

Challenge for churches: How to care for caregivers

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As churches minister to the most elderly and infirm among members, some also seek ways to serve their caregivers—often family members—who often labor around the clock.

Members of the "Classic 55-plus" ministry at First Baptist Church in Allen assemble layettes as a service project for a local organization, Real Options for Women. (PHOTO/Courtesy of First Baptist Church in Allen)

Frank Fain, director of educational services for [The Baptist Home](#) system for older adults in Missouri, offered these tips.

- *Provide a support group—a place for caregivers to express their feelings and to talk about their needs.*
- *Provide counseling or direct caregivers to available counseling, if needed. Sometimes people need help to deal with the emotional, mental and physical toll caring for loved ones can take.*
- *Teach families, deacons, caregivers and others who minister with older adults how to communicate effectively with the elderly and to treat them with respect.*
- *Offer educational events for caregivers. Draw from local experts at your state's department on aging, hospice, hospital or government agencies.*

- *Develop a caregiver section in the church media center. Many Baptist state conventions have an adult consultant or specialist or can point the church to resources.*

The Baptist General Convention of Texas is developing resources and soon will have a website in place specifically for caregivers.

Care facilities—such as The Baptist Home in Missouri and [Buckner Retirement Services](#) in Texas—also can suggest resources. Find out what local resources are available as well.



- *Develop a caregiver respite ministry to give individuals a break to shop, run errands or relax. Also consider providing res-pite on Sunday mornings to allow caregivers to worship.*
- *Partner with local hospice organizations. Perhaps staff members would be willing to be hospice chaplains. Find out what needs other older adults in your group could help meet.*
- *Take the Lord's Supper to the homebound and their caregivers.*
- *Include caregiver ministry as part of care for the homebound. [First Baptist Church in Allen](#) provides Keep in Touch ministry to make sure homebound members receive weekly contact from the church. The ministry assists caregivers by helping meet some of the homebound members' needs.*

