



NURSING HOMES

Paul DeNeui ('94, '95)

has been a traveling gospel singer, associate pastor, and music minister, and now travels full time. He ministers in churches and over 480 times a year in nursing and assisted care facilities.

PaulDeNeui.org

Paul DeNeui grew up as a preacher's kid. But in 2009 when the Lord called him to full-time nursing home ministry, he'd never heard of such a thing.

Paul had, however, prayed several years before, "Lord, put me in situations where I can be used the most." Now he ministers in about 20 nursing homes every two weeks.

"The church has a real opportunity here," says Paul. "There are lost and hurting sheep in nursing homes who are lonely, depressed, sick, without family, and needing love. This is home missions! Whether you go or you send, we need to be there."

Paul didn't have to look any further than his own family to find a reason to minister to the elderly. "My mom is 96," he says, "and she is a fireball. She lives in Minnesota and just sent me a picture of two snowmen she had made after the last snow! Fortunately she can get out and do things, but there are a lot of people who can't. So I'm bringing a service to people who can't come to us."

And, he notes, these men and women are often on the brink of eternity. "There's been more than once," he says, "that I've prayed with somebody who accepted Christ and two weeks later when I went back they'd gone to Heaven."

If Paul could say one thing to encourage Christians to minister to the elderly, it is this: "Even though you might be young today, you will get older, and you're going to want somebody to come visit you—not necessarily to preach; just to know they care. If I'm there some day, I'm going to want somebody to visit me, hug me, and listen to me, aren't you?"

Ideas for Ministry

Ministering in nursing homes is more than just conducting a worship service. Here are some ideas:

- 👉 **Take a poll.** Find out who's good at what in your church. People think that if they're not a preacher or a piano player, they can't minister in a nursing home. But preaching and music are just two elements of a healthy church, and the same is true in nursing home ministry! So find members who might want to start activities that bring people together: board games, chess, a book club, photography, crafts, writing, and so forth. Get people using their giftings in a myriad of ways in a nursing home setting.
- 👉 **Send service CDs or DVDs.** Take a copy of your church service to the nursing home activities director. She can play it for the residents if one of her scheduled activities falls through.
- 👉 **Have a family movie night.** Many nursing homes have big flat-screen TVs. Schedule a movie and invite the church to come and watch the movie with the residents. Find out what kind of snacks you could bring.
- 👉 **Adopt a resident.** Have people in the church adopt a resident. Remember him or her with a visit, gift, card, or in some other way at holidays, the resident's birthday, and so forth. Swap pictures of each other and pray for one another.
- 👉 **Get some helpers.** If members don't feel comfortable going to a nursing home, they can help support those who do through prayer, babysitting, finances, and encouragement.
- 👉 **Be a cheerleader.** Talk about the nursing home ministry from the pulpit. It lends credibility if it comes from the pastor.
- 👉 **Provide a ride.** Some residents can get out and would like to, if they have a ride. Some can walk; others need a wheelchair lift. If your church has handicapped-accessible vehicles, you could use them in your nursing home ministry.
- 👉 **Take kids.** They don't really have to do anything but visit. The residents love to see children. Maybe have the kids make cards or small gifts in advance.
- 👉 **Make the right connection.** If you want to minister in a nursing home, talk to the activities director, not the administrator. The activities director is the one who will actually set you up with a time to come.
- 👉 **Do the obvious.** Last but not least, conduct worship services and Bible studies. Ministry—preaching, teaching, Bible study, and so forth—is always very important.