

Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

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2020 HOLIDAY

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Good Morning from Oregon,

The theme of this issue of *PNN* is, *Old Age is a Blessing from God*. The year 2020 has been, and continues to be, an unusual time – the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Back Lives Matter protests, and a very intense national election. With old age comes wisdom and the sure knowledge that God is with us always, even when we feel stressed out and are deeply concerned about what is happening around us.

Four articles in this issue of *PNN* share insights on *Old Age is a Blessing from God*:

- “MEMO from Membership” by Linda Rauenbuehler
- “2020 Christmas Meditation” by Don Carlin
- “Old Age is a Blessing” by Quentin Holmes
- “The Earthquake of Retirement” by Rev. Sharon Johnson & Elder Joyce Johnson.

Other articles in this issue include:

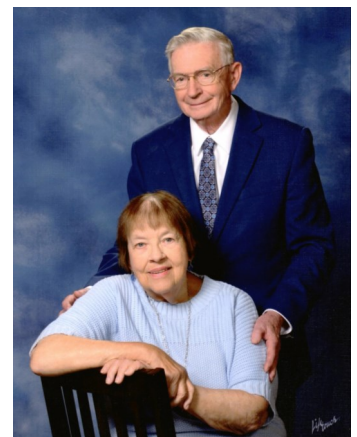
- “Why Ask Why” by Tammy Warren
- “Our Evacuation Story” by Dawn Brown and Liz Von Wellsheim
- “SIDEBAR: An Incredible Outpouring of Love” by Quentin Holmes
- “2020 POAMN Annual Business Meeting” by Quentin Holmes
- “POAMN Legacy Award to Michele Hendrix” by Pat Baker
- “Lifetime Reflections” by Don Carlin
- “Upcoming POAMN Events” by Lillian Rhudy & Adrienne Knight
- “COVID - 19, The Holy Spirit, and our Christian Faith” by Rev. William N. Johnson
- “A Little Girl’s Dog.”

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



Quentin & wife, Jane, Holmes



Pat Baker
POAMN President

POAMN PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

Blessings to all of you during this time of Advent, Christmas, and the days leading up to Epiphany. I pray that each of you experience hope, peace, joy, and love this season as we head out of 2020 and anticipate what 2021 will bring.

As the newly elected President of POAMN, I'm aware that many of you might not know me, so through this and future PNN articles I plan to tell you a little bit about myself. I'll start with the basics. I live in Lilburn, Georgia, a suburb east of Atlanta, with my husband, Rev. Arch Baker, HR. I have been a member of POAMN since its inception in the early 1980's; in fact, I was one of the founding members. I've worked with and for older adults and family caregivers in some capacity since I graduated from college in 1973.

The theme of this PNN issue is "Old Age is a Blessing." I've known many older adults throughout the years who would enthusiastically agree with that sentiment, but I've also known many who would not. This year, 2020, would be one of the years that I've heard many speak of the fear of being "old" and lonely and the increased possibilities of catching coronavirus.

In my younger years I clung to those who had a positive attitude about their longevity, and I've always been an avid follower of people who reached their 100th birthday. I've followed their interviews to read what they consider to be their secret to a good long life and have found their words to be words to live by. As I've reached my "senior" years, my focus has changed to asking different questions and delving into conversations that are not always pleasant or encouraging but seem more realistic to me now. Through my faith in God and my desire to learn from others, I'm continuing to explore people's attitudes towards their own aging. I pray every day that they will find their older years to be a blessing and that the strength that comes from their faith will help them during the difficult times.

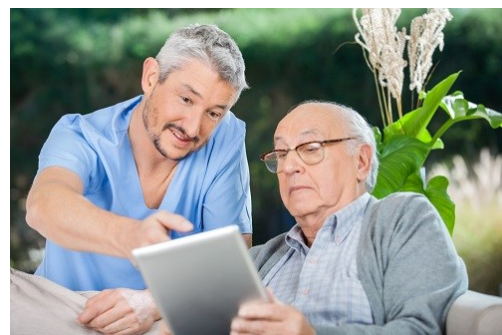
As POAMN starts planning for 2021 we'd like to hear from you! How can we strengthen our services to persons who are engaged in older adult ministry or want to hone their skills to serve older members of their congregations better? Please feel free to reach out to me by telephone or email. I'd love to hear from you!

Pat Baker
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SEE WHAT'S NEW AT POAMN'S WEBSITE!

Recently added to POAMN's website (www.poamn.org) are valuable resources for anyone providing older adult ministries.

- Our [RESOURCE LIBRARY](#) can be found under the RESOURCES tab. This library offers an array of articles categorized by topic from past years' Older Adult Ministries Planning Guides and POAMN Network News.
- [VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2020 VIDEOS](#) have also been recently added under the EVENTS tab. Here you will find the full recordings from our annual conference held October 27-28, 2020.





Linda Rauenbuehler
Membership Committee Chair

MEMO FROM MEMBERSHIP

The theme for this issue of the Presbyterian Network News (PNN) is “**Old Age Is a Blessing from God.**” The last time I wrote on this topic, I found an article that I really like and so I returned to it. The article, which can be found online, is “*Seven Blessings That Come with Aging,*” by Sister Joan Chittister.

The seven blessings that she identifies are all interconnected. They are PERSPECTIVE, TIME, FREEDOM, NEWNESS, TALE-TELLING, RELATIONSHIPS, AND TRANSCENDENCE. Having a good sense of what really matters in life is described as PERSPECTIVE. FREEDOM comes because elders have fewer responsibilities and more time to enjoy the present. By NEWNESS, the author is referring to older adults being in a better position to experience new things. We realize life is not over, but, instead, beginning again in a completely new way.

RELATIONSHIPS and TIME can be combined as seniors now have more time to connect with the people around them and to enjoy and appreciate socialization. I had to do some extra research to try to interpret what she referred to as TRANSCENDENCE. I think it means going beyond ordinary experiences through such things as prayer, reading, solitude and the arts.

Being a retired children’s librarian, I really like the blessing of TALE-TELLING. Sharing stories with others was a part of my profession for many years. I continue to love listening to people tell their stories, and older adults have the most wonderful tales to tell!

There are many blessings that come with growing older. This is our chance to do all those things that we have not taken the time to do before. I know, for myself, that I try to keep my mind open to see blessings and opportunities that come my way and to select those to act on.

