

## Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

ISSUE 72

2022 AUTUMN

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### A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Good Morning from Oregon,

The theme of this issue of *PNN* is, “*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*” This comes to us from the Bible in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:7). It expresses an ancient truth that in helping others, we are helped.

Three articles in this issue of *PNN* share insights on *Blessed are the merciful*:

- “MEMO from Membership” by Linda Rauenbuehler
- “My Memories of Two Inspiring Older Adults” by Don Carlin
- “Blessed Are You Who Bear The Light” by Jan Richardson

Other articles in this issue include:

- “Upcoming Event! POAMN Retreat at Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center – November 9<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup>”
- “Margaret Prentice Moves to Willamette Oaks” by Quentin Holmes
- “Older Adult Ministry Program Celebrates Certificate Completions” by Sarah Erickson
- “What Does Early Old Age Ministry Mean for My Congregation?”
- “Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE)” by Renda R. Brinson
- “The Grace of God” by Frederick Buechner
- “Blessed Are You Who Carry The Light” by Jan Richardson
- “My Life Is Still Being Blessed by the Churches I Served” by Huw Christopher
- “Upcoming APCE Conference”

*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 Holiday issue will be “*They’ll Know we are Christians by our Love.*” Deadline for manuscripts is December 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  
In Scotland

## POAMN PRESIDENT'S REFLECTION

The fall weather is starting to show its lovely head in Georgia and I'm so ready for it. It has been a summer of extremes. I've looked up into the heavens and asked the Lord to protect those who have dealt with extreme heat, flooding, and wildfires. I pray that you and your loved ones were spared from any of these tragic occurrences.

POAMN didn't slow down on our work this summer and will finish out 2022 with several quality offerings. I hope to see all of you at our annual Leadership Retreat, November 9-12 at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center near Little Rock, Arkansas. Ferncliff is promising us some beautiful fall foliage. Look for further details and registration information in this newsletter and please do join us!

The evening of December 21<sup>st</sup> at 7:00pm EST please celebrate with POAMN the Winter Solstice with The Reverend Dr. Ella F. Busby. Further details on this virtual worship service can be found on the POAMN website.

We're thrilled to welcome articles from the Association of Partners in Christian Education (APCE) in this issue and other issues in the future. I hope you will take a few minutes to read about this organization that is a fellow collective member of the Office of Christian Formation, PC(USA) with POAMN. Please consider attending their annual conference in late January of 2023 in Birmingham, AL. It looks like they are offering at least nine workshops that would benefit anyone in their older adult ministry.

Looking to the future POAMN is moving forward with lots of new and innovate plans as we strive to nurture the faith community, equip leadership, and resource congregations and other organizations that minister to, for, and with older adults. We'll be offering new educational opportunities, quality materials and webinars throughout the year. We always welcome your questions and comments about our programming and any suggestions of topics that would benefit your ministry.

POAMN is governed by a volunteer board of directors consisting of a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Conference co-chairs, At Large Members, Nominating Committee Chair, Certification Leader, POAMN Network News Editor, GA Liaison, and Christian Formation Contact. We welcome nominations to our Board of Directors at any time during the year. You can find nomination forms on our website [www.poamn.org](http://www.poamn.org) under the heading Who We Are. Do consider being a part of this wonderful group who are committed to raising awareness around issues facing aging adults and those who serve those aging adults in churches and congregations.

*Pat Baker,* POAMN President

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Linda Rauenbuehler  
Membership Committee Chair

## MEMO FROM MEMBERSHIP

The theme for this issue of the PNN is **“Blessed are the Merciful, for They shall receive Mercy.”** I am seeing this theme of compassion for others in action right this minute, as I enjoy the beautiful Rocky Mountains at Highlands Presbyterian Camp & Retreat Center in Colorado.

Representatives from all of PC(USA)'s five “Ages & Stages” Collaborative have been brought together for training, to make new friends from across the country, and to work for the betterment of humanity.

