

Senior/Avak Ministry of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

SENIORGEN MINISTRY

PROGRAM GUIDE

BY ORDER OF HIS GRACE BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN

Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern)



Dear Friends,

One of the greatest blessings of the Armenian Church is the living witness of our senior faithful—those who have carried the torch of our heritage, preserved our faith through adversity, and offered their wisdom, labor, and love to build our communities. Their journey is our foundation.

As we look to strengthen parish life across the Diocese, it is vital that we not only care for our elders but actively engage them as spiritual leaders, mentors, and companions in Christ. The SeniorGen Ministry is a bold step in that direction: a diocesan-wide effort to help our seniors thrive in every season of life.

Through prayer, fellowship, service, and storytelling, this ministry reminds us that no stage of life is without purpose. Just as St. Gregory of Narek gave his most enduring work in his later years, so too can our seniors continue to offer treasures of faith and wisdom for the Body of Christ.

I encourage every parish to explore this guide with open hearts and a spirit of collaboration. May we walk together—elders and youth, clergy and laity—in building a Church that honors all generations and glorifies our Lord in every age.

With Blessings,

Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan

Primate, Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

1. INTRODUCTION

Senior/Avak Ministry, through the proposed program “SeniorGen,” aims to honor, engage, and empower older adults within the life of the Armenian Church. This ministry seeks to recognize and celebrate the unique gifts and experiences of seniors while fostering their spiritual growth and active involvement in the Church community. By addressing the specific needs of older adults, SeniorGen will create opportunities for worship, learning, fellowship, and service, enriching both individual lives and the broader church community.

2. MISSION STATEMENT

To honor, support, and spiritually nurture older adults in the Armenian Church, helping them live more engaging, meaningful, and Spirit-filled lives. SeniorGen seeks to create a vibrant community that values the wisdom of seniors, supports their unique concerns, and strengthens intergenerational bonds within the Church.

3. MINISTRY OBJECTIVES

Awareness and Value Recognition:

Promote the understanding of the unique role and value of older adults in the life of the Church

Advocacy:

Address the specific needs and concerns of seniors, ensuring their voices are heard and respected

Intergenerational Relationships:

Strengthen bonds among children, youth, young adults, and seniors through shared activities and experiences

Faith Growth:

Provide opportunities for seniors to deepen their faith and contribute actively to Church life

Fellowship and Service:

Offer opportunities for worship, learning, and meaningful service to the Church and community

Positive Aging Education:

Promote awareness of positive aging and address quality-of-life issues for older adults

Guidance on Challenges:

Provide spiritual, emotional, and practical guidance for seniors navigating the challenges of later life

4. PROGRAM AREAS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Each of the following ministry areas offers a meaningful way to engage senior parishioners—spiritually, socially, and culturally. They are designed to be flexible and adaptable to each parish’s size, resources, and local context. Parishes may choose to launch with one or two areas and expand gradually as interest and participation grow. The programs aim to affirm the God-given dignity of our elders while encouraging intergenerational harmony and faithful service.

FELLOWSHIP MEALS AND SOCIAL GATHERINGS

Regular shared meals provide more than nourishment—they offer seniors a sense of rhythm, belonging, and joyful connection. Whether through monthly luncheons or seasonal gatherings, these moments create space for laughter, conversation, and the strengthening of Christian fellowship.

Objective:

Build a consistent community through shared meals and themed social events

Suggested Activities:

- Monthly luncheons (with rotating themes such as cultural celebrations, feast days, or name-day observances)
- Fellowship breakfasts or coffee hours following liturgy

Implementation Steps:

- Create a consistent monthly or seasonal calendar
- Involve Women’s Guild or volunteers for meal coordination
- Incorporate music, guest speakers, or games to enhance the gatherings

Faith Connection:

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.” (Acts 2:46)

SPIRITUAL FORMATION AND PRAYER GROUPS

Rooted in the Word and prayer, this ministry invites seniors into regular times of spiritual reflection. These gatherings are tailored to the unique faith journeys and needs of older adults, offering space for learning, sharing, and drawing closer to Christ.

Objective:

Deepen spiritual growth through regular study and prayer

Suggested Activities:

- Weekly or monthly Bible studies (focused on aging, hope, wisdom, or the Psalms)
- Prayer circles or devotions for healing, gratitude, or intercession

Implementation Steps:

- Use seasonal liturgical themes to guide sessions
- Provide printed materials and offer transportation when needed
- Invite clergy or trained lay leaders to facilitate discussions

Faith Connection:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (Acts 2:42)

WELLNESS AND HEALTHY LIVING

Health is a gift to be nurtured at every stage of life. These programs support seniors in maintaining

physical strength, mental peace, and holistic well-being through accessible wellness activities.

