

Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

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Inside this issue:

Editor's Comments	1
Save the Date - POAMN National Conference	1
President's Reflection	2-3
Memo from Membership	3-4
7 th International Conference on Ageing & Spirituality	4-6
Retired Ministers, Spouses, or Survivors Corner	7
The Psalms Speak to Us	8-10
Learning to Age	10-11
Living, Dying, Rising	12-13
Regional Conference	13
Individual Members	14
Membership Application	15
Organizational & Affiliates Members	16

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Good Morning from Oregon,

The theme of this issue of *PNN* is, *The Psalms Speak to Us*. Each of us has a favorite Psalm, or several, that we have memorized. The wisdom in these ancient writings is timeless for the psalmist wrote from their innermost being. Joy, sorrow, hope, despair – they poured out their feelings to God. As an older adult once remarked, ‘If the psalmist said it, perhaps it is alright for me to say it if that’s the way I feel.’ Several articles in this issue contain quotations from the Psalms.

The 7th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality took place June 4th-7th, 2016 in Forest Park, Illinois. POAMN was one of its sponsors. The article, 7th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality – Part 2 seeks to share what transpired during this informative and uplifting conference.

Upcoming POAMN events are:

- Regional Older Adult Ministry Conference in Winston-Salem on October 19th, 2017 (see page 13)
- 2018 POAMN Conference at Zephyr Point Conference Center/ Lake Tahoe on June 5th - 8th, 2018.

PNN is your newsletter. We need you to send us short notes about things you have done, or ideas that your group has found to work. Many older adults are in our Congregations. By the power of God, plus our faithfulness, and our warmth, we can reach out.

Thanks be to God!

Quentin Holmes / Marcola, OR



SAVE THE DATE

POAMN'S NATIONAL CONFERENCE

June 5-8, 2018

Zephyr Point Conference Center
Lake Tahoe, Nevada

“Savoring the Journey”
Acts 3:20a



Michele Hendrix
POAMN President

POAMN PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

[Editor's Note: Michele's e-mail to me on September 15th read, "Quentin, Sorry to be late with the President's article. Tomorrow morning at 6:00 am we will accompany a Mission Outreach Team from First Presbyterian Church San Antonio to Rockport, Texas to assist First Presbyterian Church of Rockport in Hurricane Harvey efforts. This is the area where Harvey entered Texas! On Wednesday and Thursday of this week I was in Houston to help coordinate relief efforts for three Houston congregations - Grace Presbyterian Church, Memorial Drive Presbyterian Church, and First Presbyterian Church."]

There are exciting opportunities ahead for every member of POAMN! POAMN recognizes the need to bring its message and offerings to regions of the country for those who are not able to attend a multi-day national conference. We are thus pleased to announce our first Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network Regional Conference to be held in Winston-Salem, NC on October 19, 2017 in collaboration with Highland Presbyterian Church Winston-Salem and Salem Presbytery. Our keynoter is Rev. Jill Crainshaw, Faculty, Wake Forest School of Divinity. The theme of this conference is *Celebrating God's Gift of Aging* and details can be found at www.poamn.org.

Then June 5-8, 2018 POAMN's National Conference will take place at Zephyr Point Camp and Conference Center on Lake Tahoe. There will be more information forthcoming about this exciting conference and details will be announced soon - be sure to hold the date!

On the POAMN website you will find a recent letter sent to Rev. Frank Clark Spencer, President, Board of Pensions. We were pleased to have it linked to our website with the information published in their recent issue of Board Connections. It outlines the history and ministry outreach of POAMN. Our goal is to reach out and encourage our former ARMSS colleagues and welcome them to POAMN.

This has been an unusually frantic month for me personally. My husband, Dale, and I have three children and seven grandchildren living in Houston, TX. Two of those families stayed high and dry. My youngest daughter and son-in-law from Houston were evacuated from their home on August 27th when waters from Hurricane Harvey came into their home. After weeks of "mucking", cleaning out, sorting, and throwing out, and finding lodging, they are temporarily settled.

