

SPIRITUAL FORMATION FOR OLDER ADULT MINISTRY: PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

By Jan McGilliard, former POAMN Certification Chair

A FAQ (frequently asked question) of inquiring candidates for Older Adult Ministries Certification is “What will OAM Certification do for me?” It’s a fair question. The truth is, each person will benefit uniquely from the material presented in four core courses, engaging in an elective study, and carrying out a final project. And just as important is the time spent interacting with other, like-minded people who wish to deepen and broaden their understanding of what it means to grow older in the life of our congregations, retirement centers, and communities. Those who complete OAM Certification are recognized by every level of the PC(USA) as the experts on issues of older adult ministry. Each graduate will have particular goals for how they wish to apply this body of knowledge.

OAM Certification program includes four core courses, an elective, and a final project (full description at www.poamn.org). It is intended to be practical, accessible, affordable, and achievable for the average person who wishes to provide the best ministry possible for those who are growing older and for those who love and care for them.

As part of our course on *Spiritual Formation for Older Adult Ministry*, participants read the recently published *Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life: 7 Gateways to Spiritual Growth*, by Jane Marie Thibault and Richard L. Morgan. Thibault and Morgan are seasoned teachers and writers on the subject of living abundantly in later life, and they have collaborated once again to bring us a practical, thoughtful resource to the older adult ministry table. In this volume, the authors troll the depths of their own experiences with aging, Jane at age 65 and Dick at age 85, inviting us to do the same using passages of scripture, reflections, and meditations. Class participants were asked to create an outline for teaching a class using this book. We offer two of them here, by Anne Adams, Director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church in Vero Beach, FL, and Rev. June Begany, Associate Pastor of Old Stone Presbyterian Church, Cleveland, OH.

Anne Adams suggests four sessions:

SESSION ONE: FACING AGING, DYING & LIVING WITH LIMITATIONS

Opening Prayer: "*Prayer For Aging*", Pilgrimage Into The Last Third Of Life, pg. 7

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 46:4

First Hour:

Understand the "Seasons of Life"

Looking Age Straight in the Face

Affirm Your Age

Bent But Not Broken

Doctrine of Providence – God's relationship with His Creations:

Preservation, Guidance and Suffering.

Second Hour:

Small Group Breakout Session..... A time for participants to reflect on what they have learned and to articulate their thoughts on these topics. They have 30 minutes in small group and then come back into the larger group to discuss their findings.

SESSION TWO: PRAYER, CONTEMPLATION & DROPPING THE MASK

Opening Prayer (same as Session One)

Scripture Reading: Romans 12:1-2

First Hour:

The Deadly Sin of Later Life - Envy

The Deadly Sin of Later Life – Pride

Pleasing Others And Not Yourself

Prayer – The Pathway For Spiritual Growth

Second Hour:

Small Group Breakout Session

Sharing The Group's Findings

SESSION THREE: COMMUNITY AND HELPING OTHERS

Opening Prayer (same as Session One)

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4:3-6

First Hour:

Welcoming Neighbors & Strangers

Learning Interdependence

Savoring Your Life

The Role of the Church

Reinforce the importance & participation of community

Encourage participation in church life

Affirm the worth of each individual

Walk along side of those who need comfort

Second Hour:

Small Group Breakout Session

Sharing The Group's Findings

SESSION FOUR: LEAVING A LEGACY

Opening Prayer (same as Session One)

Scripture Reading: John 14:1-4

First Hour:

How Do You Want To Be Remembered

Faith At The End of Life

The Power of Loving Kindness

Letters to Grandchildren

Second Hour:

Small Group Breakout Session

Sharing The Group's Findings

Anne Adams is currently the Director of Christian Education and Older Adult Ministry at First Presbyterian Church in Vero Beach, Florida. Anne has been a Certified Precept Bible Leader for 15 years, Stephen Minister for 20 years and Circle Leader for the past 10 years. Anne has been on the following committees in Central Florida Presbytery: Leadership, World Mission, Leadership Conference Coordinator, Workshop Leader for F.I.S.H. Conference (5years). Coordinator for C.O.L.E. and Coordinator for the Presbytery Meeting and Pastor's Retreat in 2012. Anne has also worked with many non-profit organizations: Back Pack Buddies, B.I.R.P., SHARE, Our Turning Point Ranch, Women for Hospice, Lake County and Women's Development Center in Miami. Anne is a member of POAMN and is working on her certification.

Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life

Rev. June Begany: (june@oldstonechurch.org)

What I would like to do with this book is not use it as a class but use it as the basis of a Lenten devotional, not just for the older adults but for the congregation. At Old Stone we have a writer's group of 10-15 individuals who gather each month and share their writings. Often the writings are poems, but several short novels are in progress. Many in this group have helped write recent Advent booklets. What I would do is get each writer a copy of *Pilgrimage*. I would invite each one to select the reading I've chosen for one of the days or weeks. After reading and reflecting on their assigned reading, I'd ask them to read the rest of their particular pathway to broaden their thinking.

Since all of the writers also belong to one or another Bible Study group, I'd invite them to suggest scripture passages that might accompany the reading. I'd ask them to write one paragraph summarizing the main idea of the reading, then suggest questions for reflection and/or an activity.

Here is my suggested outline, and what I would do if I were writing this alone.

<u>Ash Wednesday</u>	"Pilgrimage"	page 14
II Corinthians 5:7	We walk by faith and not by sight.'	
	What is your experience of pilgrimage? How is your life a pilgrimage?	
	Use a finger labyrinth or walk a floor one, thinking about the pilgrimage of faith you are on during this life.	
<u>First Week of Lent</u>	"Practice Dying"	page 29
	To live is Christ, to die is gain"	
<u>Second Week of Lent</u>	"Bent But Not Broken"	page 40
	Bent over woman healed	
	Genesis 18:1-15	
	II Corinthians 12:9	God's power made perfect in weakness
<u>Third Week of Lent</u>	"The Work of Forgiving"	page 48
	Forgive 7x7?	
	Matthew 6:12	
	Genesis 33	God repented of the evil he intended; Word from the cross
<u>Fourth Week of Lent</u>	"Learning Interdependence:..."	page 75
	John 21:15-19	
	Hebrews 12:1	Great cloud of witnesses
<u>Fifth Week of Lent</u>	"Accepting Uncertainty"	page 94
	Hebrews 11:1	Faith is the assurance of things hoped for
<u>Sixth Week of Lent</u>	"Lessons from Gethsemane I"	page 106
	Mark 14:32-37	

Holy Week

Monday John 3:16-17	“Power of Loving”	page130
Tuesday Matthew 26:53-54	“Lessons from Gethsemane II”	page 108
Wednesday Luke 22:24-27 Psalm 1	“Afternoon Work” Disciples arguing about who is greatest	page 57
Maundy Thursday Psalm 133:1 Acts 2:42-45 Luke 22:14-23	“Created for Community”	page 66
Good Friday Philippians 2:5-8 John 19:16-37	“Dedicate Pain and Suffering’	page 112
Holy Saturday John 19:38-42 Isaiah 61:1	“Solitary”	page 90
Easter Sunday Matthew 28:20b Romans 8:37-39 Psalm 27:1 Isaiah 49:16	“Jesus’ Promise”	page 42

<u>Looking to Pentecost</u> Matthew 7:12, 24-27 Amos	“How Do you Want to be Remembered?”	page124
Matthew 6:19-21	“My Legacy”	page 128
Matthew 6:25-33 Matthew 25:31-46 Micah 6:8	“Letter to Grandchildren”	page 137

This becomes the model for the activity in the post-Easter season. These letters might be shared in small groups at a potluck or extended coffee hour on Pentecost.

Note: The article on Envy, page 59 and on Pride, page 57.

June Begany has been the Associate Pastor of Old Stone, First Presbyterian Church in Cleveland for the past 23 years. She has run their food pantry, worked with the Mission/Urban Wellness Committee and with Education. In addition June calls on hospitalized members and works with the Marriage preparation program. Previously, June trained tellers for banks in New Jersey and taught in the Cleveland Public Schools. June enjoys reading mysteries, knitting and her water aerobics class among other activities. She has been married to her husband Paul, an engineer, for 33 years.