

National Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses, and Survivors

Quarterly Newsletter

Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Survivors

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A New Day is Here!!

by Bill Clark, President NARCSS

The new day for retired ministers and their families is here! The 205th General Assembly's action calling for a National Association of Retired Clergy, Spouses and Survivors has been answered with a resounding "yes." Through the volunteer efforts of John Rhea, his corps of volunteers, and the staff support of the Office on Older Adult Ministry, led by Miriam Dunson, the very successful first convention has just ended with the organization, election and installation of the officers of NARCSS. We are already learning from the evaluations of over 300 attendees what their hopes and dreams are for this "new baby on the block."

As the new president of the association, I see two things that stand out from the General Assembly's expressed hopes for this new organization. First, there is a voice and entre to the General Assembly at the national level for the issues of retirees.

Second, there is a network being put in place at the presbytery level to help retirees more effectively give the gift of service to both church and community. We learned at this first convention that those who retire healthy at age sixty-five can look forward to twenty-five bonus years! What a difference we can make in God's mission through the PCUSA if some of those years are given to the church and community in volunteer service. From the table talk at the convention, I learned that it is beginning to happen in exciting and fulfilling ways at all levels of THE church and there is still time to enjoy travel, hobbies, grandchildren and a slower pace. By sharing and being supportive, a beginning can become a groundswell.

At a time when the church-at-large is moving to get its act together, let us unite around that identifying mission of our Lord who said "I am among you as one who serves," and, just maybe we can become that leavening influence to bring strength to both retirees and the great church we love. Shalom!

It Did Happen!

We now have a National Association for Retired Clergy, Their Spouses, and Their Survivors. It took place during a convention (the first) held in Louisville, Kentucky during May 21-24, 1997.

Three hundred fifteen retirees participated in the convention. they came from 44 states, Canada, Alaska, and Japan, and from 89 presbyteries and 16 synods. It was a joyful occasion! It was a need being met which had existed for as many years as clergy have been retiring from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and its predecessors.

One hundred seventy-six participants completed their evaluation sheets and shared them with us. Some of the comments relative to the convention are: "It is exciting to be part of something at the age of 74." "I'm glad I came. I'll come again. Thanks for all the effort." "I've had a ball!" "It was fun." "I think the people who planned and developed this conference are to be decorated with large plaques with 'well done!' in bold lettering. You, and all who helped with the myriad details that had to be worked out did an excellent job! Thanks and Danke, and Merci and Gracias!!!"

What Was Accomplished?

In addition to the outstanding program consisting of a well received keynote address given by Randy Taylor, worship services led by Jim Reese and Lucille Rieben, workshops and interest groups of benefit to the retirees, there was much fun, fellowship, good food, and a special tour of the Presbyterian Center.

The business session on Friday afternoon was the fulfillment of many dreams and of long and intense planning. The accomplishments are worthy of recognition:

Mission Statement: The National Association of Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Survivors is called by the grace of God to bear witness to their faithful service to Jesus Christ. Therefore, we covenant to advocate for the support and nurture of the retired clergy, spouses, and their survivors in recognition and celebration of their contribution to the Church; provide a continuing forum for retired clergy, spouses and their survivors in recognition and celebration of their contribution to the Church; support and resource the governing bodies of the Church in their ministry to and with the retired clergy, spouses and their survivors, who are willing and able, to utilize their skills and abilities in ministry to the Church and the world.

Purpose: Through worship, major presentations, discussion groups, fun and fellowship, seek to meet the needs of the Honorably Retired, their spouses, and their surviving spouses.

Actions: Adopted bylaws for the national association and established an Executive Committee. The officers are: William M. Clark, H.R., Peace River Presbytery, President; Alice S. Green, H.R., Yukon Presbytery, Vice President; William D. Auld, H.R., San Gabriel Presbytery, Secretary; Harold M. Byers, H.R., Grand Canyon Presbytery, Treasurer; three members-at-large - Jack Angerman, H.R., Miami Presbytery; Ellen L. Fisher, Survivor, Redstone Presbytery; and Clinton Marsh, H.R., Greater Atlanta Presbytery. A Nominating Committee also was elected: Doris J. Hill, H.R., Miami Presbytery; Margaret Grimes, Survivor, Transylvania Presbytery; Marion Skelley, Clergy Spouse, Missouri River Valley Presbytery; James T. Anderton, H.R., Presbytery of the Pines; and Robert Olmsted, H.R., North Puget Sound Presbytery.

Membership: Membership is open to retired Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) clergy, spouses and their survivor. These individuals shall become regular members when each one has paid the \$10.00 annual dues.

Convention Evaluation Responses

One hundred seventy-six evaluation sheets were received. Clinton Morrison, H.R., former Professor and Dean of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, was asked to examine these responses and group helpful information. He prepared very helpful reports which will be studied and taken seriously by the Executive Committee during its August 14-16 Planning Session.