Membership Renewal for 2021

We are ending 2020 with about 140 membership units. Each institutional, couple, individual, and affiliate membership is counted as one unit. **Now is the time to renew your membership for 2021.** An application for renewal is at the end of this newsletter, or you can print one off from our website at www.poamn.org and send it to our Treasurer, Lynne Trout, with your check. You may also apply online using PayPal. As we are a 501 c (3) organization, additional gifts are graciously accepted and are tax-deductible. I am looking forward to seeing what 2021 brings for POAMN. Exciting opportunities are being planned to continue connecting people who have an interest in older adult ministry. I am also grateful for the annual planning guide and all the issues of POAMN Network News that come with my membership and provide me with ideas throughout the year as I work with my special older adults.

Certificate of Older Adult Ministry

POAMN collaborates with Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, on classes leading to a Certificate of Older Adult Ministry. Please check out this wonderful opportunity. Information can be found by going to Columbia Theological Seminary and looking under Lifelong Learning.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Rauenbuehler
POAMN Membership Chair

*The weather doesn't matter
If our hearts are all aglow;
It's almost time for Christmas
What fun if it should snow!*

(Hallie Huntington)

2020 CHRISTMAS MEDITATION

by Don Carlin / Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mary had no idea
A year before that first Christmas
An angel would visit her
Her marriage plans would get complicated
A baby would be conceived in her by the Holy Spirit
Her baby would be born in a distant town
Her baby would be born among animals without
the aid of a midwife.

Mary had no idea
After that first Christmas
The holy family would soon be fleeing in the
wrong direction
To live as refugees in Egypt
She would be standing at the foot of a cruel cross
Angry, scared, isolated and alone.

We had no idea
A year before 2020
A pandemic would change our private worlds
and the whole world
Storms of nature and storms of social unrest,
Political storms and economic storms would
shake the world
And likely be still raging on Christmas day.

Like Mary, we had no idea
We have been surprised again and again and again.

And yet — we know
Beyond the manger and the cross
There is resurrection and new life and Shalom.

We know —
Even at the manger and at the cross, then and now,
A loving God stands with us, never ever leaving
us alone.

2020 POAMN ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

by Quentin A. Holmes, Editor POAMN Network News

Usually, the POAMN Annual Business Meeting is held during our National Conference. This was still true in 2020. However, due to COVID-19, the 2020 POAMN National Conference – and the Annual Business Meeting – were both held “virtually.”

POAMN’s 2020 Annual Meeting was held online from 1:40 – 2:55 PM on Wednesday, October 28th, 2020. Key things that took place during the 2020 Annual Meeting were:

- POAMN President Michele Hendrix welcomed everyone and led us in an opening prayer.
- After giving her President’s Update, Michele introduced Support Staff, Ginny Nyhuis, and the members of POAMN Executive Committee (ExCOM).
- POAMN Secretary Rev. Nancy Rojas then presented the minutes of our 2019 Annual Business Meeting. The minutes were approved.



Rev. Doug Kurtz

- Nominations Chair Pepe Bowman presented the following slate into nomination to serve as Officers of POAMN and Members of the Executive Committee:

- **Conference Co-Chair** – Adrienne Knight / Baltimore, MD
- **Member at Large** – Linda Rauenbuehler / Henderson, NV
- **GA Liaison** – Rev. Douglas E. Kurtz / Flushing, NY

- The entire slate of nominees was then elected unanimously.
- The new POAMN Officers were then duly installed by outgoing President, Michelle Hendrix. As soon as incoming POAMN President, Pat Baker, was installed, she became the meeting Chair.



Adrienne Knight

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- By intentional choice, Pat Baker's first action as POAMN President was to recognize the dedicated and faithful service of Michele Hendrix. Our highest award, the POAMN Legacy Award, was bestowed (virtually) on Michele. (See article page 8 entitled, *POAMN Legacy Award to Michele Hendrix*.)
- Treasurer Lynne Trout presented the Annual Financial Report. Thanks to the generosity of POAMN members and sponsors, POAMN is on sound financial ground.
- Membership Chair Linda Rauenbuehler reported that as of October 28th, the POAMN membership stands at:
 - 27 Organizational Memberships;
 - 75 Individual Memberships;
 - 23 Couple Memberships;
 - 10 Affiliate Memberships.

- Stephanie Fritz from the Presbyterian Mission Agency / Presbyterian Church (USA) reported on the Christian Formation Collective. Through this relationship, POAMN is teamed effectively with four other organizations. The other organizations are APCE (Association of Presbyterian Church Educators), PYWA (Presbyterian Youth Workers Association), UKirk (Collegiate Ministries) and PCCCA (Presbyterian Church Camp and Conference Association). Each of the organizations, including POAMN, is entering into new mission partnership agreements that take seriously the work and mission of each.
- Rev. Dianna Wright gave an update on POAMN Communications. Currently, three people are taking turns – one month at a time – keeping the POAMN Facebook page updated with timely information. The communication committee gets together via a conference call about every 4-5 weeks.
- Quentin Holmes, Editor of POAMN Network News, reported the themes of upcoming issues of *PNN* will be:

PNN ISSUE	THEME	(DEADLINE FOR MATERIAL)
Holiday issue	<i>Old Age is a Blessing</i>	(December 15, 2020)
Winter issue	<i>Lo, I am with You Always</i>	(January 15, 2021)
Spring issue	<i>Rejoice, I say rejoice!</i>	(April 15, 2021)

- Rev. Sarah Erickson / Columbia Theological Seminary reported on the Older Adult Ministry Certification Course:
 - In the process of finalizing plans for two online courses for this coming spring: One will be led by Joyce McKichan Walker and the other by Mary Anona;
 - Both classes will have a joint live launch on 2/11/21 at 11:00 AM ET;
 - *Spiritual Formation* course will be online asynchronous learning activity week of 2/15 and conduct topical activity weeks of 2/22, 3/01 and 3/08. Will conclude with up to five synchronous sessions of not more than 90 minutes each during the currently scheduled days of March 15-17.
 - *Teaching for Transformation* course will have a weekly 90-minute synchronous session up to 90 minutes and synchronous online learning activity beginning the week of 2/22 (may add week of 2/15 – TBA as redesign progresses) and concluding week of March 18. Up to five synchronous sessions of not more than 90 minutes each March 17 -19, primarily for teachbacks.
- POAMN Conference Chair Lillian Rhudy reported on conferences being planned for 2021 and 2022. They are making plans for an early spring virtual event around *Aging in other Cultures*.
- Pat Baker spoke briefly talked about dreams and goals for POAMN's future. Very proactive and uplifting!
- The meeting was closed with Pat Baker leading us in prayer.



