

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Social Distancing and Self Isolation: NCBAM Offers Hope to Older Adults

By Carol Layton

Does the thought of “social distancing”—missing church, movies, or friendly hugs for a whole 30 days cause you to feel uneasy? Have you imagined what it might feel like to be quarantined inside your home—to depend on frozen foods, family, or social services for basic necessities? For thousands of frail-aging adults in North Carolina, living “quarantined” is a day-to-day reality, and has been long before we ever heard of the coronavirus.

Health professionals call this reality “social isolation” and consider it a health crisis of epidemic proportions among older adults—one that contributes to high blood pressure, depression, cognitive decline, and a 30% increased risk of premature death.

Whitney Brooks, an integrative health coach and consultant for North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM), is concerned that seniors are losing valuable contact with friends and loved ones as an unintended consequence of social distancing efforts. “Although social isolation and loneliness among seniors isn’t a new problem, it has only recently gained national attention. Because seniors are especially vulnerable to the virus, nursing homes and assisted living communities are limiting outside visitors which has resulted in a sudden onset of isolation. NCBAM’s Hope Line offers a way to help seniors stay social while they wait this out.”

For seniors who may be living on the brink of social isolation, the recent recommendations for slowing the spread of the virus may make life even lonelier. For many, a weekly church service was the only outing of the week. Seniors are also at risk of losing visits from friends or family members who don’t want to risk passing the virus to them.

NCBAM’s “Hope Line” offers help and hope to those suffering from social isolation and loneliness—whether or not it is related to virus quarantines. The toll-free Hope Line is open 9:00 am – 9:00 pm, Monday through Friday at **866.578.HOPE** (866.578.4673). Trained staff and volunteers respond with a friendly voice, a compassionate ear, and missional hearts to pray with and for people.

Due to anxieties over the coronavirus, NCBAM Call Center director, Melanie Beeson, has created extra resources for Hope Line staff and volunteers. “As callers express fear or worry over the uncertainties of the virus, we of course encourage them to seek medical attention if they have symptoms, and we also

are ready to share God’s word with them—encouraging them to trust Him and not to live in fear because of the virus—or for any other reason.”

The Hope Line is part of NCBAM’s “One Hope” outreach which offers a spiritual response to isolation and loneliness. NCBAM offers a workshop providing an overview of isolation and loneliness, methods for identifying those at risk, and strategies to help churches offer community-based solutions. Call 877.506.2226 to connect with an NCBAM regional director in your area.



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Information about NCBAM

North Carolina Baptist Aging Ministry (NCBAM) has been connecting aging adults (65 and older) with resources to meet their needs since 2009. Through partnerships with more than 4,000 North Carolina Baptist churches and other organizations, NCBAM responds to the needs of aging adults with approaches on the cutting edge of ministry and culture.

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