Hurricane Harvey wreaked historic devastation and a path of destruction in its wake. Buildings, homes, and business are devastated. The people are tired, yet resilient and hopeful. I share this to encourage you to think about what you can do to help those whose lives were impacted.

Presbyterian Disaster Assistance is the emergency response and refugee program of our denomination, committed to the long-term journey of recovery of communities adversely affected by a crisis or catastrophic event. Please consider donating to Presbyterian Disaster Assistance or an organization of your choice. This is far from over. The process of rebuilding lives and business will go on for years following Hurricane Harvey.



STREET SCENE –
where Michele's Daughter lives in Houston, TX

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

The thing I hear the most from these organizations, churches, and business is – we need people/bodies! Please give prayerful consideration to the long-term needs. You may either donate or be one of the “bodies” that are needed to help with the recovery work. Let us all continue to undergird our brothers and sisters impacted by Hurricane Harvey in prayer. I will close with this – *Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good spirit lead me on level ground.* (Psalm 143:10)

In Christ,

Michele Hendrix

POAMN President

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MEMO FROM MEMBERSHIP



Linda Rauenbuehler
Membership Committee Chair

The Psalms Speak to Us

The theme of this edition of POAMN Network News is, *The Psalms Speak to Us*. As I peeked around online, I ran across a blog entry titled, “5 Psalms to Encourage People Who Care for an Aging Loved One,” by Jennica Stevens. Even though we may not be a caregiver in one sense of the word, we do still care for aging people. I decided to select one of the Bible verses mentioned to see how I can tie it into POAMN.

Psalm 94:18 – “*I said, ‘I am falling,’ but your constant love, O Lord, held me up. Whenever I am anxious and worried, you comfort me and make me glad.*”

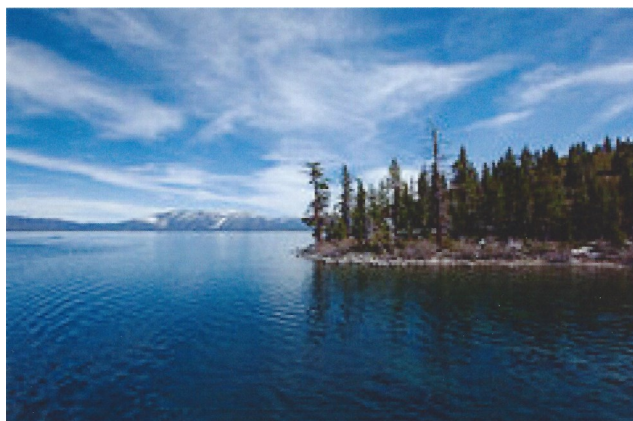
As God provides constant love to those who feel like they are falling, isn’t that also what we try to do with our seniors who are in declining health? The Lord holds them up whenever they are anxious and worried, just as He holds us, the caregivers, up when we are apprehensive. As people who love to work with seniors, don’t we also try to hold our seniors up when they are fearful? The Lord provides comfort and makes them feel glad, just as we attempt to provide comfort and bring joy to others.

Regional Conference in Winston-Salem

An exciting event is coming up quickly for POAMN. The first POAMN Regional Conference is Thursday, October 19, 2017, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. in Winston-Salem, NC. The theme is, *Celebrating God’s Gift of Aging*, and will be presented by the Rev. Jill Crainshaw from the faculty of Wake Forest School of Divinity. Now is the time to renew your membership and get registered for this one-day conference.

Annual Conference at Lake Tahoe

The 2018 Annual Conference will be June 5-8, 2018 at Zephyr Point on Lake Tahoe. I just returned last night from our Presbytery meeting at Zephyr Point. It was my first experience at this Presbyterian conference center and what a beautiful place to hold our next annual conference! I was graciously given a table to display POAMN information, answer questions and promote POAMN in any way that I can to our presbytery. Step-by-step, more people in our pres-



A View of Lake Tahoe

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

bytery are becoming aware of our wonderful organization.

Looking for Volunteers to serve on the Membership Committee

Since being on the Executive Committee as Membership Chair is new for me, I have much to learn. I need to surround myself with people to serve on the Membership Committee. So far, I have 3 wonderful, experienced people. If you have an interest in serving on this committee, please contact me at 702-558-7829 or LLrauenbuehler@cox.net.