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The task for the group that I am part of is laying the groundwork for an updated resource concerning older adult ministry. What a great opportunity we have been given. In time, you will see the development of what is being envisioned by our small group from all across the USA as we meet together in person this week. We are looking ahead and striving to discern what will be the key needs of older adults in the upcoming five years.

### **Leadership Retreat**

POAMN, in partnership with the Office of Christian Formation of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, will offer an Older Adult Ministries Leadership Retreat, November 9-12, 2022, at Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center near Little Rock, Arkansas. This will be a time for anybody who works with older adults to come together in person to retreat, to relax, to learn, and to network with our POAMN friends from across the nation. Please register now at [www.poamn.org](http://www.poamn.org).

### **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 Ravenbuehler*, POAMN Membership Chair

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## **MY MEMORIES OF TWO INSPIRING OLDER ADULTS**

by Don Carlin, Retired Hospice Chaplain / Philadelphia, PA

*[Editor's NOTE: Don Carlin currently is preaching on 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays (in the absence of a minister) and providing some pastoral care over the phone. He currently serves in a part-time chaplaincy role at an adult day care center.]*

I returned from my third extended summer trip to the farm (322 hrs. of vegetable weeding!) on August 20<sup>th</sup> to find the Summer 2022 edition of POAMN Network News in my mailbox. I was surprised and saddened to read of the deaths of Rev. Richard L. (Dick) Morgan and Rev. Dr. James (Jim) Reese. I'd like to share a few memories of these two inspiring older adults.

Dick Morgan's books meant a great deal to me and I admired his many accomplishments. Once, Dick gave me a draft of one of his books-in-progress and asked for my feedback and comments. I was surprised and honored that he would entrust me with this project. What meant the most to me was when Dick moved to the retirement community near Pittsburgh, PA, and decided on his ministry focus there. His priority would be to spend quality time visiting those with advancing dementia, being there for them in the moment, whether or not they would remember his visit ten minutes later. This priority has served as an encouragement to me in my current work with people with later-stage dementia.



Don Carlin  
Retired Hospice Chaplain

I first met Rev. Dr. Jim Reese in May, 2000, during a conference at Montreat. I went to Montreat with a Haitian colleague. We were both afraid no one else of color would be at the conference. Jim Reese showed up to lead a workshop. My colleague and Jim would end up spending a good deal of time together in conversation. In October, 2013, I saw Jim's name on the conference roster for the POAMN/ARMSS National Conference in Atlanta. I had not seen Jim since Montreat, although I had begun noticing his name on the sign board of a

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small PC(USA) church in my Philadelphia neighborhood. I made a phone call, and soon Jim and his beautiful wife, Neola, were sharing a relaxed breakfast with me in Atlanta.

After that, Jim and I crossed paths more often, with Jim extending two invitations to me - once to lead a Lenten Bible Study at his church while he attended a National PC(USA) meeting; once to preach a Sunday morning sermon at his church while he again attended a national PC(USA) meeting. Jim taught classes and preached for over 70 years, and I admired the friendly and humble manner with which he related to his small Philadelphia congregation. I once asked Jim if he ever preached the same sermon twice or taught the same class twice. His answer impressed me. He never went back to look at old sermon manuscripts or class notes. He felt it important that he study for every class and sermon and that his words be fresh.

The last time Jim and Neola Reese and I were physically together is my most vivid and precious memory of this couple. I had befriended Richard, a member of Jim's congregation who had been paralyzed in a car accident 30 years earlier. Jim knew I was visiting Richard on a regular basis, but Jim (now 93 or 94 years old) had limited his driving to areas of Philadelphia that were most familiar to him. Jim wanted to serve Communion to Richard, so he asked me if I could pick him and Neola up at church and drive them to the facility where Richard was living. I gladly made the arrangements, and the four of us had a very poignant visit and Communion/Prayer Service. Jim blessed the bread and the cup, and I served them to Richard, who was not able to serve himself.