‘FAITH AND LAMENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS

by Tammy Warren | Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE — Many people of faith have stopped asking big, unanswerable “why” questions. Questions like, “If God loves us and God is all powerful, why is there so much pain and suffering in the world?”

During Tuesday October 27th’s keynote presentation of the [Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network](#) (POAMN) annual conference, theologian and author the [Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Rigby](#), the W.C. Brown Professor of Theology at [Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary](#), made a case for the importance of asking “why” and “telling it like it is in the form of lament” during times of crisis — not to get answers, but to deepen and shape our faith. Rigby is also co-chair of the Reformed Theology and History Unit of the [American Academy of Religion](#) and an associate editor for the Journal of Reformed Theology and the Journal of the American Academy of Religion.



Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Rigby

The suffering Job, she said, was “patiently impatient,” telling it like it is for 42 chapters. In John 11, when Lazarus died, his sister Martha showed “foot-stomping, vulnerable, confessional, active faith,” telling Jesus, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.” Even Jesus asked why in Matthew 27:46 - quoting from Psalm 22:1 - “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Why do we have “why” questions about suffering and brokenness in the first place?

“The whole idea that suffering is a problematic issue is founded in the idea that we expect something different than to suffer,” said Rigby. After all, we know that the God who created everything out of nothing is a loving, powerful and good God (Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 6:3, Revelation 21:4).

The “why” questions come from “our beliefs about God and our trust in God’s promises and providential care,” Rigby said. “These promises lead us to cry out when we don’t see them coming to fruition.” However, she cautioned, insisting on or coming up with our own answers to the why often does more harm than good, particularly for suffering people, which we all are at one time or another.

“If you can fit it on a coffee mug or a bumper sticker, it probably isn’t good theology,” Rigby said. Saying or hearing from others comments like, “Have you found the blessing in that?” or “You must trust that God has a secret plan,” diminishes suffering experiences.

“Not ruling out the possibility that God is somehow, in ways we can’t possibly understand, using some suffering redemptively is very different from piously deciding that all suffering is somehow redemptive, and you are going to help everyone figure that out,” said Rigby. “That’s the trick of the oppressor that is used to keep suffering people in their place.” On the other hand, she said, it also diminishes suffering if we tell the sufferer there is *nothing* redemptive about their experience when they say there is.

Yes, if someone asks us why suffering happens, it can be easy to recite a formula answer that we’ve heard before. Rigby reflected on a conversation with a dying friend in the hospital. The friend asked her, “Cindy, why is God letting this happen to me?” Rigby told her she didn’t know why. The friend said, “Now, Cindy, I know you don’t know, but I thought you’d be able to say something after all those years of studying theology.”

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“Say something to process,” Rigby said. “Process with them.”

A couple of decades ago, Rigby taught a class in San Antonio on the subject of “doubt.” Two men came up to speak with her afterward. The first man said, “You stand up here, talking about doubt. I can’t believe you have any doubts. I can’t believe they gave you a job teaching theology when you have doubts. I don’t think any professor should teach theology if they have doubts. I’ve never had a doubt in my life, and I’ve been a Christian for 48 years.”

She told him that was probably his gift, but it wasn’t everyone’s gift, and he could use it to help others.

The other man said, “You’ve stood up here for an hour talking about doubt, and I can tell you’ve never really had a serious doubt in your life. I came here tonight looking for a soulmate, someone trying to feel God’s presence with me. Is there anything you can say to me to help me feel God’s presence in the midst of my doubt?”

“I said I would pray for him not to doubt,” Rigby said. Looking back, she wishes she would have said, “God can work even through the doubt.”

Rigby added, “Look at the ways God works in the abyss, on the cross, in the doubt, through the uncertainty - not just getting us through, but in the uncertainty. God can work through that, too. There is no place untouched by God’s presence.”

There’s no “one-size-fits-all approach” to the problem of suffering, Rigby said. “Some people become transformed, nicer people through suffering, and others just can’t bear it, they become shadows of their former selves. It’s frightening the different forms and effects suffering can have on people.”



The Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Rigby
with students at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary

We have to be more creative, present, attentive, certain about God and uncertain about ourselves, Rigby said, giving examples of fictional characters from literature, like Don Quixote or Harry Potter’s timid classmate, Neville Longbottom, who bumbles forward, hoping he is part of something bigger than himself.

“Christians have too much of a reputation for marching in with certainty and answers and faith,” Rigby said. “Maybe faith, in a time of crisis, needs to be more ‘bumbling.’”

Rigby is currently completing a book on Christian feminist theology for Baker Academic Press and a book for Westminster John Knox Press, tentatively titled “Splashing in Grace: A Theology of Play.” The Dallas Morning News called Rigby “one of the great theologians of our time.”

The POAMN, which is a mission partnership of the [Presbyterian Mission Agency](#), is celebrating its 38th anniversary of providing conferences with the framework for recognizing the gifts and challenges of growing older in the life of the church. The 2020 POAMN annual conference, [Shaping Faith in Crisis: Peace by Piece](#), held in collaboration with the [Office of Christian Formation](#), concluded on Oct. 28. Funds collected in lieu of registration fees are being donated to [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#).

POAMN LEGACY AWARD TO MICHELE HENDRIX

by Pat Baker, POAMN President

The Legacy Award is given by the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network each year to honor someone who has made an extraordinary difference in ministry to, for, and with Older Adults. This year is no exception. It is my honor to present Michele Hendrix the Legacy Award.

As you all know, she just finished serving two terms as President of POAMN, and I know I have huge shoes to fill. Michele has worked for over 30 years advocating, educating, innovating, and motivating older adults and the people who work with and for them. Her connections are wide-ranging among the PC(USA), the local church, the Presbytery, the health care industry, the non-profit sector, and local, state and national programs that serve this population. Not only has she served older adults, she is also passionate about intergenerational work, as well as her devotion to helping family caregivers to face the challenges of caring for their loved ones. I have to add that her intergenerational work probably stems from the five children and 14 grandchildren she and Dale are so lucky to have. I'm green with envy!