Since the last newsletter, we have been blessed with 3 new individual members; 1 affiliate member; 1 new couple; and 2 organizational members. If you have not renewed your membership for 2017, please take this opportunity to do so. We are a 501(c)(3) organization and you may also donate to POAMN.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Rauenbuehler

POAMN Membership Chair

7th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AGEING AND SPIRITUALITY (Part 2)

Quentin A. Holmes, Editor POAMN Network News

The 7th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality was held at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois, on Sunday, June 4th – Wednesday, June 7th. The setting was the campus of a large Lutheran university in a lovely suburb on the west side of Chicago. The theme of the conference was, *Transition and Transcendence: Transforming Aging Through Spirituality*. This article is the second in a two-part series that seeks to share the spirit of this informative and uplifting conference.

For years, POAMN has held a national conference for folks from all across the USA with a passion for working with older adults. This is the first time POAMN has helped sponsor an International Conference. Many of the 200 attendees were from the USA. However, attendees also came from England, Scotland, Germany, South Africa, and Australia. Faith-wise, there were Presbyterians, Lutherans, Methodists,



Werner Auditorium at Concordia University

Catholics, Episcopalians, and members of the Jewish faith. A number described themselves as “spiritual but not religious,” while several others were Mystics.



Concordia Bard, Prof. Bob Atchley

Every morning the conference began with Professor Robert Atchley playing his acoustic guitar and singing some of the songs he has written during his lifetime as a musician. Before starting a performance Bob Atchley always recalls the guiding words of a dear friend:

*You're not an artist, you are in the service business.
Your job is to connect with the people out in front of
you and service them."*

(Livingston Taylor/ Lyons, Colorado)

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

One particularly catchy song written by Bob Atchley was titled, *What Mama Said To Me*. After each verse described a challenging situation in his life, the audience joined in on the refrain – “Relax, take a deep deep breath and smile, smile, smile.”

On Tuesday morning, Eboni Green (Ph.D., RN) led a deeply touching experiential workshop entitled, *Cultivating Life Enhancing Spirituality: A Caregiver's Perspective*. During our lives each of us will experience the pain of losing someone we love. Being a caregiver increases the likelihood that we will experience feelings of loss long after he or she is gone. Eboni pointed out that just as the landscape of the earth is forever changed by the death of a life-giving tree, our own spiritual landscape is irreversibly changed by the loss of a loved one.

She then shared with us the losses in her own life: Grandma Roberts(2002), Aunt Linda(2007), Gran(2010), Doris(2011), Aunt Cynthia(2012), Kaye Crawford(2013), Krissy Crawford (2013), Johnny Crawford(2014), Rochelle(2015), and Ordell Jordan(2016).

Eboni defined Spirituality Wellness as, “Active engagement in activities that enhance the opportunity for self-actualization.” Our Spiritual Wellness is influenced by the interplay among four major components:

- **Spirituality** – Simply being;
- **Spirituality Stress** – A general questioning of your faith or belief system which may occur anytime but is generally more common after a loss;
- **Spirituality Disruption** – A disruption in your beliefs regarding the meaning and purpose of life, generally following the loss of someone you love;
- **Complicated Spiritual Grief** – Unsettling feelings and spiritual questioning combined with prolonged and intense sadness.



Eboni Green, PhD., RN

After discussing each factor and their relationship to each other, Eboni had us do an exercise wherein each of us took our own Mental Pilgrimage. *“Close your eyes for just a moment, if you will, and imagine that you are traveling to a place of spiritual or religious significance that is tucked away in a remote region thousands of miles away. The voyage is arduous, but when you finally arrive at your destination, the scenery is more magnificent than you visualized, your soul vibrates, and you are revitalized. You take the opportunity to acknowledge that having made it to such a divine location is a testament to your inner strength. You are refreshed! Now open your eyes. You have just taken a mental pilgrimage.”*

Losing a loved one changes your life forever, and though you will likely not get over your sadness, it is possible to learn to cope. The strain of loss often leads to a strengthening of your faith or results in the questioning of your faith, or your loss may simply confirm what you believe.

