



AGEnda

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Beginning Our Second 100 Publications of AGEnda

*By Miriam Dunson,
Associate for Older Adult Ministries
and Publisher of AGEnda*



Miriam Dunson

Looking back and contemplating the phenomenal growth and outreach of this publication fills me with a sense of pride and accomplishment. We continue to receive praise for the quality content. Requests to receive back issues or to be placed on the mailing list come in from a wide geographical area and often demonstrate a diverse ecumenical appeal.

We have been supported by the outstanding work of Dick Morgan as editor and by contributing writers who demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of not only specific topics, but the needs of our readers.

As you can see by the change in the format of this issue, we continue to explore ways to provide a high quality publication. **We are on-line with this issue at www.pcusa.org/olderadults. This may bring you to an alpha list, just click "o" and page down to Older Adult Ministries and link to AGEnda.**

NOTE: In our last issue we asked that you return a card if you are unable to access or download on-line information. If you have not returned the card or let us know you need a hard copy, this will be your last mailed issue. If you need to contact us for a hard copy call Pauline "Polly" Marcum toll-free at 888-728-7228 ext. 5472, or e-mail pmarcum@ctr.pcusa.org.

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WHAT? NO HUSBAND? NO CHILDREN?

By Dositia Carlson

Years ago my image of an old maid was a female who had lost out on the excitement of life. Perhaps there are some never-married women who still fit that description, but my own experience proves that life can be exceedingly rich for celibate older women.

Having no husband nor children can be a plus and a minus. Of course, with no spouse there may be a lack of steady companionship. Yet, for some, not being obligated to another person could seem to be an advantage. Marriage requires steady sharing of responsibilities, a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of another. However, when we live alone we may tend to become very self-centered, focusing primarily on our own needs. Two mutually caring women sharing a home may provide a healthy alternative.

Children help to expand one's world. Again there may be both trials and triumphs in rearing children. Heartaches are part of parenting, but the joy of nurturing an infant into maturity can bring abiding rewards. Those of us without children probably have little awareness of the high cost of parenting. Just the financial burden of meeting physical, social, educational demands of youngsters who turn into teenagers must be at times overwhelming.

Single older women may find satisfaction in developing relationships with the younger generation. Keeping in touch with nieces and nephews becomes important. Using e-mail for communicating enables me to enter the lives of younger relatives in wide-spread areas. Volunteering in a child-development center and also in a public school classroom helped me have a better understanding of the world of children. (I also developed a deeper appreciation of why grandmothers say their grandchildren wear them out!)

Siblings may fill an important role for unmarried women. My brother and sister (both retired) eagerly share pictures and stories of their grandchildren. We seem to have grown even closer in our later years. Their concern

for how I will manage when/if I become debilitated is reassuring.

Of particular importance to me is the extended family we have in our church. Over a dozen years ago about twenty-five men, women and children in our congregation formed a group that has bonded us in cherished ways. In our group that embraces many life styles, we have supported members as they moved into widowhood. We have celebrated the renewal of marriage vows; we have shared in weddings, births, and deaths—all the usual experiences of life.

So—I have no husband, no children, but I have life-long friends who help sustain me in my ministry. My freedom to serve and be served, to love and be loved has not been thwarted by being single. My ability to enjoy nature, the arts, travel—none of those activities depend on having a spouse. Forget any “old maid” label. As a child of God, I feel loved and needed on this planet. I rejoice with those older women enjoying the fruits of marriage and parenthood, and I rejoice, too with my older friends who without bitterness or cynicism know that singlehood can also be a blessing.

Transformational Learning As A Model For Older Adult Ministry

By Wittig Lewis

The creation of a holistic ministry for older adults with transformational learning experiences at its core can not only meet the needs of older persons in our congregations, but can also be extended in outreach to the burgeoning aging population in this country.

The components of a comprehensive, transformational learning program would include concentrations in at least five areas: spiritual nature, health and wellness, aging and transition, life enrichment, and equipping for service. All of this would take place in the context of authentic community.

