

## Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

ISSUE 69

2022 WINTER

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**Editor:**

Quentin Holmes

541-933-3324

holmes3324@msn.com

**Publisher:**

Ginny Nyhuis

615-426-1545

gnyhuis@gmail.com

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### A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Good Morning from Oregon,

The theme of this issue of *PNN* is, *In Old Age They Still Produce Fruit*. The year 2021 was challenging for everyone. The year 2022 is our opportunity to use what we have done and learned during these past two years to establish better ways of connecting with others by being extremely creative. As one enters their "third thirty" of life, physical and mental capabilities begin to decline; however, spiritual growth continues to increase. Older adults are a blessing. They "continue to bear fruit," and in doing so, they uplift and inspire others even in these times of uncertainty.

Three articles in this issue of *PNN* share insights on *In Old Age They Still Produce Fruit*:

- "MEMO from Membership" by Linda Rauenbuehler
- "Fine China & Fellowship During the COVID-19 Era" by Quentin Holmes
- "'All-Black Governing Bodies' at 25" by Fred Tangeman

Other articles in this issue include:

- "POAMN President's Reflection" by Pat Baker
- "2021 POAMN National Conference – Part 2" by Quentin Holmes
- "Small Group Opportunity: 'Cultivating Your Own Older Adult Ministry'" by Steve Aschmann
- "Continuing Help for Older Adults Remotely"
- "Help! I'm Afraid to Die"
- "The Ending Well Workshop: A Gift to Our Loved Ones" by Bruce Calkins and Diane Frash

*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. The theme of our Winter issue will be "*The Saints Among Us*". Deadline for manuscripts is April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. 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 A. Holmes / Marcola, OR



Jane & Quentin Holmes



**Pat Baker, POAMN President,**  
with 5-year-old grandson,  
Novelle Adoette Baker Hays  
(Pat calls him "Novy")

## POAMN PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

We're several weeks into 2022 and I hope all of you are well. I pray that each of you will find comfort and good health throughout this new year. The theme for this winter edition is from Psalms 92:14. The Contemporary English Version says, "They will be like trees that stay healthy and fruitful, even when they are old." In this song for the Sabbath day the Lord is talking about the righteous. Verse 14 ends by saying, "The Lord is righteous. He's my rock. There's nothing unrighteous in him." The aged Psalmist prays for God's help so that he or she can tell about God's righteousness. In this next year I hope that you will go to God and pray to him for help when problems and challenges arise, knowing that he is there for you to guide and direct your steps.

I'd love to hear from you about your older adult ministry and any special events you plan to hold for older congregants or family caregivers. POAMN will be glad to share your events through our social media. My contact information is [pat@sapctucker.org](mailto:pat@sapctucker.org) or 678-438-3673.

*Pat Baker*

## SMALL GROUP OPPORTUNITY: "CULTIVATING YOUR OWN OLDER ADULT MINISTRY"

by Steve Aschmann, POAMN Vice-President

A group of eight leaders of ministry with older adults will soon be engaged in POAMN's newest small group opportunity, "Cultivating Your Own Older Adult Ministry". POAMN is partnering with the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Office of Christian Formation to offer this online, coach-facilitated cohort. The group plans to gather for six 90-minute sessions. Sessions will be held on consecutive Thursdays at 3:30 PM, starting on February 24.

Each cohort member will enjoy the freedom to select their own area of focus and develop individualized goals designed to build a vital older adult ministry. The sessions are designed to help participants fashion and grow effective ministries in their own settings. For example, a group member may plan a special event, design a study series, organize a new area of service, address a specific challenge, connect with a specific age group like Boomers, or create a very unique opportunity. In addition, cohort members have the opportunity to examine key topics and current issues facing senior adults that are of special interest to them. Participants will be active partners in learning: supporting, guiding, and resourcing the group.

We are delighted that the coach for this group will be Sarah Erickson. Sarah is a skilled coach, with experience developing older adult ministry leaders. She serves as the Director of Lifelong Learning at Columbia Theological Seminary and the POAMN Certification Coordinator.

Currently, we have received registrations for all eight slots and are maintaining a small waiting list. If you are interested in participating in a similarly themed cohort later this year, please leave your contact information with Steve Aschmann, [se43aschmann@gmail.com](mailto:se43aschmann@gmail.com) and check out our website: [www.poamn.org](http://www.poamn.org) for announcements.



Sarah Erickson, Director  
Center for Lifelong Learning



Linda Rauenbuehler  
Membership Committee Chair

## MEMO FROM MEMBERSHIP

I mulled over this issue's theme, **"In Old Age They Still Produce Fruit,"** for awhile because I am surrounded by older people who are extremely productive. Then it hit me!! Louise is just the person I want to write about because she lives this theme every day!

Louise is 99 years old and lives in Montana. She is my father's cousin's wife's mother. Once a week she drives herself 17 miles into town to go to Craft Day at the senior center. There she teaches people how to knit and crochet. She has also been known to teach the making of jams, jellies, and divinity at the senior center.

Until about four years ago, when the program shut down, Louise served as a Senior Companion for up to four people who were younger than she was. Even after the program was discontinued, she kept on visiting her "companions" until they each passed away.

Louise takes care of her own house, maintains her garden (with the help of her daughter), drives herself to doctor's appointments and the grocery store, and even oil paints.

This coming June 23<sup>rd</sup>, Louise will turn 100 years old. My husband Ted and I look forward to taking my mother to Montana this summer and attending that birthday party for Louise, an amazing lady who exemplifies the theme **"In Old Age They Still Produce Fruit"**.

### Membership Renewal for 2022

If you have not already done so, **now is the time to renew your membership for 2022.** An application for renewal is at the end of this newsletter, or you can print one off from our website at [www.poamn.org](http://www.poamn.org) and send it to our Treasurer, Chris Pomfret, along 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 2022 brings for POAMN. Exciting opportunities are being planned to continue connecting people who have a passion for working with, and enabling, older adults.

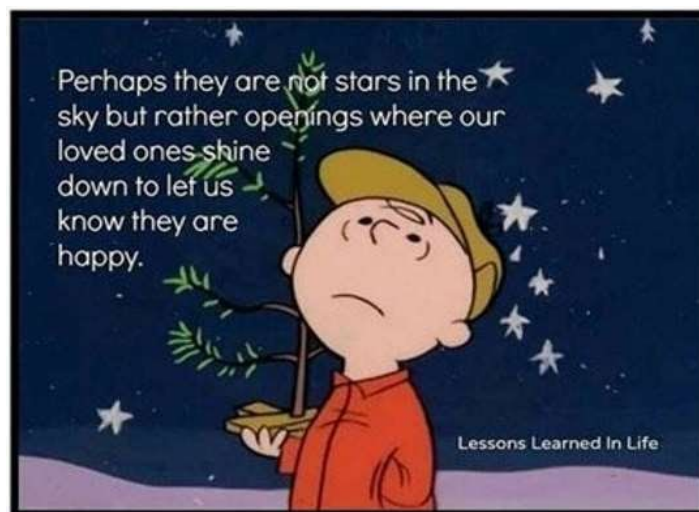
### Certificate of Older Adult Ministry

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 obtained by going to Columbia Theological Seminary and looking under LifeLong Learning.

