Growing an Older Adult Ministry

Donald R. Koepke

Edited by Kathleen O'Hagan

Recommendations

The Rev. Stephen Sapp, Ph.D.

In *Growing an Older Adult Ministry*, Pastor Don Koepke offers congregations a useful and detailed guide not only for developing a meaningful ministry with older adults but for understanding the importance of taking their spiritual needs seriously enough to want to do so. Any congregation that cares about its older adults will find much of value in this book, whether for starting a ministry from scratch or for revitalizing an existing program, and I heartily recommend it.

The Reverend Stephen Sapp, PhD
Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies
University of Miami

Susan H. McFadden, Ph.D.

Donald Koepke has written a wise and compassionate book for congregations seeking deeper, more meaningful ministry with older persons in their faith communities. His use of a gardening metaphor is powerful and beautifully simple at the same time, inviting readers to think carefully about the best ways to create, grow, and sustain older adult ministries. His emphasis on spiritual formation and development as the heart of older adult ministry is vitally important and he clearly presents the components of formation and pathways to development. This is a book to be shared and savored by people who recognize the many gifts elders can offer to their congregations and who also understand that elders are best served when their congregations intentionally design multi-faceted ways of promoting their spiritual formation and development.

Susan H. McFadden, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita, Psychology
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

Cindy Wright

Too often aging is measured solely in terms of physical decline. When measured in spiritual terms, as Don Koepke enthusiastically claims, "the experience of aging can become the fulfillment of life, reflecting the glory, the insight, the soul fulfillment of a fully lived life." I've seen this truth consistently revealed through the lives of older adults with whom I've been blessed to share in the journey of aging. Whether you're beginning a brand-new ministry or re-assessing an existing one, *Growing an Older Adult Ministry,* provides a treasure trove of resources for congregations to consider as they too discover that aging is indeed a spiritual journey!

Cindy Wright
Minister of Care and Mature Adults
Solana Beach Presbyterian Church

Pastor Don Koepke's *Growing an Older Adult Ministry* is an outstanding, thorough, and rich-resourced handbook or planning guide for every congregation that seeks to be the most effective and holistic that it can be with older adult ministries. What a beautiful gift he has given to the whole church in offering a free online version of it for all to share its blessings.

Pastor Steve Herder

"Aging is a Spiritual Journey" and this is where Don's teaching shines, both when you hear him in person, and when you read this book. For him the purpose of faith communities is spiritual formation and development, and this is not just for oneself, but it is for the sake of the community, for the sake of the poor, for the sake of God's beloved world. The pages on the "Spiritual Tasks of Older Adulthood" are valuable to read and will engage your faith community in deep ways.

For the past twenty-five years I have been mentored by Don and have used his teachings, his step-by-step process in older adult ministries, in the congregations that I have served at St. Andrew in Whittier and Ascension in Thousand Oaks, CA. As you read the plan, it may sound daunting at first, but I encourage you to do the work of each step, with many helpful tools that he has included. He has a brilliant plan for having a leadership group do the research of older adults in the

congregation and community, developing a mission statement, and planning programs and ministries with these four groups: the active, the transitional, the frail, and the caregiver.

What makes this plan holistic are the six areas of program or ministry development: Spiritual Formation and Growth; Lifelong Learning; Opportunities to Serve; Opportunities to Be Served; Community Building; Finance and Stewardship. What is fascinating to do then is to apply these six areas to each of the four groups of people explained in the previous paragraph. Our ministry team at Ascension enjoyed thinking of the values connected with these six areas and we designated the six with these words: Grace; Wisdom; Service; Compassion; Hospitality; Provision.

Don's passion for older adult ministries with its spiritual journeys, his personal teaching, mentoring, and books have inspired me each week of my pastoral ministry to do ministry with, by, and for our older members and caregivers, as well as to do everything we can to enhance the spiritual journeys of the older members of our community. All of this is framed beautifully with the metaphor of a garden throughout the book.

Many thanks, Pastor Don Koepke, and continued blessings to you on your spiritual journey, and to each one who reads and puts this handbook into practice, as we are led by the Spirit to love with the love of Jesus!

Pastor Steve Herder
Associate Pastor for Older Adult Ministry
Ascension Lutheran Church,
Thousand Oaks, CA

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This book is dedicated to
my wife, Judy,
a life-long learner,
my partner and confidant when we were young, and now as we are older.
She has challenged me to grow
as a husband, father, and grandfather,
as a person of faith,
as a professional,
and, most of all, as a person.

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Forward

In *Growing an Older Adult Ministry*, the Reverend Don Koepke draws on his 20 years of experience in leading and developing congregational ministries for older adults to provide churches with a roadmap for enhancing how they both engage and serve their aging members. Confronting the church's persistent focus on the young, Koepke challenges congregational leaders to recognize the potential of older adult members and the radical possibility that churches which intentionally focus on growing wide-reaching older adult ministries can not only survive but thrive.

Cordula Dick-Muehlke, Ph.D.

Using the analogy of a garden, Koepke leads readers from imagining to realizing a fully developed older adult ministry in which older adults bloom through serving and being served. In reflecting on *Growing an Older Adult Ministry*, I was reminded of my own mother, who surrounded our home with a large floral garden. Guided by her artistic sensibility and nurturing spirit, my mother brought even the scraggliest seedling, which others might have readily tossed aside, to full bloom. Like a painting, the colors reflected divine beauty, a beauty such as can be seen in older adults.

In Western society, aging is highly stigmatized, with older adults all too readily cast aside like a scraggly seedling. Sadly, the church, if not consciously certainly unconsciously, reflects the predominant negative societal attitude toward aging. But in reality, although often viewed like the scraggly seedling, older adults can, with the right nurturing, be brought into full bloom, even in the face of illness and disability.

What is that right nurturing? It is not merely physical, psychological, or social in nature. That right nurturing, while including attention to physical, psychological, and social needs, must encompass attention to the spiritual. But what are the unique spiritual needs of older adults? How does one even begin to address these? Challenging the church to "pull its head" out of the sand, Koepke broadens the so often limited approach to older adult ministry of serving a congregation's frailest members to engaging the spectrum of older adults who sustain and are sustained by the church. As readers explore questions about when older adulthood starts, the

evolving nature of older adulthood – from active aging to frailty – and more, Koepke guides readers through a process of learning the unique desires of needs of each older congregant.

Having shepherded many congregations through the process of developing an older adult ministry, Koepke offers a step-by-step approach to building a full continuum of programming to address the diverse needs of older members. Readers not only receive guidance, but a set of tools tailored to each step, from building a steering committee of members passionate about older adult ministry to realizing a dream fulfilled. With a laser focus on spiritual development, Koepke continuously weaves spiritual growth into every aspect of older adult ministry. While, for example, offering transportation might seem like a practical service, Koepke reminds us that that whether the older congregant happens to be volunteering as a driver or the one receiving a ride to the doctor, the opportunity for spiritual growth presents itself in the interdependence of giving and receiving, of being met authentically in what Martin Buber called an I-Thou relationship. In a chapter dedicated to spiritual development, Koepke engages readers in exploring a variety to approaches to enhancing one's awareness of and connection to the divine.

As the culmination of life dedicated to serving others, Koepke leaves the church a path forward in a new era of its own development. It is with gratitude for this work that I close this forward and encourage you to open the pages ahead and grow a lush garden of ministries with and for older adults.

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Introduction

by Donald Koepke

My basic premise in writing this manual, *Growing an Older Adult Ministry* and the idea that permeates the entire book is this: ***Aging is a Spiritual Journey***. Encouraging and supporting the Older Adult Ministry (OAM) program's participants' spiritual journey should be the primary goal of every aspect of OAM within a congregation.

This premise should not be a surprise to anyone active in a faith community. Unfortunately, my experience of presenting on Older Adult Ministry (OAM) to hundreds of persons who have a deep personal faith reveals otherwise. Religious or not, most Americans have bought into the cultural understanding (really mis-understanding!) of aging hook, line and sinker. For most (perhaps nearly all) Americans, aging is a matter of physical wellbeing. If people are reasonably healthy and mobile they are not old, and they are quick to deny being a member of that cohort.

When I was chaplain at The Alhambra Retirement Community (a California Lutheran Home) in Alhambra, California, a prospective resident, her son, and daughter-in-law came for a tour and a lunch. As she left the building she was heard to say, "What a beautiful place. Wonderful food. Gracious people. But I don't want to live there with all those old people." .Now, she was 89 years old. But the fact that she had driven herself to the appointment in her own car, taken the tour without the assistance of even a cane and read the menu without glasses, that meant she was not old!

This same attitude is evident in the church. No matter what euphemism is used in the title of an Older Adult Ministry ─ "OWLs" (Older Wiser Lutherans), "Healthy Striders," "Prime Timers," or "Keen-Agers," — congregants run from the idea of "old" and thus refuse to attend that group. And while many congregations envision a ministry with Older Adults as being a ministry with the frail and homebound, they forget that the aging process begins much earlier, somewhere between ages 45 and 55, or around the birth of the first grandchild (more on "Who is Old?" in Chapter One).

Challenges and Opportunities of Aging

Aging does include loss of physical ability and stamina. There is the old saying that states that "one is old when most of the people in your address book begin with the title 'Dr.'" As I have gotten older it feels like more and more of my income is spent on health care. At the same time, aging brings challenges about relationship as many family and friends either die or move away to "live near the children" or "retire in a more affordable environment. And aging often brings increased neurological challenges such as word-finding, remembering dates, or even recalling the location of everyday items such as house keys.

These losses present challenges, but they are not the essence of aging. In fact, these very losses give focus and power to the real experience of aging, the spiritual journey of aging. The challenge of aging as a spiritual journey is to engage a person's spiritual life -- those values, beliefs and perspectives that form the foundation of life, integrating it into a meaningful whole -- so it is life-giving even as diminishment in physical health and relationships occur.

When defined in terms of what can be measured objectively, examined in an X-ray, or captured with a camera, aging is decline. But when measured in spiritual and biblical terms, the experience of aging can become the fulfillment of life, reflecting the glory, the insight, the soul, fulfillment of a fully lived life.

Defining the Spiritual

The adjective "spiritual," and its noun-form "spirituality," may be unfamiliar to some, especially those outside Roman Catholicism. I have found it helpful not to think of spirituality in abstract, ethereal terms that feel remote and beyond experience. Instead, spirituality is the inner core of beliefs, values, expectations, and perceptions that give one's life direction, meaning, and even vitality. Our spirituality is our 'tire-meeting-the-road' belief and experience. While our spirituality includes cognitive belief about God, self, and the world, it also includes our values and experiences that are beyond thought; they simply are. It is not merely what we have learned or believe within a faith community. All of life's experiences, not just what we have been formally taught, assist in our spiritual formation.

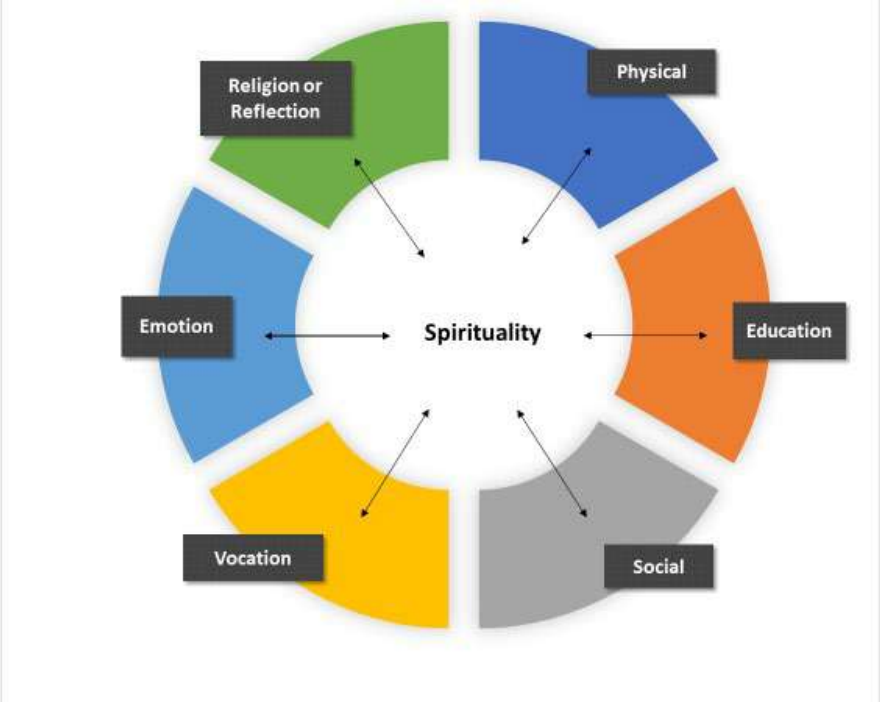

Figure 1.

Many readers might be familiar with the domains of life (see figure 1). Note that spirituality is not one of the six categories in our experience of life. Spirituality is the center, the core, that part of us which sometimes is called "soul." Every domain of life is influenced by one's spirituality, just as those same aspects of life change one's spirituality. Thus, spirituality and life are always in a dynamic interchange. Many suggest that it is a matter of the heart rather than the head. This "heart" perspective is a blending of every experience of our life and has given birth to our core values and beliefs that guide all behavior, whether to allow a feeling to be expressed, what church we attend, even telling us that we might be sick and whether we believe a doctor and do what is prescribed. Our spirituality is like using six interrelated threads to weave a gorgeous tapestry that gives comfort, beauty, and a sense of being home within the self…our spirituality. Gestalt Psychology might call spirituality our "word view." Physicians might describe this state as a body seeking homeostasis. Our spirituality says that it is life.

For example, a person who is considering a new job. This might be a time when we struggled over whether to apply for a new job. We weigh different options. We explore the job via the internet. We consider thoughts and perspectives from people whom we trust who share thoughts that we have never considered before.

We ponder our past, our education, our values, perhaps even our faith. If we embrace those new views as being valid, they are then added to the continuing growing mix of what we believe (our core values), subtly enhancing and changing the perspective of all other aspects of life and thus quietly modifying our spirituality.

My mother often talked about her "heart beliefs," which sometimes conflicted with what her church believed. She once remarked that "I don't believe everything that the pastor says to be true." "Everyone's experience is different," she went on, "perhaps 98% like the same but still 2% different." Thus, everyone's spirituality is different because they have had different experiences in life.

Faith communities might label the growth of core beliefs (spirituality) differently. Christians call it growth in grace or sanctification. Buddhists speak of following "The Way" which is purposely left undefined except by personal inquiry and experience. Those of the Jewish Faith engage this side of life through a focus on the Torah. Islam encourages this growth using their "Five Pillars." A researcher of the interplay between religion and health, Harold Koenig of Duke University, describes spirituality as a "***personal quest for understanding answers to ultimate questions about life,*** about meaning, and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent" (Koenig 2001, p.18). Depending on the individual, spirituality might be highly cognitive or deeply intuitive, subjective or objective. But it still seeks to answer the ultimate questions of life.

Because spirituality is comprised of our core beliefs and essential values, it is the primary influence in how we look at, evaluate, and engage life. (See Figure 2.) It is our spirituality that answers questions such as: "What or on whom can we count?" "What is the essential element in life? Money? Power? Control?" "How open can I be with another person?" "Is life safe?" "Is it OK to be vulnerable or do I always need to be strong?" "Can I find meaning in life, even as the decline of age imposes its will upon me physically and even mentally*?* "Can I count on a God who says that I matter and am important?" "Is there meaning in suffering or do we just exist in our suffering?" The answers that we give to these questions come from our spirituality. Spirituality is who we are at the core of our being; it's what makes us tick.

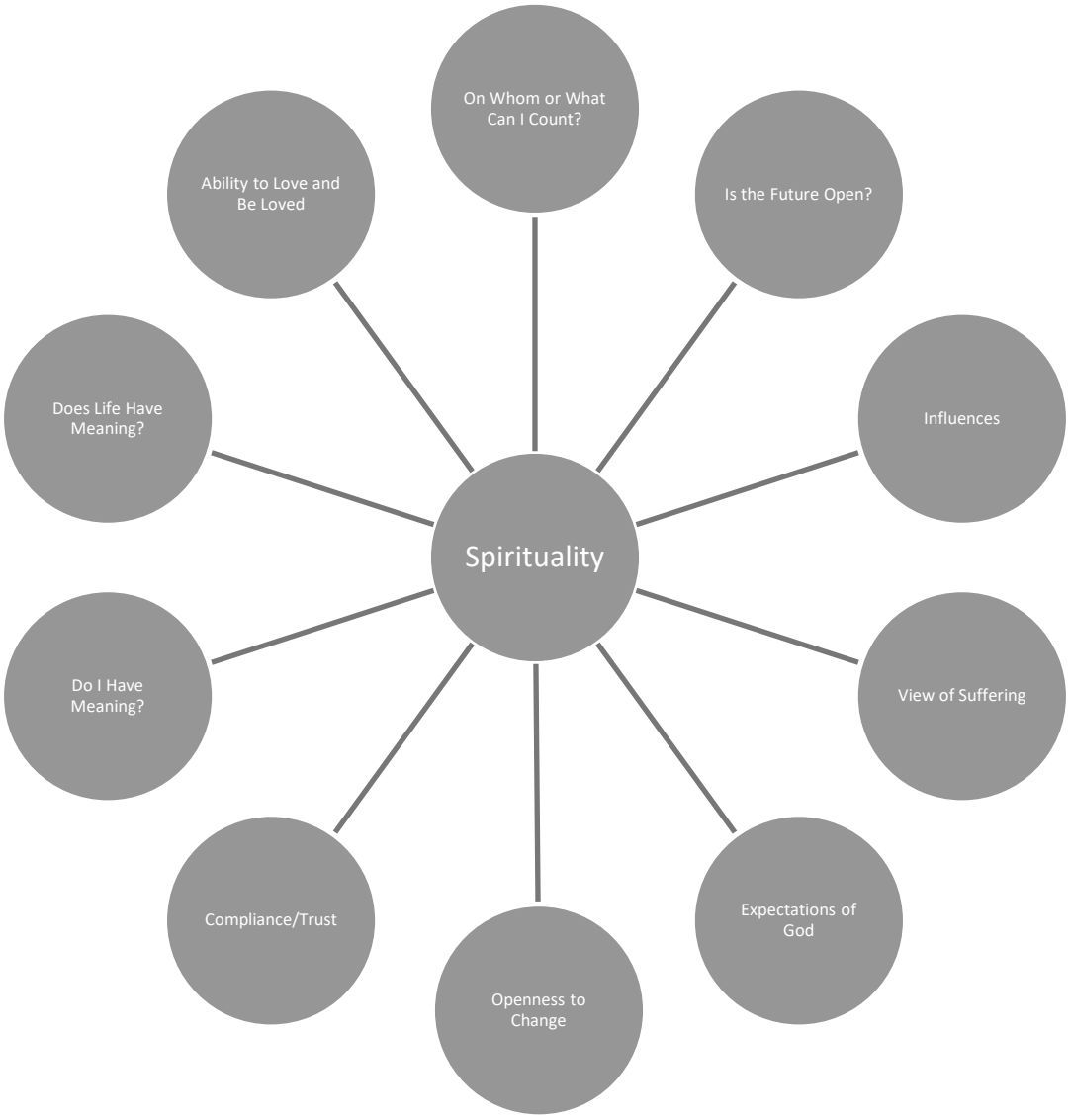
Spirituality
On Whom or What Can I Count?
Is the Future Open?
Influences
View of Suffering
Expectations of God
Openness to Change
Compliance/Trust
Do I Have Meaning?
Does Life Have Meaning?
Ability to Love and Be Loved

Figure 2.

Purpose of Faith Communities: Spiritual Formation and Development

It is my somewhat radical proposition is that the only purpose for the existence of communities of faith is to advocate for the spiritual formation and growth from all with whom they have contact. What about caring for the poor? What about praising God? What about following God's Laws? And yet, I will say it again, the ***only*** purpose for the church to exist is for spiritual formation and growth.

- To grow closer to God, to experience God, to learn from God: Don't these statements express what faith communities seek from their worship life?

- To connect with God, to expand that connection into a lifestyle rather than simply a cognitive belief: Isn't this the purpose for education within faith communities?

- Doesn't concern for the poor result from a deep relationship with God revealed in God's love that overflows our being calling, driving, us to care for other human beings in the same way that God cares for us.

- Is not the purpose for study of sacred Scripture to grow in knowledge and to grow in dedication and relationship?

- Is the goal of the annual stewardship campaign to be a fund raiser for congregational coffers or is stewardship a time to wrestle with who God is in one's life:The Living God or money?

- Is the goal of preaching to impart information or to evoke wisdom, or is it to offer a personal encounter with the 'Something More' in life, that transforms our life?

There is a place for the analytical and the cognitive in ministry and teaching within any faith community. There is a place for religion, for the creeds, the liturgy, the hymns. But intellect always follows personal encounter. Cognition, thinking, analyzing, understanding always follows experience and a religion of depth always follows spirituality. When it comes to exploring our inner-life and beliefs, it is critical to put the emphasis on the spiritual, not only on the intellectual part of our lives. When we are listening to and expressing our "heart faith," life expands beyond the borders of our mind and what we know. Thus, it is the faith community's primary task to provide the framework and support so that people can become aware of their core beliefs, their spirituality and thus be able be authentic in their response to the tough questions that come to us while on the aging journey.

Again: Aging is a Spiritual Journey

As older adults face the physical, psychological, and sociological challenges of aging it is challenging for them to apply their often long-held beliefs and values to their lives. It is easy for many Christians, especially when they are younger and may not be confronted with chronic conditions or great losses, to answer the question, "Is my relationship with Jesus enough for me to live a fulfilled life?" with a "Yes." Many say "Yes" within the Bible Study, at the altar, or within the counseling office. But when a chronic condition enters life, when we cannot look to the day when we will feel better, stronger, or more agile, the answer to the question may not be so simple.

Is Jesus enough? Or do I also need my legs or hands that fail me now because of arthritis? Do I need my memory that now is challenged by Alzheimer's? Do I need my eyes that no longer see well due to macular degeneration? These concerns raise other questions: Is the core of being human found in what we can see, touch, taste, feel or prove? Is the essence of being human the ability to reason, or even produce items of value? Or is the human being more? Is the human being a child of God, created in the image of God, a part of God? Does the experience of being human include, but also transcend, the physical, the emotional, and the social aspects of our lives?

These are the questions and the perspectives that inherently arise in our experience of aging. These are questions with which we all wrestle and struggle. And these questions during the aging experience are spiritual questions—they are the purview of faith communities and not the physician, the psychologist, or the social worker.

These issues will not necessarily be addressed at the local Senior Center. These are questions that will continue to surface even if we attempt to deny their existence. Yes, aging has physiological, psychological, intellectual, and sociological components. Yet they only evoke spiritual questions such as:

- reflecting on our life and its meaning.
- learning to live with ambiguity and doubt.
- discovering the power of simply being rather than doing.
- putting our life's story into a meaningful whole and saying, "It is good."
- identifying the joy of giving rather than receiving.
- living in gratitude rather than resentment and fear.

According to William Thomas, a person's resilience begins to decline at the same monthly rate from around age 35 to death. As this happens, aging as described in medicine, social work, and even psychology give witness to the declining body and with it the increasing challenges of aging. Note however, a person's spirituality can increase as the physical self-decreases. Spirituality is the only discipline to increase in strength, as person defines himself as a "We are spiritual being having a human experience not a human being having a spiritual experience." (Teilihard de Chardin as quoted in Furey 1993 p. 138) When a person is allowed to be defined by and led by their experience of spirituality, they can transcend all of the junk that aging might throw and, instead, find what is really lasting in life, a connection with their core, their spirituality, their God as they understand God.

Aging is a spiritual journey. And it is a new opportunity for the church, the synagogue, the temple, the mosque to be what it was created to be.

How to use this book

This work is written to share a step-by-step process whereby a group of older adults reads a chapter before meeting, discusses it thoroughly and then completes the task that is given in that chapter. I would suggest that the committee (Older Adult Leadership Team?) allows two hours to consider each chapter. Meetings can be once a month or once a week, or even another option, depending on how quickly the work needs to be completed. I would also strongly suggest that chapters are considered in the order they are written. Each chapter/meeting builds

on those in the past.

It might be observed that there is not as much emphasis on the frail as might be expected in a book regarding ministry with older adults. While one of the program categories, Opportunities to Be Served" (Chapter 5D), addresses this issue, there are more chapters devoted to other program possibilities. This is intentional for two reasons. First, most congregations, to the best of their ability, already provide such services for older people with disabilities due to aging. Many of these services are provided in the natural course of congregational life. When a member becomes frail, many in the congregation respond with encouragement and help spontaneously. If such services are organized, they often take the form of assistance getting the frail to a physician, providing transportation to church activities or even a friendly voice over a telephone. As you complete Chapter 3, "Plowing the Soil," and use the form "Assessing Existing Ministry" (Appendix C) you will find that a ministry to the frail is so much a part of the nature of a congregation that many would not even consider it to be an intentional Older Adult Ministry.

A second reason for not emphasizing a ministry with the frail is that congregations seldom consider the active older adult in planning older adult ministries. Sometimes they believe that these members are receiving the ministry that is needed through normal channels such as Bible studies, choirs, doing maintenance chores on church property, or simply through worship. Yet I believe that these 'normal' efforts do not address the specific concerns of older adults who remain active, independent, and capable. There are spiritual issues unique to the experience of aging that require carefully planned and intentional efforts. We should address issues of growing frailty, loss of social network, etc. when people might be more capable of gaining knowledge that would help them as they become frailer. Personally, as I write this work at age 78, I have not had many critical issues arising in my life because of my aging. Yet I have been diagnosed with MCI (Mild Cognitive Impairment). A neurologist provides support and medication to avoid another small stroke that was discovered by and MRI. However, the future might be bring more changes and challenges, and thus I hope that my years of experience with older adults, engaging their needs, values, goals, desires, hopes and fears will have given me perspectives whereby I can meet the challenges of my journey of aging. If that is true for me, perhaps it is true for all those who are active older adults.

The process of program development suggested in this book might seem too long

and laborious. The committee might be tempted to simply decide on some basic programming, plan it, schedule it, and then just do it. You know your people. I hope your committee consists of older adults and caregivers, and they know what is important to them. Yet this short cut is also short sighted. A great older adult ministry is focused, intentional, sustainable, and effective. Simply relying on the present beliefs of a minority of older adults to provide planning usually does not result in a sustained, or perhaps even an effective, ministry. The larger picture is needed. A broader view of aging and the possibilities of an OAM are required. If you simply choose and implement a program today, what will you do tomorrow? Is all your work accomplishing what is wanted and needed? Is your committee aware of the many forms that your OAM could use? I encourage you to leave the calendar where you can get to it after your work is done, on the office wall.

I feel the need to as for forbearance from those readers who are not of the Christian tradition. Being a Christian and an ordained Lutheran, I may not be as aware of the writings and appropriate rituals etc. of other faith traditions. I have tried to include something for everyone. Where I have not done so, I ask your forgiveness and a hope you will be able to find religious perspectives, beliefs, and writings that match what I say in this book.

Finally, the reader will note that I will use the metaphor of a garden as an overarching theme for the book. Perhaps such an image does not work for you. If so, simply ignore it. I found it fun to insert the process of gardening, beginning with choosing the site and continuing to harvest, as being interesting and fun.

I hope that you also have fun on this journey of OAM development. It is a joy sharing the process with you.

Pastor Donald Koepke, Seal Beach, CA July 2021

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Chapter One
What is the best location for the garden? Who are we to serve?

To be successful, an Older Adult Ministry needs to be

1) focused,
2) intentional
3) sustainable
4) effective

This chapter explores the ***focus*** of an OAM.

How is a garden developed? How does one start? What needs to be planned? What is the best way to proceed?

It takes a lot of thought and planning of infrastructure to begin a garden. The task is not completed overnight. It is not that the job is hard or even complicated. Developing a garden takes time because many factors need to be considered to produce a bountiful harvest. The first question that must be answered is where the garden is to be located. Certainly, the garden will hopefully grow through the years, so is the initial location be expandable. Is it necessary for the garden to be near the house for convenience? Would the best location be in the sun? Under a tree? Near the source of water? The decision of what kind of vegetables to plant needs to be considered as a location is sought. So the first step is location. The same is true for an Older Adult Ministry (OAM).

The First Step in Planning: Focus

Who are the older adults within your congregation? Answering this question thoughtfully and as fully as possible is essential to effective planning of older adult ministries. For how can a person, or a group of persons, plan anything that is effective in the spiritual development of older adults if they do not know some of the characteristics of the older adults whom they seek to serve?

It might be helpful for the older adults within your congregation to be categorized into four groups. Now no human being can be so categorized. Human beings, especially older human beings, defy being grouped into some

abstract class. Human beings, especially older human beings are too complex for much grouping. But for planning sake, grouping is helpful. To that end I would suggest four groups: **The Active, the Frail, the Transitional, and the Caregivers.** You might have a different view that would be helpful in your context but let me share how I would describe each category.

The Active

These are the older adults who live independently. They need no assistance with any ordinary task. While they might choose not to climb ladders or to move heavy furniture, they essentially take care of themselves. Persons who professionally assess older adults often use the measurement of ADLs, which is shorthand for "Activities of Daily Living." Some professionals use six. Personally, I use seven.

- Bathing and Grooming.
- Dressing and Undressing.
- Meal Preparation and Feeding.
- Functional Transfers (such as ability to get up from a chair)
- Safe Restroom Use and Maintaining Continence.
- Ambulation (usually walking from one place to another)
- Memory Care and Stimulation (Alzheimer's and Dementia)

The Active

Active older adults need no assistance with their ADLs. They often drive a car, go on vacations, participate in, or even lead groups. They can use all five snses, though some need tools to accomplish one or more (glasses, hearing aids etc.). They are aware of their surroundings, can be politically active, perhaps even president of the congregation. They make their own decisions. Many active older adults resist the term "older adult," not believing that they are old because they are not overtly frail.

The Frail

Persons in this group are often, perhaps usually, called the "old." These are persons who need assistance with most, if not all, ADLs. Often, they are the ones who become 'home-centered'. The term 'shut-in' has become out-of-date because most of these persons are still able to get out of the house and thus are not truly 'shut-in'. Perhaps they have had a stroke, are in the middle or latter stages of dementia or are so debilitated by some physical condition that their ability to act independently is limited. Unfortunately, these are the members of a church who can be side-lined. Out-of-sight, out-of-mind, they are removed from the conscious attention of the more active, and sometimes shunned because they are reminders that someday they might have such difficulties. Sometimes people just do not know what to say to them. These are the ones who can be ignored by pastors because they are swamped by needs of others. Most tragically they can be even forgotten.

The Transitional

This category contains those who are not active but are not frail either. Some of these persons might have difficulty with only one ADL, but it is a personal challenge that can evoke shame if it were to be revealed public. I remember a person who, when she came to church, was very self- conscious about her irregular incontinence. Thus, she would sit in a location close to the bathroom. After a while however, the fear of incontinence increased and finally stopped her from attending worship or any other congregational activity. And we cannot forget the persons who, because of their dementia, have interrupted worship by their talking or wanting simply to move around, making family members afraid to bring them to church. There can also be persons who cannot drive any more but do not feel comfortable asking anyone for rides to congregational activities. They can attend, but with their physical and emotional challenges, feel unable to be present.

The Caregiver

One obvious issue that congregations may be confronted with will be the support of caregivers. Figure 1 below is the most most recent national study of caregiving, conducted in 2020 by the National Alliance for Caregiving (NAC) and AARP

Public Policy Institute. It compared caregiving in 2020 with the results of their 2015 study.

Prevalence of Caregiving by Age of Care Recipient
2020 Compared to 2015

	2020 Prevalence	Estimated Number of U.S. Adults Who Are Caregivers	2015 Prevalence	Estimated Number of U.S. Adults Who Are Caregivers
Overall	21.3%*	53.0 million	4.3%	43.5 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 0–17	5.7%*	14.1 million	4.3%	10.2 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 18+	19.2%*	47.9 million	16.6%	39.8 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 18–49	2.5%	6.1 million	2.3%	5.6 million
Caregivers of recipients ages 50+	16.8%*	41.8 million	14.3%	34.2 million

** Significantly higher than in 2015*

Figure 1.

Compared to 2015, a greater proportion of caregivers of adults are providing care to multiple people now, with 24 percent caring for two or more recipients (up from 18 percent in 2015). This finding, in combination with the increased prevalence of caregiving, suggests a nation of Americans who continue to step up to provide unpaid care to family, friends, and neighbors who might need assistance due to health or functional needs. This increase in prevalence may be due to any of the following:

- The increasingly aging baby boomer population requiring more care
- Limitations or workforce shortages in the health care or long-term services and supports (LTSS) formal care systems
- Increased efforts by states to facilitate home- and community-based services
- Increasing numbers of Americans who are self-identifying that their daily activities, in support of their family members and friends with health or functional limitations, are caregiving
- •The confluence of all of these trends

For the executive summary of this study go to https://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/AARP1316_ExecSum_CaregivingintheUS_508.pdf

When I was younger, professionals talked about the "sandwich generation," those persons who are responsible to provide care for children as well as aging parents. Presently churches will confront more 'club sandwich' generations,

those caring for children while, at the same time, caring for their parents *and their grandparents*.

The Task

Knowing something about the four categories of older adults, you are now ready to decide who is in which grouping. There are many ways to complete this task but here is a simple yet effective method.

1. Gather a group of discrete, *very discrete*, members who know your congregation well, for a 'meeting that never took place.' At that meeting, provide the most recent telephone directory of your congregation to each participant. Quietly, individually, each participant is to follow the procedure below:

    a. Draw a circle around the name(s) of each person whom they believe would be categorized as an older adult (now you see the reason for recruiting discrete members for a 'meeting that never took place).

    b. Go back to the circled names and place one of the four letters listed below in the margin of the directory beside each name indicating their *perception* of each person circled. Participants might not "know" if a specific member is 'old enough' or specifically what category that might objectively be in. As a group, however, perceptions can be (and usually are) as accurate as knowing.

        '**A**' indicates "active"
        '**F**' indicates "frail"
        '**T**' indicates "transitional"
        '**C**' indicates "caregiver"

2. After everyone has completed the exercise, go back to the beginning, and discuss each person circled. Now you REALLY see the need for participation by discrete persons who know the congregation). Seek consensus as to 1) whether the member is indeed an older adult, and 2) into which group would each member fall. It is not important to have 100% accuracy to give the planning team usable and vital information for

their planning.

3. Finally, count all the persons in the five categories and record them on the form: "Who are the Older Adults in your Congregation," found in Appendix A. These numbers provide a snapshot of the older adults with your congregation and community.

> Hint: Do not forget to save the master directory for future use when events designed specifically for each group. As a matter of confidentiality, as well as saving the congregation from controversy as to who has been placed in what category by whom, destroy all other directories that were used in the process.

5. If it is desired, return to the directory and count the number of older adults living within the church's zip code. Proximity to church functions can be important factor in planning certain OAM events.

Finally, discuss what has been discovered. While there are other factors that must be considered before a final decision and recognizing that all older adults are important, ask "Based on our research, to what group of persons do you believe God is calling us to engage at this moment?" Obviously, all are older adults are going to be invited. No one will be excluded from the ministry. But since it is impossible, at this early stage of development, for any ministry to be all things to all people, which group needs to be the initial target group, the present focus of our OAM? Having the courage to choose one group to start with when all groups are important is critical to a plentiful harvest. Have a productive discussion, but do not force agreement. There are many more decisions to be made that may alter the choice of your OAM target group.

Success. You now know the location of your OAM garden. Now we consider what we want the garden to accomplish.

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Chapter Two:
Planning the Garden
What is to be accomplished?

To be successful, an Older Adult Ministry needs to be

1) Focused
2) Intentional
3) Sustainable
4) Effective

This chapter explores making your OAM ***intentional.***

Planning a garden can be time consuming, but it is always worth it. But growing out of finding a good location for the garden planners would be well served if they asked, "What is the goal of the garden?" Answers vary with almost every gardener. Extra, fresh food for the dining table. A chance to try out different foods. A desire to make a beautiful focus for the yard. Growing food that can be given away to food banks, etc. may also be a goal. What the garden is to accomplish is a vital part of planning.

It was the first meeting of the congregation council with its new president. When it came time for the "President's Report," the new officer said, "I believe that it has been five years since we took the time to revisit our congregational mission statement. I would propose that we commit ourselves to a special meeting in the next month to update our mission within the context and the challenges of today."

A noticeable groan was heard throughout the room. Many members had been through this process before, and while it made for an interesting day of dialogue and dreaming, the lack of continued effect on day-to-day decisions challenged the value of writing another mission statement. Once written, it looks good, sounds good, but does not seem to affect congregational direction or planning very much. "It looks great on the wall, or in the masthead of the congregational e-newsletter," commented a long-time member. "But I don't really want to spend any more time developing something that feels like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

Mission statements are important for any planning group for three reasons. First a mission statement enables everyone to "get on the same page" and give voice to common directions and purpose for ministry. Second, a mission statement can provide guidance in choosing between good ministry ideas and better ones.

Finally, a good mission statement can become the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of events in an OAM.

A mission Statement enables everyone to 'get on the same page"

A mission statement is essential in planning for OAMs so that everyone agrees on the purpose, scope, and direction of the ministry.

I remember consulting with a congregation when a quiet, but strident, dialogue took place between two of its members. "I believe that our OAM should begin by providing care for the frail," one person said. "We are a church-family. We need to be committed to each other. When one of our family needs help, the entire congregation should respond in some positive way. We haven't been doing that very well lately." "I disagree," said the second. "I believe that our OAM should begin by offering Bible Study. Isn't the study of the Word essential to the Christian life? I remember some of the Bible study groups that we used to have around here. They were marvelous. I learned so much from the others in the group. I never knew what it meant to be a part of our church until I attended those groups."

Two heartfelt *and appropriate* visions of OAM. Both are valid. Both could be accomplished. Both could provide for a vital and effective ministry to and with Older Adults. The operative question is: How does a committee choose between the many good things and great ideas that are available? I believe that one answer could be developing a mission statement that is based upon consensus, not voting.

I believe that the reasons most mission statements fail to be effective -- or even used -- is because they express what the congregation wishes to *do* rather than what the congregation wishes to *accomplish*. I believe our OAM should develop a ministry to the frail because so many of them are unable to attend worship or other activities of the congregation. I believe in the study of the Bible. Who within a faith community can argue with that? The question that embraces both perspectives is "What do we want our OAM to accomplish?" When all is said and done, when the ministry is in full swing and is deemed to be successful, how are the members of the congregation changed because of what has been offered?

Through my many years in congregational ministry, I have observed that at the outset of a new ministry, planning committees reach for the calendar far too soon.

"Let us brainstorm things that we can do in our ministry. St. John Church by the Freeway has a monthly group that meets for lunch and conversation. I think we should consider forming our own group." Or "When I was growing up, I remember the church sponsoring dozens of small groups that knitted caps for newborns at the hospital, made beautiful quilts that were sold at our church bazaar, and lots of other things that I don't remember right now." Or "I believe that older adults like to travel, so I would propose developing a group to tour many of the local places of interest that are so often missed." Great ideas. But how does a planning committee reach consensus when there are such divergent views of the types of ministries that are possible? The road to consensus begins by asking the deeper question: "What do we want our OAM to accomplish? What do we want our doing to do?"

The process of mission statement development seeks to include everyone's thoughts, everyone's vision, into a short, simple, concise declarative sentence that provides focus for the committee's planning and the OAM's ministry.

"Burnout was our greatest challenge until we changed our mission statement."

A mission statement gives guidance for program planning

How does a committee decide between a good idea for ministry and a great one? As you will discover later in this manual, the breadth of options for OAM programming is endless. While an OAM can include the popular lunch and a speaker (I call it the Kiwanis style), there is MUCH more that *could* be done and perhaps *should* be done. But on what basis is the decision to be made? No congregation can do everything and meet everyone's needs. Sometimes this choice is made based upon the preconceptions of the committee itself. Sometimes the choices are influenced by a member who is the most assertive rather that a person who is most insightful. But there is a better way: Develop and use a mission statement that expresses what is desired to be accomplished.

In 2001, I first developed the Mission Statement for what was then called the Center for Spirituality and Ethics in Aging. In 2010, the name of the center has been changed twice, as has the mission statement. Initially our mission statement read:

The Center for Spirituality and Ethics in
Aging is to provide and promote
education, advocacy, and
research in the spirituality and
ethics of aging
within the professional and faith
communities of southern California.

Note that there is no mention of types of education, methods of advocacy, or extent of research. Note also, the name of the Center was the Center for Spirituality *and Ethics* in Aging, which conformed to the values of the company which founded the center. Also, the region of influence was to be Southern California. This mission statement allowed for the development of major educational efforts, but no direct involvement with a specific long-term care community.

But Mission Statements can and must change to fit new perspectives learned through time and experience. In 2006 there developed a need to make the Center's sponsor more visible within the larger long-term care community and the words "California Lutheran Homes" were added. In addition, since the Center never sponsored events on the ethics of aging, "Ethics" was removed. And then the Center found itself sponsoring workshops through the American Society on Aging and the National Interfaith Coalition on Aging. Thus, the words "Southern California" were removed. Now the mission statement became

The Mission of the California Lutheran Homes Center for Spirituality
and Aging is to provide and promote
education, advocacy, and
research in the spirituality of
aging within professional
and faith communities.

A mission statement provides norms for evaluating continuing or completed ministry

How does a planning committee evaluate the effectiveness of its efforts? Is a ministry effective if lots of people attend? What if only four caregivers attend a study of the book, "Caresharing" (Richards, Marty, 2009). Was the event a failure

that should be discontinued? On what basis is such a decision made? What if 75 persons attended the annual Valentines Dinner? Was it a success? Or are there other issues that cry out to be considered? How does a planning or steering committee know? Enter the Mission Statement, refocusing attention on the desired outcomes of the OAM, not just the fact that something happened. If one of the desired outcomes is for participants to have fun, great. The annual Valentine party was probably a success. But if the desired outcome was to build community, to enable older adults to expand their horizon of friends, the Valentine's Dinner might receive a "C" rather than an "A;" even though many people attended, if few left the event having met a new person and left knowing more than their first name then the purpose may not have been fulfilled. At the same time, if a desired OAM outcome is to provide study on significant issues on aging, the book study of *Caresharing* could be a smashing success because those who were present, no matter how few attended, gained many helpful insights into caregiving.

