



A Publication of
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 Church Leader Support
 Older Adult Ministries

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In This Issue

Transitions Through Difficulties	1-2
Life After Life	2
Honoring of Retired Professionals	3
What's a PROAMN? Presbytery Contacts	4-5
Musings by Miriam Too Busy To Notice	6-7
Resources	
President's Corner	8
Thanks and Recognition	9
Poetry: To Whom Shall We go	10
Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network Conference	11
Membership Application for the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network	12

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Transition Through Difficulties

by Carol Taylor



Carol Taylor

We are always in transition because existence requires constant change. From the tiniest particles in atoms that are constantly in motion, to mountains eroding and ocean floors shifting, the nature of creation is transitory. We cannot avoid transition and would not want to, even if we could.

If it were not for transitions, our golf, tennis, or musical skills would always be as good or bad as they always were. Could we take friendship or ministry seriously if we knew that no one and nothing would change? Without transitions, we would quickly lose interest in life because life would lose meaning.

Transition is proof of God's ongoing creative activity. Without transition, there can be no redemption. Transition makes beauty. Is not the beauty of a rose due at least in part to its transitory nature? Love also produces transitions and changes value over time. It is appropriate that the symbol for one year of marriage is paper while fifty years is celebrated with gold.

Although we would not want to (and could not) live without transitions, they are often painful. Many times, transitions require nobly setting aside personal needs for the sake of home, family, and/or community. That hurts. The transitions that we call "aging" are often both emotionally and physically painful.

Why doesn't our omniscient, omnipresent, loving God find a way for us to have meaningful, beautiful, joy-filled lives without pain? I don't know. Of course, we bring some pain and suffering upon ourselves when we seek to avoid transitions.

The Book of Jonah is the story of the prophet's life transition when called by God. Jonah does not want to change his life and makes every effort to avoid disrupting his routine. First, God calls Jonah to go to Nineveh. Jonah resists this change and runs in the opposite direction. (Note that regardless of what Jonah does, his life is in transition!) Jonah hides from God, first in the belly of a ship and later in the belly of a sea-creature. When things can get no worse, from the literal depths of despair, Jonah cries out to God for forgiveness and mercy.

It makes no difference whether you think Jonah's pain and suffering were self-induced, or caused by God, or simply the effect of being inside a whale. Jonah demonstrates the practice that God has given us for coping with pain and suffering: Jonah prayed.

Continued Pg 2

Transition Through Difficulties Continued

Have you read Jonah's prayer lately? It is a beautiful poem in which Jonah describes his descent into the dark, fearful depths of the ocean where he feels his life ebbing away and then tells of his ascent toward the light when he turns to God. As you read Jonah's prayer, you will realize that it is far more than a few words uttered in a moment of distress. Jonah chooses his words carefully and puts his heart and soul into this prayer. When you pray Jonah's prayer, you will have no doubt about where Jonah stood in relation to God. Jonah prayed until he could believe what he was praying and then he continued praying until he was satisfied with the answer.

Jonah did not finish his prayer until it was answered. Furthermore, when he stopped praying, he still had to go to Nineveh, knowing that God would be generous with the Ninevites. Jonah's prayer was answered powerfully, but Jonah was still the same old Jonah. He was still stubborn and cranky.

Transitions are inevitable because that is the way that God creates and redeems. Transitions can seem wonderful or terrible, or both at the same time. We have much freedom to choose when and how we make transitions. Prayer is an effective means of dealing with the pain and suffering of transition.

In prayer we can build trust in God. This helps alleviate the pain and suffering of transition, because we recognize that we are not on our own. In fact, we are totally dependent upon God. When we express gratitude for the ongoing process of creation and redemption, we find shelter and comfort from pain and suffering. Prayer allows us to intentionally release our hearts and minds to God, who is absolute joy, beauty, and love.

Carol Taylor is a Seminary Intern in the Office of Older Adult Ministries.

LOOK FOR THE 2003 RELEASE OF
Dimensions of Older Adult Ministries

LIFE after LIFE

By A.M.R. Charrington, Jr.

In 1994, a Continuing Care Community two-bedroom apartment became home for my wife and our little dog, "Muffin." I had two tours of duty with the Residents' Association - Treasurer and Entertainment Committee Chairman - all the while maintaining a degree of business activity and relishing the fact that family and friends lived nearby. Our address had changed but LIFE basically remained unchanged.

