

POAMN Network News

Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network

Resource Guide for Older Adult Ministries

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Editor:

Quentin Holmes
541-933-3324

Publisher:

Kelley Hope
804-313-9113
poamnetwork@gmail.com

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Be Strong and Courageous. Do Not Be Afraid

We are living in a very stressful time. There is no end to the things one can be very worried about: the ongoing war in Ukraine and the suffering it is causing, the harsh strife between political views/ political parties within America, our domestic inflation rate, and perhaps your own health concerns.

In the Old Testament Joshua 1:9 the setting is one wherein a fierce battle is about to ensue.

The Israelite warriors are told not to fear for the LORD is on their side. Today, we too need to keep in mind that the LORD is our strength and shield, and will go with us wherever we go.

I hope the updates and information inside support you and your ministry.

Thanks be to God!



Quentin A. Holmes
PNN Editor

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. Send your good news, program ideas, or updates to poamnetwork@gmail.com.

Inspiring Words from SuperAgers

Pat Baker
POAMN President
Lilburn, Georgia

Many of you might be aware of my fascination with SuperAgers or those individuals who live well into their 90s or past 100 years old in pretty good health. The theme of the summer POAMN Network News is “Be strong and have courage, don’t be afraid,” words that are spoken throughout the Bible. My first thought was, that is easier said than done, but then I thought of these SuperAgers and feel that they might have the wisdom to know how to be strong and courageous.

One of the few magazines I still get in the mail is Brain & Life, Neurology for Everyday Living. The December/January 2023 issue contained an article that was an immediate read for me. The article featured people in their nineties sharing tips for longevity and living well. I’d like to share some of their wisdom with you and how I think it connects to our theme.

The first person interviewed was Eunice Black, age 99. Her defining characteristic is rule-breaker. She states, “I think everyone has a lifestyle that suits them, and if you find the lifestyle that suits you, you will be happier than if you try to follow what others try to tell you to do.” Ms. Black’s philosophy of life certainly takes a person who has a confident personality, and is strong and

courageous. We all know it is a lot easier to go with the flow and act the way people expect us to act.

Another interviewee is Albert Pollack, age 100. His defining characteristic is determination. He was born in Poland and lost his mother at the age of 19 in the Holocaust. Besides remembering well his single mother’s early lesson—be honest, be nice, and be kind—he internalized another lesson, not to give up. “If I have something on my mind, I do it. I don’t stop until I finish it. You can call it stubbornness, but I call it determination.” He published a book when he was 98 on the Holocaust. His philosophy of life is full of being strong and courageous, and certainly not being afraid!

I challenge each of you to take a few minutes to listen to those individuals around you who have beat the odds and are living near or beyond the century mark. In 2019, a federal report recorded that there were 100,322 people 100 or older in the U.S. Many clinical studies on aging are focusing less on the years lived and more on the number of healthy years lived. The five individuals interviewed for this article each continue to show courage and strength in their long lives and we all can learn a lot from them.

Learn more about Eunice, Albert, and the others featured in Brain & Life:
brainandlife.org/articles/tips-for-longevity-living-well

In Fearful, Challenging Times, Remember God is in Charge

Linda Rauenbuehler
POAMN Membership Chair
Henderson, Nevada

According to Google, some variation of the phrase “do not be afraid” is mentioned in the Bible 365 times.

My husband and I just returned from a wonderful vacation to New Zealand, Australia, and Fiji that had been on our bucket list for our entire married life. It is eye-opening to get out of the country and discover how we are seen by others. We met people who said they do not really want to visit the United States because it is so dangerous. Considering our huge number of mass shootings, those new friends sadly have valid concerns.

The minister and leaders of the church I attend are so concerned about mass shootings in houses of worship that we have hired an off-duty police officer to patrol the church on Sunday mornings.

When I mentioned this to a friend of mine who attends a different denomination, she said their church members do not have that concern because all their congregants are armed!

I don’t know about you, but I really don’t want to live in a society where one must be armed to attend church and go about daily lives.

These are challenging times, but I must remember that God is in charge. He sees the whole picture and has a plan to move beyond our current problems.

We need to be strong and courageous. We must do all we can not to let ourselves be overcome by fear.

A 5K at 92

Quentin Holmes
Eugene, Oregon

Two years ago, Margaret Prentice celebrated her 90th birthday with a drive-by birthday party during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

A year ago, Margaret moved from a house to Willamette Oaks Senior Apartments & Assisted Living Facility.

This year, Margaret completed the Eugene 5K, an event that is part of the Eugene Marathon.

Established in 2007, the series of runs take place in Eugene, Oregon. In addition to the 26-mile marathon and 5K, the event includes a half marathon and a kids run.

Months before the 2023 event, Margaret and a group of her neighbors at Willamette Oaks

decided to take part in the Eugene 5K. They trained for weeks, building up their endurance.

“We also did two practice 5K walks,” said Margaret. “One week, we all got soaked, but it didn’t stop us.”

They hit the ground running—or power walking—on April 30.

Margaret enjoys the outdoors, especially hiking and birding. As an older adult, she is an inspiration to the members of her church, Central Presbyterian, and to the members of her community.

