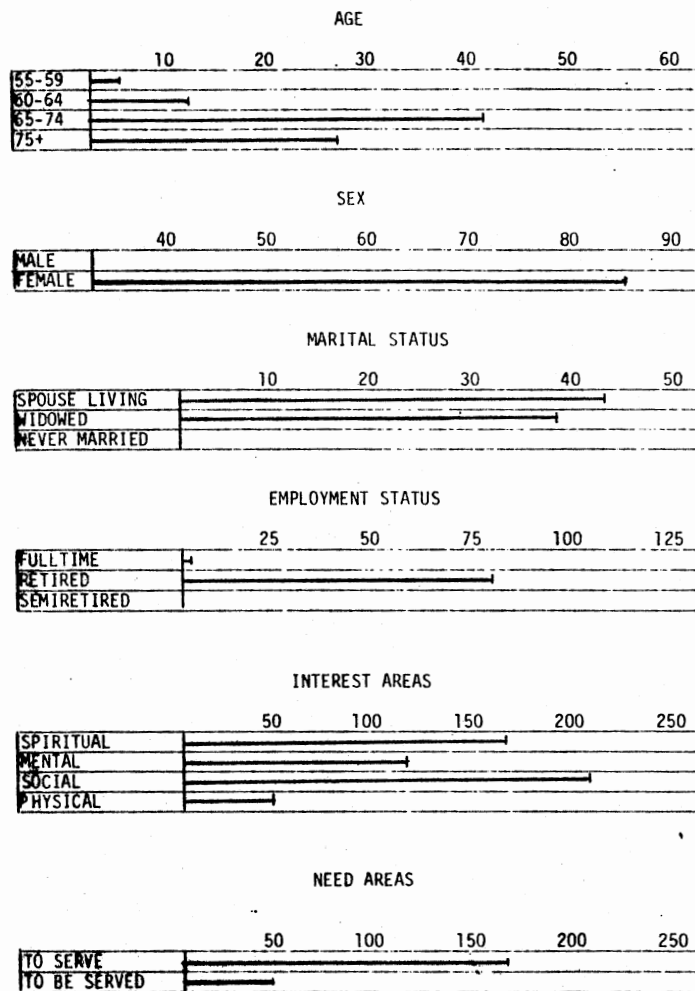


Figure 3. Female Respondent Characteristics

Findings and Conclusions

Findings

Objective One: To Identify the Characteristics of the Local Senior Adult

The largest group of respondents was the 65-74 retired female with a slight margin between being widowed (38) or having a living spouse (43). The male group was similarly structured: 65-74 age group and retired. There was, however, a large difference between the marital status of widowed or spouse living: one to 37, respectively.

Conclusions

This study's findings that 45 percent of the female respondents were widowed parallel, to some extent, the total U.S. population that 50 percent of the over 65 female is widowed. The study would also indicate that the active male senior adult member will not be widowed but will have a living mate, seeming to verify that women do outlive men.

Findings

Objective Two: To Assess the Interests of the Local Senior Adults

Every interest entry on the questionnaire received a response. An assessment of these interests of the senior adult showed a strong similarity between male and female. Each group ranked the four areas identically in order of preference: (1) social, (2) spiritual, (3) mental, and (4) physical. Within the two areas of social and

spiritual, the 16 items were again ranked identically in order of preference but the percentages differed slightly in the degree of preferences; e.g., the male populace showed a five percent greater interest in Fellowship with Own Age Group than the women (the men also listed a greater need [15 percent] for Telephone Calls from Other Church Friends and a greater need [22 percent] for Visits from Other Church Friends than did the females). Interestingly, the male respondents also showed a three percent greater interest in Bible Study than the female respondents.

The rankings of the four interest areas showed that the top five interests were Fellowship with Own Age Group (81 percent of the total respondents indicating an interest), Bible study (80 percent), Trips (61 percent), Jogging/walking with others (46 percent), and Hobbies (41 percent). (see Table IV).

The study showed that the respondents differed in the mental and physical areas with the largest difference in the hobbies item: 69 percent of the total men showed an interest, only 28 percent of the women, although 40 percent of the women indicated an interest in Arts/Crafts and only ten percent of the men responded to that item.

Conclusions

1. The study seems to indicate that the senior adults are not as concerned about what they do as they are about doing it together; for instance, only an approximate tenth are interested in exercise, but almost one half are interested in jogging together.

2. It can also be concluded that the male and female respondents have great similarity in their interests which would indicate that joint meetings would be easily planned.