Shortly after this, Jim "retired" from serving the Philadelphia congregation and moved from his home across the river in New Jersey to a retirement community in Connecticut to be closer to his children. Jim, Neola, and I stayed in touch by mail each Christmas season.

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## UPCOMING EVENT!

### POAMN Retreat at Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center – November 9-12, 2022



POAMN is having a retreat! We are going to be in the Ozark Mountains in November – to be together, to celebrate the beauty of the outdoors, and to refresh our inner spirits. Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center is renowned for its restful setting and lovely nature trails.

Discounted early registration rate is available until October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Financial scholarships are available for first-timers, for persons of color, and for members of small churches. For more information, please visit our website: [www.poamn.org](http://www.poamn.org).

Helping us refresh our spiritual side will be the inspiring Joyce MacKichan Walker. Joyce retired in 2018 after thirty years of ministry at the Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, New Jersey, as minister of education and mission and director of Christian education. Her first love within Christian education is teaching, which she actively practices as instructor of certification classes for Christian educators, for older adult ministry, and as a workshop leader. Joyce recently taught the *Teaching for Transformation - Older Adult Ministry Certification* course at the Center for Lifelong Learning at Columbia Theological Seminary. Joyce was the APCE Educator of the Year in 2008.



View of Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center

Come. Be together. Be refreshed. After more than two years of COVID-19, treat yourself to a respite from this crazy, busy, uncertain world.

## MARGARET PRENTICE MOVES TO WILLAMETTE OAKS

by Quentin A. Holmes

Central Presbyterian Church / Eugene, Oregon

*[NOTE: Margaret Prentice is an active older adult. Age 91, she loves to go hiking. Sometimes Margaret hikes with friends from church. However, she often hikes alone to enjoy the meditation. Margaret recently shared with me how she came to move from her home to a senior apartment at Willamette Oaks.]*

Margaret Prentice was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, in 1931. Her sister, Mary, was born 5 years later. After graduating from college at the University of Aberdeen, Margaret became an elementary schoolteacher. In 1956, Margaret's parents immigrated to America, and in 1957, Margaret immigrated to America also, joining them in Cleveland, Ohio.



Her Parent's Cottage in Aberdeenshire, Scotland (1936)

In Ohio, Margaret worked as a substitute teacher while attending Kent State University to earn her Ohio Teaching Certificate. She taught first graders in Willoughby, Ohio. As a member of First Presbyterian Church in Willoughby, Margaret helped teach Summer Bible School. A close friend from church introduced Margaret to her husband's

friend and colleague, William J. Prentice, Jr. And, the rest was history. Margaret and William "Bill" Prentice were married in 1964, and resided in Cleveland, Ohio, where they raised two children – Jay and Carolyn.

Bill Prentice worked as an engineer with General Electric. Bill retired in 1984, and in 1991 they moved west from Ohio to Eugene, Oregon. Factors that influenced their choice were: a university town, the proximity of mountains for hiking and cross-country skiing, beautiful Fern Ridge Reservoir for sailing, and nearness to the lovely Oregon Coast. Hiking, cross-country skiing, sailing in their boat on Fern Ridge Reservoir, Bill and Margaret had a ball! They purchased a small RV and travelled . . . to Alaska and to the Southwest. In 1996, Margaret joined Central Presbyterian Church in Eugene and served several terms as a deacon. Alas, nothing lasts forever. Husband Bill Prentice passed away in 2007.



Bill & Margaret Prentice (Circa 2005)

Margaret Prentice has always been an avid hiker. She is a member of the Obsidians, a non-profit outdoors club in Eugene, Oregon. Almost daily she walks along the Willamette River on a bike path that runs by her retirement complex. Periodically, she goes across the street and follows a path to the Delta Ponds. There, she goes birding or simply walks and relaxes with friends from church: Patty MacAfee, Pam & John Sheridan, and Charlie Thomas. Occasionally, Margaret drives her car about 7 miles to the Howard Buford Recreation Area and hikes. "Hiking in the Arboretum is easy for me, but I no longer hike to the top of 1,000-foot-high Mt. Pisgah." Margaret Prentice truly enjoys hiking in the forest alone. "Being alone in the forest is a meditation for me."