Respectfully submitted,

*Linda Rauenbuehler*

POAMN Membership Chair





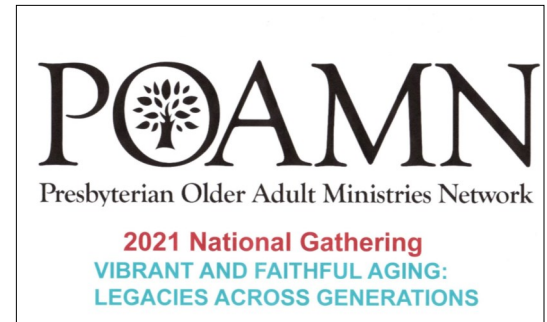
## 2021 POAMN NATIONAL CONFERENCE - PART 2

### *Vibrant and Faithful Aging: Legacies Across Generations (cont.)*

by Quentin A. Holmes, Editor POAMN Network News

POAMN's 2021 National Conference was held virtually from Tuesday, Oct. 26<sup>th</sup> to Thursday, Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. This article is the last in a two-part series that attempts to share both the substance and the spirit of this uplifting, inspiring, and informative conference. More than 100 people from all across the USA and Canada took part in this virtual conference.

A POAMN National Conference involves months of planning and coordination. Thank you, Conference Chairpersons Lillian Rhudy and Adrienne Knight and all of the dedicated planning committee members! Staging this conference became especially challenging when it had to be held "virtually". GNTV Media Ministry did a superb job of handling technical support for the entire three-day online event.



MASTER VIEWGRAPH

Day Two of POAMN's National Conference was Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>. The last workshop on this day was titled, "Continuing Help for Older Adults Remotely." This workshop was led by Stephanie Fritz from the Office of Christian Formation within the Presbyterian Mission Agency/ PC (USA). The COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to pivot into virtual meetings. Many things that we already knew got magnified by the pandemic. Suddenly, we were not able to meet in our church buildings. This COVID-19 pandemic has been a collective trauma for all of us. We have had to find new ways to connect with one another. Key areas for doing this successfully are: Faith Formation, Community, and Pastoral Care. Supporting Stephanie's workshop were three ministers with a passion for working with, and enabling, older adults: Brad Sheppard—Pastor, Immanuel Presbyterian Church, Cincinnati, Ohio; Jennifer Hrynyk, Pastor, Community Congregational Church, Short Hills, NJ; and Bonnie Boe, Commissioned Lay Pastor, Moorpark Presbyterian Church, Moorpark, CA. *(Please see page 9 for an article that shares additional information presented during this exciting workshop.)*

Day Three of our 2021 National Conference, Thursday October 28<sup>th</sup>, opened with Worship and Music led by Rev. Dennis and Donna Haines. Donna sang hymns while their friend Ted Horowitz provided accompaniment on the piano. Rev. Haines based his heartfelt sermon on scriptures from Joshua, Chapter 3, and the Gospel of Mark, Chapter 6. In Joshua, Chapter 3, Moses is leading the children of Israel and his ministry is nearing its end. When they come to the Jordan River, it is at flood stage. Miraculously, the flood waters stop flowing and allow the children of Israel to pass through. In Mark 6:47-52, the disciples are out in a boat on the sea and Jesus is on the land. A storm arises and the disciples are terrified of drowning. Jesus walks out on the water to them, tells them to "have courage," and gets into their boat. Immediately, the storm ceases its fury. Rev. Haines' message to us as we come out of this COVID pandemic was two-fold: (1) we need to get our feet wet; and (2) we need to realize that Jesus is in the boat with us. The world needs us as everyone comes out of this pandemic. It will not be easy, but Jesus is in the boat with us. We need to know that we have:

- The Faith – that has been deepened;
- The Hope – in Christ that we bring;
- The Love – we want to share to change the world.

Thank you Dennis and Donna for bringing us the message that the best years of the church are ahead of us!

Following the 2021 POAMN Business Meeting, additional workshops took place. Rev. Carolyn Mitchell of Presbyterian Village led a workshop entitled "Help! I am Afraid to Die." Goals of the first part were to investigate the preconceptions that most of us have about the dying process, to share our fears about dying, and to ask why we are afraid of death. The second part of Rev. Mitchell's workshop delved into scripture to shed

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

light on frequently asked spiritual questions. The third part of the workshop provided an opportunity for folks who wished to do so to share their own intensely personal experiences from when a loved one had died. Trusting, intimate, profound... again and again, people's words described seemingly little things that brought a sense of comfort and peace spilling over them at a very sacred moment in time. *(Please see page 10 for an article sharing the helpful information presented during this touching workshop.)*

Then, Rev. Mary Currie of Houston, TX, led a workshop entitled "Rituals for the Final Third of Life." Rev. Currie told stories and related several personal situations to spur our imagination about how things can be different in our own congregation as we reorganize, reopen, and rethink about how we stand with others in the last third of their lives. We understand this better than we did two years ago when COVID-19 shut everything down. So many rites and rituals of passage have been torn away from people since March, 2020. Rev. Currie called out three game-changing influences that have moved the church in a new direction: (1) The Millennial Influence; (2) The Historical Influence; and (3) The Biblical Influence. Then she pointed out how this COVID pandemic has moved the church in new directions no one imagined could ever happen. Driven by time and necessity, we have boldly gone where Presbyterian churches have never gone before. Rev. Currie described the good things we have learned. She also noted how many, many major passages in life came and went without being celebrated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the pandemic, major passages in the lives of our older adults all too often came and went without recognition. Rituals are a way of remembering; rituals have the power to turn the scary into the sacred. Today, thanks to what we have learned during the COVID pandemic, we have an opportunity that few other generations have had. Rev. Mary Currie challenged each of us to help our congregations create rituals and prayers to help older adults celebrate and remember important passages in their lives, to turn the scary into the sacred.

The final workshop of POAMN's 2021 National Conference was led by Chris Pomfret, a retired engineer who now resides in New Orleans LA., Titled "Spirituality: A Vital Element that Binds All Generations," this workshop was essentially a lesson plan which church educators can use to help congregants explore and become aware of their spirituality. Chris' collegial leadership style just naturally encouraged active participation by each attendee. The workshop intentionally minimized the religious elements one might associate with spirituality in order to embrace people who consider themselves as "spiritual but not religious." The workshop unfolded in five steps, with ample time for discussion at key points along the way.