On Wednesday afternoon, Jan McGilliard and Mary Ann Stripling jointly led an experiential workshop entitled, *Generations of Faith: Role of Faith Communities in Nurturing Spiritual Abundance Across Generations*. Jan McGilliard has been actively involved in Older Adult Ministry since the 1980's and shares her insights whenever she gives a presentation. As all ages gather in faith communities on a regular basis, they have a unique opportunity to foster relationships across generations. As the workshop began the leaders asked partic-

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Participants to state their name and hometown, and say what they hoped to take away from this afternoon's workshop.

Not surprisingly, the needs of Older Adults and the needs of children dovetail:

Needs of Older Adults

To nurture
To teach
To have a successful life review
To share cultural mores
To communicate positive values
To leave a legacy

Needs of Children

To be nurtured
To be taught
To learn from and about the past
To have a cultural identity
To have positive role models
To connect to preceding generations

Then a brief review was given of the strengths and key characteristics of the different generations:

Traditionalists (age 71+), born 1925-1945

Baby Boomers (ages 52-70), born 1946-1964

Generation X (ages 40-51), born 1967-1976

Generation Y/Millennials (up to age 39), born 1977-1995,

and each generation's engagement and motivation factors were described.

The majority of their workshop focused on suggested activities that could involve both older adults and children in Mission & Outreach, Education/Study, Fellowship, and in Worship. Emphasis was placed on activities in each of these areas that would nurture spiritual abundance for older adults and for children. As often happens when an audience is keenly interested, the allotted time ran out all too soon!

Late Tuesday afternoon, Rev. Dr. William Randolph from the United Methodist Church led an experiential workshop entitled, *Ageing Transformation: How Boomers Will Change Everything We Know About Ageing*. A great amount is still being learned about the Baby Boomer Generation. Growing up, they questioned their parents and were distrustful of existing authorities. Now that they are the ones in the positions of authority, they are questioning what to do with it! Rev. William Randolph shared insights from the recently-held "Boomerstock" - a 4-day colloquium sponsored by the Aging and Older Adult Ministries section of Discipleship Ministries (formerly General Board of Discipleship) of the United Methodist Church. The central question which needs to be answered is this, "What ways will the Boomer Culture change ageing, and what ways will ageing change Boomer Culture?" Rev. Randolph is widely regarded as one of the world's experts on the Baby Boomer Generation/Culture. The conference was fortunate to have him as a workshop leader because his insights are quite helpful. However, as Rev. Randolph carefully reminded us, this whole subject is changing/transforming right before our eyes as the weeks and months flow past.

The 7th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality closed Wednesday afternoon with a wrap-up followed by a worship service. The closing service was a form of prayer modeled after the Taizé community founded in the 1940s by Br. Roger in Taizé, France. The simple service consisted of chants, scripture, a service of light, an extended period of silence concluding with prayers for the world voiced by individual worshipers.

Thanks go to Lydia Manning, PhD, from Concordia University and to Annie Tarbuton from POAMN for all of their work in organizing this informative and uplifting International Conference.



Jan McGilliard



Rev. Dr. William Randolph

RETIRED MINISTERS, SPOUSES OR SURVIVORS CORNER

By Rev. Dennis Haines, HR

[Editor's NOTE: As of 31 December 2016, the Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors (ARMSS) dissolved and past ARMSS members are encouraged to join POAMN. Rev. Dennis Haines now serves retired ministers, spouses and survivors as a member of POAMN.]



Rev. Dennis Haines – at the POAMN Booth in Chicago during the 7th International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality

For many years in the past, my wife, Donna, and I were busy making plans to attend the ARMSS/POAMN Conferences. Last year in Richmond, VA, was the 20-year anniversary of Association of Retired Ministers, Their Spouses or Survivors (ARMSS) and the last conference when we were involved in the planning process. ARMSS has now officially dissolved and past ARMSS members are encouraged to join POAMN. The future is bright as POAMN reaches out in ministry to all older adults, including retired clergy, their spouses and their survivors. Donna and I, as well as many others who were active in ARMSS, will cherish the memories of the time spent in ARMSS.