Things which led Margaret Prentice to move from her home to a senior apartment were:

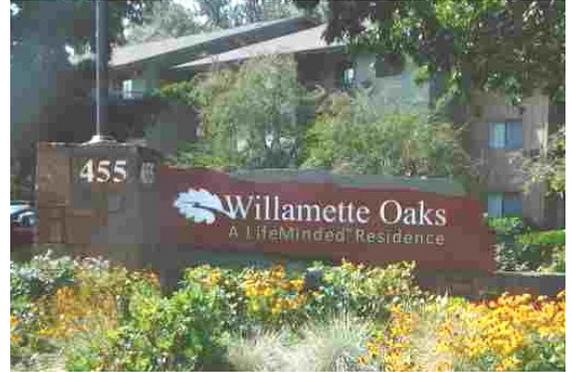
- Taking care of things: "I could do the ordinary things. But it became difficult to find people to do the big things like cleaning the gutters and clipping the hedges."
- Becoming aware that she was living alone: "This could be a problem if I fell or passed out. How long would it take for someone to find me? In 2021 I had two fainting episodes. A friend and I started emailing each other every morning. Living alone began to seem unwise."

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In late 2021, Margaret began considering moving to a senior apartment. “I knew that IF I moved anywhere, THEN it would be to Willamette Oaks with its proximity to walking paths along the Willamette River and paths leading to the Delta Ponds. Also, I had several friends who had lived in Willamette Oaks very happily.”

In October, 2021, Margaret Prentice’s two children, Jay and Carolyn, came out to visit Margaret, and together they visited Willamette Oaks Senior Apartments & Assisted Living. “We looked at different apartments. I really wasn’t sure that I wanted to move, but I started downsizing in case I decided to move.”



**WELCOME SIGN – Willamette Oaks**



**Margaret Prentice – She hiked in to these Falls (August 2022)**

In November, 2021, Jay and Carolyn came back and helped Margaret clean out her attic. “I’m not a hoarder, but my husband Bill was. Dealing with all the stuff in the attic was overwhelming. That’s when I decided to go back and look again at Willamette Oaks.” The three of them were shown three different apartments. “When we saw this apartment on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor with a view out to the river, Jay said to me, ‘Mom, you can’t do better than this!’” When asked, Willamette Oaks said that they would hold the apartment until December 1<sup>st</sup> to give Margaret time to make up her mind.

Margaret thought long and hard about moving, for this was a very difficult decision for her. “I loved my yard, and I had very wonderful neighbors. I mulled over the pros and cons for some time. After all that, I decided to go for it. And, I didn’t look back, for it was a very hard decision to make.” The fact that Margaret’s children live in other states –Jay lives in Hailey, Idaho; and Carolyn lives in Sarasota, Florida, in the winter and in Big Sandy, Tennessee, in the summer – was a factor in her decision.

“Selling my house was something that had to be done. I needed to know if I would have enough money to live in Willamette Oaks.” Fortuitously, just before Margaret’s house was to be advertised for sale, a neighbor purchased it for his own parents.

Moving to Willamette Oaks was a huge transition for Margaret Prentice. “The three biggest transitions in my life have been moving from Scotland to the USA; moving from Ohio to Oregon; and moving from my home to Willamette Oaks.”

“I like it here. Folks here have an active lifestyle. It is so much fun to get to know them and learn about their interesting lives. I love it here!”



**SUNSET – Viewed from Margaret Prentice’s Apartment in Willamette Oaks**



## OLDER ADULT MINISTRY PROGRAM CELEBRATES CERTIFICATE COMPLETIONS

by Sarah Erickson / Director of Lifelong Learning, Columbia Theological Seminary

The Center for Lifelong Learning at Columbia Theological Seminary and the leadership of POAMN are delighted to announce that twenty-two individuals have recently been recognized for completing four core courses in the Older Adult Ministry Certificate Program.