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Transformational Learning Continued

Spiritual nurture has as its goal that older adults will be built up into a mature faith, a deep faith, which is integrated into all other aspects of their lives, and enables them to cope with the contingencies of aging. Some of the richest years of growing intimacy with Christ are ahead. Groups gather to study, learn to listen to God and to apply the Scriptures to their inner souls and lives.

Health and well-being — Jesus was very interested in the physical condition of persons and spent a lot of time affecting the physical dynamics of the people around him. We spend a lot of time visiting the sick and caring for others, which is so vitally important. But sometimes we come up short on helping people prevent illness and assisting them to maintain the health that God intends for them to enjoy. That can be accomplished best through education.

Aging and Transition — Education and resource awareness are two crucial elements in helping persons prepare for and deal with the issues associated with aging. The education component provides an overview of the complexities relating to insurance, housing, and support services, legal and medical considerations, end of life dilemmas and issues of family dynamics. The resource awareness component helps people navigate through the confusing world of community and government resources and support.

Life Enrichment — The content of classes that enrich the lives of older persons has almost limitless possibilities. Rather than learning for “learning’s sake” alone, we can provide classes that are transformational. One example would be grandparenting in the light of the changing face of families. Changes have left many grandparents facing situations they never could have imagined. We can provide arenas for discussion, information-sharing opportunities and resources to give them some of the tools they need to be effective.

Equipping for Service — We must take seriously older persons’ need to serve and guide them into meaningful ministry with others.

Often, we just ask for “volunteers” when there is something to be done or someone to visit or an event to be organized. We need to help people identify their gifts, link them with matching ministries and equip them with classes and instruction where appropriate. In this manner, our volunteers will be better prepared and their experience of service will be more meaningful.

Daily our culture hands us a staggering blizzard of new facts about longevity, about the aging process, and about the social impact of aging. One can’t read a magazine or view a television program without hearing about the “aging boomers.” While everyone is talking about this phenomenon, few disciplines are looking broadly at the issues or generating a comprehensive approach to address these issues. This is a *kairos* moment for the church! We are uniquely in a position to take this opportunity and be challenged creatively. We can lead our culture in a holistic approach to the aging phenomenon. This is “kingdom-work.” We can place in a holistic framework all of our theological insights, our care of persons, our best teaching skills, and be informed by the most current information available in our culture. Then transformational learning in later life can impact our culture and we can be participants in what God is doing in God’s world.

Financial Matters for Older Adult Women

By Carol Taylor

Take Care of Business — Many older women avoid end-of-life financial and estate planning because it is an uncomfortable and complex task. Your congregation can help the matriarchs of your community make sound financial decisions by educating themselves about estate planning fundamentals.

Helping a woman feel confident when making estate planning decisions does not require a law degree. It does require listening to her concerns and helping her sort through the natural maze of emotions about illness and death. Many times older women, especially if they are not married, put off estate planning

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Financial Matters Continued

because they have no one to talk to about their wishes and their concerns. Even when adult children offer to help, she may feel more comfortable weighing end-of-life decisions with someone who can be more objective and has some emotional distance.

Most of us do not want to think about what will happen to our money and property when we die or who will take care of our finances when we are too sick to pay bills or file tax returns. At the same time, most of us would do anything we can to make life easier for our families. Adult issues classes could have a series in which knowledgeable persons could lead discussions on these and other estate planning concerns.

Have A Plan — Estate planning arranges your property so it can be transferred after your death or managed if you become disabled. The goal is to honor your wishes with the least financial and emotional burden on your family. Estate plans vary, but usually include all of these documents:

Last Will and Testament: tells how to distribute your property, appoints a personal representative to carry out your instructions.

Durable Power of Attorney for Financial Matters: authorizes a family member, trusted friend, or advisor to handle your financial matters if you cannot do so.

Living Will: states your wishes regarding the use of life-prolonging procedures. It takes effect only if you are unable to communicate your wishes yourself.