One of my favorite couples was Ken and Betty Smith. Many of you are aware that Rev. Kenneth W. Smith, HR, age 90, recently died and is now with His Lord. During his ministry he served in Alaska and Hawaii. I bought one of his books back in 2009, *Inupiat Parables*, where he shares short stories from his Alaskan Ministry.

Ken served ARMSS well as Governing Body Network Chair, attempting to keep presbyteries aware of the work of ARMSS. His personal ministry, which he began in 2009, was to write a personal note to every retired clergy to let them know the work of ARMSS and that their own service to the church was appreciated. In the latter years of ARMSS, Ken served as Treasurer. I will always remember Ken for his big smile, welcoming embrace and generous spirit. While I will not see Ken again in this life, I will always remember him and his wife, Betty. Our sincere sympathy goes out to this wonderful woman who is now left without her husband.

I know that Ken loved ARMSS and supported it generously. I would encourage anyone who wants to remember Ken to send a gift to the John Rhea Scholarship Fund that assists retired clergy, spouses and survivors to attend POAMN Conferences. Contributions to the John Rhea Scholarship Fund in memory of Ken can be made out to POAMN, and sent to Lynne Trout, Treasurer, 410 Richard Avenue, Delanco, NJ 08075. Be sure to write in the Memo line "John Rhea Scholarship in memory of Ken Smith".

As I have stressed before, all retired clergy, spouses and survivors should be joining POAMN so as to continue the ministry of ARMSS. I am sure that Ken Smith would be supporting that idea and would rejoice if we all joined POAMN!!

In Christ We Serve,
Rev. Dr. Dennis J. Haines

*This is the day the LORD has made,
let us rejoice and be glad in it.*

- Psalm 118:24

THE PSALMS SPEAK TO US

by Quentin A. Holmes

Most of us have a favorite Psalm, or several. The Psalms are unique in providing expressions for the ups and downs of everyday life. The wisdom in these ancient texts can meet us right where we currently are: highs, lows, joys, sorrows, hopes, fears – the Psalmist has been there. During good times, and during seemingly impossible times, the psalmist speaks from his innermost being. When our feelings are far too deep to be expressed in our own words, the Psalms are there for us.

Many older adults are reluctant to talk about the challenges they are experiencing – dislocation, marginalization, search for identity, and the redirection of their lives. Some older adults, who have been surrounded by family and friends in all other transitions and crisis times, find that they must face perhaps the most difficult phase of their lives alone. The psalms are beloved because they speak to us and give voice to our innermost thoughts. This article will consider three well-known examples that illustrate the breadth and depth the psalms bring into our personal spiritual lives.

o Life's Ups and Downs - Psalm 27 (see insert)

Being a believer is no guarantee that bad things will never happen to you. Indeed, the wicked often prosper at the expense of good people. However, God is always present with us – both through the ups and through the downs.

*"For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;"*
(Psalm 27:5a)

And,

*"I believe that I shall see
the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living!"*
(Psalm 27:13)

PSALM 27 – A Psalm of David

27 The LORD is my light and
my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of
my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

2 When evildoers assail me,
uttering slanders against me,
my adversaries and foes,
they shall stumble and fall.

3 Though a host encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war arise against me,
yet I will be confident.

4 One thing I have asked of the
LORD,
that I may dwell in the house of
the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.

5 For he will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble;
he will conceal me under the cover
of his tent,
he will set me high upon a rock.

6 And now my head shall be lifted
up above my enemies round
about me;
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to
the LORD.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer
me!

8 Thou hast said, "Seek ye my
face."
My heart says to thee,
"Thy face LORD, do I seek."

9 Hide not thy face from me.

Turn not thy servant away in an-
ger,
thou who has been my help.
Cast me not off, forsake me not,
O God of my salvation!

10 For my father and my mother
have forsaken me,
but the LORD will take me up.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD;
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

12 Give me not up to the will of my
adversaries;
for false witnesses have risen
against me,
and they breathe out violence.