Then, my wife's health situation reached the point that a move to a medical unit was in her best interest. On December 16, 2000, her journey came to a merciful close. LIFE as I had known it for over 60 years, ended.

But, there is a second LIFE - a one-bedroom apartment, caring for and being cared for by a cat named "Bis-Kit." I spend considerable time writing; having nearly finished my autobiography and an ongoing series of brief biographies of "community" employees for the Human Resources quarterly newsletter.

A cane has become a very close friend. I struggle to keep from losing weight instead of gaining, and the number of pills I take can just about be counted on the fingers of both hands. If I don't write it down in my daily reminder, it's gone from Memory City!

I feel perfectly safe driving my trusty Oldsmobile, ritually visit the Fitness Center, and take comfort in the fact that in-house medical service is available 24 hours a day.

About three years ago, Ann Lander's column caught my eye, perhaps because it appeared on my birthday. In part it had this to say:

Lord, thou knowest that I am growing older. Keep me from falling into the tiresome habit of expressing an opinion on every subject. Release me from the craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Give me grace, dear Lord, to listen to others describe their aches and pains. Teach me the glorious lesson that, occasionally, I might be mistaken. If I do not approve of some of the changes that have taken place in recent years, give me the wisdom to keep my mouth shut.

THERE IS INDEED LIFE AFTER LIFE

Westminster Retirement Communities Foundation Honors Retired Church Professionals

Deciding to move into a retirement community was a taxing experience for retired Presbyterian minister Arthur W. Rideout and his wife, Margaret, physically, emotionally and financially. After raising a family and devoting a lifetime to serving the Lord, they had little to put aside for retirement.

When Dr. Alan and Alma Gordon retired after serving as Presbyterian medical missionaries for twenty-five years in Brazil, they wondered what would happen if their health failed and they needed extensive long-term care.

Mindful of the Apostle Paul's words in I Corinthians 9:14, ". . . those who preach the gospel should earn their living by the gospel. . .," and in 1 Timothy 5:17, ". . . those who labor in preaching and teaching the Word are worthy of double honor. . .," the Westminster Retirement Communities Foundation recognized the valuable service to which both the Rideouts and the Gordons dedicated their lives and bestowed upon them the Honorable Service Grant.

Through the Honorable Service Grant program, Westminster Retirement Communities Foundation recognizes and honors retired church professionals by providing funds to help them enjoy a secure, fulfilling retirement, a lifestyle they might not have been able to afford otherwise. Unfortunately some servants of the church receive inadequate compensation to plan adequately for their retirement.

Honorable Service Grants are available to former Presbyterian ministers, missionaries, church educators, and their surviving spouses, who have faithfully served the Church. An Honorable Service Grant equals 10% of the entrance fee of an apartment or village home at any Westminster Retirement Communities continuing care retirement community, and is usually valued at between \$10,000 and \$20,000.

As a faith-based, Presbyterian Church-related organization, the Westminster Retirement Communities Foundation responds to David's plea in Psalm 71, "Do not cast me off when old age comes, nor forsake me when my strength fails." (v. 9 NEB) This scripture is the foundation for

Westminster Retirement Communities mission to older adults.

"Thankfully, the Honorable Service Grant helped considerably with the financial part of retirement," says Rev. Rideout. "It is doubtful we could have managed without the assistance we received. We have been most grateful that the grant program was available to us. What's more, we so appreciate the assistance we received in cutting through the red tape. The Foundation did an excellent job of answering our questions and helping us through the process."

If you are a retired Presbyterian minister, missionary, church educator or the surviving spouse of a professional church worker, please contact Honorable Service Grant coordinator, Donna Smaage at 407-839-5050, 800-948-188, or via e-mail at PRCDonna@aol.com.

Nancy Thompson, media specialist, Westminster Retirement Services

A Prayer for All Ages

Our Father, who watches over us with endless love and care, we thank you for the journey of life and each of its stages:

- For childhood**, with its sense of wonder and discovery;
- For adolescence**, with its miracle of growth and new relationships;
- For young adulthood**, with its promise and its challenge
- For midlife**, with its sobering retrospectives and adaptations;
- For the later years**, with their joy and fulfillment and even their new beginnings.