Developing a Mission Statement: The Task

As you develop your Mission Statement, remind the group members of what they have already discovered about aging:

1. Aging is a SPIRITUAL journey, not a medical, social, or even psychological one.
2. Spirituality is formed by the interplay of life experiences, and it also influences those same experiences.
3. There are four categories of older adults in an OAM: Active, Frail, Transitional and Caregivers.

This Biblical understanding about the nature of growing older must be remembered to assure that the statement that is produced by the planning committee is consistent with the Scriptures.

Appendix B is a form that I have found helpful for faith groups to develop a mission statement for OAM within 45 to 60 minutes. It is best if the committee has previously read this chapter and completed the form individually, thus allowing maximum group time for sharing and consensus building. If this strategy is chosen, have each committee member complete only steps one, two and three,

leaving step four for the actual planning committee.

However, you might choose to complete the forms, share visions, and develop the vision statement together. If so, follow the steps below:

Step One: Ask everyone to complete the Appendix B form in 15 minutes. Not all members will be able to complete the entire form, but the short time frame is designed to evoke initial, intuitive thoughts and visions, not a polished, finished product. You may act as timekeeper:

1. In ten minutes, ask each person to write as many accomplishments that they believe that your OAM is to fulfill. Examples might include:

    - grow deeper in their experience of, or connection to, God.
    - have a positive attitude towards their own aging.
    - volunteer more often for church or some other local not-for-profit organization.
    - have fun
    - go on educational trips
    - engage issues of aging such as dying and chronic illness.
    - Have medical doctors present on topics such as "Healthy Aging"

2. Take three minutes to rank order the list developed in Step One above (First choice, second choice, third choice, etc.).
3. In the remaining two minutes, circle the important words (nouns and or verbs) in each statement of accomplishment.

After fifteen minutes, convene the group to share their personal answers.

- Potential accomplishments for OAM. Leader writes each potential accomplishment on a white board, newsprint, or poster paper. Weed out duplicates.
- Rank order the statements (1, 2, 3, etc.)
- Circle important words within each statement
- Then, have the group use the rank order and important words to 'word-smith' a simple, declarative sentence or mission statement.

The final step is to discuss what has been accomplished. Is the mission statement

- broad enough to give guidance to a program with many facets?
- concise enough to be understood as a whole?
- focused enough to give guidance in planning?

- stated in terms that lead leaders to seek accomplishments rather than simply providing programs?

According to Win and Charles Arn (Arn, Win and 1999), Mission Statements should:

- Unify members of the group.
- Give assurance that the group is doing God's work rather than just keeping busy.
- Provide motivation for involvement and a basis for accountability.
- Give the group overall direction.
- Define what the group will and will not do.
- Give a basis for measuring accomplishments.

Examples of Mission Statements

First United Methodist Church of Fullerton, California
"Elder Ministry is a ministry by, with, and for older adults within and beyond the walls of our congregation. We shall continue to offer and deepen programs and services that mediate the love and care of God. We shall endeavor to respond in new ways to the needs and hurts of older adults in the community we serve."

Note the focus of First Methodist:

- is not only to provide ministry "to" older adults, but "with" and "by" as well. Note the desires to deepen programs and service that "will mediate the love and care of God," not just making older adults feel better or merely be a loosely organized group that might meet each month.
- is on being willing to try "new ways" of fillings needs, perhaps responding to the often-said phrase, "We never did it that way before."
- Is on the whole community, both outside and inside the church.

Messiah Lutheran Church, Yorba Linda, California developed both a vision statement *and* a mission statement:
"The VISION of elder ministry at Messiah Lutheran Church is to recognize and utilize God's gift of wisdom, age and grace to provide purpose, personal vision, and fellowship among the older members of our church and community."

Growing out of their Vision Statement is their Mission Statement.
"The MISSION of elder ministry at Messiah Lutheran Church is to identify and

respond to the gifts, talents and needs of our older members in order to encourage spiritual growth in the congregation."

Note:

- They want to recognize and use the gifts and talents that God has already placed in their older adults.
- They believe that by encouraging spiritual growth within older adults that spiritual growth will happen in the entire congregation.

First United Methodist Church, Chula Vista, California
"The mission for Senior Ministry at FUMC is to bring all seniors into the community of the church, share stories and nurture the spirit of each person to make Christ's love visible to all."

I would emphasize that FUMC wishes to foster older adults to share stories that will result in the nurturing of the spirit within all. An interesting insight.

Conclusion

Throughout the conversation of the development of a Mission Statement for your OAM, focus has been on ministry accomplishments, not program possibilities. Focus on what the group wishes the 'doings' of your OAM to do.

Now we turn to making your OAM sustainable by having a firm infrastructure.

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Chapter Three
Plowing the Soil: Infrastructure

To be successful, an Older Adult Ministry needs to be

1) Focused
2) Intentional,
3) Sustainable
4) Insightful

This chapter explores making your OAM ***sustainable***

Gardens need a good infrastructure to be sustainable. Is the garden too exposed to winds so that a wall might be required? What about a source for water? Will the garden be watered by hand or a drip system? Is there a need for a tool shed? What about shade for plants that can be damaged if they get too much sun? Is there a need for a border or even scare crow? What about the soil? Is there a need for compost? Is the soil too acidic? What about drainage? To put it simply, what physical needs require change, and which conditions are to be preserved?

Identifying Your Present OAM

While there are frightfully few congregations that have an intentional OAM, all congregations provide some OAM. Congregations might not call their present efforts to and with older adults an OAM. Installing handrails in restroom stalls might be providing safety for all who come on their campus. Worship is usually intergenerational. The group that folds bulletins each Friday might be a service to the church, and one may not realize that it also gives purpose and a sense of belonging to the participants, many of whom may be older adults. Older adults serve on the church council, vestry, or board of directors, chair committees, all of which are helpful to the life of the congregation. But recognizing that affirming the gifts of older adults confirms that they have not been "put out to pasture." The fact is that I do not know of a congregation that is not providing an OAM experience. And thus, as our planning continues, it is helpful to identify and evaluate what is presently being accomplished so that efforts can be coordinated, and duplications might be avoided.

Appendix C (Assessing Existing Older Adult Ministry) is a form designed to identify 'hidden' OAMs. Have all the planning committee members complete Appendix C by themselves first and then share with the rest of the group. If your congregation is medium size or above, one person probably will not know everything mentioned on the form.

After all participants have reported, discuss how these present ministries affect the spiritual life of each of the target groups for OAM noted in Chapter One: the active, the frail, the transitional, and the caregiver. Which group receives the most from the ministry strategies that have been identified?

Congratulate your congregation for the efforts in OAM that are already present. Good Work! Because of your ministry, older adults are being given the opportunity to enhance their relationship with God-in-their-lives. You might seek an opportunity to share the results of your assessment with your congregational leadership board.

Creating an Older Adult Ministry that is Sustainable…

Now that you have an idea as to what your congregation brings to the OAM table, how prepared is your congregation to embrace and sustain this new ministry? Few congregations in the USA have a focused, intentional, sustainable, and useful OAM. The reasons, of course are many. Perhaps some of the following sound familiar:

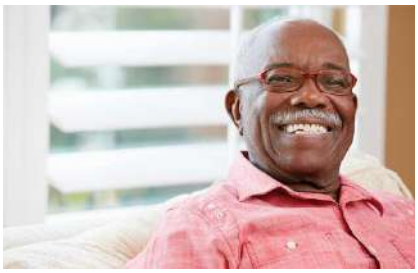
- Congregational focus should be on young families with children, which is logical since "we all know that the future of the church is with the young."

  > WRONG! The future of the church is with the people who are there, younger, or older. Jesus did not say: "Go into all nations and make disciples of all of the young people." Instead he said, "Go into all nations and make disciples of all people." (Matthew 28)

- We have never had an OAM before. Why start one now?

Well, in the 1950s and 1960s, congregations debated whether to hire a youth ministry specialist. Many at the time did not think the youth needed a specialist because they, like everyone else in the congregation, did have a pastor. This debate began because of the Boomer Generation, the big bulge in US demographics, were at that time preteens or teenagers. Many churches today have a youth ministry specialist and program. Now, however, the Boomers are turning 65 at the rate of 10,000 per day. https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2019/12/by-2030-all-baby-boomers-will-be-age-65-or-older.html Perhaps it is time that the Church discovered the need for OAMs, just like it discovered youth ministry years ago.

- Older people, many of whom have been long-term members of the congregation, are the backbone of the congregation already. There are already many ministries focused upon all the adults within the congregation. They do not need a specialized ministry.



And yet, recall previous chapters that describe some of the distinctive characteristics and needs of older adults. Older adulthood is vastly different from middle age. The challenges of life experienced by older adults are unique and provide an opportunity for a congregation that is person-centered and which desires to help people grow in God. Many older adults are the first to say that they do not need a special OAM, not because they don't have unique needs, but because they also have bought into the fallacy that youth are the future of the church.

A friend of mine was a parish pastor who decided to be my successor as chaplain of a long-term care community. One Sunday, after worship, a member of her former congregation asked, "Whom do you prefer to be in ministry, a multi-generational congregation or older adults." My friend was quick to answer, "Older adults. They ask better questions."

- Older adults do not want an OAM because they do not what to be labeled as being older, and thus, by cultural definition, less capable and less worthy of time and consideration.

> Doesn't this attitude provide the most important reason for a congregational OAM? If one segment of the congregation believes it is less important than others, isn't it the purpose of the congregation to ensure that all persons explore the grace of God that comes to them during all periods of their lives?

The fourteen statements discussed below are listed on Appendix D (Evaluating Infrastructure). They have been gleaned from congregations who have an effective OAM, and they have shared their opinions as to why they have been successful. I would suggest that every member of the planning team read the descriptions below and complete the form in Appendix D before the next meeting so that there is enough time for a significant conversation. Encourage members to be honest with their opinions so that the result is honest and useful. No matter what organizational structure and ability might be, no congregation is terrible at all the characteristics, just like no congregation is totally competent about all the attributes.

14 Characteristics of Effective OAMs

1. Our program is intentional, planned, focused and useful

Your planning committee should be coming along quite well towards being "excellent" regarding these characteristics since this has been the focus of this entire manual. Think about what you have learned to date. How helpful has it been to expand your thoughts and readiness to plan programming for your OAM? What, besides actual programming options, still needs to be decided upon or learned? (You will be considering programming options in the next chapter).

Has there been consensus on your planning committee as to who the elderly are within your congregation, what you wish to accomplish, and what the congregation is already doing for and with older adults in your community? What is needed to gain and/or continue further consensus? How are you working as a group?

It might even be true that your planning group is further along in their understanding of what makes corporate ministry work within your faith

community than any other committee, even your board of directors/vestry/congregation council. What groups within the congregation with whom you need to collaborate or report to as you continue your planning? How would you rate your planning group in its inclusion of other important decision-makers within the congregation as to your progress and decisions?

2. Our program has a sense of rootedness

Effective ministry development is evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Effective ministry development takes present realities and past experiences into account. An effective part of the OAM in one congregation in southern California was drama. A great portion of the congregation, most of whom were older adults, participated in producing three plays each year for the congregation and the community. They were very sophisticated in what they did; making creative use of the small space that was available to them, and they intentionally used drama 'rookies' in their casts rather than the same people all the time. I marveled at the effectiveness of their ministry: Challenging and thoughtful themes; intergenerational contact and use of skills; time for reflection and even worship (they had devotions prior to all rehearsals). But they also had a member who had been a director of small films in his younger years. Their sophistication began with simple ten-minute dramas produced to enhance worship. Their forty members worked as cast, construction, and 'behind-the- scenes' crew; they began fifteen years before with only five members. They did not begin with a production of "The Sound of Music" but rather the ministry evolved so that 15 years later "The Sound of Music" filled the church sanctuary.

New ministries should be an expansion of what is already familiar to the congregation. New ministries become controversial when they challenge people with experiences that are unfamiliar. If your choir has a tradition of having devotions before rehearsal, OAM planning might include providing devotional themes and materials that engage older adult issues. If your choir has not traditionally had devotions prior to their rehearsal, proposing a change could easily be met with resistance. In other words, be willing to start small.

If your congregation has had a history of providing adult forums, a rooted plan

for an OAM could include having presenters from a local hospice to talk about end of life issues, or someone from a local caregiver association speaking to the caregivers of the congregation. A tradition of Sunday Morning Adult Forums could spawn a series of Tuesday Morning events that might be well-received.

How would you evaluate your congregation or planning group in fulfilling this characteristic? Healthy congregations and programs are in a constant state of change. It is called growth. But has the change come through evolution or revolution? Has change been a continuation and/or expansion of what has been, or has the change come "out-of-the-blue" as if from Mars?

3. Our program intentionally addresses the spiritual needs of the people whom we serve

Last, but far from least, one of the characteristics of effective OAMs is the intentional engaging of the spirituality of OAM participants. This theme is the thread throughout this manual. If your OAM does all sorts of educational and supportive events but does not address the spiritual nature of aging itself, why are you providing an OAM within your congregation? Again, Jesus did not say, 'Go into all the world and be good social workers." He said, "Go into all the world and make disciples." Providing what might be described as good social work services is fine for faith communities to offer. Yet their *essential* role is that of spiritual developer. When planning EVERY OAM program, the essential question is: "How will this ministry assist people in deepening their relationship with God?"

4. Our program is based on demonstrated needs

Any planning committee can offer those programs that they would enjoy. For example, being on the committee that develops the menu for the annual congregational retreat ensures that you will eat everything that is offered on the retreat. But while the needs and perspectives and beliefs of the planning committee are essential, final decisions made by the committee regarding programming such as what Bibles passages are to be studied or the themes of worship, must come from demonstrated needs, not personal beliefs.

Demonstrated needs can be recognizing a segment of older adults who are being

underserved in the first place. Would in be helpful if a demonstrated need discovered within the OAM planning team was then shared with a different congregational group to evaluate the OAM team's perception. A need can be demonstrated through the results of a congregational survey (though be careful of this one unless you have someone on the committee who can develop a survey that evokes actual needs rather than confirming the prejudices of the person writing the survey document). Needs are also revealed through a deeper understanding of gerontology (the academic study of older adults as a whole). Whatever method a planning committee uses, its essential role is to plan that which is useful to the congregation, not just to the members of the planning committee.

While it is critical not to impose the thoughts your OAM planning committee on any other committee in your faith community, but are other committees considering issues that surround older adults? When the church council/vestry/board of directors considers future goals of your faith community, do they have the needs of older adults in their minds in addition to th other opportunities for ministry? Could the education committee consider older adults as they plan for the next round of adult education courses? Are the needs of older adults being respected as the worship committee meets? Are older adults thought of when the property committee considers physical changes to the building? Be careful not to 'step on toes' but some quiet conversation between a OAM planning committee member and the chair of such committees could produce important results for OAM.

5. Our program is enhanced by good record keeping and accountability

There are many congregations who have saved every Sunday bulletin for the entire 85 years of their existence. I believe that they have taken the value of 'good record keeping' a little too far! At the same time, there are committees that make decisions without any record of the decision being made, why the decision was made, what the outcome desired by the decision was, who is responsible for implementing the decision and when, and finally, by whom and when was an evaluation of that decision going to be made. Thus, there is no record for those who serve on future OAM planning committees. With no records every membership turn-over must fend for themselves rather than having the experience of prior members

Is the number of persons attending an event important? Does it depend on the purpose of the event? A Bible study can be valuable even if only three attends. A bus trip to the city might be possible a second time only if this first one was self-supporting. The number of attendees can be a statement that a specific program option is succeeding or dying a slow death, evoking additional questions, exploration, and planning.

Records are important. Numbers can be revealing and helpful. Being accountable to a responsible group such as congregation or council or vestry or cabinet is critical. Just ensure that the information recorded is valuable for future planning and evaluation, and not just recording for its own sake.

6. Our program has identifiable leadership

The number one characteristic expressed by successful OAMs is identifiable leadership. Leaders must be persons who are trusted by the congregation to act on its behalf. Identifiable leadership allows for clear communication as to who is in charge and to whom I can go for more information. Identifiable leadership can be critical for persons who are considering attending one or more of the programs that your OAM offers. Is your those who are exploring this book going to continue to be the leaders, at least for one year? If not, who is going to implement the plans that will be developed? Is the leadership of your committee reflective of the older adults within your congregation? Persons younger than 45 years old can be effective leaders of an OAM. But I believe that most of the committee and the leaders should be older adults themselves.

7. Our program has leaders trained in gerontology

This is an important one. Many persons believe that they can plan an OAM because they are older adults, or they like older adults. While this might be true on one level, it certainly does not go far enough. I was a parish pastor for over 27 years before I was called to chaplaincy within a retirement community. During those 27 years, I thought I knew what my older adult members were thinking and needed because I spoke with them, I had visited

their homes, and often heard their fears when they were in the hospital. And yet, when I entered the specialized ministry of long-term care chaplaincy, I discovered an entire world of which I was unaware. While I had sensed that older adults took prayer more seriously than younger persons, I had no idea that what I had observed were people confronted with the challenges of aging that revealed their humanity in ways that they could no longer deny. Until I read books such as Kathleen Fisher's "Winter Grace" or James Miller's "Autumn Wisdom," I had no idea as to the depth of inner dialogue that was happening within older adults. I discovered was that while my personal perceptions were true on some level, they were not as complete or as valuable as when those perceptions were sharpened by an intentional study of gerontology.

Does your planning group or congregation have a person or persons who are familiar with literature regarding older adults? Reading several of the books listed in the bibliographies of this book can be helpful. If not, are there any plans to help one or more persons (or your entire committee?) to intentionally explore the older adulthood from a perspective beyond their own?

Are there courses on spirituality and aging in your area or on the internet? If you are interested, you might search for the New Theological Seminary of the West (NTSWest.org) who are collaborating with a local coalition to provide four online master's level, courses in Spirituality and Aging. This course of study is open to everyone, not just to clergy. The seminary awards a certificate upon completion.

Are there congregations in your area who have had experience providing an OAM with whom you can consult? Many have specific ministries that could be considered so why not utilize their expertise and experience.

Your pastor (spiritual leader) or a member of your OAM committee can join an organization such as the American Society on Aging and aligning with ASA's Forum for Religion, Spirituality and Aging (FoRSA). FoRSA will provide access to newsletters as well as people who have studied older adults for years. Contact your regional faith community leadership (presbytery, diocese, synod, district, cluster) and ask if they know of opportunities to learn more about the needs, strengths, and challenges of older adults and OAMs.

8. Our program has the support of the church council

How connected is your committee with the group to whom they are to report? Often this is the group that initiated and/or authorized your planning committee to form in the first place. Has the planning committee been consistently reporting to this body? If not, you might find yourselves in the position of having done a lot of work only to discover resistance from that "higher body" because they have not heard of the reasons for your thinking, and thus doesn't understand the decisions that you have made.

9. Our program communicates well with the congregation

If the connection between your committee and the "higher body" is important, the connection between you and the rest of the congregation is even a higher priority. You have had an extended time to think about and consider the implications of developing an OAM within your congregation. Could it be that others need the same amount of time before they will fully support a ministry "that we have never done before?"

How can you communicate with the congregation? Brief 5-minute verbal updates at Sunday worship could be effective. Developing occasional bulletin inserts could also be helpful. What about articles in the congregational newsletter? What about a series of special emails to all older adults who are online? Have you considered raising issues being explored within your planning committee to others during the fellowship time following Worship? What about hosting some "focus groups" where the ideas and thoughts evolving within the committee are shared with small groups of older adults, seeking their comments and suggestions? During this time of the computer, gather the email addresses of as many older adults as possible so that an "eblast" surveys or announcements regarding coming events can be directly sent to them.

Also, why not develop a Facebook Page. Similar to a website, a Facebook Page allows persons but within and outside your congregation to receive news about your OAM, register for events, take surveys, and even respond to the information provided. (See Chapter Fourteen: OAM and Covid 19).

If you are not communicating with your congregation you might be heading for trouble when you want support for what you develop.

10. Our program communicates well with the community

This characteristic might not be critical in the planning phase, unless you wish to organize focus groups of non-members, but it will be critical in the future, especially if you would like persons from the community (potential members?) to participate within your OAM. The ministry opportunities of most faith communities are often the best kept secret in town. Important educational and experiential events take place without anyone outside your faith community knowing of their existence. The social worker from the local hospice speaking on the stages of grief would be of help to members and non-members alike. The caregiver support group that you may organize could be vital to your neighbor as well as yourself. The lives of all older adults can be enhanced by community building events. But communicating with the community at large is probably the most difficult task of any organization within your congregation.

It is a challenge to find ways to reach out to non-members if do not receive your newsletters, etc. Of course, the best method of communicating to non-members is person-to-person contact, the invitation of one friend is more effective than a thousand newsletters or signs on the lawn. E-newsletters sent to both non-members and members alike is cost effective.

Why not sponsor a booth at a community event or even a farmer's market that not only shares information about your OAM but also gently asks for email addresses of interested parties?

What about a website? Your congregation should have one. If they do, ask permission to sponsor a page on your congregation's site. If the congregation does not have one, is it possible for your OAM committee to develop one. It is not too hard to accomplish. Search the internet for "Create Website for Free". Your faith community might already discovered this, but a congregation that I have attended has discontinued all print advertising, including the traditional phone directory, in favor of web-based communication. Before that change,

over 95% of first-time visitors learned of their worship and congregational activities via the website. By the way, the number of older adults who are online is growing fast. While those over 85 years may or may not be interested in computers, those under 85 are embracing the technology in increasing numbers.

What about asking a person in your faith community who is not a member to be on your planning group to be your webmaster? Young people would be interested to use their skills, especially if a small honorarium were offered.

Many congregational members already attend events at a local Senior Center. Your OAM adds spirituality that can enhance the services that persons receive from their center. Would the manager of your local Senior Center allow posters advertising special events at your OAM?

11. Our program is supported by a strong physical infrastructure.

Evaluating infrastructure is the topic of this entire exercise because the more people who know about and are involved in program planning and/or implementation the better. The more "6s or 7s" that you have as you complete "Creating an Effective OAM" the better. As plans develop, could your congregational education committee help with ideas about presenters or even topics? As your OAM takes shape, how can the worship committee enhance the goals that you make for the ministry?

12. Our program has adequate financial and volunteer support

It does not take much money to develop or sustain an effective OAM because the most effective OAMs promote deeper relationships with God and with each other. But it is helpful to have a congregational budget line for OAMs that could ensure that the Valentine's Dinner would happen even if it ended with a deficit. While most local agencies relating to older adults are willing to present without charge (they are just happy to share information with a group of older adults), it is nice to have some money to provide an occasional honorarium or travel expenses for those professionals who come to help out. While most older adults can afford to buy the book for a study group, it does communicate a strong interest in the needs of older adults to sometimes have the books provided. Since

transportation is always a problem, what about a 12-passenger bus, and if you have the money, equipped with a wheelchair lift.

By far, the greatest need for an OAM is not money, but volunteers. To volunteer for anything can be invaluable for older adults to have meaning in their life so do not be afraid to ask. In addition, to volunteer for an event in an OAM provides the volunteer with the same educational, inspirational, spiritual growing experience as anyone else. Older adults are stronger and healthier than just a generation ago. To use their experience and knowledge is critical for them and great for your ministry. (See more on volunteerism in(Chapter Seven: Nurturing the Spirit, Opportunities to Serve)

13. Our program is blessed with community ties

The congregation is not the only organization in your community which is focused on assisting elders in their later years. It can be very productive to contact some of these organizations, become aware of their offerings, and even invite them to share their efforts within your OAM. For example, every county in the United States has what is called a "Triple A," the Area Agency on Aging. While the Triple A might have a different title in each county, one can usually access that organization via the internet by searching for "county government," and calling any phone number listed that has anything to do with aging. One of them is bound to be the correct one. The Triple A is the organization through which all the Older Americans Act money is funneled. Those programs include nutrition sites, ombudsman services, senior services, and caregiving support services. Perhaps your congregation has the kitchen that could support an area nutrition site. Perhaps one of their programs could fund/resource a part of your OAM.

Your local senior center is an ally, not a competitor. The senior center might have the funds to do some OA programming that you are not able to do (e.g. bus trips to local site-of-interest). If you cannot provide a service, why not advertise what is available at the Senior Center. Remember, your congregation, if it has the will and the resources, can duplicate anything that the local senior center does. The only difference is that your faith community can overtly address that all-important spiritual side of aging, while the senior center will probably steer clear of any involvement with spirituality or religion because of the separation of

church and state.

But there are other organizations:

- The Alzheimer's Association may provide free educational events within your OAM. They also will have a network of Caregiver Support Groups and might be interested in starting one at your location with no cost to your OAM. www.alz.org gets you connected.

- The Braille Institute provides services to the blind and those with visual challenges. Again, they can be a valuable resource for participants in your OAM. In California, they are willing to make a home visit to make suggestions that make the home safer and more useable by a sight-impaired person.

There might be physicians or nurse-practitioners in your area who might be willing to provide educational events regarding heart disease, cancer, or other physical challenges of aging. Check with your local hospital as to their speaker bureau services. A local not-for-profit caregiving service might provide information to the caregivers in your OAM. Community contacts can be critical in program development and support. Networking with them is worth the time and effort.

14. Our program is based on neighborliness and inter-congregational cooperation

Many congregations operate like islands unto themselves. Cooperation between congregations is often limited with each fearing the other will steal members. Inter-congregational cooperation could allow a small OAM to provide programming that normally can only be provided by larger organizations. What if your OAM has three members interested in attending a retreat on "Aging as a Spiritual Journey?" Three participants might not be enough. But if a second congregation in the area has four and a third congregation has two, and a fourth congregation has six, suddenly there is a group of fifteen, more than enough for a retreat to be programmatically and financially successful.

"Neighborliness" can go a long way towards increasing interest in your OAM and/or your faith community in general (remember what I said about seeking new members within the elderly in the community?). Why not have a "coffee"

and give a face-to-face invitation for coffee and conversation to all older adults in a one-block radius from your church or even a home of one of your members? Have you thought of inviting several neighbors to attend a focus group for 90 minutes on an afternoon where your leadership shares some of the visions for OAM and receive feedback from the focus group?

The Task at Hand

Now complete "Evaluation Infrastructure" (Appendix D). Choose the number between one and ten that best expresses your overall evaluation of how your congregation measures up to each characteristic, #1 being "Not Yet" (we are lousy at this right now) while #10 means "Doing it Well" (you are excellent fulfilling this characteristic). Be sure to express why you choose your number for each characteristic. Be as specific and as honest as possible. Then ask yourself, "What suggestions might I have for improving this characteristic within our OAM?" When you share what you have written with the rest of the group you might find your "why" and "suggestion" comments more valuable in the planning process than the exact number, one through seven, that you gave each characteristic.

Once the discussion is complete and some form of consensus has been formed, consider one or more characteristics of effective OAMs to improve upon over the next year. What characteristics need to be addressed immediately? Which ones could wait a while? Strategize as a group regarding the characteristics needing the most urgent attention.

I have said it before, but this is worthy of repeating: No congregation is totally devoid of these characteristics. No congregation has all 1's, 2's or 3's. or all 8's, 9's or 10's. I challenge you to provide a more considered evaluation of your readiness. You will find that this challenge will be helpful when you meet with the organizing committee.

Remember, each congregation has more resources for OAM ministry than might be obvious. Perhaps there are some nurses who might be willing to establish health screenings at OAM events and/or provide support to the frail. Often an older adult is not sure if they should 'bother' their doctor because of some physical concern. Sometimes older adults need someone to go with them to a physician appointment who knows the questions to ask and can remember more clearly the answers.

A retired teacher with strong skills might be encouraged to lead a class on an important topic.

Members who have connections with community organizations might find persons able and ready to provide needed OAM services or events.

Communities which have, or perhaps need, a strong prayer ministry can meet the spiritual needs of not only older adults but others within the congregation.

A local nursery might be willing to allow staff to assist OAM members regarding their gardens. What are the personal resources of your membership?

God provides leaders for ministry within a fellowship of faith. Perhaps gathering such information might provide insight into the direction that God wants your OAM to move.

Now on to choosing the seed: Providing effective programs.

Chapter Four
Choosing the Seed
Providing Effective Programming

To be successful, an Older Adult Ministry needs to be

1) focused,
2) intentional,
3) sustainable and
4) effective

This chapter explores making our OAM **effective.**

Once the planning for the garden is completed, once those who will benefit from the garden have been chosen, once the overall goal of the garden is known, it is time to choose what will be planted. The core purpose of this garden is for something to grow inside those who partake of this garden: spiritual development and growth. So there needs to be a variety of vegetables that will nurture the body (the soul?) effectively. People are different, with their own likes and dislikes. They might need a specific vegetable for healing of a wound or each might need a group of vegetables to provide them strength to withstand the storms of life. Different people mean different needs, if the entire body (their spiritual selves) will be healthy

At the same time, consideration should be given to the resources that the garden will need: Who will do the planting, who will do the tending, the weeding, the watering, and who will gather the harvest. All these tasks challenge the committee to develop an OAM that is useful to those whom the Spirit has guided into their midst.

Older Adult Ministry is more than a potluck and a Bible study. Do not get me wrong. If your congregation provides time for older adults to gather and explore the Scriptures, that is fantastic. Your congregation is probably doing more to reach out to older adults than most. You are to be commended.

But the needs of older adults extend far beyond those that can be addressed by basic ministries, good as they are. For nine years I was a youth minister between the ages of 34 to 43! I found that ministry exciting and challenging. And yet, when compared with ministering with older adults, youth ministry was quite simple. Young people are more homogeneous, growing to young adulthood from a time when their hormones were so new that they did not have the words to describe what they were experiencing. At the end of their youth they were burgeoning young adults, looking for their place in the sun. In one way or another, almost all youth struggled with identity, were driven by a need to be acceptable and accepted, had their entire lives ahead of them but often didn't have a clue what would fill those days yet-to-be. Youth are quite different individually, but in the greater scope, they all had the same basic needs and goals.

The lives and experiences of older adults are more varied. Instead of looking at a future that is yet to be they can look at a past that has sculpted them into who they are today. Victor Frankl, the psychiatrist who was a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, described older adults as having the "rich granaries of the past," what has *been* rather that what *might be*. He also suggested that people do not just have memories; they *are* their memories. There are more things that have happened in our lives that we do not remember. However, that which we remember are vital to our life. Memories give our lives meaning. Memories such as how it was within our family-of-origin, or whom we have loved or refused to love, shape our focus, ourselves. And since each older adult has had many more important events in their lives than young people, they are more complex than are youth, more multifaceted than stereotypes describe.

So, what does an OAM look like programmatically? It certainly cannot be a "one size fits all" endeavor. What congregation has the resources and the skills to execute a ministry that is fashioned to the spiritual needs of each person? Thus, a useful OAM needs nuance, texture, and diversity to be able address the myriad of issues that haunt many an elder.

If an older adult ministry is not useful to the intended target audience, it is of no consequence. All that is required to create a useful OAM program is a sense of openness to new ideas and possibilities. All that is required is to keep phrases

like “that won’t work,” or “we have never done it that way before” out of our vocabulary. Seeking “usefulness” challenges leadership team members to look beyond their own interests and discern the interests and needs of those who are not at the planning table. Sometimes a useful program can only be gained by trial and error, since OAM is new to most of not all congregations, no one knows exactly how to do it.

Planting the seeds that produce what is needed.

It might seem as though we have already answered this question. In Chapter One (finding a good location for the garden) we identified four categories of older adults: Active, Frail, Transitional, and Caregivers. In doing so we really began to identify needs, at least those needs that seem to be logical and self-evident.

In Chapter Two (planning the garden) we talked about the value of a mission statement, not only for guidance in preparing new programing, but to assess and evaluate what has been done so that everything is focused on spiritual growth and formation.

But what are the needs of the individual person? Elizabeth McKinlay suggests that there are four spiritual needs. Below is a chart illustrating these spiritual needs as well as their interactions. Through her research she had identified that older adults need to

1. Transcend Loss and Disabilities,
2. Find Final Meanings,
3. Find Intimacy with God and others,
4. Find hope

Note how these needs interact with each other as they all interface with the individual’s core beliefs, their ultimate meaning, their spirituality. (Figure 1.) The conglomerate of these four spiritual needs give form, substance, character and structure to all behaviors, emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and values. These four needs are what drives us all, but especially older adults.

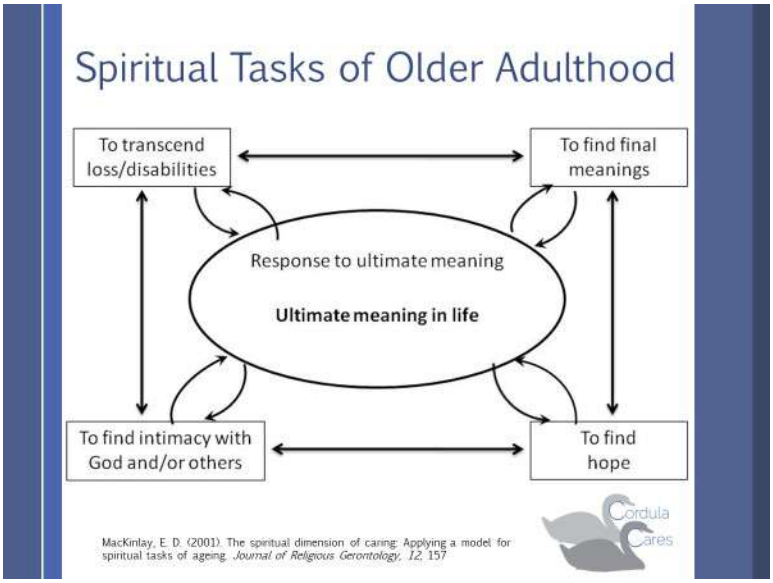


Figure 1.

Intimacy with God and/or others. Intimacy is the challenge of the Scriptures. Jesus came to foster relationship, to point to relationship, to experience relationship. Relationship is what God has always sought as the Lord led the people of Israel through the sea, as the promised land was given, through kings and even in the message of the prophets. It certainly is the core of the teachings of Jesus as he continually sought to point people to the Kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33; Matthew 19:14; Mark 1:15; Luke 10:9). I believe that intimacy, a close relationship with God and one another, is a core need of human beings. The experience of infants flourishing in Neo-Natal ICUs when they are held or even touched by a human hand. The experience of persons wanting their intimate friends and family to share in the most personal experience of life…death. These experiences testify to the power and essential need for intimacy in life, even if that intimacy comes from an abusive relationship.

Transcending loss or disability. No one likes to feel vulnerable. No one likes to be out of control. No one looks for suffering in life. No one wants to become aware that they are powerless. And yet life, particularly aging, evokes feelings and experiences that pierce the soul. It has been said that a person is growing old when the phone numbers of physicians out-number friends in one's address book. As the years fly by, the number of doctor visits increase, the strength of

one's body decreases, and the loss of support systems challenge one's ability to cope. Thus, the need to transcend, to see something beyond the pain, beyond the depression, to be able to reprioritize what is important in life and thus look beyond what is immediate. Transcendence is to face of life-as-we-have-always-experienced-it. Transcendence, believing and living the truth that there is something beyond the suffering that we all share as human beings, is critical to well-being for all people, but especially for those who are older and losing more of their vitality. (for more about the experience of transcendence in aging search for "Gerotranscendence" on your computer and look for articles written by Lars Tornstam such as https://shieldmysenior.com/gerotranscendence/ or https://www.atpweb.org/jtparchive/trps-43-11-02-166.pdf)

To find final meaning. Meaning and purpose are needed for successful living. To be devoid of meaning is to sink into depression and even despair. The psychiatrist, Irwin Yalom, noted that the need to find hope in a hopeless world is one of the four unanswerable questions of life. (Yalom 1980) No one can bring meaning to another. They can share what brings meaning to their life; they can even wish that they could give meaning, and yet only the person themselves can decide whether a specific event or attitude brings them meaning. For example, I find meaning in writing this book, but this might not float anyone else's boat because they find meaning in playing golf (I am a terrible golfer so no meaning there for me.) I love classical music, but my children love country western. Thus, there is a critical need to offer many possibilities might bring meaning to others. Even a single person gains meaning in different things at different times in their lives. At one point I find meaning in my career. There are other times that I find meaning in playing with the grandchildren. Thus, meaning can be a moving target.

To discover hope. Hope looks forward not backward. Hope focuses on what can be rather than what is. In our spiritual lives, hope can be found in the promises of God. Yet sometimes life can seem hopeless. Sometimes loss, disabilities, pain can seem forever, and sometimes they can be chronic, recurring. Without hope life is meaningless. Without hope life is void, impenetrable, dark. Hope continues to search for the pinpoint of life and the end of the dark tunnel of life experiences, even when everything is black. Hope is given by Scripture (Psalms 9:18; Jeremiah 29:11; Mark 9:23). Hope can erupt though song ("One Love"

Bob Marley; "Imagine" John Lennon; "We are the World" Michael Jackson). Hope can appear via a word of concern amidst confusion, and confidence amid depression. Without hope few people can live abundantly.

Ultimate Meaning Spirituality. The interplay between these four spiritual needs are what results in our Ultimate Meaning or Spirituality note the arrows that connect one spiritual need to all the others. Our spiritual needs are interconnected and influence each other. Academically we can talk about each spiritual need individually, but in life they cannot be separated. One affects the other either by strengthening or weakening. My pie chart on page 13 in the Introduction describes the domains of life forming a person's spirituality, one's core belief. Here McKinlay calls the center of her chart *ultimate meaning*, the core of one's life, that which gives life focus and direction.

Ultimate meaning is one's spirituality, the sum of all the formative events in one's life to date. As a person experiences more in life, this Ultimate Meaning is shaped. Our Ultimate Meaning at age 15 is different when we are age 85. Thus, the goal of any OAM is to enhance and enrich a person's core beliefs, their ultimate meaning. And the pathway of that enhancement and enrichment is the four spiritual needs. And though those four spiritual needs, one engages the deeper, often unspoken, perhaps unseen, maybe untouchable ultimate meaning of life.

Planting Seeds That Grow Well

One method of program planning is to "unpack" older adult ministry into several parts or program areas. These are pathways for addressing the four spiritual needs of the person, and addressing these needs affects their ultimate meaning. In the past, I suggested five such categories. Pastor Bill Herder, spiritual advisor to the OAM of Ascension Lutheran Church, Thousand Oaks, has suggested a sixth: An older adult's view of finance and stewardship. (see more insights from Pastor Herder in Chapter Fifteen)

1. Spiritual Formation
2. Life-long Learning
3. Opportunities to Serve
4. Opportunities to be Served
5. Community Building

6. Finance and Stewardship

Figure 2 below is an attempt to visualize this dynamic

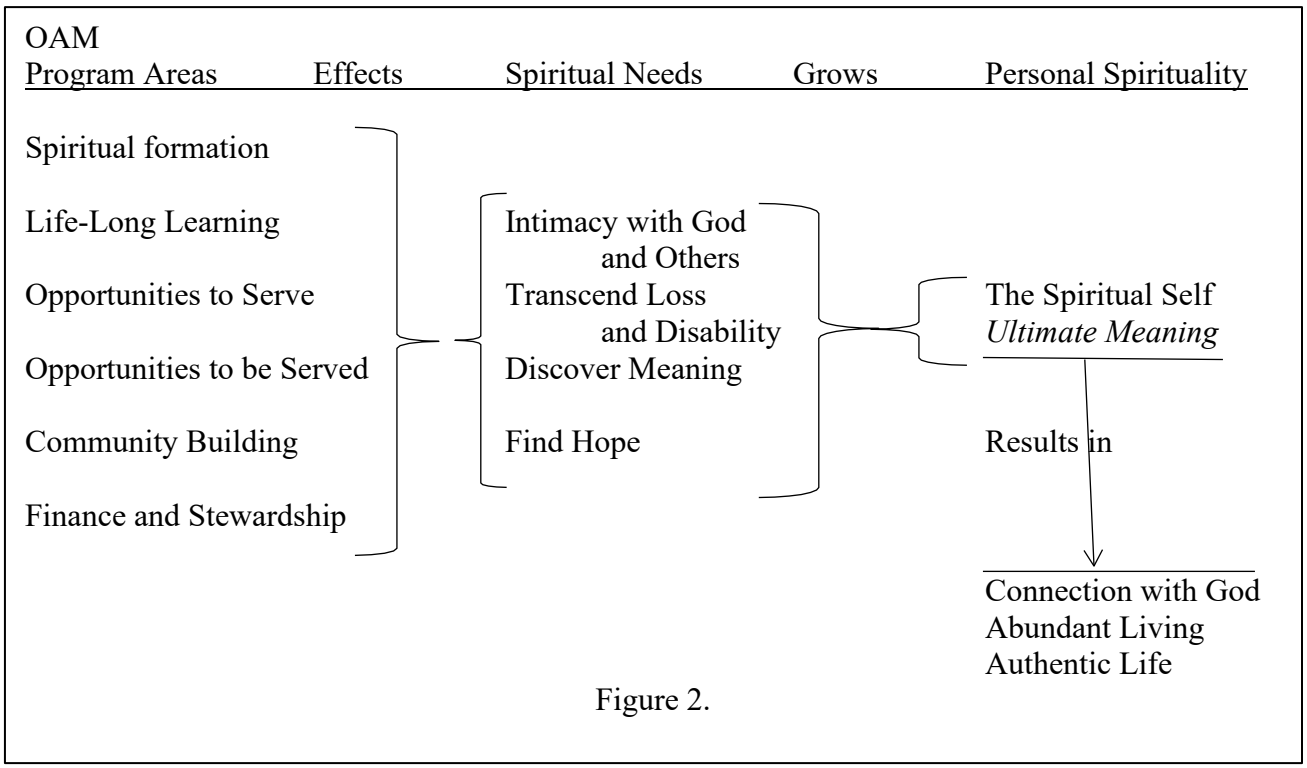


Figure 2.

In Figure 2, it is important to note that the goal of life is abundant living or personal authenticity, which I hope was expressed in your Mission Statement of Chapter Two. The six program areas address spiritual needs and thus further sculpt the four expressions of the Spiritual Self (Ultimate Meaning). This Spiritual self leads to the true person as God made all persons, but here older adults, to be. This chart seems to suggest that what God wants us to be is what we want to be. The problem is that we often have our own opinions as to who we are and who we are to be, rather than, being powerless, listen to Someone who knows us better than we know ourselves.

