

Agenda
January 2001

A Vision for Older Adult Ministry In the 21st Century

For POAMN

- Training for enablers at the annual conference and in regional meetings. This would involve some kind of certification process.
- Office on Older Adult Ministry, along with POAMN, exploring, developing and implementing a certification process for persons engaged in older adult ministry.
- Offer training and resources for the "sandwich generation."
- Develop programs and models for intergenerational ministry.
- Develop resources or sharing available resources for intentional intergenerational ministry.
- POAMN members need to be on cutting edge for end-of-life issues and late-life transitions.
- Undergird the work of POAMN with prayer and spiritual focus, including prayer calendars on the Web.

Communications

- Continue and expand circulation of AGenda.
- Encourage every congregation to observe Older Adult Week, and to use the resources available from the Office on Older Adult Ministry.
- Utilize technology (Web sites, etc.) to share successful models of older adult ministry.

Partners in Order Adult Ministry

- General Assembly, working through the Office on Older Adult Ministry, to involve other Divisions in various aspects of older adult ministry.
- With presbyteries in a given area, and with POAMN, conduct continuing education courses in older adult ministry for pastors.
- Become intentional about older adult ministry being a priority at theological institutions. (Focus on older adult issues in the curriculum, offering a D.Min. degree in older adult ministry; provide training institutes for clergy in older adult ministry; expand internships for students beyond chaplaincies in hospitals and nursing homes; with the Office on Older Adult Ministry, develop a certification program for persons engaged in older adult ministry.

Continuing/Emerging Concerns

- Ageism

- Abuse of older adults
- Health issues
- Housing for older adults
- Changing family patterns
- Caregiving and support of care givers

POAMN as an Organization

- Make membership growth a priority (2,000 professionals and 3,000 lay members by the year 2010).
- With the Office on Older Adult Ministry, work for adequate funding for older adult ministry.
- Focus on recruiting members ages 45–60 (Boomer Generation).

Editor's Note: Due to lack of space, we apologize for this abridged version of the Zephyr Point document and urge interested persons to contact Marvin Simmers for the full document.

OAM Matters: Discerning the Path to 2001

by Helen Morrison

"Exciting, Informative, Fun, Helpful, Great Networking, Beautiful Setting, Excellent Food" are but a few words expressed in describing POAMN's annual gathering. One hundred-plus folks met at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Center, Zephyr Cove, Nevada, located at the most southern point where Nevada and California meet.

Zephyr Point is a facility on Lake Tahoe owned by the Synods of the Pacific and Southern California/ Hawaii. It is to the West what Montreat is to the Southeast. Both centers have been in existence for more than 75 years. "Concerned parents worried about the world in which their children were growing up." This was an effort to provide new and inspirational experiences for the young people.

It was exciting to be in a place where people were excited about older adult ministry! The Reverend Tom Robb led worship each day around the theme of "borders, boundaries, challenges" in our lives. We were reminded that Biblical folk, too, had limitations and challenges in their lives.

The Reverend Marvin Simmers, keynoter, invited us to consider "Moving from here to 2010" by introducing four questions to which small groups responded periodically in our time together. The small groups worked together throughout the conference.

Each small group shared their responses and together provided a wonderful plethora of ideas. These ideas will provide a great base for the POAMN Executive Committee as they plan for future conferences.

Also, the Spirit was at work in our midst as more than half of the attendees were first-timers. This has been a pattern for our POAMN Conferences, which has added to the network; however, this is not totally reflected in paid membership.

For those of us who have been with POAMN since its beginning it was heartening to see such a spirited group, who without question are committed to older adult ministry. A true example of the parable of the seeds that sprouted and keep on sprouting!

In addition to our worship leader and keynoter there were about a dozen workshops offered and an evening of Dixieland jazz. On Friday afternoon another exciting happening was around the "future of Older Adult Ministry" with a "new vision."

Colorful paper streamers and balloons provided the backdrop for the Reverend Miriam Dunson's "Fund Development Presentation." Miriam shared the history of our denomination's work in older adult ministry, which began with an office in Atlanta, a cooperative effort of both former denominations. Reunion brought about some challenges and the Enabler Network was formed to preserve folks (volunteers) trained by the denomination in older adult ministry, which included the enablers and "Gift Of A Lifetime" folk.