Objective:

Promote healthy living through movement, mindfulness, and medical support

Suggested Activities:

- Senior fitness or chair yoga classes
- Health screenings and wellness seminars
- Meditation or guided breathing exercises

Implementation Steps:

- Partner with local healthcare providers or Armenian health professionals
- Offer sessions in a quiet, accessible parish space
- Encourage peer support and ongoing participation

Faith Connection:

“Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?” (1 Corinthians 6:19)

CULTURAL OUTINGS AND PILGRIMAGES

Stepping out together deepens bonds and widens horizons. Whether exploring museums, attending a play, or visiting sacred sites, these excursions enrich seniors’ understanding of culture, faith, and community history.

Objective:

Enrich spiritual and cultural knowledge through shared journeys

Suggested Activities:

- Group visits to museums, plays, or historical sites
- Pilgrimages to local Armenian churches or monasteries
- Excursions tied to feast days or cultural observances

Implementation Steps:

- Coordinate transportation and accessibility needs
- Provide educational background before visits
- Follow outings with group discussion or prayer

Faith Connection:

“Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.” (Psalm 84:5)

SOCIAL GAMES AND MENTAL FITNESS

Laughter, learning, and lively competition all find a home in these social activities. Game days encourage seniors to stay sharp, engaged, and connected—all while having fun.

Objective:

Support mental agility and camaraderie through games and interactive activities

Suggested Activities:

- Trivia tournaments, board games, or Armenian bingo
- Puzzle challenges, word games, or chess
- Intergenerational game nights

Implementation Steps:

- Schedule regular “Game Days” in the parish calendar
- Provide printed materials and offer transportation when needed
- Offer snacks and light refreshments to foster fellowship

Faith Connection:

“A cheerful heart is good medicine.” (Proverbs 17:22)

CELEBRATING RELIGIOUS FEASTS

Celebrating the sacred feasts of the Armenian Church allows seniors to remain connected to the rhythm of the liturgical year and to rediscover the spiritual depth of our traditions. These gatherings become moments of joy, education, and community building as participants reflect on feast-day themes and share in cultural customs.

Objective:

Deepen understanding and connection to the Armenian liturgical calendar through active celebration

Suggested Activities:

- Feast day reflections, hymns, and home blessings
- Cooking classes featuring foods tied to specific feasts

Implementation Steps:

- Coordinate feast celebrations with parish liturgical calendar
- Invite clergy or knowledgeable laypersons to teach on the feast’s meaning
- Include music, food, and crafts connected to the celebration

Faith Connection:

“Let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (1 Corinthians 5:8)

MUSICAL AND STORYTELLING PROGRAMS

Music and storytelling are powerful ways to stir memory, foster connection, and pass down heritage. These programs encourage seniors to share their voices—through song or story—and invite the wider community to listen, learn, and celebrate our living history together.

Objective:

Foster joy and cultural connection through music and oral tradition

Suggested Activities:

- Mini-concerts by local musicians or school groups
- Storytelling hours featuring life tales from the seniors

Implementation Steps:

- Schedule events monthly or seasonally
- Invite children/youth to participate or listen
- Record sessions to preserve and share with parish archives

Faith Connection:

“I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter hidden things, things from of old.” (Psalm 78:2)



LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Our elders carry within them the memory of our people's joys, trials, and triumphs. The Living History Project seeks to preserve their stories as a gift for future generations—documenting not just facts but the faith and wisdom that sustained them.

Objective:

Preserve and honor the lived wisdom of senior parishioners

Suggested Activities:

- Video or audio interviews capturing testimonies
- Written legacy books or collaborative memoirs

Implementation Steps:

- Train volunteers or youth to conduct and record interviews
- Provide prompts to guide storytelling (faith, migration, resilience)
- Archive and publish highlights in newsletters or social media

Faith Connection:

“One generation shall commend Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” (Psalm 145:4)

ANNUAL RETREAT

Retreats offer sacred time and space for seniors to withdraw from daily concerns and dwell more deeply in God's presence. Whether silent or social, these retreats provide spiritual nourishment, reflection, and fellowship that uplift the heart and mind.

Objective:

Provide spiritual renewal and reflection through an immersive retreat experience

Suggested Activities:

- One-day or weekend retreats focused on prayer and rest
- Intergenerational components including grandchildren or caregivers

Implementation Steps:

- Choose accessible location and develop a theme (e.g., Hope, Gratitude)
- Include worship, guided reflection, and communal activities
- Provide transportation, meals, and retreat materials

Faith Connection:

“Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while.” (Mark 6:31)

VOLUNTEER AND MENTORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Service is not reserved for the young. Our seniors bring decades of experience, skills, and insight to share with the Church. Through mentoring and volunteerism, they continue to build up the Body of Christ by guiding, teaching, and encouraging others.