In response to question #1, of the narrative section, "What do you think is the main function of the National Association," Clint wrote, "The most common terms/categories mentioned for the main function of the National Association strongly confirm the Mission Statement and Purpose proposed to the opening meeting (Article II.2).

Principle Suggestions for the Main Function:

- Encourage and channel member resources for service to the denomination.
- Provide support of members.
- Provide fellowship opportunities for members.
- Provide communication between members and with the denomination.
- Provide liaison and advocacy with G.A., B.O.P., and church structure.
- Provide opportunities for networking.
- Provide a forum for discussion of common interests and concerns.

John I. Rhea Honored During the Convention

During the banquet on Friday evening of the convention, Marvin Simmers, Coordinator of the Pastor, Lay Leader Support Program Area of the Congregational Ministries Division of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) presented John with a plaque. The inscription reads, "In celebration of his vision of and dedication to the development of the National Association for Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Survivors, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)"

John has been involved in events leading up to forming the National Association since 1990. The 202nd General Assembly authorized a study be made of the needs of retired clergy, spouses and their survivors. John chaired the study Task Force and helped write the report which was approved by the 205th General Assembly. He continued to provide leadership and, as a full-time volunteer working in the Office on Older Adult Ministry with Miriam Dunson and Pat Miles, helped fulfill the dream of many and to carry out the mandate of the 205th General Assembly. Yes, the National Association is a reality!

Congratulations to the National Association...

Miriam Dunson, Associate, Older Adult Ministry, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
For Retired Clergy, Spouses and Their Survivors, the dream has become a reality, and with so much enthusiasm and vigor that the myth about energies diminishing in the later years has been abolished, at least for 315 retired ministers, spouses, and survivors who attended the very first National Convention! This was one of the most lively and spirited groups I have been a part of in recent years — enthusiasm about being a part of a brand new experience, about being charter members of a new denominational organization, and enthusiasm about their own lives as retired persons. Those of us who participated in the planning of the Convention had some dreams about how things might develop, but the actual Convention went far beyond our own expectations and dreams.

The officers that were elected to lead the new Association are outstanding in their abilities, and in their commitment to the task before them, and under their leadership, my prediction is that the Association is headed for great things. My dream is that the Association can address the issues and needs that are of concern to retired clergy, spouses and survivors, and let them be known to those who have a need to know, and who can assist in dealing with the issues and meeting the needs. My dream also is that the Association will provide an arena in which much sharing and support can take place both at the National Conventions, and on the local level in Presbyteries. I look forward to an even greater Convention in May of 1998, and hope that many who did not attend the first one will be able to come and be a part of such a delightful event!

Thanks to Bob Ellson...

Bob Ellson, Advisory Committee member, Ohio Valley Presbytery, has just put NARCSS on Presbynet!

We have joined the electronic age of communication. Our National Association of Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Survivors is now on Presbynet. We have our own meeting place and it is open for all to join. If you haven't yet joined Presbynet and want to, just call 1-800-872-3283 and ask to join. They will give you all the necessary information.

To Join "NARCSS" on Presbynet (using Covene), start from the main menu and follow the directions the Convene Manual has about joining meetings. The sequence is: "Other", "Meeting Actions", "Actions", "Join", under Name, type NARCSS, then answer the questions that follow. This will put you on as a member of the meeting.

To contribute your ideas, also follow the Convene manual. The sequence is: "Write", "Write a New Note". Type your message and "Exit", "Destination(s) For Text", "Send Note To", choose NARCSS (if you have already joined the meeting) and follow through with agreeing to "Selection O.K."

We have all led meetings that were "dead" and others that are quite lively. The difference was in the contributions of those in attendance. Once you are on board, don't be a "lurker", rather join in the conversation, ask questions, seek information, contribute insights and ideas, be part of the party!

An Item of Special Interest

Westminster/John Knox Press has recently published a Large Print Hymnal, which was edited by William D. Auld, who is NARCSS secretary, and a member of the Executive Committee. Bill said he edited it especially for older adults. He held a book signing session during the convention. If you have a need for the large print hymnal, contact the Westminster/John Knox Press.

Second Convention Being Planned

A second convention for Retired Clergy, Spouses, and Their Survivors is being planned and will be held at the same location as the first — The Executive West Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky — May 27-30, 1998!

The Executive Committee, consisting of the elected officers and members-at-large, will meet in Louisville August 14-16, 1997 to finalize these plans. The committee invites your suggestions regarding the content of this convention — speaker(s), worship leader(s), workshops and interests groups, and names of possible leaders. Your information should reach this office no later than August 4, 1997.