Chris Pomfret

### **1. What is "The Third Thirty?"**

A person's mental and physical capabilities continue to increase during the first sixty or so years of life. Spiritual growth also increases during the first 60 or so years of life. However, beyond age 60 or so, i.e., entering the "third thirty" of life, a person's mental and physical capabilities drop off sharply, but their spiritual growth continues upward. This is the magical period where just being becomes more significant than doing. For many of us, it is a time for pondering deep questions concerning the meaning of life itself.

### **2. What is Spirituality?**

The workshop wrestled with the definition of the word "spirituality." Even well-known sources of definitions, such as Webster's Dictionary, aren't of much help here, for they tend to be circular. The definition of "spirituality" that we felt most comfortable with was, "The unique, unbreakable relationship between the heart and the mind that allows one to endure the most harrowing of circumstances."

*(Continued on page 6)*

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### 3. Defining our own Spirituality

Workshop participants were invited to relate their own spirituality to phrases such as:

- Being at peace with our age and our mortality
- Feeling gratitude for life
- Practicing forgiveness
- Leaving a legacy
- Harvesting our lives
- Showing appreciation to others

### 4. Finding our own Spirituality

Thought provoking questions included:

- We tend to measure other people's spirituality, but do we ever measure our own?
- How do we find and measure our own?
- Have we even been aware of it?
- When do/did we become aware of it?
- How do we cultivate/optimize it?

Needless to say, the discussion springing from these questions was far-ranging and very thoughtful.

### 5. Using our Spirituality in our Third Thirty

There are a number of ways that, intentionally or not, our actions share our spirituality with others.

Examples include:

- Accepting help - whenever we accept help, we, in fact, give to the person offering help;
- Practicing grace - selfless behavior is contagious;
- Showing humility and modesty;
- Talking about death - being at peace with the inevitable;
- Being civil - aka, "The Golden Rule;"
- Helping others "invisibly" - paying it forward without taking credit for it;
- Exercising mindfulness - being aware of the present;
- Minimizing denial and maximizing realism.

During our discussion period, Chris Pomfret had us focus on the question, "Is spirituality overt across all the generations?" The consensus was that regardless of whether an individual uses the word spiritual to describe themselves, spirituality undergirds acts of kindness and sharing across all the generations.

Chris Pomfret summarized his workshop.

*"Spirituality is our most valuable attribute as we age. Spirituality is not delivered to one's door. One has to search for it, find it, practice it, then repeat over and over. In one word, spirituality is mindfulness."*

Thus, the 2021 POAMN National Conference drew to a close. Although we were not able to physically come together in one place this year, the sharing, the caring, the joy of being in the company of men and women of deep and abiding faith with a passion for ministering with, to, and for older adults left each of us feeling uplifted and inspired. Thanks be to God!

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*"There are only two days in the year that nothing can be done.  
One is called yesterday and the other is called tomorrow.  
So, today is the right day to love, believe, do and mostly live."*

(Dalai Lama)

## FINE CHINA AND FELLOWSHIP DURING THE COVID-19 ERA

by Quentin A. Holmes, Editor PNN

Here in Oregon, like other places in the USA, the COVID pandemic has been a collective trauma for all of us. Some days it feels like we are beginning to come out of the pandemic. Some days it feels like this pandemic will never end. Since Christmas, the Omicron variant of COVID-19 has caused weekly averages of new cases of COVID to soar. At the previous peak of the pandemic (in mid-September of 2021), the weekly average was 1,900 new cases in Oregon, and hardly anyone knew someone who had COVID-19. Currently (in mid-January 2022), the weekly average in Oregon is 7,500 new cases, and everybody seems to know several people who have recently tested positive. Nevertheless, my wife Jane and I try to enjoy life while being mindful of staying reasonably safe.

We had a clear, sunny day last Saturday. So, Jane and Yours Truly drove over to the Oregon Coast for the day. No big thing, but it was a delight to get out of the house and go see the Pacific Ocean together, much like we used to do quite frequently.

Last Wednesday, we invited a 90 year-old widow from our church, Margaret Prentice, to come out and have lunch with us at our home here in the Woods in the Mohawk River. Jane and I and Margaret Prentice have each been double-vaccinated and each of us has received booster vaccine. Margaret Prentice just finished downsizing and moving from her home of more than 40 years into a retirement facility in Eugene, Oregon. Making that move was a huge change for her. She gladly accepted our invitation to come out, relax, have lunch, and go exploring on our timberlands. I picked her up at 11AM and brought her out to our house. Jane had the table all set with her finest china and had prepared a healthy, but delicious, lunch. We ate with lighted candles and classical music playing softly in the background. Egads, this was the first time Jane had used her fine china in more than five years! Then, Yours Truly made a crackling fire in the fireplace so all three of us could enjoy its cheery warmth while Jane and Margaret sipped English tea. Of course, we went to explore the Woods (See PHOTO). Afterwards, Jane and I drove Margaret home, and then we went in with Margaret to see her new digs – a 4th floor apartment looking out over the Willamette River. Margaret Prentice chose the apartment she did because she loves to hike and can easily do so on the well-maintained walking paths along the Willamette River and also around the nearby Delta Ponds with their abundance of migratory birds.



Margaret Prentice and Jane Holmes  
at "Rocket Launch Point"

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*"The days of our life are seventy years,  
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong...  
So teach us to count our days  
that we may gain a wise heart."*

(Psalm 90:10, 12)



## CONTINUING HELP FOR OLDER ADULTS REMOTELY

by Quentin A. Holmes, Editor PNN

On Wednesday, Oct. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Stephanie Fritz from the Office of Christian Formation in the Presbyterian Mission Agency/ PC(USA) led a workshop entitled “Continuing Help for Older Adults Remotely.” The Office of Christian Formation is all about faith formation with an emphasis on “transformation” rather than “information.” Supporting the workshop led by Stephanie were three ministers with a passion for working with and enabling older adults:

- Rev. Brad Sheppard – Pastor at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, OH, shared his thoughts on Faith Formation during this era of COVID-19;
- Rev. Dr. Jennifer Hrynyk – Pastor at Community Congregational Church in Short Hills, NJ, shared her thoughts on Community during this era of COVID-19;
- Rev. Bonnie Boe – Commissioned Lay Pastor at Moorpark Presbyterian Church in Moorpark, CA, shared thoughts on Pastoral Care during this COVID era.



Stephanie Fritz  
Christian Formation/ PMA

Presbyterian faith focuses on faith formation and community; at its best that community is intergenerational. In March, 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced all of us to pivot into virtual meetings. Many things that we already knew got magnified by the pandemic: We have always had super-busy families for whom physical attendance at our worship services is a challenge. We have always had older adults who live in retirement facilities and are not able to come to the church building for worship. Now, all of us were all on the same playing field, all were in the same boat – we had to find new ways to connect! Connection really does matter. Listening to a 20-minute sermon is a good start, but it doesn’t provide person-to-person interaction. Key areas for doing this successfully are: Faith Formation, Community, and Pastoral Care. The COVID pandemic has been a collective trauma for all of us. Some days we might feel like we are beginning to come out of the pandemic; and some days we might feel like this pandemic will never end!

