



*Partners in*  
**HEALTH**  
*and*  
**WHOLENESS**  
*Mindful Together*

## **PHW Healthy/Active Aging Inclusion Plan for Faith Communities**

### **Purpose**

“In congregations where there is intentional ministry with, by, and for older members, there is a richness of intergenerational activity and mentoring that serves everyone well.” - Janet Ramsey (from “Senior Adults and a New Story for Pastoral Care” in *Injustice and the Care of Souls*, 2009)

#### **Proactive Model**

<b>Trust</b>	<b>Care</b>	<b>Compassion</b>
Embrace	Involvement	Ministry as Celebration
Enough for everyone	Intentionality	Elders as resources and partners in ministry
Elders as neighbors	Flexibility	
Genuine Humor	Elders as models	Joy as motivation
Wise perspective	Truth-telling	Hopeful, encouraging, energizing & creative
Ability to risk	Face to face	
Language of mutuality	Collaborations and partnerships	Deeply Theological
Shared power		Enters the suffering of others
Intergenerational	“I am with you.”	Ministry to, with, and by older adults
“You are my brother!” “You are my sister!”		“We will live, work, and pray together.”

*(from Ramsey “Senior Adults and a New Story for Pastoral Care”)*

The purpose of this inclusion plan is to offer guidance as you strive as a community of faith to move towards greater inclusion of older adults in your worshiping community by addressing/beginning to address the elements of active and healthy aging through programming, accommodations, and resource referral options that fit the needs of your members and attendees while offering room for growth in scope and impact. We invite you to consider and use the “Proactive Model” shown above and the inclusion plan suggestions below on your journey towards greater inclusion, while adapting each to meet the unique needs and assets of your faith community.

## What *is* Active Aging?

The [International Council on Active Aging](#) defines active aging as “promot[ing] the vision of all individuals—regardless of age, socioeconomic status or health—fully engaging in life within all seven dimensions of wellness: emotional, environmental, intellectual/cognitive, physical, professional/vocational, social and spiritual.”

Researchers from the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) define active aging as “the striving for *well-being* through activities relating to a person’s *goals, functional capacities, and opportunities*.”<sup>1</sup>

According to Alan Walker’s article “Active Aging: Realising its potential,” integrating such active aging concepts, as seen above, requires a commitment towards the following priorities:

1. “Meaningful pursuits,” engaging with an eye towards well-being for older adults, their families, their communities, and society at large;
2. “Preventative” activities, engaging across the lifespan and not isolated to older adults in their scope;
3. Activities and programs that are inclusive of all older adults, not just the “young old,” but also the “old old,” and those who receive assistance for daily living, regardless of chronological age;
4. Creation and “maintenance of intergenerational solidarity;”
5. Covenantal focus, understanding the relationship between rights and responsibilities of all involved;
6. Activities that are “participatory and empowering,” with a mix of “top-down” and “bottom-up” guidance, which requires “partnership” and “flexibility”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rantanen, T., Portegijs, E., Kokko, K., Rantakokko, M., Törmäkangas, T., and Saajanaho, M. “Developing an Assessment Method of Active Aging: University of Jyväskylä Active Aging Scale.” *Journal of aging and health*. 2019;31(6):1002-1024. doi:10.1177/0898264317750449

<sup>2</sup> Walker, A. “Active ageing: Realising its potential.” *Australasian journal on ageing*. 2015;34(1):2-8. doi:10.1111/ajag.12219

## Elements of Inclusion for Active/Healthy Aging

*Adapted from the International Council on Active Aging, the University of Jyväskylä “Active Aging Scale,”<sup>3</sup> and the priorities of active aging in Alan Walker’s work, as noted above.*

The lists below are suggestions and are not exhaustive. We encourage you to be creative in offering additional programs and resources not listed here to address these focus areas. We look forward to hearing your suggestions and feedback for future editions of this inclusion toolkit. When you’re ready to get started, submit this [Google Form](#) to let us know which inclusion elements your faith community plans to focus on.