In reviewing the evaluation sheets, a large percentage asked that we plan a convention annually. These and other suggestions will be carefully considered by the Executive Committee during their August 14th meeting. Send your suggestions to: John I. Rhea, Older Adult Ministry, 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396, telephone 502-569-5486 (office), 502-569-8263 (fax).

Comments From "The Retirement Trenches"

A Retirement Community

by Don Harris, Synod of the South Atlantic

As we advance in years, some of us feel the need to relocate. There are many types of arrangements available to us. One is a retirement community.

Don Harris has described one provision in the Synod of the South, called Presbyterian Retirement Communities. He writes:

"Presbyterian Retirement Communities is in covenant relationship with the Synod of the South Atlantic. We have been working in the state of Florida for over 40 years. Currently, we are ministering to 3,500 older adults in 11 communities. These include five rental communities and six Continuing Care Communities. The communities are located throughout the state."

The Board of Directors' policy provides a 10 percent entry fee discount to all retired ministers, educators and their spouses. In cases of extreme need, additional funds are available. If you have any questions, please call Don Harris, at (800) 789-1628, extension 259 for details.

A Report From Minnesota Valleys Presbytery

By John Kauffman, Advisory Committee Representative

Retired clergy and spouses of the Presbytery of Minnesota Valleys met at the presbytery office in Willmar, Minnesota.

Rev. Wayne Purinton, recently installed executive presbyter, discussed future plans for presbytery. Bea Ourada, moderator of presbytery, who is a professional tax consultant, explained current fiscal matters of special interest to retirees.

The same group met in May sharing their pastoral experiences, serious or humorous. The speaker was the interim executive presbyter, Rev. John Roschen. The Presbytery Committee on Ministry sponsored the luncheon meeting.

Continuing to Follow One's Call

By Thomas L. Harrington, Central Florida Presbytery

I have been retired since 1981 — that is, officially. Since then I have served a year as pastor of the Protestant Congregation in Kathmandu Nepal, which was only 85 miles from the top of Mt. Everest. I have also been quite active since my returning to the states. Supply minister in northern Georgia where we lived for 12 years on 20 acres four miles off the Appalachian Trail. It was beautiful, but took a lot of work, so we moved to this country from abroad. We will be acting as host and hostess for Stetson University of an elderhostel on the second week of December this year and another the first week of January in 1997. We have enjoyed the fellowship and scholarship which they provided. We also have included spiritual growth as a priority. We went to the retreat at Montreat led by Bill Vamos entitled "Prayer in everyday life" and this next week we are going back up to Montreat to attend the seminar directed by Robert Raines entitled, "Beyond

Mid-life: Passage into the elder season." As you can see, we are keeping busy and look forward to the Convention in May.

Greater Atlanta Presbytery

By J. Phillips Noble, Advisory Committee Representative

We continue to have good quarterly luncheon gatherings with about thirty retirees coming. We share stories, experiences, and enjoy being with one another.

A new feature: We have set up a chain of a call system, so whenever there is a death of a Presbyterian minister (does not have to be retired) in the presbytery, we notify everybody immediately, giving details of funeral and family members. This makes it possible to have a caring ministry.

We're Growing

By Ralph W. Adamson, Advisory Committee Member, Presbytery of Great Rivers
Twenty-six attended the second gathering of the retired clergy, spouses, and survivors of Great Rivers Presbytery at Scotland Trinity Church, Macomb. This was an increase of seven from our previous gathering. We began with an interesting presentation on "The Devil — Who or What is He?" presented by Wally Jamison.

We enjoyed a delicious meal of chicken and biscuit dinner by the women of the church. Following lunch, we brought each other up-to-date on what had been happening in our lives since that last meeting, and ended with a lively hour and half discussion on problems affecting us — who provides us support and comfort when health problems arise? What does "Pastor Emeritus" mean? With or without it, what years and especially what about our spouses who are members of that congregation?

Positive Presbytery Response

By C. Sheldon Seibel, Advisory Committee Representative, South Louisiana Presbytery
The Committee on Ministry asked the Care and Development of Church Professionals Committee to include retired church professionals in its care. Subsequently, the CDCP voted to ask me to attend the next meeting to inform the Committee of ways to best address the needs of retired church professionals. I received an invitation from Chairperson Harold S. Horan to attend the August 6th meeting of the committee.

Give us a report on what is happening in your presbytery regarding retirees.

Membership

Membership is open to retired Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) clergy, spouses, and their survivors.

These individuals shall become regular members when each one has paid the \$10.00 annual dues.

Interest In National Association

To show an interest in the National Association, either:

Contact John Rhea, H.R., Older Adult Ministry, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202-1396

This newsletter is distributed through the Advisory Committee person in your presbytery. For presbyteries who do not yet have an Advisory Committee representative, the newsletter will be distributed through the executive presbyter. Please share your thoughts directly with:

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