Objective:

Empower seniors to share their gifts through meaningful service

Suggested Activities:

- Mentorship to youth and young families
- Participation in church outreach projects

Implementation Steps:

- Survey interests and skills of senior parishioners
- Match them with parish ministries in need of support
- Create a recognition program for ongoing service

Faith Connection:

“Serve one another humbly in love.” (Galatians 5:13)

TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION

In our digital world, access to technology is essential for staying connected and informed. These programs help seniors bridge the digital divide by providing patient instruction and practical tools so they can engage more fully in parish life and family communication.

Objective:

Help seniors connect with the Church and loved ones through technology

Suggested Activities:

- Classes on email, Zoom, and social media
- Help accessing livestreamed liturgies or online Bible studies

Implementation Steps:

- Partner with tech-savvy parishioners to lead sessions
- Offer printed step-by-step guides and follow-up support
- Provide tablets or loaner devices as available

Faith Connection:

“Many will run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” (Daniel 12:4)





CREATIVE ARTS

Art opens the soul to beauty, healing, and meaning. Whether through painting, poetry, or collaborative projects, creative arts offer seniors an avenue for self-expression and spiritual reflection—while enriching the cultural fabric of the parish.

Objective:

Encourage creative expression and beauty through arts and crafts

Suggested Activities:

- Art workshops, poetry readings, and parish quilt or icon projects
- Intergenerational collaborations on murals or exhibits

Implementation Steps:

- Set a regular creative hour in the parish calendar
- Showcase projects in the parish hall or website
- Offer supplies and beginner-friendly instructions

Faith Connection:

“He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work... as artists in all kinds of crafts.”
(Exodus 35:35)

5. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Launching a SeniorGen ministry requires thoughtful coordination, clear roles, and steady communication. This section outlines how to begin small, build momentum, and ensure the ministry is inclusive, sustainable, and spiritually grounded.

- Appoint a parish coordinator for SeniorGen
- Form a committee with clergy and volunteers
- Start with 2–3 core programs and expand gradually
- Use regular parish communications for promotion
- Collect feedback after each event to refine and improve

6. BUDGET AND FUNDING

While many SeniorGen programs can be low-cost, planning for basic expenses ensures smooth and dignified execution. Budgeting also helps communicate needs clearly to parish leadership and opens the door for creative fundraising and grant support.

Expenses May Include:

- Materials, meals, and transportation
- Honoraria for guest speakers or instructors

Funding Sources May Include:

- Parish stewardship and designated gifts
- Diocesan ministry grants
- Local sponsorship or community partnerships

7. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Greater visibility and inclusion of seniors in parish life
- Renewed spiritual growth and fellowship
- Stronger intergenerational bonds
- Documented legacy of parish elders for future generations

8. CONCLUSION

SeniorGen offers a unique opportunity to honor and engage older adults within the Armenian Church, ensuring they feel valued, supported, and spiritually enriched. Through this ministry, the Eastern Diocese will not only enhance the lives of seniors but also strengthen the bonds of faith and community across all generations. Let us embrace this vision and work together to build a vibrant and inclusive Church community that values the wisdom and contributions of our elders.

9. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

No parish needs to do this work alone. A variety of community and Diocesan partners are ready to support your efforts. Reaching out to local agencies and institutions brings fresh energy and expertise into the life of the parish.

- **The local Police Department’s Community Affairs Officer or Department**
Contact them to have an officer make a presentation about keeping your home and yourself safe
- **The local Hospital**
Contact them to speak about special programs and facilities for senior citizens. Inquire about providing free flu shots at your site during the fall season
- **The local Senior Center**
Inquire about programs that they can deliver to your Seniors/Avaks gatherings at the Church
- **Area Churches and Houses of Worship**
Inquire about visits to each other’s house of worship with a brief talk at each about their particular faith tradition
- **Local Schools of Music and Art**
Inquire about music students who may be able to present a short musical program as part of the educational program and training
- **Local Gyms and Personal Trainers**
Inquire about having a personal trainer who specializes in working with senior citizens to come and offer a free class to the group. Offer this as an opportunity to sign up new clients
- **The American Red Cross or the local Fire Department**
Inquire about free First Aid classes which they can offer at your location

10. SUGGESTED READING

- David P. Gallagher, *Senior Adult Ministry in the 21st Century* (Wipf & Stock, 2006)
- Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., *Designing an Older Adult Ministry* (Discipleship Resources, 2006)
- Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., *Aging and Ministry in the 21st Century* (Discipleship Resources, 2008)
- Ray James, *Senior Adult Ministries* (2025)

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.” (Proverbs 16:31)



THE DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)

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