



# **St. John's Is Active Participant: Older Americans Month Is Important To Celebrate**

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COLLINSVILLE - Older Americans Month is celebrated each year in May. It has been an opportunity to celebrate the gifts that our Older Americans bring to us in our families and communities. It is especially important, during this unusual year, to celebrate this population and the challenges they may have faced through isolation and anxiety as well as the joys they have experienced in learning new ways of communicating with loved ones.

With this in mind, we have the opportunity to provide you, at no charge, a downloadable worship service to use to celebrate Older Americans Month in May.

Pastor Jennifer Sowell-Glover of St. John United Church of Christ in Collinsville and St. John's Community Care will be involved in the production of the service. Plans are

to have this ready by the end of May (barring any unforeseen circumstances) for possible consideration for May 30 worship services or anytime that you would have a need or opportunity throughout the summer months to share the video. The service theme will be “the in between times of our lives“. Anyone is welcome to download it and show it at their convenience, this video will be suitable for any church or senior group.

## Celebrating Older Americans Month

St. John's is also planning activities throughout the month with our family caregivers and participants in our Adult Day centers. This service will be viewable a little later this month from this page.

**A Little History** – In 1963, President John F. Kennedy and members of the National Council of Senior Citizens met to address the growing concerns of America's 17 million individuals ages 65 and older. At the time, one-third of all seniors lived in poverty with few social programs available to help support them.

To raise awareness of the problems facing seniors and to honor them, then-President Kennedy and the Council proclaimed May as Senior Citizens Month.

## Senior Citizens Month Becomes Older Americans Month

Two years later, in 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Older Americans Act of 1965 and formally declared May as Older Americans Month. But the act did much more than raise awareness or encourage community involvement – although it did both of these things well.

Johnson took Kennedy's proclamation and intentions a step further by taking action that resulted in positive change, financial assistance and federal support for older Americans.

### The Older Americans Act:

- established the Administration on Aging, the first federal agency designed to address the struggles of older Americans
- introduced nutrition programs, transportation assistance, federally funded adult day care, legal assistance and other services for seniors
- paved the way to passing the Medicare program to offer health care to seniors

## Older Americans Month in the Recent Past

The proclamation didn't end with Johnson, either. Every president since has offered a formal proclamation declaring May as a time to remember and honor older Americans. Communities organize events, fairs, and fundraisers focusing on seniors.

Each year, the Administration on Aging (AOA) and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) establishes a theme for Older Americans Month and encourages communities to organize events based on the theme. "Communities of Strength" is the theme for 2021.