It is all a rainbow of splendor and excitement, a pilgrimage of learning and experience. Help us to walk in it always with a sense of your presence, of never being alone, of living forever under grace.

Teach us to rise above our mistakes, to forgive our enemies, to cherish friends, to love adventure.

Inspire us to live to the fullest, both individually and in community.

Let the talents and wisdom and love you have given us find rich expression in our work and play and daily relationships.

Show us how to give ourselves to others until we have overcome the deficiencies in ourselves.

Let goodness, mercy and peace attend us all our days, and bring us at last into the presence of all your saints and angels,

And of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

(From Lost In Wonder Love and Praise: Prayers and Affirmations For Christian Worship by John Killinger, (Angel Books, P.O. Box 3390, Lynchburg, VA 24503, 1986) p.82, No. 2.

WHAT IS A PROAM?

There is a new organization emerging which is called the Presbytery Representative for Older Adult Ministries (PROAM). This organization is made up of individuals who have been nominated by their presbytery, and/or have volunteered their services to spend time and energy in helping older adult ministry get started and flourish in their presbytery. Currently, SIXTY-ONE PRESBYTERIES have named either one or two persons to fill this position. With the numbers of older adults increasing rapidly, it is hoped that other presbyteries will make nominations for persons to volunteer for this important cause. The job description of the PROAMN includes:

1. Keep the Executive Presbyter and/or other presbytery entities informed of the status of older adult ministry within the presbytery.
2. Work with the appropriate presbytery committee to assure a viable older adult ministry effort within the presbytery.
3. Use existing presbytery channels to inform individual churches of resources available to develop or strengthen an effective older adult ministry program.
4. Plan training conferences within the presbytery to assist individual churches in their ministry with older adults.
5. Make sure the resources of the Office of Older Adult Ministries, the leadership available within the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network (POAMN) are known and utilized to develop a presbytery older adult ministry program.
6. Participate as often as feasible in the annual POAMN Conference.
7. Develop a network of representatives from each congregation to meet annually to be trained, to share ideas and to be supportive to their common cause.

At the 2003 Annual POAMN Conference, there will be a special workshop for Presbytery Representatives (PROAMNs), led by Miriam Dunson, designed to share ideas, to learn more about the program, and to make suggestions to

make the program more effective. The conference is to be held in Tempe, AZ, at Fiesta Inn, on October 22-25, 2003. Brochures for the conference will be available by June 1.

The following presbyteries and their representatives have responded to the request for PROAMS. If your presbytery is not listed, you may wish to make nominations of one or two persons in your presbytery to do this volunteer work, in order that older adult ministry in your presbytery can flourish and grow. If you have been nominated by presbytery and your name is not listed, please let us know so we can have a correct, up-to-date listing. If your name and presbytery is listed and should not be, we also need to know. The present PROAMs are: (Listed by presbytery in alphabetical order.)

1. Abington Presbytery
The Rev. and Mrs. Klell Napps
2. Alaska
Shirley Winters
Judith Ann Richards
3. Baltimore
Janet K. Williams (Volunteered,
not nominated by Presbytery)
4. Boise
Harvey Pitman (Volunteered,
not nominated by Presbytery)
5. Carlisle
Myrtle McCall
6. The Cascades
Camille Kunnick
7. Central Washington
James M. Erixson
8. Charlotte
David Fry
9. Chicago
Lillie Cox
Holly Hudnut
10. Cincinnati
Lois Whitney
11. Dakota
Yvonne Looking Elk
Wilson Kitto
12. DeCristo
Bev Greer
Virginia Levinson
13. Detroit
Bob Brown
Eldon Beery
14. East Tennessee
Patsy Turner
Houston Lowry
15. Eastern Oklahoma
Dennis Ritchie
Joyce Ludwig
16. Eastern Virginia
Shelby Whitt
David Greene