A History of POAMN and Older Adult Ministry in PC(USA)

Dr. Miriam Dunson

This article was originally written in 2016 and has been updated for 2023.

In 1983, the General Assemblies of the two Presbyterian Churches (North and South) made the decision to reunite. As part of that reorganization, an office on Older Adult Ministry was added to the structure of the Presbyterian Church (USA) at its headquarters in Louisville. In May of 1990, with great excitement, I was called to serve in that office.

Upon my arrival in Louisville, I met representatives from a group of about 40 older adults who were committed to ministry with, for, and by older adults. They had been involved in a project funded by Presbyterian Women in the 1980s to focus on older adult ministry in our congregations.

After undergoing training in ministry to older adults, members of the group went out to churches to lead and support the creation of older adult programs. Individuals (or couples) lived and worked at a church site for two years, focusing on the skills, needs, and commitments of older adults. The congregation provided only housing with all other expenses covered by the PW fund. After two years, when the Older Adult Ministry program in that church had been developed, the visiting person or couple would then move on to another church.

The program lasted about four years before funding ran out. These 40 individuals, trained and experienced in Older Adult Ministry, formed an organization, elected officers, and sought to continue their ministry.

The next thing that happened to this group was the inclusion of an Office on Older Adult Ministry in the new headquarters in Louisville. I suspect

those older adults had something to do with that action! A few years earlier, I had received a Doctor of Ministry degree, focused on older adult ministry, from Columbia Seminary. In May 1990, much to my surprise, excitement, and, I must admit, trepidation, I was called to fill the position of Associate for Older Adult Ministry on the new staff.

The older adult group was interested in becoming an integral part of the activities of the new Office on Older Adult Ministry and I was excited to have them.

In late 1990, the group became the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network (POAMN). The group's leadership continued supporting ministries at local churches by publishing a newsletter, holding conferences, and creating an annual guide of resources.

One of the deepest joys of my life was the opportunity to work with the leaders and members of POAMN for 13 years in Louisville. We published materials every year for use in churches, retreats, and conferences. These publications included *Older Adult Ministry: A Guide for the Session and Congregations* and *Older Adult Ministry: A Guide for the Presbytery Committee*.

The office staff traveled constantly to individual churches, presbyteries, seminaries, and colleges, seeking to raise the awareness of the skills and needs of older adults in our churches.

At the end of 2003, because of financial difficulties, many of us who served in Louisville were downsized or encouraged to retire. After another two years, the Office on Older Adult Ministry closed down.

POAMN Creating Online Resource for Starting an Older Adult Ministry

Quentin Holmes
Editor, POAMN Network News

POAMN and the Office of Christian Formation (OCF) of the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) are partnering on an online module to help people create or initiate older adult ministries (OAM) in their congregations.

For many of us, two books published by PC(USA) in the 1990s served as invaluable guidelines for developing our ministries to older adults. As excellent as these books were, the time has come to upgrade them to take advantage of new information and new means of accessing information.

In September 2022, as part of a meeting of the Christian Formation Collective, PMA & POAMN began to envision something more effective. The approach involved three steps: reviewing, re-thinking, and re-imagining.

During the review phase, we identified current gaps in POAMN's support of older adult ministry. These gaps included:

- Need for online training
- Need for more diverse leaders
- Need for quick access
- Need for resources written in Spanish/Korean
- Basics of older adult ministry
- Individual coaching
- POAMN Network News needs more links

Our re-think sessions brought out that revising/ updating the 1990s-era guides would provide a technical solution, but not address the gaps above. We then brainstormed novel ideas to overcome those gaps. Ideally, the new OAM resource should:

- Build upon OAM's past resources (i.e., written materials)
- Be accessible to a person with a smart phone or PC
- Be printable (for the folks who like to work from hardcopies)
- Require no payment or fee to access
- Provide short videos by experts
- Employ infographics for visualization of numerical facts
- Be modular and updateable over time

Our re-imagine sessions led us to creating a digital resource on the POAMN website instead of a printed or electronic book. This resource will be modeled after the new Opening Doors to Discipleship website recently launched by Association of Partners in Christian Education. We plan for it to include:

- Factsheets, templates, charts, and videos
- Real examples of older adult ministry in a variety of contexts
- Interviews with ministry leaders and participants
- Cool stuff in older adult ministry
- Links to more tools

Since January 2023, a group of representatives from the Office of Christian Formation (OCF) and POAMN have been busy developing materials for this web-based resource. The team consists of Miatta Wilson, Sarah Erickson, Linda Rauenbuehler, and Quentin Holmes.

We look forward to sharing more information with you in the future, including a launch date.

Volunteering in Poland: Helping Those Who Help Ukraine Refugees

Margie James
Eugene, Oregon

In January 2023, almost a year after the first shelling of Ukraine began, my neighbor, Stan Paulic, invited me to join him in Poland to volunteer with All Hands and Hearts (AHAH). After doing my due diligence, which included both researching AHAH and my heart, I decided to apply to the program, to feel that I was doing something to make a difference in this senseless war.