All of our ministers and congregations are currently wrestling with how to do “trauma informed ministry.” The Center for Disease Control has called out six essential principles that shape trauma. Those principles are:

- Safety;
- Trustworthiness;
- Peer Support;
- Collaboration;
- Empowerment – voice and choice;
- Cultural, Historic, and Gender issues.

Keeping these six principles in mind will greatly help us enable faith formation through connection.

### Virtual Christian Faith Formation – Rev. Brad Sheppard

In March, 2020, our world changed abruptly. Suddenly, we could not gather physically for worship, for fellowship, for bible studies, or for committee meetings. Making worship services available online can only go so far. The opportunities for person-to-person interactions that have always accompanied attending worship are missing. Rev. Sheppard shared how his ministry is moving forward in ways that are informed by the trauma that we have all been experiencing. Years ago, when ZOOM was first introduced, it seemed like a novel tool useful to business people who were located all across the country. Now, ZOOM provides a new way of connecting members of the congregation. Rev. Sheppard’s congregation began by using ZOOM for their Wednesday afternoon Bible Study. They soon realized that ZOOM can be a great equalizer. A lot of their older members join in by telephone. Often they are living alone and delight in the opportunity to join in from the comfort of their home and favorite chair. Rev. Sheppard’s Wednesday afternoon Bible Study is a safe space to them. They experience peer support and feel confident in listening to each other. This sharing is as

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important to them as learning more about their faith. Sharing stories with others about their joys is empowering; doing so builds faith in a virtual setting. Rev. Sheppard acts more as a facilitator than as their minister. Previously, when he would ask for someone to volunteer to lead the group in prayer, the request would be met with a lengthy silence. Now, on ZOOM and in the comfort of their favorite chair at home, they readily volunteer and often lead the group in prayer in a novel way! The big challenge today is how to create sacred space when everyone is relaxed and at ease, sitting in their own home, with mundane distractions vying for their attention.

### **Pastoral Care – Rev. Jennifer Hrynyk**

The outbreak of COVID-19 suddenly changed everything. Ministers scrambled to pull together worship services that could be watched online. Rev. Hrynyk's congregation made the transition in just two days and never missed a worship service. Because of the size of their congregation, they went with Facebook LIVE and YouTube. Rev. Hrynyk became a "digital pastor" and focused on inviting people to stay connected in ways that were more than just passive. She found that pastoral care undergirded everything, for children as well as older adults. The need was for more than just a teaching space. Small groups fostered community. And assisting older adults to learn to use the technology opened up conversations on pastoral care.

*"As things began to improve, we found ourselves faced with "Hybrid Reality" wherein some folks are seated in the sanctuary during worship while other folks are participating in worship virtually." (Rev. Hrynyk)*

The challenge was to create sacred space in places that don't seem sacred, places where there are many distractions. Creating a sense of trust was the underlying key: a sense of trust in her as their pastor and a trust that God is with us in these two very different spaces.

### **Community – Rev. Bonnie Boe**

Rev. Boe's congregation had called a new minister a mere six weeks before COVID-19 erupted and closed everything down. Fortunately, they had already been working toward streaming the worship services. ZOOM would not do the job because they have more than 250 people in their congregation. Connecting people in the midst of COVID-19 isolation was the challenge. Even with online worship up and running, older adults were missing the fellowship aspect. Their bible studies were the first to embrace virtual technology. They live-streamed worship and followed up by having chat groups shortly after worship. Those chat groups were soon replaced by holding a virtual Fellowship Coffee Hour on ZOOM shortly after worship. They discovered that people were more open to conversations and to sharing during these virtual events. Rev. Boe recommends asking yourself, "What are people missing?" Then make that an online event. Her church has put together online workshops on topics as varied as Avoiding Fraud/Scams, Financial Planning, Estate Planning, Book Clubs, and Bible Studies. People in her congregation are starting to reach out to others. Doing so helps them deal with feeling isolated and lonely. Serving communion during online worship is an effective way to create that sacred space which we all seek. Her church now puts together communion packages and delivers them to their older adult members for use on Communion Sunday. Rev. Boe challenged us to think, "Where were we and what did we do when we were able to be physically together." And then ask, "How can we still do that activity that we are missing in this COVID era?" This can include activities such as visiting museums, watching a play, or even virtual vacations. Buy a ticket, have people participate, then come together virtually afterwards and talk about this shared experience.

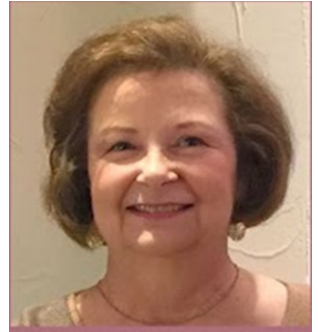
*"Any way you can keep people connected during this ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is great. It reaffirms that we are here for our church members whatever their needs." (Rev. Bonnie Boe)*



## WORKSHOP - HELP! I'M AFRAID TO DIE

by Quentin A. Holmes, Editor PNN

On Thursday, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Rev. Carolyn Mitchell of Houston, TX led a workshop entitled “Help! I’m Afraid to Die.” Goals of the first part of this workshop were to investigate the preconceptions that most of us have about the dying process, to share our fears about dying, and to ask why we are afraid of death. The second part of Mitchell’s workshop delved into scripture to shed light on frequently asked spiritual questions.



Rev. Carolyn Mitchell

About 100 years ago, most deaths came quickly - often taking place at home. Today, modern medicine has given us the ability to delay physical death.

Dying is unique to each individual. The term “active dying” is sometimes used. Evidently, people sometimes have a certain amount of control over when they pass away. Some people linger on awaiting a specific event, like a holiday, or their birthday, or the arrival of a loved one. Then, often they wait for their loved one to leave the room before passing away in private.

After an opening prayer, Rev. Mitchell solicited questions that we, the attendees, had about the dying process. Questions tendered included: “Will it be painful or frightening?” “Will we recognize our loved ones and our friends who have gone before?” “Will we be forgiven for our failures?” These questions served to guide the workshop. Rev. Mitchell highly recommends a booklet, “Gone From My Sight: The Dying Experience,” by Barbara Karnes, RN.”

### I. THE PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF DYING:

About 1-3 months prior to dying:

- The person may sense, and accept, that the end is approaching;
- Withdrawal, just room for one person now – spending lots of time sleeping;
- Eating is not important, but drinking fluids continues;
- This can be a time of transition to the Spiritual Realm;

About 1-2 weeks prior to dying:

- Body may turn pale yellow;
- Toes and fingers may turn blue;
- Breathing becomes slower;
- May develop a deep rattling in their chest.

