

POAMN Network News

Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network

Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

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In Old Age They Shall Bring Forth Fruit

Good Morning from Oregon.

Our culture dotes on staying young - each year, people spend countless dollars on lotions and potions and programs to delay their physical aging. However, the Bible speaks of old age as being a blessing from God. All of us know individuals who exemplify that blessing. You and I aspire to provide a similar example as we ourselves grow older.

Three articles in this issue of PNN share insights on this issue's theme.

- Memo from Membership
- POAMN Members Have Fruit to Bear
- My Third Act - Destination: Old Age

I hope you enjoy them and that they, as well as the other valuable updates and information inside, support your ministry.



Quentin Holmes and wife, Jane
POAMN Network News Editor
Marcola, Oregon

Friends, PNN is your newsletter. We need you to send us short notes about things you have done or ideas that your group has found to work. Many older adults are in our congregations. By the power of God, plus our faithfulness and our warmth, we can reach out.

Thanks be to God!

Quentin A. Holmes

President's Reflection

WE WANT YOU! and WE CAN DO IT!

The theme of this issue of PNN is very appropriate for what I want to talk to all of you about: contributing your talents to our organization.

POAMN is very aware of the "fruits" or talents of its members and followers. We hear about them at conferences, we read about them in PNN newsletters and in the annual planning guide, and we see them on social media posts.

I'm reminded of the two famous posters from WWI and WWII.

During WWI, the poster of Uncle Sam is pointing at us and saying I WANT YOU!

During WWII, Rosie the Riveter is reassuring us that we are needed when she says WE CAN DO IT!

Likewise, I summon all of you to step up to the plate and join our board of directors or one of our teams. We need you and we want you!

The board is a small group of volunteer POAMN members

who coordinate our efforts to support ministry to older adults. Our officers include a president, a vice president, a secretary, and a treasurer. Other board members include conference co-chairs, nominating committee chair, certificate coordinator, PNN editor, PC(USA) GA liaison, and members who serve at-large.

Board members agree to serve for three-year terms. Their work is assisted through a part-time paid organizational administrator and support by Presbyterian Mission Agency staff.

We have several positions open on the Board of Directors for 2024-2026. Please consider calling me (678-438-3673) or Pepe Bowman (770-460-8761) to find out more about being part of this wonderful working association of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

We're also seeking volunteers for teams to support activities of POAMN. Participation in a team is for a shorter duration than board membership and may fit better in your schedule. The teams are membership,



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conference planning (special events and webinars), communications (social media and website), new initiatives, and financial and grants planning. Each is led by a board member. Can I interest you in contacting me (pat@sapctucker.org) or Kelley Hope (poamnetwork@gmail.com) to share your gifts and talents in one of these areas? We'd love to hear from you!

With your help and support, POAMN will continue to be the great organization that was started 41 years ago to promote the development of older adult ministries and the value of such ministries.

Dreams don't happen because we dream them.
They happen because *we do something about them.*

Memo From Membership

As I was pondering about someone I knew who was bringing forth fruit in old age, it crossed my mind: What about me?

I retired from the Las Vegas School District at the age of 60, and I had been taking classes to learn about working with seniors because I knew that was what I eventually wanted to do. I was also wrapping up a six-year term on the Board of Deacons at our church, having served as moderator for the last four years.

Upon retirement from my job, I emailed the pastor about seeing a need to give extra attention to our oldest members in addition

to what was provided by their deacon. Within months, I was in a volunteer staff position as director of senior adult ministry.

Three-and-a-half years later, the church changed my position to director of congregational care and put me on as paid staff. Now I serve all ages, but since our church is probably 80-90% seniors, I continue to work mainly with older people.

These past nine years have been the absolute best!!! I count my blessing every day and feel positive I am doing exactly what God needs me to be doing at this stage of my life.

I do not remember anything being mentioned in the Bible



Linda Rauenbuehler
POAMN Membership Chair
Henderson, Nevada

about retirement. I think we are meant to help and serve others for as long as we possibly can.

Maybe, without even realizing it, YOU are also an example of someone who exemplifies bringing forth fruit in old age.

Membership Renewal for 2023

If you have not already done so, please renew your membership for 2023.

A membership application/renewal form is available at poamn.org/membership.

You may mail a check or pay online through PayPal.

Your membership dues help POAMN produce this newsletter, as well as conferences, events, and

our annual older adult ministry planning guide. A complementary members-only print copy of the guide was mailed in March. We'll mail you one also when you renew.