13 I believe that I shall see the good-
ness of the LORD
in the land of the living!

14 Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart
take courage;
yea, wait for the LORD.

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

o The World has Changed - Psalm 137 (see insert)

Through study of selected Psalms, older adults are able to feel that special link between the issues addressed by these ancient hymn writers and those that are a part of the everyday life of older adults today.

Psalm 137 was written after the fall of Jerusalem in 487 BC and before the restoration of the temple in 515 BC. This was the second deportation to Babylon, when King Nebuchadnezzar finally razed Jerusalem to the ground after a brief respite and intrigue-filled ten years. The people speaking in Psalm 137 were in exile; they had been forced to leave their homeland and were now grieving over their losses while sitting on the banks of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The exile had extraordinary faith repercussions. Prior to this event the people of Israel were firmly convinced that:

- Their land was God-given;
- A land of promise and covenant;
- Their King was God's representative, a sign of divine blessing;
- Their temple, central to Jerusalem, was God's dwelling place;
- Whatever happened, the temple – the dwelling place of the Holy One of Israel – would stand.

Now, they had either seen or heard of the devastation of the temple, and their grief was deep and extremely painful.

For most of our lives many of us see ourselves as inviolable. A personal tragedy, death, illness, or war may touch some of us in younger years. But it is only in our later years that we begin to realize that this invincible city – our Zion, ourselves – is vulnerable.

PSALM 137

137 By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.

² On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.

³ For there our captors
required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of
Zion!"

⁴ How shall we sing the LORD's
song
in a foreign land?

⁵ If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither!

⁶ Let my tongue cleave to the roof
of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy!

⁷ Remember, O LORD, against the
Edomites
the day of Jerusalem,
how they said, "Rase it, rase it!
Down to its foundations!"

⁸ O daughter of Babylon, you devastator!

Happy shall be he who requites
you
with what you have done to
us!

⁹ Happy shall be he who takes your
little ones
and dashes them against the
rock!

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

o All Will Be Well - Psalm 23 (see insert)

Almost everyone knows the 23rd Psalm by heart. One pictures King David writing this as an older adult recalling his life story. He remembered the days of being a shepherd of sheep, providing green pastures where they could graze and find food, and quiet waters where they could drink. He led the sheep in right paths and protected them from wild animals with his staff. King David also remembered times when he was host to travelers in the desert and offered them hospitality and protection. A table was prepared with food, oil for healing wounds, and they were safe from enemies. To know such shepherd-host was to know security.

As Christians, we often think of God as The Good Shepherd. Everything that the young David had been to the sheep that were entrusted to his care, God is to us on a much larger scale.

In life, and in death, all shall be well.

*“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me all the days of my life; and I shall
dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”*

(Psalm 23:6)

Joyous times or sad times, the wisdom in these ancient texts can meet us right where we currently are. When our feelings are far too deep to be expressed in our own words, the Psalms are there for us.

PSALM 23 — A Psalm of David

- 23** The LORD is my shepherd,
I shall not want;
² He makes me to lie down in green
pastures.
He leads beside still waters;
³ he restores my soul.
He leads me in the paths of righteous-
ness
for his name's sake.
- ⁴ Even though I walk through the
valley of the shadow of
death,
I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff,
they comfort me.
- ⁵ Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
- ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the
LORD for ever.

LEARNING TO AGE

By Darlene Shepherd/ Oskloosa, Iowa

[Editor's NOTE: Darlene Shepherd was one of the key leaders in POAMN when I first attended an annual conference way back in 2008. Darlene's vision, wisdom, and tireless efforts played an important role in helping lay the groundwork for the POAMN that we know today. Darlene received the 2014 POAMN Legacy Award for her lifetime of service with, to, and for older adults.]

I just finished reading the POAMN newsletter, and I realize I have really distanced myself from many areas. After reading it, then going for a walk, I feel there is another side to aging that might be explored.

One day sitting in my home, I said to myself – I just can't do this any longer.