About 1-2 days prior to dying:

- May get a burst of energy and appear to rally;
- May even request their favorite meal;
- The “Spiritual Energy” that comes with this period has arrived!

During their final few hours, they may appear outwardly to be asleep, but not actually be asleep – rather in a dream state. Their body begins to shut down piecemeal: hands and feet will get cold; blotches develop on their legs and arms due to pooling of blood; and inhibitions may go out the window. As the brain shuts down, about 87% visually see lights; a number have intense dreams – seemingly more real than life itself ever was! About 47% “see” and even “talk to” people who aren’t physically present (i.e., they are no longer alone). The sense of hearing is the last to go. Then one last breath. Here, often times, a palpable sense of peace will fill the room.

Afterwards, the medical doctors will come in and evaluate the person to confirm three things: that they are unresponsive, have no respiration, and have no pulse. At this point, they are officially dead. Later on, as the body cools, rigor mortis will set in.

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## II. THE SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVE OF DYING:

We are all spiritual people, we have feelings, we have emotions, we are social people, we like being together, we have imaginations, and we believe in God. Of course, we have all kinds of questions about what will happen after we die. The Bible serves as a guide to us, as it has to many of our loved ones who have gone before us. However, some of our questions remain simply a part of the mystery of God.

In a clear and concise manner, Rev. Mitchell sensitively described what the Bible tells us about:

- What's going to happen to us when we die;
- Justification;
- The last judgment/the new world;
- The resurrection of the body;
- When will resurrection happen;
- The life everlasting.

"The Christian faith in the future beyond death is based upon what God has been doing with us and for us in the past and in the present. As Christians what we look forward to is NOT the destruction of life, but the renewal of life; the new heaven and the new earth – these are the completion and perfection of us and the world." (Rev. Mitchell)

We do not have to save ourselves. God, through Jesus Christ, has saved us. Only God can make things right between us and God; between us and other people.

*"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life, For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."* (John 3:16-17)

This is through grace. In spite of our shortcomings, God loves us. Justification is by grace, and it comes through faith. God does not demand our works. Faith is our acknowledgement that God's grace has saved us.

The final 30 minutes of the workshop were devoted to letting folks who wished to do so share their own intensely personal experiences from when a loved one had died. Trusting, intimate, profound... again and again people's words described little things that brought them a sense of comfort and peace spilling over them at this very sacred moment in time.

As the workshop drew to its end, Rev. Mitchell read a short book to us, The Fall of Freddy the Leaf, written by Leo Buscaglia in 1982. This book was particularly helpful to her personally when her own mother died.

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## THE ENDING WELL WORKSHOP: A GIFT TO OUR LOVED ONES

by Bruce Calkins, HR and Diane Frasher, TE / Pasadena, California

*[Editor's NOTE: Bruce Calkins is a retired Presbyterian Pastor and resident at Monte Vista Grove Homes, a Presbyterian Continuing Care Community in Pasadena, California. Diane Frasher is a Presbyterian Pastor who, through support from San Gabriel Presbytery and the House of Rest in Pasadena, California, serves as Chaplain at Monte Vista Grove Homes.]*

A no-cost workshop called *Ending Well* has given me a sense of wellbeing, knowing that I have taken steps that will save our children weeks of time and emotional stress. They will know where to find documents, family "treasures," passwords, and our hopes for them.

The *Ending Well Workshop* was offered to residents of Monte Vista Grove Homes (MVGH). Those who attended were very grateful.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

*"Thank you for this excellent program. It has been very helpful to have the opportunity to think about those things that would be helpful to my family and others at the time of my death. I look forward to continuing to follow-up with the work related to preparing to end well."*

*"Ending Well helped me focus on unpleasant but necessary paperwork and start to build a sense of accomplishment. I've begun thinking futuristically and building files. The presenters did a fantastic job encouraging without stressing people. A highlight for me was opening up the concepts of legacy."*

*Ending Well* is a gift to our families. Each workshop guides us in organizing our end-of-life affairs and lightens the load for those who will take care of this responsibility. The workshop meets on Zoom. There are five one-hour sessions, once a week for five weeks. To facilitate communication, there is a maximum of nine persons in each workshop.

The following introduction by Janet and Bob Logan is given at the beginning of the *Ending Well Workshop*:

#### **Workshop Focus and Outcome**

"Our hope is that at the completion of this workshop you will have more peace of mind. It may be because you've taken steps and made some progress towards getting your paperwork together. Maybe it will be about gaining tools for having difficult conversations. It will look different for each of you, but we are here to provide our support and structure for that to happen."

### **CONTENTS OF THE ENDING WELL WORKSHOP SERIES**

#### **WORKSHOP 1 – BEGINNING ENDING WELL**

- Create a "when-I-die" file --- estate planning checklist
- Sample table of contents for a "when-I-die" file

#### **WORKSHOP 2 – PAPERWORK**

- What an executor/trustee of an estate needs to do
- What to do (chronologically) when a loved one dies

#### **WORKSHOP 3 – PASSWORDS, PETS, and PREPARATIONS**

- Best safe ways to save passwords
- Planning my memorial and final arrangements
- List of informative articles

#### **WORKSHOP 4 – GOODBYES**

- Difficult goodbyes
- Taking stock
- Your heirs want this even more than money

#### **WORKSHOP 5 – LETTERS AND LEGACY**

- Legacy letters
- My legacy

The no-cost, five-session *Ending Well Workshops* are available on the following dates and times in 2022:

- Tuesdays at 5:00pm ET/2:00pm PT on Jan 11, 18, 25, Feb 1, 8
- Wednesdays at 1:00pm ET/10:00am PT on Jan 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 9
- Wednesdays at 7:30pm ET/4:30pm PT on Jan 12, 19, 26, Feb 2, 9
- Thursdays at 1:00pm ET/10:00am PT on Jan 13, 20, 27, Feb 3, 10
- Thursdays at 6:00pm ET/3:00pm PT on Jan 13, 20, 27, Feb 3, 10

The workshop has been designed by Janet Logan and Bob Logan. I've admired Bob Logan's ministry of coaching and discipleship training for thirty years. Now Janet and Bob have created the *Ending Well Workshop*. It is free because they are volunteering their time and experience.