- PROAMs Continued
17. Flint River
June Evers
Frances Odom
18. Florida
James Dees
Kathleen Hodgson
19. Giddings-Lovejoy
Carolyn Newcomb
Susan Relfe
20. Grace
Mary Joiner
Susanne Johnson
21. Grand Canyon
Jane Wilson (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
22. Great Rivers
Vickie Kintzel
Lorna J. Loeffler
23. Greater Atlanta
Bill Schotanus
Joyce Horsley
24. Heartland
Pamela Hart
Al and Sue Coleman
25. Hudson River
John and Carolyn Fluckinger
26. Indian Nations
Bill Guilford
27. Lehigh
Regina Olson
Marlene Merz
28. Long Island
Kenneth Lewis
29. Los Ranchos
Barbara Francis (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
30. Memphis
Lucy Cummings
31. Miami
Nancy Strait
Annette May
32. Mid-Kentucky
Sue Bryant (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
33. Milwaukee
Barbara Jordan
34. Missouri River
Ruth Hamlin
William A. Denny
35. New Brunswick
Dorothy Broan
Jean Cooper
36. New Covenant
Michelle Shultz
Blake Brenninger
37. New Hope
Jane Love
Carole McCartney
38. New York City
David Taylor (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
39. Newark
Donna Bowers
40. North Puget Sound
Robert M. Olmstead
Raymond Riese
41. Northern Kansas
Franklyn Schroeder
42. Northern Waters
Candy Kending
43. Olympia
Elaine Swigart
44. Palo Duro
Donald Gum
45. Pittsburgh
Lois Lang
Winnie Woodland
46. Providence
Fred and Carol Rogers
47. Sacramento
Richard Pearson
Richard Wylie
48. Salem
Kevin Conley
Aaron Fulp-Eichstaedt
49. Scioto Valley
Jane Dickson
Richard Milford
50. Seattle
Lindalee Henderson
51. Sheppards & Lapsley
Guy Newland
Erskine and Mary Vandergrift
52. Sierra Blanca
Marcus L. Burr
Carrol Blevins
53. South Dakota
James Clarke
Deb Anderson
54. South Louisiana
Harry Robson
55. Southern California and Hawaii
Karen Bading
56. Stockton
Jean Kalino
Phil Bliss
57. Tampa Bay
Peggy Johnson
Mae Hogue
58. Trinity
Marvel Frick
Mrs. Cleo Chamberlain
59. Twin Cities Area
Janna Severance (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
60. Wabash Valley
Susan Bernauer (volunteer,
not nominated by presbytery)
61. Western North Carolina
Gennie Gernoske

The Office of Older Adult Ministries is dedicated to the development of trained personnel to work with the churches to support the spiritual and connectional needs of Older Adults. Thank You for your efforts.



Musings By Miriam

"Too Busy to Notice"

In the beginning, before God was busy creating the heavens and the earth; the sun; the moon; hippopotamus; beetle; sponge and the human race, God created time. The result of this earliest of creative acts is that in all the glory and wonder "Eden saw play," Eden also knew that its days were numbered. "There was evening and there was morning, the first day." Gone! "There was evening and there was morning, the second day." Gone! The third day...;Gone! This numbering hardly seems a concern of the rock, the tree, and my old cat lying belly up on the living room floor. It does, however, concern me and those of us who remember the garden, notice the gray, feel the newest ache and wonder, "Where has all the time gone?"

This quote is from a new resource to be published by the Office of Older Adult Ministries in the fall of 2003, the working title of which is: *Dimensions of Older Adult Ministries*. The above paragraph is quoted from the first page of the first chapter written by Donovan Drake, Minister at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Durham, North Carolina. The chapter is entitled: "In God's Time: Aging as People of God."

As I read this paragraph, I recognized myself in the words, "Where has all the time gone?" I have been too busy to notice that life was moving on very rapidly. I suspect that others who read these words and who are nearing retirement, or thinking about retirement, may have the same reactions I had. You may be asking the same questions: "Where has all the time gone?" "How did I get to this place in my life so rapidly."

There are some birthdays that come and go and we don't think much about them. When we are young, we look forward to birthdays, to that special time when there is a celebration, possible presents, cake and candles. It is a happy and hopeful time as we looked forward to being old enough to drive a car, and exercise our independence. Then, there comes a time when we dread birthdays. For some, it is the

29th, for others the really big one is the 40th, but then comes the 50th, and we begin to wonder "Where has all the time gone?" We've been too busy to notice. Then, there will come a time when you look forward to your birthday again...when you are in your later years and are just happy to still be around! When did you stop looking forward to your birthday? And then, when did you begin once again to look forward to your birthday? Think about it.