TABLE IV
 RANKING OF ALL INTEREST ITEMS
 FROM TOTAL RESPONDENTS

Percentage of Total Respondents Indicating an Interest	Ranking	Interest Item
81	1	Fellowship with own age
80	2	Bible study
61	3	Trips
46	4	Jogging/walking with others
41	5	Hobbies
37	6	Fellowship with other Ages
33	7	Religions
32	8	Prayer groups
32	8	Current events
31	9	Arts and Crafts
29	10	Music
27	11	Book studies
25	12	Share groups
16	13	Films/movies
15	14	Retreats
13	15	Sports (participant)
10	16	Exercise
9	17	Drama
9	17	Conferences
7	18	Back to School

Findings

Objective Three: To Assess the Needs of the Local Senior Adult

Need to Serve. Although all 14 items listed under the Need to Serve category received some response, only two received over 30 percent respondent vote: Visiting (36 percent) and Telephone (33 percent). Being willing to telephone others ranked highest with the female populace (42 percent of the respondents indicating an interest) and making Home Repairs for others received the lowest female ranking (one percent). The male respondents ranked Visiting others highest (33 percent) and Speaking the lowest (three percent).

The Need to Serve had 223 responses compared to 73 responses to Need to be Served: over three times greater need to serve than be served.

Need to be Served. Of the 73 responses, Visits from Other Church Friends received the largest response; the male response was greater than the female. Home repairs was ranked second; the female response was far greater than the male. Telephone Calls from Other Church Friends was ranked third; this is the most equal between male and female. Financial need was listed in last place with only one respondent.

Conclusions

1. The evidence from this indicates that senior adults have a much higher interest in serving others than being served. This supports surveys made by the Harris polls in 1977 which reported that most senior adults are interested in volunteer work. Of course, it must be

pointed out that the senior adults assessed in this study had more items to check under Need to Serve, but opportunity was given on the questionnaire for the respondents to offer other items of needs.

2. The possibilities that most local senior adults are not worried about finances is suggested by this assessment. This supposition parallels the Harris survey statistic that only 15 percent of the elderly surveyed found finances a personal problem. It could be concluded that the senior adults will want to help pay their way in setting up a program.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the results of this survey be reported to the senior adult respondents. It is believed that individuals taking part in a survey have the right to know the findings of that survey. It is also believed that there will be more commitment to any program derived from the findings of this assessment if the results are made known to the participants.

2. It is recommended that a program be set up to match the senior adults who listed they are willing to do home repairs and those who need home repairs since this item was the largest need listed by the respondents.

3. It is recommended that the results of this study be made available to the church and that these results be filed in the church office to be used for cross reference by other organizations of the church.

4. It is recommended that a weekly jogging / walking program be established with the church van taking participants to the park or

another suitable area to walk or jog together.

5. It is further recommended that activities be planned around those items receiving the largest interest and need responses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**SENIOR ADULT INTEREST AND NEEDS
ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

NAME _____ ADDRESS _____

BIRTHDATE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

AGE LAST BD.	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	MARITAL STATUS	SEX
_____ 55-59	_____ fulltime	_____ spouse living	_____ male
_____ 60-64	_____ retired	_____ widowed	_____ female
_____ 65-74	_____ semiretired	_____ never married	

INTEREST AREAS

I. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

- _____ Bible Study
- _____ Book Studies
- _____ Conferences
- _____ Prayer Groups
- _____ Share Groups
- _____ Retreats
- _____ Other (Name) _____

II. MENTAL GROWTH

- _____ Arts and Crafts
- _____ Back to School
- _____ Current Events
- _____ Hobbies
- _____ Religions
- _____ Other (Name) _____

III. SOCIAL GROWTH

- _____ Drama
- _____ Fellowship with own age group
- _____ Fellowship with other age groups
- _____ Films/Movies
- _____ Music
- _____ Trips
- _____ Other (Name) _____

IV. PHYSICAL GROWTH

- _____ Exercise Group
- _____ Jogging/Walking with others
- _____ Sports Participation (Name) _____
- _____ Other (Name) _____

NEED AREA

I. OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

- _____ Children's Worker
- _____ General Office Work
- _____ Home Repairs
- _____ Lawn Work
- _____ Library
- _____ Mission Work
- _____ Music
- _____ Speaking
- _____ Teaching
- _____ Telephone
- _____ Transportation
- _____ Visiting
- _____ Witness
- _____ Youth Worker
- _____ Other (Name) _____

II. SERVICES NEEDED

- _____ Financial
- _____ Health
- _____ Home Repairs
- _____ Lawn Work
- _____ Transportation
- _____ Telephone Calls from other church friends
- _____ Visits from other church friends
- _____ Other (Name) _____

APPENDIX B

TABULATION OF SENIOR ADULT

INTEREST AND NEEDS

NAME FEMALE RESPONDENTS (85) ADDRESS _____
 BIRTHDATE _____
 TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

AGE LAST BD.	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	MARITAL STATUS	SEX
<u>4</u> 55-59	<u>4</u> fulltime	<u>43</u> spouse living	male
<u>12</u> 60-64	<u>81</u> retired	<u>38</u> widowed	<u>85</u> female
<u>42</u> 65-74	semiretired	<u>4</u> never married	
<u>27</u> 75+			