To register or request additional information or future workshop dates, email Janet Logan at [endingwellclass@gmail.com](mailto:endingwellclass@gmail.com)

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## ‘ALL-BLACK GOVERNING BODIES’ AT 25

(Reprinted from Presbyterian News\_1-13-2022)

*[Editor's NOTE: Rev. Jim Reese helped found the Association of Retired Ministers, Spouses or Survivors (ARMSS) back in the mid-90's. Rev. Reese, along with his supportive wife Neola, took an active part in each of the Joint ARMSS/POAMN National Conferences (years 2011 thru 2016). Jim Reese has a gift for reaching out and raising others up to his level of faith and deep spirituality. In good times and tough times, I personally feel uplifted and inspired whenever I am around them. Jim and Neola are living examples of "Blessed to be a Blessing."]*

*James Foster Reese looks back at GA-commissioned history of African American mid councils  
Fred Tangeman | Office of the General Assembly - January 10, 2022*

### PHILADELPHIA



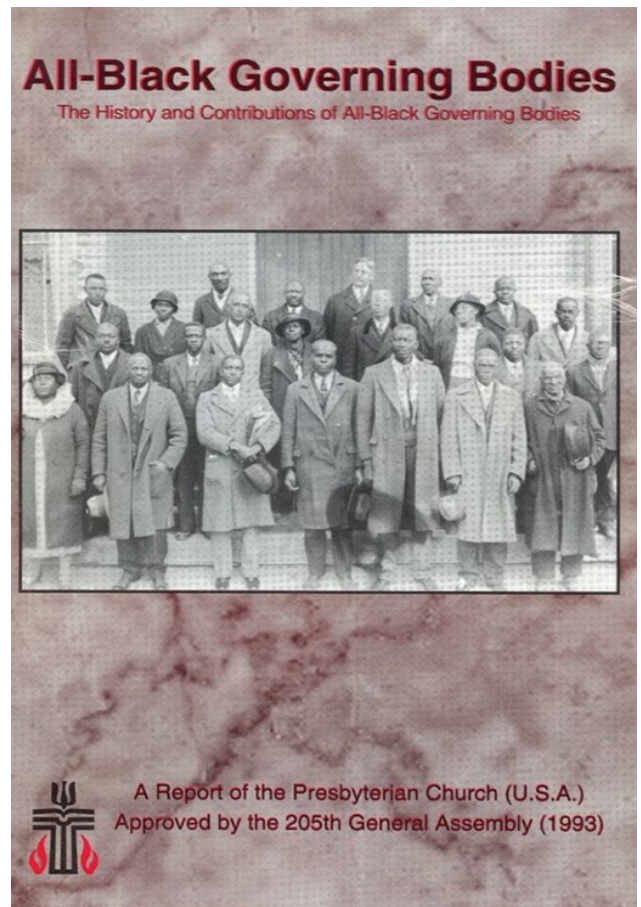
James Foster Reese on Zoom - December 2021

January 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of "[All-Black Governing Bodies](#)," a groundbreaking work of denominational history that grew out of a General Assembly overture. At the end of 2021, the Rev. Dr. James Foster Reese, chairperson of the task force that researched and wrote the book, remembered the project during a Zoom interview.

Reese, who is 97 and lives in West Hartford, Connecticut, spoke with impressive recall about the six General Assembly cycles it took to complete the book. Dr. Darius Swann, who joined the effort in 1991, provided research assistance to Reese and six other task force members. Staff at the [Presbyterian Historical Society](#) (PHS) helped gather research materials, including church records, photographs and maps. Other [Office of the General Assembly](#) staff coordinated task force meetings and publication details.

Reese spoke for more than an hour about the project, its many helpers, the history detailed inside "All-Black Governing Bodies" and some ways that today's church can further support racial ethnic ministries.

As he answered questions, Reese's face moved in and out of focus on the Zoom screen even as his preacher's voice remained measured and clear, summoning conversations and organizational milestones from decades before as if they had happened last week. He mentioned being the last living member of the task force and appreciated the renewed attention "All-Black Governing Bodies" was receiving.



Book Cover for "All-Black Governing Bodies"

*(Continued on page 14)*

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Many of Reese's remarks connected Presbyterian history to today's America, where Langston Hughes's line "Let America be America again" — referenced in "All-Black Governing Bodies" — has an uncanny resemblance to a recent political slogan. "America never was America to me," Hughes wrote in that same poem, and yet, "its dream lies deep within my heart."

All-Black governing bodies worked to make the dream of America real for all Presbyterians, something the church is still trying to achieve.

### The history

All-Black governing presbyteries emerged after the Civil War, when African Americans, many newly emancipated, set about founding congregations and schools throughout the South. The three largest Presbyterian denominations — [the Southern PC \(US\)](#), [the mostly Northern PCUSA](#) and [the mostly midwestern UP-CNA](#) — established Black mid councils to support the new ministries. A large number of mission workers from the PCUSA and UPCNA assisted that work, including at schools that grew into institutions of higher learning such as Barber-Scotia College, Johnson C. Smith University and Knoxville College.

But all-Black mid councils also isolated African American Presbyterians away from white congregations, seminaries and mid councils —denominational centers of power. "All-Black Governing Bodies" shares stories of how African American presbyteries thrived despite this separation and periods of neglect or outright oppression. The book is ordered by historic era, with anecdotes about mid council and congregational life — such as the Rev. Joseph Metz Rollins's civil rights work at Trinity Presbyterian Church in Tallahassee, the attempted formation by E.W. Williams of an independent [African American denomination](#) and the educational pioneering of [Lucy Craft Laney](#) — that bring historical figures into sharper focus.

[A sermon Rollins delivered about pressure Trinity Presbyterian Church received](#) from church officials to stop supporting desegregation efforts was added as an appendix. Its inclusion was one of many suggestions the task force received as it drafted and revised the book.

*[Join PHS Live at 5 p.m. Eastern Time on January 20 to learn more about Joseph Metz Rollins.]*

### Research and writing

The 201st General Assembly (1989), in response to Overture 89-2 from the Presbytery of Arkansas, directed [the Rev. Dr. Joan Salmon Campbell](#), Assembly moderator, "To appoint a task force of not more than six [persons] to document the history and contributions of all-Black presbyteries of the South."

Soon after that summer's assembly in Philadelphia, Salmon Campbell selected Reese as task force chairperson. At a later assembly the task force became a special committee, and the scope of the project was widened to include historical information about all-Black synods.

Over Zoom Reese pointed out that, despite the additional latitude, "All-Black Governing Bodies" ended up focusing on presbytery history. He said that a deeper look at all-Black synods — and the history of all racial ethnic synods inside the PC(USA) and predecessor denominations — would be a worthy sequel.

Reese said that Salmon Campbell likely picked him as chairperson because of their previous work together, including through the Presbytery of Philadelphia. In 1989 Reese was director of the national church's Racial Ethnic Ministry Unit. At a previous posting with the General Assembly Mission Council, Reese worked with ordained women of color, including national church leaders such as Salmon Campbell and [the Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon](#).



"All-Black Governing Bodies" interview transcripts and oral history cassettes, -PHS records

*(Continued on page 15)*



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"I think that the naming of other people on the committee was also done by her," Reese said of Salmon Campbell.