No birthday ever got my attention until my 70th. Birthday's were always for me just another day on which I had cake, presents and my friends sang "Happy Birthday." I had no awareness that I was any different from when I was 10 years younger...that is, until all of a sudden, when my 70th birthday rolled around. That one grabbed my attention, and before I could adjust to the idea of being 70, which seemed like only a month or so later, I became 71!

How did I get there? What happened to the time?

Then, there was one more traumatic experience to face. I recently attended a pre-retirement seminar sponsored by the Board of Pensions. I felt that I was in the wrong place. I didn't belong there. I was shocked when I realized that I will indeed be retiring at the end of 2003. My immediate response as I entered the seminar room was, "Where has all the time gone!" "How did I get to this place in my life?"

Too busy to notice. Too busy to notice that I needed to plan for life after retirement -- how to live, where to live, what to do, who will make up my support group?

For me, I have come to the conclusion that retirement is one of the major transitions in life. If we have worked all our lives, our work has become our identity, has demanded all our time and energy, has been the source of a satisfying social life, and has brought opportunity for creativity, for meaning in life, and satisfaction that we have been engaged in something worthwhile.

As I think back on my own life, I have been through many major transitions. At the age of 22, I moved to Korea where I lived and served as a missionary for 18 years in a different culture, a different language, a new work responsibility, new

Continued Pg. 7

Musings Continued

friends, and a different life style, all requiring major adjustments and transitions. In 1973, I moved back to the States, and encountered a very changed homeland, changed by the turmoil of the sixties. Many things had changed -- the language, basic values, the music, a different way of thinking, a new job, new friends and my parents were 18 years older. Again, major adjustments and transitions were experienced.

At the age of 49, I resigned the job as missionary recruiter, a job that I loved, in order to attend seminary. Becoming a student again was another major transition, as those of you who have gone back to school at a later time in life know so well. After seminary, I went through the trauma and disappointment of trying to find a position as a newly ordained older woman. Then, came the move to Louisville to a new job, a totally new environment in which to work, followed by two years of battling breast cancer. So, as many of you have done, I have experienced many transitions, changes, and major adjustments, but the toughest one for me, looking at it from this side of retirement, is facing the reality of not getting up every morning and going to my job!

I have heard many retirees say, "Retirement was the best experience of my life," and "I am busier now than I ever was while working...how did I ever have time to work?" Just this week, a colleague said to me, "Why did you wait until your seventies to retire...I am planning to retire when I reach 55!"

During my years as Associate for Older Adult Ministries in Louisville, I have led many workshops on retirement where we have discussed those big questions: Has my life been worthwhile? Have I done anything that really makes a difference? What are those things I wish I had done or had not done in my life? As these questions begin to emerge now in my own life, it frightens me. With life expectancy for women now approaching 90, this means that I may have another 20 years or so to live.

Maybe being 71 isn't so bad after all. Perhaps I can do those things I wish I had done but never had the time, and perhaps I can seek some resolution concerning those things I wish I had done differently. As I think further, there are indeed some things I

want to do. I want to continue to have opportunities to support and speak up for the cause of older adults. I may want to write another book; I especially want to write down some of the extraordinary stories that have happened in my life that should not be lost; I want to reconnect with friends and family whom I have neglected because I was "too busy." But, most of all, I want my remaining years after retirement to be fulfilling -- productive, enjoyable, hassle-free, surrounded by a caring community, and pleasing to the God whom I worship.

Actually, I don't even like the word, "retirement." I am reading a book entitled, *Don't Retire--Rewire* by Jeri Sedlar and Rick Miners (Published by ALPHA, A Pearson Education Co., 2003). This is what I want to do in retirement: I want to be "Rewired." A former business professor is quoted in this book, saying: "Transition is a better word than retirement." We do need to find a new word for "retirement." In 1935, when Social Security was put in place, it made sense to set the "retirement" age at 65 because people at that time didn't live much past 55 or 60. If they made it to retirement age, they retired, lived a couple of years and then died. Therefore, at a time when life expectancy has moved from 47 years of age in 1900 to nearing 90 plus in this decade, with the retirement date still set at 65 and with a possibility of retirement at 55, the traditional concept of retirement doesn't fit. Transition, redirection, or passage might more accurately define the experience.

