

Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

ISSUE 55

2019 SPRING

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Good Morning from Oregon,

The theme of this issue of *PNN* is, *Older Adult Ministry in a Changing Era*. Major demographic changes are taking place in our society. This provides both challenges and opportunities for today's churches. Several articles in this issue of *PNN* share insights on some of the opportunities that folks are addressing:

- MEMO from Membership by Linda Rauenbuehler
- NEXT Church Gathering by Quentin Holmes
- A Renewed Approach to Aging: Wise Eyes - Fresh Eyes by Michele Hendrix
- Addressing the Challenges of Aging Well in a Remote Location by Lynnette Wood

Other articles in this issue include:

- We Just Wanted to Serve Our Neighbors A Bowl of Soup! by Carrie Macaluso
- A Contemplative Article by Wesley Lachman

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 A. Holmes

Quentin Holmes / Marcola, OR



JANE and QUENTIN HOLMES

POAMN NATIONAL CONFERENCE

***Our Calling with the Generations:
Intergenerational Engagement***

One generation shall praise Thy works to another and shall declare Thy mighty acts.

- Psalm 145:4

October 15-18, 2019

Laws Lodge, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

Watch for more details & registration to open soon at www.poamn.org





Michele Hendrix
POAMN President

POAMN PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

We hope you are excited about this spring weather and the winter thaw! It is a good thing to have that unpredictable winter behind us – in most parts of the country! Spring Fever is in the air as we see the first robins and redbirds up north, and the Texas bluebonnets and wildflowers down south. We hope in a similar way you are getting **POAMN Fever!** While Spring is in the air and registration is open, take time to register for our fabulous 2019 POAMN Regional Conference “*Engaging in Aging in Today’s World*,” on May 22, 2019 at St. Leo Abbey, St. Leo, Florida in collaboration with ALOA – The Association of Lutheran Older Adults, with keynote leader Rev. Ray Jones, III. We have a great local leadership team from both organizations led by POAMN members, Revs. Lynn and Mike Fonfara. Register online on the Association Events page at www.poamn.org.

In most mainline churches, 70% of the membership is over 65 years old. In PCUSA the median age is 65. Because this constitutes a major change in our society, denominations, and congregations we hope this *PNN* newsletter helps you to gain inspiration that will help you apply the information, tools, resources, and models to enhance and encourage your ministry with Older Adults. We want to encourage you to use your 2019 Older Adult Ministries Planning Guide as you plan for your Older Adult Sunday Celebration on May 5, 2019 – a date designated Older Adult Sunday by PCUSA but can be offered at any time. For additional resources for planning check out other archived planning guide copies on our POAMN website.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the 2019 POAMN National Conference held on the campus of Louisville Seminary, “*Our Calling with the Generations: Intergenerational Engagement*,” on October 15–18, 2019 in Louisville, KY. Our keynote presenters are Rev. Diane Moffett, President and Executive Director of Presbyterian Mission Agency, and Rev. Jason Santos, Presbyterian Mission Agency Coordinator for Christian Formation. POAMN member Alan Winkenhof and the local ground team in Louisville, KY have assisted greatly in planning a fantastic 2019 National Conference. We have an exciting lineup of presenters, workshops, and worship leaders for this event. Watch for registration coming soon online on the POAMN website.

I would like to take the opportunity to remind you to renew your membership if you have not done so already. While renewing your membership please consider making a gift membership for your church or presbytery. This will encourage our churches and presbyteries to think about the importance of ministry with older adults. As we continue to move our POAMN Regional Conferences around the country, in collaboration with presbyteries and congregations, we have a list of presbyteries and churches who served as host sites for our 2017 and 2018 Regional Conferences with over 100 attendees. There is now a growing list of churches and presbyteries that wish to host a regional conference in their areas. Let us know if you have an interest in hosting a POAMN Regional Conference. We encourage you to share this newsletter with your presbytery, congregation, or others to help get the word out about these opportunities.

Your POAMN Executive Committee realizes and remembers the privilege of serving our members and this organization. We recognize that we have a special responsibility to our membership, ecumenical partners, and covenant partners. We take our roles and responsibilities seriously in fulfilling the mission of this organization as we meet our goals and move forward into a new era. We look forward to our partnership and collaboration with Presbyterian Mission Agency Christian Formation. We are pleased to be one of the five “Age and Stage” Covenant Partners recognizing the mutual support for ministry and good relationships in collaboration with Christian Formation. POAMN endeavors to develop Older Adult Ministry with Intergenerational Engagement in collaboration among the five organizations, APCE – Association Presbyterian Christian Educators, PYWA – Presbyterian Youth Workers Association, PCCCA – Presbyterian Camp and Conference Centers Association, UKIRK – Presbyterian Campus Ministries, and POAMN – Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network. We celebrate the many ways this collaboration can work together to inspire, equip, and connect the generations in mission and ministry.