Somewhere I heard an old rabbinic proverb that states, "When you get to heaven God will not ask you why you were not like other people. Instead God will ask, Why, were you not you?" The encouragement towards the true self and thus abundant living is the goal of an effective OAM.

We now turn to each of the six program areas, exploring how each might address

spiritual needs and then giving concrete programmatic possibilities that hopefully with stir your own creativity and imagination.

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Chapter Five
Planting the Seed
Spiritual Formation and Growth

Finally, after choosing the seed, they are now planted. As we have noted in Chapter Four, we need different types of seed so that the vegetables raised fit of the distinctions of those who will do the eating. In the next six chapters we will be considering different types of seeds. Each have special characteristics and have different purposes. But all of them are needed to be consumed so that each eater will become a healthy person engaged in life.

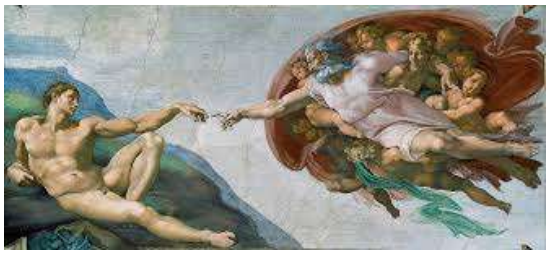
We note again that throughout our lives, as we have engaged the ups and downs that is life, our spiritual selves have been being formed. Every event in life, those outwardly religious and those that are a part of the so-called secular world, sculpts our spiritual selves, forming the self, fashioning the self, into who we are today. The following chapter seeks to expand our understanding and provide concrete strategies for spiritual formation and growth, a continual theme of this book.

It has only been recently that the term "Spirituality" has been used to describe people. Many persons, even those who are churched and describe themselves as religious have no idea what spirituality is. To some, spirituality is in the realm of metaphysical religion, something like the "wo-wo," ethereal, other worldly religious experience. But the word spirituality has been with us a long time beginning with Christian mystics in the 4th Century CE. As Ray Mattes writes in my previous book, *Ministering to Older Adults: The Building Blocks*,

> "The best way to define spirituality is to state what it is not. Spirituality is not a given doctrine, a belief system, or a set of rituals. Spirituality is not about correct or incorrect answers, structured approaches to prayer or even holiness. Spirituality is about questions, searching, discerning, meaning making and transcending. Spirituality is the essential element of who we are as human beings. Spirituality is that component of our humanness that draws us and pulls us out of ourselves in the recognition that there is something that is beyond us. Spirituality is that force which motivates and propels us forward whether we consciously realize it or

> not. It becomes the process of making meaning out of one's lived experiences, thus enabling a person to have a greater awareness of the gifts one's live has bestowed, the values that one holds." (Ray Mattes in Koepke 2009, *Ministering to and with Older Adults, p 58-59).*

Mattes wrote these words for a more general audience. To those who are Christian, spirituality is when we discover/decide that there is not only something beyond us, bigger that we are, whom we call God, the One made visible in Jesus of Nazareth.



Right from the first, we discover that we are not master of the universe, we are not the one who knows, and thus are not the person to whom everyone else should listen. We are challenged to realize that God is in control of those things that we have always thought that we could, should, even must control. We are powerless where God is powerful. God is knowing when we are confused. God knows the way even when we are directionless. These insights into God and our essential human condition are sides to the same coin. While you can believe in one without the other it is to your peril to do so. And it is the experience of this realistic way of life that give rise to real spirituality. It is this reality that older adults experience as they confront the challenges of aging. Mattes suggests that there are three facets of spiritual formation.

Discovering

A wonderful colleague of mine, Jane Thibault, once wrote on the subject, "Aging is a Natural Monastery." (Thibault in Aging and Spirituality). Now what does a person have to do to enter a monastery or cloister?

- Give up your stuff that has been important to you for a long time.
- Begin a communal life with persons who are initially strangers.
- Live in smaller accommodations, eat in a group at a time set by someone else, live by several rules that they did not write, and have a single person who is not you who is the "boss" of the facility.

Well, it sounds like a person who is aging to me. The person might be living independently in a retirement community or needing physical assistance and home, but Thibault's description rings true. Thus as we noted in the

introduction, the process of aging evokes spiritual questions as older adults find themselves evaluating their lives, confronting limitations that challenge one's independence, and generally become aware that "they are not as young as they used to be." Previous ways of doing do not work anymore. Friends are dying or moving away, promoting a sense of isolation and grief. Older adults can have a crisis of faith as seen in the lament: "Why hasn't God taken me? I can't do anything anymore."

Many older adults retreat into themselves due to the onslaught of the ever-increasing frailty brought upon by aging. Many only look to the physiological or the psychological or to the sociological to gain meaning. Being older can often be seen having fun, doing activities that one likes to find some sort of fulfillment and meaning to their lives. But when these activities do not do the job. When an active life is no longer possible or meaningful, older adults view of self and their worth can collapse. Yet all the vicissitudes of aging can be transcended only when they have the courage and the resiliency to look for something more.

While other faith traditions might have other words to express the needed transcendence, Christians see themselves as resurrection people. They live within a two-sided reality of cross and resurrection, life coming out of death, new opportunities springing up from despair, fresh perspectives coming out of fear. Christians we stand Paul, author of most of the New Testament, who wrote, "So we do not lose heart. While our outer nature is wasting away our inner nature is being renewed day by day." (Second Corinthians 4:16). At their best, Christians are people who faithfully search for the light at the end of the tunnel even when all seems black. That power to transcend what is happening now is ours because they have seen a transformation happen as the Crucified One became the Resurrected One.

Transformation forms the bedrock of our lives, even if we do not totally believe it. There are times when we feel that we must believe or die, either physically or emotionally. Older adults need to be encouraged not just to look at their life for what it is, but to look deeper into their soul, their core, for there is much in life that distracts us and challenges our belief that for every no there is a yes.

And thus, one of the categories of seed in an OAM, the programs, events, offerings, is Spiritual Formation and Growth, where older adults have the chance to share doubts, to express fears, be encouraged to search beyond the familiar, experience something greater that their past, to question and even embrace new thoughts . Any program idea that aids older adults to find the courage to ask the big questions in life is good. Now that I am older, now that I can stand at the twilight of my life and see what has formed me to be me, now that I realize that I am powerless over life, who am I? Has my life been worth the living? Is old age the end of life or only a new chapter, a fresh perspective? These are spiritual questions. These are the essential questions if we be willing to intentionally explore them.

Transformation begins with discovery, an "aha" experience that invades with a fresh perspective on what might be an old thought or idea. Below are some verses from the Christian Bible that describe this transformation.

John 3:5-7 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I say to you, 'You must be born from above.'"

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

Ezekiel 36:26-27 A new heart I will give you and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you follow my statues and be careful to observe my ordinances.

Habakkuk 1:5: Look at the nations and watch— and be utterly amazed. For I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe, even if you were told.

Qur'an, 13:27-28 Say (O Muhammad) Truly, Allah leaves to stray

whom He will (as a result of their choice to go astray). Still, He guides to Himself those who turn to Him in repentance, those who believe, and whose hearts find satisfaction in the remembrance of Allah, for without doubt in the recollection of Allah do hearts find rest.

Thoughts from Buddhism

1. Determined to obtain the greatest possible benefit
From all sentient beings,
Who are more precious than a wish-fulfilling jewel,
I shall hold them most dear at all times.

2. When in the company of others,
I shall always consider myself the lowest of all,
And from the depths of my heart
Hold others dear and supreme.

3. Vigilant, the moment a delusion appears in my mind,
Endangering myself and others,
I shall confront and avert it
Without delay.

4. Whenever I see beings who are wicked in nature
And overwhelmed by violent negative actions and suffering,
I shall hold such rare ones dear,
As if I had found a precious treasure.

5. When, out of envy, others mistreat me
With abuse, insults, or the like,
I shall accept defeat
And offer the victory to others.

6. When someone whom I have benefited
And in whom I have great hopes
Gives me terrible harm,
I shall regard that person as my holy guru.

7. In short, both directly and indirectly,
Do I offer every happiness and benefit to all my mothers.

I shall secretly take upon myself
All their harmful actions and suffering.

8. Undefiled by the stains of the superstitions
Of the eight worldly concerns,
May I, by perceiving all phenomena as illusory,
Be released from the bondage of attachment.

Transformation, and thus growing spiritually, begins with an experience of something more in life, something greater that one's expectations, something beyond that which has guided our past. Spiritual growth, spiritual formation, begins with experience of the new in life, no matter what one's age might be.

Pondering

One of the characteristics of older adults is reminiscing regarding the past. To again quote Ray Mattes:

> "At some point in our life we come to a place within ourselves that allows us the freedom to listen to the stories of lives and ponder the lessons they have to teach us….to ponder one's own story validates one's lived experiences and by affording the opportunity to relive anew the ups and downs, the joys and sorrows as well as the achievements and failures. As a result of this living, one comes to a place of deeper understanding as to what all the seemingly unrelated events of life have meant." (Mattes in Koepke 2009, *Ministering to and with Older Adults*, page 61)

The ability and the opportunity to ponder are among the greatest gifts of aging and an essential step in personal spiritual formation. As noted above, after we have discovered the questions of our lives and perhaps some of the answers, there needs to be a time when we simply ponder, reflect, be silent, and listen.

The Psalms are the Hebrew hymnal that express a down-to-earth faith. Here are just a few of the verses that speaks to pondering.

Psalm 48:9: Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.

Psalm 77:12: I will consider all your works and meditate on all

your mighty deeds."

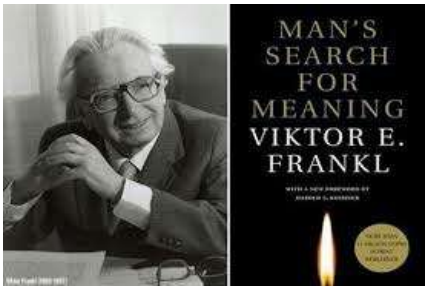
Psalm 119:15: I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.

Psalm 119:97: Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.

Psalm 143:5 I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.

It was Victor Frankl, the survivor of Auschwitz, who suggested that we do not have memories, like memories are things that we possess. No, we do not just have memories; we *are* our memories. We are the *sum of all the memorable events in our lives*, experiences that have been so powerful, so formative, that they are worth remembering, worth being pondered. It is the way that the Spirit of God sculpted us to be who we are today. It is the way that we can 'tease out' the essential truths that can be found in our experiences past and present, thus propelling us to further growth and freedom. We need time to think, to consider, to allow our heart to go where it wants to go. Simply put, we need some silence so we can listen and learn not only from others, but from our experiences, our hopes, our fears, our successes, and our failures. Pondering allows us to understand ourselves. An effective OAM that results in an enriched spirituality provides time for pondering, for quiet, for thinking.

Surrendering



We have been taught throughout our life to trust in what we can experience through the senses: what we can see, hear, touch, taste, and smell. In our world there is a sixth sense, not intuition but proof. We have been taught to believe what we can see, touch, taste, hear, smell, and prove.

But God is beyond the senses, beyond knowledge, beyond understanding. "No one can look upon the face of God and live." (Exodus 33:20) "My thoughts are not your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8). "When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the covenant law in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD." (Exodus 34:29). In the Christian scriptures,

people do not see to believe, but believe to see, they must surrender to that which is beyond themselves.

Human beings have a hard time with surrender. If we are not in control, if we are powerless, then we are not only less than, but are in danger of not being at all. Surrendering means embracing the fact that something greater than I, something more engaging my life. After we have discovered, once we have pondered, we have a choice to embrace it or to reject it. But this decision should not just be an intellectual weighing of the facts and then making a choice. It needs to be done within the context that God is More and I, with my pea brain, am less. Surrendering to whom we really are, less than God, is essential to what it means to be human.

In the Christian bible, consider the second creation story in Genesis, chapters 2 and 3. At the end of chapter 2, creation is complete, whole, wonderful, and thus the Adam (man) and the Eve (woman) are in an ideal world, a paradise. They were totally open to the world around them, so accepting of one another, so at peace within themselves that they are described as being "naked and unafraid." (Genesis 2:25) Sounds great. It sounds exactly how people desire for their lives to be, whole, complete, peaceful, unafraid, perfect

But then we come to chapter 3 and the temptation of the serpent. Note what the serpent says. The serpent asks the woman, "Did God say that you may not eat of any tree in the garden?" The Eve replies that they were able to eat of every tree except one, the one in the middle of the garden, in the center of their day-to-day living. It was later that both the Adam and the Eve ate, not only because the tree's fruit looked good, but because in eating it they would become like God. It was like the Adam and the Eve said, "Look God, this is a wonderful place. We love it here. But there is one little thing, just a small tweak, that would make it better. Let us eat of *all* the trees in the garden because we do not like a "No" in our life. The result was being thrown out of the garden, where there would be work, pain, and death, instead of fullness, completion, peace within the self, life. By wanting to be like God, to be the one who decides what is right and what is evil, the man and the woman

lost what they desired, and what God, in his love, gave them and wishes to give them again.

And isn't that the struggle with aging, with decline of health, with the challenges of mind and heart? Isn't that the problem found in relationships between people, expectations of others, political decisions, and grabs for power? Isn't the authentic life for which we continually search hidden behind the fact that we do not like a "No" in our lives? We do not like the "No" that comes with chronic pain. We do not like the "No" that is at the heart of personal conflicts. And we *really* do not like the "No" that comes with death. We want to be in control. We want to be able. We do not want to be a burden on others, and thus think less of ourselves. And yet, according to Genesis, we hear a "No" you shall not eat of the tree, even though the tree has been right in the middle of our life, in the midst of the garden, looking good to eat, and promising unlimited power. The life for which we seek is all based on accepting "No." The good life was found in the "No, you are not the center of the world. You are not the Creator; you are the created. You cannot have everything your way, the way you want your life to be, for God has a better plan than the one that you can perceive by your pea brain. The truly human life, the authentic life, the life we seek is found in embracing the fact that we cannot, but God can.

This truth is found in our suffering as we identify with the apostle Paul who wrote "My power is make perfect in weakness." (1 Corinthians 12:2

"Jews seek signs, Greeks seek wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Greeks, but to those are the called, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1Corinthians 1:22-23)

"Come to me who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

"Why do you seek the living among the dead. He is not here. He has been raised." (Luke 24:5)

And thus, Ray Mattes suggests that not just discovery and pondering are essential to the spiritual life, but so is surrendering. Sometimes surrendering is letting go of possessions, like when a decision is made to down-size living

space, and decisions must be made as to what goes to the new place and what is given away or sold. Sometimes surrendering is the willingness to embrace death, not only the death of ourselves, but perhaps more painfully, the death of loved ones like spouses, dear friends and even children. All these experiences of life are out of our control, beyond our understanding, and thus require a letting go of our self-needs and surrendering to something that is More.

Thus, it is my belief and experience that an Older Adult Ministry (OAM) will be successful in Spiritual Formation and Growth if time and opportunity are allowed so that participants are able to discover, ponder on what is discovered, and then surrender to that discovery and embracing the new life that is offered. Many participants in your OAM are stuck in understanding that have been acquired in childhood. Childhood faith does not have the depth to withstand the power of suffering. Some have yet to discover finding meaning in life has not ended with age but is, in fact, continuing, even exploding. There are many an older adult who needs to discover that life is not filled with fear of the unknown, because the unknown is God's surprise. The truth is that once we surrender, we find ourselves are entering the unknown with knowing, a knowing that works. It is a knowing, at belief, that trusts in a God who knows, who guides, who 'goes where no one has gone before." At first such a journey can be frighting but when we get there, we find indeed Something More, better that the life that we had before. We discover that we only needed to surrender to that which is truly real, a God who is able while we are not, and we gain the life that we have always wanted, which is also the life that God wants.

Fostering Spiritual Growing in an OAM

What are some ways that a congregation's OAM can encourage spiritual growth and growing among their participants? Below is a listing of possibilities. Perhaps some will engage your thinking and consideration.

The Monthly Lunch

For many congregations, a monthly luncheon is the way that they minister to and with older adults. But what are some ways that this luncheon can become a time where persons can still discover, ponder and/or surrender? Often time is

short because eating and the engagement with other people are essential to spiritual health. Sometimes there is only 20 or 30 minutes available. But here are some other possibilities.

Quaker Questions

Ask the group to pair up with someone whom they would like to know more as a person. Then a leader asks the following questions, one at a time, for the pair to discuss. If possible do not set a time limit for discussion. Instead allow the leader to continue with the next question when it seems as though everyone has completed the previous one. Every time that I have used these questions, discussion flowed freely, and participants had a hard time stopping.

1. Where did you live at age 5?
2. In what way was your childhood home heated?
3. Who, as a child, did you go to for warmth?
4. When did you first experience the warmth of God?

Closing Rituals

A prayer for older adults which can be prayed by all, perhaps holding hands.

All Gracious God, You have given me all that I am and have,
and now I give it back to You to stand under Your will alone.
In a special way I give You these later years of my life.
I am one of those called by you into old age,
a call not given to all,
not given to Jesus, not given to most of our world today.
I humbly ask You, grace me deeply in each aspect of
this new chapter in my life. As my physical eyesight weakens,
may the eyes of my faith strengthen, that I may see You
and Your love in everything. As my hearing fails,
may the ears of my heart be more attentive to the whisper
of Your gentle voice. As my legs weaken and walking
becomes more difficult, may I walk more truly in Your paths,
knowing all the while that I am held in the embrace of Your love.
As my mind becomes less alert and memory fades
may I remain peaceful with You, aware that

with You there is no need for thought or word.
You ask simply that I be there, with You.
And should sickness overtake me, and I be confined to bed,
may I know myself as one with your Son as he offers his life for the salvation of the world. Finally, as my heart slows a little after the work of the years, may it expand in love for you and all people.
May it rest secure and grateful in Your loving Heart
until I am lost in You,
completely and forever. Amen.

"A Prayer for Older Adults"
Sr. Moya Hanlen, fdnsc (Australia)
Adapted by Ministry of the Arts
Courtesy of **www.MinistryOfTheArts.org**
LaGrange Park, IL 60526-1721

The noted Erik Erikson described the later years of life as being a search between two ends: Finding our life meaningful and purposeful, and thus filled with integrity, or instead, discovering that life has not been meaningful nor purposeful thus ending in despair. Which result would you desire the participants in your OAM to discover: Integrity or despair? Fostering Spiritual Formation even at lunch can go a long way to this end. (Note: Erik Erikson suggested that our life can be thought of as having eight stages. Becoming familiar with these stages search for "Erik Erikson's stages of development" or click https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK556096/ for one persons description.)

Offering Holy Communion before, after, or even during lunch

Lutherans are a church of Word (preaching, teaching) and Sacrament (Baptism and Holy Communion). Your faith tradition may have beliefs regarding Communion. Buddhism also have traditions and rituals whose purpose is to promote intimacy with God. So, what if, at the end of every significant OAM event, participants would be invited to share in Eucharist or Holy Communion? Don't we all need to experience the mystical

presence of the Living Christ at every chance that we can have?

For example, after the weekly luncheon, Holy Communion is celebrated. Perhaps an old, familiar liturgy is used. Old hymns are sung, hymns that often are not used much in Sunday Worship. We could only hope that a participant would be intimately touched by their Creator, perhaps in a way with a gentle power that has never been experienced before. The experience is powerful, filling the person with such a sense of grounding, of surety, of foundation, and as a result their senses become alive to all that surrounds them. The heart is filled with a profound gratitude. The next moment, perhaps even mixed in this moment-with-God, that good memory of an estranged sister quietly appears. A powerful experience. An experience that deserves reflection, a pondering. And there is time to sit silently with the experience, listening to the experience without judgment or fear and let its meaning reveal itself.

Offering Rituals of Meaning

Rituals are the way people seek to bring meaning to an event in life. A funeral, no matter where it is conducted or by whom or what content is used, is a ritual. The same for marriage whether it is a part of a faith community or not. Singing the National Anthem before a sporting event is a ritual, evoking feelings of patriotism and love of country is a ritual. Faith Communities are masters at ritual. I participate in one every Sunday called The Liturgy. I find it allowing me to release myself, focus on and experience the presence and love of God. But what about developing a ritual more specifically focused on events in the life of older adults. Some examples might be:

A celebration of retirement recognizing the loss as well as the opportunities that come with this new chapter in one's life.

Saying 'goodbye' to one's home as people downsize or move to be closer to family.

What about the celebration of intimate friendship, perhaps including any older persons in the congregation who are co-habitation so that they do not lose either person's social security?

A ritual with a focus on becoming aware of new meanings and perspectives that can (do?) arise with any sickness or tragedy. Some may place an emphasis on what lessons are being learned i.e. though the Covid 19 pandemic. Or what are we hearing from God as we lie on our bed, or deal with loss, or respond to crisis. Is God talking? Are we humble enough and honest enough to listen from the heart? A quiet, contemplative worship experience could be created using some of these questions as a guide.

Retreats

Retreats are wonderful. The time away from the 'normal' in life can be refreshing. Retreats allow time to engage in deeper issues of being an older adult, issues that might need more time for reflection and integration into one's core. Instead of having a Bible Study or an event that enriches our thinking, what about being more experiential, focusing on experience and observation. During the Christian season of Lent, how about sharing feelings and insights around the stations of the cross. There are many Roman Catholic and Episcopal retreat facilities that already have stations on their campus. Or have you ever tried to have participants make and share a timeline of their lives noting the ups and downs of their life with God? Everyone has had "God Moments" in their lives. But have we ever encouraged people to share those wonderful, fulfilling, life-changing experiences? Many faith groups call this sharing "witnessing," and it has been a wonderful support to those that share and those that listen and receive.

Some of the topics that I have used to have a retreat with older adults in retirement communities have been:

- The Separation of Church and State
- Celebrating the Gifts of Age
- Aging to Saging
- A more in-depth study of a part of Scripture

- Healing of Memories
- Beginning a personal life review that can continue at home

Your congregation might not have enough people to form a critical mass resulting in a powerful retreat. But what about inviting one or more congregations in the area to participate with you?

Purchase the book Autumn Wisdom: Finding Meaning in Life's Later Years, by James Miller, from Amazon and instead of using it for study, use it for experience. Have a small group sit in a circle with instructions like:

> Today, instead of studying a portion of a book, we are going to try to experience a portion of a book. We will begin sitting in silence listening to a CD of waves gently reaching a shoreline. After a time, I will read a chapter entitled (add name of the section to be read) gently and quietly. I will read it three times.
>
> The first time through simply allow the words to flow over and in you. Do not focus on any word or thought. Just allow the words to flow.
>
>
>
> During the second reading listen for a word or a phrase that strikes you. The feeling might be only a moment of awareness. It might evoke a gentle flip of the stomach. When this happens, simply receive that word or phrase.
>
> During the third reading, allow yourself to place that special word or phrase into the context of the reading.
>
> Finally, we will sit in silence as we allow ourselves to integrate that word or phrase, to let it speak to our heart and touch our soul.
>
> At the end, those that desire may share their word/phrase and what it meant to them.

This process is called Lectio Divina, and can be used with parts of Psalms, favorite Scriptures or even a favorite hymn. For example, what would it be like to meditate on the hymn "Amazing Grace" or the Lord's Prayer or the

Shema?

Meditation Prayer groups

While many OAM participants have not had experience with meditative prayer, I have found a select few who are really moved by this method of praying, deeply affecting their view of themselves and God. In Appendix E, you will find a detailed script for a person who is willing to be the leader and timekeeper. This document contains a detailed description of meditation and does not need to be duplicated here. At the same time, Appendix E contains a detailed description of four popular meditation tools noting the value of each.

Conclusion

This chapter is the first of seven that explores categories of programming appropriate for a congregational OAM. It is important to remember that all categories have the expressed goal of supporting participants' spiritual formation and spiritual growth. This chapter focuses directly on this essential goal, but there is more to the story as we explore ways to nurture the seeds that were sown, seeds that if focused, intentional, sustainable and effective, will reap a bountiful harvest.

Chapter Six
Planting the Seed
Lifelong Learning

One of the gifts that God has given to humankind is learning. For culture will change; technology has and will change, but the core of the human person, their spirituality, does not. People of all ages need relationship, intimacy, hope, and transcendence. Thus, it is in and through learning that we can incorporate the experience of our ancestors to inform ours. Through learning we can engage ideas and perspectives that enhance and expand our own way of living. While our lives are filled with cell phones and the internet, we share the essence of what it means to be human with all people, including those in our past. Ideas birthed in the past can come to maturity as we age.

Life has taught us that we do not have all the answers. Yet the thoughts of others enable us to stay in touch and see the sweep of the many perspectives on life. Thoughts once seen as scandalous are now accepted as reasonable, not because the past has been wrong, but because today society has a different understanding that has been formed from the perspectives of the past. We have experienced people through the lenses of different glasses. We can see this development in how the people of God grow in their understanding of God.

Influenced by their culture, the Hebrews conceived of God as being a god among gods. They believed that there were other gods but theirs was not only their God, the God of the Hebrews, but that their God was stronger, better, bigger than those that their neighbors worshiped. Thus, the first commandment is "You shall have no other gods" is an expression of this early belief. Of course, today we not that different that those believers of the past. In our lives we have the gods money, power, security, or even the search to create a life of comfort for ourselves. To the ancient Israelites, God (Yahweh) called for supremacy over the myriad of gods that "existed" at the time. But then times changed.

With the giving of the law, the Ten Commandments, the Hebrew's view of God expanded. While those that believed in those 'other gods' who were capricious, demanding that they be appeased by gifts, the God of the Hebrews gave them a set of laws that He made. Gone was a continual trial and error search for the right act or gift that would appease god. God gave them a straightforward description of what He expected from his followers.

As they wandered in the wilderness, they carried the Tabernacle (which means dwelling place) in which were stored the tablets of God's law. The

Tabernacle was the throne of God, the place where God lived (Exodus 40:35), not unlike the chairs borne by slaves upon which pharaohs and kings sat. The tabernacle was carried ahead of the people, guiding them to the promised land (Exodus 40:36). At night it was placed into the "Tent of Meeting". When in trouble, Moses would enter the tabernacle to talk directly to God and would always emerge with a radiant face having spoken to God (Exodus 34:29…33-35). But again, new experiences changed their picture of God.

Along came the kings, and the people called for the building of a proper, permanent house for God rather than the RV of the past. After the Temple was built, the tabernacle was placed in the "Holy of Holies," God's dwelling place.

But then disaster struck. As the prophets had warned, Jerusalem, which was believed to be impregnable because God lived there, was destroyed by enemies. The very dwelling place, the house of God was obliterated. The people were carried off into an unknown land, Babylon. God, they believed, had either abandoned them because of their arrogance, or God remained in Holy Land.

The people were on foreign lands among foreign gods (see the lament in Psalm 137). But surprise, they discovered that God was still with them, even in their exile. And while they would have to stay there for a while, God would forgive them and bring them back to the land. That was true because God was not just one God among many, but the true and only God, the God

of the Nations (read Isaiah 40 to the end of the book). But then, again, ideas about God and God's relationship with Israel changed.

When they were released to their own homes by Cyrus the Persian, who probably was a Zoroastrian, the people of God returned to the promised land and their leaders sought to make sure that they did not make the same mistakes again. So, they codified God's law, proclaimed that the law was the only pathway to God, an understanding of God that would continue until the coming of Jesus, the creative Word (John 1) who "became flesh and lived, dwelling (lit. tabernacle), with us" (John 1:14). God certainly did not change, but the Hebrews' perception of God did, as their life-experiences changed. They learned, grew in their understanding of God, themselves, and the world about them. And so, do we.

Learning is an experience brings change, even if what you learn is what you already know. If you already know it, at least your perception/belief has been confirmed, though perhaps expanded. Learning brings change as we engage ideas that have not been considered before, even our concept of God. For example, it might be interesting to share the ways that your concept of God has changed over the years. I think that you might be surprised not only at your own insights, but the perceptions of others. As Rod Parrott, the retired Dean of the Disciples Seminary Foundation at Claremont, California, notes:

> Age provides opportunity…for people to enlarge their understandings of the world about them, including God, and connect them to previous learnings and life-experiences. In older age, learning is not merely an affirmation of what has been, but a *re-creation of the self* in relation to everything that surrounds the person…the goal is for churches to encourage and assist in each person's *re-construction of their lives (Italics are mine)* and they view life from the perspective of length of years. (Parrot, Rod in Koepke 2005, p. 73.)

Education explores experience. Education always follows experience. Education helps to evoke the words that describe the experience. Without the incarnation of words, experience becomes just that, an experience that is there but has no root, no real meaning, no place within one's life. It is through using words, the result of reflection and education, that a person integrates what has been experienced with the present framework of the soul. It is one's experience that evokes the "AHA! I never thought of that before. The "AHA" comes because we are looking at the reading after having different experiences. Then cognition kicks in and the words come alive. That is why 20 people in a Bible Study can receive 20 different meanings out of one text. The results of this interplay between experience and description (words) is insight, an insight that changes beliefs, values, life patterns and hearts. Life does not end with age but is renewed (re- constructed) through life experience and learning. Age alone does not evoke wisdom. It is age (experience) plus reflection (learning) that result in wisdom. Yes, an old dog can learn new tricks.

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we re- create ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be a part of the generative process of life. There is within each of us a deep hunger for this type of learning. (Senge, 1994, 14).

That event was a flop. Hardly anyone attended!

A program does not have to attract lots of people to be effective and deemed a success. I was a part-time chaplain in two retirement communities. In each of them, I offered residents the opportunity to participate in a meditation group (more on meditation groups later). At one I had 15 participants, while in the other community I had four. I believe that they both were valuable and effective in spiritual development and thus worth my time as chaplain. Numbers are the only way to measure success. Success depends on what the event seeks to accomplish (sound familiar? See Chapter Two)

The larger the group present, the less interaction, intimacy, and meaning is shared, and less learning occurs. Large groups require less personal transparency on the part of the participants (Figure 1.) Thus, more people come but less is learned because, normally, there is less time for reflection and pondering of what was shared. In contrast, the fewer persons attending an event, the greater chance that there will be authentic interchange and sharing of knowledge and wisdom.

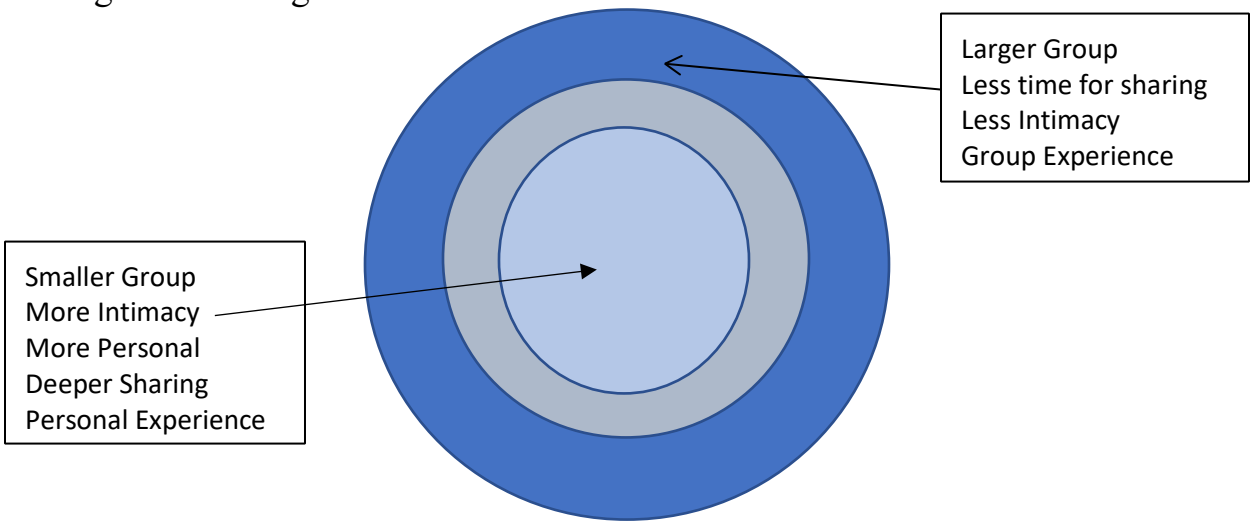


Figure 1.

What are some examples of learning events, both large and small, that when focused and intentional can evoke change and growth? Here are some.

Practical Ideas for Learning Events

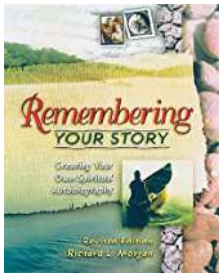
Holy Communion: In the previous chapter on Spiritual Growing, celebrating Holy Communion was suggested as a powerful spiritual experience of surrender to the presence and grace of God. A learning group could be formed to engage the power of Holy Communion from many sides. Initially participants could share how they prepare themselves to receive, what happens as they receive, and what the result of the experience is. The pastor or a layperson could then suggest books, or parts of books, that describe the experience of others, many of whom might be spiritual heroes of the past.

Worship 101: One hopes worship is central to the participants in your

OAM. But do we know that the very structure of the worship experience seeks to stir up an interchange with the soul? Is there meaning in the colors of the stoles of Christian clergy, the Muslim traditional body positions in prayer, or the lack of seating in a Buddhist place of prayer that can enhance the experience of worship in these faith communities? What is behind the fact that most Christian churches have only two candles on the altar, or that the Ganges River is seen as a sacred place for Hindus? Why is the statement of faith expressed by one of the historic creeds placed where it is in the liturgy? Why do worshippers in a synagogue have a procession with their "bible" around their place of worship so people can simply touch it? Answers to these questions and more can keep worship from becoming a rote ritual that we just go through.

Life Review is one of the most powerful tools for spiritual growth through learning that exists. Older adults do not live in the past. They *are* their past and thus are trying to make sense of the past, what it has meant, and what it means now. Reflection on one's life seeks to discover how the Holy Spirit has sculpted us into the persons we are now with the values, beliefs and behaviors that are so important to our living. There are lots of life review tools on the internet. Two particularly come to mind.

One is the work of Richard Morgan and his book, ***Remembering Your Story*** (Upper Room Books, 2002). In this book Morgan provides the resources for exploring the meaning of one's life from "Seasons of One's Life" that uses the 12 months of the year as a framework for sharing. There are several suggestions like this one that is short enough that they could be used as a program at a Senior Luncheon. He also has questions that can be the basis for interviewing an older adult while being recorded



A second work is ***Telling Life Stories through Guided Autobiography Groups*** by James Birren and Kathryn Cochran (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). This book is a leader's guidebook for a group of persons who are committed to one session per month for nine months. Everything that a leader might need is in the book including what the course is trying to accomplish, the value of writing an autobiography, lesson plans and even marketing ideas. Each month participants would write on a focus such as "What are the Branches in your life," "Your Family," "The Role of Money" and "Your Major

Life's Work or Career," and then share a brief summary of their work with one or two others in the group. Several used the resulting document as Christmas presents to family.

Experiential Bible Studies

A method of Bible Study comes from Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. Below is a model of study that includes three parts. The text to be studied is copied on a piece of paper that has two columns. The left column is the text to be studied. The right column is used for personal notes regarding the text.

The first step is for everyone to read the text silently, looking for words/phrases of interest.

Second, they become aware of and note the content of the text including its flow. For example, who is the speaker and who is the audience? What is the perspective of the audience at the beginning and what is the stance of the audience at the text's end?

Finally, what is the meaning of the text and how does this text engage my life right now? Obviously, there is a lot of silence at the beginning for everyone to complete all three steps. When everyone is ready, answers to each step are shared.

I have used this method of study on the Gospel text assigned for the coming Sunday with a group of older men for over six years. The more we get to know each other, the more honest we become, and our insights soar.

Small Group: Your picture of Religion and your picture of "spirituality"

This exercise is great for a small group or even at luncheon.

- Give each participant one piece of blank paper and 3 crayons of different colors.
- Ask the group to draw two pictures. On side one they are to draw their picture of God. On the second side, draw a picture that describes their understanding of the word "Spirituality." Artistic skill is not needed. Words are not to be used.

- Allow the group to work in silence until all seem to be done with the task.
- Gather in groups of three or four. Each person in turn reveals their pictures of God for everyone, *except the artist,* to share their interpretation of the work. After all members of the group have shared their insights, the artist shares their intentions. Hopefully, the artist will gain more insight and meaning from the insights of the others. Discussion continues until all have revealed and shared both sides of the paper.

When all is complete the leader may, if desired, ask a volunteer from each group to summarize the group's insights for everyone else. Write the summaries on a piece of newsprint for all to see. When all the groups have shared, process what has been learned. How has their understanding of God and their understanding of spirituality changed? How does the group's understanding compare with their own? Is this a God whom they could follow?

Study of Articles by Spiritual Giants

Often OAM leaders dismiss offering book studies as being too long to be of interest to many. But short articles can be discussed and integrated in one hour. There are literally hundreds of one or two-page articles written by some of the best religious minds of today. Some these giants include Richard Rohr (cac.org) and Henri Nouwen (soulshepherd.org). Articles on aging can be secured through www.greatergood.berkley. These online articles can be copied, transferred to a Word Document and then saved to a file of your choice.

Henri Nouwen

If you have access to the internet where you meet, OAM participants can seek many "Spiritual Giants" speak using YouTube. Lengths of speaking vary from 1 to 3 minutes to 1 hour or more. You can choose the presentation according to need. Note that interviews by Oprah on her show, "Super Soul Sunday" can be secured by using your internet browser to search for www.oprah.com/own-super-soul-Sunday. Many of these videos could be easily used at a monthly Senior Luncheon.

Appendix G and H has several articles as examples of what might be found on the internet at sites such as www.soulshepherding.org or www.shalem.org

Henri Nouwen, Christian Writer https://www.soulshepherding.org/when-

henri-nouwen- couldnt-feel-gods-love/

Juliet Vendral "What Does it Mean to Be Beloved of God?" https://shalem.org/2014/09/05/what-does-it-mean-to-be-beloved-of-god/

Dawn Peck "Tending the Garden that is Our Life" https://shalem.org/2019/11/05/tending-the-garden-that-is-our-life/

Famous Speakers on YouTube.

Viktor Frankl, psychiatrist and holocaust survivor on suffering (8 minutes) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EIxGrIc_6g#t=11

Viktor Frankl on the need (will) for meaning. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MmKta5tymPY#t=70

Carl Jung, psychologist, 19 quotes that can enrich your life. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pwbrjd2zfjA Review the video writing down the 19 quotes and then duplicating them for your OAM group. Then show the video to the group and have them respond to the quote or quotes that touched their heart. Encourage each participant to say more about their choice.

Study quotes by Famous Persons

Search for the name of a famous person on the internet to find quotes.

Quotes by Martin Luther

"Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

"We are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone."

"If you want to change the world, pick up your pen and write."

"So, when the devil throws your sins in your face and declares that you deserve death and hell, tell him this: "I admit that I deserve death and hell, what of it? For I know One who suffered and made satisfaction on my behalf. His name is Jesus Christ, Son of God, and where He is, there I shall be also!"

"I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer."

Quotes from the Mishnah

- The liar's punishment is that even when he speaks the truth, no one believes him (Sanhedrin 89b).
- Once a person has sinned and repeated the sin, [he treats it] as if it has become permitted (Rav Huna, Arachin 30b).
- The inclination only desires that which is forbidden (Jerusalem Talmud, Nedarim 9:1).
- No two minds are alike, [just as] no two faces are alike (Berachot 58a).

- Do not celebrate among the mourners, and do not weep among revelers (Kallah 10).
- There is no community where everyone is rich; neither is there a community where everyone is poor (Jerusalem Talmud, Gitten 3:7).

Hindu Quotes (https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/hindu)

"Yes I am, I am also a Muslim, a Christian, a Buddhist, and a Jew."
― Mahatma Gandhi

"Language is the key to the heart of people."
― Ahmed Deedat

"Krishna taught in the Bhadavad Gita: 'karmanyeva-adhikaraste ma phalesu kadachana', which means, 'Be active, never be inactive, and don't react to the outcome of the work."
― Anonymous, Buddhist Scriptures

"If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendor of the Mighty One... I am become Death, the Shatterer of Worlds."
― The Bhagavad Gita

"Detachment from the world means nearness to Shiva. Souls that are attached to both suffer immeasurable pain."
― Shunya

Or here are the results for the search "St. Paul Quotes"

- For when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong.
  2 Corinthians 12: 10

- Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart.
  Colossians 3:23

- There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.
  Galatians 3:28

- Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own [will], is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
  1 Corinthians 13:4-8

- I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any

and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength.
Philippians 4:11-13

- Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds
  Romans 12:2

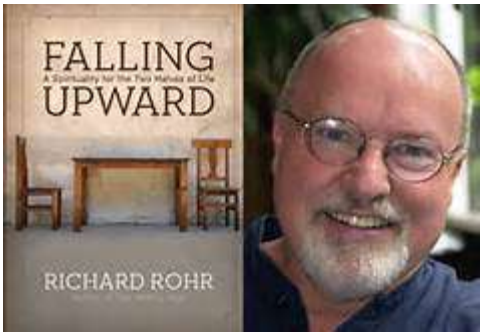
- We walk by faith, not by sight.
  2 Corinthians 5:7

- If God is for us, who is against us?
  Romans 8:31

Book Studies

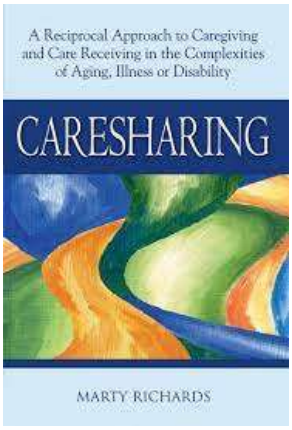
Many older adults have participated in book studies in the past. A small group, meeting at a time and frequency of their choice, gathers in a comfortable place at church or someone's home. They choose a book of interest and assign a portion of the book to be independently read by participants before the next meeting. Some books that I would suggest are:

What are Old People For? by William Thomas, MD 2004 VanderWyk and Burnham, Acton Massachusetts 2004. An especially important book that suggests that aging is a gift to humanity. One of his best offerings is a chapter on the difference between being and doing and how that dynamic affects perceptions of aging



Falling Upwards by Richard Rohr 2011, Josey-Bass, San Francisco California. A spiritual expression of life as being in two parts, one of which is aging where humans confront the essential questions of life

Tuesdays with Morrie by Richard Albom, 1997 Doubleday, New York, New York. An old man dying from ALS and a young former student and reporter explore the great issues of life.



