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4 ways to support vulnerable populations during pandemic

by Susan Ervien, posted Tuesday, March 31, 2020 (27 days ago)

DALLAS (BP) -- At this point, there is no running from it. The coronavirus (COVID-19) is here and having a particularly destructive impact on vulnerable populations.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), COVID-19 is more dangerous for those over the age of 60 and for those with underlying health conditions such as COPD, diabetes, high blood pressure, etc.

At GuideStone, the safety and well-being of this demographic is particularly important because of its Mission:Dignity ministry. GuideStone provides financial support to 1,700 retired SBC ministers, workers and their widows -- all of whom fall into this vulnerable category.



Now, more than ever, these elderly recipients are in need as the coronavirus takes hold in communities across the country and puts access to their much-needed doctors' appointments and medications in jeopardy. GuideStone staff is contacting recipients to assist with any urgent needs, and churches are reaching out to their own elderly members and neighbors.

"The population with the highest risk for COVID-19 infection is the population served by Mission:Dignity," said Mission:Dignity director Aaron Meraz. "Between the threat of infection and the recommendations for social distancing, these 1,700 households of retired ministers and widows may feel isolated -- and many are scared. We must not let them feel alone during this time. Though we are doing our best to communicate with them and provide for them financially, we need our local Southern Baptist churches and small groups to assist in ministering to them as the hands and feet of Christ."

Here are four things Southern Baptists can do to help in the weeks and months ahead:

1. Follow social distancing guidelines and help seniors avoid exposure. The CDC recommends that those at high risk take extra precautions to keep space between themselves and others. This includes not visiting elderly loved ones and neighbors, as you, your family, co-workers and children may have been exposed to the virus and can pass it on even if no symptoms are present.
2. Reach out to family, neighbors and fellow church members who fall into this at-risk category. Call, drop them a line via email or send an encouraging card via snail mail. Errands to get necessities and medications are also difficult, so if you're able, offer to do pickups! And if not, many grocery delivery services are still up and running, so you could order some essentials for their pantry. If able and available, be sure to connect with them through video conferencing apps like Skype, Duo, Zoom or FaceTime.
3. Get connected with a Mission:Dignity recipient. Churches, Sunday school classes and individuals can contact the Mission:Dignity office by calling 1-877-888-9409 and then selecting Option 2 or emailing MissionDignity@GuideStone.org to be connected to recipients in their area and get ideas on how best to serve them.
4. Donate to your local church's ongoing efforts to support the community. Your consistent tithe and regular contributions are vital to help church members and seniors get the help and support they need. If you have additional funds to give, consider donating to your local food pantry or at MissionDignity.org during this uncertain time.