### Emotional

*A commitment to be supportive of the varied emotional lives and mental health needs of the older adults in your faith community.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Programming and communications that counter and address ageism, both in the church and the broader society
- Stress reduction and management programs/classes
- Grief support (pastoral care and group support for various types of grief, including, but not limited to, the death of friends and loved ones)
- Caregiver support and respite (including for grandparents raising grandchildren)
- Small group sharing sessions
- Mental health ministry (see PHW Mental Health Inclusion Plan)
- Opportunities for play and laughter
- Worship services and rituals that acknowledge grief and loss
- Caring ministry
- Mental health first aid training and similar trainings for staff and congregants
- Awareness of community resources for referral as needed

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:

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<sup>3</sup> Rantanen, T., et al, “Developing an Assessment Method of Active Aging: University of Jyväskylä Active Aging Scale.”

### **Environmental**

*A commitment to aid in creating inclusive and accessible indoor and outdoor physical spaces for older adults of varied physical abilities within the worshiping space and beyond.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Accessible buildings for varied abilities and mobility devices (e.g. ramps and stair rails, grab bars in restrooms, removal of tripping hazards in building and parking areas, etc.)
- Assistance in making homes safer and more accessible for older faith community members, including aging-in-place modifications (e.g. ramps, rails, grab bars, shower chairs), removal of trip hazards, installation of proper lighting for emergencies, etc.
- Minor home repair ministries
- Opportunities for engagement with the outdoors/nature that are accessible for varied abilities (e.g. hiking; walks; gardening, including accessible gardening with raised beds; bird-watching; outdoor prayer meetings or worship services, picnics, river clean-up, etc.)

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:

## Intellectual/Cognitive

*A commitment to being inclusive and supportive of older adults in your faith community and their varied intellectual and cognitive abilities and needs.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Opportunities for creative pursuits for those of all intellectual and cognitive abilities (e.g. arts, crafts, skits/theater, writing, music, worship planning, etc.)
- Opportunities for lifelong learning, including guest speakers and classes
- Game nights, puzzles, etc.
- Technology learning and mentoring
- Library trips and book clubs
- Dementia screenings and education
- Becoming a dementia-friendly faith community (supports and examples can be found in the appendix of this document.)
- Partnering with [Music & Memory](#) programs
- Awareness of community resources for referral, as needed

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:

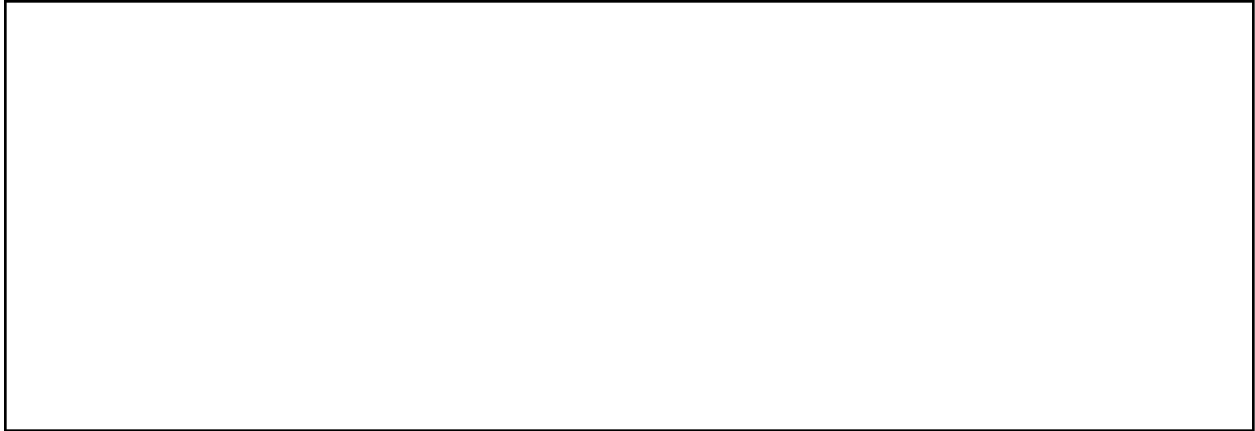
## Physical

*A commitment to supporting the health and functional ability of the older adults in your faith community through inclusive opportunities for physical health and wellness, as well as offering support for and prevention of chronic and emergent health conditions. This commitment extends to providing inclusive communities for those with physical disabilities.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- For those with visual impairments:
  - Large print bulletins and other printed materials
  - Digital materials compatible with screen readers
  - Website and social media images including image descriptions
  - Website accessibility tools (a variety of free options are available)
  - Scripture study materials with audio book options
- For those with hearing impairments:
  - Amplification of worship services, meetings, etc.
  - Offering hearing-assistive devices for services, meetings, etc.
  - Providing captions for online services and other video offerings.
  - Offering ASL interpreters for worship services and other events.
- Wellness activities and community-wide communications that focus on supporting health and functional ability rather than focusing on weight loss and body size/body type.
  - [Tools for physical activity goal-setting that do not focus on weight loss.](#)
- Varied opportunities for movement, including dance nights, fitness classes, walking clubs, falls prevention classes, etc., with activities tailored to those with varying levels of ability and function (including chair-based/wheelchair-based exercise and other adaptations, as needed).
- Shared meal offerings that are nutritionally balanced and inclusive of those with dietary restrictions for chronic conditions (e.g. diabetes, high-blood pressure, heart disease).
- Health screenings on site
- AED and First Aid training and equipment on site
- Supports for adults experiencing aphasia or other concerns after having a stroke, including communication support and assistive equipment.
- Offering transportation assistance for medical appointments and health screenings for those who need it (with potential support from local aging resources).
- Awareness of community resources for referral and assistance, as needed

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:



### **Professional/Vocational**

*A commitment to offering older adults opportunities for meaningful engagement within the faith community and beyond.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Opportunities for older adults to volunteer, mentor, lead, and assist others both inside and outside of the faith community
- Opportunities for older adults explore their gifts and passions and how they would like to use them
- Opportunities for older adults to advocate for others
- Ageism-countering programming and communications that pushback on arbitrary limits to older adults' professional and vocational pursuits inside and outside of the faith community
- Awareness of community resources and volunteer opportunities

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:



## **Social**

*A commitment to offering engaging social experiences for older adults in a variety of settings in order to build and maintain interpersonal connection and prevent social isolation.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Offering a variety of clubs, group events, intergenerational activities, dinners, and other social opportunities both for the faith community itself and in cooperation with other congregations.
- Offering alternative forms of social engagement beyond in-person events for those who are homebound or otherwise needing to isolate for health-related reasons, including virtual events, porch visits, and friendly phone calls.
- Offering transportation to social events for those who are no longer able to drive or who do not have transportation arrangements.
- Offering a variety of times and days for events, especially to make attending safer for those with impairments of night vision with driving or other concerns about night time travel.

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:



## **Spiritual**

*A commitment to supporting inclusive opportunities for spiritual growth and exploration.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Offering a variety of group and individual opportunities for spiritual growth and exploration, including intergenerational/multigenerational scripture studies and worship services.
- Offering alternative forms of worship and spiritual growth programming, including virtual options, for those who are homebound or who are sheltering in place for health reasons, as well as for those caring for family members
- Offering opportunities for older adults to lead and mentor others in learning and growth
- Providing devotionals and other materials in accessible formats

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:

## Economic

*A commitment to economic inclusivity and to the economic well-being of older adults in your faith community through congregational support and referrals to appropriate community agencies and programs.*

Examples of inclusive activities/supports:

- Programming, worship, and stewardship expectations that are inclusive of and accessible to individuals of varying socioeconomic backgrounds and financial statuses, including hardship waivers for pledge commitments and activity scholarships as needed, as well as offering free and low cost opportunities for fellowship and community
- Referrals to community resources for financial support, as needed, for housing, transportation, food, healthcare, medications, etc.
- Partnering with community resources to raise awareness of programs to support older adults with fixed and lower incomes
- Partnering with programs like [SHIIP](#) to educate and assist older adults with Medicare questions
- Partnering with programs like [VITA](#) for free income tax preparation for lower-income older adults and others
- Referral to legal aid resources
- Offerings such as food pantry, clothes closet, hygiene/beauty supply closet

Activities and supports your faith community currently offers:

## Ready to Get Started?

Submit this [Google Form](#) to let us know which inclusion elements your faith community

plans to focus on: <https://forms.gle/WroGbjN22kGYmSKp9>, and use the worksheets on the following pages to start planning!

*Have questions or feedback? Contact Krista at [krista@ncchurches.org](mailto:krista@ncchurches.org)*

## Inclusion Planning Worksheet

**Focus area:**

Select **one**:  Emotional  Environmental  Intellectual/Cognitive  Physical  
 Professional/Vocational  Social  Spiritual  Economic

**Goal:**

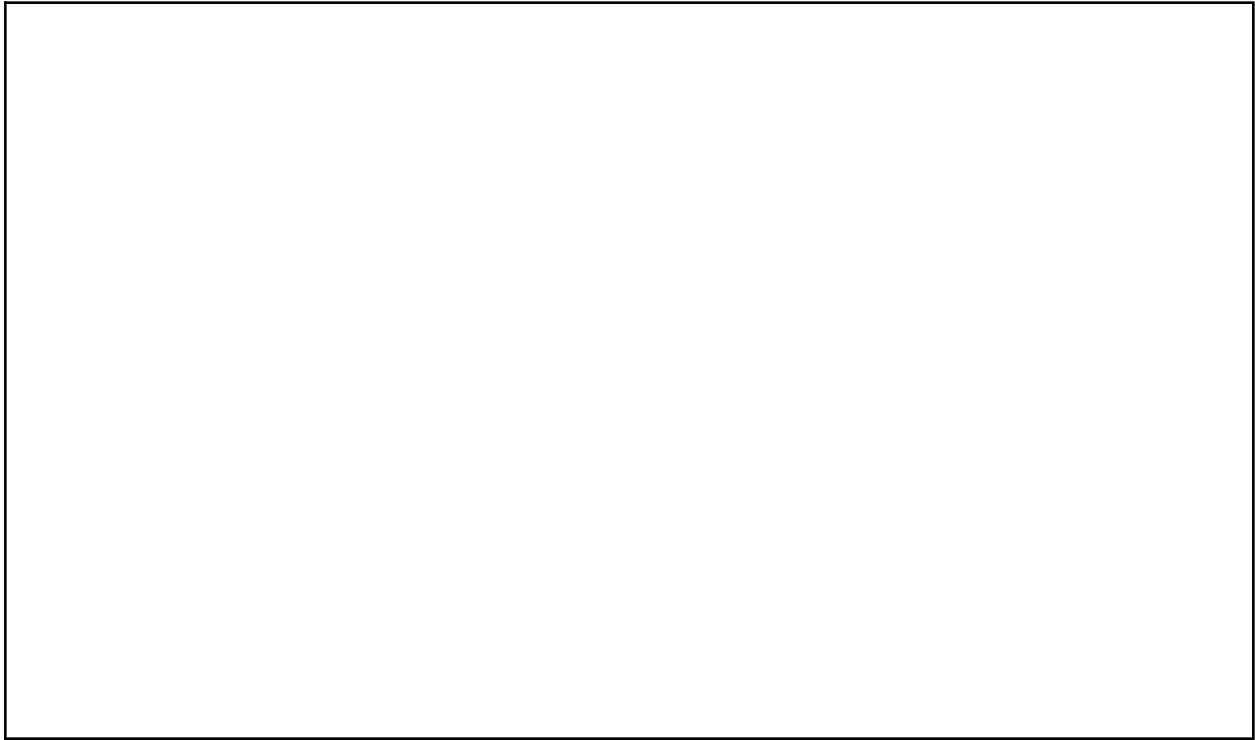
(List the specific inclusive activity or support you would like to provide in your faith community)