The Network, working in partnership these past dozen years with the Congregational Ministries Division (formerly ECN), has managed to develop a large network of folks interested and doing older adult ministry.

Financial realities moved the Office on Older Adult Ministry to work in a new way. With initial financial support from CMD and working with Mission Funding and the Presbyterian Foundation, there is in place a specific campaign.

"A New Vision for the Future" is being initiated by the Office on Older Adult Ministry to concentrate in the next 3–5 years to raise \$6 million for the Permanent Endowment Fund that is established. The majority of the "A" (Advance) Team members were present for the conference. The "A Team" (volunteers) have been busy at work since early March. They will be working cooperatively with Presbyterian Foundation officers. The Reverend John Rhea serves as the chair. The Advisory Panel for this campaign numbers 27 persons, 17 of whom are former General Assembly moderators.

Currently the "A Team" is concentrating on the first phase of its work. It seemed appropriate that the "official" presentation be at POAMN and the continuing celebration be with the Association of Retired Ministers & Surviving Spouses at

their June 2001 Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida, since both of these groups are leaders in this realizing the value of older adult ministry.

POAMN and ARMSS are both wonderful organizations that work closely with the office in Louisville. Many of the realities of the demographic projections made 20 years ago are coming to pass in our denomination. The PC(USA) is the only mainline denomination with a full-time staff person working exclusively in older adult ministry.

Reaching the goal of \$6 million for the Endowment Fund will afford the opportunity to double our efforts to serve our congregations. Daily the Older Adult Ministry Office has requests for resources ranging from "how to" to "spiritual aids." Funding will allow us to continue to lead the way in serving in this ministry.

Living longer has provided opportunities to meet the challenges of multigenerational families. As Presbyterians we have had a base to build upon in a society—some of which is also in the church—obsessed with youth (more than other stages in the cycle of life). We have a strong foundation—a theological perspective to help us look at life on this earth and beyond.

If we believe what we say we believe about our place in the life cycle, we will assist those who follow—through the sharing of stories and study of the Scriptures while observing those who seem to have a "handle" on this "aging" process. We too can model and pass on our experiences for those who follow.

Thanks to all who helped us to look to the future while remembering the past. We look forward to next October when POAMN will meet in Nashville, Tennessee.

From the Editor

The quote, "where there is no vision, the people perish" is true for the nation, for the church, and surely for older adult ministry. At Lake Tahoe the vision was expressed . . . and this issue of **Agenda** tries to share this vision with those of us/you who were not there. Marvin Simmers . . . Miriam Dunson . . . Kathy Westmoreland . . . Helen Morrison . . . all share the vision.

On a personal note, I am experiencing yet another transition in my "retirement" years. After six years as parish associate at First Presbyterian Church, Morganton, North Carolina, I have resigned to give my time and energies on a broader scale. I intend to do seminars and workshops on "The Spirituality of Aging" and "Spiritual Autobiography" across the nation. Without even seeking such engagements, I am already under contract for 10 seminars for 2001, from North Carolina to Ohio to Tennessee to Texas. So pray for me (I Thessalonians 3:2) as I consider my work as a mission/ministry for the cause that all of us love so dearly.

—Dick

Agenda Contest

They say our memories fail as we grow older, But I find my long-term memory improving!!! Below is a list of feature articles written for **Agenda** since I became volunteer editor in 1992. Without peeking at back issues, which of these articles do you recall as most significant? Choose just three:

1. Has Anyone Seen My Parents?—Donovan Drake
2. Aging: Entering into the Passion of Christ—Jane Thibault
3. "Something Happens"—Walter Fitton
4. Surprised by Illness and Joy—Arthur W. Frank
5. Baby Boomers Face Their Aging—Steve Eason
6. A Hopeful and Pessimistic Baby Boomer—Ed Loper
7. Visiting Those with Alzheimer's Disease—Henry Simmons
8. Healing Power of Laughter—Perry Biddle
9. Musing by Miriam on the Psalms—Miriam Dunson
10. What Does One Generation Owe Another?—Steve Sapp
11. Lessons From a Death Too Young—Steve Sapp
12. Caregiving: As a Profession and As a Daughter—Mary Ann Morgan
13. Worship in the Later Years—Dwyn Mounger
14. Worship in the Nursing Home—Ed Loper
15. Need for Intentional Intergenerational Ministry—Jim Gambone
16. A Generation Takes Up Autobiography—Michael Vitez
17. Getting Started—Bill Arnold

Just send me a post card (104 Pinewood Drive, Morganton, NC 28655) or e-mail me at rmorgan@hci.net and tell me your choice of three of these articles. It might give some directions for future issues, etc.