When I talk about connections, I have to mention the tireless efforts she makes each time she attends the PC (USA) General Assembly. I'm sure she comes close to visiting EVERY booth to tell them about POAMN and how POAMN can benefit their work and ministry. As I said, I've got gigantic shoes to fill! On the home front, she is Moderator of the Deacons at her church, a large downtown church with lots of active mission program, which has been no easy feat during COVID-19, as we all know.

As President of POAMN these past six years, she has taken POAMN to a new level. She has guided us through some significant transitional events. Even though POAMN has been around since the early 1980's, through the years we have struggled to be recognized for the great organization that we are. Michele has helped us to expand this ministry by putting our ministry in the minds and hearts of the powers that be of the wider church and has even pushed us to explore other denominations and how we can partner with them to make a difference for older congregants.

I can't end this tribute without mentioning her partner in success, Dale. He has contributed his business manager skills to POAMN's benefit and was critical to helping POAMN get our non-profit status.

Thanks Michele for your commitment and faithfulness!



Michel Hendrix —
with her POAMN Legacy Award

UPCOMING POAMN EVENTS

“CELEBRATING LONGEVITY AROUND THE WORLD”

POAMN's Conference Planning Committee is organizing a series of webinars between April 19 and May 19, 2021. These will be offered on three different days and at different times in order to accommodate more folks. The theme for these will be, *Celebrating Longevity Around the World*. As an organization which focuses on serving our older adult population, we need to look at other cultures and learn more about changes we could adopt in the ways we honor, respect, and value older adults. We already have one webinar speaker who will focus on Asian cultures. The cost of these will make it affordable to more people, and they will require no traveling. We plan to design the webinars to attract lay members, pastors, church leaders, and health profes-

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sionals. PLEASE CHECK POAMN.ORG WEBSITE FOR DETAILS AS THEY UNFOLD. We hope you will sign up for one or all of these informative webinars.

Does your church have a plan for honoring your older adults on **Older Adult Sunday, May 2nd, 2021**? Our 2021 Planning Guides will be available to help give you new ideas. The 2021 OAM Planning Guide will include worship service suggestions from various cultures around the world. Please check www.poamn.org, for latest details. One question we would like for you to think about and share with us during these webinars is: *How does your family celebrate and value your OLDER ADULTS? Do you have some “wise words” you remember from your grandparents?* (We welcome new ideas for future webinars and workshops.)

Lillian Rhudy, Conference Chair

Adrienne Knight, Conference Co-Chair

OLD AGE IS A BLESSING FROM GOD

by Quentin A. Holmes, PNN Editor

In contrast to our society where youth and youthfulness is adored, the Bible speaks again and again of old age as being a blessing from God.

When my congregation set up a task force on Older Adult Ministry, the first question was, “How old does a person have to be to be regarded as ‘older adult?’” It turns out the answer depends on the age of the person you ask. An AARP study interviewed 1,800 people ranging in age from 40 to 90 and posed the question, “How old is old?” The response they received depended on the age of the person. 85% of those interviewed said that they were not old yet. People in their 40’s, on average, said 63 years. People in their 50’s, on average, said 68 years. People in their 60’s, on average, said 73 years, while people in their 70’s, on average, said 75 years. (One 90-year-old woman said that a woman isn’t old until she hits 95!)

Most of the local congregations in the Presbyterian Church (USA) have a substantial number of older adults. For example, the median age in my congregation of 120 individuals is 63 years.

Because we are all aging together, the challenges and blessings of the later years are ones we all share. We all struggle with questions of self-esteem, longing to find our ultimate worth in who we are rather than in what we do. We all know grief, loss and failure, face limitations and the final limit, death. We puzzle over our purpose in life and ask ourselves just what of lasting value have we accomplished during our lifetimes. At every age we also stand in wonder and gratitude at the beauties of creation and discover new dimensions of love and friendship. In late life our questions are less theoretical and more personal, our experiences of loss more intense and multiple, our proximity to death assuredly more immediate.



To be human is to exist between birth and death, to be capable of both wrenching anguish and deep joy. From the perspective of faith, the later years provide the most intense and vivid revelation of the paradox at the heart of the Christian Gospel: that in losing our lives we somehow find them; that loss can be gain, and weakness strength; that death is the pathway to life.

Old age can help us achieve greater distance from the values by which our society measures a person’s worth. We can find the new freedom to embrace God’s gift to us in Jesus. Old age is indeed a blessing from God!

OUR EVACUATION STORY

by Dawn Brown, FNP and Liz Von Wellsheim, NP

[Editor's NOTE: On Labor Day, hot, dry, fierce winds began blowing West down off Oregon's Cascade Mountains. A tree limb falling across a power line near Rainbow, Oregon, high up the Mckensie River Valley, started a forest fire. Within just 4 hours the Holiday Farm Fire raced 40 miles down the Mckensie River Valley and grew to 18,000 acres. Twenty-four hours after it started, the unprecedented Holiday Farm Fire had grown to over 140,000 acres, and all the residents living on the Eastern side of Springfield, Oregon, were being ordered to prepare to evacuate. If you are taking care of 90 memory-impaired older adults, evacuating them is a challenge!]

On September 8, 2020, the management team at ElderHealth & Living Memory Village (EHL) were talking about what to do if the Holiday Farm Fire moved into Springfield. We learned our strategic disaster plan that included moving our 90 residents to Thurston High School was not an option, as they were at capacity with families from the McKenzie River communities already impacted by the fire. Our team began looking at our disaster planning protocols and brainstorming.

Different department leads had awesome input into the moving process, what to actually take with us, what vehicles were available, and through Dawn Brown, FNP, we made contact with her church, **Central Presbyterian Church in Eugene**. Her Pastor, Rev. Jennifer Martin, assured us they could accommodate our residents and told us she was just a phone call away for help.

In early preparation for a possible evacuation, we had staff pack three sets of clothes for each resident. All of the residents' families were called and asked, "If we need to evacuate, would you like to come take your loved one home or have them come with us to an evacuation site?" About 25 families were willing and able to come by and pick up their loved one, if needed.

In the late morning of September 8, 2020, EHL was placed on Level 1 evacuation alert. We were told in communication with fire officials that the fire was very unpredictable and at zero percent containment. Our management team met again and decided that if we waited for Level 2, we might not have enough time to evacuate safely. We therefore decided to start evacuating residents from the EHL campus.