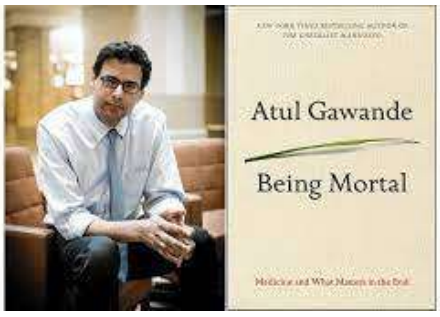
Caresharing by Marty Richards 2009, Skylight Paths Publishers, Woodstock California. A fresh new take on the relationship between caregivers and care-receivers. Richards advocates for care-sharing instead. She does a great job describing this new paradigm of caregiving.

Counting on Kindness by Wendy Lustbader, 1991, The Free Press, New York, New York. The book that should be read with caregiver and care-receiver together. The book's subtitle is "The Dilemmas of Dependency." Need more be said?

The Heart of Christianity by Marcus Borg, 2003, Harper Collins Press, New York, New York. A new approach to Christianity that embraces the Bible is mostly metaphor and how this perspective adds to a deeper relationship with God.

The Spirituality of Age by Robert L. Weber, PhD. And Carol Osborn, PhD. 2015, Park Street Press, Rochester, Vermont. A look at the deeper experience of aging. It is a great choice for those who wish a greater understanding of the word "spirituality" and its context within the experience of aging.

From Age-ing to Sage-ing by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Ronald S. Miller. 1995, Warner Books, New York, New York. One of the early books that looked at aging from a perspective that is beyond the physical, emotional, and the sociological. The book advocates for older adults to be more assertive in their relationships with those who are younger, in that persons of age have something that is unique and powerful for all, including those who are younger.



Being Mortal by Atul Gawande. 2014, Metropolitan Books. New York, New York. A look at the human person as being finite, mortal, and power of becoming comfortable with this understanding that is the basis for true strength.

Presenters on Issues on Aging by Local Professionals

Death and Dying. Today, most persons will die of a several physical conditions, all of which will be under treatment by a physician at the time of death. Hospices have a team of people who assist both the dying person and family though the process of dying. They are also competent to address the challenge and treatment of persons with chronic pain. To understand the hospice process and what it offers can be of a significant help when the time comes for outside assistance. Ask your pastor for the name and phone number of a local hospice. In a small group, share

Care-giving Tricks. Ask a nurse or certified nurse assistant to demonstrate ways to assist a person who is limited in their ability to walk, get out of bed, transfer into an automobile. These issues are particularly important if the person is in a wheelchair. Other issues are how do I bathe a person in bed; how do I change the bed when my loved one is bedfast. What about needs surrounding eating, exercise?

Caring for the Caregiver. Seek a social worker from a long-term care community or hospice to express opinions regarding the why and how of caregivers receiving needed care.

Issues surrounding Alzheimer's Disease and other Dementias. There are many issues that cry for consideration that surround Alzheimer's and other dementias. Call your local Alzheimer's Association and speak with their educator or community services person about services that they might offer. A local Alzheimer's Association can be found by searching www.alz.org and entering your zip code. This contact can provide many presentations on dementia that would be appropriate for different events and audiences.

Housing Options for Older Adults. Many older adults do not understand the many options that they have regarding housing. This confusion is not limited to "independent" "assisted living" and "skilled care." What is the difference between living in a retirement community or "Over 55" housing? There are other possibilities such as affordable housing that they

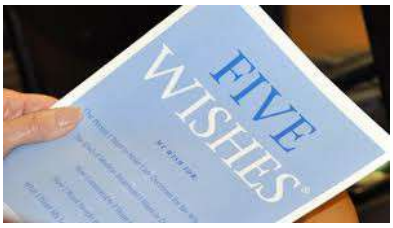
might qualify for. You might contact a local retirement community, asking for their intake department, and see if they have the knowledge to make such a presentation.

End of Life Documents. Many persons do not understand the difference between a durable power of attorney and a durable power of attorney for health care or a will and a living trust. Your pastor might be able to refer you to an appropriate person for this information.

Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. This document is especially important it that each person can appoint someone of trust to be their agent in case they are not able to speak for themselves. This document can be used following a surgery or as a person approaches death. The goal is for the wishes of the person filling out the document to have their wishes followed by health care professionals and even family. An excellent form that has been used by thousands is the Five Wishes (www.fivewishes.org)

Other Program Possibilities

Ethical Wills Either at a luncheon or for a special one-time event, have participants develop an ethical will for their family. And ethical will does not bequeath wealth to an important person, but a value, a perspective, something that has been foundational for you and your life. (See Appendix I for an Ethical Will form that is self-guiding). While participants may bequeath the same personal value, like love of pets, or the value of education, participants may share specific beliefs/values to a specific person because of that person's specific needs. For example, "I bequeath my joy of reading to Beth as she enters adulthood." Besides the ethical will in the Appendix, others might be found on the web by simply searching for "Ethical Wills."



"I Met God When…" Ask OAM participants to write their response(s) to the phrase "I Met God When…" and publish the results for all to read. Other phrases that might be used are: "When I was a child I…." or "Life at 85 is…" or "This I Believe…."

A Biblical study of suffering and transformation

The purpose of this activity is to help the home-centered person to

express their thoughts, values, and perspectives by responding to these passages, not to come to a "right answer." Like much of the Bible, especially the parables, the purpose inward reflection rather than cognitive correctness. You might want to use the method explored in "Experiential Bible Studies" noted above. Some excellent texts are:

Compare **Lamentations 3:21-33** with **Lamentations 3:1-20**
Life (God?) is against me. Consistent with the experience of aging followed immediately with God is good, cares, is loving.

Psalm 42: Longing for God "As the deer longs for flowing water, so my soul longs for you, O God"

Psalm 43: A cry of lament being beset by forces beyond personal control.

John 5:1-9: "Do you want to be made well?" An interesting question.

Mark 15:21-39: Exploring suffering through the suffering of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: So, we do not lose heart. While our outer self is wasting away, inwardly we are being renewed day but day.

Rev 21:1-7: A look forward. The new Jerusalem. How would you like to live there? What do the images describe the way life will be over how our life is now.

"People suffer because they are caught in their views. As soon as we release those views, we are free and we don't suffer anymore."
Thich Nhat Hanh

"Have compassion for all beings, rich and poor alike; each has their suffering. Some suffer too much, others too little."
Lachian Brown

"Anxiety, the illness of our time, comes primarily from our inability to

dwell in the present moment."
Thich Nhat Hanh

"Mindfulness puts an end to such a limited perspective. The Buddha faced his own suffering directly and discovered the path of liberation. Don't run away from things that are unpleasant in order to embrace things that are pleasant. Put your hands in the earth. Face the difficulties and grow new happiness."
Thich Nhat Hanh

"Pain is certain, suffering is optional."
Lochian Brown

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Chapter Seven
Planting the Seed
Opportunities to Serve

The 25th Chapter of Matthew contains the parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats. The scene is when the faithful come to heaven and are judged on how they served the people in their community. Their continual cry was, "When did we see you naked and clothed you, thirsty and gave you drink…?" The final word: "Those who did it to these, the least of my brethren, you have done it to me." Amazing words. Jesus is to be found in the least, in places where you would never expect. God's people are called to use the spiritual gifts that God has given in the service of others. Put another way, the human being is not complete until he has one hand in the hand of God and the other in the hand of one's neighbor. Service is the logical result of our becoming aware that we are spiritual persons, born to love as God loves, serve as God serves, to give of our whole selves as God also gives of his whole self. Thus, we explore a critical program area: **Opportunities to Serve.**

Within your congregation, older adults may comprise the core of the leadership and the worker-bees who devote much time to serving. And there are many things to do: Serve on the church council or one of its committees, sing in the choir, teach Sunday School, serve as greeters before worship and/or "munchie donors" for camaraderie after worship. They might attend a woman's or men's meeting or perhaps a Bible study. There are some persons who seem to live at the church.

But there are laments. How many times do I have to usher before someone else takes over? How often do I accept being the congregation's delegate to the Synod Convention before it is some else's turn? Often these are the older adults who are tired or just bored. They need something new, something challenging, something that makes a difference to themselves and others, something that offers the opportunity of finding new meaning. At the turn of the 20th century, the average age of Americans was 45 years. In 2018 the average is 76.2 years for men and 81.2 years for women (NCHS Data Brief No. 355, January 2020). Thus, we have an extra 30 years to live longer than our grandparents had. But is that 30-year bonus "worth the effort?"

Remember our conversation about the spiritual needs of being human? We noted that these needs include intimacy, meaning, transcendence and hope. By taking part in one or more opportunities to serve, an older adult engages all four.

- **Intimacy** by intentionally engaging others. Intimacy is gained as two souls touch through an experience of a need found in both the server and the served.
- **Meaning** as they discover that they are of value and still have something to offer even in their elder years
- **Hope** as they look into the eyes of someone whom they have served and allow themselves to sit a moment in the glow of having made a difference in the life of another human being.
- **Transcendence** helps a person break out of the prison of self-centeredness that plagues so many persons in our individualistic culture. Serving leads a person towards community rather than isolation and loneliness.

But the reasons for a person serving today might be different than years ago. Culture changes and so does the motivation for service. It would be prudent if service opportunities were shaped by the felt desires of the volunteers Bonnie Stover, a retired volunteer coordinator for a large organization that owns many retirement communities has noted the following reasons: (Stover, found in Koepke 2005)

- Control over their lives...not having to work for someone else is appealing to retirees. Service should not compromise their sense of having control of their time.
- The idea of life as a journey with a future suggests a continuum rather than a series of sections with beginnings, middles, and most of all, ends.
- The idea of sharing what they have learned from experience and maturity.
- Being part of something larger to address social issues. The power of groups as agents of social change holds the promise of recreating purposeful relationships that many retirees miss so much.

She continues to offer some suggestions of key messages that encourage involvement in serving (Stover, found in Koepke, 2005). Life is a continuing journey with never-ending opportunities to learn, give, and grow.

- New bridges are being built, from generation to generation, from skill to need, from interest to opportunity. We all need to be part of that process no matter what our age, background, or experience.
- Experience, wisdom, and talents are needed and will be valued.
- One's freedom and autonomy will not be compromised.
- Those who serve know what they have to offer, and they need to find an outlet.
- Experiencing the unique satisfaction of "relationships with a purpose" need not be gone forever.

It is important that all volunteers, no matter how slight the task, need to be linked with a larger purpose, serving our God while serving one another. For example, bulletin stuffers need to be aware that their efforts provide a guide to the day's worship, allowing participants to experience the presence of God.

The kitchen cleaners need to recognize that visitors look at the cleanliness of restrooms and kitchen as they decide about a new church for their family. Volunteering, which is serving, should be inclusive, welcome for anyone and everyone in the congregation to participate.

While some opportunities to serve require experience in the task-at-hand, a passion to serve is often all that is needed.

But there are times when a person is not aware of their passions regarding serving. Appendix J has a Passion Assessment that might be helpful. The assessment can be competed individually. Yet it might be helpful for the assessment to be filled out in a larger group (a senior luncheon?) so that, if necessary, huddle groups can be formed.

Another way of helping persons clarify where they would like to be in ministry is through a spiritual gift assessment. In 1 Corinthians 12, the apostle Paul lists 12 such gifts, not only noting that they are all given by God, but that they are given to different people for the benefit of the entire community. A long (128 statements) but perhaps more 'accurate' assessment can be found at https://fbconcord.org/am-site/media/spiritualgiftstest.pdf. A shorter form (31 statements can be found at

https://www.flumc.org/files/fileslibrary/congregational+vitality/discipling/spiritual_gifts_inventory+short.pdf. Both sites have a scoring sheet. If you desire, use your computer and search "spiritual gifts assessment" and you will receive many options.

I have found that a simple job description is a helpful tool in seeking persons to serve. A job description is a document that clearly states the essential job requirements, job duties, job responsibilities, and skills required to perform a specific role. A job description form can be found in Appendix K. Below is an annotated copy of Appendix K that describes might be included in a job description.

Job Description

Job Title
Formal position title.

Reports To
The [job title] will report to [person and position in church such as pastor, OAM development group, or a staff person such as the choir director].

Term of Service
Noting the length of service provides a way for a person complete a task rather than quit a job. With such transparency, the server might be willing to continue for another term. If not, the server will still be more open to other opportunities. Remember, you are not filling a task or role but providing an opportunity to serve and gain the benefits of serving.

Job Overview

Provide a brief, 4-sentence description of the role, what success in the position looks like, and how it fits into the life of the congregation.

Responsibilities and Duties

Provide a bullet point list of the responsibilities and duties of this job.

- List the essential duties required to carry out this job.
- List them in order of importance.
- Use complete sentences.
- Start sentences with verbs.
- Use the present tense.
- Use gender neutral language.

Qualifications

Provide a bullet point list of the qualifications that are necessary for someone to fill this position. This is a wonderful time to recognize a person for the gifts that he or she possesses.

Bullet points you may want to include are:

- Education level.
- Experience.
- Specific skills.
- Personal characteristics.
- Certifications.
- Licenses.
- Physical abilities.

Program Possibilities: Opportunities to Serve

Eucharistic Ministers. Out of sight can end in being out of mind. Those who have a chronic condition can begin to isolate from others, either out of pride, energy or even fear. Eucharistic ministry is a valuable outreach to such persons bringing them companionship. Often given bread and wine directly from the altar following receiving the Sacrament and the prayer of thanksgiving, Eucharistic Ministers scatter to the homes of the chronically ill with this powerful expression of the presence of God in their lives, fostering spiritual growth. At the same time, their presence testifies that they remain a part of the church community. Receiving Holy Communion can bring a person hope amid despair, enabling them to at least have a glimpse that this condition, though overwhelming, does not exist outside of the love of God. Your pastor can provide training for such a ministry.

The sending forth of Eucharistic Ministers is enhanced and deepened by including it at the end of the worship experience. After the congregation has received Holy Communion (Eucharist) and after the final prayer and before the benediction, the Eucharist Ministers gather at the altar, each carrying the box containing that which is needed in their ministry. It is from the altar that their boxes are supplied with bread and wine, the same bread and wine that was earlier shared by the congregation. A simple blessing of sending is spoken or prayed. Then the benediction is proclaimed, and the service is ended. A powerful statement of inclusion of those who, for whatever the circumstance, are unable to come to worship at the church.

Friendly Companions. Another ministry to those with chronic conditions is one of companionship. The presence of another can raise spirits and, like Eucharistic Ministers, touch recipients at their spiritual cores. Friendly Companions is just that, companions. o be a companion a person just needs to like people and be willing to listen. Yes, they can bring news regarding congregation and community to a person who might be outside the loop. But the most powerful gift that they could bring is a person who is willing to listen to the recipients' story without judgment or a need to fix things.

Recipients might just need to vent their frustrations, unburden themselves from weight of isolation brought about by their condition. But Friendly Companions can also be the eyes of the pastor, alerting the pastor to concerns that require his compassion and expertise. Friendly Companions can be trained in the use of a Spiritual Triage Assessment tool (appendix L) that can alert a pastor or persons in a Stephen's Ministry to concerns that are deeper than emotional dumping. Training of these Friendly Companions could be accomplished with one or two gatherings of persons interested in this ministry. Participants could simply share what they believe to be the advantages and pitfalls of such visitation. Use of the Spiritual Triage Tool could be discussed.

Friendly Companions have a lifetime of experience of connecting with

others in such situations. Thus, training does not need a professional, simply a person who will guide a group of qualified volunteers in sharing what they have learned with the others in the group. Once a visitation team is established, new persons can simply be teamed with a veteran of the ministry for a length of time.

Provide Baby Sitting for Younger Families or Caregivers. Organize persons willing to visit a person with dementia so that their caregivers can take a break, get some rest, obtain a haircut, go to a movie with friends or go to some outdoor event.

> The meaning of life is to help others find the meaning of theirs.
>
> *Victor Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning p. 165*

Confirmation Mentors. Many congregations have a confirmation ministry with young middle-school persons. Why not, in consultation with your pastor, link each confirmand with an older adult mentor who can build a relationship of trust and support. Mentors should hold conversations in strict confidence. They can, for example, remember the confirmand's baptismal anniversary with a special treat or a small gift. Christmas cards can be shared. Questions that could not be addressed in class can be talked about. Experience about how the theology studied in confirmation class effects perspectives, attitudes and even behaviors. On the day of confirmation, a gift can be given along with a hug of welcome into this new chapter in the life of the confirmand.

Serving on the OAM Leadership Team. Being a part of the initial OAM Leadership team, or joining later, can be an excellent opportunity to serve. Hopefully, the team will be highly creative and thus very interactive and even fun (as meetings go). They would be willing not only to share their thoughts, but thoughtfully listen to and consider their creative offerings, resting in the knowledge that all present share in a common goal: To make the OAM vital, effective, and useful. If a person does not want to join the team, perhaps they would become a consultant, using their knowledge and experience to guide in the development of new OAM offerings or in the evaluation of older ones.

Prayer group which prays for others. Petitionary -- or intercessory -- prayer groups are often a staple within congregations. These persons remember members of the congregation and their personal needs, thanking God for God's presence and power in the situation and asking for his continual

presence, love and healing power be made known to a person who is stricken. Such prayer groups can be a place that supports strong faith or is

fraught with deep issues such as why God seems not to answer some prayers and not others. I would suggest that in addition to prayer, that a group also read books of prayer such as *Knocking on Heaven's Door* (Crump, David 2006). Also, Harold Koenig, MD is a researcher at Duke University who has researched the effects of prayer on patients. In the article, "Is Prayer Good for Your Health?" Dr. Koenig and others explore some scientific research on the effectiveness of prayer in health care. https://www.heritage.org/civil-society/report/prayer-good-your-health-critique-the-scientific- research

Dedicated Suffering Groups is a ministry of prayer and contemplation. The instructions below are from a friend of mine who has been involved in older adult ministry for decades, Jane Thibault. She suggests that a group between 6 to 10 persons gather regularly. Sitting in a circle, each person in turn, 'checks in' with the others by sharing some concern, challenge or need that is presently impinging on their life. No one comments on their sharing. Each presentation is simply given and received. The action becomes a time of solidarity with all who are suffering.

After 'checking in' the conversation revolves around needful topics of the day. Needful topics are NOT to include any of the personal issues shared during check in. Topics are to be concerns outside the group. They may be local, national, or global. It might involve a ministry of the church or something that involves the entire congregation. But the topic should be an issue that evokes chronic suffering, such as the polarization of politics in our country, the pain caused by the latest natural disaster, a place of famine or extreme illness. The conversation continues until the group reaches a consensus of the group which will receive prayers that day.

At that point, the group shares in silent prayer, using their imaginations to make those for whom they pray as intimately present as possible. There is no need for words. God already knows what is needed. The group seeks to

simply lends their strength and hope to the work that God is already accomplishing. The silent prayer has no time limit. It continues until all have completed reaching out to those who have been chosen by the group. Participants who finish before others should simply sit in silence until all prayers are complete.

The session is ended by together praying the Lord's Prayer.

Joining with community groups

There are times when older adults have a passion that is beyond the abilities for one congregation to address. At a gathering of older adults (the senior luncheon) have a brief commissioning of those who have a passion for this ministry, sending them to other congregations or not-for-profits in the community seeking collaboration and partnership. Thus, many persons of like concern can advocate for such issues as peace and justice or for the needs of the marginalized.

Stephen's Ministry

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2, NRSV).

Stephen's Ministry is the one-to-one lay caring ministry that takes place in congregations that use the Stephen Series system that includes training and coordination. Stephen Ministry congregations equip and empower lay caregivers -- called Stephen Ministers -- to provide high-quality, confidential, Christ-centered care to people who are hurting.

This is a powerful ministry that requires not only money but the commitment of many persons. But it is worth the effort to develop. See their website at www.stephensministry.org

Providing transportation to a physician appointment

This provides time to share in the passengers' hopes and fears regarding their present condition, and should be done by a trained person in a ministry to the suffering. See Chapter Six: Lifelong Learning

Providing emergency meals for the bereaved or the family of the hospitalized. This is an ageless ministry that has been valuable and supportive in times of need. It can also be a wonderful outreach to non-members in the community declaring that your congregation is a place of welcome, love and support.

Adopting a Cause or a Local Not-for-Profit Organization can provide a focus beyond the congregation that can uplift everyone as they support a wonderful cause. It doesn't matter whether a person is active, frail, transitional or a caregiver, everyone can participate. One or two dollars at each luncheon or other OAM event can go a long way to support a needed outside-the-congregation service.

World Hunger. Contact your own regional or national judicatory for information as to how your congregation can engage local, national, and even world hunger. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) there is a World Hunger Appeal and global companion churches. There are other partners like Bread for the World and Church World Service. In addition to funding relief and development projects that assist our sisters and brothers in need, education and advocacy provided by your local food bank help change the systems that perpetuate poverty. Your OAM might wish to partner with other congregations on local projects that provide food, or housing in church buildings, or simply street gutters in the neighborhood.

There are also non-faith-based organizations who seek to provide food for those who do not have enough. A great website sponsored by the National Agricultural Library, a part of the National Department of Agriculture. Find names and addresses of organizations by searching for https://www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/hunger-relief-organizations

Check with your faith community organization to find serving opportunities. Here are some from the Lutherans.

Lutheran Immigration

The work of the ELCA through Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service

includes responding to people caught in conflict and facing persecution, advocating for their needs and interests, helping people access resources for basic human needs, working with foster care programs for minors, legal assistance, developing new and innovative service programs and partnerships, and much more. https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Immigration-and-Refugee-Services

Welcoming America

Welcoming America is a secular not-for-profit organization focused on providing resources that assist immigrants to blossom in their early days in the USA.
https://welcomingamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Welcoming-America-Brochure.pdf

Disaster Response

Every disaster is local. Because of this, every response needs to be rooted in the community. Faith Communities need to accompany that community from immediate relief through long-term recovery. Below are some organizations worthy of support

Lutheran Disaster Response

https://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development/Lutheran-Disaster-Response

Red Cross

Find local location
https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html
Blood donation: Individual or Hosting a Bloodmobile
https://www.redcrossblood.org/
Training classes: CPR, First Aid, AED and more
https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class

CPR and First Aid Training online

There is a cost for individual courses plus has a group discount
https://cprcare.com

Women's Shelter

See Appendix L for a brief definition of abuse that was retrieved from the National Domestic Violence Hot line.

www.thehotline.org

Homeless Shelter

Information on local issues surrounding homelessness can be easily secured by web-search. A brief description of the issue can be found in Appendix M. This description is a part of a larger study from the National Alliance to End Homelessness that can be found at https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in- america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/

A Local Children's Hospital

Ranking of children's hospitals in the USA. Are you near one of them? https://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/pediatric-rankings

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Chapter Eight
Planting the Seed
Opportunities to ***be*** Served

Jane Thibault, a clinical gerontologist and professor emerita of Family and Geriatric Medicine at University of Louisville, began a presentation with this simple question. "In the Jewish tradition there is a special birthday blessing: May you live to 120 years old. Now," she continued, "If you heard that wish, would it for you a blessing or a curse?" Few said "Blessing." More said that it was a curse. The largest group said "it is a blessing" but with a caveat. "It would be a blessing if I kept my mind." "It would be a blessing if I had those who I love living with me." "It would be a blessing if…." (Thibault, 2000) But in truth, the experience of aging does not work that way. In our culture, aging continually showers us with loss and few gains. We might try to hang on to what we have, the status quo, but age creeps into our lives taking away many, if not all the things that matter most.

Strangely, it seems hard for many older adults to allow themselves to be served. These persons seem to fall into two groups.

First is the overly dependent. These cling to the people providing the service that is needed. There may be the incessant phone calls, the manipulation of guilt trips and the cries that they are but a victim that testify that they are dependent on others outside the self for safety and for providing what is needed to live. Perhaps it is because of an inferiority complex that has served them well over the years to gain what they want.

Perhaps it is the fear brought about by having so much of their selves taken away by the experience of aging. Perhaps, through the strength of others, they feel some sort of control or power over the helplessness that they encounter. It is important for them to say, "I don't want to be a burden," but they are wanting, even needing to be a burden. They don't want to be a burden out of fear that they will, through their need, lose their relationship with the person whom they see as being powerful and capable, which they are no longer. To add fuel to the fire, in the depth of their being (their spirituality), they deny that

they are loved, can be loved, or even are worthy of love. For if they allowed themselves to be loved, they would reveal to others, but mostly to themselves, that they are vulnerable and afraid and less than what they perceive that they need to be. These persons are hard to serve.

But then is the opposite of the overly dependent: **the stubborn independent and even prideful**. These people firmly say things like "I don't want to leave my house" and "I can get along fine by myself. I always have and I always will." But clinging to being independent (whatever that means) can be hiding behavior driven by the same fear as those who are overly dependent.

Something deep inside says that they will become less if they show any weakness. There is a voice that whispers that they must be in control because if they are not, disaster will come crashing down with a vengeance. Who will be in charge? Whom can they trust? Who will be 'there' for them? Fearfully, tricking themselves to believe it, they charge ahead like Teddy Roosevelt at San Juan Hill. These are the people who rail at chronic conditions, first denying that they even exist and then fighting them with everything they have, perceiving them as untrustworthy, life-stealing adversaries. These are the people who refuse to be loved even though even though they yearn for it, thirst for it, for to be loved means that they must become more transparent and vulnerable than their pride and fear can endure. These are also people who are hard to serve.

Why is it so hard for a person to accept the fact that they are loved? One would think that to be loved would be the greatest of news. But to be loved means that we must accept our need to be loved, our need to be accepted, our need to be embraced as a person of worth despite the voices in their head that suggest otherwise.

Thus, the first and most important step towards being our true selves, the way that we were created, is to accept our powerlessness. The first and foremost pathway to intimacy with God is to allow ourselves to be who we really are. This allows us hope in the future, transcendence beyond that which ails us and through it all, find meaning in a meaningless world. We can embrace the fact that we are powerless and that much of our life is beyond our control. This is the truth that the experience of aging challenges us to accept.

Our childhood points to the way of authenticity, teaches us that we are not in charge, we cannot be in charge, and that is OK because that is who we are. But childhood also has a secret that leads to authentic living. The weakness of childhood causes us

to look around for the One who is indeed powerful, is indeed compassionate, is indeed loving. We all like children's sermons because the message seems so simple and straightforward. During the next children's sermon that you hear, listen to how the children respond. The young get it. They are not afraid to trust in something that they cannot experience with their five senses. They do not question the love that comes from that which is beyond, that which can embrace us in our authenticity, even if that means loving what we don't love within ourselves. The knowledge of this darker part of ourselves enters only as we begin to think rather than simply experience.

So, if the child of our past can be OK with being vulnerable and powerless, if the child of our past can be OK with the fact that we are less that what we believe we need to be, if the child of our past were ready to trust in the One who is beyond, who has the power and uses that power on our behalf, then why can't we embrace what we already know? I cannot, but God can.

Viktor Frankl was a Viennese psychiatrist and a deep observer of the human person. He was also a survivor of Auschwitz and the "final solution" that killed millions. He

was indeed a person who experienced the worst of suffering. Upon entry to the camp he watched as his wife was "sent to the showers to freshen up." He experienced starvation, forced labor, degradation, all that inhumanity could throw at him. And yet he not only survived but he learned. Auschwitz became a macabre laboratory that verified what he had understood in the years before he was arrested and imprisoned. What he had come to believe, his experience at Auschwitz proved to him: A person who has discovered meaning in one's live can withstand anything that life might bring. (Frankl, 1959, 2017)

Remember, the OAM Program Areas are vehicles through which a person engages and perhaps enhances their Ultimate Meaning (their spirituality). The spiritual needs of the human person are for intimacy, transcendence, hope, and discovering penultimate meaning, all of which sculpts their Ultimate Meaning, their spirituality.

For videos of Viktor Frankl sharing his thoughts on topics of interest go to YouTube and search for "Viktor Frankl." To view the video, Wi-Fi is needed.

Living as the persons we are, not as the persons that we want ourselves and others to see, is living authentically. Authenticity arrives as

we embrace our powerlessness over our lives, acknowledging that we are not in charge. But at the same instant, we know that God has made us to be more than our powerlessness and need. The recognition that we are also created in the image of God, "a little lower than the angels," attests to the fact that no matter what our state of being at the moment, no matter how deep the challenge cuts, no matter how long the journey through this time-in-life might be, that we have an opportunity to be served and thus an opportunity to be loved.

Viktor Frankl told this story about a man who came to him with severe depression over the death of his wife of 65 years. The man shared his story with tears after which Doctor Frankl asked, "Would you have preferred to have died first and left your wife to continue living?" "Oh no," the man replied. "For if I died before she did, she would have been overcome with grief and pain." "So, by your wife dying first you have saved her from grief and pain." "Yes," the man said, and his depression and pain left him. He had found meaning in his grief. (Kimble, 1999)

Persons with acute or chronic conditions have the option of embracing their condition or denying it, or wallowing in it. It all comes down to one's ability and willingness to allow themselves to be loved, and to allow that love to permeate their soul. They can discover the newness that God brings by looking for the new opportunity that their present condition brings. One hopes they can use the faith that has supported them throughout the years and live as resurrection people, proclaiming that life can even come out of death. They can allow themselves to become aware of the presence of God that has always and is always present, that love is real and can be trusted, and to stop running from suffering or denying its existence. **This is God's grace, God's intent, God's gift to us that sculpts us into who we are.** This perspective on our lives is the way we live authentic lives, the life that we really need to live, want to live, are born to live.

Consider these passages of hope.

> Now what can we say about these things: If God is for us, who is against us? God who did not withhold the only son, but gave him up for us all, will God not with [Jesus] also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who

indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? No, in all these things we are more that conquers through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (*Romans 8:31-39, RSV)*

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed. (*Romans 8:18 NRSV*)

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that the Holy Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. *(Romans 8:26-27 NRSV)*

We know that all things work towards good for those who love God. *(Romans 8:28 NRSV)*

So, we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what we cannot see; for what we can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. *(2 Corinthians 4:16-18 NRSV)*

Therefore, to keep from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this that it would leave me, but he said to me: "My power is sufficient for you, for [my] power is made perfect in weakness. So, I will boast more in my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, I am strong. *(2 Corinthians 12: 7-10 NRSV)*

"No disaster strikes except by permission of Allah. And whoever believes in Allah – He will guide his heart. And Allah is Knowing of all things..."[Quran 64: 11]

And be patient, [O Muhammad ﷺ], and your patience is not but through Allah. And do not grieve over them and do not be in distress over what they conspire. Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good." [Quran 16: 127-128]

"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."[Quran 2: 153]

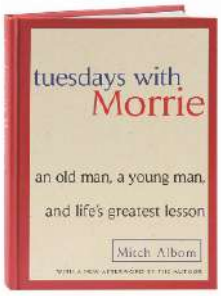
Experience cold or heat, pleasure or pain. These experiences are fleeting; they come and go. Bear them patiently. - Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita.

The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. - Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita.

Do everything you have to do, but not with greed, not with ego, not with lust, not with envy but with love, compassion, humility and devotion. - Lord Krishna, Bhagavad Gita.

Possible Programs – Opportunities to Be Served

Group Book Study



If the person with a chronic condition is not able to come to church for a book study, consider bringing the book study to the person and allow them to be host. The host does not need to do everything for the group, but the host can do what they can do. Perhaps the host can make reminder calls by using phone or email or text. Perhaps someone else will have to do this. Perhaps this person can lead the study, or offer coffee and goodies, or provide a clean house. But perhaps those tasks can be shared with someone from the group linking with the host. NOTE: If the person with a chronic condition has difficulty reading, many of the books from Amazon.com have the book of audio CD. These Audio CDs can also help if the person does not want a crowd but would still like to "read" the books.

Suggestions of Books to Study

Man's Search for Meaning. Viktor Frankl

Tuesdays with Morrie. Mitch Albom. An old man, a young man, and life's greatest lesson.

Two Old Women. Velma Wallis. An Alaskan legend of two old women experiencing betrayal, courage and survival. (A hidden gem)

Suffering and the Heart of God. Diana Langberg. How Trauma Destroys and God Restores.

Study and discuss each of the quotes from Viktor Frankl or from the Bible as noted above.

Have conversations of faith using a spiritual assessment tool as a guide

This resource can be used individually by persons with chronic conditions independently, used as a conversation starter or guide by a friendly visitor, or even utilized by a group. While each participant could complete the form by themselves and then share it with others, I think that it would be more effective if the tool were discussed item by item and everyone then completes the assessment. When the assessment is completed, individuals might share what they have discovered about themselves and their relationship with God and others.

Appendix O contains a detailed spiritual assessment form that has been used pastors, Stephen's Ministers and friendly visitors. Consider each question, sharing with each other your responses and why
you made them.

Write an Ethical Will

An ethical will is a Jewish tradition in which we will to others what we have learned throughout our lives, what we value, believe, and what we know from experience. In an ethical will we do not bequest our stuff, but rather ourselves.

The first step would be to select a person to whom you would wish to provide something of yourself. Then, using the form in Appendix R as a guide, write what you would like this special person to consider integrating within their own life-perspective. A person might intend that one general ethical will be given to all beneficiaries. Or one might go to the effort of choosing what value, belief, and attitude to give based upon the personal needs of their loved ones. Many persons wish that these wills be read

after death. Some give them as Christmas presents or at important dates such as a grandchild's 18th birthday.

Ethical wills can be developed individually by simply giving the form found in Appendix R and allow the person to complete it as desired. Another method could be when the visitor and the home-centered person fill out their personal forms together, sharing comments and questions. The ethical will could also be a group exercise with everyone completing their ethical wills and then sharing it with the rest of the group if they wish to.

Encourage doing important tasks
Often persons with a chronic condition feel sidelined and out of the loop. Possibly, before the onset of their present challenge, they may have been active in the church, a leader, a teacher, a member of the choir, even a home visitor. Now they are stuck at home. Now their energy is low, or mobility is difficult. But there are tasks that a person at home can still provide the congregation. Hopefully, those listed below will spark your creativity to develop more.

Staffing the Church Phone in the Evenings.
As the support staff of a synagogue in Fullerton, California left for the day, they forwarded the church telephone to the phone of a home-centered person thus allowing the synagogue phone to always be answered by a human being.

Provide the Means for Faith Community Worship
In my California congregation we had a "Praise Worship" on Sunday Mornings. That was a time before projection of PowerPoint slides was available. So we used narrow 3-ring binders to hold not only our liturgy (worship form) but copies of the Scripture for the Day and words and music every praise song. It was a huge task, but six older adults stepped up and came each week for coffee/tea, donuts, and work. The congregation could not have provided such a worship experience without their help. It was essential.

Make reminder calls regarding congregational events
Divide up the phone list of members of a specific ministry within your faith community or even your entire community. Many home centered persons can still talk on the phone. What if they became the person(s) who kept members

of the prayer group up to date with those who need prayer?

Make a video where they share their spiritual journey.
A special video can be used as Christmas Presents or even at one's funeral or memorial service. Provide a list of questions that can be used to interview the home-centered person so that they might review the list, discarding any question that they would rather not discuss. The book, *Remembering Your Story* by Richard Morgan, contains a list of questions which can be given to the person prior to the day of videoing so that the person can cross out any questions that they would not like to be asked or add questions of interest that are not in the list.

Provide Worship in the Home

The Friendly Companion or the Pastor encourages a home-centered person to allow a contingent from the church to bring the worship experience to their home. An altar care person can set up an altar in the home-centered person's living room. Hymnals or printed copies of the liturgy are brought. The hymns are sung acapella or accompanied by an easily transported musical instrument. Lectors read the assigned readings. The pastor provides a brief comment on the Scripture. The choir sings an anthem. Everyone shares in the liturgy, filling the room with the joy of the community of faith. And, of course, the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is celebrated.

Sunday Worship or certain educational event on the Internet

Faith Communities throughout the country have discovered providing worship via Facebook, Zoom, or Streaming. Continue to use the skills that have been learned to enter the homes of the home centered. Putting a small group such as a Bible study online is very effective. A group in which I participate includes a person who moved from the area via Zoom. We used a member's laptop and since our location does not have Wi-Fi accessibility, we a "hot spot" was purchased from a member's cell phone provider. An inexpensive external speaker for the computer was then secured so that the all participants can be heard by everyone.

Hold a Friendly Dinner Group in the home of a home-centered person (a description of Friendly Dinner Groups can be found in "Possible Programming Ideas" in Chapter 5E: Community Building).

Discuss some of the Thoughts of Viktor Frankl in a group or one to one. (See Attachment J).

Compassion Fatigue Test. This document gives a snapshot of the degree to which a caregiver is developing fatigue in providing care to a loved one. It can be simply given to a caregiver or completed in a support group followed by sharing. See Appendix K for a copy. To secure a copy on line follow: http://www.valueoptions.com/providers/Education_Center/Training_Workshops/Handouts/032106/032106_Compassion_Fatigue_Test_from_ACE.pdf

Consider having an OAM planning group meeting in a home-centered person's home. Many home-centered persons have physical conditions, but they still possess the ability to envision, plan and even implement effective programs. Including home-centered persons in the planning process can be a powerful way for the entire planning group to develop ministries that acknowledge the sense of being powerless in one's life, and how the reality of being powerless affects their attitudes and behaviors. In addition, it is obvious that the inclusion of a home-centered program in planning can provide a deeper and more effective exploration of opportunities to be served. Just be aware of the host's possible limitations in meeting etiquette's expectations, such as cleaning, providing refreshments and so on.

Review "Practical Ideas for Life Learning Events" in Chapter 6 for learning options that would be effective in exploring this spiritual need.

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Chapter Nine
Planting the Seed
Community Building

Churches do a lot of community building. Be it a potluck or a sit-down dinner, be it Octoberfest or simply a coffee pot after worship, a little time and effort can provide a way to gather people where they all can learn some new names and informally develop friendships. Community is built through shared experience, especially through events filled with a high sense of corporate meaning. Hopefully, every service of worship is one of those community-forming events of shared experience of deep meaning. Yet any event can be -- and potentially is -- a community building experience, be it a church council meeting or a Bible study. All that is needed is a group of persons willing to share, not only their names, but something of themselves.

Think of the deep community that is built though small groups who gather each month or week for a close encounter with God, and thus with others. Community is built when people share of themselves with another. Best friends are not made instantly. Best friends are made slowly, often with fear and trembling as lives are shared; friendship grows out of acceptance and celebration. Community is built by people coming together as friends and sharing of themselves, and not just doing a common task.

Just about every suggestion in chapters 5 through 11 can be created to foster many goals, one of which could be community building. But each event needs to provide an opportunity for everyone to share of self and hear others share as well. There can be a time of bonding through fun events, laughter, and joy but the real issue is whether there are ways for intentional interaction. The interaction does not have to be deep and intimate. It might simply be time to learn another's name or to share favorite foods. For example, a potluck is fun but by simply adding a small sign with the donor's name (and perhaps the recipe or their email address so others can secure the recipe), could turn this popular event into a community building

event.

Community can even be built when a committee meeting, even with a full, demanding agenda, takes time for everyone to 'check in,' sharing something of their personal life with one another. This sharing of person to person is not only community building; it even fosters the completion of tasks since everyone knows each other better, and even "dumb ideas" are considered. This cooperative attitude by members happens because community was built…*intentionally*.

It was Martin Luther who once said, "I am so busy that today I need to spend three hours in prayer" (Luther 2017). I know of an Episcopal church with a monthly, two-hour vestry meeting (church council) which begins with at least a half hour of sharing personal concerns, followed by Eucharist, Holy Communion. The rector (pastor) of the church says that they never continue beyond the two- hour limit for each meeting. They never experience conflict because it is hard to be at odds with another with whom one has just shared the intimacy of Eucharist.

In the same way, the program which follows the monthly senior luncheon could always begin with a simple sharing of some personal concern or life-event or funny anecdote by each person who wishes to speak. If possible, have a microphone available so that everyone can hear even when a shy person speaks softly. If your group is large, ask them to find a person that they do not know well. Once paired up, tell them to share their name, some simple family details, and one embarrassing moment that they have experienced.

Community is built, not by being in proximity with another, but in sharing with one another. For example, the coffee pot after worship is intended to build community, but do worshippers really talk with someone who is not a member of the same group of friends that will go out for breakfast when the fellowship time is over? We might get to know a person's name, but then what? The conversation often begins with "How are you today?" to which the expected reply is "Fine, how are you." Woe to the person who hears "I am not that well today" because they might have responded with some words other than a simple "Glad to hear it."

At the coffee pot, community can be built by being aware of isolated persons and asking them to join with you and your friends. Another way that a coffee pot community can be created is by occasionally distributing pieces of paper to worshippers as they get their refreshments, encouraging them to gather with their color group for that day. A topic such as "In your opinion what was the most helpful part of today's sermon?" or "What touched you in today's scripture reading?" could be written on the card as a suggested topic for conversation. This strategy could also be used at senior luncheons with the cards being distributed at the door. Be sure that everyone knows that this is a special day, not to be repeated each week. We do not want to break up the gathering of friends. Yet maybe getting to know other members of the church is also important.

Possible Community Building Events

Appoint a task group of seniors to plan and then implement a service of worship. May is Older American Month, so it would be appropriate for older adults to lead in worship some week. Small groups could be formed with one group working on music, such as prelude and recessional or a choral anthem. This group would also choose hymns and even consult with the choir director regarding the anthem.

A second group could choose the Scriptures assigned for the day or they could or they might choose their own Bible passages based on a common theme.

A sermon group could expand on the theme, first brainstorming thoughts, and ideas, choosing the preacher and even sharing in the preparation of the sermon.

Another group might choose to change the entire worship experience that morning to focus on what older adults bring to the congregation. Why not use some old, 'traditional' form of liturgy that was used in their younger years? The possibilities are endless, but such an event would indeed be worth remembering. Such an event could be community building.

Support a community not-for-profit organization. The older adults could begin by choosing a not-for-profit organization each year for everyone to support with their time, talent, and money. Such a decision could be powerful not only as a social ministry outreach but as a community-building event.

What about sponsoring a stewardship dinner? Both older and younger people could share the tasks, including doing the cooking and clean up. A creative event could be developed using one of the offertory prayers that is a part of most liturgical congregations. A speech could be written, a play either using actors or a reader's theatre-style could be developed and shared. This play could be the sermon for the day.