Whatever we call it, however, it does raise two major questions for us individually to consider: Where has all the time gone? And, What will I do with the rest of my life? My answer is that all these years have gone to make me who I am today and that's okay. I am on a journey, and when I leave my present job, I will continue on the journey set before me, perhaps to even greater things.

Transition According to Alice in Wonderland

"Who are you?" said the Caterpillar....

"I-I hardly know, Sir, just at present," Alice replied rather shyly, "at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then."

Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (New York: Signet Books, 1960). p. 47.

Resources

Aging: God's Challenge to Church & Synagogue, by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. and Donald F. Clingan. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1996. \$16.95

This volume deals with spiritual needs of older adults, the theology of aging, and gives practical guidance for congregations that desire to develop effective ministry to, with, and by older adults. The fact sheets, worksheets and lists of agencies engaged in older adult ministry are worth the price of the book.

Aging Well, by George E. Vaillant, M.D. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2002. \$14.95.

Dr. George Vaillant, director of the five-decade Harvard Medical School study of the basic elements of human development, has written a comprehensive summary and analysis about the factors that determine how happy people are in later life. His numerous illustrations, drawn from the sample of hundreds of persons in the study, is both interesting and informative reading.

Rock of Ages: A Worship and Songbook for Retirement Living. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2002. \$15.95.

This is a large-print ecumenical songbook and worship guide for use in nursing homes and other older adult settings. The volume includes the lyrics, but not the music, to more than 80 familiar hymns arranged alphabetically.

The Virtues of Aging, by Jimmy Carter. New York: Ballentine, 1998. \$11.00

The insights and reflections about aging by former President Carter speaks meaningfully to adults of all ages. Although written for individual reading and not including a suggested group discussion guide, this would be an excellent study resource by a group interested in reflecting together about the impact of growing old upon individuals and American society.

VISIT THESE WEBSITES:

www.seniornet.org

This nonprofit website "provides adults 50+ access to and education about computer technology and the internet to enhance their lives and enable them to share their knowledge and wisdom."

www.elderhostel.org

Elderhostel offers literally thousands of educational opportunities nationally and internationally on a broad range of subjects.

A Woman's Guide to Successful Retirement

When our parents were driven out of Paradise, Adam is believed to have remarked to Eve: "My dear, we live in an age of transitions."

Written by Dean William R. Inge (1860-1954), quoted in *Transitions: A Woman's Guide to Successful Retirement*, by Diana Cort-Van Arsdale and Phyllis Newman, (Harper-Collins Publishers, 1991) p.33.

NEEDED FOR THE NEXT AGENDA

CREATIVE POEMS/PROSE

Subject: *Thoughts on Aging*

**Send Your Articles To:
Marvin Simmers
MarvinSimmers.AOL.Internet
or
1144 Bromley Road
Avondale Estates GA 30002**

Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Change is inescapable.

We begin changing in our mother's wombs, bodies rapidly change and grow. In our pre-school years, minds develop and habits form. Change is necessary. Life continues the changing pattern as we age, moving from one stage to another. In fact, much of what determines the quality of our lives depends on how we respond to the changes

taking place.

The church changes as we change. Twenty years ago ministry was planned for two groups of older adults, active retirees and the frail elderly. Today, a third group to be considered is early retirees who may or may not be anxious to be categorized as "older adults."

Change affects all people, but none more dramatically than older adults. John I. Rhea, volunteer in mission in the Office of Older Adult Ministries, listed the following as "Forces Contributing to a Change in Life-Style for Older Adults:"

- Retirement
- Loss of spouse
- Reduced income
- Leisure time
- Extended illness
- Rejection by off-spring
- Loss of support group
- Move from the "big house"
- Gradual surrender of independence
- Loss of goals
- Loss of initiative
- Loss of self-respect

All but leisure time involve loss and any one of them is a change that can impact life. All have implications for the ministry of the church by, for and with older adults.

The church plays a vital role as its people age and respond to changes in life. The forces named by Dr. Rhea have spiritual, service and social implications. Add the forces of change to the implications and the result is a launching pad for older adult ministries in any size congregation.

