

## Reaching out to the elderly

Loneliness and isolation are a way of life for far too many elderly people in our communities.

While most of us enjoy the company of family, friends and work colleagues, some elderly people will spend days without hearing a friendly voice, a knock on the door, or the ringing of the phone.

It doesn't have to be like this and churches across the country are working to end the misery of loneliness. A popular way of easing isolation is through a luncheon club – people get a hearty meal and the opportunity to socialise.

If your church is considering such a venture, here are ten steps that will help you on the way:

1. Pray, then ask someone who loves older people to do it.
2. Ask for PCC support.
3. Do your research – find out who is doing what for older people in your area, ask for advice and visit their groups, and get to know the clients.
4. Ask people at church to help. Invite them to a meeting to discuss the who, why and when. For instance, someone will need to go on a food hygiene course.
5. Select a time and a date to start that does not clash with anything else. Tell everyone you know to go along.
6. Venue – wherever possible use the church building (it tends to be rent free).
7. Start simply by offering soup and bread, cake, tea and coffee. Volunteers should sit and eat with the guests – it encourages conversation and friendship
8. Offer entertainment after lunch eg bingo, talks, films, whist or beetle drives. ALWAYS end with a prayer and ask for things that need praying for.
9. Don't be discouraged, keep on doing it weekly or monthly – regularity is the key.
10. It will grow, God will bless it.

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