Using your web browser (Google, Yahoo, Explorer, etc.), search for

- *Stewardship Plays*. There are some great video plays and personal talks using YouTube.
- *Skits of Giving and Serving*. Many short skits (probably meant for worship) plus longer videos for group meetings.

What about producing a short play on topics that are needful in your church? The "cast" could present the play at an OAM event before or after it is presented a Sunday worship experience. Many of the skits below have a small charge and perhaps need permission from the publisher. You might want a producer to gather needed items and sets and a director to keep the chosen actors focused.

http://www.church-skits.com has a great number of skit scripts on a wealth of Christian topics and Bible stories

http://www.skits-o-mania.com also has a wealth of scripts from a more "secular" perspective.

Sponsor a church cleanup day, choosing spring-cleaning of the church campus or a sight within the community, or even adopt a stretch of public road to keep clean. An OAM could participate in a community event such as beach cleaning or removing trash from a local park. Don't forget to wear

clothing that identifies that the participants are from your OAM.

Sponsor No Host Small Group Dinners. Groups should be no larger than six persons. A potluck could be organized. The couple, or a couple of friends, providing the location could be exempt from providing food. Or the small group could choose a restaurant for their meal.

Sponsor a Senior Luncheon is the most popular style of OAM event. This works if you have personnel to make the lunch. If so, leftovers are helpful so that some of the transitional elders can take home another meal. If no one is available to cook, try securing items for sandwiches and serve those items buffet style for each to make their own sandwich. A third option is buying food from a local vendor.

Often these events have a speaker on a special topic. Look at program ideas in Chapter Six, Lifelong Learning, for suggestions. The event could also be an opportunity for skits to be shared. Another thought would be to provide a simple script for all and to act out the skit spontaneously, without rehearsal. All mistakes and gaffs could just be a part of the fun.

If you have wi-fi access in the room where the luncheon is held, and a large screen capability like a large flat screen or an LCD projector, search YouTube for interesting items such as “Humor,” or “Fun Young Children” or even “comparative religion” just to name a few. Ask your participants what they would enjoy or use your own imaginations.

And what about giving more active persons an “opportunity to serve” by cooking, setting up or cleaning up, or perhaps providing transportation for transitional and even some frail persons.

And don’t forget spiritual development with a simple devotion with some familiar old hymns or songs, surrounding a reading from the book “Autumn Wisdom,” which can be viewed and purchased at https://willowgreen-inc.myshopify.com/collections/transition-aging/products/healing-meditations. In fact, Willowgreen has many video and book resources regarding aging which, with little creativity,

can become a powerful tool.

An OAM Talent Show is obvious but a lot of fun. There must be enough "hams" with your OAM to produce a wonderful event for all. I remember having talent shows at a retirement community where a partner and I sang "There's a Hole in the Bucket." For lyrics see https://www.google.com/search?q=there%27s+a+hole+in+the+bucket+dear+liza+lyrics&sxsrf=ALeKk002qZREJvhzXlS0W3Vv_nub-ESZnA%3A1627329225499&ei=yRL_YP_3HZqz0PEPmo-v6Ao&oq=there&gs_lcp=Cgdnd3Mtd2l6EAEYADIFCAAQkQIyBAgAEEMyBAgAEEMyBwgAEIcCEBQyBwguEIcCEBQyBAguEEMyBQgAELEDMgUILhCxAzIECC4QQzIFCAAQsQM6BAgjECc6BQguEJECOgQILhAnOgIILjoICC4QsQMQgwE6CgguEMcBEK8BEEM6AggASgQIQRgAUIHGAVjBygFgnuYBaABwAngAgAGYBIgByAiSAQcxLjQuNS0xmAEAoAEBwAEB&sclient=gws-wiz

Design T-shirts that advertise the existence of your OAM. They could be sold at cost. If you have the budget, give them away. Encourage members to wear them when they go to the grocery store, etc., not only to OAM events. The more people in the community that know of your OAM the better. Designing the T-shirts can also be a group building experience. By searching for "T-Shirts" on the internet, you will find lots of options from designing them yourself to choosing a design from any number of sources. You might also consider bumper or other stickers.

Chapter Ten
Nurturing the Seed
Finance and Stewardship

We are born into a culture that is defined by money. We all need it. We all seek it. We all want to keep it. We all are dependent on it for life and living. We all need it to feel secure in our futures. That is the American way, a culture based on capitalism that rewards success and productivity, skill, and sacrifice.

Because of culture's emphasis upon money and the possession of it, older adults can be at a disadvantage. As Lynne Twist notes in her wonderful book, *The Soul of Money*:

> "Whether we look at money in the context of our personal or family lives, the workplace, or in the health and welfare of nations, the same picture emerges: Money is the universally motivating, mischievous, miraculous, maligned and most misunderstood part of contemporary life… Rather than relating to money as a tool we created and control, we have come to relate to money as if it is a fact of nature, a force to be reckoned with. This stuff called money, mass produced tokens or paper bills with no more inherent power than a notepad or a Kleenex, has become the single most controlling force in our lives. Money only has the power we assign to it, and we have assigned to it immense power. We have given it almost final authority. If we look only at behavior, it tells us that we have made money more important that we are, given it more meaning that human life. Humans have done and will do terrible things [to others and to themselves] in the name of money [brackets mine]. (Twist, Lynne 2003 pp. 7-8).

Money, whether we have it or we don't, is not the problem. The problem is how we see ourselves when we have or do not have money. Paul, in the Christian Scriptures, notes "The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil." (1 Timothy 6:10). It is not the money. It is the love of money. It is the irrational seeking of money that traps people, telling them that they are worthy or worthless, a person of power or weakness, one who is a success or a failure. This is one of the insidious messages that our money-driven culture imposes, not only upon older adults, but

anyone of any age.

The fear that we do not have enough money often results in a feeling of vulnerability. Most Americans will do just about anything not to feel vulnerable or at least not to show others that they are vulnerable. Many cover that feeling through anger, resentment and even a lashing out at others, keeping the issue outside-of-self instead of looking within themselves. “It is my company’s fault that I am in this mess.” “If the economy just had not tanked then we would be OK.” “People like me, the little people, cannot get ahead in this economy.” Some of that anger might even be poured out onto any innocent person who is perceived a safe target. But the vulnerability remains, the guilt remains, the sense of helplessness remains, whether we wish to own up to it or not.

THE THREE TOXIC MYTHS ABOUT MONEY

If you believe that there is not enough money to last the rest of your life, it might mean that you have accepted one or more of what Lynne Twist describes as the three toxic myths of money. Perhaps these myths (I prefer to call them “lies”) are what bring anxiety and even depression within your being. The Three Toxic Myths/Lies are: 1) There is not Enough; 2) More is Better, and 3) That is Just the Way it is.” (Twist, Lynne (2003) pp. 48-55).

Lie #1: There is not Enough

Fear of not having enough money is based upon a belief that there is not enough money to go around and thus the money one has must be protected and even hoarded. This lie about money suggests that financial viability is a matter of the survival of the fittest and the strongest. It fosters the belief that when it comes to money everyone is on their own. Are not squirrels praised for gathering nuts for the coming winter when there are none to be found? Is it not prudent for every person to have a 401K as a hedge against being destitute in one’s older years? Shouldn’t older adults be prudent with their wealth since they are on a ‘fixed income?” Money does not grow on trees, right?

And yet, approaching financial issues from a belief in scarcity, from a belief that “there is not enough” can be debilitating and life-crushing. Lynne Twist describes this lie as playing musical chairs where participants compete for a chair knowing that there is always one less than the number of players. Part of the fun of musical chairs is in the anxiety that is produced, which is fine for playing a game, but not so much fun in real life. The fear of not having enough often drives people to

desire more, seek more. It often causes them to perceive that their financial situation is worse than it really is. Sometimes it might be expressed through a feeling of being less-than because one is not capable of providing for family or self.

I have met residents in retirement communities who continually fret over not having enough money to live on but then, after they died, have left large sums to obscure family members. I remember one older adult who felt so insecure with her money that she did not allow herself the one luxury she craved: That of going to the hairdresser once a week. To address her problem, maybe she should call her financial advisor and have a profit and loss statement made that would determine the number of years before investments and social security to run out. But for others the fear of not having enough is emotional and spiritual, not rational, and thus cannot be lessened by cognitive means alone. Fear of not having enough money, believing in scarcity which is our cultural perspective on life, threatens our ego, promotes guilt, and creates unfulfilled desires. Some attitudes about money are simply toxic.

Lie #2: More is Better

A wealthy person is asked, "In your view, at what point will you have enough money?" The person's simple reply is "When I have just a little more." A little more and I will feel safe. Just a little more and I can relax. But remember the parable of the rich man who built new barns to store his bumper crop. Jesus didn't describe him as sinner but a fool. How much has our culture fostered a driving need for accumulation, getting more to have enough? How often do we feel we are like the proverbial hamster running on a wheel and not getting any place? It is said when our worth, our "success" is based on how much we have and how much we can hang on to, our soul is threatened.

In the Christian Scriptures, Jesus said, "A man's worth is not in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15). Do people really need or even want everything that they have? One of the pains of entering a retirement community is that residents need to downsize their living space and thus must get rid of all sorts of things that they have accumulated over the years. But much of what some would call "stuff" is not stuff in the eyes of the older adult. Instead, each item is fraught with memories, even meaning and value. Things are not just things. They are symbols of stability, of intimacy, items that help us cope by evoking memories of the past that at least

make the present better and the future less foreboding. If this is your perspective, it is understandable that you believe that more is better; to have is to be secure.

However, there are others who see the process of downsizing as an unburdening.

Unburdening can be a spiritual truth that can weed out the unneeded so that we might embrace the freedom that this load-removing process creates. When the task is complete, when the resident has moved into a smaller home, they are surrounded by the core of their lives, having kept those things that are the most meaningful and fulfilling in their eyes. Gone might be the Van Gogh but remaining are the photos of grandchildren and the wedding pictures that always bring a smile. “It doesn’t take as long to clean the house” exclaims one. “A few years ago,” another said, “I was awakened by a small earthquake. Immediately I thought of my collection of music boxes. But then I remembered that I had given them of them to my family, so I rolled over and went back to sleep.” What did Porgy sing in Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess: “I’ve got plenty of nothin’ and nothin’s plenty for me.” For many older adults those can be vital but challenging words to live by.

Lie #3: That is Just the Way it is

Like Lie #2 above, Lie #3 is also the result of a belief in scarcity. This third lie says that we are stuck where we are and that there is nothing that can be done to change it. People might say, “I don’t have enough money and I don’t know what to do. I feel immobile, angered by forces beyond my abilities and control.” Or they may seek sympathy saying, “I am the victim of forces outside of myself.” Without money I have no power to change my situation. I can’t start over again like a younger person can do. I am just stuck with what I have, which is practically nothing.”

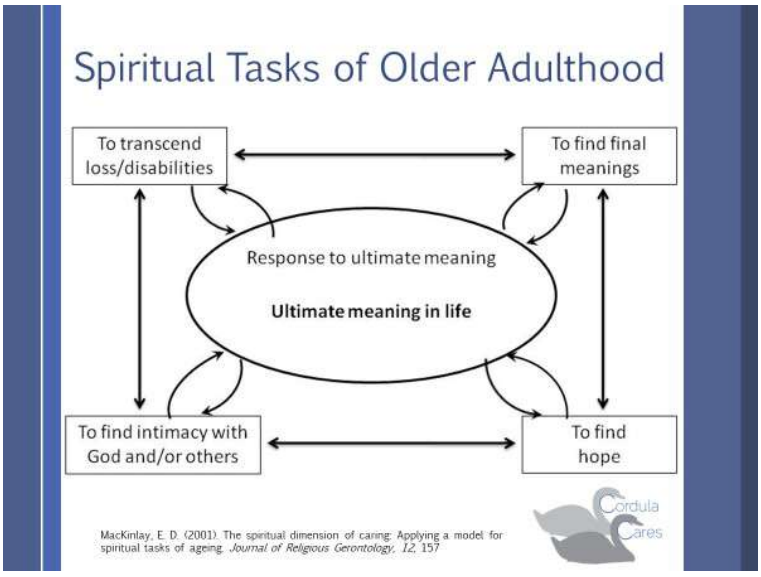
That there is no way out of a money crunch can be logical and supported by what is seen and experienced by older persons. If a person has a hearing deficit, they feel left out of conversations. If a person is stricken with macular degeneration, there is nothing that can be done but resign oneself to living a life that is less-than. If I don’t have enough money, I am a failure. And it is this resignation, this inability to see beyond the present situation, that makes a person feel hopeless, helpless, and cynical.

Enter Our Spiritual Needs

We can look at our situation differently by exploring what we continue to have, not what we do not have. Wealth does not have to require more money than what we already have. The resources that we have can be more than money. They can be meaning, love, giving, living positively and the readiness to receive more such riches.

Remember the four spiritual needs: intimacy, transcendence, meaning and hope? (Chapter 4). Why isn't money on the list? Because money, which is culture's idea of what is important, is a servant not a definer. Money might provide comfort but if we determine that the size of our assets determines how valid we are as a person we can be in big trouble. Remember Jesus when he said, "Why do you worry, saying 'What shall we drink? or What shall we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But strive first for the Kingdom of God and all these things will be yours as well." (Matthew 6: 31-33). Are we going to be defined by how much we have or by who we are?

Older Adults would be helped if they explored these spiritual needs within the context of their need for money. To have money is important. To engage spiritual needs is more important. That we have wealth is in the eye of the beholder. What is rich to one might be poor to another. Remember the last scene in that classic movie *It's a Wonderful Life*? When Harry Bailey, a war hero, returns to George's house and sees the crowd and the joy of his brother's friends even though that brother's house is still old and decrepit, and he still has huge money problems, smiles and declares, "To my big brother, the richest man in town!"



Such is the power of fulfilling the four spiritual needs of the human person. Remember the iconic speech made by Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees on his last day in baseball? He was stricken with ALS (which now bears

his name) and struggling with the effects of this terrible disease. Gehrig said, “I am the richest man in the world.” Older adults can envision light at the end of the tunnel even if they can see no light. Wealth is more than dollar signs and so “That’s the Way it is” does not have to be defining for today or tomorrow.

Finance and the Scriptures

Our money is not ours. Money is only a symbol of that which comes from what God has created and for which he made us to be guardians. Money is but a piece of paper, or a coin, that people agree has worth, but ultimately, everything comes from the earth that surrounds us. All our blessings come from God, the Creator of all things.

Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 is one creation account. Genesis 2:4-25 is a second. Both declare that God is creator and thus owner of all the surrounds us.

Therefore, all our blessings are not really ours. We work and receive money, but all our blessings originate in God and God’s creation. Money, as a symbol, as an incarnation of our labor, is only one of God’s blessings. But when money itself becomes the symbol of our worth, of our value, of our very being, then our money is destructive to our person, our souls.

Can money bring us a sense of control and transcendence over the challenges of life? Perhaps in the short run. Yet ultimately money deserts us because it is finite. Money keeps us focused on what we can see, taste, feel, hear, smell. Only the spiritual in life sees beyond the empirical. Money can’t really rescue us from feeling and being vulnerable. Vulnerability and powerlessness are an expression of our humanity, and thus they only trick us into believing that with money we are safe. Perhaps it is our money, whether we have it or not, that we need to transcend! Remember when Jesus laments “And Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Truly, I say to you, it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.’” (Matthew 19:23-24). It isn’t that money makes the person sinful, but that money can distract a person from what is important in life.

Can money, or even what money brings, give us a sense of meaning. Certainly, it can bring us a sense of achievement, allowing us to feel secure what we can

see, touch, taste, hear and smell. But can it bring meaning, a sense of purpose? Does money fill that deep hole, that loneliness, that is so much a part of our lives? In his book, *Money and Power*, Jacques Ellul suggests that the only way a person can demonstrate that they are not enslaved by money is to give it away. (Ellul, 2009, page 110). The only way that we can demonstrate to ourselves that we are not trapped in the lies that our need for money promotes is to give it away to some cause like the Salvation Army or Alzheimer's research, something that does not give back to us.

But what if a lack of money can drive us to change our attitude about money and in that act find meaning? Viktor Frankl suggested that if we can't change the situation that we are in, like being fearful that we don't have enough money, we can change our selves. (Frankl, 1959 page 112).

Can money give us hope? Again, maybe in the short run, but seeking hope from our money is like hoping we win the lottery, for which the odds are 1 in 302.6 million. A long shot at best. But understanding the role of money in the eyes of God can point us a much healthier approach to money, challenge us to seek what is important in life, thus finding a hope that lasts through God's love for us.

Can money bring us intimacy? Who fills your heart, a $100 bill, or a warm, fuzzy cat cuddling up in your lap? What fills your soul, having money, that for most of us is often more than we need, or being called "Grandma" or "Grandpa" by a smiling grandchild. Money goes away. We spend it. Money goes away. We can invest it and increase its value or provide more for the future. But money can't buy truly intimate relationships with another human being. A friend of mine signed each of her emails with the words, "Relationships are everything; everything else is secondary."

Karen Russo writes of twin girls, Positive-Little-Karen and Not-So-Positive-Little-Karen, who wake up on their tenth birthday. They are told that there is a present for them in the barn. Expecting it to be a pony they rush out to find only a pile of manure. The Not-So-Positive-Little- Karen complains about never getting anything good for her birthdays. But the Positive Twin claps her hands and exclaims: "There must be a pony here somewhere!" (Russo 2007, p. 64). There is an old cliché that reminds us that "Sh*t Happens." When life turns brown, dirty, and smelly we can

choose what the event means. We can choose only to see the pile of sh*t, or we can look for the pony. The future is open if we wish it to be.

One of the blessings of later life is coming to the realization that all the trinkets in our life have been fun to possess but not critical for us to live authentic, God-filled lives. There is more to our life than "stuff" even if that stuff is money. Personhood is found in our core beliefs, our core values, our spirituality. Our intrinsic value comes not from our checkbook but from within us as we live by what we believe and value. For some people, these beliefs and values are expressed in religion and religious practice. For others that core is articulated through music, or art, or building big buildings, or being an important cog in our country's economic machine by driving a truck or planting and harvesting food. Yes, money and the making of money is an important part of life. But is it the essential part of life?

Karen Russo says it well.

> *What we believe we experience. We have the power to choose our reactions, interpretations, attitudes, and responses to life and create the meaning that we want out of our experiences. What we do with what happens, how we respond? The attitudes that we have grow out of core beliefs. How we create meaning in our lives is "meaning-management," which is as important as "money-management."* (Russo 2007 p. 54.)

A Story about Life and Possessions

Recently a family put up a hummingbird feeder with four feeding stations. Almost immediately, it became popular with the hummingbirds that lived in the area. Two, three, or even four birds would feed at one time. The feeder would be refilled at least once a day.

Suddenly the usage decreased to almost nothing. The feeder needed filling only about once a week. The reason for the decreased usage soon became apparent. A male bird had taken over the feeder as his property. He was now the only hummingbird who used it. He would feed and then sit in a nearby tree, rising to attack any bird that approached his feeder. Guard duty occupied his every waking hour. He was an effective guard. The only time another bird got to use the feeder was when the self-appointed owner was momentarily gone to chase away another intruder. (From a sermon by Rev. Lyn Crow, Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Fullerton CA).

That hummingbird was teaching a valuable lesson. By choosing to assume ownership of the feeder, he forfeited his freedom. He was no longer free to come and go as he wished. He was tied to the work of guarding his feeder, his STUFF. He was possessed by his possessions.

The following prayer expresses much of what has been said throughout this chapter and, I believe, an appropriate stance for every older adult.

Dear God.
I am so afraid to open my clinched fists!
Who will I be when I have nothing left to hold on to?
Who will I be when I stand before you with empty hands?
Please help me to gradually open my hands and
to discover that I am not what I own,
but what you want to give me.

Henri M. M. Nouwen
(1932-1966)

POSSIBLE PROGRAMS – FINANCE AND STEWARDSHIP

A Spiritual Gift Inventory

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a wonderful spiritual gift inventory. It is designed to be completed on a computer. When the inventory is examined within the context of a discussion regarding money or stewardship, a spiritual inventory can lift a person's perspective as to what is important in their life. https://elca.org/Our-Work/Congregations-and- Synods/Faith-Practices/Spiritual-Renewal/Assessment-Tools. Complete the inventory and then copy and print the results. If this exercise is done in a group, ask the participants if they agree with the inventory results. The affirmation of others can be helpful.

Stewardship Resources

https://elca.org/Resources/Stewardship This site has loads of resources to engage participants in the use of money and money's relationship to the spiritual life. Here are some.

A Readiness Tool to Stewardship Life: A list of questions regarding the five values of stewardship to be discussed in a small group or small groups at a luncheon. *Appendix S.*

Making it Simple Learning Event (90 Minutes) At the conclusion of this event, participants will be able to:

1. Discern and describe the purview of their lives, including some ways in which they will make their lives simpler.
2. Look at simple living from a biblical perspective.
3. Value the perspective of different generations in exploring this topic.
4. Establish personal relationships with others who might want to continue the conversation and support one another.
5. Consider their giving in relationship to simple choices in their lives.
6. Name the ways their congregation finds it important to look at living and giving through the lens of our faith.

Biblical Stewardship: Three one-hour sessions for the study of the use of money. The goal of this study is to

1. To focus more on living than on giving;
2. To focus on the good news;
3. To present stewardship and giving as a privilege.

Bible Study: Commitment A stand-alone study of Paul's relationship with the Macedonians. Appendix T.

Stewardship Resources for Other Denominations

Presbyterian Church USA
https://www.pcusastore.com/AdvancedSearch/DefaultWFilter.aspx?SearchTerm=stewardship
https://www.pcusa.org/search/results/?q=stewardship
The Methodist Church
https://www.resourceumc.org/en/topics/stewardship
The Episcopal Church
https://episcopalchurch.org/posts/lifelongformation/stewardship-resources

Family of Origin Views regarding Money.

Appendix V is a list of questions designed to help participants explore where their attitudes toward money originated. Discussion in groups of four persons followed by reports on what has been learned by each group is a good way to use this resource.

Presentation on Money

Arrange for a Money Manager or a Financial Consultant to share his/her observations as to how people view wealth. Be sure to emphasize that the goal is not to sell products but to explore the meaning of money in our culture and provide a safe place for discussion. If you are Lutheran, you might wish to contact your local Thrivent office.

Book Study

Have a group study of one or more of the books found in the bibliography of this chapter. This study could happen in a home or at church. Consider different options for the group: daytime, evenings, home, church, single gender, or all gender, once per month or even every week.

Bible Study of Money in the Bible.

Deuteronomy 6:10-15	Do not forget the Lord who brought you out of Egypt.
1 Kings 3-13	Solomon asks God for wisdom not money
1 Chronicles 29:14-19	For all things come from you
Proverbs 3:5-10	Honor the Lord with your substance
Proverbs 30:7-9	Give me neither poverty nor riches
Ecclesiastes 5:10	The lover of money will not be satisfied
Psalm46:5-9	The ransom of life is costly
Malachi 3:8-12	Will anyone rob God?
Matthew 5:23-24	When you are offering your gift
Matthew 6:1-4	When you give to the needy
Matthew 6:19-21	For where your treasure is your heart will be there also.
Matthew 6:24-34	No one can serve two masters.
Matthew 19:16-26	Sell your possessions and give the money to the poor.
Mark 12:41-44	A widow came and offered two small coins
Romans 13:8-10	Love fulfills God's requirements
1 Timothy 6:17-19	Do not put your hope in wealth
James 5:1-6	Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten

your clothes

Assess Readiness for Stewardship – Appendix S

This survey intends simply to help Christian leaders assess their personal understandings of Stewardship as it relates to their lives, to others' lives, and to the church.

Bible Study on Commitment – Paul and Macedonia – Appendix T

By Rev. Serena Sellers, "Gave themselves first to the Lord." A narrative Bible Study

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Chapter Eleven
Gathering the Harvest
Putting it All Together

Finally, we can see the results of our efforts. The garden has been carefully planned. You have decided the persons you have in mind as you prepared, decided what your garden would accomplish, considered the support systems needed to make the garden a success, and chosen the right seed. We have resisted the desire to plant without plan and thus did it right. It is now the time to reap the harvest. Finally, we explored the six program needs providing strategies and resources for your Older Adult Ministry. Now, we gather the harvest of an OAM that is grounded so that everything that is picked is intended to develop the core, the spiritual nature of participants.

Organizing Your First OAM Event

Figure 1 below is a chart, the OAM Planning Guide, that is designed to aid your efforts in your harvest. This chart is also found in Appendix V. On the top right corner of the OAM Planning Guide enter the date that the OAM planning group of this "put it together" meeting so that you do not get confused later. On the top left side is where you can write your mission statement. Writing the mission statement here seems like busy work, but the task intends to remind you that your decisions indeed conform to what you hope to accomplish. Below the mission statement is room to make notations regarding the infrastructure needed to implement the decisions to be made. Then note the infrastructure needed for success (Chapter Three). Finally comes a graph to enter programming decisions.

St John by the Freeway Older Adult Ministry Date _____

Mission Statement

The Mission of the Older Adult Ministry of St. John by the Freeway is to nurture the spiritual life of older adults in our congregation and community through Spiritual Formation, Learning, Serving, Being Served, the Building of Community, and an exploration of Finance and Stewardship.

Needed Infrastructure in Place

Program

	Spiritual Formation	Learning	To Serve	To Be Served	Community Building	Finance
Target Group date:						
Target Group date:						
Target Group date:						
Target Group date:						

Figure 1

First, decide on the target group to be served (Chapter One). The target group that is chosen does not exclude anyone from the event; it only informs the focus of planning, advertising. (We will talk about advertising in Chapter Thirteen below).

Do not make a rash decision. Every target group is worthy of being addressed, which can cause a lot of discussion. Not only consider which group is the most in

need, but also consider what could be offered as a second or even a third event. It is all a matter of strategy based upon the needs of the older adults within your congregation. For this initial effort, I would suggest that the committee chooses only one target group. Remember, no one is excluded from attending the event, but one group get the focus. When this part is completed, place the name of the target group into the box on the far left of the first line of boxes. At this point your chart should look something like this:

St John by the Freeway Older Adult Ministry **Date _____**

Mission Statement
The Mission of the Older Adult Ministry of St. John by the Freeway is to nurture the spiritual life of older adults in our congregation and community through Spiritual Formation, Learning, Serving, Being Served, the Building of Community, and an exploration of Finance and Stewardship.

Needed Infrastructure: Church Council, Church Newsletter, Email List of Older Adults

	Spiritual Formation	Learning	To Serve	To Be Served	Community Building	Finance, Stewardship
Target Group date:						

Second, decide on the program category that best addresses the needs of the target group. Refer to the chapters that describe each program area: Spiritual Formation, page 63; Learning, page 79; Serving, page 96; Being Served, page 108; Community Building, page 118; and Finance and Stewardship, page 124. Again, take your time. Say, the Planning Group sees the possibility of using two programming categories for this first event, Spiritual Formation and Community Building. Note these on the chart.

Third, since the committee has chosen both Spiritual Formation and Community Building, scan the ideas relevant to the "Program Possibilities" of these program areas (Chapters Five and Ten). List possibilities for all to see. Of course, you may use any programs possibilities that are described in the chapter, but those listed should not inhibit other options that have come to light. For the first event, you

might choose a simple program that the planning group perceives to be an easy winner, the so-called low hanging fruit. In this case however, the planning group chose two categories, so one Spiritual Formation event and one Community Building option are chosen. Say the group chose a Senior Luncheon followed by Communion. Place these events in the proper box in the chart. Now, choose a date and write it on the chart. Thus your planning chart might look like this:

St John by the Freeway Older Adult Ministry **Date _____**

Mission Statement
The Mission of the Older Adult Ministry of St. John by the Freeway is to nurture the spiritual life of older adults in our congregation and community through Spiritual Formation, Learning, Serving, Being Served, the Building of Community, and an exploration of Finance and Stewardship.

Needed Infrastructure: Church Council, Church Newsletter, Email List of Older Adults, Pastor

Program Category:

	Spiritual Formation	Learning	To Serve	To Be Served	Community Building	Finance, Stewardship
Target Group Transitional date: 11-25	Communion				luncheon	

But if the group believes that there is more that should be offered to those in Transition, these items could be planned for by a second event. In our example, the planning group believes that the program of Life-Long Learning should also be a possibility; scan Chapter Six for appropriate programing ideas. Once decided, add them to the second line of boxes along with a potential date of meeting.

St John by the Freeway Older Adult Ministry **Date _____**

Mission Statement
The Mission of the Older Adult Ministry of St. John by the Freeway is to nurture the spiritual life of older adults in our congregation and community through Spiritual Formation, Learning, Serving, Being Served, the Building of Community, and an exploration of Finance and Stewardship.

Needed Infrastructure: Church Council, Church Newsletter, Email List of Older Adults, Pastor

Target Group	Spiritual Formation	Learning	To Serve	To Be Served	Community Building	Finance, Stewardship
Transitional date: 1-27-2021	Communion Closing prayer, p. 60				luncheon	
Transitional date: 2-25-2021	Closing prayer p.60	Draw Religion and Spirituality	ask people to bring dessert		eat dessert	

Now turn to the Event Planning Guide (Appendix W). Each OAM planning group member is given a copy of this form.

Event Planner

OAM Category(s):
Event Name:
Date:

Tasks to be Done	Date to be completed	Person Assigned	Date Completed
Recruit pastor to officiate at Communion	1-20-21	George	
Recruit and organize people to bring desserts	1-31-21	Shandra	

On the guide, each member writes the title of the first event, the OAM category and the date of the meeting. As the planning continues, all members complete their copy of the guide so that everyone has the tasks needed to be completed, the date the task is to be completed and the person who is assigned to this task. At the next meeting of the OAM planning group a date of the completion of the task can be entered. Be conscious that every member of the planning committee is involved.

Everyone's opinion and experience are needed for the event to be a success. Some tasks that might be considered are:

- Does the OAM need to have permission to sponsor this event?
- Is there a person or another group that should become aware of the event?
- What kind of food is going to be served?
- Is there special items and equipment needed?
- Does a special person need to be asked to participate and what does the group want them to do?
- How is the event going to be advertised (marketed)?

The OAM Planning Group can use this process to plan any OAM event. Each event should have its own Event Planning Guide and it should be kept for future reference (Appendix W).

Remember, the congregation's resources are always greater than what individual members possess. Now is not the time to be timid and unsure of yourselves. Now is the time for action, for decisions that lead to implementation and creative.

Getting Feedback

Feedback and evaluation are critical for a successful OAM. Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards." (Kierkegaard, Brainyquote.com). The OAM planning committee needs to look back to effectively move forward. The past does not enslave as much as it informs.

Feedback is secured by asking participants regarding their experiences. Note that I say, "What they have experienced" rather than "What they think." Experience is the way that ultimate beliefs are addressed. While thinking gives words, experience results in power and then, hopefully, insight, that touches the soul.

In Appendix X you will find a Participant Evaluation Form that the Planning Group might find helpful. Perhaps the group can improve it or find another that

seems to be more helpful. The form is short (half page), but it requires some thoughtful response. Provide enough time for the participants to complete the form before they leave the event. Evaluations taken home are seldom returned. Be sure to have extra pens or pencils for those who might not have one with them.

In Appendix Y you will find a longer evaluation form designed to be completed by the OAM Planning Group at their next meeting. I suggest that each member of the planning group receives a form and completes it individually before there is discussion. This strategy allows persons who are quieter and thus do not talk much to collect their thoughts and become ready to share with the entire planning group. Once the evaluation is complete, restate and summarize the most important items that the OAM planning group has learned from this event.

Now, with the overarching mission of developing and enhancing the spirituality of OAM participants and with your Mission Statement in hand, you are ready to begin the planning process and return to the beginning of this chapter. You are on your way to the next step toward developing a focused, intentional, sustainable, and effective older adult ministry.

There is a cliché that says that "you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." As with many clichés, there is truth in the statement. The OAM cannot ensure that everyone will have a deeper experience of their true self, their authenticity, see others as they are, and to walk humbly with their God. No ministry will result in fulfilling all of what is desired or intended. No, we cannot force someone to drink the water that is offered, but we can still bring them to the water. The rest is in God's hands through the work of God's Spirit and only God knows the heart and will touch those who are ready to receive what God offers through your OAM.

By addressing who God *is* in our aging and what God brings *to* our aging, we can envision our aging as not only as a continual downturn in our lives but that those very downturns give rise to the growing confidence and vision for our lives that a healthy spirituality and faith bring. The graph next page (figure 2) seeks to put this concept into a tangible form. As we have seen in both the introduction to this book, as well as Chapter 5, Spiritual Growth and Development, what if, at the

very moment that life seems to turn against us our spiritual self-lifts us higher, on the inside, as a person, rather than only being seen as a physical being that is getting old.

Age 5 10 15 25 30 35 45 55 65 75 85 95

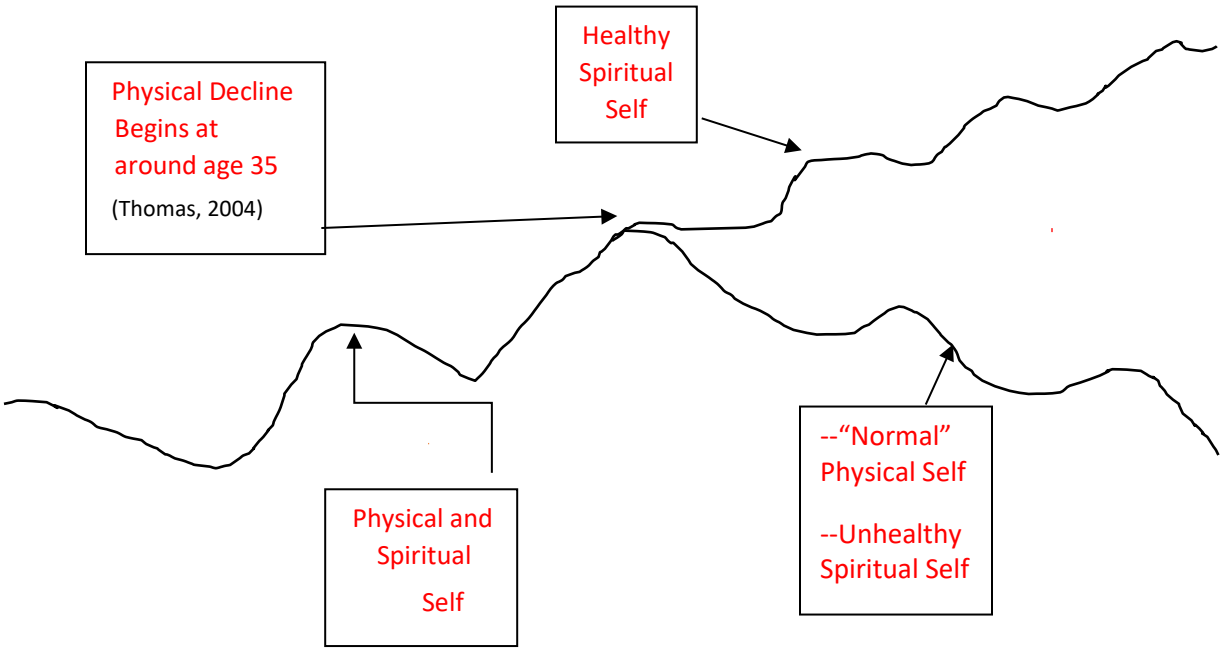


Figure 2.

Chart created by Stephen Peterson
Coalition on Spirituality and Aging

Our spiritual life does *not* have to follow what we foresee about our self as we age. What if the downturns of life can give rise to the spiritual way of life? What if our lives do not have to be filled only with the dread and a fear of the future, but can experience a new invigoration, an uplifting experience of God in our life? What if, in our aging, we can experience that God is always present with us, growing within us, challenging us to surrender our egos that have brought so much pain in our lives? What if we can discover that we can live with God in a way that God has always been beckoning us to embrace? What if the elder years of our life can really be the best years of our life because, finally, we are really to live by the core of what life has always meant to be?

Our spiritual growth is dependent on how honest we are as we reflect on our life

and relationships. Spiritual growth is dependent on how humble and willing we are to learn and change our life-perspective, resulting in becoming more transparent with God, ourselves, and those around us. Now isn't that Good News!?

Chapter Twelve
A Special Gardener
Spiritual Caregiving and Dementia

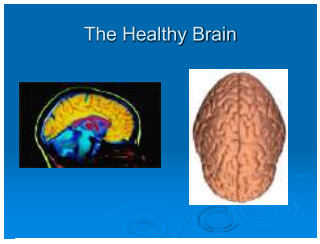
I was acting as a substitute minister for a congregation in metro-Los Angeles. As usual, I arrived early so that I could get the "feel" of the sanctuary and talk with some of those persons preparing for worship. In the rear of the sanctuary, I saw man whom I thought to be an usher unlocking doors and gathering worship materials. There was also a woman, whom I took to be his wife, sitting in the back pew. I went to greet the two of them saying “Hi” to his wife. She didn’t say anything to me, simply starring ahead. I wondered if she had dementia, so I bent low, looking into her eyes. I gently offered my hand and said, “I am Pastor Koepke. It is good to meet you.” Slowly the woman looked at me but didn’t take my hand. “Hello” she quietly said. I smiled at her, paused a bit, and then left to greet her husband. After a few moments of conversation, I left to prepare for worship. As I re-entered the worship center, I was puzzled to discover that the wife of the usher was sitting across from my seat, next to another woman. They both wore the vestments of an assisting minister.

The liturgy progressed to the point of the reading of Scripture and both women stood and walked to the reading stand that held a large Bible. The other woman announced where the passage would be found, put her finger on the Bible, and this woman, who had hardly spoken to me, read. She read with a well-developed clarity. She read with a quiet passion that revealed years of experience. And as she read, her partner repositioned her finger to the point where, I guessed, the passage assigned for the day ended. When the reading ended, they both sat down, and the woman returned to her quiet self.

Being a chaplain of a-long-term retirement community, I have had lots of encounters with people who had a dementia. But this experience was amazing! The group that was present at worship didn’t bat an eye, as if this action were a normal experience. The usher’s wife taught me to see persons with a dementia differently. At the same time, I admired the congregation for their openness and caring attitude. I never again would misjudge or minimize what a person with dementia, with the support of a caring community, could do.

I am not an expert in dementia or spiritual care for those with dementia. I write from my experience and from a personal theology and spirituality that has been shaped by the Spirit for years. But no book on the interplay between spirituality and aging is worth reading unless something is said about dementia. More than 1 in 9 people age 65 and older has Alzheimer's dementia; that's 11.3%. The percentage of people with Alzheimer's dementia increases with age: 5.3% of people age 65 to 74, 13.8% of people age 75 to 84, and 34.6% of people age 85 and older have Alzheimer's dementia. People younger than 65 can also develop Alzheimer's dementia, but it is much less common, and its prevalence is uncertain. (2021 Alzheimer's Facts and Figures p. 21)

But there are many paths to, or causes of, dementia. The Alzheimer's Association notes that Alzheimer's Disease (AD)is the major cause of dementia, accounting for 60% to 80% of all cases. Other substantial causes of dementia include cerebrovascular disease (15-20% of cases as reported by *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology,* https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/ATVBAHA.119.311908), and Lewy Body disease (15-25% as reported by Behavioral Neurology, https://www.hindawi.com/journals/bn/2018/7631951/). Lewy Body Dementia is the disease that sole away the genius of Robin Williams. The devastating depression and debilitating mental symptoms led to his taking his own life. Other less common causes of dementia include, but are not limited to, Fronto-temporal lobar degeneration, Parkinson's disease, and Hippocampal sclerosis.

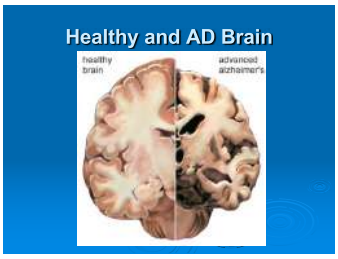


alz.org

In this book we shall focus on the most common cause, Alzheimer's Disease. Each year the association publishes a free online booklet that contains short descriptions of all the causes of dementia as well as other helpful, up-to-date information. Click the link below to secure the booklet. (www.alz.org/media/Documents/alzheimers-facts-and-figures.pdf) But bear in mind that the lessons we learn about caring for persons with different dementias transcend any one particular diagnosis.

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a progressive disease. Research has discovered that the disease has been progressing for around 15 years or more before diagnosis. At first, AD does not affect the functions of living. In those first 15 years there are no signs of the disease whatsoever. But as the disease continues, changes occur within the brain. A healthy adult brain has about 100 billion neurons, each with long, branching extensions. These extensions enable individual neurons to form

connections with other neurons. At such connections, called synapses, information flows in tiny bursts of chemicals that are released by one neuron and detected by another neuron. The brain contains about 100 trillion synapses. They allow signals to travel rapidly through the brain, and the information they carry creates the cellular basis of memories, thoughts, sensations, emotions, movements, and skills. But over time, the development of "plaques and tangles" begins to interfere with healthy neuron-to-neuron communication at the synapses. Comparing a healthy brain with one stricken by AD shows the staggering results (2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures).



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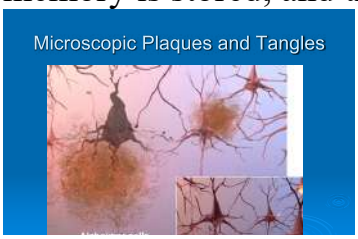
It is important to note that while a person may exhibit behaviors that suggest that they have AD, that is not necessarily the case. There is a condition called "mild cognitive impairment" (MCI) that may or may not be a prelude to AD. I personally have been diagnosed by MCI. I had been bothered by logolethia (word-finding), forgetting appointments, and other functions for some time. In the summer of 2019, I had an MRI. The test did not reveal any amyloid deposits which could indicate the beginnings of AD. But the MRI did show the results of a small stroke that might be hindering communication between my brain cortex, where memory is stored, and the hippocampus, located deeper in my brain, a cortical region that regulates motivation, emotion, learning, and memory. I still have some cognitive problems. I still can fully function as a person, though I sometimes stop in the middle of a sentence to reach for a word that sometimes does not readily come. There remain times when I have missed an appointment, so I check the calendar in my cell frequently during then day. While I might become self-conscious or embarrassed, these symptoms are not debilitating. So, whether it is caused by MCI or some other reason, memory loss or confusion does not necessarily scream "Alzheimer's!" I have symptoms common among persons who have early AD, but I do not have AD.