Until next time,

Michele Hendrix



Linda Rauenbuehler
Membership Committee Chair

MEMO FROM MEMBERSHIP

Older Adult Ministry in a Changing Era

The theme of this Spring Issue of POAMN Network News is “Older Adult Ministry in a Changing Era”. I wasn’t exactly sure what was meant by “changing era” or what angle I wanted to approach this topic. Does it mean that the baby boomers are becoming older adults and we need to do things that are a little more active? Does “changing era” mean moving more toward intergenerational ministry which an important direction in which POAMN is moving?

I decided to google the key words (older, adult, ministry, changing, era) and came up with a very interesting and, I think, appropriate article from a publication called “Sojourners”. It was titled “Have Churches Abandoned the Elderly?” by Stephen Mattson. Although it was written in 2013, it still is relevant today as churches seem to mainly do their marketing toward the young. The article discusses how churches, in trying to stay up-to-date, can undervalue the elderly. Fast paced technology such as social media, the internet, and smartphones are not always something our older members have any interest in keeping up with. Many of our elderly prefer face-to-face conversations, handwritten letters and land-line phones. For me, face-to-face conversations and handwritten notes are important components in reaching out to the elderly in our church. Churches also need to be willing to take steps to accommodate aging members who are struggling with deteriorating physical abilities. Does your church have space for wheelchairs or hearing devices for those with hearing loss or large print for those with poor eyesight?

Although catering to the younger generation is important, we also need to honor the elderly in our midst in ways in which they are comfortable. Jesus reached out to ALL people, wherever they were and no matter their age or station in life. We need to do likewise.

Membership Renewal for 2019

If you haven’t renewed your membership for 2019, please do so now. Information can be found at the end of this newsletter or at www.poamn.org.

Upcoming Conferences

The regional conference in the Tampa, Florida area is coming up very soon on May 22, 2019.

Please mark your calendar for the POAMN National Conference on October 15-18, 2019 in Louisville, Kentucky. Information on both upcoming conferences can be found at www.poamn.org.

Certificate of Older Adult Ministry

POAMN has partnered with Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia to earn a Certificate of Older Adult Ministry. I have finished the 4 classes and am working on my final project. I hope you will look into this wonderful opportunity. Information can be found by googling Columbia Theological Seminary and it is under Lifelong Learning.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Rauenbuehler

POAMN Membership Chair

*Everybody needs beauty as well as bread.
places to pray in and play in where nature may heal
and give strength to the body and soul.*

(John Muir)

NEXT CHURCH 2019 NATIONAL GATHERING IN SEATTLE, WA

WOVEN TOGETHER: Stories of Dissonance, Sacrifice, and Liberation

Seattle, Washington March 10th-13th, 2019

“Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19)

More than 600 people attended the 2019 NEXT Church National Gathering in Seattle, WA. Next Church had its origin in a group of ministers who got together informally during a PC(USA) General Assembly. Rather than simply lament the steady decline in church membership and financial support over the last few decades, they took up the task of trying to discern, and be an active part of, where God was leading the church in these changing times. The goals of NEXT Church are:

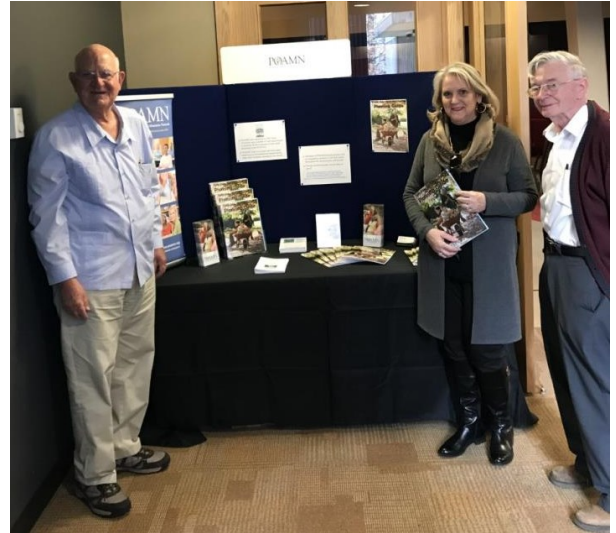
- Support and Equip Congregations;
- Develop Leaders;
- Strengthen Connections across the Denomination.

Older Adult Ministry is a vital part of what the church is becoming as God is transforming us. How appropriate that both POAMN and Presbyterian Association of Homes and Services for the Aging (PAHSA) had exhibit tables at this National Gathering.

