Background and Overview

As the congregation of Immanuel Nashville continues to grow, seniors at this church remain a minority demographic. Because of this, one of the main goals of this project was to educate the church leadership on the specific needs of the senior population in order to be able to better serve and meet both their spiritual and physical needs. Phases of the project included an annotated bibliography of relevant literature, a needs assessment through a survey of the 50+ adult class at Immanuel, a building accessibility assessment and report, development of a resource book for the church, a community event to educate seniors and their family members, and the development of a blog post for church planters and new congregations to bring awareness to senior needs.

Learning Goals

• Develop skills and preparation to work with an elderly population.
• Articulate to church leadership the unique nature of occupation, including religious observance, as viewed by the profession of occupational therapy and the value of such to support performance, participation, health, and well-being.
• Express support for the quality of life, well-being, and occupation of seniors to promote physical and mental health and prevention of injury and disease considering the context and environment.

Outcomes

• Conducted a survey-based needs assessment of the 50 years and older population in the church.
• Created a resource guide for the church that is specific to the needs of seniors. This was a directory of organizations in Nashville that can assist seniors in ways where the church may not be able to help.
• Advocated findings of senior needs to church leadership.
• Conducted an accessibility assessment of Immanuel Nashville facilities to identify barriers and solutions to allow improved access to and participation in worship and church community.
• Wrote a blog post for church planters and church leaders concerning the unique needs of senior adults, which described ways in which a church might unintentionally exclude them from community and worship.
• Created a list of volunteer opportunities for Immanuel Nashville to provide opportunities for seniors in the congregation to both serve and be served.
• Hosted a community event for seniors and their families on Aging Well to help them prepare for successful aging.

50+ Survey

Total Responies: 17

Needs Identified:
• Easier Access to Information
• Home Repairs/Yard work
• Transportation
• Housekeeping
• Food
• Financial Concerns
• Social Interaction

Volunteer Opportunities- Varied responses indicated many were unaware of opportunities other than children's ministry.

Volunteer Abilities- Wide range of skills identified, with the most prevalent being:
• Prayer
• Visitation
• Mentoring
• Writing
• Cooking/Mean Meal Preparation

Improving Accessibility

Barriers and priority modifications identified using the CHEC-MD and CHEC-HOWO to improve accessibility for seniors with mobility or other physical impairments:

I. Parking and Entrance – Improperly marked accessible spaces, hazardous route to entrance.
II. Restrooms- Main building restrooms lack accessible doors, stalls, and mirrors.
III. Sanctuary- No designated seating; narrow pews; stage inaccessible.
IV. Other Meeting Spaces- Upstairs or basement classrooms require stairs or outdoor ramp.

A report of recommendations was prepared in order to promote accessibility for all persons to participate in church community and worship alongside peers.

Community Education

‘Aging Well’ Community Event featured presentations on:
• Family Conversations on Aging Issues
• Senior Housing and Senior Driving
• Prevention and Management of Common Age-related Health Problems

Provided attendees with local connections and info from:
• Council on Aging of Greater Nashville
• The Hartford- Center for Market Excellence
• 2-1-1
• Law Offices of Hooper & Zinn
• CDC Falls Prevention

References


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