Columbia Theological Seminary

This group received their Level I Certificate after a recent revision to the program divided the coursework into Level I (the four core courses) and Level II, the Capstone. “The program was revised as we considered the amount of work involved in completing the courses and the final project for each course,” said Sarah Erickson, program coordinator for the OAM courses and Director of Lifelong Learning at the seminary. “The course participants demonstrated their competence in comprehension and application of the material in the four courses: The Process of Aging and Implications for Ministry, Teaching for Transformation with Older Adults, Spiritual Formation and Older Adults, and Theological Reflection and Older Adults.”

For this first group of thirteen, many began their coursework around 2014 and completed it by or before the spring of 2021. They appreciated receiving the certificate, an unexpected surprise because they originally enrolled under the “old format” where the four courses and a Capstone Project were required to earn OAM Certification. This group includes:

Steve Aschmann, Asheville, NC  
 Patricia Baker, Lilburn, GA  
 Marcy Campbell, Des Moines, IA  
 Michele Hendrix, New Braunfels, TX  
 Ronald Hopkins, Richmond, VA  
 Abby Keller, Greenville, TN  
 Debbie Layman, Winston Salem, NC

Catherine Mooney, Newton Grove, NC  
 Katherine Potter, Farmington Hills, MI  
 Susan Roddey, Charlotte, NC  
 Anne Tarbutton, Blowing Rock, NC  
 Erin Weaver, Brownsburg, IN  
 Cindy Wright, Solana Beach, CA

Another nine individuals completed the Level I courses between April and June of 2022. Most of them began their course work between the spring of 2020 and spring of 2021 and completed all four courses or most of the four courses in an online version. Erickson commented, “The online courses are more accessible for more people. The cost is reduced – no travel, no housing – and the quality of the course design is exceptional.”

The recent recipients of the Level 1 Certificate are:

Burnetta Armour, Cleveland, GA  
 Hayley Brandenburg, North Manchester, IN  
 Katherine Eisele, Sioux Falls, SD  
 Anne Jenkins, Pfafftown, NC  
 Donna McDaid, Milford, NJ

Mandy Ealy, Mebane, NC  
 Phyllis Sanders, Columbia, SC  
 Alpha Stacer, Lilburn, GA  
 Joseph Stehle, Trafford, PA

For more information about the OAM Certification courses, and to register for the two courses available in the spring of 2023, please visit: <https://www.ctsnet.edu/lifelong-learning/certificate-programs/older-adult-ministries-certificate-program/>

## WHAT DOES EARLY OLD AGE MINISTRY MEAN FOR MY CONGREGATION?

On August 25<sup>th</sup>, Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA) put on an informative webinar<sup>11</sup> with this title. Rev. Dr. Carl P. Greene\* presented insights and recommendations based upon his research with older adults ages 65-80 years. The purpose of this article is to share key points of Rev. Greene's outstanding talk.

Early Old Age (EOA) refers to adults who are ages 65-80 years. Members of the "Baby Boomer" generation, many of them were involved in church when young, then dropped out for various reasons. People in EOA do not like to be called "Older Adults." Now in their Early Old Age, many of them feel that spirituality is an extremely important part of their lives. Dr. Greene's research revealed that 21% of the individuals involved in his study felt that spirituality was an extremely important part of their lives at age 65. However, by age 72 this figure had jumped to 37%. His research also revealed that 21% of the individuals involved in his study felt that religion was an extremely important part of their lives at age 65. However, by age 72 this figure had jumped to 32%. Most churches are attuned to providing assistance (i.e., "chaplaincy") to the older adults in their congregation. A key question is how can your church engage Early Old Age adults and involve them in the life of your congregation?