The 2019 National Gathering was held at First Presbyterian Church in downtown Seattle. First Presbyterian is an extreme example of the sort of challenge that a number of Presbyterian congregations face today. Founded in 1869, this church was once a congregation of over 7,000 members with 100 ruling elders on its Session. Today, First Presbyterian/Seattle has fewer than 100 active members. Working closely with Seattle Presbytery it has spent the last 5 years wrestling with the difficult process of re-imagining its ministry to Seattle.

About 50% of this year's Next Church attendees were active ministers; some 22% were active ruling elders. For about a third of us, this was our first Gathering. We “first-timers” were invited to a Welcome and Orientation with NEXT Church President, Rev. Shavon Starling-Lewis and Vice-President, Rev. Adam Fronczek. The individuals seated at our round table were: a woman minister from a suburb of Washington, DC who has served as an active pastor for more than 30 years; a middle-aged woman from Capital Presbytery in Maryland who is being ordained as a minister in June; A woman minister and a staff member from a large church in downtown Albuquerque, NM; a ruling elder from John Knox Presbyterian Church, Normandy Park, WA; ruling elder Jane Holmes and Yours Truly from Oregon; and Rev. Adam Fronczek from Cincinnati, OH. People from far and near!

Opening worship was both stunning and inspiring. The worship leaders included people of African-American, Korean-American, and Asian-American ethnicity. The Old Testament scripture lesson was read by a man of African-American descent. Scripture was from the book of Ruth – Ruth and Naomi were woven together in a



POAMN Table at NEXT Church Gathering
Bill Young, POAMN President Michele Hendrix,
& Quentin Holmes



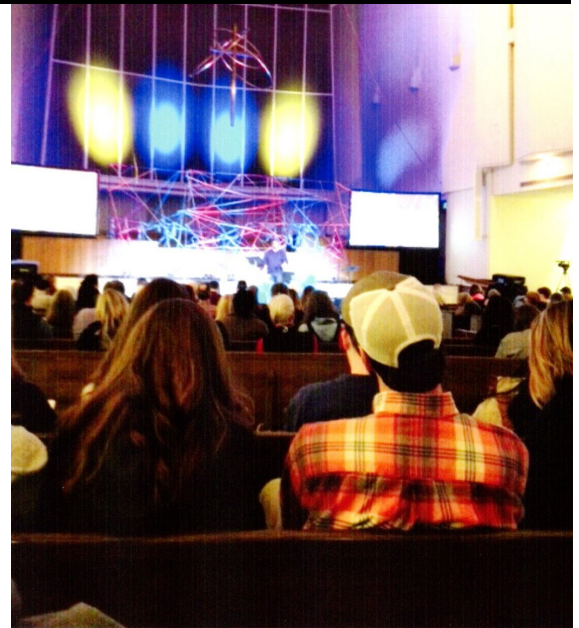
PAHSA Table at NEXT Church Gathering
Rev. Cindy Ray/PAHSA

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season of despair and displacement. Environmental trauma, poverty, forced migration, food insecurity, personal vulnerability, and power differentials continue to shape our shared human experience now as it did then. God interlaced the threads of Ruth's and Naomi's individual stories. Through God's weaving, these women learned mutual sacrifice, found healing community, and shared liberation. Our singing was led by a singer/guitarist of Korean-American descent accompanied by a cellist. Hymns were sung not only in English, but also in Spanish and in Korean. The sermon was given by a minister of Asian-American descent. Opening worship set a tone of inclusion and listening to the life experiences of others.

In addition to excellent talks by Keynote Speaker Tali Hairston on Monday morning (*"Transformation in This Work Called Reconciliation"*) and by Keynote Speaker Jennifer Harvey on Wednesday morning (*"Who Are My People?"*), several different "personal faith journey" testimonies were shared during the gathering.



Opening Worship at NEXT Church Gathering



Corey Greaves/Mending Wings

On Tuesday morning, Corey Greaves of Mending Wings – a nonprofit, Native American Youth Ministry – shared his faith journey with us. A Native American of the Yakima Tribe, he accepted Yeshua, who died on the cross, into his heart at age 7, and then had to endure disdain for his native culture and spiritual practices from those in authority around him as he grew up into adulthood. Today, he helps run a program entitled Students Learning About Missions (SLAM), wherein youth groups, college students, and families can come as learners and listeners for a week-long camp on the 1.2 million-acre Yakima Indian Reservation in South Central Washington State. SLAM is a locally led, cross-cultural mission trip experience. Attendees learn how to shoot a bow & arrow, chant Native American songs, and perform community service to help restore the land. Wow, Corey's talk was very informative, reconciliatory, and inspiring!