With Reese as chair, the task force pored over available church records, including documents collected at PHS's two locations at the time, in Philadelphia and Montreat, North Carolina.

A problem was the lack of documentation. The task force "was unable to locate a single meeting docket from an all-Black mid council," Reese said, and the records of PCUS-affiliated Black congregations were extremely difficult to find. Some records were eventually found at other repositories or congregations.

Lacking extensive records, the task force relied on secondary historical sources and personal accounts. Black Presbyterians mailed in stories of ancestors' involvement in church groups and sat down for oral history interviews.

Reese remembered one especially helpful trove of histories from [Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary](#), where students had stored dissertation theses about congregations, mission fields and all-Black mid councils. He noted that one of the task force members, [Mattie Solice Grigsby](#), had been a librarian at Johnson C. Smith. Reese thought the theses were eventually sent to Atlanta University, a recollection supported by [Worldcat](#) listings of Atlanta University Center microfilm.

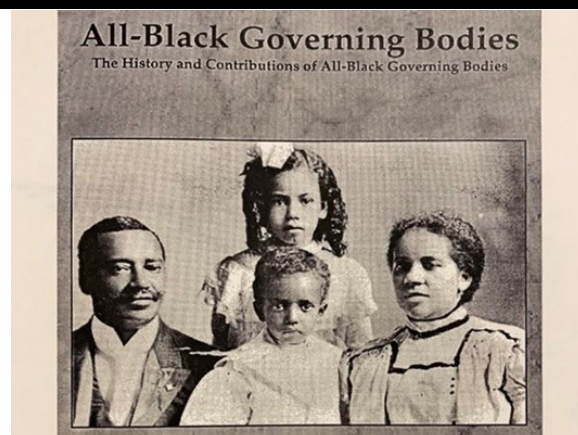
The years of research and editorial work went smoothly, Reese said. [Task Force/Special Committee records at PHS](#) show Reese being consulted about the final title, art selection and line edits. An early draft of the book's foreword is in his handwriting.

### 'Facing Forward'

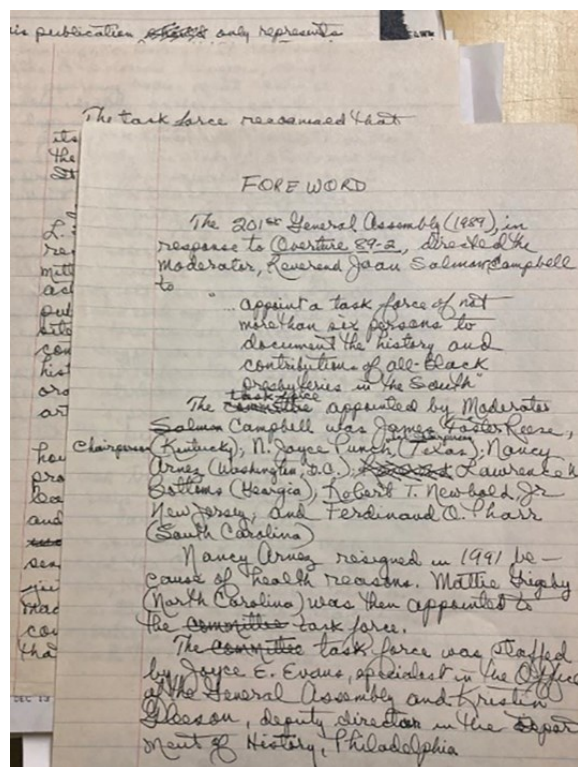
Reese's undergraduate years at Knoxville College and graduate work at Pittsburgh-Xenia Seminary gave him insights into the UPCNA, leaving him well positioned in the '80s and '90s to chair a PC(USA) task force comprised of Presbyterians from the three major predecessor denominations. Four of the final task force members had worked in the UPCUSA prior to Reunion in 1983, Reese said, and two in the PCUS.

"All-Black Governing Bodies" shows that the UPCNA's [Women's General Mission Society](#) energetically supported Black congregations and schools in the parts of the South where that denomination was present. Across the denominational mission schools for Freedmen founded after the Civil War — institutions that would be centers of Black Presbyterian life into the 20th century — most of the teachers were women.

Reese said that during the civil rights era the UPCUSA was well organized in its support of all-Black mid councils, creating a climate where close personal relationships could form among pastors, church members and national staff. As *All-Black Governing Bodies* emphasizes near its end, that closeness helped develop generations of African American leaders who went on to lead church agencies and General Assemblies, including Salmon Campbell and the [Rev. Lawrence Bottoms](#), moderator of the 1974 PCUS assembly in Louisville and a task force member. The book is dedicated to Bottoms, who passed away shortly before its publication.



A cover considered for "All-Black Governing Bodies" showing the Sheppard family, - PHS records



Reese's handwritten "Foreword," - PHS records

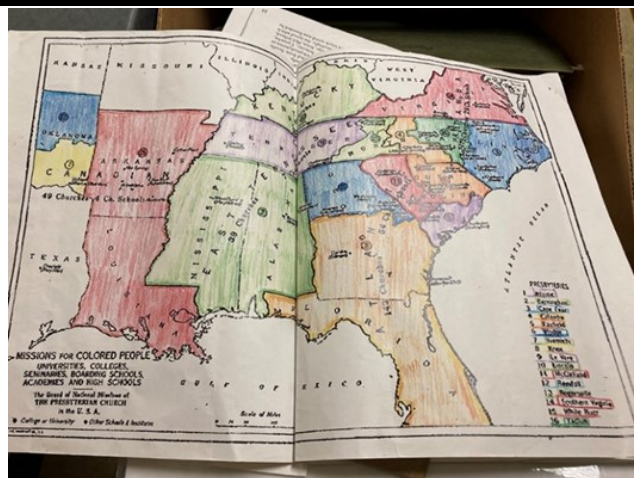
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"There was a holy pride in being able to help these persons," Reese said about the closeness of all-Black mid councils. His own pride in that group history has helped him remember details large and small.

"The third Sunday of each October was the meeting time for Tennessee Presbytery," he said. That mid council last convened 64 years ago, during the Eisenhower administration.

The denominational unions of 1901 (PCUSA and Cumberland Presbyterian Church), 1958 (UPCNA and PCUSA) and 1983 (UPCUSA and PCUS) all changed mid council maps and saw the merger of all-Black presbyteries into other mid councils.