The next seven hours were somewhat of a blur. We remember calling Pastor Jennifer and saying, "Are you ready for almost 60 residents to be evacuated to your church?" Her response was, "I'll meet you all at the church." We contacted families to come pick up their loved ones and prepared a packet of medications and a crash course in how to care for their loved one. About 20 families came and took their loved ones home. We simultaneously packed up linen, adult briefs, cosmetics, and prepared the mattresses to be taken and all nine of the very important medication carts.

All of a sudden, there were volunteers and staff moving things onto a long flat-bed trailer and into other trailers, pickup trucks, and cars. Tall stacks of mattresses and nine medication carts were packed and brought to the church and organized in the fel-



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lowship hall to create some sense of space for each home. Tapes were placed at the head of each bed with the residents' names on them.

Then Lane Transit District (LTD) and RideSource, along with private vehicles, transported 57 residents to the Central Presbyterian Church in Eugene. They were escorted from the buses into the church with staff and volunteers talking to them about a sleepover, or getting away from a fire, or just coming here for dinner, depending on their ability to understand. One person told me that when she arrived with more mattresses, it felt like entering a party because everything seemed so upbeat and organized.

And then FOOD from everywhere arrived! We had pizzas donated for everyone, both staff and residents. Piles of canned goods, sanitizing supplies, adult briefs, disposable plates, bread, cereal, peanut butter and jelly, gallons of milk, heaps of fresh fruit and veggies! The following day's full meals for residents and staff arrived!

The health care community called and asked if they could help or bring food or drop off donations. The families were wonderful, and some even helped to clean EHL houses that had been left in chaos on evacuation day.

The residents had fun seeing so many people, wandering around, visiting, and enjoying music and games. It really was a party/sleepover!

On September 13, 2020, we returned to EHL with the fire partly contained and reduced risk. We did everything in reverse. Multiple staff called each family to give an update. Trailers, a U-Haul truck, and staff in pickup trucks came to move the medication carts, beds, and supplies. And the LTD and RideSource and private cars transported the residents back to the EHL campus. Most residents were happy to don their masks and leave, but a few had already grown attached to the church and needed a lot of encouragement to leave. By the time the last bed was loaded into trailers and trucks, the entire church was clean and back to its previous condition.

On Monday, September 14, 2020, we placed each home back on strict quarantine to recreate the individual home "bubbles". We spent hours doing laundry and sorting clothing to each resident. We moved all supplies back to their home or department. When residents that day were asked if it was nice to be back home, many had no recollection of having been gone.

ElderHealth & Living Memory Village wants to thank all of the staff and volunteers.

We also want to thank the food donors, the transport vehicles, the home cleaners, the other communities and professional staff that offered support and help, and mostly, we want to thank all of our families for taking our loved ones home or supporting us as we cared for them at Central Presbyterian Church.

Special thanks for Pastor Jennifer and her staff for being there to answer a thousand questions, helping when folks wandered into their offices, and for the graciousness and kindness you showed to our staff and residents.

Thank you!!



SIDEBAR: An Incredible Outpouring of Love

by Quentin Holmes, Deacon / Central Presbyterian Church

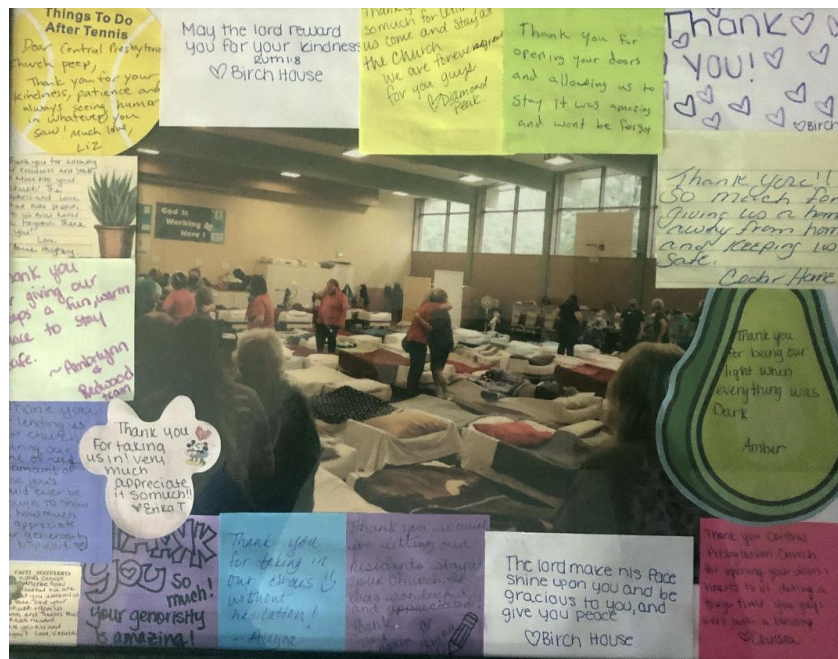
On September 8th our Pastor was at the grocery store when she received a phone call from member Dawn Brown who works at ElderHealth & Living Memory Village. “At some point, we are going to have to evacuate. Can we evacuate our memory care residents to the church?” (Dawn Brown) Alas, due to COVID-19, Central’s building has been closed since March to groups larger than 10 people. “Let me check with the Session.” (Rev Jennifer Martin) Jennifer immediately called the Clerk of Session, who sent out the following urgent e-mail message to the session members:

“Dawn Brown has asked if Central’s building can be used by Elderhealth and Living if it needs to evacuate its 58 residents and staff members. Apparently the Thurston School is already full. Please reply yes or no to this e-mail.” (Within 30 minutes, all 9 of our session members replied “Yes.”)

And thus began a joint adventure-in-faith that was both turbulent and incredibly heartwarming. The residents and staff of EHL arrived at the church in a motley caravan of vehicles. The local TV station featured their story on that afternoon’s news. So many people spontaneously brought donations of food, clothing, toys, etc., to the church that our staff was overwhelmed. A layperson had to be called in just to handle all the incoming calls. A young woman who is a student at the university near our church assumed charge of organizing the donations. The nursery room soon filled to overflowing, the hallway filled, and additional donations continued to show up, dropped off all along the sidewalk. That night, just after all the memory care patients had been fed a hot supper, a Domino’s Pizza truck dropped off 33 piping-hot, freshly-baked pizzas donated by a local medical doctor.

It was interesting to see how our guests processed what was happening. Some thought of it as a sleepover; others, as a trip to a fascinating new place; while others just wanted to get some sleep. In any case, our guests felt welcome and safe and quite at home.