Revocable Living Trust or Self-Declaration of Trust: helps manage your affairs if you become incapacitated and it eases the administrative task and expense of changing the ownership of assets at your death. The trust will name a *successor trustee* to step into your decision-making role. The successor trustee may be a friend or family member who is experienced in financial matters or you may

choose a professional such as an attorney or bank trust officer.

Follow Through — Without attention to details, estate plans fail to ease your family's concerns. Follow through by titling assets in your revocable living trust and update beneficiary designations to agree with your estate plan. Before hiring an estate-planning attorney, make sure that the service includes these details.

Hold A Family Meeting — Responsible estate planning requires communicating your desires. Do you prefer burial or cremation? Have you bought a cemetery plot? Have you discussed your living will with your family? Do your physician and clergy person have copies?

Your estate plan is not complete unless you have talked with the people you have named as your executor, personal representative, and successor trustee. Make sure they understand their responsibilities and agree to serve.

If members of your congregation are concerned about estate planning, the next step is to call 800-227-2872 (Geneva Press, Louisville KY) for a copy of *Are Your Affairs in Order? A Planning Guide and Resource Book* (ISBN 0-664-50085-4) published for the Office of Older Adult Ministry, A Ministry of the General Assembly Council, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). In addition, ask a member of your congregation (or a neighboring congregation) who is a retired estate planning attorney to teach a basic estate planning class once or twice a year.

This article is for information purposes only. It is not legal or tax advice. Please consult an attorney for legal advice.

About the Author: Carol S. Taylor, is a first-year M.Div. student at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Before attending seminary, Carol worked as a CPA and a personal financial advisor. You may contact Carol at: ctaylor@lpts.edu

Musings By Miriam: Older Single Women and The Church

By Miriam Dunson

I have lived the single life all of my life, by choice, and have found it to be fulfilling in the work I have been called to do, enjoyable in the friends who have surrounded me and cared for me, and who have guided and supported me through difficult times. The church has nurtured my faith, affirmed me as a person and has given me opportunities that I had never dreamed could become a reality. This has been true for most of my life. However, as an older single person, I have discovered some areas of my life that have not been as fulfilling as in earlier days. Some of these gaps can be addressed by the church. I need to explain what I mean.

There have been times when there seemed to me to be so much emphasis in the church on young families and children (which I love dearly) that, as a single older person, I have felt as though I was standing outside the church looking in with my nose pressed against the glass, watching everyone inside having a spiritual feast, while I was starving for spiritual food. The litanies, the prayers, the announcements, even the sermon, seemed to me to be centered around the youth and young adults, to the exclusion of older people, especially older single women. If the sermon, the confessions, the litanies would include some notice of the fact that the pews are filled with older women who are divorced, single by choice, or single because of the death of a spouse, then we could all feel a part of the worship service.

This is not to imply that a focus on youth and young adults is not important. It is indeed important and must be a priority, but so must the older persons in the pew, especially older women, and especially older single women.

I have found that as a younger person, friendships happened automatically and without great effort on my part. However, as I have gotten older, I have found that I am not the only older single woman who has found that making friends is much more difficult and

requires a great deal of effort. If the older single woman is limited physically by a chronic illness or by limited sight, hearing or mobility, this makes it even more difficult to make friends. This is at a time when she needs friends, perhaps more than at any other time in her life.

When you look out over most congregations in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), you will notice that there are lots of older women filling the pews. When a monthly luncheon is given for the senior adults in the congregation a majority of those who attend are women. When you visit a nursing home you will notice that most of the residents are women. When you observe the middle-aged adults in your congregation you will be aware that many of them are involved with caring for their parents. Because women live longer than men, in most situations, the parent being cared for is their mother.

The demographics reflect why this is true. Women represent 59 percent of Americans over the age of 65, and 71 percent of those are older than age 85. This is the fastest growing segment of the population according to the National Center on Women and Aging. In 1990 (the last figures available from the Census Bureau), 47.1 percent of those persons 85 years of age or older in the United States, lived alone.