Workshops at this gathering were typically one-and-a-half hours in duration and were shared by two different leaders. On Tuesday afternoon, POAMN President Michele Hendrix gave a workshop in conjunction with Rev. David Norse-Thomas of Maryland Presbyterian Church. More than 29 people attended this particular workshop, and an electronic copy of Michele's viewgraphs and David's viewgraphs were e-mailed directly to each attendee afterwards.

Michele's talk was entitled, *"Interwoven Generations: Our Shared Calling."* Michele described the current demographics in PC(USA) and noted that each day some 10,000 people in the USA reach the age of 65 years. In pictures and in words, Michele then shared ideas, information, and resources for: Balancing the Need for Pastoral Care, Varying Abilities, Being Intentionally Intergenerational and Missionally Focused.

David's talk was entitled, *"Intergenerational Ministry Utilizing Community Organizing."* Two years ago,

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Rev. David Norse-Thomas, who describes himself as an openly-gay millennial, accepted a call to Maryland Presbyterian Church (MPC). MPC is congregation of about 100 members that was becoming smaller and smaller with each passing year. The challenge he took on was to help the congregation discover where God was calling them. Succeed or fail, the timeline was five years – period - for that is when their endowment funds would run out! David shared with us a make-believe situation that has fueled their approach to re-inventing a small, aging congregation set in a busy urban surround.

THE MIRACLE QUESTION *“Imagine a miracle happened during the week and all your dreams for MPC came true, and we were the community God is dreaming of us being. All the difficulties we’re facing, are gone. But the miracle happens while we’re away, so we don’t have any idea what has happened. Imagine that you’re walking into worship on Sunday. What would be the first thing you would notice that would make you realize, ‘Wow! Something amazing has happened.’?”*

In pictures and in words, David shared with us some of the ideas Maryland Presbyterian Church has tried successfully:

- Children & Families in Worship;
- Secret Worshipers & Lots of Coffee;
- Hearing the Story of Every Visitor;
- Homecoming Sunday;
- A Covenant Community;
- The Prayground.



Rev. David Norse-Thomas

Each local congregation is a unique situation. However, near the end of his talk, Rev. Norse-Thomas offered the following useful questions for congregations who are also seeking to discern where God is calling them:

Who should you be developing as leaders of all generations?

What are the spiritual needs of your older adults that intersect with children and families?

When have you seen belonging taking root?

How can your congregants’ questions, doubts, and experiences lead to action?

Where can you cross lines of difference to practice living into the Beloved Community

There is no guarantee of what the future will bring to Maryland Presbyterian Church, but Rev. David Norse-Thomas and his husband are looking forward to adopting their first child. That seems to be a harbinger of unusual and exciting things to come. God is clearly “doing a new thing” with Maryland Presbyterian Church.

WE JUST WANTED TO SERVE OUR NEIGHBORS A BOWL OF SOUP!

by Carrie Macaluso, Highlands Presbyterian Church/Grayson, Georgia

[Editor’s NOTE: Carrie Macaluso is the Co-Director of Highlands Soup Nite. She shares how Highlands was blessed to be a blessing through this adventure in faith.]

Our beginnings started with a concept in 2011. My friend Jane and I were working full-time, but wanted to do something as a service ministry with our church, Highlands Presbyterian Church, in Grayson, Georgia. Highlands is a rather small, loving congregation of 150 members. At first Jane and I took baby steps. We tossed around the word “soup”, and the idea of working with programs that included mothers and their children, but that is as far as we got. We didn’t



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know how to get started so we both prayed about it. The first answered prayer was when a deacon in our church suggested that we should contact the local Food CoOp, the Southeast Gwinnett Cooperative Ministry. The church had been donating food items to that ministry for years, so we gave it a try. We contacted them on a day that the CoOp was supposed to be closed and Laura Drake, the director, picked up the phone. Answer to prayer number two! This was definitely a God thing and the seed was planted. Soon afterwards, Laura came to our church to discuss with our volunteers what was needed to start this program. The name, Soup Nite, was chosen because at the time, we thought that we would only serve soups – little did we know how rapidly that little idea would grow. With approval from the church, Soup Nite was launched in September of 2012.



Soup Nite Team – Dressed in T's

Immediately, we suffered growing pains. We started out with a team of about 15 people, older adults from the congregation, both men and women. We started serving Crock Pot soups at the CoOp, while their clients waited to be interviewed to receive their monthly food boxes. It was very important for us to build relationships. We needed the clients to feel they could trust us, not only with a healthy meal, but with being consistent and having a welcoming attitude. We served outside on the CoOp's picnic tables until it got cold in November, but our prayer was that we would be able to serve these meals in the Highlands Fellowship Hall.