Truthfully, we at Central Presbyterian Church were the ones who were blessed. After months and months and months of enduring the challenges, frustrations, and physical isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic, God had chosen to use us. Thanks be to God!



Collage of Thank You Notes from Our EHL Guests

THE EARTHQUAKE OF CLERGY RETIREMENT

by Rev. Sharon Johnson, HR., wife of Bill A. Johnson,
and Elder Joyce Johnson, wife of Dr. William N. Johnson, HR.

Those of us who live in the Palm Springs/Palm Desert area of Coachella Valley are located near the San Andreas Fault line. You can actually see the fault in this area. It is a huge, enormous, gaping trench that extends for miles. Occasionally, the earth plates move along the fault and the earth shakes; to say the least, it is unnerving. We have noticed that for *some* retired couples, who have spent their life in ministry, retirement brings a shift in the earth plates of a marriage relationship. The earthquake of “Retirement” shifts the “Ground of All Being” (Tillich) and *the shaking needs to stop before equilibrium is restored*.

You might ask why retirement would cause a seismic shift if we have lived happily together for years? The answer is that there are some real challenges that may precipitate this shakeup. These challenges need to be examined and understood. Most retired clergy persons will recognize the following reasons, but may not realize how influential they can be on life habits.

RETIREMENT CHANGES

The dreams of retirement years being full of travel, reading and relaxing, meals at a restaurant weekly or at our leisure, and seeing grandchildren at will, need to be more carefully considered. Retirement incomes are usually smaller than working incomes. With fewer finances available and perhaps some changes in our physical abilities, those dreams will have to be adjusted.

Health problems, and trips to the doctor may take more time and cause more stress. Our time is not always our own, and we are spending more time talking about how to improve our health. Perhaps the doctor has recommended more exercise to keep us fit or recommended limiting our travel plans to local trips.

Our relationship worlds may also have gotten a little smaller – children have left home, grandchildren have their own busy lives, and some close friends may have moved or died.

Before retirement, we probably each had a fairly regular schedule. We may have spent as much waking time with our co-workers as our spouse. There were important items at work that needed our attention. We have noticed that the retiring spouse may expect to spend more time with the partner. It may be that the non-retiree is still very engaged in community, volunteer, or paid employment with regular hours. The retired spouse has to adjust to a different time schedule and find new ways to spend the day. Discovering how one’s partner is actually spending his/her day may be a disconcerting surprise. The scriptures tell us that a man is to leave his father and mother and becomes one flesh with his wife. They are no longer two individuals but one. In retirement we may find ourselves asking the question, how much time is too much time together?

And then there is the complexity of the clergy person’s new relationship with the previous congregation or place of employment. After a productive ministry of several years, when a clergy retires, he/she is often asked (required) to discontinue all activities in the church of their service. Even if another church is nearby, there is a period of adjustment for a couple to enter into a new church community. This separation often creates a great loss of purpose and companionship in the clergy’s and spouse’s life and may lead to isolation or overdependence on the spouse for contact. The loss of mental and spiritual challenges may also result in a lack of interest in other aspects of life. Although some retired pastors may have opportunities for Interim positions, the distance and time of a long commute may hinder the ability to take advantage of these opportunities. We know of one clergy couple who eventually divorced when the pastor left his church for a new location after a long ministry, and his wife refused to follow.

By now some of you may have recognized yourself. You may say, “Fine, now I see some of my unsettled, shaking ground, but what do I do about it?”

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Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase of the Bible, The Message, in Matt. 19:12 says, “*Not everyone is mature enough to live a married life. It requires a certain aptitude and grace... If you are capable of growing into the largeness of marriage, do it.*” The question becomes, how can we grow into the “largeness” of marriage in these retirement years?

PERSONAL CHALLENGES

Where do we begin? This is definitely a season of life that provides an opportunity to learn new skills, new activities, explore what has been put on hold for many years:

1. Is there an interest of yours that has a chance to emerge? Could the spouse learn or grow in knowledge and enjoyment from your special area of expertise, such as watercolor painting, gardening, or bird watching? Invite your spouse to join in the activity by taking a class.
2. Are there special activities that could be shared? In the case of one of our authors, Sharon has learned to enjoy riding a Harley Motorcycle with her husband, who has ridden one for years, and doing this has led to new locales to see and enjoy. Our other author and clergy spouse took cooking lessons to improve their culinary skills. One clergyman and his wife took a series of ballroom dancing classes.
3. Has one of the spouses always wanted to write for a publication? Can you Google to see if there is a writer’s group nearby, such as local newspaper or community magazine or college writing class? This could be a new talent or latent talent that just needs honing.
4. Look at your home. Is a new decorating scheme needed? Could you both become interested in home furnishings or antiques or start a hobby working one day a week at an Antique Mall?
5. What about the local Thrift Stores. Could they use some extra hours of help from both of you? Our local Coachella Valley Rescue Mission and other Thrift Stores need workers daily.
6. How about becoming a photographer of your family or local civic group?

COMMUNITY AND FELLOWSHIP

Hebrews 10:25 implies that we are to encourage each other.

Even in this 2020 year of COVID-19 putting restraints on our social activities, pastors can promote fellowship and provide a community group which might continue their church leadership with spouses:

1. Perhaps it is time to begin a small Zoom Bible Study/Fellowship group from your home. Begin with just trusted Christian friends and a study that focuses on fellowship. Or look for an existing small group that needs another couple to make it stronger.
2. Find another retired pastor or retired church member who is also looking for fellowship and join for informal times together in an outside get together once a month. Dr. Bill Johnson has begun an outside lunch group locally once a month.
3. Begin or join a book study group. This can be done on Zoom by choosing a book and setting a time to discuss it with simple guidelines.
4. Have a Bible study time with your spouse...a radio ministry daily, or a weekly ministry time. Read through a book of the Bible together and discuss it in terms of life today.

Support may come in a variety of ways. We have known and observed clergy that needed to deal with family or extended family regarding issues of addiction. Al-anon, AA, Gamblers Anonymous, and Overeaters Anonymous are only a few of the support groups that meet specific needs with others who are seeking the same help.

FAMILY TIME

We believe the family could be at the top of the agenda for retirement quality time.