Although the length of the life span is a great scientific achievement, it does present some challenges to society and especially the church. Women do live longer than men generally, however the Bureau of Census says that 82 percent of women in the last 20 years of life have one or more chronic diseases that often limit their self-care abilities and decrease the quality of their lives. Therefore, health care and health delivery services will need to increase in availability and in affordability.

Other concerns of older single women include their financial matters — whether or not they have the expertise to handle their finances in the present highly technological and highly

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Miriam's Musings Continued

complex structures. Women still generally earn less than men, and pensions, as well as Social Security, are closely related to wages. Today, women earn approximately 74% of what men earn. According to the Census Bureau, as women age, jobs are more difficult to find, and the pay drops to about 65 percent of what men can earn in the same jobs at the same age.

So what can the church do? Here are a few suggestions:

1. Pay attention to the older single women in the congregation. Recognize their presence, listen to their needs and desires, and include these issues in the total program of the church.
2. Include reference to issues of older single women in prayers, sermon illustrations, and in the liturgy of worship services.
3. Stay in touch with those who have experienced some chronic illness and still live alone. Contact them by visits, telephone calls, cards, and by giving them opportunities for service that they can accomplish in spite of their limitations.
4. Provide support groups for older single women who are the caregivers of their own parents or other relatives. Single women are

traditionally seen as the obvious caregivers of family members. Provide respite care for the family member, visit them frequently, stay in touch by phone, and be a good friend to them in all ways.

5. Assist older single women who live alone and who do not have sufficient financial resources for their living expenses. Assist them in taking advantage of the many services provided by the Area Agency on Aging, the Home Health Care Service, and financial aid availability of which they may not be aware.
6. Employ or find a volunteer Parish Nurse to be on the staff of the church to monitor the health of the older persons, especially the older single women.
7. Form a telephone buddy system or a "Call a Friend" program whereby the older single women check on each other daily.

NOTE: The statistics came from two sources:

Sixty-five in America, by Cynthia M. Taeuber, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration, Bureau of the Census; and *Church and Society*, January/February 1999, published by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

Mary S. Vandegrift Role Model for Older Women

Mary S. Vandegrift, a member of the Shades Valley Presbyterian Church, in Birmingham, Alabama, has been named to the Alabama Senior Citizens Hall of Fame.

Mary served as Director of the Senior Adult Ministry of her church and chairs the Care and Share Committee. She also serves as an elder at her church.

Called "an angel of mercy" by many, she has reached out to many people with the compassion of Christ, helping people in hospitals, serving older adults in church, and being a role model of Christian service. She calls herself "a late bloomer," but "bloomer" she is, all in the service of those in need.

AGenda congratulates Mary S. Vandegrift on this well deserved honor.



Mary S. Vandegrift

One Woman, To Many Women, To One Woman

By Ginger Broussard

Hi! My name is Ginger Broussard and I have been working more than ten years in older adult ministries. I want to take you back to where it all began for me. There was a wonderful woman in my congregation at the Presbyterian Church of the Covenant in Port Arthur, Texas. Her name was Annabelle Anderson. Annabelle was very active in Presbyterian Women at local, presbytery, and synod levels. She also served many years on the synod council, and was active on the General Assembly level as well. She nurtured me and taught me about leadership.

Annabelle and other women of her generation have taught me so much. They are like parents to me. They have been my Sunday School teachers, youth sponsors and my mentors. Now I want to give back to them in my ministry with older adults. That is my passion.

A number of years ago, a "Day Away" Program was being revived. Annabelle and others enjoyed shopping in other communities, visiting museums, touring old homes and other places of interest. However, they were hesitant to depend on their own driving abilities, especially for long distances. In the "Day Away" Program we traveled by train from Houston to Galveston. We traveled by boat in the Galveston Bay and Kema Bay area. We visited five Seaman Centers across New Covenant Presbytery. We traveled by air boats in the marshes of the Gulf of Mexico and the Bayous of Texas. We even visited NASA Space Center when a space rocket was being launched. During these and many more trips, many life stories, conversations, recipe exchanges, counseling and just plain fun were shared. This was the beginning of our older adult ministries. The ministry expanded to new ideas for programs and ways to minister to one another. That's what it is all about love and concern for each other.