In December of that same year we moved serving our meals from the CoOp over to our church. Answer to prayer number three! Highlands has a commercial kitchen and the Fellowship Hall seats about 80 people. If guests wanted to sit and eat that would be our capacity, so we started out making enough meals to serve 80 people. The CoOp gave out vouchers to their clients, which asked for the number of meals needed and the family name, and we also posted flyers letting people know where to go, what was being served, and when we were serving. The vouchers were then brought to us at Highlands, all filled out with a family name and the number of meals they requested. The first couple of months our numbers were sparse, maybe 20 people came. We got signage to place out in front of church so people would know where we are, but also to make our neighbors aware of our ministry. We were careful to serve only food that we would serve to our own families.

Using the non-profit status of the church, we partnered with the Atlanta Community Food Bank in May of 2014. We scheduled an additional Monday per month for Soup Nite, making it the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month to meet the requirements of the Food Bank.

So many blessings followed, as the CoOp was able to get two other churches in our neighborhood to serve hot meals on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of each month. These churches serve their meals at the CoOp. Now guests were being served a free hot meal at least once a week! In the beginning, with so much interest in the ministry, getting volunteers to make 8 crock pots was easy. It got a little tougher as some of our volunteers dropped off due to various reasons, but we still maintained a core team of about 6-8 older Highlands ladies to prepare meals and 10 people, men and women, to serve. We started to get more guests coming to us and saw the greater need. Our biggest challenge was never knowing how many guests we would have on any given Soup Nite Monday. This still is a challenge today.

Jane began a church garden, and we use the fresh produce in our meals and sometimes are able to give out produce to our guests. We also began preparing readymade meals for the seniors at the CoOp's Seasoned With Love project. Seasoned With Love takes food boxes to seniors who are immobile or have trouble getting out

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of their homes or have no family to help them. Now, they get two prepared meals to heat up in the microwave every time we go out on a route. This is where we were at the end of 2015, when Jane and I were finally able to do this ministry as retirees.

Presently, we make enough meals to serve 100-120 people. There have been true “fishes and loaves” stories, where we ran out of food and started defrosting items in the freezer to serve. On some occasions, when we serve a recipe that we know is a group favorite, like Chicken Teriyaki, we prepare more and can reach up to 180 meals! We don’t serve just soups anymore. That changed due to partnering with the Atlanta Community Food Bank and having a greater selection of food products to make into meals. Another change is that most of our guests take meals to go. Their families are waiting on them to get home from work or they have school functions to get to or their elderly parents don’t want to go out late in the afternoon/evening.

In 2018, we served over 3,000 meals at Soup Nite, including the Seasoned With Love program, averaging 35-40 households. We have guests that have become very close to us and we look forward to seeing them. We offer prayers, hugs, smiles, and encouragement to each of our guests. There are scripture verses on each brown bag that contains the meal. Soup Nite has also developed vendor and



Xavier & Pops – at Soup Nite



Serving Line at Soup Nite

merchant support in the Grayson community. The Public Library comes over to reach out with library card sign ups and free books. Grayson Coffee gives out coffee at our Christmas celebrations, and McDonalds donates their oatmeal containers to us for our soups. Soup Nite has reached into other ministry groups in our own church, making it an intergenerational program. On occasion, the youth group helps serve on Soup Nites and our shut-ins are delivered meals by our Congregational Care team. One of the greatest pleasures in serving began in 2017 when a neighboring church, Faith Community Church, partnered in serving with us. Every Soup Nite they are there to prepare, serve and pray with our guests.

Looking forward, we would like to serve even more meals to families in need. Our most current prayer, which God has yet to answer, is for a truck. We are currently fundraising for a non-profit Food Truck, aptly named, On Eagles Wings. Our truck would mainly be utilized to deliver meals prepared in our church’s kitchen to the Seasoned With Love immobile seniors and to our Soup Nite

families who cannot get to our regular Monday meals. We also want to reach out to the children in our community. It is our hope to use the truck’s counter window, like an ice cream truck, to give out that much-needed meal that is lost during the summer months when school is not in session. The truck will start conversations and build community.

All of the volunteers working on the Highlands Soup Nite ministry have a servant’s heart. It is our prayer that we will continue to build relationships with the addition of our Food Truck. God has answered so many of our prayers in very specific ways. Our most fervent prayer is that this example will be embraced by other churches so that there would be a fleet of food trucks serving the greater Gwinnett community and even throughout the state in the not-so-distant future. So, we are continuing to pray ...

A RENEWED APPROACH TO AGING: WISE EYES - FRESH EYES

By Michele Hendrix – New Braunfels, Texas

[Editor's NOTE: Michele Hendrix is President of Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network (POAMN). Michele has a passion for Older Adult Ministry that encompasses the generations, and spans interfaith ministry.]