Several of the forces are interrelated. For example, retirement often means loss of income. This may cause

questions such as "Will I have enough money to pay my bills both now and in the future," or "Do I have the resources to cover unexpected emergencies?" Finance committees in the local congregations, community resources and the Presbyterian Foundation should be called upon to help plan for and answer questions about retirement. For those whose careers have been at the center of their lives, it could mean loss of support group, a loss of goals, loss of initiative and loss of self-respect. Retirement seminars should always include a spiritual component that affirms our value as image bearers of God. The obvious positive result of retirement is the leisure time it affords. It is time that may be channeled toward service projects or social activities. Consider also, that leisure time is a gift from God.

Reduced income always means a change in life-style and may give opportunities of service and social interaction. Many retirees no longer have the ability to pay for handyman kinds of services. Larger churches can utilize volunteers of all ages to fix doors, install light bulbs, etc. Even smaller churches can contribute. A friend in a small Mississippi Delta church recently began his own handyman service. In the monthly newsletter he stated his qualifications, "retired and a longtime master of the 'honey-do' list." He listed what he could do and the times he was available. Then he invited others to join him. Thus began Ray Beckham's one-man service to older adults.

Leisure time offers opportunities for work, study, play, and travel. Short-term mission projects welcome people with life experience and specific areas of expertise. Your pastor or presbytery can put you in touch with groups, both local and abroad who are anxious for volunteers. The leisure time now available can be used for Bible study you were once to busy to pursue or maybe it is time for you to teach or lead a small group. Walking together is a favorite activity of many groups, but not in the same places or styles. Younger retirees might choose to do their walking on a hiking trail, while older retirees might prefer mall walking. Travel is not only enriching, but also a wonderful way to meet new friends and build relationships.

The possibilities are endless and always changing. I challenge any church of any size to list the forces that contribute to a change in life-style, envision the three groups (early retirees, older active retirees and the frail elderly) within your congregation, then identify how the spiritual, service, and social implications apply to each force within each group.

God bless you as you use these tools ministering to the changing church in a changing world.

Faithfully,

**THANKS
UNITED ADULT MINISTRIES
FLUSHING, NEW YORK**

United Adult Ministries has made a \$4,000 gift to assist in the publication costs of *AGenda*. This organization consists of a Retirement Residence, offering independent living with supportive services on-premises; Home Services offers for individuals with disabilities and adults 55 years of age and over the opportunity to take advantage of low cost, reliable repair and maintenance services; and United Lifeline, offering personal emergency response service. These services enhance quality of life by giving, peace of mind, confidence and security to older adults in the Long Island and New York metropolitan area. Their stated mission is: "To offer older adults hope, through expanding opportunities and practical services, to live confidently in today's world."

WE ARE MOST GRATEFUL TO UNITED ADULT MINISTRIES FOR THEIR GENEROSITY IN PROVIDING THIS FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR THE PUBLICATION OF AGENDA.

Margaret Suttle

**Continued Gratitude To

OHIO PRESBYTERIAN
RETIREMENT SERVICES**

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TO WHOM SHALL WE GO?

By J. Phillips Noble

Terrorists. War. Uncertainty.
Poverty. Hunger. Suffering.
Disease. Misery. Death.
Where are answers?
Where is help?
To whom shall we go?

There are options.
To the living God of the universe,
Though a God not fully known
By the smartest, wisest, and most religious
Of earthly human beings.
But in Jesus we have a clue.

There are options.
To a God we have formed
In our minds from fragments
Of Sunday school teaching in childhood,
From elements of America's civil religion,
A small God who leaves us empty.

There are options.
To no God at all.
Let misery be unanswered.
Let evil take over the globe.
Let us be animals to hurt and devour,
With no reaching for faith and hope.

I choose the first option.
I clutch at the outskirts of God's ways.
I listen for the whisper of God's voice.
I focus my image of God through Jesus.
My reason runs its course and fails.
Faith is the word God whispers to me.

(Dr. Noble is a retired PCUSA minister who is very active in working with retired ministers and their families in the Greater Atlanta Presbytery.)

**We will appreciate your support of this important resource, designate your donation for Extra Commitment Opportunity Account No. 048097 and send it to: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Older Adult Ministries
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