We developed Martha's Club to bring meals to persons who were homebound and to people just released from the hospital. We visit and help with light housekeeping and letter writ-

ing. We also developed Joseph's Club to help with home repairs such as replacing burned out light bulbs on ceilings and building wheelchair ramps for homes. The program was built on older adults helping older adults.

What has come out of this program? The result has been women sharing their talents and interests with others and the giving of themselves to others by serving people with special needs. The result is that the recipient of the service can have a visit with someone, eat a good meal, have small repairs done around the house, and not be lonely for a while. As the experts tell us, loneliness and depression are among the major challenges for those who are homebound.

In the program we celebrate life events such as birthdays, recovering from a long illness or returning from a long trip, the birth of a great-grandchild, giving up the privilege of driving, moving from the "old homeplace" and more. We offer help in many ways including counseling, listening, hugging, or just being there.

One year, fourteen women in our congregation died. At the May Presbyterian Women's meeting, I bought helium balloons, one for each woman who had died. A member of the family, or a close friend held the balloon. After a brief service and prayer the balloons were released thus helping us with our grief for those lovely women who had been such a part of our lives. A wonderful thing happened — several of the strings intertwined as they floated into the sky as if they were going up with arms intertwined.

Now, you may ask, "If you give so much of yourself away, what do you have left?" Lots! You always get back more than you give. I get my charge from a couple of wonderful places, events and women. The places are Mo Ranch Conference Center in the Texas Hill

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One Woman Continued

country and Montreat Conference Center in Montreat, North Carolina. The events are Older Adult Ministry Conferences and the woman is the Rev. Dr. Miriam Dunson, who for the last twelve years has been our guiding light for older adult ministries at the General Assembly offices in Louisville, Kentucky.

She has developed the Older Adult Ministries Permanent Endowment fund with the Presbyterian Foundation to ensure the future of this ministry. She has worked with presbytery committees for older adult ministries across the nation to help make them more effective. She has led workshops in innumerable conferences and presbytery events with a contagious enthusiasm that makes even the most discouraged person become filled with excitement. So, for me, it all started with one woman, Annabelle Anderson. From there, my call moved on to sharing the need for ministry with older adults with many women and men in my local church, presbytery and in leadership in conferences. Undergirding it all during the past several years has been the support, guidance and encouragement of that other woman, Miriam Dunson.

NEEDED FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

CREATIVE POEMS/PROSE
BY OLDER MEN

Subject: *Thoughts on Aging*

Send Your Articles To:

Richard Morgan
rmorgan@hci.net

or

104 Pinewood Drive
Morganton NC 28655

BOOKS ON AGING OF INTEREST TO WOMEN



The Desert Blooms: A Personal Adventure in Growing Old Creatively

Sarah Patton-Boyle, Nashville TN:
Abingdon Press, 1983

Engaging in Ministry with Older Adults

Dosia Carlson, . Washington DC: The
Alban Institute, 1997

Beginning to Pray in Old Age

Susan Coupland, Cambridge, MA:
Cowley, 1985

A Very Present Help: Psalm Studies for Older Adults

Miriam Dunson, Louisville KY:
Geneva Press, 1999

Wisdom and the Senses: The Way of Creativity

Joan M. Erikson, New York NY:
Norton, 1988

Winter Grace

Kathleen Fischer, Nashville TN: Upper
Room Books, 1998

Toward Evening: Reflections on Aging

Mary Hope, Brewster MA: Paraclete
Press, 1997

The Best Years

Helen Hayes, New York NY:
Doubleday, 1984

Maggie Kuhn on Aging

A Dialogue Edited by Dieter Hessel.
Philadelphia PA: Westminster Press,
1977

What's Worth Knowing

Wendy Lustbader, New York NY:
Jeremy P. Tarcher, 2001

Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of our Elders

Mary Pipher, New York NY: Penguin
Putnam, 1999

The Measure of My Days

Florida Scott-Maxwell, New York NY:
Alfred A Knopf, 1968

A Deepening Love Affair:

The Gift of God in Later Life

Jane Marie Thibault, Nashville TN:
Upper Room Books, 1993

Being Seventy: The Measure of a Year

Elizabeth Gray Vining, New York NY:
Viking Press, 1978

Ed.Note: Note that most of these books by women authors were written in the 1980s and 1990s. Florida Scott-Maxwell's *The Measure of My Days* (1968) remains a classic.

Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The 2002 POAMN conference has just finished, and what a conference it was! Freda Gardner, our keynote speaker, gave two presentations that engaged, inspired, motivated creative thinking and challenged attitudes and opinions about the role of the older adult in the church.

She and Stephany Graham, Associate for African American Leader Development, who led us in worship each day, developed well the conference theme, "The Changing Face of the Church".

As always, the best part of the conference was the networking among conference participants. We had a tremendous amount of energy, creativity, and expertise in our conference attendees. Once again, I was impressed and in awe of what is happening in congregations and presbyteries in older adult ministries!

Because this conference already has me energized and encouraged, I am looking forward to the 2003 conference! It will be October 22-25, 2003 at the Fiesta Inn in Tempe Arizona. The theme is "Spirituality, Health and Wellbeing" and the plans that are underway promise to make it a memorable learning experience for both novice and veterans in older adult ministries. Add to that the great location of Arizona in October, and you have the perfect mix! I hope that many of you will be able to join us there. Look for more details in late spring and early summer.

My term as president has come to an end. Rev. Margaret Suttle of Fair Oaks, California was elected president, but due to health issues will not take on her full responsibilities until spring. Pat Baker, our new vice president from Stone Mountain, Georgia, will take on that leadership role until Margaret is able to do so.

Beth Ann Force of Bryn Mawr Pennsylvania is a new at-large member of the Executive Committee. This Executive Committee is extremely strong in leadership abilities as well as skills in organization and problem solving. The Network is in very capable hands.

It has been my privilege to serve POAMN as president these past four years. There are great challenges and opportunities before us in the area of older adult ministries in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) With what I have seen at the conference, we have the commitment and the gifts to do whatever God sets before us. It is an exciting time to be serving Jesus Christ in this particular area of ministry!

God's blessings on you all as you continue your work in loving and serving God and neighbor.

Peace

Kathy Barlow Westmorland

Make A Dedicated Commitment

**Assure
Ministry With Older Adults
Thrives Within The
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

Because of reduced budgets, we have developed two ways in which you can help support older adult ministries.

1. Permanent Endowment Fund #510-58345 with the Presbyterian Foundation.

Gifts can be sent directly to: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Foundation, 200 East Twelfth Street, Jeffersonville IN 47130. In addition, you can contact the Foundation Representative in your area to discuss deferred annuity giving and other options. Gifts need to be designated for Older Adult Ministry Endowment Fund #510-58345.

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Funding Continued

2. Extra Commitment Opportunities

Designated gifts can be given to particular items by sending your gifts to Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Central Receiving Dept. 97600, Louisville KY 40297-7600 and designate your donation for a particular account (see account numbers and activity listing below).

EO48097 *AGenda* Publication
 EO48103 Older Adult Ministries Office
 EO48099 Training - Older Adult Ministries
 EO48109 Funding A Vision for the Future
 EO48110 Older Adult Week Planning Guide

Please help to insure the continued services of Older Adult Ministries by providing financial support by designating your gift to one or more of these items..

For more information call Miriam Dunson toll-free at: 888-728-7228 extension 5487.

A Woman's View of Aging

*Submitted By
 Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services*

It's often said that some women age gracefully. That's certainly true of Jo Schmidt, a remarkable woman who epitomizes grace and dignity. Jo, now age 85, is a resident at Westminster-Thurber Community in Columbus, Ohio, one of the eleven retirement communities of Ohio Presbyterian Retirement Services.

Jo's greatest personal asset lies not in her attitude toward aging, but rather her philosophy on life: "My personal motto has always been 'Jesus first, others second and yourself last.' Living this motto has brought a great deal of joy into my life."