A major change is taking place in our society. According to Pew Research Data from the U.S. Census Bureau, as of July 1, 2016 (the latest date for which population estimates are available), “Millennials, whom we define as ages 20 to 35 in 2016, numbered 71 million, and Boomers (ages 52 to 70) numbered 74 million. The Millennial generation continues to grow as young immigrants expand its ranks. Millennials are expected to overtake Boomers in population during 2019 as their numbers swell to 73 million and Boomers decline to 72 million. Generation X (ages 36 to 51 in 2016) is projected to pass the Boomers in population by 2028. Boomers – whose generation was defined by the boom in U.S. births following World War II – are aging and their numbers shrinking in size as the number of deaths among them exceeds the number of older immigrants arriving in the country.”

In 2019 the assumption that life is spent in a rocking chair at age 65 has disappeared! The increasing number of older adults is on the rise in unprecedented numbers. It is no secret that most of our aging adults (80% of those 85 and older) want to stay in their home as long as possible as they grow older. Many Boomers are not thinking in terms of a Continuum of Care Facility in the future; and we certainly want to live our lives after 65 with enthusiasm, vitality, excitement, and new opportunities in our own homes and communities. Inspired by the philosophy of healthy aging, many individuals are living longer, living safely, and living productively.

Today's aging populations are in pursuit of continued growth and balance and are being guided by the seven dimensions of wellness. A word that many assume conjures up thoughts of nutrition, exercise, diet, blood pressure, etc. In this new era, wellness is commonly seen as having seven dimensions - physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, environmental, and occupational. Each dimension contributes to our own sense of wellness or quality of life, and each one overlaps and affects the others. A greater focus must be placed on ensuring that all who are aging have the support to lead viable and productive lives based on their functionality.

The effects of aging encompass the emotional, physical, social, financial, and spiritual aspects of a person. Multiple generations are facing issues unique to their generation with responsibility for the care of their parents and grandparents while still assuming parenting roles themselves. Susan Barnett, Public Policy Coordinator at Presbyterian Mission Agency shared “the largest age group in PC (USA) continues to be 65 and older, while young people, 25 and younger make up the smallest group. More than 1 in 3 women (and 1 in 5 men) who are age 65 today will reach age 90.” Within 10 years, the high-risk age 85+ populations nationwide and worldwide will increase by 40%. The number of persons 100 and older is expected to grow rapidly, eightfold by 2050. In a trend that comes as no surprise to those who are searching for the secret to longevity, more and more Americans are reaching the age of 100 these days.

In this new era and with our covenant partner relationship with PMA/Christian Formation, POAMN has taken a fresh approach to aging where people are drawn by their own desires to engage in fellowship, community, care, and service. This approach to ministry creates an environment where people can, in a very natural way, step forward and begin using their God-given talents, passion, skills, expertise, and gifts. It is our belief that out of this wonderful group of mature saints, we will send forth people with heart, wisdom, and needed compassion to minister to the hurting, hungry, homeless, aging, those confined to their homes, caregivers of all ages, and their family units. Plus we will also place a strategic emphasis on ministering to connect the generations as well as children, youth and their families by creating intergenerational opportunities.

The vision is to strengthen and interconnect ministries so that all might serve and reach others. Intergenerational is a way of life - not a new way of life. It is the manner in which I was reared in the faith and in the

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church. Making such a shift requires overcoming the individualistic mindset that is so strong in our culture and entails developing a community mentality in which all generations and ministry departments are valued and involved with each other in significant ways throughout the church body. Cross-generational valuing must become an integral part of the congregation's collective story. The vision of the church needs to include assimilating our children and youth into the church today, not someday. By joining hands with our peers, we will foster warm fellowship, mutual support, spiritual growth, community, and connection. Sowing new seeds of opportunity for Older Adult Ministry with Intergenerational Ministry engagement will expand opportunities for all to serve our local churches, communities, cities, and the world for the cause of Christ!

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A CONTEMPLATIVE VIEW: THE EASTER BUNNY AS TEACHER

by Wesley Lachman / Eugene, Oregon



standard.co.uk

The legend of an egg-laying rabbit originated in Germany over 300 years ago. She was called the *Oschter Haws*. Lutherans brought the rabbit to the U.S. in the 1700's, where it became known as the Easter Bunny. Do you find it surprising that the EB is that old, that she was not invented by a candy company, and that—despite her cuddly, childlike reputation—she can teach us about meditation and prayer?

Just look at her sitting still upon the grass. If she has been fed, there is little reason to move. Her stillness helps to fool any predator who comes by. But it also teaches us how to enter meditation. It is just to become comfortably, physically still, like the Easter Bunny. There is no need to move a muscle. In fact, movement usually produces more stray thoughts in the mind, which may interrupt either meditation or prayer.