INTEREST AREAS

I. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

67 Bible Study
25 Book Studies
9 Conferences
32 Prayer Groups
24 Share Groups
14 Retreats
 Other (Name) _____

II. MENTAL GROWTH

Arts and Crafts 34
 Back to School 8
 Current Events 30
 Hobbies 24
 Religions 29
 Other (Name)
 Genealogy 1

III. SOCIAL GROWTH

10 Drama
68 Fellowship with own age group
32 Fellowship with other age groups
17 Films/Movies
30 Music
52 Trips
 Other (Name) _____

IV. PHYSICAL GROWTH

Exercise Group 11
 Jogging/Walking with
 others 36
 Sports Participation
 (Name) 3
 tennis, bowling
 Other
 (Name) _____

NEED AREA

I. OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

12 Children's Worker
15 General Office Work
1 Home Repairs
3 Lawn Work
9 Library
5 Mission Work
8 Music
6 Speaking
15 Teaching
36 Telephone
15 Transportation
32 Visiting
12 Witness
2 Youth Worker
 Other (Name) _____

II. SERVICES NEEDED

Financial 1
 Health 2
 Home Repairs 15
 Lawn Work 9
 Transportation 7
 Telephone Calls from
 other church friends 7
 Visits from other
 church friends 8
 Other (Name) _____

NAME MALE RESPONDENTS (39) ADDRESS _____

BIRTHDATE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

AGE LAST BD.	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	MARITAL STATUS	SEX
<u>1</u> 55-59	<u>8</u> fulltime	<u>37</u> spouse living	<u>39</u> male
<u>6</u> 60-64	<u>30</u> retired	<u>1</u> widowed	female
<u>19</u> 65-74	<u>1</u> semiretired	<u>1</u> never married	
<u>13</u> 75+			

INTEREST AREAS

I. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

32 Bible Study
8 Book Studies
2 Conferences
8 Prayer Groups
7 Share Groups
4 Retreats
 Other (Name) _____

II. MENTAL GROWTH

Arts and Crafts 4
 Back to School 1
 Current Events 10
 Hobbies 27
 Religions 12
 Other (Name) _____
 Genealogy study 2

III. SOCIAL GROWTH

1 Drama
34 Fellowship with own age group
14 Fellowship with other age groups
3 Films/Movies
6 Music
24 Trips
 Other (Name) _____

IV. PHYSICAL GROWTH

Exercise Group 2
 Jogging/Walking with
 others 21
 Sports Participation 13
 (Name) _____
 tennis, fishing
 Other _____
 (Name) _____

NEED AREA

I. OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

 Children's Worker
2 General Office Work
4 Home Repairs
5 Lawn Work
 Library
1 Mission Work
1 Music
1 Speaking
 Teaching
5 Telephone
11 Transportation
13 Visiting
6 Witness
3 Youth Worker
 Other (Name) _____

II. SERVICES NEEDED

Financial
 Health
 Home Repairs 1
 Lawn Work 2
 Transportation 1
 Telephone Calls from
 other church friends 8
 Visits from other
 church friends 12
 Other (Name) _____
 fishing buddy 2

NAME	TOTAL RESPONDENTS (124)			ADDRESS			
BIRTHDATE							
TELEPHONE	DATE						
AGE LAST BD.	EMPLOYMENT STATUS	MARITAL STATUS	SEX				
5	55-59	11	fulltime	80	spouse living	39	male
18	60-64	111	retired	39	widowed	85	female
61	65-74	1	semiretired	5	never married		
40	75+						

INTEREST AREAS

I. SPIRITUAL GROWTH		II. MENTAL GROWTH	
99	Bible Study	Arts and Crafts	38
33	Book Studies	Back to School	9
11	Conferences	Current Events	40
40	Prayer Groups	Hobbies	51
31	Share Groups	Religions	41
18	Retreats	Other (Name)	
	Other (Name)	Genealogy	3
III. SOCIAL GROWTH		IV. PHYSICAL GROWTH	
11	Drama	Exercise Group	13
101	Fellowship with own age group	Jogging/Walking with others	57
46	Fellowship with other age groups	Sports Participation (Name)	16
20	Films/Movies	tennis, bowling, fishing	
36	Music	Other (Name)	
76	Trips		
	Other (Name)		

NEED AREA

I. OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE		II. SERVICES NEEDED	
12	Children's Worker	Financial	1
17	General Office Work	Health	2
5	Home Repairs	Home Repairs	16
8	Lawn Work	Lawn Work	11
9	Library	Transportation	8
6	Mission Work	Telephone Calls from other church friends	15
9	Music	Visits from other church friends	20
7	Speaking	Other (Name)	
15	Teaching	fishing buddy	2
41	Telephone		
26	Transportation		
45	Visiting		
18	Witness		
5	Youth Worker		
	Other (Name)		

VITA I

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Master of Science

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