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What are some of the causes of cognitive difficulties that might appear to be dementia? Depression (that's me), untreated sleep apnea (me again), side effects of certain medications, like the anti-depressant and anti-anxiety drugs I take, Lyme disease (no), thyroid problems (no), certain vitamin deficiencies (I am now receiving several per day), and excessive alcohol consumption (I am a recovering alcoholic). These are just a few examples of the many factors that can contribute to cognitive impairment. Yes, a person can exhibit characteristics of someone with

early dementia, and yet does not have a dementia. Therefore, early diagnosis is important. Use good sense. If smoke seems to be in the air, call the fire department. It is better to be safe than sorry.

That said, it might be helpful for those who are planning a ministry to persons with AD to know something of the trajectory that the disease normally takes.

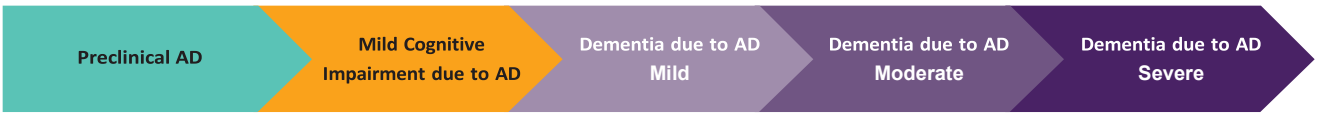


Figure 1. (2021 Alzheimer's Disease Facts and Figures p. 8)

Figure 1 shows an Alzheimer's disease continuum. The first stage is pre-clinical. Brain changes are occurring and may have been progressing for 15 years or more, but symptoms have not yet emerged.

The second phase mirrors my experience with MCI, but it progresses into full-blown dementia due to AD. The person has some mild symptoms, but they might be known only to family and close friends, as well as to oneself.

In the early or mild stage of dementia, the person experiences notable difficulties in memory and other thinking abilities, as well as behavioral changes (e.g., apathy, suspiciousness, and anxiety) that impair the ability to function "normally." While the person may seem "normal" at first impression, symptoms quickly become evident. At this point, the person should no longer be driving and will show an increasing need for assistance with activities of everyday living. The disease gradually progresses from mild to moderate, and then severe, over an average of 9 years, but it can extend 20 or more years. Everyone is different.

In moderate dementia, cognitive symptoms worsen, and the person needs help with basic everyday activities (e.g., eating, dressing, and personal hygiene). At this point, the person needs ongoing supervision; challenging behavioral symptoms like false beliefs, wandering and aggressiveness may also occur. Despite these limitations, individuals with moderate dementia can participate in favorite activities with the support and encouragement of others. It should be noted that awareness of one's diagnosis and symptoms vary greatly across the course of AD. Some individuals who are moderately impaired may retain some awareness of their impairments (e.g., forgetting), while others are totally unaware.

During worship, the person in the moderate stage of dementia might become restless, agitated, try to wander, or exhibit other behavioral changes. In these situations, it's important to remember that behavioral changes are a way for persons with dementia to express themselves when words fail. For example, their acting out is trying to say, "I can't follow the sermon," or "Worship is too confusing for me." If both the caregiver and the individual are not treated respectfully by congregational members and do not receive gentle pastoral care as soon as possible, they may not return for fear of creating another scene. Many, if not most, congregations treat outbursts of infants with understanding and care. Why not treat adults, perhaps persons whom they have known for years, the same way?

Finally comes severe dementia. Here the individual is totally dependent on others for assistance. Unless the person dies from another cause (e.g., cancer or heart disease), the individual will ultimately become bedbound. Often, the person succumbs to an infection, such as aspiration pneumonia, in which severe damage to the brain thwarts the ability to swallow and particles of food get stuck in the esophagus or lungs. The unawareness that comes with dementia can also cause the person to overlook treatable signs of illness, like an abnormal heartbeat, because they just can't figure things out like they used to.

These are the people whom I visited in skilled nursing centers. They didn't have to be in a 'memory unit' because most of them were not ambulatory. I have experienced many people, lining a hall in front of the nurse's station, exhibiting what I call the "Alzheimer's stare," just looking at the floor and having no reaction when I would get on my knees, look into their eyes, and say "Hi, Calliope. It is good to see you." There was never a response, but I still did so every time I passed them in the hall. Ministry with a person with AD and their caregivers changes as the disease progresses.

Addressing the Person with Alzheimer's using Spirituality.

When I was a chaplain at Walnut Manor Retirement Community, practically across the street from Disneyland, I had an interesting encounter with a man whose wife was in the memory care section of the skilled care facility. After everyone else had left the dining room after Wednesday evening devotion, he asked me, "Does my wife have the same experience of God that I have right now?" "Well, I

don't really know," I said. "I don't speak Alzheimer's, so I can't say for sure. But remember the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5? Is your wife loving and peaceful? Is she kind, generous, faithful, and gentle? Does she exhibit self-control?" "Yes," he said. "I think she has all of those things." "Well then, at least according to Galatians, the presence of the Spirit of God is with her."

How does spirituality "work" within persons stricken with AD? I believe that persons with AD have a spirituality like what everyone experiences. Spirituality is what makes us human, no matter what our physical or mental capabilities might be. A person's spirituality is alive and well even that person is unaware. As we noted in the introduction of this book, spirituality consists of consciousness, values, and upbringing. It is revealed awe and wonder. It discloses itself in the presence of music, nature, art, and companionship. Spirituality combines all our senses, beliefs, hope, dreams, what we experience within our soul, our core. Spirituality is what we express when we come from our soul.

My spirituality is accessed when my heart is open, my expectations are silenced, and my ego ceases to be the center of my life. Yes, my spirit is touched by music (I am a great fan of classical), when I gather with my faith community (which I do each week), when I allow myself to be swept up in worship, when I smile when my great granddaughter is at my home (not as often as I wish), when I stand in awe before a waterfall in Yosemite National Park (peaceful is the word), and when I quiet myself and simply "be." Spirituality is what holds me together. To put it simply, I access my spirituality when I surrender my ego (which I do on a good day, certainly not always).

Where do we find persons who live outside their egos? Certainly, we honor those who surrender their lives to that which is More, that which is beyond. We call them saints and commemorate their lives. And yet, I wonder if those who have been affected by AD and other dementias have a leg up. For they live in the moment, every moment. Unless they are troubled, they are friendly, open for engagement, or are happy to simply sit. To simply be.

When a person gets AD, their person, their spirituality, does not fade away. The only part of them that is taken is their cognition, their ability to think, to reason, to put words together into what we would call a coherent sentence. They gradually remember less and less of the past (how many of us wish we could selectively forget?) and become unable to anticipate the future. They live in the now. In

seminary I was taught -- and personally discovered -- that living in the now is the pathway to the spiritual. Yes, the ability to cognate is destroyed, but that person still has use of the five senses, still has values, and is still oneself. While I can't prove it, I have to believe that persons with AD know God just as I do, maybe even more so, being relieved of the burdens of knowing it all.

How many people, who are supposedly 'normal,' buy into the famous quote from Descartes, "I think, therefore I am." Americans are a hypercognitive people living in a hypercognitive culture. So much of our identity is wrapped up in our ability to think, to reason, to manage the world about us. We feel that not to be able to think is to be less than human. Consider how culture treats persons who also have difficulty with the cognitive, such as these who developmentally delayed or schizophrenic. Thus, our culture calls the experience of AD the "long goodbye" or the "living funeral." When I was younger (which was a long, long time ago 😊), I remember believing that what made human beings different from the animal world was the ability to reason, to think. In fact, in the back of my head, I remember being told that the ability to think, reason, and create is what being created in the Image of God means. Yet, if we would allow ourselves to hear it, persons with AD tell a different story. Living in the moment is hard for those who focus on the cognitive like you and me. But persons with AD live in the moment, every moment. They can help us to learn how to live in the present.

Engaging the Spiritual

But how can people in an OAM engage persons with AD? If spirituality is the core that makes us human, no matter what our condition, what might be some of the strategies that people within an OAM may use to help people with AD get in touch with their spiritual selves? Since, by definition, persons with AD have lost the ability to cognate, connecting through gentleness, kindness, and love might do the trick. An AD ministry relies on activities and actions that are in the moment and do not require memory of past learnings or a sense of the future to participate. The spirituality of a person with AD is engaged through action that does not require them to think, but simply ***to do*** and have fun in the doing. Thus, an OAM needs to be creative concretely rather that abstractly. Virginia Bell and David Troxel have some helpful insight into all strategies to engage persons with AD, including engaging the spiritual.

Best Friends Approach to Activities

- The art of activities is not in what is done; it's in the doing.
- Activities often need to be initiated by a partner.
- Activities should be individualized and tap into past interests and skills.
- Activities should be adult in nature.
- Activities should stimulate the five senses.
- Activities should tap into remaining physical skills.
- Activities should fulfill spiritual and/or religious needs.
- Personal care is an activity, not just a task.
- Doing nothing is actually doing something.
- Activities should be voluntary.
- Intergenerational activities are especially desirable.
- Activities can be short.
- Activities we think will never work sometimes do.

Bell, Virginia and Troxell, David 2007 p. 116

Make Your Faith Community's Worship Alzheimer's Friendly

The number one AD activity in a faith community is the regular worship experience; the number one most important job of the OAM is to make that

experience accessible to persons with AD. I believe that worship, at its core, is experiential rather than cognitive. The setting, music, reading of Sacred Scripture, even the sermon or teaching is designed to touch the soul rather than the head. Thus, worship can be perfect for connecting with a person who has AD, because connecting with God is always beyond the rational. No one can really know who God is rationally, but all can experience the presence of the holy. At its core, worship is a time of meaning, an event that brings meaning, simplifies confusion, and provides practical guidance for living. A person with AD, who has been a part of a faith community for years, has had their memory circuits hard-wired. Just walking into the sanctuary evokes a sense of communing with the Ultimate in Life.

It might be helpful to the spiritual life of a person with AD to experience a worship designed specifically for them; it might also be helpful for that person to be included with the entire congregation. While they might not be able to follow a sermon, or keep up with what is shared during prayers, worship is communal, bringing people into the presence of God, the One who hears "sighs too deep for

words" (Romans 8:26). Because God lives and speaks to the soul, the core, God can communicate where our cognitive selves are powerless to do so. Worship is the core of life for all worshippers, especially for a person with AD. Yet there are several adjustments that can make worship more accessible to persons with dementia. I give thanks for the "Dementia Inclusive Church Guide" for its insights. (https://www.livability.org.uk/resources/for-your-church/travelling-toegther/)

Is there a **quiet space** for someone who might be feeling confused and overwhelmed by sensory overload? A place where a supportive person can quietly sit with them can be all that is needed for worship to be fully experienced.

Highly reflective surfaces, like sunlight shining off a waxed floor, can cause confusion not only within a person with AD, but also those who have vision issues such as macular degeneration.

Any carpeting should be plain rather than patterned. Patterned flooring can feel unnerving, even unsafe to a person with AD, making access to the worship center difficult.

Landmarks on walls can aid a person to find where places like the restroom are located. A well-placed picture on a wall, or a plant (real or fake), can assist a person to find the restroom. It might seem crazy to some, but what about placing a picture of a toilet on the doors of the restroom and any walls that lead to the restroom?

Is there a **restroom** where a caregiver can assist someone without embarrassment to anyone?

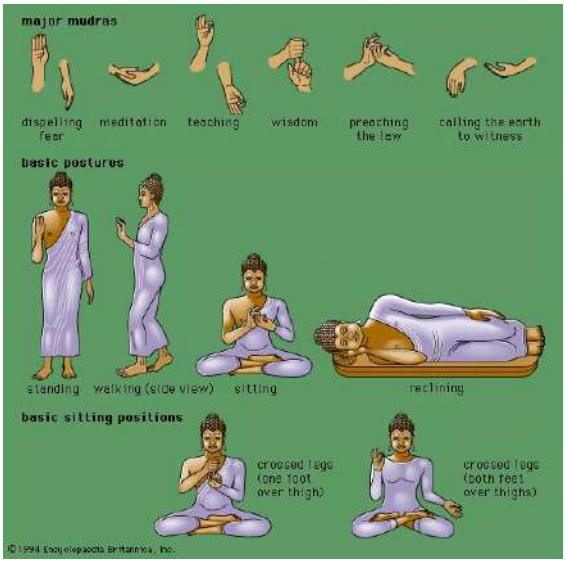
Greet the person by name. A warm welcome makes worship more pleasant for everyone. Have the welcoming persons wear name tags that have large and legible writing. In fact, ***every*** worshipper should wear nametags, not because they don't know each other, but because visitors do not yet know any names, and persons with dementia might remember faces but not names. Name tags allow both groups to connect with the faith community without the awkwardness of having to ask for names.

Like the reader of Scripture above, ask the person living with dementia to be of **service**. What about becoming a part of the Welcome Team or an usher? This is especially true for those who have been ushers for years and know what needs to be done and when. Memories of important tasks can be surprisingly resilient.

Is there a place to sit near the worship center for a supportive friend or family member to sit with the person with dementia in case they become agitated during worship? If agitation takes place, having a quiet "time out" can enable the person to reengage in worship.

Familiar hymns and songs are gold for persons living with AD. Music is stored in a different part of the brain that might yet to be subject to the disease. A large-print bulletin with the lyrics of songs and printed Scripture passages can also be helpful.

Perhaps the worship style of your community uses some **physical actions** that can be helpful. Actions can include "making the sign of the cross." There might be some standing, then sitting, then standing again for different parts of the liturgy. This helps engage people who don't like to sit still for very long, but it can be confusing for others. While kneeling with forehead on the floor is a Muslim practice, Christians can do other things. The "passing of the peace," where worshippers greet one another as a part of the worship experience, can foster a sense of community and connection. Jewish communities carry the Torah around the worshipping community so anyone can touch these sacred scrolls. Buddhist and Hindus often sit in a lotus blossom style with hands on the knees and fingers making a circle.



Sermons or teachings might not be 'memorable' but they can be engaging. Providing a short, simple outline can be helpful. Holding a religious object, such as a Bible or Quran, or even a bulletin or a prayer book, may increase concentration. The goal is not to keep participants busy, as is done with

children, but to assist persons whose mind wanders to worship as fully as possible.

Prayer is central to worship. It is helpful for those with AD if there is a religious or cultural stance for praying, such as standing, sitting, or kneeling. Familiar prayers, such as the Christian Lord's Prayer, simple mantras, or even the Shema can be remembered well into the later stages of AD. Printed prayers are helpful but try to mostly focus on the attitude of prayer, the inner work of prayer. The depth of a person's prayer might not be evident to the outside observer. The words are not important; in Christian prayer, the concept of intercessory prayer is helpful: One is not praying alone; one is "interceding" with others, including Jesus, to pray for the needs of many, even the world. It's not important to have the right words or a full understanding. It's important only to join the mighty chorus of others in prayer.

In Christian circles, the receiving of **Holy Communion** (Eucharist) is often central for spiritual growth. The act of receiving is highly mystical and beyond the realm of reason. How can one connect with God, who cannot be seen, by consuming something that is physical? Yet to those who have experienced that deep connection, Holy Communion (Eucharist) is a deeply spiritual experience. Cognitive thoughts any of us have about Communion are limiting. In dementia, the experience of Communion, felt in the body and not the brain, continues. I remember when I was a chaplain, I offered Communion at each weekly worship time. When it came time to receive, it felt as though the room took on a deeper, more sacred feeling. Perhaps the perception was only within me, but maybe it was something greater than me. Perhaps it was a shared, mystical experience with God.

Designing a Welcoming Space for Persons Living with AD

Everyone feels more comfortable in a room that is clean and cozy. This is particularly true for persons with AD. A clean, comfortable, welcoming room that is not cluttered, and thus without distractions, can assist in engaging those who live in a world of experience and not thought. It would be best if the room were tastefully decorated, rather than the dull, empty fellowship halls that exist in many houses

of worship.

For example, why not decorate the room with real plants and flowers? What is better for the soul than getting in touch with the created world? But make sure that live plants you choose like a lot of water. A retirement community had the great idea of seeking to bring the outdoors indoors. They created a long, narrow planting container and did a beautiful job choosing plants. The planter looked wonderful. But a couple of weeks later the plants were dying. The reason: Residents watered the plants but did not remember that they had already done so some three times that day. Watering plants is a simple and wonderful task that people with AD can do on their own or share with another. But make sure that their desire to help the plants grow doesn't unintentionally kill them. At the same, remember that some plants are not safe to eat and who knows what persons with declining inhibitions and memory will consume. Again, choose carefully.

Photos, or even paintings, can make a room homier. Looking at photos or paintings can be appreciated, either individually or shared with a caregiver, but these can make the room more interesting.

Noise can be a problem for persons with a dementia. As everyone, some like music, others do not. Some like the classics (like me), while others enjoy a good country western or rock song. We must remember that a person with a more advanced dementia, because of their disease, often cannot express their discomfort using words. Instead, they will become agitated or even annoyed and hostile. So, if music is desired, make it soft and soothing. Talking with family regarding the individual's musical tastes can provide direction for OAM volunteers.

Be creative but don't make it hard on yourself. In your OAM group there must be a person who likes to decorate rooms. Engage people with their strengths and interests but be aware that they may no longer be able to see the big picture, so give them some help, lest your common room become a blazing pink boudoir.

Recognize the person

persons with AD might not act the same as they did in the past, they are the same individuals that they always have been. As noted above, AD does not take away

the person's core values and interests. In one of the retirement communities where I served as chaplain, I met a man who was a retired admiral in the US Navy. In his room his family had placed a glass-enclosed large Navy ship model, which I assumed was the flagship on which he served. I found it fascinating, but the resident didn't pay any attention to it. His AD had removed the admiral from his memory. But AD didn't remove the admiral from his person. He always wore crisp shirts and slacks, and his shoes were always spit shined. The admiral was still present.

I remember presenting workshops and staffing exhibits which were sponsored by the Center for Spirituality and Aging. These were about educational offerings for spirituality and aging. At the exhibit, a person engaged me regarding her experience of being a caregiver for her elderly mother who had AD. She shared the importance of spirituality to her mother. As a child, her mother had been a critical person with a chip on her shoulder. But then the caregiver said, "I don't know exactly what happened, but it was like she simply forgot that she was angry. In those two years of caregiving, I feel as though I had finally met my mother as she was, inside. She was a kind, caring person."

The challenges of AD are very real, debilitating, sometimes scary, and often frustrating. But the person with AD deserves to be treated as a person with hopes and dreams like everyone else, not as simply an example of a category, i.e., "dementia."

Persons with AD can learn

It seems counterintuitive, but persons with AD can often learn routines or procedures that they repeat, even late into the disease, although they can no longer learn words. Practicing and repeatedly playing a simple game like Tick-Tack-Toe might build community and engage their soul. While the game might be forgotten over time, a relationship with another human being can last in their core, if not in their memory. Simply have fun and enjoy one another.

AD persons are social people

While some prefer to be alone, I have found persons

with AD enjoy some contact with others, provided that personal physical space is not invaded or threatened. Like others, persons with AD can carry on a conversation just like they always have done. Conversations become simpler over time, and sometimes you may not understand what the person is trying to say. But your reassuring and listening presence can make the person feel heard and valued. Even when you cannot understand what the person is saying, remember they are trying to communicate with you. Often, triggering a memory (e.g., by looking at old photos) leads to another memory of another important experience. Remember, sometimes the best ministry is just to have a pot of coffee and comfortable chairs in which to sit.

When I was chaplain and felt worn out or a little depressed, I would go to the memory unit for persons with moderate AD. They were a fun group of people. Some would talk. Others would simply listen. One person was funny as she said some of the most outlandish things, often about her younger years. In truth, the residents were able to have more fun because they had forgotten the cultural mores and inhibitions. The conversation was just there, in the moment. I always left the unit refreshed.

Contact with others is important. I perceive that living with AD can be isolating since you are so different than anyone else. We live in a culture where cognitive ability is the norm. So, engaging one-on-one with another can fill the void. Participating in group action such as singing, or a drum circle allows a participant to have fun with others. Remember "This is how they will know that you are my disciples: that you love one another" (John 13:35). Being in community is one of the pathways to the spiritual, the essence of the person. Finding a welcoming community is often a way to God and to the soul.

Choose Activities that Participants Enjoy

Activities should be tailored to each person. Remember, in the early stages, participants might still be able to play bridge but need help dressing at home. My father, who had vascular dementia, always greeted people with a warm smile. So, he could have been a greeter with a supportive partner because he might not have been able share in a coherent conversation. If such a conversation would happen, he would retreat into

quietness until he could greet someone new. In later stages, persons living with AD might be able to talk about what they see in a picture but not recognize anyone in the picture. And if soft rock music made a participant anxious in the past, such music would probably do the same when they have developed AD. Yes, there are activities that persons with AD cannot do. But that is also true for me as well. At my age I can't do everything that I used to be able to do. Choose activities with the person's abilities, likes, and interests in mind. Having fun is more important that doing something correctly. Be as flexible as you would be when engaging any other friend.

Stay in the moment

Staying in the moment can be difficult for a person with "normal" cognition. I find that as soon as I enter the present moment my mind gets into high gear as if it says, "Good, now that you are quiet for a moment, I got a lot of things that I have wanted to bring to your attention." And we begin to enter the past or the future, forgetting the present. It needs to be said over and over; persons with AD, or any other form of dementia, live in the present. It is here that we find the person, and with the person, we engage in community.

Christine Bryden

Christine Bryden was stricken with Frontotemporal Dementia (FTD), a disease that primarily attacks the brain's frontal lobe. In contrast to AD, early FTD may affect cognition more slowly. Therefore, Bryden was able to write a book detailing the experience of having a dementia. She notes that having a dementia blocks what has been learned in the past or projected into the future.

"We feel as if we are hanging onto a high cliff, above a lurking black hole. Nothing is automatic. Everything is learned for the first time." (Bryden 2005, p. 98).

Sometimes, without realizing it, people at your OAM might treat AD participants like children. While they live in the moment, they are not children. They remain adults, and while they might not be able to express it verbally, they can feel minimized and offended. These feelings might result in withdrawal or even hostility. Even though they may have "forgotten" them, a person with AD has the same values and deep-down vision of the self as they always have had. Their means of expressing values might change but they are still there, in their soul. Training other adults in their world is very important for the success of all of these interactions.

Enter their world

Many years ago, I was in therapy where we talked about my relationship with my daughter. Because of my behavior, a thick wall between us hindered each of us from touching the other. My therapist noted, "It appears you are the one having difficulty reaching her. You are the dad. You are the adult who should reach out to her, not the other way around. So how can you enter her world rather than requiring her to enter yours?" here was an uncomfortable silence as I tried and tried to think of something, anything. Finally, I quietly answered, "I could take her shopping at the mall." "Great," my therapist said, "when can you arrange that?" The next Saturday we went to the mall, tried on clothes (which we didn't buy) from Saks Fifth Avenue and Bloomingdales, had a pizza for lunch, and finally bought her a new outfit that I could afford. It was great. I learned to enter her world instead of requiring her to enter mine.

Because the world of persons with dementia is so different from ours, Bryden has some insights into theirs.

> "Our reality can become caught between dreams and daily life -- a terror-land of illusion by dark shapes, real feelings, but an inability to move, or speak, or escape [or understand]. So, what is real, what is true? We create our own stories to explain what is happening.**"** (Bryden 2005, p. 142-143).
>
> It is so important to enter our reality which is created through scrambled emotion and little cognition, and held together through our spirit, our true self. Our reality may well reflect our emotions and may tell you something about our worries or our joys so that you can help us move forward from an unpleasant space or help us reflect on a happy moment." (Bryden, 2005 p. 148).
>
> "Listen carefully because we cannot repeat our words." (Bryden, 2005 p. 118).
>
> "Don't interrupt our thread of thought but let us interrupt you when an idea comes into our heads, because if we wait, it will disappear." (Bryden, 2005 p. 119)
>
> "Give us time to speak…to find a word, and don't feel embarrassed if we lost the thread of what we are trying to say." (Bryden, 2005, p. 119). *(This happens to me because of my MCI.)*

Use the Senses

Feel

Make a memory box out of a shoebox by cutting a hole large enough for a hand in one end. Place a couple of items into the box and ask the participant to identify each of them by touch alone. Then swap roles.

Taste

Play a game of “What is it?” Ask the AD participants to close their eyes and then spoon feed them something that they try to identify. Afterwards, why not try the other way around, with the person with AD feeding the person with "normal" cognition.

Smell

Using pill bottles, place items in a jar and have participants identify the smell. Use spices, food items, anything with a distinct scent.

See

Together, look at one of the paintings or photos that decorate the walls of your room. What do you see in the photo/painting? What do you think they are doing? How are they feeling? Have you ever done that? Have you ever visited a place like that? As you look at the photo, how do you feel right now?

Experience

Browse through Reminisce magazine. Each issue has lots of photos of past years according to category. Subscribe for as little as $19.98 for 7 issues per year.

https://magazineagent.com-sub.info/Reminisce/Subscription/?abtest=specialoffer&abvalue=1

Hear

Try "Guess the Sound" where a sound is heard, and four photos appear. Match the photo that corresponds to the sound. This video has two games of ten. One is "animal sounds" and the second is "environmental sounds." The answers are given at the end of each game. I found the environmental sounds easier to choose correctly.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPm6brp6pJY

There is also "Guess the Sport"
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qY4uCrcZkI

Musical Instruments
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17V-bP1XEao

30 Disney Characters
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8j4Bw4UKiKs

Create a Memory Café

A memory café is a place where persons with a dementia and their caregivers can go to connect with each other and the spiritual side of life. A café might be an entire room or one section of a room. It can used as a stand-alone OAM event or as one area of the space used by other OAM participants. For more information on this subject see https://caregiversmatter.org/MemoryCafeActivities for some simple activities to use in your Memory Café. Additional ideas are below.

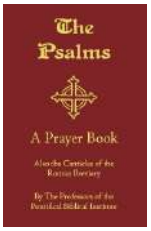
Scatter devotional items used in your spiritual tradition around the room for participants to simply view, touch, or even use. Or, have objects that are used within your spiritual tradition for participants to touch, handle and use.

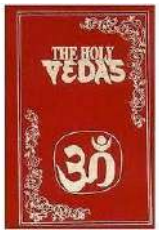
Prayer beads and/or rosaries, (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu)

Necklaces

Sacred Scripture

Prayer books and hymnals





Cups and/or a chalice used for communion wine (Christian)

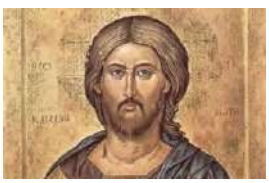
Prayer shawl/Hijab (Jewish, Christian, Muslim)

Yarmulke (Jewish)

Telfinin (Jewish)

Muslim prayer rugs

Religious pictures



Statues (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian).

A Place to be Creative

Place paper, colored pencils, colored card stock, and old magazines on a table and allow the participants and their caregivers to create a piece of art.

A place to sit and read

Magazines with lots of photos, a comfortable chair and good lighting are all that is needed.

An area to play games with friends

Decks of cards on card tables can trigger memories of favorite games. Simple board games like Yahtzee or Uno can be played even if the person doesn't remember all the rules. Just adjust the rules of games as needed (e.g., eliminate a timer). Try Nonsense Scrabble, making up the words if the player can't find one. Pronouncing the made-up word and assigning a definition can lead to lots of laughter. The task is to connect with another, commune with another, not to complete a task.

Create a Quiet Spot

Lots of people and activity can be disturbing. Create a place which is quiet. The room could have soft lighting (e.g., soft white Christmas lights) and of course, comfortable chairs. If desired, quiet music could be playing. Or use an essential oil diffuser. (Search "aromatherapy essential oil diffuser" on your web browser, but make sure you don't inflict oils on people with breathing difficulties, like asthma or COPD). If you don't have a suitable location, having just a comfortable chair and a headset might work.

You might make your quiet place like a chapel, with religious symbols hung on the walls or placed on a table. Perhaps your quiet place is your community's

place of worship. Placing a couple of chairs near the place where the worship leaders stand might evoke a great place for quiet devotion. The place might be close to an altar, reading stand, the tabernacle, or in front of a stained-glass window.

Perhaps your quiet place is outdoors. If your community has a garden, an outdoor worship space, or a place where birds congregate, take the person with dementia there. You know where you go when you need quiet, so discover the same for the person with dementia.

Connect Using Common Objects

Have a table of household items for conversation, a sharing of memories, or simply a display at which to look. Items might include tools, baking equipment like measuring cups, photos of pets (their pets or downloaded from the internet), fruits, such as bananas, grapes, or apples, or photos of fireworks or military flags. Some participants might remember an old rotary phone, or two cans connected by a string. Anything from the home might be used.

Form a Memory Choir

There are many examples of a choir made up of both persons with AD and others who are interested in supporting them (see YouTube.com and search "dementia choir" or click https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I98H0Ea_ztE). Some choirs sing just for themselves, while others 'go on the road' to perform at skilled nursing facilities, lunches for older adults in senior centers, other faith communities, or even during your worship services. Choirs do not need to be large groups. Four or five works great. A FEW members of your community's choir (if you have one) can provide vocal support in the choir but should not be dominant. It would be best if the choir director were also skilled in engaging persons with AD. Select songs, either religious or common, that fit the experience of participants who have AD. Provide songbooks or song sheets in large print.

Stand in the Light Memory Choir 1

You might also want to consult Giving Voice found at https://givingvoicechorus.org/#:~:text=Giving%20Voice%20inspires%20and%20equips,being%2C%20purpose%20and%20community%20understanding. This resource contains guidelines for beginning a chorus

Another option is to provide time for community singing. A model is "Singing for the Brain." To see a YouTube video, click https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4S_FX9bieg.

Create a playlist of a person's favorite songs

https://www.playlistforlife.org.uk/resources/ A resources page is full of free materials to help you at each stage of your playlist journey, whether you're making a personal playlist for yourself or helping someone to make theirs.

Provide Twiddlemuffs

https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/twiddlemuffs People living with dementia are often restless and can pluck at their clothes and bedding. It has been found that if they have something to hold or twiddle with, they are comforted and become calm.

Offer Art Activities

https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/a-pocket-guide-arts A book, *A Pocket Guide to Art Activities for People with Dementia,* is available on this site. This 40-page booklet contains chapters on the arts and the person, ten ways to use the arts in everyday life, storytelling, and movement exercises. It even has some suggested rules for activities.

Stories that Help to Engage the Spiritual

https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/ideas-and-stories
Helpful resources for engaging spirituality/dementia.

Conversation Starters

Sometimes it is helpful to have icebreakers, such as some questions, to get the conversation flowing at events and discussion groups. *The Ugly Duckling Company's Table Talk for Third Agers* has now been followed by *Table Talk for Fourth Agers*.

Here are some examples of the kinds of topics featured and questions posed:

- Trivia: Best decade — 1950s, 1960s or 1970s?

- Celebrating: Best day of your life?
- Treasured memories: Describe your mother's kitchen
- Relationships: Who was your first love?
- Health and well-being: What is your greatest fear?
- Big issues: Is there anything that cannot be forgiven?

These may be fun games for opening up conversations, but as you can see they don't shy away from tackling some of the more challenging, even hitherto taboo, areas.

A Guide to Developing a Short-Term Program

https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/ministry-to-seniors-at-winchester
This pioneering work for mission to seniors was started by Liz Stacey in 2003, and since then has flourished, with Liz being inducted as the Pastoral Coordinator for Mission to Seniors in September, 2007, at Winchester Baptist Church (WBC).

The ministry to older people at WBC has an annual program, which includes:

- a monthly Silver Service
- a monthly Silver Seeker's Group
- an annual Holiday at Home
- a gospel concert and a Songs of Praise
- pastoral care
- regular visiting
- services in two residential homes

Help for Caregivers

An Online Newspaper of Resources for OAM or Caregivers

https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/daily-sparkle
Much appreciated by home care activity coordinators around the country, the "*Daily Sparkle"* is a reminiscence newspaper specially developed to provide daily stimulation, interest, enjoyment and fun for older people, and people living with dementia.

> It is an online newspaper. It is described as bring "about the world many older people live in," a world which we see as the past, but which is often

their experience of reality. The articles trigger memories of times when they often felt happier. he "*Daily Sparkle"* helps older people feel good about themselves.

The "*Daily Sparkle"* evokes feelings of happiness and enhanced self-esteem. It also provides the perfect opportunity for interpersonal engagement. With its short, easy-to-digest articles, older people enjoy sharing their precious memories with others, paving the way to building relationships with staff and other residents.

Tips for Caregivers Dealing With Early AD

https://www.helpguide.org/articles/alzheimers-dementia-aging/tips-for-alzheimers-caregivers.htm
Contents include how and when to communicate the diagnosis, getting family involved, communicating effectively, understanding and accepting highs and lows, planning for cost of care and legal issues.

Demonstrate using Alexa or some other speech-based control for computers

https://caregiversmatter.org/ Site includes a caregiver song called "A Caregiver Ballad," as well as tips and instructions for using Alexa in the home.

Caregiving Tips

https://www.helpguide.org/articles/alzheimers-dementia-aging/tips-for-alzheimers-caregivers.htm?pdf=12432
Download and print this pdf containing caregiving tips using it in your OAM and/or giving the pdf to persons who are giving care for persons with AD.

Partner with other organizations

The Alzheimer's Association https://www.alz.org

The Dementia Society https://www.dementiasociety.org/

In Summary

Those living with dementia have a lot to teach me, and perhaps you as well. I am often not comfortable living in the moment. Living in the moment seems strange, unfamiliar, perhaps frightening. But to engage a person living with AD challenges me, models for me, precisely how to do that.

As I age, I am often frightened by changes in my physical and mental capabilities. Persons with AD can provide a model of courage during difficulty.

I might be bothered by guilts of the past or fears for the future. Engaging people with AD can remind me to focus on what is important in life: Relationships. All else is secondary.

I often ignore my feelings, burying them in a cluster of thoughts. Persons living with AD can help me to express those feelings, leave my insecurities behind, and live a life free of the expectations of others.

Remember, a person living with AD is …

- A person of infinite value
- A person with a name
- A person with a spirit
- A person with feelings
- A person with a will and a personality
- A person with a life story
- A person who has a physical environment
- A person who has the present moment (Bell and Troxel 2007)

Persons with a dementia like AD can be -- and are -- really fun to know. As important, they are individuals from whom I have an opportunity to learn about myself and my inner life.

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Chapter Thirteen
The Vegetable Stand
Marketing Your OAM

Many persons who create a garden share their harvest with others. The harvest by itself cannot create an income stream. Churches are not in that business. But they still want to make the fruits of their labor available not only to friends, but the community at large. As we have said before, many, if not most ministries of a congregation are the best kept secrets in town. Many wonderful, engaging, and helpful opportunities are offered to those who are members of our family, our spiritual community, but are not know outside the walls of the church.

But marketing, sharing the harvest, can be difficult these days. There are very local newspapers that might accept our ads or articles describing our OAM events but in the larger newspaper ads are expensive and have proven not to be effective and most newspapers have no room or interest in our articles.

In the 'old days' the phone book yellow pages were probably the best way to market church and its ministries, but the phone book is a thing of the past, as is the neighborhood newspaper with cheap ads. New strategies to communicate with congregation and community may or may not work. Efforts may be an experience of trial and error whereby you take failure as only a learning experience. Here are some strategies that I have experienced, heard from others, or just thought of while writing this chapter.

Word of mouth remains the most effective means of communication. If one person experiences an OAM event and finds it helpful, they need to be encouraged to share it with others. But there is a little 'trick' to sharing effectively. No one likes to have someone "sell" them on something which they have found helpful. Often, being barraged by an enthusiastic participant turns the hearer off. Many times, the conversation ends in the phrase, "I really loved it. You should come with me sometime." Words such as these are often interpreted in telling someone what to do and thus their inside response is "This is not my church so why should I go to yours. Are you trying to get more members for your congregation?" and the spoken response might be something like, "It sounds good; maybe someday. I'll give you a call."

The secret to good marketing is not to "sell" at all but allow the hearer simply to hear your witness as to the value of the experience. As Alcoholics Anonymous states, "Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather that promotion" and look at how successful the strategy has been (Wilson, W, *The Twelve and Twelve:* Tradition 11*)*. Great marketing is when one person shares with the other person what the OAM event meant to them and how it helped their view of their aging and living. Instead of talking about the group or the entire ministry, the OAM participant simply shares their experience seeking nothing in response. If the person responds, fine. But the response is not because of promotion but that the event sounds intriguing. They might wish to participate because they have been touched by the OAM member's sharing, not that they have been convinced to attend. A community person, hearing "The Bible Study yesterday was terrific; the eighth chapter of the book of Romans just about brought me to tears. I felt the presence of God in that moment. It really helped that there were only older adults in the room. I seldom say anything in other Bible Studies that I have attended, but with the room filled with persons my age, speaking my language, sharing about how Romans 8 affected their lives, I felt safe sharing myself (period!)" Note that nothing is said about the friend, only the experience of the OAM participant themselves. No one tells anyone what to do. They only share what they have found personally helpful. The multi-million, multi-national AA society was built on this principle. If it works for them, perhaps it would help our OAM to spread the word of how we have changed lives.

This process of attraction -- rather than promotion -- depends upon participants having reflected on how the event affected them. A simple minute of silence for participants to gather their thoughts might help. Asking "Specifically what have you learned today?" or "Specifically what made sense to you?" "If you met a friend on the way home, what words would you share about how this event helped you?" This exercise is not only important for sharing with others, but it is vital for all participants to share what particularly made a difference to them personally. Completing an evaluation form like Appendix X can help participants glean meaning out of the OAM event.

What about signage in front of the church? Many churches are located on a busy street in your community. Many, sometime thousands, of cars pass each day, so take advantage of the golden opportunity that your location provides. Signage can

be wonderful, yet the content of the signage must be carefully crafted.

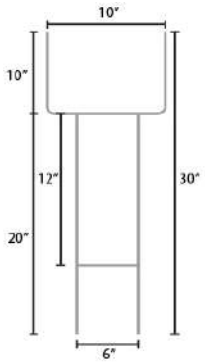
First, the best signage speaks of who the program seeks to address or is a statement of the kind of people or even the goals of your OAM. Specific events can be ignored because those who see the signs are not aware that the message is meant for them. So, speak directly to the audience that you seek. Tell them who you are, what you are seeking to accomplish (Chapter Three), or what kind of older adult would benefit if they participated in your OAM. (Chapter 1)

Remember the old Burma Shave signs along the two-lane roads that were the way we got around when we were kids? A person could read and understand what was printed no matter what their speed. Some of the reasons were that the type and font used were large enough to easily be read. Second, not only could a passerby read the sign, but each sign contained only one word or phrase, and when strung together, they conveyed the desired message. Good OAM signs in Burma Shave language could be,

- WE…SPEAK…OLDER…ADULT…HERE
- WE…SING...THE...OLD…SONGS…HERE.
- NO…LOUD…BANDS…HERE
- WE...LISTEN…TO…OLDER.ADULTS…HERE
- ARE…YOU…OLDER...GREAT…SO...ARE…WE
- WE ...MAKE...A DIFFERENCE…IN…OLDER...LIVES

The final sign, like “Burma Shave,” should always carry the name of your Church. If desired, and if you still have frontage left you might follow the first by a second sign that has your website, email address or phone number.

How the signs are displayed and even the length of the message is dependent the number of feet that the church has as frontage to the property. Signs are to be placed at a distance from one another that is comfortable and easy to read traveling at 5 miles per hour faster that the speed limit of the road.



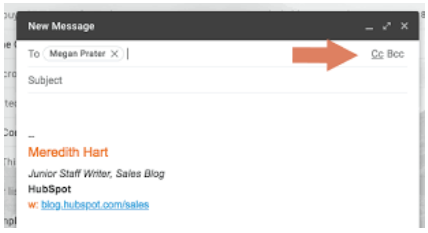
Yard signs, like political signs, are an inexpensive way to make Burma Shave-type or any kind of sign. Most of these signs are made of durable corrugated plastic that can have any wording and be mounted on simple heavy-duty wire stakes. The sign below costs around $8.

The wire stake costs another $5 but can be used again. Search your web browser for "custom yard signs" and find a price that fits your budget.

If Burma Shave-type signs are not desired, you might post a banner in front of the church. Design a double-sided banner that will be displayed perpendicular to the street. Any sign or banner parallel to the street cannot be easily seen. Posts made up of long piping pounded into the soil work wonderfully. You can attach two eye bolts to each pipe. The banner is then hung by bungee cords. As with all signs, use as few carefully chosen words as possible. A person in a moving car will not even to try to read something beyond three or four words long. I would suggest moving any additional information to your OAM website. The use of websites will be discussed in Chapter Fourteen. Keep it simple. Easy to read lettering is a must. Times New Roman is a popular font. Size of the letters is also important so make them larger that you think is best. Unless a photo or drawing is so good that it is more effective than a thousand words, do not use them because it complicates the banner/sign and detracts the eye from the message. Frills do not help but complicate instead.

Email addresses are like gold for marketing. Persons can be placed into e-group lists according to interest or attendance. Thus, one carefully worded email provides information about a coming event or a statement as to why they are being invited can be sent to the entire e-list at once. A participant can be on every e-list in your OAM. Thus, I would suggest that one e-list would contain all participants.

HINT: If you are sending an email to group, put your own name in the "To" line and the others in "BCC" (Blind Carbon Copy). That way each person who receives the email will see your email and email address and



their own name, but not the names and email addresses of the other people. Many will appreciate your efforts to keep their email address private.

Every participant needs to have personal contact information on a 3 X 5 card on file. Sometimes people are reluctant to provide personal information to people or an organization whom they do not know well. My experience is that persons are more likely to provide name and email address before any other personal information. The information card for a new participant could have the word "please" on the name and email line and "optional" for the phone number and snail address. Do not forget to "require" the name(s) and phone number(s) for persons to call in case of illness or injury.

Being armed with personal contact information, targeted phone calls and emails can be made to persons before an OAM event. Giving each person a small list to contact will increase the potential of friendly conversation happening. Note the number of program categories that can be found in a simple phone call. Instead of having one or two persons calling the entire list try developing a phone tree. A single person telephones two or three persons. Each of them then phone another two or three. Continue until everyone is notified. Even the busiest participant might be willing take the time to phone two or three others.