Then, have a listen: bunnies don't bark. They do make some sounds, soft little grunts or honks, but mostly they are silent. Again, the Easter Bunny teaches us well. Be silent. In meditation, let your mind go silent, as much as it will allow. In prayer, also keep silent. Instead of reciting a list of requests to God, try to listen below the mind for the words that rise up from your heart. Put your whole attention there. Listen for the words or images silently, in a kind of trustful, quiet mood. Then sometimes you may find that you are prayed through, the divine in your heart speaking to the divine everywhere else.

Apparently the Easter Bunny doesn't do a lot of thinking. So long as she is comfortable, she doesn't think much. There may be little wispy thoughts about dinner or safety, but that's about it. She is not obsessing about either past or future as we often do. Although her open eyes and pert ears are alert to what is going on, she's not fretting, just receiving whatever is here and now. Follow her example. Just ignore the thoughts that buzz in and out of your head. You did not ask for them, so they do not belong to you.

Easter is our celebration of death and resurrection, both of Jesus and of ourselves. The Easter Bunny teaches us by example again—still, silent, open. She demonstrates a kind of death, we might say, to all except this present now. She calls us to die a similar death—forsaking all else in order to find the will of God arising in meditation and prayer for this moment now. This is our appropriate Easter imitation of the One who died and was raised.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF AGING WELL IN A REMOTE LOCATION

by Lynnette Wood, Ph.d., Orcas Island, Washington

[Editor's NOTE: Lynnette Wood is an internationally-known remote sensing scientist who has helped developing countries assess their resources and their needs in order to plan effectively for the future. She and husband, Dr. Kenneth Gibbs- a retired astronomer- now live on Orcas Island in Puget Sound. This article is a follow-on to [Understanding the Challenges of Aging Well in a Remote Location](#) that appeared in our Spring 2018 issue.]

Betty turned her car from the narrow, two-lane road that hugged the rocky shoreline of Massacre Bay, one of three bays that define the shape of Orcas Island, to wind her way up through the forest toward her home. Passing through a grove of old-growth cedar trees and going by a lily-covered pond, she reached her timber-framed house perched on a moss-covered knoll facing southwest toward the Olympic Mountains. In the evening, sitting by the fire, she could watch the inter-island ferry as it passed between the grey-green humps of two neighboring islands, the sun setting orange and purple over the snow-capped mountains in the distance.



THE VIEW FROM BETTY'S HOUSE ON ORCAS ISLAND

Is this the story of yet another rich person living in a place the rest of us can only dream about? No, not at all. We are reading about an elderly woman living on her late husband's social security benefits who inherited her property from homesteaders who settled in this island archipelago more than a century ago. Betty grew up here. She taught in the old schoolhouse - now a community club - and she raised two children here. Approaching 90 years of age now, Betty, like many other elderly island residents, has vowed never to leave. Betty's children moved to the mainland years ago; for that is where the jobs are. After losing her husband, Betty has found it more and more difficult to manage. When he was alive, he took care of all the home repairs, or dealt with contractors when the tasks exceeded his skills or his own physical capabilities. Last winter, Betty hired a handyman to repair a leaky roof, but within a month it was leaking again. Now, a faint but growing patch of mold has appeared on the ceiling. Last week, Betty's worsening arthritis prevented her from securely fastening the lid to her garbage can. Raccoons got in and spread trash all over the yard. This morning, the smoke detector started beeping, but it is high on the ceiling and she can't reach it. The problems seem to just keep piling up. Betty thinks, "At least I can still drive... just not at night." So Betty is able to buy groceries or catch a ferry to the mainland for a doctor appointment. In that regard, Betty is lucky. Many seniors on Orcas Island are reliant on others for their shopping and transportation needs.

Last spring, this newsletter published an article entitled, "*Understanding the Challenges of Aging Well in a Remote Location*." That article described an "Aging on Orcas" survey conducted by the Orcas Senior Center, located on Orcas Island, Washington. Orcas Island is a 57 square mile, rural island located in the northern part of Puget Sound. Orcas Island is only accessible by ferry, boat, or plane. Health care facilities are limited; the nearest hospital is a 45-minute ferry ride away, and at present there is no 24/7 medical provider on the Island.

The "Aging on Orcas" survey was intended to gather information about the needs of those among us who

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choose, and who are able, to remain on Orcas Island as we age. Since many of these residents can do so only with community support, the survey was designed to reflect the needs of our inter-dependent rural community, a place where community investment is critical to maintaining the island's way of life.

After reading about Betty, it is perhaps not surprising that among the top-rated concerns expressed in the survey, the challenge of maintaining one's home and property was rated higher than were any of the concerns about health and wellness.

So, you may have wondered what happened after our survey was completed - what did we do with the survey results? Well, for the last year, the Orcas Senior Center has used the results of the survey to prepare proposals for grant funding, and to institute several new programs.

