



CENTER SAGE

Issue 14 • Fall 2007

From Faith to Practice: Sage Corps

By Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., D.Min.

“Even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to all the generations to come” (Psalm 71: 18).

Older adulthood has the potential to become the best stage of life, an age of liberation when adults combine newfound freedoms with prolonged health. It can be a time when individuals make their most important contributions to life, faith, society and the world. As in all stages of personal and spiritual development, aging encompasses special tasks, one such task is the desire to give back and to help benefit succeeding generations (i.e., Erik Erikson suggested this developmental stage as “Generativity versus Stagnation”).



As I reflect on this desire of the psalmist to proclaim God’s might (e.g., love, power, faith, and grace) to succeeding generations, I can only imagine what such a vision would look like if congregations were truly intentional in helping older adults find meaning and worth in the later years.

If in fact as we age we have the opportunity to grow in wisdom, to gain experience, and to deepen our faith, to what end or purpose does all this have? Is it beneficial for Christians to watch 48 hours of television each week or to play 18 holes of golf, five days a week? There isn’t necessarily anything wrong with watching television or playing golf, but if people are living longer and healthier than previous generations, what purpose does living longer have for individuals and for our world?

Perhaps it’s time for congregations to invite “prime-timers” to really put faith into practice by creating intentional opportunities for older adults to live out their Christian discipleship in service to others. An example of this ministry might be in the form of what I envision as “Sage Corps”: Spiritually Active Generative Elders. More than a fellowship group or an “eatin’ & meetin’” program, Sage Corps would model Christian “elderhood” in our world today. Rather than thinking of old age as a vast wasteland, Sage Corps members would seek to serve Christ in all things and with all people.

What would it mean for the revitalization of our churches if we started a “Sage Corps” among older adults? If we United Methodists were to mobilize our older men and older

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women, organize them to confront the ills of our society, send them out in pairs like the original disciples, we could change the face of this land. Our times demand just such a ministry.

As an intentional ministry, Sage Corps could tap into the existing programs of United Methodist Women and/or United Methodist Men, or it could be a wholly new ministry with older adults reaching out to all generations. It would engage Evangelism and Nurture Teams, and older adults would be equipped and empowered for mission, service, and outreach.

In order to bring about such a corps of people in the service to Christ and the church, there needs to be guiding principles. These principles would include:

Name: The Sage Corps name is a deliberate attempt to avoid names associated with age, and to honor the sturdy, widely possessed, unimposing assets present in many older adults: Wisdom and Experience. An acronym for **SAGE** can mean: S-spiritually A-active G-generative E-elders.

Impact: Sage Corps would engage real problems of major significance in our communities and in the world. Older adults, growing in faith and spiritual maturity, would be involved in advocacy for all God's children at every age and stage of life. Older adults, invited to grow as disciples of Jesus Christ, would be empowered for making a difference in the lives of individuals, communities, and the world.

Commitment: Joining the Sage Corps would require a major commitment for older adults for a defined period of time. For some people, the commitment would be to become involved in community service projects for a lengthy period of time. For others, the commitment might be for a shorter duration and in various parts of the world. Many older adults are involved in wonderful mission work around the world, and in various regions of the country. Often, however, mission and service opportunities can also be met in an individual's local community.

Deployment: Sage Corps members would be deployed in sufficient concentration to be a presence wherever they are serving, whether locally, regionally, or throughout the world. Teams would be created for mutual support, encouragement, and experience.

Leadership: Sage Corps members would provide initiative, creativity, and leadership. Leadership would be named by the church council and selected by the members. Leadership needs would be dependent upon the specific mission and service involvement and the duration of the specific ministry.

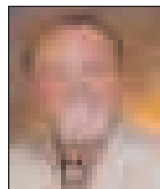
Spiritual Growth and Learning: Members of Sage Corps would practice spiritual disciplines (e.g., prayer, Bible study, worship, communion, fasting) and be engaged in acquiring new experiences and gaining new knowledge.

Diversity: Sage Corps would be open to everyone over a certain age (50? 55? 65? 70?). Some might question the wisdom of using chronological age as a basis for membership in the Sage Corps movement. Perhaps one reason for doing so is to provide an opportunity for people at midlife and older to be intentional in ministry and service.

Recognizing that many older adults are already involved as Christian disciples helping to meet the needs of children, youth and adults in their communities and throughout the world, Sage Corps can be a creative way of putting faith into practice in an intentional, comprehensive ministry. Sage Corps can be a critical venture for revitalizing congregations and communities. **Primetimers**, a program of the General Board of Global Ministries, is a wonderful effort for older adults to be involved in a short-term mission/learning experience. Sage Corps can be adapted and designed to meet the needs of various levels of skills and abilities of older adults on the local level, as well as encouraging their participation in such endeavors as **Primetimers**.

Again, I ask the question, what is the purpose of living longer if it is not to fulfill the purpose of God? Sage Corps is a way of inviting older adults to engage in spiritual growth and for organizing older adults to be in service to the needs of others. Sage Corps is an intentional ministry that engages older adults in Christian discipleship. Through this model of Christian elderhood, older adults have an opportunity for finding meaning and purpose in the later years. They will experience the reality of the psalmist's yearning by "proclaiming God's might to all the generations."

Let me know what you think. Do you already have such a ministry in your congregation, perhaps by another name? If so, what is your ministry? If not, is there a way you can create a Sage Corps experience in your congregation? If so, what would it look like?



The Reverend Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. is director of the Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries. He is the author of numerous books on midlife and older adults including *The Graying of the Church* (Discipleship Resources) and *Designing an Older Adult Ministry* (Discipleship Resources).

