

Expanding Ministry With Homebound Members

The term *homebound* can be a misguided term. It can mean different things to people and in different situations. Who is homebound – A person who is home most all of the time? A person who cannot walk far? A person recovering from an injury? A person who doesn't drive?

Becoming homebound can affect a person of any age and means *confined to home*, but it should not connote isolation. Being confined to home has wide and deep impacts physically, emotionally and spiritually. Mobility contributes greatly to being homebound, and can lead to an ever-increasing need for support. Addressing and expanding home-based support is critical for recovery and/or slowing the need for increased care or transitioning to a long-term care facility.

Older Adult Ministries wishes to address the physical and emotional aspects of at-home members (we have chosen this alternative term), and most importantly, its spiritual impact. If there is little contact from the congregation, its leaders, and if there is no way to share in worship, then the spiritual impact is great.

Gather a group in your church to discuss the elements and possible ramifications of being an at-home member. Discuss your recollections about isolation during the pandemic. Explore the positives and pitfalls of the word *homebound*. Make visits to listen to the experiences and views of members of your church who are currently confined to home. What are some of the common themes? How might their individual concerns be addressed?

Would this person be an at-home member if you and your congregation were better connected with them? How might this make a difference in their daily or weekly life?

- Inquire what is needed and wanted
- Provide transportation esp. doctor visits
- Make regular phone contact
- Invite them to online group Bible Study and devotions
- Create a list of available community programs
- Supply technology training and support
- Make and deliver meals, but stay to eat together

What are ways to support their caregivers?

Use the worksheet, "Considering Ways to Support the Homebound" to identify and prioritize next steps.