Rev. Greene challenged us to redefine our concept of Older Adult Ministry. Early Old Age is a game changer. Call them the "Robust Elderly," if you will. EOA individuals may be retired, but their health is still quite good. EOA individuals have a considerable amount of time at their disposal. They are known to say that they are "busier than ever," but that is by their own choosing. And, Early Old Age is a spiritually sensitive season, a time to ponder what one's life is all about.

Some researchers refer to the Early Old Age individuals who are no longer participating in churches as "Done's." As a group, these are people who are religiously socialized, but they disaffiliated with the church at the highest rate as they grew up. As a group, they are suspicious of institutions of any kind, be that the church or a political institution or even our government. As they pursue their interest in spirituality, your congregation has an opportunity to reach out to them.

Rev. Greene described four different areas in which congregations are effectively reaching out to Early Old Age adults: Giving Voice to Spiritual Pathways, Genealogy to Spiritual Genogram, Rituals not Institutionalism, and Proxemics not Program.

**Giving Voice to Spiritual Pathways** allows individuals to begin to verbalize their faith stories. We can be in the midst of a beautiful setting and yet not really aware of it until we try to describe that setting to someone else. Each of us has our own faith story. One way of becoming aware of ours is by trying to share it with others. Along this line, helpful questions to ponder include:

- Beginning:
  - ◊ Who first told you about faith?
  - ◊ What was your church experience growing up?
  - ◊ What do you remember about confirmation class?
- Middle:
  - ◊ Who do you pray about?
  - ◊ How/when have you seen God at work in your life?
  - ◊ When were you disappointed at God? Mad at God?
- End:
  - ◊ How do you feel about your relationship with Jesus right now?
  - ◊ Why did you choose to tell your faith story?
  - ◊ What do you want people to remember about your faith story?



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A **Genealogy to Spiritual Genogram** is a way of recalling the people in your life who influenced the development of your faith. These may be people whose example caught your attention: a parent who lived out their own personal faith, a favorite aunt or uncle, a grandmother who took you to Sunday school at her church, etc. These people may or may not ever know how much they meant to you, but you are who you are today because of their faith.

**Challenge not Chaplaincy** starts with losses not gains. People tend to take the good things that happen for granted. However, when life comes down hard, they think long and hard about what is happening, who they can turn to for support, and what their next steps should be. Rev. Greene identified “The Four Big D’s” as Death, Divorce, Diminishing Health, and Displacement. Faced with a life-changing challenge, people tend to turn to others whom they can trust and who they know care about them. It is a point of reconnection. Here, a congregation that focuses on ministry **with** older adults does far better than a congregation that focuses on ministry **to** older adults.

Early Old Age Adults are hungry for purposeful belonging. While one-in-four EOAs in America and two-out-of-five EOAs in Canada have volunteered in retirement, 82% of them think there should be more ways for retirees to help in their community.

Early Old Age adults have a desire to impact the next generation. Rev. Greene suggested that one way to involve Early Old Age adults is to involve them in your congregation’s Youth Ministry.

**Rituals Not Institutions** involves trying new things, but remaining rooted in tradition. The goal here is to get people to go beyond simply feeling thankful for what was. There is a cultural shift away from formal organizations. Rev. Greene suggests you begin by asking, “What are the important rituals in your congregation? How do you explain these rituals? How can you connect these rituals to religiously socialized Early Old Age adults?” In addition, examine the low-attendance meetings that you are so frustrated with. Can those meetings be changed to purpose-oriented activities? Can those meetings be changed to experiential mission work?

**Proxemics Not Program** takes advantage of the fact that not all ministry spaces are alike. There are certain places where it is good to be close, and certain spaces where it is good to be spaced apart. “The key to involving EOAs is inviting them to participate in the right space.” Rev. Greene described three different kinds of spaces, and the characteristics of each. Those three spaces were: worship, small groups, and service groups. Each of these spaces has some characteristics that encourage a sense of belonging, but they do so at a different level of trust. Storytelling is a key tool in engaging EOAs. In worship, we deal with God’s story in history; in service groups, we deal with our story.