1. Is this the time you could vacation together? Bill and Joyce Johnson have become avid travelers and recently took a day trip to the Apple Pie Capital of Julian, CA. Researching the historical background and seeing new parts of Southern California was half the fun.
2. Are there ways you could encourage your children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews to step out and

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- explore a new job or school opportunity. Joyce Johnson is working with a grandchild on learning about the Stock Market.
3. Letter writing/Skype/emails to family are important ties that could enhance relationships. Expand beyond birthday greetings to monthly events.
 4. Photo parties or making family photo albums might help with cleaning out drawers and bring joy to family members. Working on a family genealogy has been rewarding to many and can be done easily on computers.

There are so many opportunities to grow in our maturity and faith as we have more time to explore our full potential. It may be that each person will need to explore their own interests, gifts, and abilities separately from their spouse.

The Apostle Paul tells us that love is patient and kind. We have come to believe that patience and kindness towards our spouse may be the key to a rewarding and fulfilling retirement. One thing is certain, retirement has caused a shift in many significant relationships. The EARTHQUAKE OF RETIREMENT can be a new opening in the ground that sets us back on the solid path of finding fresh life in our marriages.

LIFETIME REFLECTIONS

by Don Carlin, Retired Hospice Chaplain / Philadelphia, PA

On September 9, 2020, I celebrated 65 years of life. On October 8, I celebrated 43 years of urban life. I am deeply grateful to God. I am grateful for my first church home in New York City, a storefront Baptist church with African-American, Hispanic, and Asian members, pastored by my Cuban friend. Three African-American families welcomed me into their apartments to lead weekly Bible Studies. I received meals from a Dominican lady and a Bulgarian refugee. In my second church home, a large Baptist church in mid-town Manhattan, I was surrounded by worshippers from fifty nations. Every Communion was “World Communion” Sunday. Four church families “adopted” me: one multi-racial family, one African-American, two Jamaican-American. I taught the weekly high school Sunday School Class with African-American teens, and others from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Mexico, Columbia, China, India, and Swaziland. These were some of the most eager and welcoming students I have ever taught.



**Don Carlin,
Retired Hospice Chaplain**

My paid employment was in NYC public high schools, tutoring and mentoring African-American, Hispanic and Asian students, including many children of immigrants. I was welcomed into their work sites, and they broke my stereotypes of urban teens as many volunteered in community service.

I moved to Philadelphia for three years of training in a broadly ecumenical seminary with many African-American, Hispanic, and Asian students and a roommate from India. Learning theology and practicing ministry with such diverse fellow students was enriching and enlightening. I thank God for my academic advisor, a black Baptist pastor, and for three years of “field education” experience in a racially-integrated Presbyterian church.

Returning to NYC, I spent my next six years working in foster care agencies. In my first agency, African-American, Hispanic, and Asian teens living in group settings welcomed me warmly as I provided social services and spiritual care and as they looked out for each other. Here I met my first Vietnamese refugee. In my second agency, I was “foster home finder” and was welcomed into hundreds of homes and apartments by mostly people with black or brown skin who entrusted me with their life stories as I assessed their foster parenting qualifications. I’m so grateful for all the compassionate and competent caregivers I met, including gay/lesbian and Muslim caregivers. They made many sacrifices to care for the city’s most vulnerable children, including HIV+ babies.

In NYC, I rented from a gracious Russian-Jewish couple, generous Greek families, and a Chinese couple. Post

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-Seminar, I transitioned my church ministry to a large Presbyterian church which extended this former farm boy several invitations. I was ordained a deacon, and ultimately chaired the 36-member Board of Deacons. The deacons included staff at the United Nations, gay and lesbian caregivers, and folks with roots in Cuba, Iran, and Ghana. Never before have I worked with lay people more committed to compassionate service within a congregation.

In Philadelphia, I worked in foster care, finding “people gifts” similar to those I found in NYC. I then worked eight years in an interfaith organization serving vulnerable and older adults living in long-term care settings. I came to appreciate so many compassionate congregational volunteers, many of them African-American, and also many compassionate paid caregivers, many of them African-American, African, Caribbean-American, and Hispanic. Transitioning to Hospice Chaplaincy in 2005, I came beside some 1500 people who died under my spiritual care over a period of 7-1/2 years. A majority of them were people of color, and I was warmly welcomed into hundreds of homes and hundreds of nursing home rooms where I was entrusted with people’s life stories and faith stories. I witnessed amazing love, amazing care, deep pain, and deep faith. Many people, including Jewish and Muslim patients/caregivers, prayed for me, even as I prayed with/for them.

Since 2013, as a volunteer, I have continued giving emotional and spiritual care to scores of vulnerable people of all backgrounds. There is mutual sharing. So many stories! So many memories! Now, in this COVID-19 era, the people who feed me, the people who care for me medically, who supply my essential needs day-by-day in my neighborhood — almost all are African-Americans. I thank God for them and pray often for them.

For 19 years now, I have lived at the same address in an incredible diverse neighborhood where many yard signs today read “Black Lives Matter” and “Hate has no place here.” No church or neighborhood is perfect, but I’m grateful to be surrounded by diverse people who care for each other, who love their country and seek to correct its shortcomings, and who have compassion for our brothers and sisters around the world — all created in God’s image. I am enriched.

COVID-19, THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

by Rev. Dr. William N. Johnson, H.R.

When Coronavirus began to strike the USA in late 2019 and/or early 2020, many were looking at Wuhan, China, as the guilty party. Many of us older adults were dumfounded, as were many others of all ages worldwide. What is happening and how do we deal with it? Who caused it? Is it a biological warfare weapon or just a tragic accident coming from a virology lab in Wuhan? Is it basically one of the epidemic attacks, like the flu or polio or measles or shingles, that have stomped all over humanity for centuries?

As I write this we are in the midst of the roll-out of the Coronavirus vaccines from several pharmaceutical companies throughout the world. With this incredible “*Warp Speed*” (to quote President Donald J. Trump) development, we are beginning to glimpse a much-needed decline in the terrible and tragic spread of the virus that has caused so much damage and fear. However, that fear and damage is not totally over yet.

Of course, much of what I am saying today is just repetitive and becoming “*old hat*” as we have listened, cringed, cried, fought, sought, and prayed about what to do next about this pandemic, sometimes just wanting to run and hide or sit glued to the TV or possibly read a good book.

