

Q&A: What is the practical role of recent retired people in the church?

Big Bad Wolf asks: *What is the practical role of recent retired people in the church? Stacking chairs and serving cups of tea?*

Hi Wolf,

Is there some personal hurt behind your question? I would understand if there was because I have come across churches where the retired/older people are relegated to (what might sometimes be considered to be) menial or trivial tasks, and this is hurtful. So there might be a question behind your question.

But to interact with your question as it stands...

A church, like any organised community, takes a lot of energy to run. If people are to be blessed, particularly newcomers, then there is a necessary reliance on people putting their hand up to serve the community in many various ways. This includes stacking chairs and serving cups of tea!

So, there is no reason why a recently retired person should be excluded from acts of service, if they are willing and able.

I have come across many recently retired people who have delighted to serve the church in such a way, and have valued the fact that they can carry some of that load while they have the energy and the freedom from caring for children etc. that may not be afforded to others. Let us not denigrate the necessity, importance, and value of those so-called menial tasks of service and those that volunteer for them. As someone who has reached the end of service to be faced with 100 chairs to pack up, having someone say, "Will, I'll do

that” is such a relief and a blessing, truly soothing. I value it greatly.

But perhaps your question implies an “only” – is that the “only” role for the recently retired? Absolutely not! Each member of the body is gifted according to the Spirit one to another so as to build the people of God and further the gospel. The task of the church is to encourage everyone, regardless of their age, towards ongoing maturity and the wise application of their gifts and talents.

However, if there is one direction that I would, generally speaking, encourage the “recently retired” to particularly explore, it is the task of mentoring. The age group you refer to have a particular wealth of experience and knowledge to gift the church with. If they can be involved in some way, large or small with the ongoing task of identifying, apprenticing, releasing and commissioning newer leaders they will have blessed God’s people and produced much fruit for his glory in that way, and it may be a useful framework for their direct hands-on ministry.

Thanks for the question,

W.