Help POAMN continue connecting people who have a passion for working with, and enabling, older adults. Thank you for renewing today.

Certificate of Older Adult Ministry

POAMN collaborates with Columbia Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, on classes leading to a Certificate in Older Adult Ministry. Please check out this wonderful opportunity. Information can be found at poamn.org/courses.

Plans Progressing for POAMN's 2023 Conference

Kathleen Rankin
Grosse Ile, Michigan

On September 14 and 15, POAMN members and friends are invited to gather in Grosse Ile, Michigan, for a day and a half of workshops, worship, warm fellowship, and good food.

The theme of the 2023 conference is *Walking in New Shoes*. The focus will be on trying new things.

Grosse Ile Presbyterian Church, home church of our dear friend and a POAMN past president,

the late Helen Morrison, will host our time together.

Grosse Ile is a beautiful island community south of Detroit, and September is a lovely time of the year to visit.

More information will be available on POAMN's website as the conference planning team finalizes the agenda and related conference details. But for now, start clearing your calendar for that week and making plans to join us.

Join POAMN in

Walking in New Shoes

September 14-15
Grosse Ile, Michigan

Those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength.

They will mount up with wings like eagles.

They will run and not get tired.

They will walk and not become weary.

Isaiah 40:31 (NASB)

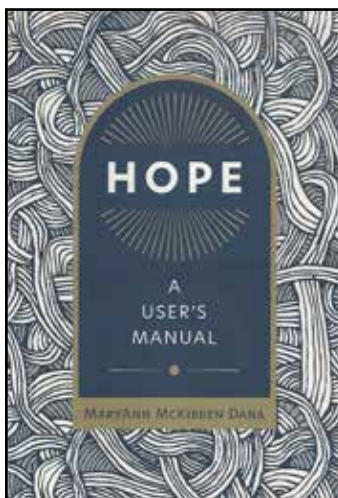
A Good Read For Difficult Times

Quentin A. Holmes
Central Presbyterian Church, Eugene, Oregon

In *Hope: A User's Manual*, Rev. MaryAnn McKibben Dana has produced a much-needed guide for people seeking inspiration during difficult times. Drawing upon her own faith, as well as her personal experiences, this book lives up to its name.

Our society often settles for shallow platitudes and blind optimism expressed via social media. However, these fall woefully short when the going gets rough.

Across her book's six sections, Rev. Dana describes what hope is, what it is not, and presents a spiritual narrative on real hope and the role it can play in our lives.



First, she dispels some of the common misconceptions about hope and offers new ways of thinking. Then, in the context of the messiness of our imperfect, flawed, yet beautiful human bodies, she reminds us that

caring for ourselves allows hope to thrive.

In later sections, Rev. Dana explores the idea that hope is not a process or a goal, but rather a narrative in which we live and move. She wraps up the book with thoughts on how we persevere, both when we are feeling hopeful and when we are not.

Rev. Dana's book is well-researched and thought-provoking. It seeks to enable the reader to imagine, and even create, a more hopeful story for themselves and for our world.

Aging in Place: Choice or Necessity?

Lynnette Wood, Ph. D.
Orcas Island, Washington

A neighbor in my community on Orcas Island in northwestern Washington lives in a home that is held in a trust. Although he does not own the home or control the trust, he is allowed to stay in the home as long as he lives. If he is unable to stay in the home, or when he dies, the home will be sold.

Another neighbor has advanced dementia. As his disease progressed, the deed to his home was transferred to his younger sister, along with his finances.

Polls taken over the years consistently report the vast majority of people say they want to “age in place” - to age and eventually die in their homes.

However, for many, aging in their home is not a choice; it is a necessity. Their only option is to age in place, due to lack of money, other resources, or other reasons. They cannot simply sell their home and go somewhere else.

These people often remain invisible to others. I see it here on Orcas Island where our focus is often on things other than an elderly person living alone in a cabin in the woods.

So what do we do? First, let’s recognize that not all are blessed with money and resources, and that there are other housing situations than just those of direct ownership and rentals. Let’s not assume that our situation is the same as that of our neighbors and friends.

Once we recognize this, how can we not pay attention? How can we not help find ways to support people so they may stay in their homes



safely, as they age? Not just people who wish to stay in their homes, but also people who have no other choice than to stay in their homes, no matter how difficult that option may seem to be.

The Orcas Senior Center in Eastsound, Washington, offers two programs to assist senior, ill, and disabled adults in the community. By providing companionship, assistance with basic household tasks, and help with simple home repairs and safety upgrades, these programs can help people stay in their homes as they age.