In summary, Early Old Age Ministry is an opportunity to redefine our notion of Older Adult Ministry. Early Older Age adults are extremely interested in spirituality. Will your congregation include them in a way that is both intentional and meaningful (i.e., by ministering **with** them instead of ministering **to** them)? Some of the ways in which congregations are effectively reaching out to Early Old Age adults are: Giving Voice to Spiritual Pathways, Genealogy to Spiritual Genogram, Rituals not Institutionalism, and Proxemics not Program.

As Early Old Age adults pursue their interest in spirituality, your congregation has an opportunity to be there for them.

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<sup>[1]</sup> This webinar is available at [Webinar Opportunities – Adult Lutherans Organized for Action \(aloaserves.org\)](http://aloaserves.org)

\* Rev. Dr. Carl Greene serves as the Executive Director of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada.

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## ASSOCIATION OF PARTNERS IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

by Renda R. Brinson, Certified Church Educator / Presbyterian Church, USA

The Association of Partners in Christian Education, commonly known as APCE, is a 51 year old association that was started by those who had a calling to Christian Education in the Church. The Mission of APCE is to: connect, enrich, empower, and sustain all persons serving in educational ministries in the Reformed family of churches. APCE is a total voluntary organization (currently we have had a contracted Organizational Administrator for 15 hours a week, but that position will not be renewed in February.) The four words in our mission statement - Connect, Enrich, Empower and Sustain- are the words that direct us in our work in Christian Education.

Last year when we changed our name from the Association of Presbyterian Church Educators, we wanted a name that better reflected our ecumenical partners, and our new emphasis on helping to provide resources for those who are doing Christian Education in the Church today. The church has been changing and the pandemic has made those changes move faster. We want to reach those who are doing Christian Education with little or no training and may be serving in the church in which that they grew up. At this time, almost all of our resources are at no cost to anyone who wants to use them. We have seminars, webinars, workshops and, our newest and largest project, Opening Doors to Discipleship, a comprehensive resource for churches. We have a weekly blog - The Advocate and a newsletter from the APCE President, called The Alert, that goes out 6 times a year. Our annual event is an educational event for anyone working in Christian Education which covers all areas of Christian Education/Faith Formation. This year our event will be in January in Birmingham, AL. We are excited to walk with the church in the next 50 years to see what God has planned for us all!

Renda R. Brinson  
Certified Church Educator  
Presbyterian Church, USA

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## MY LIFE IS STILL BEING BLESSED BY THE CHURCHES I SERVE

by Huw Christopher, HR / Pasadena. California

*[Editor's Note: Huw Christopher is a retired Presbyterian pastor who served congregations in Washington, Kinston, and Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina, and in Marianna, Florida, before retiring to Southern CA. Since December 2014, he has been a resident at Monte Vista Grove Homes in Pasadena, California.]*

On July 1, 2022, when I received a generous increase in my pension from the Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (USA), my thoughts went back to July 1, 1972, when I began my ministry at the First Presbyterian Church in Washington, North Carolina. In my terms of call, the Presbytery of Albemarle, as it was then called, required contributions for my medical insurance and retirement benefits to what is now the Presbyterian Church (USA) Board of Pensions. Over the forty years of my ministry, each of the congregations I served was required, by their particular presbyteries, to make similar contributions, sometimes with questions being asked about why the presbytery would require such contributions. Indeed, for most of those forty years, I did not give much thought to such contributions, except when medical expenses arose and were covered, and then as I drew closer to retirement on August 1, 2012.