Within about a month, my home was sold and I moved to an apartment-type living, with everyone over 65 or disabled in some fashion. It is the smartest thing for me to do. No more concerns over what type of new roof, etc. etc. There are 35 people here, on three floors. We have an elevator, open-air small porches, community room,

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

laundry facilities, in-house mail delivery and garbage pick-up. The building was built 40 years ago, so doesn't have the small patios that are outside each room like the newer buildings. At that time, if they built two bedrooms with each unit, they would have to rent to families. (HUD housing). While children around might seem an advantage, they also bring "kids, cats, cars and cops."

Some people here rarely venture out of their rooms. Others use the community room for games and puzzles every day, along with coffee times, birthday recognitions, and meals, including every Sunday at 1 p.m. We take food for just ourselves, whatever we would have eaten alone in our room. Coffee times and the Sunday 'meal' usually last an hour and a half. We have our personal lock on our door, plus the outside doors are locked about 7 p.m.

Rent is extremely reasonable, even for we who pay full price; there are no utilities paid, there is a TV tower that supplies limited TV at no cost, and a bus stop just at the end of the sidewalk. There are fast-food places and grocery stores within a couple of blocks. A grocery store/pharmacy (Hy-Vee) will deliver meds, and we can call in groceries that are delivered for \$5.00. If needed, the delivery person will put the food away.

I considered town-house or condo. In each, when the front door is closed and locked, you are by yourself, with no diversions except self-centered ones such as TV or knitting, etc. I am a bit of an introvert and could have stayed in my home, and now my room, for a few days without talking to anyone. Here, I go down to get my mail and talk to people in the halls. I purposely go to the community room most nights and visit with others until 9 or 9:30, as opposed to dozing in front of the TV.

I often walk the halls for varying lengths of time or until my legs are tired. In my home, I would be walking from just one room to another.

If needed, therapists come here as directed/needed. I have good friends of people I would never have known, from my own home.

This kind of relays the other side of staying independent as long as possible. In 40+ years of nursing, about half of which was in a nursing facility, we admitted people whose family had enabled them to stay in their own home as long as possible. Even with the best intentions of family, this can result in contracture, limited mobility, poor hydration, and the need for more specialized observation for daily needs.

In one's own home, with the best of care, there is someone in the home for a given number of hours each day. That leaves quite a bit of time with no one around to provide any stimulation.

For myself, and for my overall health, being in a multiple-living situation is far healthier long-term than being in my own home. One has to scale down considerably, which I've done. And I still have more than I need. It had to be scaled down sooner or later, and this way I had control on what to keep and what to relinquish to others.

For what it's worth – it is a type of living that is not considered.

Blending the two groups seems to be a healthy, growing adventure. We look for miracles – sometimes forgetting that God's answer is always the miracle.

Peace to you and yours.

Faith is the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.

- Martin Luther King, Jr

‘LIVING, DYING, RISING’ AT 1001 New Worshiping Communities National Gathering

By Paul Seebeck/Presbyterian News Service

[Worshipping Communities](#) August 11, 2017

Learning to let go of a dying spouse: Keynote speaker and preacher at closing worship chooses not to be on a ‘death watch’

ST. PETE BEACH, FLORIDA — “Love you.”

These were the last words the Rev. Aisha Brooks-Lytle heard her husband speak as she was preparing to go to New Hampshire for a vacation and before coming here to speak at “Living, Dying, Rising,” The 1001 New Worshiping Communities national gathering.

Carl hadn’t spoken to her in months. He suffers from a rare degenerative neurological disease. Inherited from his father, Spinocerebellar Ataxia 7 goes “quadruple speed” in the second generation, taking away his ability to verbally process things mentally. Physically, he has little use of his body. He’s been in rapid decline over the last five years and has been in a nursing home since July 2016. “He told me I had to put him in there,” she said softly. “That was rough.”

Brooks-Lytle spoke during Thursday’s plenary on prayer — how powerful and effective it is, how the Spirit helps us when we are weak, praying for us with sighs too deep for words. Later in the afternoon she preached on “Rising,” about how Jesus showed up when the disciples were going through complicated grief.