AGORA

"Show and Tell"

An earlier issue of **Agenda**, in the "Agora Center," asked for creative programs or innovative ideas for older adult ministries. This idea may not be new, but we had never heard of it before, and it did present a very enjoyable evening.

On our day of Older Adult Recognition we held a special "Show and Tell" program at our evening service. Older adults were asked to bring an item of memorabilia— something that has special significance for them. It might be something handed down, something they received at a special time in their lives, or something that came from a special place. It could be anything that was important to them. Items were displayed on tables while refreshments were served.

After a brief program of music and a devotional, older adults were invited to tell the "story" associated with their item(s). There were lots of questions, much fun, and everyone left knowing things about our senior members that they did not know before, including WWII service, football heroes of the forties and fifties, and accomplishments that few knew about.

The evening was a big success and one we will probably do again, as everyone was reminded by things brought of other items that might have been included.

Just thought others might like to try a "Show and Tell."

Sincerely,
Ann Millican
Trinity United Methodist Church
Dalton, Georgia

Musings by Miriam

A Celebration at Lake Tahoe!!

As others in this issue have indicated, the 2000 POAMN Conference was one of the most enthusiastic and upbeat conferences we have had in a long time. Of course the most unique element of the conference was the fact that the keynoter, Marvin Simmers, led the whole conference in discussing "A New Vision for Older Adult Ministry in the 21st Century." These discussions culminated in creating the keynote address, which was then mailed out to all the participants by Marvin after the conference was over. In their participation in the writing of the keynote address the conferees gained ownership, vision, and a growing

excitement concerning the future of POAMN and Older Adult Ministry in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Another very exciting part of the conference which added to its uniqueness and the growing enthusiasm was the sharing of the Funds Development Program with the conferees. The Program is designed to develop an endowment fund for Older Adult Ministry that within five years will amount to \$6,000,000. The interest on this endowment fund will provide for expansion of the office staff, fund new resources, provide more leader development opportunities, and ensure that the Older Adult Ministry on the national level will continue from now on. When the speeches were made, the Doxology sung, and balloons, candy money, play money and streamers floated down from three stories up in the atrium dining room at Zephyr Point, Lake Tahoe, the excitement went sky high, and hopes for the future began to take hold in all of us who were present.

The ten members of the "A Team" (Advancement Team) who are busy identifying and cultivating potential donors have each made substantial donations to the endowment fund already, as have the members of the Executive Committee of POAMN. Twenty-seven well-known leaders in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), who are called the Advisory Panel, have lent us their names in support of the "New Vision for the Future," and some of them have also made generous donations to the endowment fund, even though they were neither asked nor expected to do so. Seventeen of these members of the Advisory Panel are former moderators of the church.

Already the Christian Education Program Area has provided our office with a full-time administrative assistant for funds development because the work load had so greatly increased that one administrative assistant simply could not handle that work as well as all the other work assigned to the Office on Older Adult Ministry.

Older Adult Ministry in the Presbyterian Church is in a better place now than it has been since I came to the office ten years ago. We have the full support of the Division of Congregational Ministries and the General Assembly Council in what we are doing in ministry, as well as in the development of the Endowment Fund. In fact, both bodies have approved \$150,000 for use in paying the expenses of the "A Team" as they work.

We have just recently submitted a joint project proposal, along with the Office on Theological Education, to the Staff Leadership Team, asking them to fund a project that would encourage theological institutions to include workshops and seminars on older adult ministry in their continuing education programs for ministers. The Office on Theological Education would be the channel for working with the seminaries, and the Office on Older Adult Ministry would pay the cost and choose leaders for the events. It is difficult for seminaries to add classes or expand present curriculum to include older adult ministry, so this is a way to

provide continuing education in older adult ministry for ministers who are already in ministry, many of whom have discovered that a high percentage of their congregations are older adults who need a different kind of ministry.