Among the programs with the potential to have the most significant impact is a feasibility study investigating the issue of home repair and maintenance. Like Betty, a significant fraction of Orcas' seniors cannot age safely at home without some level of community involvement. Their home upkeep may have been deferred for years. Some walker- or cane-dependent elders struggle to navigate their homes, few of which would meet current code requirements, let alone provide the sorts of upgrades which benefit those who do not get around as well as they once did. Others with heart or lung disease may live in homes which are damp or have mold due to leaky roofs, flooded gutters, or failed plumbing. Often, such homes are poorly heated, further compounding these health issues. Many lack the mobility to adequately clean their own homes, creating a health hazard and inviting vermin.

After completion of the survey, the Orcas Senior Center convened a focus group which identified the most frequent needs as yard maintenance, appliance repair, plumbing, chimney sweeping, gutter cleaning and electrical repairs. The focus group further identified the most difficult services to access locally as furnace, roofing, electrical and plumbing repair. Obtaining a licensed and bonded contractor is already made difficult by being on a remote, rural island, and services are more expensive than on the mainland. On Orcas Island, this is further compounded by the fact that many of the qualified contractors prefer working on the many multi-million-dollar homes, often second homes, than to bother with small jobs and repairs. Fundamentally, seniors need services from people who are licensed, reliable, trustworthy, professional, good communicators, fair in their pricing, and willing to take on small-scale projects.

Because the survey results provided tangible, hard evidence of the need to support home repair and maintenance on Orcas Island, the Orcas Senior Center was able to secure two successful grants, one from United Way and the other from the Orcas Island Community Foundation. The Center is now examining potential options for helping island seniors access qualified home maintenance and repair services. The effort is being guided with input from an advisory committee of island contractors, handymen, housing experts, and seniors. In addition, the Orcas Senior Center will provide a series of in-house workshops to provide elders and seniors with the planning tools and knowledge needed to address home repair and maintenance issues, such as "Creating a Home Maintenance Plan and Conducting a Home Safety Audit," "Understanding Home Maintenance Language" (e.g. estimates vs. quotes, contractor terminology and tips), and "How to Deal with Insurance Companies."



Typical cabin built by homesteaders - Still in use today

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After home and property maintenance, the next highest concerns expressed in the survey were health-related and wellness-related. In response, the Orcas Senior Center has launched or is expanding related programs, including balance, Tai Chi, strength training, and even Zumba classes. The center also hosts a mammogram screening van and commercial preventive health screening services and is enhancing its foot care service.

Not surprisingly, given Orcas Island's demographically high level of education attainment, survey respondents also indicated a strong interest in activities that will help them remain intellectually engaged. These survey results prompted another grant from the Orcas Island Community Foundation to support a variety of technology classes covering everything from computer basics and how to avoid being scammed, to how to use your iPhone and how to select a Personal Emergency Response Device.

For me personally, the most exciting new offering has been the Meeting of the Minds (MOM) lecture series. This new series is loosely modeled after TedX, and is designed to directly address the high level of interest expressed in the survey for "lectures and other educational opportunities." The lecture series encourages local speakers to share their knowledge and enthusiasm in a way that encourages people to think differently about things - lectures that change perceptions.

The MOM lectures now occur monthly. I was honored to be chosen to give the first MOM lecture where I talked about "Toxic Plankton in the Salish Sea". [The Salish Sea is the intricate network of [coastal waterways](#) that includes the southwestern portion of the [Canadian province of British Columbia](#) and the northwestern part of the [U.S. state of Washington](#).]

I provided microscopes and freshly-caught plankton for people to view following the lecture. Subsequent lectures have covered topics as broad-ranging as Highland Mayan Culture, Cosmic and Gamma Ray Astrophysics, and citizen science experiments with the EarthWatch Institute. All were presented by members of Orcas Island's highly diverse population. Attendance has been excellent, with 30 to 40 or more individuals in attendance at each lecture. Since the lectures are open to everyone, not just seniors, they have drawn a wide cross-section of island residents, including many younger attendees. We like to call them our "senior wanabees." In this regard, the program has been an inducement for attracting future members who, we hope, will help insure a socially and economically sustainable future for the Orcas Senior Center.



Toxic Plankton (long, stick-like object)
— as viewed through a microscope

ABOUT HAPPINESS

Happiness is fragile,
But very near and real.
It may be shared by just a smile,
It is a joy to feel.

It's found not in great riches,
Nor places far away,
But in the common little things
Of every single day.

To have it is a blessing,
To keep it, this is true,
The more you give to others...
The more comes back to you.

(Esther F. Thom)

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Special thanks to those that have made an extra donation to support POAMN!

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