Admitting she “can’t stand it” when people offer simplistic responses to things she knows are complex, she told those gathered she knows, “Jesus is always ready to give peace and power.” The question is, “Are we ready to receive it?”

“Just relax, God’s got this,” she kept saying.

In 1997, Brooks-Lytle was finishing up a jazz vocal performance degree at Temple University. It’s where she met her husband, a jazz guitar major. They played in the band and even put out a CD together. That year her dad died from cancer. She took a week off to grieve and at the request of a friend back home in Philadelphia, went on a racial reconciliation trip to Jackson, Mississippi. It was the first time she had attended a mission trip with Presbyterians. “Right before I went on the trip they told me that Wayne Presbyterian Church was going to have a job opening in youth ministry, that I should apply for it,” said Brooks-Lytle. “I only knew this through a woman who did youth ministry there at the time.”

Brooks-Lytle became a Presbyterian in 1998, going to work at Wayne as their middle school director. After working there four years she went to Princeton Theological Seminary. Graduating in 2005, she served churches in New Jersey and Pennsylvania — all while her husband’s condition was worsening.



Aisha Brooks-Lytle and Michael Gerhling offer affirmation and blessing to those gathered during closing worship at ‘Living, Dying, Rising,’ the national 1001 New Worshiping Communities gathering. (Photo by Paul Seebeck)

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

In 2013, Wayne Presbyterian was looking for a “bridge pastor” — one who could help lead their mission efforts. They were continuing to deepen a relationship with New Spirit Community Church, an urban church in southwest Philadelphia, thirteen miles from Wayne. Wayne wanted to make a difference in the disparity between their two faith communities by sharing resources, time, energy, love and prayer. Presbyterians closest to Brook-Lytle encouraged her to apply for the job.

She was called to the position and came home to Wayne Presbyterian as their mission pastor. She is also organizing pastor of The Common Place, which is a blend of two worshipping communities. They work together with partners to create safe space — doing this together by offering faith, education and social service support in southwest Philadelphia.

Long before going into the nursing home, Carl told Aisha two things. First, he spoke about how “she wouldn’t even be a Presbyterian” if her daddy hadn’t died the way he did. “You probably wouldn’t have even gone on that trip,” he said. “Secondly, ask yourself if I wasn’t sick, would you have come back home to Wayne? You might have not had the opportunity to start The Common Place.”

She’s thought about those words often, especially now with the disease taking away his voice. “Honestly,” she said, “The Common Place is a statement of grace in my life as Carl is declining and will be in the nearer presence of God. I decided last year that I was going to choose to live and not do a death watch. It’s why I said “yes” to coming here.”

Brooks-Lytle also went to Scotland, where she visited the 1,200-year-old Abby in Iona. As light was coming through the window, a choir was singing and she began to pray, “Lord I lay down the first half of my life to you; whatever you want, whatever is next, I’m thankful for what the first half of my life has been.”

She says it was another turning point for her. A deepening recognition that sometimes, “you just have to pull the plug, whether it’s sin, or old habits, or watching a spouse dying, you have to let go.”

Aisha and Carl are 42 and they’ve been married 18 years. Counting the time they dated, they’ve been together nearly half of their lives. Aisha lives with their 11-year-old son and 62-year-old mother. She visits Carl once a week. The community of faith she belongs to visits him often, as does the hospice staff, family and friends. They all write in a notebook to remember like Aisha did on the weekend of July 22.

“The first words my husband has spoken to me in months, ‘Love you.’”

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

“Celebrating God’s Gift of Aging”

Psalm 92:13-14 (NRSV): “In old age, [the righteous] still produce fruit; they are always green and full of sap, showing that the Lord is upright; God is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in God.”

October 19th, 2017

Highland PC, Winston Salem

8:30 – 2:45 pm

Registration available at www.salempresbytery.org

If you need any assistance contact Dianna Wright at dwright@salempresbytery.org
or call 336.755.3393, Ext. 126

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Membership fees for 2017 are now being accepted. Thank you to those that have joined for 2017!

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(continued on page 16)

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A 501(c)3 organization
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ISSUE 48	POAMN MEMBERSHIP CONTINUED	PAGE 16
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