Looking back, many of us well remember the threats of polio to either ourselves or our children or grandchildren, and it was frightening. Many of us got the polio shots or pills or whatever was offered back then. Today, many of us get our annual flu shot every year, and it usually helps to keep us well. There are vaccinations for measles, shingles, etc., that we rush to the local pharmacy to get, or we make appointments with our primary care physician. And all is basically A-O.K.

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But now, with COVID-19 raging across the world, creating illnesses, deaths, and fear, and while scientists are working day and night to develop vaccines to combat that virus, we may begin to look around and wonder where God is in the midst of all of this medical (and spiritual) warfare? That, I believe, is an essential question that many of us who are retired from our careers, including retired Presbyterian clergy, are asking and praying about, discussing with family and friends, and floating around in our minds and hearts as we seek to live and to serve God and those around us - even at good old retired ages.

So, now what? As I write this, and you read this, some of you will probably be saying something like, *“What is that old man trying to say?”* Others will mutter, *“What a waste of time!”* But I hope that some will read, think, and respond, *“Boy, has Johnson re-birthed this in ways that help us think and clarify and maybe even act!”* Time will tell.

For me, this is not only about the medical side of this pandemic. It is also about the way in which the Holy Spirit works in our lives and in the heart and soul of all of humanity, whether they know or recognize the Holy Spirit or not. As followers of Jesus the Christ and believers in the power of the Holy Spirit at work, this makes all the difference in the world – or should I say in *“all of Creation?”* Sitting in our living rooms reading or watching TV, or putting on our masks and venturing out to the grocery store or for a medical appointment, or even standing in line for our vaccination, we are mostly being cautious and even a bit frightened. Oh, yes, with the advent of the vaccines and their distribution (beginning with the medical workers and frontline people), there is a glimmer of hope that we may have received a dose or two by the time you read what I am writing.

Our faith in Christ and belief in the work of the Holy Spirit means we are not captivated by the impulses and demands of the world around us, but that we are surrounded by the powerful presence of the God of gods, the Creator and Sustainer of life and all of creation, the One revealed in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the one we call *“The Christ,”* the Messiah, God in human flesh. Therefore, even in the midst of this coronavirus pandemic, we believe that the Holy Spirit is with us and at work within us. Tragic as are the deaths and hospitalizations, we are not alone. Incredible as is the rapid development of vaccines, we are still convinced that God is with us and guiding us throughout all that happens. The rapid development of the vaccines, I believe, is not by accident. They have come about because of the incredible work of brilliant scientists who have been given insights and abilities beyond anything we could possibly imagine. For me, that demonstrates the power and presence of the Holy Spirit at work, whether those at work accomplishing these “miracles” acknowledge it or not.

What does all of this mean for us in the year 2021? First, for many of us, this means that although there are times when we feel vulnerable and afraid, and maybe even stumbling and deserted, God is still with us, never leaving nor forsaking us. Second, in Jesus the Christ, God has provided a way in which we see and walk with God in ways never before imagined. Third, in the person of the Holy Spirit, we have the powerful presence of God at work within and beside us in what we do and in all we encounter, even when those encounters hit us right in the middle of our weaknesses and vulnerabilities.

Immanuel - God with us! Is that not the heart of who and what we are, as God’s Holy Spirit guides, comforts, escorts, and enables us to deal with the complexities of life in the midst of that which is good and that which is frightening?

I, for one, am convinced, as are many of you, that this presence of the Holy Spirit is true, and we are in the midst of seeing the power of the Holy Spirit guiding and opening new vistas for all of us. The development of coronavirus vaccines is an ample demonstration of the Holy Spirit at work in and through you and me, and even working in and through those who might not believe or recognize the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit.

Let me ask you, as you approach the end of my thinking: 1). In what ways has the coronavirus changed or challenged your life? 2). In what ways have you been able to help those around you to cope with the fears this

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virus brings? 3). In what ways have you and those around you allowed, or been open to, the Holy Spirit to guide, strengthen, and enable you to minister to those fearing and fighting this virus? And, finally, 4) In what ways has your commitment to Jesus the Christ, with the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, made a difference in your home, neighborhood, community, church, and the world as we struggle with COVID-19?

This is a Miracle unfolding before our questioning eyes!

A LITTLE GIRL'S DOG

We don't know who replied, but there is a beautiful soul working in the dead letter office of the US postal service.

Our 14-year-old dog Abbey died last month. The day after she passed away, my four-year-old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey. She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her. I told her that I thought we could do so, and she dictated these words:

**Dear God,
Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I am happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick. I hope you will play with her. She likes to swim and play with balls. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her you will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.**

Love, Meredith

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey and Meredith and addressed it to God/Heaven. We put our return address on it. Then Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven. That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office. A few days later, she asked if God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper and addressed "To Meredith" on our front porch. The handwriting was in an unfamiliar hand. Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, "When a Pet Dies." Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey & Meredith and this note:

**Dear Meredith,
Abbey arrived safely in heaven. Having the picture was a big help, and I recognized her right away. Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart. Abbey loved being your dog. Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in, so I am sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.**

Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and sending it to me. What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you. I send my blessings every day, and remember that I love you very much. By the way, I'm easy to find. I am wherever there is love.

Love, God



2021 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION
Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network (POAMN)
A 501(c)3 organization
(please print all information)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Synod: _____ Presbytery: _____

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*** I would like to receive future *PNN* issues by: email hard copy

Membership Type:

- \$50 Individual \$75 Couple
- \$35 Affiliate (non-voting) \$125 Institutional, Church & Judiciary Membership

To continue POAMN’s ministry to older adults and those engaged in ministries for older adults, additional gifts are welcome including those in honor or memory of someone. All extra gifts are tax deductible. Gifts can also be given through the PC(USA) Extra Commitment Opportunity (ECO), to account E048101.

Extra gift of \$ _____ to POAMN a 501(c)3 organization

Extra gift of \$ _____ enclosed to the Miriam Dunson Legacy Fund

Gift of \$ _____ enclosed in honor / memory of: _____

(include address if you would like family notified of gift): _____

Gift to support membership of another person or church: _____

(include all contact information of that person/church)

Make checks payable to:
POAMN
c/o Lynne Trout, Treasurer
410 Richard Avenue
Delanco, NJ 08075

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

MEMBERSHIP FOR 2021

Membership fees for 2021 are now being accepted. Thank you to those that have joined POAMN for 2021!
 Special thanks to those that have made an extra donation to support POAMN!

2021 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL
 application is available on page 19

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