AHAH is a non-profit organization that addresses the immediate and long-term needs of global communities impacted by disasters. AHAH arrives early for first response and stays late to support communities in ways most needed. What makes their Ukraine Crisis Relief Project different is that this is the first time AHAH is responding to a disaster associated with war.

AHAH's Ukraine Relief Project started in March 2022 in the town of Przemysl, Poland, located about five miles from the western border of Ukraine. After temporary housing projects were completed in Przemysl, the base relocated to Krakow, Poland, in March 2023. There the greatest need was supporting Ukrainian refugees to transition and integrate into life in Krakow, where opportunities for work and housing were greater.

On March 26, 2023, I flew from Eugene, Oregon, to Warsaw, Poland. This was my first international travel on my own. The Polish language is very challenging and English is not a common second language, especially in smaller towns and amongst the elder population. However, I found the people very helpful. We usually were able to figure out where I needed to go, aided by Google Translate and Google Maps.

With Stan and a few others from the US, I traveled to All Hands and Hearts' Polish base

camp in Krzecin, a farming village and bedroom community about 12 miles SW of Krakow.

Volunteers commit to serving for a week at minimum but can stay as long as desired. We spent four weeks volunteering with All Hands and Hearts on their Ukraine Crisis Relief Project, living communally in a three-bedroom, two-bath house in Krzecin.

While we were with the project, there were 20-plus volunteers and staff living on site. Volunteers and staff came from around the world and were of all ages. We shared a desire to do something useful for people who had to flee their homes because of war and a need to get a better sense of the reality of that war.

All Hands and Hearts currently has five sites in Krakow where projects are happening. Volunteers choose the projects they want to work on each evening. This allows both the opportunity to experience a variety of projects and to feel connected to a project. We worked 5-1/2 days a week, traveling into Krakow by van or by train. Given our mission of supporting organizations that are supporting Ukrainian refugees, our tasks were varied.

My first day of work was in a warehouse operated by International Bund (IB), a German relief organization. I sorted boxes of clothing by gender and size. The clothing was then made available to the refugees through IB's storefront.

Another day I spent cleaning the kitchen and offices at Dobro Zawsze Wracca, an organization started by two Polish and Ukrainian women. Dobro is a distribution site for food, clothing, and special need items. AHAH also helped prepare some rooms at their site to serve as a school for Ukrainian children.

I spent more days working on several construction renovation projects, where I learned how to use hand tools. Imagine building when there are no square corners or straight walls, mortar has grass in it, bricks are crumbling away, cement floors are pocked and uneven, and materials are mismatched, yet they still need to fit together!

One such project was creating a kitchen for Soup for Ukraine. This group has been making soup for refugees since Feb 25, 2022, the day the war started. They had recently moved to a new site that did not have a kitchen; now they do! We also helped repackage food for refugees.

Our largest task was renovating an old warehouse operated by Mission of Grace that will store supplies vital for the local Ukrainian community. We added structural support, metal tracks for drywall, and rebuilt brickwork to securely support the door. They have now completed all electrical, drywall, and painting; it takes a village of volunteers!

I felt the closest to the Ukrainian people while loading vans with supplies for the front lines of the war. These vans carry critical materials to people who have remained in Ukraine as well as special hospitals there. This effort is coordinated by Friends of Ukraine, an organization started by several Polish and Ukrainian women. Many of the non-AHAH volunteers were young Ukrainian refugees; the van drivers were from several different European countries. We packed baby supplies, food, special request items (a set of tires) – anything we Americans take for granted!

People helping Ukrainian people were present all around us. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity I had volunteering with All Hands and Hearts in Poland. I learned so much. The highlight was being around the Poles and Ukrainians who jumped to help without any questions when needed. It was an honor to support them.

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However, this was not the end of POAMN. The leaders and members of POAMN were committed to seeing the work of the organization continue, and so it did.

The ministry goes on, carried out by the officers and members of POAMN throughout the nation. They are dedicated and determined, excited and enthusiastic, to continue this effort into the future.

For 40-plus years, volunteers with POAMN have focused on training, celebrating, and expanding the vision that older adults in the church have skills to be utilized, faith to be shared, and the

wisdom never to let the focus on ministry with older adults die.

God has certainly had a hand in seeing that this organization was born, was strengthened, and even now continues its ministry. All involved are committed to seeking to fill the need for ministry with, for, and, especially, by older adults.

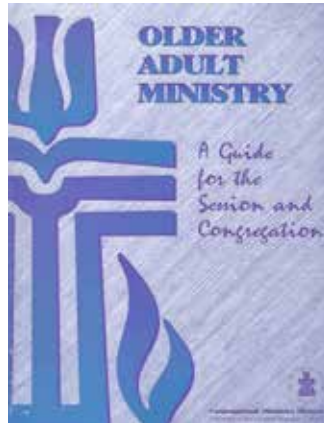
Thanks be to God!

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Older Adult Ministry
guide book from early
1990s



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Stan Paulic



Soup for Ukraine kitchen before volunteers
remodeled it



Soup for Ukraine kitchen after remodel