Does an organization in your community offer programs like these? If so, consider yourself lucky that they may be available to help you or a loved one someday, even if aging in place is a choice not a necessity.

To find out more about these programs or to support the Orcas Senior Center, visit orcasseniors.org or call (360) 3376-2677.

Lynnette Wood spent her professional career as a scientist helping developing countries assess their resources and their needs in order to plan effectively for the future. Now retired, Lynnette serves on the board of directors of the Orcas Senior Center on Orcas Island where she lives. The community is part of the San Juan Islands in Washington’s Puget Sound, about 90 miles from Seattle.

My Third Act - Destination: Old Age

Priscilla Long

I am in shock. In five months I turn 80 — I, who thought I would never live past 30. Still, I find myself rather pleased to be venturing into the country of old age. And what better way to bone up on a new destination than to write a book on it. My new book, *Dancing with the Muse in Old Age*, is just out. In researching it, I discovered so very many vibrant, amazing elders — many, though not all, active in the arts. As I navigate this new territory, they are my guides.

I once thought old age was about sitting around remembering. How ridiculous! Yes, we remember, at times vividly. But, we also have goals — my main goal for the next 20 years is to write 10 more books. And we are exercising more — or know we ought to. (I have bonded with my Fitbit.) And we know to reduce stress. Check. Connect with others. Check. Eat vegetables. Check.

But, the most mind-blowing thing I've learned has to do with learning — for brain health, for entertainment, for connection with others. We now know how plastic the brain is, that the hippocampus, that body part essential for memory, can produce new neurons (brain cells), and grow thicker. We know that every time we learn something new, our brain adds

to its zillions of connections. And we also know that the brain is plastic the other way — lack of use causes neuron death, brain shrinkage.

The researcher Rachel Wu and her team at CALLA (Cognitive Agility Across the Lifespan via Learning and Attention) have added a new twist to the need to keep learning in old age. It's less about maintenance, more about cognitive development. Most middle-aged folks, however brilliant and high-functioning, are not learning much. They have become increasingly specialized, relying on experience and past learning. In middle age this is likely good enough, thank you very much. We are busy holding down a job, raising kids, getting the car fixed.

But in old age we need more. We need to develop cognitively. And cognitive development, Wu and her team have discovered, works in the elderly exactly as it does in children. To begin with, you must believe you can learn. To paraphrase the cosmetics entrepreneur Mary Kay Ash, if you believe you are too old to learn, you are right. It's important to get input from the environment rather than drawing on past knowledge. This is about learning something new. It's important to learn within a



supportive environment, to see mistakes as part of learning. It's important to learn in small steps, mastering one before proceeding to the next. It's important to persist, to keep going when the going gets tough. And finally, Wu and her team advocate learning several things at once, as children and college students do.

Now, what has this got to do with me? It's true that when I write a new piece or book I learn stuff, but isn't this the kind of learning I've always done? In terms of my brain, how does learning about the history of writing differ from learning about the biology of salmon (considering two of my recent pieces)? I don't know the answer, but I do already know how to research a piece.

So, what would steer my brain into exotic territory? The answer is obvious — math!

Here's a subject about which I know zilch. Okay, I can

count. I can even make change, which you do by counting up from the price to the amount handed over, which our father taught us children to do so we could go door to door selling strawberries. Beyond that, I struggled with math.

Fast forward a few decades. In my mid-40s I began studying for the GRE in the process of applying to MFA programs in creative writing. And here comes math, my nemesis, back to haunt me. I studied and studied. Within a month I had advanced from the second grade to the fifth grade — pretty good! —though I doubted an admissions committee would think so. Then the worst happened. I arrived at the test an hour late. So poorly do I perceive numbers that I read 12:10 as 1:12. I was heartbroken, my dream of entering an MFA program dashed. The application deadline preceded the next GRE test opportunity.

Three weeks later, with no GRE score, I received an acceptance letter. Saved!

Three more decades have passed. Could I now actually learn math? I think of the Italian nonagenarian, Giuseppe Paterno. Growing up, Giuseppe loved to read, but life did not afford him an education past

the eighth grade. He married, helped raise two children, and worked as a surveyor for the Italian railroad. At age 93 he entered college, but, within days, had serious doubts. Everyone else was so much younger! A dean encouraged him and before long he just blended in. At age 97, he graduated in history and philosophy at the top of his class. He said, “My time at university has changed me for certain. It’s as if my brain has evolved. I’ve started to speak a different language. If I’m discussing the newspaper with my friends, I can articulate myself with greater precision....”