- Those who do the phoning (*Opportunities to Serve, Chapter Six*) might share the details of the OAM event with another participant (*Opportunity to Be Served, Chapter Seven*)

- After that task, the conversation could continue: "How are you doing? The last time I saw you was at worship and you have been on my mind. What's happening in your life?" (*Community Building, Chapter Eleven*).

- Remember, persons who are transitional and even frail need reminder contacts. An OAM planning group is providing ministry to such persons (Opportunity to Serve, Chapter Seven) rather than just using them to fill a task. Intentionally communicate this to everyone who helps with anything.

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Chapter Fourteen
Older Adult Ministry
In the time of Covid 19

2020 and 2021 have been and will be transformational times for older adults and thus for an OAM within congregations. Like the entire ministry of the congregation, OAM is built on personal experience and connections. It is the life blood of who we have been as we have sought to engage people with the free, total, unmerited grace/love of God. With the invasion of Covid 19, new methods, new perspectives, and new skills have appeared. Seeing the innovation and creativity that has allowed OAMs to function in congregations even during this time of Covid 19 has been transformative. OAMs across the country have been challenged to also find ways to provide a focused, intentional, sustainable, and effective OAM.

Our ministries have been challenged to discover new ways to provide for the **four spiritual needs of participants: Meaning, transcendence, hope, and intimacy.** In what new ways can we address those spiritual needs through spiritual formation, lifelong learning, opportunities to serve, opportunities to be served, community building, and stewardship/finance? The bad news is that we are often blindly seeking fresh ideas that do not come easily. But the good news is that we are no longer 'stuck' within the walls of our churches. We can communicate with older adults across the street or across the nation. And it is all thanks to a lot of ingenuity and the use of technology.

Of course, one of these tools that is new to many congregations is Zoom.com. What opportunities that this very flexible platform allows with a minimum of training! The tutorials provided by Zoom are clear and helpful. If your OAM wishes to use this tool it would be important that one or more persons become familiar with the ins and outs of Zoom. Zoom can be used for:

- Creating a Zoom meeting with a speaker presents on a topic of interest
- Worship, either on Sundays, or a simple morning or evening devotions (see the section "Spiritual Formation and Growth" further on in the chapter.
- Bible studies

- Book Groups
- Discussion groups where the leader or a participant chooses a topic for all to share their thoughts.
- Meetings that allow members to participate in their own homes.
- Put together an organ or piano and a group of singers and you have the makings of a Zoom hymn sing. The old-time hymns can be sung that most people don't need the words printed but often are not sung on Sunday mornings.
- What about a weekly "Zoom Lunch Bunch" when people eat together rather than separately? Songs could be sung, small clips of interest from YouTube could be shared, conversations take place, or participants who have a gift of being able to play an instrument have an opportunity to share.

Is this the time to develop a website on which announcements can be shared? Participants can forget the time and/or day of OAM opportunities. There can be a place to chat on a website. Search "*Creating a Free Website"* on your web browser to find dozens of websites. Some sites are easier than others. Not every website offers a design that fits your needs. Do some snooping.

A chat room can be added to any website. Stand-alone chat rooms could also be created. To find one, simply search *Free Chat* on the internet and you will find several options. I found *ChatCrypt.com* that offers a free, encrypted chat where participants use the same group name and password but can have a different username. Example: group name: *myoam* and the password can be the name of your church.

What about creating a YouTube channel where events at your church or OAM are videoed and posted? For example, your OAM could sponsor a Zoom educational meeting on "How to Vote" led by the League of Women Voters." That meeting can be recorded and then the recording can be posted on your web channel. Tutorials can be accessed by using your browser to search "Creating a YouTube Channel" or using this URL:

https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1646861?hl=en

One of the options brought me to the information below:

"You and others can jointly manage a Brand Account through your own Google Accounts. You won't need a separate username or password. Your account can have multiple owners and managers.

- Owners can take the most actions, and controls who manages the account. An account must have one primary owner.
- Managers can use Google services that support Brand Accounts, like share photos on Google Photos or post videos on YouTube.
- Communications managers can do the same things as Managers, but they can't use YouTube.

If your OAM has not provided a phone/email list for participants, maybe this is the time to do so. People need the ability to contact each other by phone, email, or even text.

These tools can be used for all the OAM program categories. Here are some specifics.

Spiritual Formation and Growth
Remember that for Spiritual Formation and Growth there needs to be adequate time not only to engage new thoughts and perspectives, but to have time to ponder (Chapter Five) so that the new insight can integrate within us, our Ultimate Meaning (Chapter Four) or Core Belief (Introduction).

- Online Sunday worship on Zoom, or many other platforms that are available such as streaming via Sermon.net or searching for "Facebook Streaming Services." It might feel strange. We might look forward to being face-to-face again, but perhaps we can include the frail and transitional persons who have difficulty coming out of their homes. Someone needs to make sure they have a computer connection and know exactly how to access your church's programs.

- We can encourage friends and neighbors to simply "checkout" OAM events without having to leave the safety of their recliners, thus allowing them to ease into accepting the invitations that we have shared.

- Accessible easily on Zoom, simple morning or late evening devotions could be shared with multiple persons being on the team. Many denominations

have a service of Matins (morning prayer) and Compline (night prayer before bed) in their service books.

- Using Appendix F (Leading Meditation Prayer Groups) could provide a place where persons might receive education and then actual practice in meditation skills.

- Search YouTube for "evening prayer service" and choose from many options to discover 15-minute evening prayer services posted by various faith communities which can be viewed using Zoom's "Shared Screen" feature (yes, there is need to use Zoom's tutorials in order to use this and other features of Zoom).

- Review the resources in chapter 5, Spiritual Formation and Growth, with creative eyes. With a tweak here or there, many of the resources listed could be adapted for use virtually.

Lifelong Learning

Learning is possibly the easiest program category that can be enhanced by Zoom or other platforms. Because of Zoom, everyone, the active, transitional, frail and caregivers, can easily participate. Once again, resources in this book enhanced by YouTube could form the basis for a vital lifelong learning ministry.

- Bible Studies, book groups, even speakers on important topics like Alzheimer's Disease and diabetes could become available. These speakers might be more available since they could present from the desks in their office rather than having to travel to the church.

- Recordings from experts located around the world are accessible to your people via YouTube and Zoom's "Share Screen" feature. For example, Dr. Christin Puchalski M.D. is a world-renowned expert in spirituality and health care. People in your OAM can watch and listen to a 29-minute lecture by her by searching "Dr Christina Puchalski" on YouTube. Think of it; you can listen to Nelson Mandela's "Paralyzing Speech" or Martin Luther King's being interviewed by NBC 11 months before his assassination! Many interviews and speeches are short enough to allow discussion

following the viewing. The sky is the limit, and it is all free.

- If desired, your OAM could provide a weekly reading at the same time on the same day of the week. Special books could be read, such as "Two Old Women," through which we share in the experience of two Native American women who were abandoned during the winter in Alaska. A transitional person with reading skills might be happy to be of service in this way.

- Why not ask staff of one of the better not-for-profit agencies providing home health care to share tips for the caregiver on Zoom. There might be people in your congregation who have had contact with professional caregiving organizations and would be happy to recommend one.

- Use Zoom to teach just about anything. I searched YouTube.com. On the landing page I searched for "Lutheran Seminary Bible Study," and among other offerings, found "An Outsider Talks with a Lutheran Theologian (What Lutherans Believe). On that same landing page, I found buttons that would lead to categories of videos. Clicking "History" I found the "History of the Reformation." Clicking "Ted Talks" I found "The Roots of Religion." Searching for "A Study of Romans" provided many options from a verse-by-verse study over many videos to a 45-minute overview of the entire book. The possibilities seem endless. Remember, all YouTube videos can be broadcast through your OAM's Zoom account.

What has been learned because of Covid 19 can enhance and even expand the reach and effectiveness of a congregation's OAM, and has promoted ways of engaging people that an OAM might wish to continue even after the pandemic ends.

Opportunities to Serve

- Personal phone calls can address loneliness. Phone buddies, where two persons promise to phone each other every morning, can enhance someone's life, discourage isolation, and perhaps will result in friends being made. This can be a great opportunity to serve transitional, and even some frail persons.

- What about having OAM Planning Group meetings on Zoom and asking a

transitional person to become a member? Anyone can be asked to complete a task for the planning group finding good devotionals on YouTube to be shared with others via Zoom.

- An OAM in Solana Beach CA made 150 "You are not Alone" bags and delivered them to the homes of older adults in their community, members or not. The bags included goodies baked from scratch following CDC guidelines for baking during Covid 19. The bags also had devotional booklets, perhaps candy, fruit, peanuts, or even chocolate. Interestingly, their OAM included bottles of bubbles or some other crazy item. Obviously, this event was a major undertaking with the many Covid 19 rules, and it included all groups within their OAM, active, transitional, frail and caregivers.

Opportunities to Be Served

During a time of pandemic probably everyone needs to feel love and acceptance. These are the times where pastoral care given by both clergy and lay are more important than ever. We have heard stories of depression, out-of-control anxiety, and even suicide that has come from the isolation imposed by 'Stay Home, Stay Safe' from government officials to many ads on TV. Many of the program suggestions for the frail are listed in Chapter Seven and can be used on Zoom and other platforms.

- Persons needing to be served can post thoughts or simply greetings on the OAM's website or YouTube channel.

- Through Zoom, hymn sings can be offered, or viewing a selection of humorous YouTube clips could be shared.

- Caregivers and those at home receive coaching by Zoom presentation by organizations like the Alzheimer's Association.

- A laugh is always good, so on YouTube (again) I searched for 'Comedy' and found "Christian Comedy: Thou Shalt Laugh."

- Click this URL and find ways for frail older adults to make Christmas Cards. https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=making+simple+christmas+cards+for+frail+elderly+persons

Community Building

- Start an email string. Send an email with a simple greeting or a joke and email it to a participant in your OAM with the instructions: Write another joke (or whatever) and send it to a member of our OAM, asking them to add something and pass it on.

- Mail out copies of your OAM phone list to all participants, telling them that they all will receive a phone call from another OAM participant on a particular day. On the day, phone the first person on the list, asking them to call the next person, and so forth. Let everyone decide what to talk about.

- Have a hymn sing, using the old hymns, on Zoom. All it takes is a piano (or other instrument) and some singers to lead everyone, and nobody has to worry about spreading the virus!

- Have a weekly "coffee klatsch."

- Search "Games to play on the internet" or click this URL https://www.boston.com/culture/entertainment/2020/03/18/board-games-online-with-friends

Stewardship and Finance

- YouTube.com has many short videos on how banks can help older adults can keep their money safe, financial abuse, scams, governmental laws and more. Search for "Elder Financial Abuse," "humorous finance," "Financial Tips for Seniors" or simply "meeting financial needs of seniors."

Create a Series of Zoom Broadcasts

Why not establish a set time and a day where Zoom programming is provided? If you have the person-to-power and the energy, you can consider a:

- Spiritual Formation and Growth event on Mondays
- Lifelong Learning on Tuesdays
- Community on Wednesdays
- Opportunities to be Served on Thursdays and Finance or Opportunities to Serve on Fridays.
- You can also schedule to transmit one YouTube video per month on a topic of interest such as
    - "Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (the largest not-for-profit dealing with this topic in the nation)
    - "Political Satire"
    - "The Spanish Flu and How the World Recovered"
    - "Catholic Charities"
    - Search YouTube.com for "You'll be back" a hilarious church parody regarding returning to church after Covid 19
    - Insert any name of a famous person into YouTube.com "search" and you will probably find videos of that famous person speaking. I found videos on "George Patton," "Viktor Frankl," "Judy Garland," and "Dietrich Bonhoeffer."

All that is needed is creativity that I am sure that you have within your OAM.

Chapter Fifteen
An OAM in Practice

Steve Herder
Pastor for Older Adult Ministry
Ascension Lutheran Church,
Thousand Oaks CA

What led you to become a pastor who specializes in Older Adult Ministry?

I was ordained in 1982 and for thirty-eight years I have, in some way or another, been involved in ministries with older adults. At my first congregation I was a solo pastor and at my second congregation, both in Iowa, I was on a large staff and was responsible for youth ministry. But I found my heart drawn towards the older persons, especially those who were home centered or in skilled care. I was then called to my third congregation, St. Andrew, Whittier, California which is in metropolitan Los Angeles. Early on I was focused on youth ministries. But when the congregation called a youth minister, I began to give more time to the elderly. I believed, in fact I still believe, that seniors form the backbone of a congregation. A greater percentage of them worship, attend Bible studies, fill important roles in the church. They seem to be the foundation of a congregation. My decision to focus on older adults was personal but was also influenced by the fact that they represented about 30% of the congregation. So, the demographics supported the type of ministry in which I was interested. Mostly, I was influenced and mentored by both my parents and my grandparents, to care and advocate for our elderly.

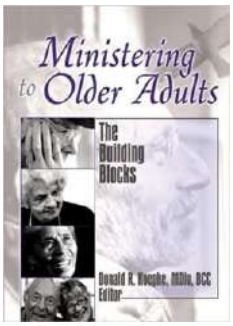
Steve Herder

What happened then?

Well, I heard about Don Koepke. At that time, he was the Director of the California Lutheran Home Center for Spirituality and Aging and was offering a series of workshops for congregations interested in developing a ministry to older adults. Immediately I was hooked. Here he was, a pastor who was also focused on older adults. If I remember correctly the classes were held at a Methodist Church in Fullerton, California. The congregations and leaders that were part of those classes inspired me and motivated our congregational team to do more for ministries to, with, and for older adults.

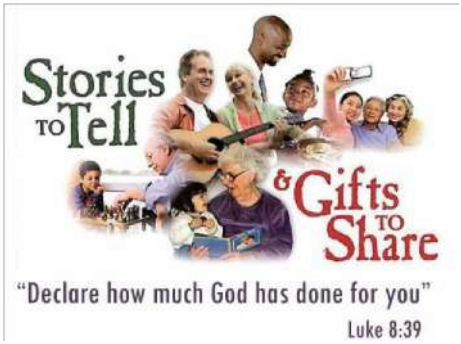
Can you remember anything about the classes? My memories might be influenced by your first book, "Ministry to Older Adults:

The Building Blocks" (Building Blocks) which you wrote soon after the end of our series of workshops. I remember that you required me to recruit four to six members of the congregation to be trained with me. That was helpful. I remember that we always had homework, usually some form to complete that was linked to what we had talked about the previous session. Sometimes, that required an additional meeting with my group to meet to talk and share. Attendance at those extra meetings were spotty for some, but most came every time. I also remember that there was a book that I was given to read. I think it was a book that discussed the needs of older adults from a spiritual point of view. (*Don's note: "Winter Grace" by Kathleen Fisher*) It was the first time that I read anything about how spirituality can expand the lives of older adults by addressing their heart faith, their spirituality.



Did anything come out of the experience?

Oh yes. A lot. The members that accompanied me to the workshops were spurred to engage in the ministry. We became partners, coming up with useful insights, happy to give of their time. The good news is that the class gave us a structure to think through what we wanted our ministry to accomplish. We found ourselves not just thinking about what could be fun and interesting but what would be helpful and faith-building. The workshops with Don gave us a sense of where we were going. Seniors began to participate with me in a visitation ministry. We gathered older adults together as a group, something that had not been done much before. One of the most important ministries that came out of our thinking and planning that was having a structured videotaped interview with many of our seniors. We asked them some of the history of their involvement in the church; for their favorite Bible verses; their meaning of prayer; the place of Holy Communion in their life, how being a part of the church made a difference. We even request them to share their "God Moments," the times when God felt intimate and close. Where did they find hope, meaning? If they felt comfortable, we asked what blessings that they wanted to give to their living children and grandchildren. The tapes were then given their families, many as



Christmas presents. Later, with permission, they were used at the senior's funeral. It was a powerful testimony.

I remember when you were called to be Associate Pastor of Ascension Church. I was thrilled to hear that one of your ministries would be to older adults. (Website: https://alcto.org/senior-adult-ministry-team/)

Ascension's desire to develop an intentional ministry with older adults was one of the key reasons why they called me to be their third pastor. I thought it was a very natural fit for me to come and work to strengthen Ascension's many current ministries and to develop new ministries with older adults.

How did you begin developing the older adult ministry at Ascension?

Thankfully, I had Don's previous book and my experience at St. Andrew. I again read your book cover to cover. One of your tips was that if a ministry was not intentionally focused on spirituality and our older adult mission statement that it should not be done. When I came to Ascension there were already many caring ministries plus a group that did monthly fellowship events with day trips to nearby fascinating places. That ministry had a good history, and it continues today, with a variety of lay leaders over the years.

But my favorite thing to do at the beginning was to visit people and to get to know them in a personal way. I saw those visits as time to listen and simply develop relationships. After a while, I was able to form two morning groups of people who were interested in a ministry with seniors. All had a passion for older adults. We had one person who was frail, but her daughter provided transportation for her and later became a member of one of the groups. So, we had persons representing all four of the OA categories you talk about in "Building Blocks" and now in "Growing an Older Adult Ministry" (Growing). **How long did the groups meet?**

About a year. Once per month. We carefully read each chapter of "Building Blocks," sometimes only twenty pages at a time. We did all the surveys and completed all the suggested tasks. Slowly the vision for ministry began to take

shape. The charts that led through each step were very helpful. We still use the planning chart [*See Appendix V*] and a similar group has been meeting the first Friday of each month ever since. That was about fourteen years ago!

What was revealed though the study?

We knew that we were a part of a large congregation with many resources and educated people. We discovered that we had many older adults being served already. We found that we could complete the entire planning chart with existing ministries (*see chapter 4 as well as Appendix C*). There were existing programs that provided ministry to and with older adults that spanned all four older adult groupings [*active, frail, transitional and caregivers, in chapter 1*]. Don's five program categories expanded our thinking as to what serves to engage older adults meaningfully (*See chapters 5-10: Spiritual Formation, Life-long Learning, Opportunities to Serve, Opportunities to be Served, Community Building.*). Over time we were drawn to specific categories that we thought would be best for the older adults in our congregation. A year or two later we added program category, "Financial Well-being," or "Finance and Stewardship" because we discovered many to be concerned that they might outlive their resources. Plus, we wanted to help all four groups be good stewards of the finances God had entrusted to them. At Ascension we have many strong leaders who are also on staff with Thrivent (*a Fortune 500 not-forprofit financial services organization, founded by Lutherans*) and they have been and are terrific resources for this "Finance and Stewardship" area of ministry. We also have added an eighth category, "Physical Well-being". Each year our ministry team would add one or two new ministries to the chart. Many ministries began as dreams and ideas but did not take root until two or three years later.

Do you have an example?

Right from the start it was clear that providing simple maintenance around the house was a high need. For the transitional and the frail to remain in their homes, they need a little bit of help around the house. A professional was not needed to change a light bulb in a ceiling fixture, but it was not safe for seniors to climb a ladder. Replacing

a new rubber washer in a dripping faucet also was simple but "What tool should I use?" We had the forms for this ministry ready a couple of years before it got off the ground. We called it "3M: Minor Maintenance Ministries." Finally, a person who was passionate about getting it going volunteered to lead the effort in finding volunteers and then matching them with the needs expressed by our older adults. This ministry has both women and men providing help with these simple tasks, all coordinated by this one person who was interested in serving, using her personal strengths. One could say that she shared the 'spiritual gifts' given by God to all. (*1st Corinthians 12:4-31)*.

Just how do new ministries begin?

New ministries begin with the leader who has the gifts and the passion to carry out the ministry. All planning is nurtured in prayer, as we trust the Holy Spirit's leading. The planning committee simply shares the need, waits, and watches for the right person to emerge. When that person is found, the ministry takes off, especially with a good team of people supporting. It almost seems that the leader was only looking for permission to engage in what she/he wanted to do in the first place. Or the Spirit nudges them in the call to serve! The planning committee simply provided that permission. At Ascension, ministries evolve out of prayer, passion, brainstorming, recognizing needs, and getting to know people. This has been the key for us.

Do you have another example?

One of the first ministries that we started was a ministry to a local skilled care center where a member of Ascension was living. Many in our transitional and active older adults were interested in this monthly ministry where we had a hymn sing, Bible readings, short devotions, and shared prayers. The staff was very gracious, supportive, and appreciative.

After the ministry in that first skilled center was firmly established, we were invited to include an adult day care center for persons with dementia. That ministry is very near and dear to a number of our Ascension leaders and they love doing this ministry twice a month. Then a member of Ascension asked if we could come to her mobile home park for senior adults. We used their community center to sing, share in a Bible study, and even celebrate Holy Communion. It is a

wonderfully ecumenical group! It has been said that "relationships are central, all else is secondary." So, we often come early and stay late to simply visit the residents. At each of these places, in addition to the residents, we are also very cognizant of engaging the staff, including them as much as possible, listening to them, before and after our time with the residents, trying to share the love and grace of Jesus with all! As always, relationships are vital.

We continued to expand this ministry as leadership kept popping up. We are now calling the ministries at each of these sites "Christian Life Hour." We have served seven sites. How often we come and what time of day are unique to each location. It is a fulfilling ministry where those who serve find themselves being served. Volunteers, staff, and residents get to know each other by name and grow to care for each other and look forward to the next time we are together. We use the song book "Songs of Faith" for these Christian Life Hours. The words are in large print and contains many of the old favorite hymns. It is published by Woodsong Publishing. Another book that we use is "ElderSong."

If the money were available, what ministries would you like to see at Ascension's OAM?

Except for my time, which of course is part of the budget of the congregation, the costs of our ministry are low. Older Adult Ministry is person-oriented, and we have done many of our ministries without cost. We have no charges for anything except

trip expenses that people pay for themselves, and for our weekly luncheon which is $5.00. It's delicious food and the folks are so appreciative of this relatively inexpensive meal. We found that coming to a potluck was difficult for many who did not cook as much anymore. And so simply attending, was their best option.

Creating a senior luncheon each week can be a challenge. Ascension was fortunate to have a retired person who had run a restaurant and was a great cook for large groups. Was that ever a gift from God! She certainly made this ministry very popular, she and the super group of about a dozen volunteers who work with her. The luncheon, called Lunch Bunch, each Wednesday noon has been important to our expanding OAM in that it has not only become a meeting space for everyone

to gather, but it allows contact for leadership to share information about what is happening and encourage new people to attend and get to know others. It's good community outreach as well. In this lunch hour we sometimes welcome a class from our Early Childhood Center or our Day School to sing a song for us or share with us in other ways. It's always a delight to bring the generations together. I know that in some other congregations who have a similar lunch ministry, they will have a guest speaker or a presentation. Not our group, they come just for the Christian fellowship! [*Note from Don. Ascension was indeed gifted, but a former restaurant owner is not needed, especially for smaller congregations. I know of many faith communities who buy sandwiches from a local restaurant or are blessed with one or two active older adults who find cooking to be fun and still have the energy. There are senior luncheons, sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging, provide, and serve lunch to members of the community-at-large. There might not be a need for an additional location, but it might be worth a phone call.*]

There are times when there is a budget need for a specific ministry. Instead of asking funds from Ascension we seek other sources like a special offering by the older adults themselves. We and other congregations also have access to funds designated for congregational use by Thrivent Choice dollars. Maybe those in other faith communities have special sources of funds such as these that have never been considered. This accompanying photo is from Grandparents' Day at our Ascension Lutheran School.

How do you communicate with the older adults in your community?

I am glad that you used the word "community" and not simply "faith community." All older adults have the same spiritual needs, so we encourage as many persons outside our community as possible. Communication with those persons is more difficult because they don't receive information from Ascension's normal methods. Word of mouth is by far the best outreach for everyone, including persons in our congregation. We often ask that those attending a ministry invite others. When someone attends for the first time, we ask for their email address. The older population in this country is growing fast. Few congregations have an intentional OAM, so the opportunities for outreach are endless. Thankfully, the Conejo Valley here has many outstanding resources in the community to help older adults. Two key places are Senior Concerns and the

Goebel Center.

Besides using the normal church channels of communication such as Sunday bulletin, newsletter, and website, social media, we also publish our own newsletter for older adults. It's called the "SAM Spirit" and we have an excellent writer and editor! We create a logo for each of our ministries so that readers can easily find what they are interested in.

What about now. Do you still have a planning team?

We meet in the morning of the first Friday of each month. The downside of having meetings during the day is that people who are working are not able to attend. But they are still invited to volunteer as their time permits. The planning team meets for about an hour. We spend as much time talking with each other, listening to each other's joys and sorrows as we do on the planning itself. We have devotions, prayer requests, and then prayer.

The leaders of each of our ministries attend the meeting. We go in a circle updating everyone on each ministry. We have two of retired nurses who are happy to do what a paid parish nurse would do, only without expense to the congregation. The leaders of the Lunch Bunch are also there as well as the coordinator of Minor Maintenance Ministries and, of course, the Christian Life Hours. The leader of our Single Active Seniors is also present. We have a transportation ministry too, but the leader of that works daytimes and is not able to attend our meetings. We evaluate what has been done in the past month and how the ministry might improve. We always share who needs extra care and prayer in our congregation. We brainstorm about ministries beyond the congregation into the community. Sometimes we dream about a new ministry and begin looking for a leader. Usually, the planning team waits for the leader to arise, but sometimes they do push the edge a little (*Steve smiled*).

I also need to say that there are as many ministries by older adults in our congregation that happen outside of our Older Adult Ministry planning team. This would be similar

in other congregations. I'd like to acknowledge and thank the older adults here who are so active in these other ministries as well: worship; music; prayer; adult education; Bible Studies; Sunday School; Church Council; School Board; Foundation Trustees; Life Groups (small groups); Mentoring in confirmation and high
school; Generosity Team; Community Concerns Committee; the Food Pantry; Blood Drives; Stephen Ministry; Green Faith Team; Global Ministries Team; Fair Trade Ministries; and the Matthew 25:35 Outreach Ministry Team working with refugees and immigrants.

Has the planning team ever decided to end a ministry?

We had a group of walkers which we called "Emmaus Walkers" each Tuesday morning. The leader moved away. No one took over the leadership. The ministry simply stopped. That was a ministry under our Physical Well-being category.

A ministry that I wish we had started years ago but is now tremendously meaningful is our Eucharistic Ministry. After several weeks of training, older adults (and sometimes younger ones too!) take Holy Communion to those unable to come because of disability, hospitalization, or even hospice. Ascension, as a liturgical church, celebrates communion each week, so this ministry is an expression of our very soul. I am always excited to witness the spiritual growth and depth that arises in those who participate in this ministry, givers and receivers alike. The fifteen Eucharistic Ministers often comment to me on how much they are blessed by being able to visit people and to bring them the sacrament, along with their care and listening skills. Again, the volunteer who coordinates this ministry is doing outstanding work.

Your work is truly impressive. But what about faith communities who are too small to call an additional person to develop an OAM. You are seminary trained and have had lots of experience. Can the average person hope to create something that even resembles the OAM at Ascension?

If they have the passion for older persons (both in the congregation and in the community) and a vision of what can be, anything is possible. It only takes a few people to give birth to a new ministry. With Don's book, especially this new one, I believe

that any thoughtful person can begin an OAM. I believe in both relationship and in patience that is directed by a book like Don's. It leads us to do our ministries based on our mission statements. (The accompanying photo shows the gifts of a prayer shawl and a hand-held cross for those we visit. Gather your talented knitters to make prayer shawls!)

You have found using a book to guide your ministry is important?

All the basics, Don calls it "infrastructure," remain the same. Dividing older adults into four groups might seem arbitrary and even offensive to some, but the division is helpful for planning. There are four basic groups of older adults. Distinctions can be made. Those distinctions make planning more precise, more effective.

The same is true regarding programming. While we have added a seventh (*Physical Well-being*), the six program categories in "Growing" remain the same. The purpose of each category remains the same. Content does change based upon the needs of the older adults in each faith community. Again, building an OAM is based on relationships. I have found that being guided by a book like Don's, or maybe a similar book, was instrumental for the growth of ministries at Ascension and beyond Ascension, since outreach and care to the community is just as important. All it takes is sensitivity, compassion, and a great guidebook by someone who has already been there and done that.

In your view, creating an OAM takes focus, energy, but also lots of patience.

Beginning an OAM is not a sprint, but a slow marathon. Some may wish it could grow faster because they know the need. Maybe it is just my style, but people, planning committees and OAM members alike, must be patient. Transforming seeds into plants takes time. One of my mantras is "Multiply the Ministries." And I love the quote from William Carey, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God." Begin where you are, where God has placed you. There is more that can be added in the future. Using the planning chart (Appendix V) provides the needed structure to plan ministries to, with, and for older adults.

If you were to develop an OAM in another congregation, what would you change, add, or omit from the process that you used?

Very little. Trust the process in Don's book. Use the advantage of following a trail that already exists. I believe that "Growing an Older Adult Ministry," will help even more than Don's previous book. It has more practical resources and is more concise and accessible. List the older adult ministries that already exist within your faith community and go from there. Build on what you already have. Pray for God's leading. Brainstorm. Spend the time to do a ministry well. Build it brick by brick. Encourage both the leaders and the participants to grow in their faith. Write a mission statement and use it. And remember, listen, listen, listen. In God's time and with God's guidance the ministries will multiply. Faith will grow. Generations will be connected. Young and old and in between will learn from each other. People will be cared for both in the congregation, in the community and we pray in the world as well. And our Triune God will be glorified and worshiped.

Below is a photo from a trip to the Los Angeles Cathedral to learn about the artwork of John August Swanson who is in the center with the orange shirt.

Chapter Sixteen
A Final Word

I am a blessed man. God has led me to being pastor of three congregations and then surprised me by challenging me to release the thought that I would be a parish pastor for life, and then led me to chaplaincy training at UCLA Medical Center in Los Angeles. In 1995, I was called by California Lutheran Homes and Community Services as a chaplain in two of their retirement communities. It was there, in the encounter with my older adult teachers, that I learned where my spiritual quest was leading from the time I left seminary. It was the role of spirituality envisioned and expressed and lived within the soul of older adults.

They were the people who taught me that faith was more than agreement with concepts about God, but instead was a life with God, on a deeply personal level. They taught me that the real path to discovering my authentic self was not through status, or being liked, or having people listen to my way of thinking and my understanding of Reality. They taught me, through their chronic conditions, through their life challenges, and yes, through their pain, that the power of gaining a true vision of self was finally achieved. What a blessing. They transformed my life by giving me a new direction to live, a new vision that was at first dim but soon grew into a shining light that shown from God. I discovered what the author of *The Dark Night of the Soul* discovered: That the dark night, no matter how fearful it might be, is only God breaking through our defenses, and with the darkness expanding our very selves, our soul, so that we "do not experience ideas about God, but God himself." These words exploded in my mind and heart and led me, *drove* me, to write this book.

This book is focused on two of my deepest loves: Experiencing God in my life and in my work, and continuing to learn through the life experience of older adults. When I was chaplain of Walnut Manor (now Walnut Village), a California Lutheran Homes and Community Services facility, I was humbled to preach before 80 or so people who were 80+ years old. This meant that I would be sharing insight about life based upon the life and teaching of Jesus to people who, as a group, had 6,400 years of experiencing God while I had, at that time, only about 60! That was as humbling as it was encouraging.

I hope that this book continues to encourage you to share the Gospel, the good news of a loving God, with older adults who are seeking the very answers to life that God gives. I believe that your life will be blessed beyond belief. Mine certainly has.

Donald Koepke
Seal Beach, CA
October, 2020

Appendix A.
Who are the older adults within your congregation?

Church Name

_____

What is the total number of older adults within your congregation? _____

What is the total number of persons in your congregation within each of these groups?

Active _____

Frail _____

Transitional _____

Caregivers _____

1. How many persons within each category live in the church's zip code?

Active _____

Frail _____

Transitional _____

Caregivers _____

If desired, expand your snapshot by searching www.factfinder.census.gov, entering the church's zip code and explore the characteristics of older adults in your community.

Number of Older Adults _____ Number of Women _____

Number of Men _____ Average Household income _____

What percentage are employed?

ages 55 to 59 _____ 60 to 64 _____

65 to 69 _____ 70 to 74 _____ 75+ _____

Appendix B.
What is to be Accomplished

Hopes and Dreams as an Expression of Mission

- What do we want to accomplish? What are our desired outcomes?
- What is the standard by which we will evaluate present ministry and guide the development of future ministry?

Step One: List as many desired OAM outcomes that you can think of in five minutes.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Step Two: Rank the goals above in order of importance, 1, 2, 3, etc.

Step Three: Circle the essential words in each ministry goal

Step Four: Based on the above steps, write below a simple, declarative sentence that describes your hopes and dreams for your older adult ministry.

Step Five: Share your Mission Statement with the entire group and through discussion seek consensus on an initial Mission Statement

Appendix C
Assessing Existing OAMs

1. What is the Total Membership of your Congregation? _____
   (See your Pastor or Secretary)

2. How many persons in your congregation are in the following groups?

(From Appendix A)

Active Elderly _____

Frail Elderly _____

Transitional _____

Caregivers _____

Percentage of Total _____

3. How many persons in your congregation need:

Transportation _____ Special Assistance _____

Extra Visitation _____ Home-centered ministry _____

3. Do you have a social group especially for older adults? Yes No

If yes, is it run by: Themselves_____Others_____

4. Do you have a group of volunteers to drive people to clinics, dentists, shopping, etc? Yes No

If yes, what is the age group of most of the volunteers _____

5. Does your church have the following?

   a) Recordings of church services for the home-centered? _____

   b) Access for the disabled to the Sanctuary? _____

   c) Access for the disabled to Social Hall? _____

   d) Access for the disabled to classrooms? _____

   e) Wheelchair accessible restrooms? _____

   f) Pull bars in restroom stalls? _____

   g) Access to altar by wheelchairs/walkers? _____

   h) Bright lighting in sanctuary/social hall? _____

   i) Blank wall in back of altar/pulpit? _____

   j) Hearing Assist equipment? _____

   k) Prominent place for wheelchairs in the sanctuary? _____

   l) Worship Materials in large print? _____

   m) Meals on Wheels? _____

   n) Home Repair services? _____

   o) Home Chore Services? _____

   p) Parish Nurse Program? _____

q) Stephen's Ministry (or similar)? _____

r) Exercise/Aerobics classes for older adults? _____

s) Cooking and Nutrition Classes for older adults? _____

t) Respite Care Relievers Program? _____

u) Telephone Reassurance Program? _____

v) Adult Day Care Center? _____

w) Prayer/Concern Chains? _____

x) Emergency Hot-Line? _____

y) Support Groups? _____List: _____

6. Approximately how many older adults are doing volunteer work in your church? _____

   Total hours per week_____per month_____per year_____

7. Do any of your organizations organize trips, movies, parties or other events for older adults? Name them and describe the event.

8. Does your church minister to the needs of persons in your community who are not church members or attenders?

9. Do you have volunteers who visit older persons who are:

   In thehospital? _____

   Home-centered? _____

   In Nursing Home? _____

10. Are older adults represented on the governing board of your church or other committees of your church? _____

11. Does your church offer classes/seminars for older adults in any of the following?

    a) Grief and loss _____

    b) Spiritual Development _____

    c) Death and Dying _____

    d) Marriage Communication _____

    e) Retirement Planning _____

    f) Caregiving _____

    g) How to choose a retirement community / nursing home _____

12. Do older adults participate in the following ministries?

    Local church teaching ministries?

    For children _____

    For youth _____

For young adults _____

For Middle-Aged _____

For Older Adults _____

a. After school Latchkey Programs for Children _____

b. Preschool volunteer or employee _____

c. Telephone Reassurance Program _____

d. Serve in Worship Areas:

Ushers _____

Greeters _____

Lay Assistants (Liturgists) _____

Readers _____

Choir _____

Song Leaders _____

Soloists _____

e. Church office assistance:

Bulletins/Worship materials _____

Newsletters _____

Directories _____

Mailings _____

Receptionist _____

Volunteer (or paid) office assistant _____

f. Other existing Older Adult Ministries: _____

_____

_____

Adapted from: Local Church Program Assessment
"Designing A Ministry By, With and For Older Adults"
Richard H Gentzler, Jr. Office of Adult Ministries
The United Methodist Church, Nashville, TN, 37202-0840

Appendix D.
Creating a Successful Elder Ministry

1. Our program is intentional, planned and focused.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

2. Our program has a sense of rootedness.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

3. Our program is based on demonstrated needs.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

4. Our program is enhanced by good record keeping and accountability.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

5. Our program has identifiable leadership.

2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How are we going to improve?

6 Our program has leaders trained in gerontology.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

7. Our program has the support of the church council.

2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

8. Our program communicates well with the community.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

9. Our program is supported by a strong physical infrastructure.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

10. Our program has adequate financial and volunteer support.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

11. Our program is blessed with community ties.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

12. Our program is based on neighborliness and inter-congregational cooperation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

13. Our program intentionally addresses the spiritual needs of the people whom we serve.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not Yet □ □ Doing It Well

Why this evaluation?

How we are going to improve?

Appendix E
Leading Meditation Prayer

An Annotated Script for the Leader

A presentation/discussion of a topic of Spiritual Development and Growth
(30 Minutes)
(See Blue Pages: Spiritual Growth topics)

A discussion time is not only helpful, it is crucial. A presentation followed by discussion focuses the group and provides time for continuing education of persons in the spiritual life from some of the "masters." Excerpts from books could be read and discussed. Two books that I have used often are: ***The Inner Voice of Love*** (Doubleday, 1996) by Henri Nouwen, and ***Devotional Classics*** (HarperCollins, 1993) edited by Richard Foster and James Bryan Smith. I used Nouwen for almost two years. The residents insisted on hearing topics for the second time.

Prepare the room
Dim the lights (if possible)

Where possible, create a mood for meditation. Use of a single candle in the middle of a circle is great. Indirect lighting is best so that there is no distraction as participants close their eyes. Dimming the lights also provides a "now it is time to meditate" expectation.

Preparing for Meditation

Describing to people what to do, how to meditate, and where such meditations are from is helpful, particularly for the "rookie." Describing the meditation also provides a sense of history and removes meditation from the realm of mystery.

> ***Today we are going to meditate using***
> *(Meditation Style of Choice)*
> *(See Appendix F: Meditation Descriptions)*

After meditation description the preparation continues:

Find yourself a comfortable way to sit. For meditation, I like sitting with my feet flat on the floor, my hands comfortably in my lap, my spine as erect as possible, my head very slightly tilted forward, and my eyes closed.

I like saying almost the same thing each week. "Rookies" will listen. "Veterans" will tune you out and begin to enter into a meditative state. Like reading the same book and saying the same bed-time prayers for small children, leading the meditation in the same way allows a person to concentrate on the meditation rather than your words. Surprises are disruptive in meditation

Leading the Meditation:

Begin by taking two very slow but very deep breaths, to give a shot of oxygen that relaxes the body.

Become aware of the sensations around your body, not to change them, but just to become aware of them.

The purpose of this section is to assist the participants to center themselves and become aware, not of their surroundings, but of the Spirit of God within. Thus, we start by becoming aware of the sensations in our own bodies and then move to an awareness of God.

Become aware of the sensations around:
Your head *(pause)*
And your face *(pause)* **And your neck** *(pause)*
And your shoulders *(pause)* **And your elbows** *(pause)*
And your wrists *(pause)*
And the palms of your hands. *(pause)*
Become aware of the sensations around you knees *(pause)* **And your ankles** *(pause)*
And the souls of your feet. *(pause)*
Now gather all that awareness and focus it on the place near your heart, that vast place within where God lives and waits for you. *(pause)*

Throughout religious literature, the heart has been seen as the essence of the person. Today we say phrases like: "I love you with all my heart," and "I learned

that by heart." If pressed, many people might suggest that the soul is located somewhere near their heart in that when they experience any intimate moment they become aware of a 'sensation' in the center of their chest, near their heart. Thus, this form of meditation focuses on the God who is within, in addition to being above, around, and beyond the person.

> **Feel your heart opening to God**. *(pause)* **Sense God's presence filling your heart with warmth and love. If you don't feel God's presence right now, know that God is present because of God's promise, and we trust God's promise more than our own feelings.**

We come to the essence of the meditation, gazing upon God, being receptive to God, open to God. We lay aside our expectations and agendas, all thoughts and feelings, and simply surrender into the presence of God. The experience could be likened to "climbing onto the lap of God" and cuddling with God.

> *(Insert instructions for the meditation-style of choice found in Appendix F)*

Once again, the meditations' instructions are repeated in a couple simple sentences. 'Rookies' need to assurance of what to do, which is nothing except surrendering to the presence of God within. By this time, veterans will have tuned the speaker out in favor of being attentive to God.

Time the Meditation

Using a cell phone or timer, time the meditation. While you will be able to meditate as well, your meditation might be disrupted by the need to 'keep watch of the time.'

Concluding the Meditation

There are several ways to conclude the meditation. Two of them are: either by speaking or by chimes. If you have a chime or a small, pleasant sounding bell, you can ring the chime QUIETLY. To a person in deep meditation the smallest of bells will sound like Big Ben! Talking the group out of meditation is also effective. Be sure to speak softly, but project so that the hard-of-hearing can understand.

By speaking
As you are ready, become aware of the sensations in your hands and feet. *(Pause)*
As you are ready, become aware of the room. *(Pause)*
As you are ready, take a deep breath, and open your eyes.

By chime
Ring the chime three times softly

After two minutes of silence:
Are there any questions or comments?

Allow time for participants to 'savor' the peace that accompanies meditation. After a time, ask the question which is deliberately cognitive in nature.

Participants have just concluded a non-cognitive event. They need to "put the brain in gear" before leaving. While it is quite rare that people have a comment or question, inviting a question helps puts the brain in gear' before leaving. If there is a question or comment because of what people have experienced, it shows an openness to their concerns.

Close with a corporate prayer of choice, such as ***The Lord's Prayer (The "Our Father)"*** or another prayer for older adults.

Alternative closing prayer:
Gather for spoken intercessions, thanksgivings, and words of praise. The leader might begin with a simple prayer of invocation and meeting with God.

We love you, O Lord, for you gather us together and grant us the privilege of communing with you. We love you that you love us so much as to wish to be one with us and to share life with us. Hear now our prayers, both verbal and silent, that we now bring before you.

Allow time for persons who wish to pray verbally. Finally, close with a prayer such as the following:

We thank you, O Lord, for hearing our prayers. We pray that you might use them for our growing and for the care of others. We love you, O God. Amen

Leading Meditation Prayer Groups
Descriptions of Meditation Styles

Meditation is the discipline of growing in one's ability to surrender to God without agenda and without seeking to control the prayer. Meditation is placing us into the hands of God, yielding to his Presence and Will, and simply 'being' with the Lord.