Indeed, Jo hasn't let aging prevent her from living life to the fullest. Her remarkable life includes travels to every state in the U. S., as well as sixteen foreign countries. Her twenty-seven year employment at two Columbus television stations, her association with The National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and membership on their board gave her the opportunity to be involved in a television cultural exchange. A certified parliamentarian, Jo's active involvement in the National Association of Parliamentarians take

her across the country frequently, including to New York for three days this past October.

Jo encourages others to stay active also. She recognized that previous generations didn't have access to the symphony, opera and the travel options that current retirees enjoy, so she has helped others take advantage of these opportunities by organizing a few tour groups in past years, including one to Germany.

Although she stays active, Jo realizes that she can no longer do things like heavy cleaning or climbing ladders. She doesn't cook quite like she did before; she now needs to refer to recipes for dishes she used to throw together from memory. Jo accepts the fact that she tires more easily; she needed a full day to recuperate following her three days in New York. However, she still has energy to do the important things; she continues to be the primary caregiver for a 91-year-old friend.

Jo shared her observation that as we get older we begin to understand the problems and challenges of others a little better. Younger people often are not as empathetic to people's frailties as someone who has experienced more of life and its difficulties.

"I have been a caregiver for many people in my life," Jo says. "As you get older, caring becomes a primary concern, especially for women. Caregiving has been personally rewarding for me. It makes others feel cared for, wanted and loved — and that makes me feel good inside."

"The interesting thing about getting older is that my children, who are now reaching retirement age, have become my peers. Our conversations have become very interesting. We now talk about things that most parents and children don't normally talk about, and that's rewarding."

As her life attests, Jo Schmidt continues to grow as a beautiful Christian, aging gracefully and living life to its fullest.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

LOOK FOR A NEW RELEASE

Dimensions of Older Adult Ministries
 (provisionally titled)

An edited collection of essays on topics in older adult ministries.



AUTUMN WISDOM

(Note: In this issue all writers are women)

Growing Old Gracefully

By Susan Schnell

1 Samuel 12:23: “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you”

I have just returned from visiting a dear friend who is 84 and who prays faithfully for me and many others since 1953 . . .that’s almost 50 years! Maude, daughter of a wealthy shipping magnate, has not been wanting for anything for most of her life. The riches her earthly father was able to provide pales in comparison to what her Heavenly Father provides. Now older, alone and still rejoicing in the Lord, she serves Him the best way she knows how.

If I were to paint one picture of what it looks like from Maude’s perspective, She may be saying. . . “As a single elderly woman, I cope with the problems of daily survival so I can continue to live independently. Each day I do things like pay my bills, obtain necessities such as food and medications, do the laundry, take out the garbage, and arrange for transportation. I try to take it one day at a time.

Often I wonder why I am still here. Then I remember Samuel’s words about praying for others in chapter 12, verse 23. “Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.” I pray for my family, friends, neighbors. I pray for elected officials, medical professionals, people in the military, people who are in institutions, children in difficulty, people who are sick, bereaved and lonely. I pray for myself, asking that I might use wisdom and do what I can. I confess my sinful habits or indulgences and ask for God’s guidance, continued mercy, kindness and for opportunities to help others. When I have prayed, I feel that I have not lived my life in vain.

Who do you have praying for you?

Many senior church members here would love to pray for others. I invite you to cultivate a deep friendship with at least one of the many senior prayer warriors in your congregation.

BE CALMED

By Missy Tuller

My boat is so small, Lord
this world in which I live.
I need help, Father, to leave the dock
and steer my boat straight
into the sea of life.

Help me hoist my sail, Father,
to sail my small ship
Where your Spirit leads me,
and to ponder your direction for me
against the storms.

I know I am responsible for my wake.
Do I leave a good wake?
I am responsible for my speed.
Do I make big or small waves?
Follow the laws you’ve set down for me?

With you as my Captain, giving direction,
how can I not steer straight and true,
my sail capturing the wind of your spirit?
Stay by my side, Father, get me home
safe in the harbor of my eternal rest.

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