Requests from congregations for new resources are increasing rapidly, and invitations for leader development events continue to increase. The funds development plan together with the "New Vision for the 21st Century" for older adult ministry that was boldly set forth at the 2000 POAMN Conference and which will continue at the 2001 ARMSS Convention (Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses and Survivors) will provide the funding necessary to meet these needs adequately.

This is a reachable goal, and we have every hope and belief that in five years we will have reached the goal, and the Office on Older Adult Ministry will never again be in danger of not being able to do its work because of lack of funds, nor will it ever again face the possibility of termination. Thanks be to God!

POAMN President's Page

by Kathy Westmoreland

I am still basking in the glow of the 2000 conference at Zephyr Point! The energy, creativity, and dedication to the future of older adult ministry in the church was an inspiration to me. There is so much to tell that in some ways I do not know where to begin, except to encourage you to read [Helen Morrison's article](#) on the conference and our keynoter, Marvin Simmers' notes that are found elsewhere in this issue. They will give you a good idea of where we are headed—and that we certainly have our work cut out for us!

One of the themes that seemed to run through the work of the small groups at the conference was to be an advocate and influence in congregations, presbyteries, synods and theological seminaries. This is a daunting challenge for all of us. Part of that work is to combat ageism as it continues its unopposed march through the church. Another part of that work is raising awareness of the gifts of older adults, the needs of older adults, and the need of the church for older adults as a vital part of the Body of Christ. It takes courage, passion and persistence to be an influential advocate, or prophet, if you will, for older adults.

How do we prepare ourselves for this role? We begin with Scripture, looking at the prophets from Samuel to Malachi. Understanding their call and their work can help us as we seek to be faithful as advocates. How did they get to the people who needed most to hear the message? How was the message delivered? The Biblical prophets give us models from which to learn.

We can also find ways to raise awareness. Understanding that older adult ministry is not an exclusive generational ministry—it is about mentoring young people, grandparenting infants, and supporting new parents, as well as about young

people enlivening the daily lives of homebound and nursing home residents. It spans the generations. It also includes every aspect of a church's life from mission to education to worship. Being an influencer means speaking up about large-print bulletins and lighting at worship, asking about mission opportunities for new retirees and how to do an intergenerational Bible study.

Another significant preparation is to keep current on the issues for older adults. Read about the caregiving dilemmas and the health care struggles. Understand the spiritual needs of homebound and nursing home residents. Become knowledgeable about new retirees and their discipleship. We must be advocates who know what they are talking about! Contact your local area agency on aging or retirement community for additional resources and education on new and emerging issues for older adults.

There is such potential within this Network. With the gifts that are present among you and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, we can do anything! Now is the time to speak up and be heard!

Peace,
Kathy Westmoreland
POAMN President

Autumn Wisdom

Change Today
by Louis Seaman

Carol McFarland's father on the occasion of his 94th birthday

One's mind is filled with wonder
As to what will next occur.
These days life moves by leaps and bounds.
A time of change provides the spur.

Once we stayed just as we were,
Content to live with what was there;
Now come dreams of something more.
No days alike—what's new we'll share.

Of course the new may not be best.
Give it a shot—it's worth a try.
The pace of all the world has changed;
We can't let something good go by.

Who knows just what tomorrow brings,
Perhaps much brighter, happy days.

Enjoy the change, whatever it be;
All life is fraught with different ways

On Youth

*Found in Marti Consuegra's room at the office of Dr. Stephen Howard, a
Christian dentist in Inverness, Florida.
Shared by Betty Paschall.*

Youth is not entirely a time of life—it is a state of mind.

It is not wholly a matter of ripe cheeks, red lips,
or supple knees.
It is a temper of will,
a quality of the imagination,
a vigor of the emotions.

Nobody grows old by merely living
a number of years.

People grow old only by deserting their ideals.
You are as young as your self-confidence,
as old as your fears; as young as your hope,
as old as your despair.

In the central place of every heart,
there is a recording chamber;
So long as it receives messages of beauty, hope, cheer, and courage, you are
young.