Over the past ten years, as I have received that pension and most years have also seen an increase, I have been

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appreciative of the blessing which each of the four congregations I served and their presbyteries provided for me in retirement. The pension enabled my wife, Rachel, and me to move in retirement from Marianna, Florida, to Southern California to be closer to our son and daughter-in-law. In December, 2014, we were able to move into Monte Vista Grove Homes in Pasadena, California, to which our son had introduced us. Since 1924, this Presbyterian continuing care community has been blessing Presbyterian pastors, missionaries, and other church workers in their later years. Until her death from metastatic breast cancer on February 10, 2021, Rachel felt privileged and blessed to be part of this loving, caring community. It has also been a blessing in my life to have enjoyed those years together with Rachel and, since her death, to be settled in such a caring community. The fact that this community is only 48 miles from my son, daughter-in-law, and now a 6-1/2 year-old grandson is an added blessing in my life!

I am most grateful for the way in which each presbytery in which I served required that the church of which I was pastor include in my terms of call payment of my medical and pension dues to the Board of Pensions. This requirement by the presbyteries and the faithful response of each church I served to this requirement continues to bless my life. As I express my personal gratitude, I hope that as you look at the terms of call for your own pastor or pastors in your presbytery, you will see the way in which the faithful payment of these dues will bless the lives of pastors and their families long after they may not be serving a particular congregation.

Monte Vista Grove Homes has often been called “the best kept secret of the San Gabriel Valley,” but I think it could also be called “the best kept secret of the Presbyterian Church (USA).” Personally, I do not think I would have heard of this loving, caring community if my son had not introduced us to it when he was a graduate student at the California Institute of Technology and a ruling elder at Pasadena Presbyterian Church.

If any of you are ever in the Pasadena area, I would love to show you this great community in which my life continues to be blessed. Even for those who may not be able to make such a trip to Southern California, you can learn more about this unique Presbyterian community which blesses my life at the website at [www.mvgh.org](http://www.mvgh.org). If you know of other Presbyterian Church workers, or ruling elders, who would like to join me in this caring community, please invite them to check the website or to contact me.



**Main Entrance to Monte Vista Grove Homes**

Rev. Huw Christopher, HR  
 Phone: (850) 209-6931  
 E-Mail: [huwchristopher@gmail.com](mailto:huwchristopher@gmail.com)

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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)

# 2023 APCE Annual Event Birmingham, Alabama January 25–28, 2023



*Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me.  
Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest.  
Walk with me and work with me — watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.  
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.  
Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.”*

**Matthew 11:28-30 (The Message)**

**Come get away with us for the 2023 APCE Annual Event, “Unforced Rhythms of Grace”.**

**The following workshops should be of interest to those doing or interested in doing older adult ministry in their church and for their congregations. Please check out more information on this conference at this link. <https://apcenet.org/2023-annual-event-invitation/>**

- Faith Practices: In Community and at Home (especially for grandparents)
- The Gift of Lament
- Planning Your Last Party: End-of-Life Celebrations
- Psalms for the Journey -- A Mini-Retreat
- PW Bible Study: Sacred Encounters with Jesus
- Intergenerational Pathways
- Praying the Life Cycle
- The Language of Grace
- Creating an Intergenerational Mentoring Culture

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## **BLESSED ARE YOU WHO BEAR THE LIGHT** <sup>[1]</sup>

by Jan Richardson

Blessed are you  
who bear the light  
in unbearable times,  
who testify  
to its endurance  
amid the unendurable,  
who bear witness  
to its persistence  
when everything seems  
in shadow  
and grief.

Blessed are you  
in whom  
the light lives.  
in whom

the brightness blazes—  
your heart  
a chapel,  
an altar where  
in the deepest night  
can be seen  
the fire that  
shines forth in you  
in unaccountable faith,  
in stubborn hope,  
in love that illumines  
every broken thing  
it finds.

<sup>[1]</sup> **Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Season,**  
Jan Richardson, Wanton Gospeller Press, Orlando, FL

## MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022

Membership fees for 2022 are now being accepted.

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## MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022

Membership fees for 2022 are now being accepted.

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**LEADERSHIP  
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**NOVEMBER 9-12, 2022**

**FERNCLIFF CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTER  
LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS**

**POAMN**  
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