So, it can be done. And if it can be done, perhaps I can do it. I have obtained a math book for innumerate adults.

Priscilla Long has an MFA from the University of Washington. Author of seven books to date, she is a poet, science writer, and writer of creative nonfictions as well as fiction. A longtime independent teacher of writing, her how-to-write book is *The Writer’s Portable Mentor*. Her most recent book is *Dancing with the Muse in Old Age* (Epicenter/Coffeetown Press).

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POAMN Members Have Fruit to Bear

Quentin A. Holmes
Central Presbyterian Church, Eugene, Oregon

The Bible considers old age to be a blessing from God, a time when a person's faith enables the impossible to become possible. Psalm 92 speaks of older adults being active, productive, and bearing fruit in the latter years of their lives.

Abram and Sarai were not young when the Lord instructed them, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing." (Gen 12:1-2)

Indeed, both were of advanced age when Sarah gave birth to Isaak, the first of many, many generations to come of the people of God!

How about you and I? We, too, shall bring forth fruit in old age!

Although we grow older with each passing year, our definition of an "older adult" tends to be someone who is about ten years older than *we* currently

are. However, there is a great diversity among older adults.

I personally know 75-year-olds who reside in assisted living facilities; and 75-year-olds who live at home and drive to church each Sunday; and 75-year-olds who enjoy backpacking in the Cascade Mountains, camping out under the stars.

Depending upon the criteria you choose as a measure, a person has several ages. These are:

- A Chronological Age - the number of years passed since birth;
- A Biological Age - a gauge of how well one has, or has not, taken care of one's physical body;
- A Personal Age - how old you think you are.

Of the three, the last one is by far and away the most important because it influences how you think and act. Chronologically, someone may be way up there in years, but their Personal Age is much younger.



How can older adults share their experiences and bear fruit in old age? Older adults have a lifetime of stories and lessons, successes and failures, joys and sadness, health and sickness, laughter and tears.

You and I possess a wealth of wisdom, knowledge, and experience to serve our families, our communities, and the Church - and folks will know we are Christians by our love.

Thanks be to God!

The measure of life is not its *duration*, but its *donation*.

Peter Marshall

Remembering Influential POAMN Members

Compiled by Quentin A. Holmes
Eugene, Oregon

What I enjoy most about POAMN is networking and forming friendships with others who share their passion for older adult ministry. These are women and men of deep faith who have spent a lifetime ministering to, with, and for older adults. They have a knack for reaching out, lifting us up to their level, and helping us grow spiritually. Allow me to share a few stories about three folks that you may have come to know, and be inspired by, through POAMN: Rev. Dr. James Reese, Helen Morrison, and Rev. Dr. Richard Morgan.

Rev. Dr. Richard Morgan

Upon awarding Dr. Morgan the POAMN Legacy Award in 2013

Tonight I'm privileged to honor someone for whom words about the Word are very important. Richard Morgan is all about helping us find God in the middle of all of our life experiences, through the good times and the challenging ones, particularly as we age. One of my favorite images of him depicts a man sitting at a simple desk, pen in hand, writing.

Richard Morgan grew up in the shadow of the Universities of Kentucky and Pennsylvania, a preacher's kid and a preacher's grandkid. Learning, teaching, and writing were a given in his family tree.

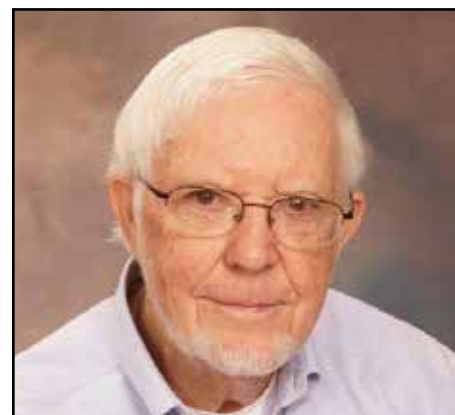
Dick pursued graduate studies at Wake Forest University and Union Theological Seminary, with a Ph. D. in Early Christian History, for a grand total of four graduate degrees. This education was integrated into

a career path that includes pastorates, college teaching, counseling, pastoral care, and writing.

Dick was serving a small congregation made up of mostly older adults in North Carolina when he had a revelation that led him to become dedicated to older adult ministry.

"I was looking out over my congregation and realized the majority was older than 70, yet they wanted a creative, innovative ministry," he recalled.