**List existing assets that can help you reach this goal (e.g. gifts, skills, and talents of members and staff, community resources, financial support, etc.):**

**Whose input do you need before you get started? How are you including older adults in the planning and implementation of your inclusion goals?**

**What steps do you need to take to reach the goal? (Be as specific as possible):**

**Who will help with each step above? What resources do you need to gather to accomplish this goal?**



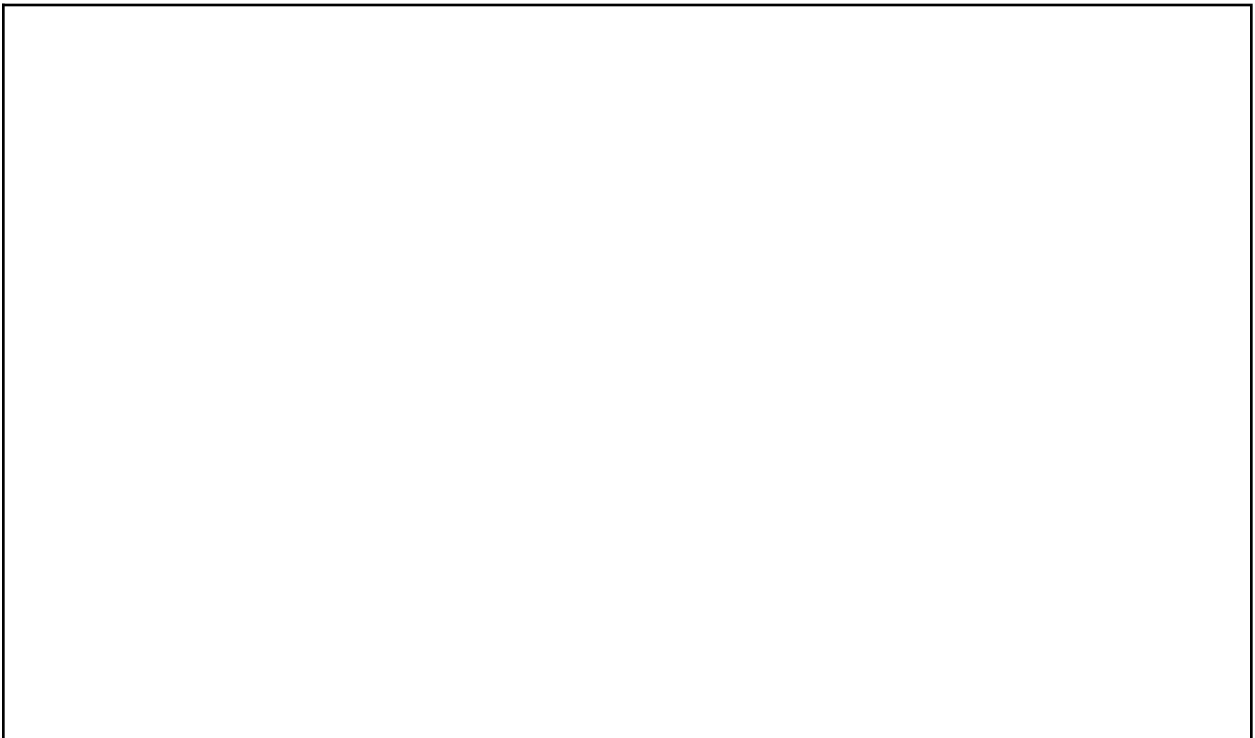
**For each step listed above, how much time will each take and when do you plan on reaching the goal?**



**Once the goal is reached, what will you need to do to maintain and sustain it?**



**How will you get feedback before, during and after the process?**



**How will you celebrate and spread the word once the goal is reached?**

**How will you commit to sharing what you've learned in this process?**

**\*This form can be reproduced for additional focus areas and goals.  
*Have questions or feedback? Contact Krista at [krista@ncchurches.org](mailto:krista@ncchurches.org)***



## Appendix: Navigating Aging Resources

### Find Aging Resources Near You:

Support your faith community's inclusion plan work by connecting with local resources.