But human beings do not like to meditate because they do not like to yield to anyone. Human beings like to be in charge, to manage, to control. In prayer, especially in meditation, that control takes the form of thoughts and feelings that distract one from simply yielding to God and being with That-Which-Is-Beyond. Over the centuries, persons of faith have developed different 'tools' that assist them in quieting their egos and focusing on God.

There are many such meditative tools. Four are described below. One is more "verbal," for those who like to talk. It is called the **Jesus Prayer**. A second is for those who need a gentle reminder of the heart. It is called **Centering Prayer**. A third is for those who need to hear and participant purposefully and intently: **Chant**. The fourth is for those who wish to simply surrender and thus is called **"Practicing the Presence of God."** If these styles do not meet the needs of your residents, try **Lectio Divina** (Praying the Scriptures) or the **Breath Prayer** (where we focus on God through the deepest yearning of our hearts). Some references for further study are as follows:

Kaisch, Kenneth. *Finding God: A Handbook of Christian Meditation* (General)

Carvarnos, Constantine. *Byzantine Sacred Music* (Chant)

Br. Lawrence. *The Practice of the Presence of God*

Gillet, Archimandrite Lev. *The Jesus Prayer*

Keating, Thomas. *Open Mind, Open Heart*

Vest, Norvene. *Bible Reading for Spiritual Growth (Lectio Divina)*

Meditation is a discipline, that is, a method of "training the person." At first, meditation is going to be hard because as the mind becomes quiet all sorts of "stuff" will come to mind. That is the ego seeking to maintain control. But as one

persists in meditating it becomes easier, though never perfect. Protestants might think of meditative tools as mini-altar calls where one surrenders again and again to God, hopefully going deeper and becoming more intimate with God at each act of yielding.

Leading Meditation Prayer Groups
The Jesus Prayer

The Jesus Prayer is an ancient meditation tool that goes back to the fourth century. It comes to us from the desert fathers who used it to enhance their meditation on the person of Jesus. The Jesus Prayer is popular in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

The tool uses the words of the gospels where the blind man, Bartimaeus, calls out to Jesus and will not stop even when those around him try to silence him. In fact, as the crowds told Bartimaeus to be quiet, he cried out more, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." (Mark 10:46-52). "Son of David" is a peculiar term of Jewish origin which Christians have altered within the prayer to say, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me."

The prayer is rhythmic in nature. It begins with invocation: "Jesus, Son of God," thrusting out from within to the God who is beyond. It begins by stating who is being invoked: Jesus (the human being) who is also 'Son of God.' But then the prayer extends far beyond to the person within: "Have mercy on me." As we come into the presence of the One-Who-Is-Beyond, the Living God is made visible in Jesus.

The prayer is short, not to complicate the mind. It is designed for repetition so that at each occasion, the person releases more of the self to enter into the presence of God. It quiets the mind that likes to *think*, to create, and to ponder; it helps the mind rest in the stillness of God. Practitioners are encouraged not to hold a visual picture of Jesus but simply to call out to Jesus.

The Jesus prayer has three parts:

- **First**, a moving of our awareness to the place near your heart, the place where God lives and waits for you.
- The **second** part is to become aware of the Presence of God.
- **Finally**, the Jesus Prayer is said internally, over and over again, until the mind is quiet and the heart is focused on Jesus.

When attention wanders, simply re-engage the three parts: 1) moving awareness to the heart, 2) becoming aware of the Presence of God, and 3) internally praying the prayer, "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me," until the mind is quiet and the heart rests in God.

Leading Meditation Prayer Group
Centering Prayer

Centering Prayer is based on the 14th century book, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. This meditative tool leads one to focus attention on God rather than on one's own thoughts. Essential to the Centering Prayer is the use of a "sacred word" chosen by each participant. This "sacred word" is not sacred in its meaning as much as sacred in its use, for it reminds us to focus our awareness on God. Our intent is to be present with God and surrender to his action in our lives.

The action is simple. First, choose a word that is simple, short (one syllable, two at the most), and does not evoke a lot of meaning or thought. To be sure, one could use words like God, or love, or even Jesus. But those words, being so charged with meaning, could be distracting in and of themselves. A "sacred word" could be a gesture like raising up one's thoughts to God. It might be a sound like "ah" or a "sigh." The purpose of the sacred word is to remind the self to focus on God and not on thoughts, feelings, or concepts. The sacred word is not used repetitively but only when one becomes aware that distractions have stolen attention away from God. Quietly saying the word internally reminds the self to focus on God without cognitive thought. Once you have chosen your word, keep the same word for the entire meditation. Changing in mid-stream requires thought, and thought is distracting.

There are three parts to Centering Prayer.

- **First** is to move attention to the heart, the place where God dwells and waits for us.
- **Second**, become aware of the Presence of God.
- **Finally**, simply surrender to God, and when distractions come, quietly and gently say the sacred word internally and return to the Lord and rest there again.

Don't internally "shout" your sacred word for that might be even more distracting. Simply and lovingly, gently and with care, stroke the distraction with your sacred word and return to your Lord who is waiting for you.

Leading Meditation Prayer Groups
Chant

Chant belongs to the family of meditative tools called 'sensory meditations." These tools use the senses to focus our attention on God. Chant uses the ears and well as the voice to surrender and yield.

Chant has been used since before the time of Jesus, as people chanted the psalms. It takes many forms. One can chant one word repeatedly, such as the word "holy," using the same pitch. A group can respond to the expression of a cantor. Several words and pitches can be used. The important thing to remember is that the intent is not to make beautiful music but to focus on God, to experience The Divine directly. At its best, the person who is chanting becomes the chant where the words and the music and the person are all intertwined.

The leader chooses a pitch that is comfortable for all. Some practice might be needed during an instructional period. As the chant continues, feel the vibration of your voice extending throughout the body. Allow yourself to be swept up by the chant, the music, the words (or word). Don't think. Simply surrender to the chant, responding out of a deeper part of yourself than your cognitive mind. Allow the chant to resonate within you and carry you to God. When the chanting stops, there is an amazing stillness that is living and vibrant. You find yourself not needing to think. You are able to sit, be still, and be with God.

When distractions come, internally return to the presence of God and continue the chant from the heart.

Leading Meditation Prayer Groups
Practicing the Presence of God

The basic focus of all prayer is to focus all one's attention on God and to experience -- not some ideas about God -- but the very presence of God (period). A further goal of prayer is to make people aware of God's presence throughout life.

Brother Lawrence was a French Carmelite monk in the 17th century. He came to the monastery late in life because he loved God and just wanted to be with him. That intention became the essence of this meditative tool. Instead of using one's voice to focus on God (Chant) or prayer to focus on God (Jesus Prayer) or a word to focus on God (Centering Prayer), Brother Lawrence used his intention, his burning desire, his *decision* to yield himself to God.

This tool is deceptively simple. First, open your awareness to God. Redirect all your attention, all of your being, to God. Secondly, allow yourself to become immersed in the Divine Presence. Let go of thoughts, ideas, sensations, emotions by simply not paying attention to them. When distractions come, simply let them go (without judgment or comment by you) and return your attention to God.

Appendix F

SOULSHEPHERDING

When Henri Nouwen Couldn't Feel God's Love

The warmth of God's presence can be elusive. In his secret journal, Henri Nouwen is vulnerable about a dark season in which *he could not feel God's love.*

He'd helped millions of other people around the world into a more tender and intimate experience with God, but he was in a Dark Night of the Soul.

The spiritual darkness overtook Nouwen around his transition of leaving his work as a seminary professor to live and serve in a community of developmentally disabled adults in 1988.
Eight years later and shortly before his death he agreed to publish his secret journal as *The Inner Voice of Love*. Here are some excerpts from that short and heartfelt book:

"Everything came crashing down — my self-esteem, my energy to live and work, my sense of being loved, my hope for healing, my trust in God… everything."

"Here I was, a writer about the spiritual life, known as someone who loves God and gives hope to people, flat on the ground and in total darkness."

"What had happened? I had come face to face with my own nothingness. It was as if all that had given my life meaning was pulled away and I could see nothing in front of me but a bottomless abyss." (p xiii)

"It was as if the house I had finally found had no floors…."

"I could not be reached by consoling words or arguments. I no longer had any interest in other people's problems. I… could not appreciate the beauty of music, art, or even nature. All had become darkness." (pp xiv-xv)

Henri Nouwen finally experienced consolation from God through two spiritual counselors. Through them the Lord spoke to his heart and to ours:

> **"You have to trust the place that is solid, the place where you can say yes to God's love even when you do not feel it."**

"Right now you feel nothing except emptiness and the lack of strength to choose. But keep saying, "God loves me, and God's love is enough." You have to choose the solid place over and over again and return to it after every failure." (p 8)

"Don't whip yourself for your lack of spiritual progress. If you do, you will easily be pulled even further away from your center. You will damage yourself…"

"It is obviously good not to act on your sudden emotions. But you don't have to repress them either… Acknowledge them [and] befriend them so that you do not become their victim."

"The way to 'victory' is not in trying to overcome your dispiriting emotions directly but in building a deeper sense of safety and at-homeness and a more incarnate knowledge that you are deeply loved. Then little by little, you will stop giving so much power to strangers [who make you feel insecure]." (pp 42-43)

"When you experience the deep pain of loneliness, it is understandable that your thoughts go out to the person who was able to take that loneliness away, even if only for a moment….

"But no human being can heal that pain."

"Still, people will be sent to you to mediate God's healing, and they will be able to offer you the deep sense of belonging that you desire and that gives meaning to all you do.

"Dare to stay with your pain, and trust in God's promise to you." (pp 47- 48)

Appendix G
Tending the Garden That is our Life
By Dawn Peck

Just suppose God wrote a letter, a real letter, to us at birth. I imagine it as something like this:

> *My dear little one, you are coming into being. You are beginning to perceive things. This body that is now yours is wondrous. I feel such joy in anticipation of the journey that is to be yours. Yet, I also feel some trepidation – for I know of this journey. I know the dance you will forever do between comfort and discomfort, between knowing and not knowing, and the challenging decisions you will make that are of such great import. I know the needs of creatures, perhaps better than the creatures themselves. Yet, I cannot "do it," "do life" for you. Life is your journey. How, I wonder, can I help you sense my presence with you? I cannot "make" your life "perfect." I actually don't even know how to define perfect, unless it is life lived in communion with me, for I am the source of all love. I wonder, how long will it take you to recognize Love, to seek it, to share it?*

Just an inkling of the reality of Divine Presence, of radiant love permeating all of creation, it is the beginning of a never-ending journey, one that is simultaneously towards and within God. This precious inkling is elusive. At times we question ourselves as to its reality. Is "this" really of God? Can "this" really be trusted? With whom can I even talk about "this?" Sometimes, as seekers, we assume church communities might be a safe place for asking such deep questions. Sometimes a church community *can* be a safe place for exploration. And, sometimes a church community is not welcoming of seekers who really question deeply.

It actually takes quite a bit of courage to authentically turn towards God (or whatever other word you might choose to use for Divine Presence). C. S. Lewis talks of being pursued by God, about reluctantly turning towards God, and about being surprised by Joy (in his book by that title).

This lifelong journey is not one to be embarked on alone. We need companions on this journey; we need community across time. We may need the perspective of another to help us validate our own experience and our own truth. This "other person" may or may not be someone we personally know and, for me, has often been a voice from the past, from the distant past. As I have grown to recognize the Divine within my life over time, I have needed to rely on the experiences of people from long ago to help me along the way: Brother Lawrence, Meister Eckhart, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Thomas Merton, Paul, Jesus, the Desert Fathers (and Mothers), Howard Thurman, to name a few.

Sometimes the perspective of "other" comes unbidden and unwanted. Sometimes this necessary perspective grows and stretches us in ways that are needed, necessary for our own development. Sometimes the perspective forces us to stand up for what we know to be true—to find our courage, however small it might be in terms of a world scale, but to find our courage to stand up for what is right and true in our own life. All we can give to the world is our own truth. Of what use are we to anyone, including ourselves, if we are not living our own truth?

If ever you have known God, you will never be quite the same.
You may look exactly the same,
but, you will know that God is with you.
You will feel deeply loved,
You will be filled with such love that it will naturally overflow.
You will know a deep peace, a meaning underneath.
From that "place" of deep peace, you will see the world differently,
And, you will care, care deeply about and for all.
If ever you have known God you will grow in to being your true self.
You will be more yourself,
but you will never be quite the same.

Retrieved from https://shalem.org/2019/11/05/tending-the-garden-that-is-our-life/

Appendix H
What Does it Mean to Be Beloved of God?
by Juliet Vedral

It happened at the last day—the last hour really—of the 2013 Shalem YALLI kick-off retreat. As our ragtag group of contemplatives wrote down on paper the blockages we sensed to living lives connected to the Spirit, we placed them in a bowl. We were then asked to come up, take a few of the slips of paper, hold them up to God, then return them to the bowl with a prayer: "I am the Beloved of God."

This snarky, snide former Pastors' Kid (yes, that's two pastors) rolled the eyes of her heart. What did that prayer even mean? But then that question tugged at me: What *does* it mean to be the Beloved of God? It seemed to be the question I had always been asking. Could that really be true of *me*?

I've always loved John's gospel the most, primarily because of his audacity to define himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." What a claim, right? Yet it seemed the journey that the Spirit was inviting me to take as we left the retreat was to be able to claim for myself, for my core identity, "the Beloved of God."

Flash forward 10 months. I am on a work retreat with the messaging team and Anne Grizzle, my mentor through Shalem's YALLI program. I had suggested that one of my projects to incorporate contemplative practices in the workplace was to have this team take some time to learn how best to listen to the Spirit and each other. As we did some listening and discernment, I shared about my life and how I felt as though I have been on a pilgrimage in the darkness and not sure to what end.

To my surprise, two of my colleagues said that they believed I was "blessed" and that perhaps the season I was in was less about me and more for others. It was not what I'd hoped to hear. Still, it struck a chord in me—as in, it caused all the notes that had been playing in my head and my heart for months to harmonize.

Henri Nouwen, in his book, *Life of the Beloved*, writes that being the Beloved of God means that we are taken, blessed, broken, and then given to others. As Jesus was blessed, broken, and given to us, so are we to the world. It is at once a beautiful and terrible thing to claim about oneself.

As I contemplate certain areas of my life that feel broken, I recognize that perhaps I'm missing the "slow work of God" because change isn't happening fast enough. Perhaps the challenge of being the Beloved is having the eyes to see that this life is about God and God's work in this world.

A co-worker recently referenced a sermon she'd heard a few years earlier, about being in the river of God. As we wade deeper into that river, we are carried to places we may not have willingly gone.

Right now I feel that I am at a place in my life where I would not have willingly gone. I am a single (off of a recent, perplexing break up), 33-year-old, childless woman with a great job, but not in her vocation, far from home. All of these aspects of my life make me feel as though I am not Beloved, as I would prefer to be married, with children, living into a vocational calling and near my family. There is a powerful temptation to feel purposeless and "cursed" by God when looking at my life through the lens of a self-centered world that tells me I am barren because I am alone and childless and not "living my dream."

And yet the One whom God proclaimed a beloved child that pleased the Divine, was "like one from whom people hide their faces; he was despised and we held him in low esteem." (Isaiah 53: 3b). In this upside-down kingdom, Belovedness looks broken. It looks low and impoverished, without "beauty or majesty." That's quite a depressing image, right? Who'd really want to sign up for *that*?

On my birthday I joked that this was my "Jesus year." Well, here was another 33-year-old, alone, without any descendants, unrecognized for the work he was doing, far from home. So when my colleagues said back to me something I couldn't hear—the voice of God saying "this is my Beloved Daughter in whom I am well pleased"—it was transformative. To be considered "blessed" despite feeling otherwise showed me how much farther I need to go in embracing all of God's love towards me. Not just the warm, fuzzy parts. But the real-life parts of being broken in front of people and letting them see God heal and restore.

Isn't that the reason we claim "the Beloved of God" as our identity? I am my father and mother's beloved daughter even when I don't always feel it. When I was a child and they didn't give me what I wanted all the time and they disciplined me to be a kind, thoughtful person, it was because they loved me. As the author of Hebrews writes, "Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father?" (Hebrews 12:7). This discipline is not

punishment but instead is teaching me to know my worth to God. I am Beloved even when it doesn't feel like it and through this process being made more and more like Jesus. And like him, may I continue to be chosen, blessed, broken, and given to those who need to see the slow—yet powerful—work of God.

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Retrieved from https://shalem.org/2014/09/05/what-does-it-mean-to-be-beloved-of-god/

Appendix I
How Much is Enough?

"I don't need this" score "1" **"I MIGHT need this" score "2"** **"I need this" score "3"**

Formal Dining ware_____	Computer station_____
Formal Flatware_____	36" Flat Screen_____
Informal Dining ware_____	54" Flat Screen_____
Informal Flatware_____	Audio System_____
Basic Kitchen Items_____	CD Rack_____
Bar Accessories_____	TV (Analog)_____
Every Day Drinking Glasses_____	Bedroom Flat Screen_____
Formal Drinking Glasses_____	Cable (Basic)_____
Stemware_____	Cable (Premium)_____
Personal Bedroom Set_____	Patio Furniture_____
Guest Bedroom Set_____	Outdoor Propane Grill_____
Computer_____	Book Cases_____
Printer_____	Jewelry Cabinet_____
Scanner_____	Second Sofa_____
I Pad_____	Second Living Room Chair_____

Cell Phone_____ End Tables_____

Bathroom Accessories_____ Coffee Table_____

Camping equipment_____ Walmart lamps_____

Outdoor "Toys"_____ Thrift Store Lamps_____

Trailer to Haul Toys_____

Gardening Tools_____

Landscaping tools_____ TOTAL_____

Total your score and share with a partner.

Appendix J
Quotes on Suffering, Viktor Frankl

"Man's search for meaning may arouse inner tension rather than inner equilibrium. However, precisely such tension is an indispensable prerequisite of mental health. There is nothing in the world, I venture to say, that so effectively helps one to survive even the worse conditions as the knowledge that there is a meaning in one's life."

"In some way, suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice."

"Man's main concern is not to gain pleasure or to avoid pain but rather to see a meaning in his life."

"Suffering unnecessarily is masochistic rather than heroic."

"At any moment, man must decide, for better or for worse, what will be the monument of his existence?"

"Pleasure is, and must remain, a side-effect or by-product, and is destroyed and spoiled to the degree to which it is made a goal in itself."

"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."

"But there was no need to be ashamed of tears, for tears bore witness that a man had the greatest of courage, the courage to suffer."

"For the first time in my life I saw the truth as it is set into song by so many poets, proclaimed as the final wisdom by so many thinkers. The truth - that Love is the ultimate and highest goal to which man can aspire. Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: the salvation of man is through love and in love."

"It did not really matter what we expected from life, but rather what life expected from us. We needed to stop asking about the meaning of life, and instead to think of ourselves as those who were being questioned by life—daily and hourly. Our

answer must consist, not in talk and meditation, but in right action and in right conduct. Life ultimately means taking the responsibility to find the right answer to its problems and to fulfill the tasks which it constantly sets for each individual."

"Happiness cannot be pursued; it must ensue."
(ensue: to follow because of…to flow from the meaning that a person has discovered or experienced. Quoted from the internet at Dictionary.com)

"To draw an analogy: a man's suffering is similar to the behavior of a gas. If a certain quantity of gas is pumped into an empty chamber, it will fill the chamber completely and evenly, no matter how big the chamber. Thus, suffering completely fills the human soul and conscious mind, no matter whether the suffering is great or little. Therefore the "size" of human suffering is absolutely relative."

"Man does not simply exist but always decides what his existence will be, what he will become the next moment. By the same token, every human being has the freedom to change at any instant."

"If there is meaning in life at all, then there must be a meaning in suffering. Suffering is an ineradicable part of life, even as fate and death. Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete."

Appendix K
What is My Passion for Ministry?
A tool of Discovery

Making a Servant Profile

Example profiles

TED
I have a Passion for children, young, single-parent family "problems."

SUE
I have a Passion for caring for the poor,
Working with food bank. Connecting with community groups.
Developing or enhancing the work of others in our congregation.

Your Name: _____ Servant Profile

I have a Passion for |_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you still are unsure, clarify your passion by participating in a huddle group of supportive persons. Use the following guide.

DIRECTIONS:

Each explain your Passion to the group. Listen to the thoughts and struggles of others.

As a group, discuss each person's Passion in order to help that person gain a clearer understanding of his or her Passion. Jot down words and phrases that touched you during the discussion.

_____

_____

Circling key words and phrases, using them to form a description of your passion.

_____

_____

Transfer your description to the servant profile above

_____

For Further Exploration of Finding Your Passion

Background

The New Reformation, Greg Ogden, Zondervan

Pouring New Wine Into Old Wineskins, Aubrey Malphurs, Baker Books

General

Serving One Another, Gene Getz, Victor Books

The New Reformation, Greg Ogden, Zondervan

Unleashing the Church, Frank Tillapaugh, Regal Books

Unleashing Your Potential, Frank Tillapaugh, Regal Books

Partners In Ministry, James Garlow, Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City

The Body, Chuck Colson, Word Publishing

What Color Is Your Parachute? Richard Bolles, Ten Speed Press

Improving Your Serve, Charles Swindoll, Word Publishing

Passion

The Truth About You, Arthur Miller/Ralph Mattson, Ten Speed Press

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual Gifts, Bobby Clinton, Horizon House

Spiritual Gifts, David Hocking, Promise Publishing Team Ministry, Larry Gilbert, Church Growth Institute

Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow, Peter Wagner, Regal Books.
Finding (and Using) Your Spiritual Gifts, Tim Blanchard, Tyndale House

Discovering Spiritual Gifts, Paul Ford, Fuller Institute

Personal Style

Please Understand Me, David Keirsey/Marily Bates, Prometheus Nemesis Book Co.
Understanding How Others Misunderstand You, Ken Vogues/Ron Braund, Moody
The Delicate Art of Dancing with Porcupines, Bob Phillips, Regal Books

6

Appendix L

[Name of Congregation] Older Adult Ministry

Job Description [Date}

Job Title

Reports To

Term of

Service

Job

Overview

1.

2.

3.

4.

Responsibilities and Duties

- □
- □
- □
- □

Qualifications

- □
- □
- □

Appendix M
Taking a Spiritual Temperature

I have meaning in life

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Full of Meaning					Seeking for Meaning	

Having meaning is important to me because:

God feels close to me

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very Close						Distant

The way this affects my life is:

I have doubts

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No Doubts					Lots of Doubts	

Doubting is good for my spiritual life because:

Doubting is bad for my spiritual life because:

Pain

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Clarifies life						distorts life

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is to be embraced					Is to be avoided	

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is never good spiritually					Can be good spirituall	

What three words best expresses your experience with God?

In my relationship with God, I would hope that before I die I would….

Appendix N
What Is Domestic Violence?

Domestic violence (also called intimate partner violence (IPV), domestic abuse, or relationship abuse), is a pattern of behaviors used by one partner to maintain power and control over another partner in an intimate relationship.

Domestic violence does not discriminate. Anyone of any race, age, sexual orientation, religion or gender can be a victim – or perpetrator – of domestic violence. It can happen to people who are married, living together or who are dating. It affects people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and education levels.

Domestic violence includes behaviors that physically harm, arouse fear, prevent a partner from doing what they wish or force them to behave in ways they do not want. It includes the use of physical and sexual violence, threats and intimidation, emotional abuse, and economic deprivation. Many of these different forms of domestic violence/abuse can be occurring at any one time within the same intimate relationship.

Here at The Hotline, we use the **Power & Control Wheel*** to describe most accurately what occurs in an abusive relationship.

Think of the wheel as a diagram of the tactics an abusive partner uses to keep their victim in the relationship. While the inside of the wheel is comprised of subtle, continual behaviors, the outer ring represents physical, visible violence. These are the abusive acts that are more overt and forceful, and often the intense acts that reinforce the regular use of other more subtle methods of abuse.

**Although this Power & Control Wheel uses she/her pronouns for the victim and assumes a male perpetrator, abuse can happen to people of any gender in any type of relationship.*

PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE
SEXUAL
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.
USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.
USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.
USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles
USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.
MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.
PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE
SEXUAL

Appendix P

Homelessness in America

A total of 552,830 people were experiencing homelessness on a single night in 2018. This number represents 17 out of every 10,000 people in the United States. HUD's Annual Point-in-Time Count, the only nation-wide survey of homeless people, provides this data and other useful statistics.

Most people experiencing homelessness are individuals (67 percent). The remainder (33 percent) are people in families with children. Public policy has put a focus on additional subpopulations.

One of the subpopulations is youth who are under the age of 25 and living on their own (without parents or children). This group is 7 percent of the total homeless population. In recent years, coordinated efforts at all levels of government have also targeted veterans (7 percent of the total homeless population) and chronically homeless people (18 percent). This last group consists of people with disabilities who have been homeless for an extended period of time or repeatedly.

Gender and racial demographics are an important part of the American homelessness story. The homeless population is largely male. Among individual adults, 70 percent are men. White Americans are the largest racial grouping, accounting for 49 percent of those experiencing homelessness. However, African Americans and American Indians are dramatically overrepresented in the Point-in-Time Count compared to their numbers in the general population.

Appendix Q
Spiritual life Needs Assessment

This set of questions tells us about some of your beliefs and personal preferences related to your spiritual life.

This scale consists of various statements concerning your point of view on several topics. Please read carefully and respond as honestly as possible. Indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement by circling the appropriate phrase from the scale:

Totally Disagree	**Somewhat Disagree**	**Uncertain**	**Slightly Agree**	**Agree**

1. I believe in the existence of a supreme being, God, or a power beyond myself.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

2. I feel a connection to God or a power beyond myself.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

3. It is important for me to grow in my relationship to God or this power beyond myself.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

4. I feel a deeper sense of spirituality after I have experienced a meaningful visit form a formal representative from my religious organization (minister, priest, pastor, rabbi, swami, or other designated visitor).

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

5. It is important for me to have the help of others to think about and sort out my life- long and current spiritual experiences.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

6. It is important for me to be able to read scripture or other faith materials with others persons of my faith.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

7. It is important for me to participate in a prayer group with at least one other person.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

8. It is important for me to participate in liturgy or worship services of my own faith.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

9. It is important for me to participate in private spiritual activities, such as scripture study, prayer or meditation.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

10. It is important for me to be able to maintain contact with my own church or faith community.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

20. It is important for me to participate in a group to share spiritual life and growth struggles.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

21. It is important for my feelings of spiritual support to have personal study resources such as books and tapes to help my spiritual development.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

22. It is important for me to have opportunities to help other people.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

23. It is important for me to be able to listen to religious music.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

24. It is important for me to have time for extended, uninterrupted, personal reflection, meditation, prayer or contemplation.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

25. It is important for me to have access to nature.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

26. In times of adversity it is important for me to have opportunities to be exposed to beauty through painting, sculpture, music, gardening, crafts, etc.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

27. It is important for me to be able to spend time reflecting on the purpose of life.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

28. In times of adversity, I know that I have the support of my church.

TD	SD	U	U	SA	TA
Totally ee	Somewhat Disagree		Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

28.In times of adversity I have used prayer to cope.

TD	SD	U	U	SA	mm TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain		Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

29. During bad times my religious faith has sustained me.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

30. In times of adversity, knowing that God is there will get me through.

31.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

32. Sometimes in my life, I get angry with God.

33.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

34. Sometimes in my life, I feel God has abandoned me.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

35. When bad things happen to me, I believe that it is God's will.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

36. If someone were to tell me what I believe is untrue I would remain calm and not be offended.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

36. I have a set of beliefs that are important to me

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

37. I have access to people with whom I can discuss my beliefs

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

38. I have opportunities for doing good works for others.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

39. I enjoy participating in Spiritual Activities

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

40. I engage in private spiritual time, such as prayer, meditation, reflection.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

41. I have a current and ongoing contact with my religious congregation (church, synagogue, temple, mosque).

42.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

43. I feel supported in my spiritual beliefs

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

44. I receive the help I need to read, attend or participate in spiritual expression.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

45. In times of adversity, I can turn to a supreme being, God, or power beyond myself and know that there will be an answer.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

46. I enjoy talking about and thinking through the various ideas and concepts of my faith.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

47. I prefer to think about spiritual matters rather than getting caught in the emotions of them.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

48. It is important in my life to feel the spirit of my faith (Spirit of God, or a power beyond myself) in my life.

TD	SD	U	SA	TA
Totally Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Uncertain	Slightly Agree	Totally Agree

Appendix R
Ethical Wills[1]

Opening I write this to you, my_____. In order to_____.	**The Family** 1. My parents, siblings antecedents were/are 2. Events that helped shape our family…
Religious Observances, Insights 1. The ritual(s) of most meaning to me… 2. Specific teachings from values, spiritual or religious source(s) that move me most…	**Personal History** 1. People who strongly influenced my life… 2. Events which helped shape my life
Ethical Ideals and Practices 1. Ideals that found expression in my life… 2. I would like to suggest to you the following…	**Closing** 1. My ardent wishes for you… 2. May the Almighty….

[1] Adapted by Marti Richards from Reimer and Stampfer (1991) *So That Your Values Live On: Ethical Wills and How to Prepare Them.* Woodstock, VT. Jewish Lights Publishing.

Appendix S

Stewardship
Life & Ministry Values

A Readiness Tool

Name:_____

Date: _____

Welcome!

Thank you for participating! This survey intends simply to help Christian leaders assess their personal understandings of Stewardship as it relates to their lives, to others' lives, and to the church as a whole.

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. The survey will help you find out "where you are" and, it is hoped, challenge you to identify areas for future growth.

Instructions: Please assign a numerical value to each of the statements below with "1" representing strong disagreement and "5" representing strong agreement.

Value 1:

Christians Trust in God's Abundance

___ The object of Christian Stewardship is to share what we own with others.

___ The earth has sufficient resources to provide enough for all.

___ I often feel anxious about whether I will have enough to "make ends meet."

___ God always provides enough for those who are faithful.

___ Most people are grateful for what they have.

___ Most people feel that they have earned what they have.

___ I usually end up giving more than I can really afford.

Value 2: ***The Bible and Tradition Give Us Guidance***

___ Tithing is a firm expectation of all faithful Christians.

___ Tithing is an Old Testament concept that has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus

___ The correct proportion to share varies with the abundance received.

___ Biblical teaching about stewardship appears in only a few important passages.

___ It is counterproductive to preach too often about stewardship.

___ Lutheran (or another denomination) theology has very little to say specifically about stewardship.

___ Most people are already very well aware of what the scriptures say about stewardship.

___ Biblical teaching about stewardship is interwoven throughout the Bible.

Value 3: ***Stewardship Affects All Aspects of Life***

___ When we talk about stewardship, we are referring only to the management of time, talent and treasure.

___ Concern about physical health, diet and exercise is secondary to the main point of stewardship

___ A theology of the cross implies that sometimes my family has to suffer for my faithful service.

___ If you don't have much money it is perfectly fine to give time and talent instead of money.

___ Taking care of my house and my yard is a distraction from time I need to spend on ministry.

___ Honoring Sabbath time requires me to neglect the needs of my

congregation.

___ I regularly engage in conversation with congregation members about balancing life priorities.

Value 4: ***Stewardship Expresses Our Interconnectedness***

___ My stewardship decisions are between me and God; it is not anyone else's business.

___ Good stewardship leads to greater levels of independence and self-sufficiency.

___ I regularly feel supported and encouraged in my work by people outside my congregation.

___ There is value in discussing stewardship issues openly with peers and colleagues.

___ If the larger church consistently makes bad decisions, it is more faithful to support non- ELCA missions.

___ Most people don't understand what they get in return for their mission support.

___ I regularly preach and teach the story of how the church is working throughout the world.

Value 5: ***Christian Stewardship Engages Our Culture***

___ Community-based organizations are legitimate expressions of God's work in the world.

___ In order to reach out to the world, the church must give people what they want.

___ People are entitled to what they have earned.

___ The economic well-being of all people often requires us to use up natural resources.

___ Our congregation engages in practices that reflect a counter-cultural attitude about stewardship.

___ Capitalist business interests stand in fundamental contradiction to the Gospel.

___ We have initiated intentional efforts in our congregation to help people be less materialistic.

Values 6: ***Financial Health Is an Expression of Faith***

___ Money has very little to do with the development of my spiritual life.

___ People who really love Jesus should not worry or think too much about money.

___ Paying back my educational loans makes it impossible for me to be a good steward.

___ Our congregation is actively engaged in helping people plan healthy financial lives.

___ Most people would give more if their financial lives were more healthy and stable.

___ It is healthier to talk with others about money than to keep our financial life a secret.

___ I am personally involved in the budget and finance operations of my congregation.

Appendix T

Bible Study – Commitment

By Rev. Serena Sellers

"Gave themselves first to the Lord" … Total commitment

"We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints—and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you." *– 2 Corinthians 8:1-6*

I sat in the auditorium with sweaty palms. I wasn't on the stage. I wasn't going to be on the stage. I was not qualified to be on the stage. First, and most obviously, I was too old. Every person on that stage was under the age of 15. I was an adult. Second, I had too much schooling. No one on stage had completed 8th grade. I had a seminary degree. Finally, and most importantly, I couldn't spell to save my life. My fourth-grade teacher, Miss Raleigh, had kindly written on my report card, "Serena is a very creative speller." I thought it was a compliment! I was a constant reader. More than once I had been in trouble because I was too engrossed in a book to hear the call to the dinner table. But somehow, when the pencil was in my hand, letters were wild and untamable things. How I rejoiced when I first encountered "spell check." But here I was, attending the county semi-finals of the Scripps National Spelling Bee, with sweaty palms and a lump in my throat. I covered my mouth to be sure that my unconsciously moving lips would not disqualify anyone, and to prevent anyone from hearing my gasps at misspellings. I couldn't breathe while I listened to the spelling of words I had never heard before. My stomach was in knots, my head hurt, my jaw clenched. It was excruciating. My son sat on that stage.

Question to the Group: **Has love ever taken you to a place you would never have expected to be?** *(Pause to share stories!)*

The Macedonian Christians were not expected to be generous participants in the

collection for Jerusalem. One might have thought that the Macedonians, living in poverty, would be reluctant to give their meager resources away, especially when they were undergoing some REDISCOVER MACEDONIA affliction. A spirit of gratitude and generosity kind of affliction. Yet here they were, surprising everyone with their "wealth of generosity" and passion for giving. Paul claims they were "begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints." – 2 Corinthians 8:4

Question to the Group: **Have you ever wanted something so much that you risked pain, embarrassment, or rejection to get it?** *(Pause to share stories!)*

Why? Why were the Macedonians so eager to participate in the offering? It was not because of the great need in Jerusalem. It was not because they had a surplus of resources. It was because "They gave themselves first to the Lord." Knowing that they were in God's hands, the Macedonian Christians did not hesitate to commit themselves fully to God's purposes. They made God's priorities their own. They entrusted themselves, and their future, entirely to the Lord. Their faith and commitment were so great that it spilled over to Paul. Paul was so inspired by their generosity that he was also willing to risk his own pain, embarrassment and rejection. Paul had been in conflict with the congregation in Corinth:

"*So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice;"* *-2 Corinthians 2:1-3.*

Yet, despite the strained relationship, Paul was inspired to send a request to the Corinthians with hat in hand. He sent Titus with a request. The request for funds had the potential to pour fuel on the fire of Paul's problems with the Christians in Corinth. But, if God could create a miracle of giving in the hearts of the poor Macedonians, could the Lord not inspire a miracle of forgiving in the hearts of the Corinthians? The commitment of the Macedonians was contagious to Paul. Could their generosity go viral?

Question to the Group: **Have you ever been inspired to give by someone else's generosity? Have you ever reconciled after a conflict? How did you know that the conflict was really behind you?** *(Pause to share stories!)*

Our commitments, if they are true, take us to places that may not only be unexpected, but uncomfortable. They may inspire us to take risks that seem

foolish to others. On the other hand, our commitment to Christ, and to his ways of generosity, may inspire others to overcome their pride and fear to leap into the passion of truly abundant, a-b-u-n-d-a-n-t, abundant life!

Let us pray,

Loving God, all things work together for good for those who love you. With the love of a mother hen you gather us to yourself and care for us. Your love was willing to go to the cross for our sake. Help us to utterly trust your love so that we can fling ourselves into your mission with abandon, passion and joy! May what I give be an expression of who I am, a child of God, called, supported, and loved by you. Amen.

Appendix U
Quotes from *Money and Power* by Jacques Ellul

For Discussion

How can capitalism be more valid than communism, or communism than capitalism? The same error lies at the heart of both: The flight from responsibility and the pursuit of an alibi. When I talk about money, everyone hands me a system. "If there is a money problem, it is because the economic system is unsound." All we need to do is to change the economic system. This amounts to predicting that man will become just and good, that he will know exactly what to do with his money, that he will no longer covet his neighbor's possessions, that he will no longer steal, that he will give up bribing women and public officials, that he will not be corrupted by his own material good fortune, that he will sympathize with the needy, that he will neither hoard his money nor waste it, that he will no longer dream of "upward mobility," that he will not use his accumulated wealth to gain power in society, that he will not use his money to humiliate others (page 12).

Money, which allows us to obtain everything material progress offers (in truth, everything our fallen nature desires), is no longer merely an economic value. It has become a moral value and an ethical standard. (page 20)

Since no economic mechanism corresponds to Christian truth, if we wish to choose we will have to do so for purely natural reasons, knowing that our choice will in no way express our Christian faith…. Christianity is infinitely too realistic, and revelation shows us far too clearly what man and the world really are, for us to be able to base a system on it. (page 24)

All we can do is to accept God's decision; indeed, all the devout must do is to recognize God's sovereignty. This recognition is the beginning of a right attitude towards wealth. (Page 43)

Wealth is temptation because it urges us to put our confidence in money rather than in God.

Appendix V

Mission Statement

*Date*_____

Needed Infrastructure in Place:

Program Categories:

	Sp. Form	Learning	To Serve	To Be Served	Community	Finance
Target Group **date**						
Target Group **date**						
Target Group **date**						
Target Group **date**						

Appendix W
Event Planner

Event Planner

Event Name:
Target Audience:
Program Category(s)
Date:

Tasks to Complete	Completed	Assigned	Completed	Other

Appendix X

OAM Event Participant Evaluation

Was the event fun? 1 2 3 4 5
Low High

Was the event Interesting?

1 2 3 4 5
Low High

What part of the event touched your heart? _____

_____

Would you attend a similar event in the future?

1 2 3 4 5
Low High

Would you invite a friend in the community to attend with you?

1 2 3 4 5
Low High

As a result of this event, who did you come to know better?

1 2 3 4 5
Low High

How did the event address your inner life?

1 2 3 4 5

Low High

How would you improve an event like this one?

1 2 3 4 5

Low High

Suggestions for the Planning Committee?

1	2	3	4	5
Low				High

I would like to help with:

1	2	3	4	5
Low				High

Appendix Y
OAM Event Evaluation Form for Planning Committee

Event Title: _____

Date and time of Event: _____

Event such as a Bible Study or a Stand Alone, one-time event? *(circle one)*

Target Older Adult Category: *(circle one)*

Active Transitional Frail Caregivers

Spiritual Need(s) addressed: *(circle one)*

Hope Meaning Transcendence Intimacy

Program area used to address the spiritual need: *(circle one)*

Spiritual Formation	Life-Long Learning	Opportunity to Serve	Opportunity to be Served	Community Building	Finance, Stewardship

Building Stewardship:

Portion of the OAM Mission Statement that was addressed:

Intended accomplishment (goals):

How did the event address the spirituality of participants?

What happened that suggested that the intended accomplishment was achieved?

Would you like to continue the event as a series?

Plan another event like it?

How could the event be improved?

Optional:

The number of the Target Group attended.

Total attendance:

Other

SPIRITUALITY AND AGING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM
READINGS IN SPIRITUALITY AND AGING

INTRODUCTION
This bibliography includes a variety of books and other publications recommended by faculty of the Spirituality and Aging Certificate Program (SACP) and members of the Southern California Coalition on Spirituality and Aging. Many of the readings address spirituality and aging broadly, in ways that are applicable across traditions. While some are rooted in the Christian tradition, they offer important content that can be adapted to other faiths and a wide variety of settings. Over time, we are also gradually incorporating readings that speak to Jewish, Islamic, and other traditions. Finally, in addition to general readings on spirituality and aging, the bibliography includes books and other publications addressing specific topics, such spiritual care in dementia and older adult ministry, discussed during the SACP. We welcome any recommendations of additional readings to include for our consideration.

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About the Author

Donald R. Koepke was ordained in 1967 into the Lutheran Church in America, a predecessor body to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. He served three congregations until 1995 when he spent a year in chaplaincy training (Clinical Pastoral Education) at UCLA Medical Center, Los Angeles CA. He was called as a chaplain by California Lutheran Homes and Community Services in two of their multi-level Long Term Care Retirement Communities.

In 2000, he became the founding director of the California Lutheran Homes Center for Spirituality and Aging where he studied the interaction between a person's spirituality and their aging: How spirituality affects aging and how aging affects spirituality. He is the editor and an author of two books, *Ministering to Older Adults: The Building Blocks*, written for congregational leaders and *The Essential Spirit: Providing Wholistic Spiritual Care with Older Adults*, for professionals in Long Term Care. He has served on the Board of Directors and as Editor of the newsletter of the Forum on Religion, Spirituality and Aging, a constituent group of the American Society on Aging. He also has served on the Board of Directors of the National Council on Aging, receiving its prestigious Spirituality and Aging Award in 2007.

Presently he is a reviewer of articles submitted to the Journal for Religion, Spirituality and Aging, of Rutledge Taylor and Francis Press. He has led seminars and workshops throughout the country as well as providing training in Older Adult Ministry for 20 congregations in Southern California, upon which "Growing an Older Adult Ministry" is based. He is a member of the Southern California Coalition on Spirituality and Aging which has designed and teaches a master's level course on spirituality and aging for pastors and other professionals in gerontology, granting a certificate from the New Theological Seminary of the West. (For more information go to http://sccsa.ntswest.org/sa-certificate-program/) In addition, he continues as a part time consultant to congregations for California Lutheran Homes and Community Services Retired, which means "working for free" since 2008, he now lives in Seal Beach CA with his wife, Judy Koepke.