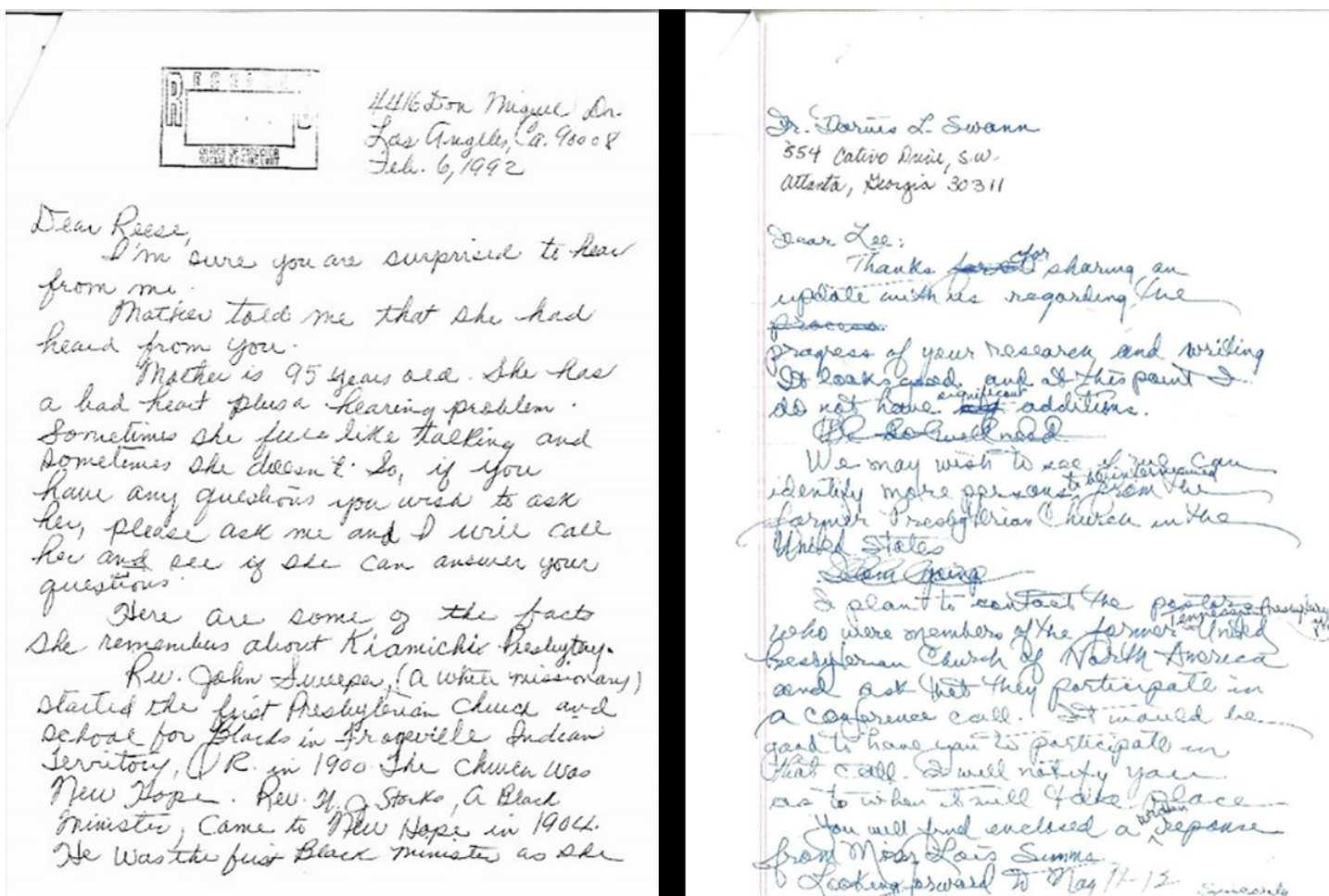


PCUSA Board of National Missions map

In 1983, the reunited PC(USA) began preparing for the merger of the last all-Black mid councils. "There was a tendency to want to turn the page on the history of those groups," Reese said. "In doing that, something was lost."

"All-Black Governing Bodies," dating back to Overture 89-2, gathered and shared that Black Presbyterian history — a history that even in the late 1980s was at risk of receding into the distant past.

Reese sees a through-line between the experience of researching and writing "All-Black Governing Bodies" and the PC(USA)'s approach to supporting racial ethnic ministries today. The biggest struggle faced by the task force, he said, was convincing the General Assembly between 1989 and 1995 to continue funding the project.





*(Continued from page 16)*

Reese said that the Racial Ethnic Ministry unit he directed ended after five years due to funding changes. “I was the first, last and only,” director, Reese said.

From the 1990s on, Reese held other positions with the national church, mid councils and Germantown Community Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. In 2019 [he retired from the position of Minister of Specialized Interpretation](#) with the Presbyterian Foundation.

Today’s PC(USA) supports racial ethnic ministry through offices such as the Presbyterian Mission Agency’s [Racial Equity and Women’s Intercultural Ministries](#) and the Office of the General Assembly’s [Committee on Representation](#) — a permanent committee that “All-Black Governing Bodies” points out in its concluding “Facing Forward” chapter was created during reunion “to ensure minority representation within organizational structures at all levels” of the church.

When Reese was asked if the church’s current financial support of racial ethnic ministry is adequate, given the scope of work, he said, “No, I don’t think it is adequate. That’s my opinion.” Later he joked that financial support is always crucial to ministry, whatever its focus. “You want some free advice? Find money!”

As the church emerges from the pandemic, Reese hopes to see a rededicated effort to support racial ethnic ministries, both financially and programmatically. Using his own region as an example, he said that conducting a survey of racial ethnic congregations active in the Northeast would be a good step toward “making those congregations more inclusive in the life of presbyteries and synods.” Reese noted that this idea came up at a recent meeting of the [National Black Presbyterian Caucus](#) he attended as an NBPC board member. NBPC has continued the connectional tradition of all-Black mid councils, affirming the ministries of African American church leaders and congregations.

Another area Reese would like to see more progress in is the continued lack of Black pastors leading white congregations, and the lack of white pastors leading Black congregations. Allocating resources toward future church building and educating more BIPOC seminarians are other priorities he discussed.

As a last interview question, Reese was asked what he thought was the most important legacy of “All-Black Governing Bodies” 25 years after its publication, one of his many contributions to the history of the PC(USA). “I would like people to remember that there was a time when all-Black governing bodies were necessary,” Reese said, “and they filled that need by providing the leadership necessary for the church.”

#### **Learn More About “All-Black Governing Bodies”:**

- PDF version of “[All-Black Governing Bodies](#)”
- Task Force interviews with [Jim Costen](#), [Clinton Marsh](#) and [Ethel Hawkins](#)
- [Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. African American Synods Collection](#): PHS Record Group 395
- [All-Black Governing Bodies Task Force/Special Committee records](#)
- [Johnson C. Smith Seminary student theses](#)
- [Guide to Historically Black Presbyterian Schools collections](#) at PHS
- --Support PHS’s *African American Leaders & Congregations* initiative to collect and preserve Black Presbyterian history.

*Thanks to PHS staff members Luci Duckson-Bramble, David Staniunas, Kristen Gaydos, Nancy Taylor and Jennifer Barr for help with this article.*

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