When the wires are all down and your heart
is covered with the snows of pessimism
and the ice of cynicism,
then and only then,
have you grown old.

Two Ways of Growing Old

*by Jean Vanier, Community and Growth
(Darton, Longman and Todd, 1991, p. 140)*

Old age is the most precious time of life, the one nearest eternity. There are two ways of growing old. There are old people who are anxious and bitter, living in the past and illusion, who criticize everything that goes on around them; they are shut away in their sadness and loneliness, shriveled up in themselves.

But there are also older people with a child's heart, who have used their freedom from responsibility and function to find a new youth. They have the wonder of a child, but the wisdom of maturity as well; they have integrated their years of activity and so can live without being attached to power. Their freedom of heart and their acceptance of their limitations and weakness make them people whose radiance illuminates the whole community. They are gentle and merciful, symbols of compassion and forgiveness. They are the community's hidden treasures, symbols of compassion and forgiveness. They are true contemplatives at the heart of community.

Four Poems by Elizabeth R. Smylie
of Richmond, Virginia

Petition

Lead me down Your mystic ladder, Lord,
low, to be brought higher still:

not to worldly glory,
but to grace;

not to human honor,
but humility;

not to private power,
but to purity;

by the hiding of
Your face.

Desolations

Would that I could
rearrange my mind
the way I move
the seashells on the shelf,
and wipe away the nagging dust.

What once seemed sure
no longer
answers well.
Empty shells know no pain;
still, like human hearts,
they often break

At Last

At last she rests in peace,
her body caught up now
with her mind,
which had left her long ago.

At last she stands as whole
within our Father's House,
her hand held
and gently led by angels.

At last she smiles again
in recognition of
her long-lost
love, here for her
forever.

The Wise Ones

God is still calling us
to a growing wisdom,
not written in books
no longer read,
but softly, deeply
imprinted on our hearts
by Love;
and, for all
that lies ahead,
an all-sufficient Grace.

Poem by Louise Claspill of Palo Alto, California

Dear Lord,
You changed my hands
into crinkled tissue paper.

You draped my face
With velvet folds and wrinkles.

My weighted body
Shouts, "You're old!"

But Lord,
Inside I think young.
The child has survived.

Three new exciting books!!!

Soulful Aging: Ministry Through the Stages of Adulthood

Henry Simmons, Director of the Center on Aging at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education has written this masterful new book. (Smith and Helwys, 2001). Simmons writes, "People in the last third of life know that the experience of aging is complex, challenging, rich, and demanding. What we need is a road map that helps us make sense of these years so that our ministry will be focused and creative. We identify three stable periods and three transitions:

- **Extended Middle Age:** the retirement years where one replaces work with another set of activities, but most other parts of life remain the same.
- **Ready or Not:** a time of loss that requires a significant change of lifestyle: death of a spouse, a one-sided divorce, deterioration of one's own physical well-being.
- **The New Me:** the years in which one picks up one's losses and forges a new identity and a new reality that match one's changed circumstances.
- **Like It or Not:** the transition into frailty
- **The Rest of Living:** a potentially rich and engaged part of life, but also a time of dependence and frailty.
- **Dying**

The New Testament identifies six ways in which a community of faith shapes or fashions a godly people: community, prayer, teaching, proclamation, service, and witness (koinonia, leiturgia, didache, kerygma, diaconia, marturia). All these are key elements in the life of any community of faith. The importance of each of these pathways to spiritual growth is perhaps most easily seen if we try to imagine a church—or a segment of a church—that lacks any one of them.

Soulful Aging: Ministry Through the Stages of Adulthood brings together the six stages and transitions of the last third of life with the six tasks of the Christian life. It asks what is, for example, community in Extended Middle Age and how that differs from community when one is dying. Or, what is the witness of one who is slipping into frailty? Or the good news for one who is now dependent with dignity?

Retirement Boomers Face Life After Fifty

James V. Gambone, available from Jim Gambone, pointsofview@earthlnk.net or 1-800-586-9054*

Awakening of the Heart

John C. Morgan (brother of Richard Morgan), 65 Meditations from All Religions. Available from Skinner House, Boston, Mass.*

* *Editor's Note: Reviews of the above two books will appear in a later issue.*