Through his books and countless presentations, Richard Morgan has taken us all on a journey of the Spirit based on the notion that aging is a sacred work. Understanding the intersections of my story, your story, and God's story are central to a healthy old age.



Richard Morgan
1929 - 2022

I have a bookshelf dedicated to Dick's gift of writing, and a file drawer full of AGenda newsletters published over a ten-year period under his skilled editing for POAMN.

We are so fortunate to present this year's Legacy Award to Dr. Richard L. Morgan, the guy who always has a new book in the wings!

— Jan McGilliard

REMEMBERING MEMBERS continued from page 9

Rev. Dr. James Reese

I first met Rev. Jim Reese in May 2000, during a conference at Montreat. I went with a Haitian colleague, and 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 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. 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.

The last time Jim and Neola Reese and I were physically together is my most precious memory of this couple. I had befriended Richard, a member

of Jim's congregation who was paralyzed in a car accident thirty years earlier. Jim knew I was visiting Richard on a regular basis, but Jim (now 93 or 94 years old) had limited his driving.

Jim wanted to serve Communion to Richard, so he asked me if I could pick him up at church, along with Neola, 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, with Jim blessing the elements and me feeding them to Richard.

— Don Carlin

In 2016, POAMN and the Association of Retired Ministers, Spouses and Survivors (ARMSS) held their fifth consecutive joint conference, this time in Richmond, Virginia.

On Tuesday evening, Rev. Reese welcomed everyone to the event on behalf of Ella Banton, ARMSS president who was unable to attend. Jim's message was clear, full of wisdom gained during his 92



Jim Reese
1924 - 2022

years of life, and straight from his heart.

“Let me remind you that no other denomination has an organization for its retired ministers, spouses, and survivors,” he pointed out.

Rev. Reese concluded his opening remarks with, “When you leave, it is our fondest hope that you will be greater in knowledge, greater in friendship, and that all that you do beginning today for the rest of your life will be to the glory of God.”

— Quentin Holmes

REMEMBERING MEMBERS continued from page 10

Helen Morrison

Helen Morrison, Presbyterian extraordinaire, was part of the effort that created POAMN. Aged 94 at her death in 2021, she was a 60-year member of Grosse Ile (Michigan) Presbyterian Church. Her accomplishments were many, and she remained an involved member of the community throughout her entire life.

Helen grew up in the south end of Dearborn, a Detroit suburb. She married young and had three sons. As her boys completed college, she went back to school herself at University of Michigan-Dearborn and got a degree in sociology and psychology. Her husband's untimely death derailed their plan to open a career consulting business. Nevertheless, Helen went on to be a life and career consultant for the rest of her days.

That did not limit her Presbyterian commitments. She was Sunday School superintendent at church, an elder, part of education committees at the Presbytery and Synod. She was a representative of the Presbytery of Detroit at several General Assemblies and served at all four levels of PC(USA). Helen served on the Board

of Presbyterian Villages for several years and was pivotal in organizing an Older Adult Ministry commission at Grosse Ile Presbyterian Church. Each one of these involvements was because she cared about people and she cared about her faith.

Helen's proudest moment came in 2014 at that year's General Assembly, when she was designated a "Prophetic Woman of Faith." That meant she was following the examples of prophets and apostles who came before her. It was also a very appropriate way of describing Helen. Rev. Karl Travis, who nominated her for the award, said, "Helen, at 86, exhibits the two most obvious qualities of all prophets: a clear vision of righteousness accompanied by an unabashed willingness to share it."

That is a perfect description of Helen Morrison, one which makes it easy to understand why the loss of her is felt so keenly. The most we can hope for is to emulate the example she set as we thank God for having had her with us as long as we did.

— Ilona Macek



Helen Morrison
1929 - 2021

In the 1980s Helen Morrison served as one of the original "Older Adult Enablers" whose mission was to establish and support older adult ministry in 16 Synods. By 1991 their group had grown to more than 225 "enablers."

Helen's passion for older adult ministry was infectious. She helped create what ended up being Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network, and later served as POAMN's president from 2011 to 2014.


Helen was a person of deep faith who pioneered the way for women to serve in leadership roles in the Presbyterian Church. She was my mentor.

— Quentin Holmes



**Presbyterian Older Adult
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We join you in *celebrating* older adults this month



In old age they still
produce fruit;
they are always
green and full of
sap,
showing that the
Lord is upright;
he is my rock, and
there is no
unrighteousness
in him.

Psalm 92:14-15