PHW Interactive Resource Map - <https://www.ncchurches.org/phw-map/>

Eldercare Locator - <https://eldercare.acl.gov/Public/Index.asp>

### Common Aging Resources Terms:

#### **Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) -**

These services are provided in home or at places within the local community for older adults living at home rather than in a care facility. These services can include home-delivered meals, in-home aide services, transportation, caregiver support services and much more.

#### **Congregate Nutrition -**

A weekday, nutritionally-balanced hot lunch provided at a senior center or meal site to older adults age 60 or older.. (Some locations serve spouses-of any age-of people aged 60 or older, or those with disabilities.) May be offered free of charge or with a small contribution. Offers an opportunity to socialize with other older adults.

#### **Home-Delivered Meals -**

Commonly referred to as Meals on Wheels, though not all home-delivered meal services partner with the national organization. A weekday, nutritionally-balanced hot meal delivered to the home of persons aged 60 or older who are homebound or otherwise isolated. (Some locations may also serve meals to a recipient's spouse under 60 or their caregiver.) These meals may be provided free of charge or with a small contribution. Some communities offer frozen or shelf-stable meals for those within their community who need home-delivered meals, but reside outside of their available delivery routes.

#### **Evidence-Based Health Promotion -**

Typically offered at a senior center or through local Parks & Recreation facilities, but may be offered at congregate nutrition sites. These programs and classes have proven health benefits and may help with managing chronic conditions (for example: diabetes or arthritis), lowering risk of chronic conditions, and preventing falls.

#### **Family Caregiver Support -**

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Support services and programs for unpaid caregivers of older adults and/or grandchildren. May include support groups, stress-reduction training, respite services, and other assistance.

**Respite Services -**

Offers opportunity for an unpaid caregiver to have a short break from caregiving in order to attend to errands, medical appointments, self-care, and rest. May be provided either in home or in a group setting.

**In-Home Aide -**

Assistance in maintaining independence and remaining in one's home for older adults who require help with personal care and/or other daily living tasks. Services may include assistance with personal care, in-home tasks, and meal preparation.

**Information and Assistance -**

Service that offers general information and referrals to needed health and human services in the community. Typically found at local senior centers or other senior services sites.

**Options Counseling -**

Helps individuals and families with the process of making decisions about long-term care services and supports. Options Counselors in North Carolina are trained and certified.

**Seniors' Health Insurance Information Program (SHIIP)-**

Provides free, unbiased assistance to Medicare recipients and caregivers in understanding Medicare, Medicare supplements, Medicare Advantage, Medicare Part D, and long-term care insurance. SHIIP counselors do not sell or endorse insurance plans.

**Adult Day Services -**

State certified programs that provide day services to older adults who need care, supervision, and sometimes health services. Offered in a community setting with social opportunities and activities.

**Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE) -**

Special day program that offers healthcare and in-home services to those age 55+ who qualify for skilled nursing. Allows individuals to remain in their homes and their community rather than moving to a long-term care facility (nursing home). Medicaid and Medicare are accepted, but not required.

## Appendix: Dementia-Friendly Training Resources

- [Alter Dementia](#): Free services and resources for creating dementia-friendly congregations (for predominantly African-American faith communities)
- [Faith United Against Alzheimer's](#) “Creating Dementia-Friendly Faith Communities” fact sheet
- “[The Dementia-Friendly Church](#)” guide from The United Methodist Church Discipleship Ministries
- Support Group Facilitator training via [Dementia Alliance of North Carolina](#)