A Day of Wondering and More

By Karla Woodward

It was Martin Luther King Day, a day of service at our United Methodist Church. Staff Parish had granted all employees a paid day off to give us the freedom to go forth and serve. There were wonderful Mission projects planned, but I decided to forge my own service path and make some much-needed nursing home visits. Both of my "circuit rider" volunteers had sudden family caregiving responsibilities and hadn't been able to make their regular rounds to the many care homes where our members (or their family) resided.



So on this freezing cold, snowy Monday morning I blazed a trail to my first stop. Well, actually I slid right past my first stop on the icy streets, couldn't negotiate a U-turn, and decided it was probably safer to keep going! I finally arrived at a brand new Assisted Living residence, noting the Pony Express station/museum on the adjoining property. I wondered how those horses and riders negotiated their rounds in these bleak Kansas prairie winters.

The wind swept me into the foyer, and instantly those within moved towards me like metal to a magnet. The weather had been so bad for so long that I was a beacon of light in a visitor-void world. I received joyous greetings, smiles and hugs from perfect strangers. It was a good thirty minutes before I parted a path to my intended, but there she lay, sick with a sore throat and cough, not able to visit. I felt a wave of disappointment as if I had somehow failed in my mission, but as I wove back out through the sea of beseeching eyes, I realized I had served Christ in this place, offering his presence and peace in the gap between here and there.

I slid off to my next destination, wondering how often we do stand in the gap unaware of the blessing we give. I always pause and pray at the threshold of a care home, asking the Holy Spirit to use me to meet the needs of those within. I never cease to be amazed at the apparent power of my prayer, as I "happen" upon those who are dying alone, as I try to answer those who ask in despair "What use could God possibly have for me here, why won't he take me?" and to pray with those who have been aching for a final assurance that if they but ask, they are forgiven.

A husband and wife, parents of a member, lived at the next

facility, an older, institutional skilled nursing center. She was downstairs in a sunny room reading a steamy Romance novel. Her Twenty-Third Psalm poster was hung on the wall opposite the foot of her bed so she could view it whenever she looked up. I'm not sure how those two reading materials really fit together, but we had a wonderful, laugh-filled visit, prayed together, and her words of "I love you" trailed behind me like floating ribbons as I left the room.

I went upstairs to visit her husband, who was well incarcerated in the dementia unit. So incarcerated, in fact, that I couldn't get through the outer locked gate at the top of the stairs. I couldn't find anyone to help me, so I furtively glanced around and then, just shimmied over I wondered what the penalty was for breaking and entering a dementia unit.

The unit was a hum of sounds and movement, like a freestyle ballet where everyone did their own dance to their own music. Instead of tutus, though, this ballet was costumed with an entire color wheel of sweatpants and tops that bore no relationship to bottoms. Many of the tops looked like they had been splash painted with the flick of a brush, but in this case the paint resembled milk and juice with a little oatmeal for added texture.

I searched for the husband's room, weaving among the wanderers in a dance of my own. His room was blocked by a man stuck in place, like he had returned to yesteryear and was playing freeze tag under the streetlights on a warm summer eve. Gently and carefully I spoke to him, asking his name, and after my voice triggered no explosion of agitation, I gently touched his arm to draw his eyes to mine and repeated my question. I received no answer, but went on to ask if I could help him move down the hall to the dining room where others were gathering, or being gathered, for lunch. I got nothing. He was in a space where time, schedules, meals were irrelevant. I moved away, wondering if his space was freeing.

At the end of the hall was a large, paned window through which the sun was streaming, making a four-foot square white-bright checkered-board spot on the carpet. A woman was lying on the floor in the warm spot, wallowing, spinning, turning to try to soak it up, throwing her arms over her head, then out to the side as if to gather in the un-gatherable. One sock had come off in the process and lay discarded to the side. My grandmother's words echoed in my mind in equal rhythm to this dance, "Deedle deedle dumpling, my son John. Went to bed with his stockings on. One shoe off and one shoe

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(A Day of Wondering and More continued from page 3)

on. Deedle deedle dumpling, my son John.” To me her dance was mesmerizing and beautiful – free and without thought of propriety or convention. I wondered if her daughter would think so, if loved ones who had been held and rocked by her, fed by her, nurtured and loved by her, would find this beautiful. I doubted it, but hoped they could find some emotion besides horror at the sight of her dance welling out of the depths of a misguided brain.

I moved to the dining room and sat down next to the husband. I introduced myself, and though he did not answer back, he welcomed me with his eyes. All dining at this table had some form of turkey noodle casserole and peas. Some had identifiable noodles and hunks of meat in their ice cream scoop shaped pile, and peas in their original circular shape. Some had softer, less identifiable scoops, and others had the whitish filled bowl and greenish filled bowl of liquefied food. I could easily reach two people, so I began feeding both.

The conversation around the table occurred in isolation, but somehow communication DID happen. There were joyous outbursts mingled with yells, mingled with eyes-only language. The lady I fed gently patted my hand, a great gift and the only thanks she could offer. She and I played the One-Two counting game over and over; where she started with One and I chimed in with Two and off we went. Once we made it all the way to 52 – my age. Appropriate enough, I thought. Another at the table took in a meager few of the offered liquid spoonfuls, graciously offered by a caring staff that works so hard for so little. When you forget to swallow you begin to fly away. I wondered if she was already soaring.

I said the Lord’s Prayer with the husband, knowing he understood despite his lack of verbal response. I could feel it

through his hand that I held, see it in the brief flash of a smile and the softening of his eyes. I silently prayed for each around the table, that they would know the peace of God that passes all understanding, that the Holy Spirit would swirl like smoke through their minds and remind them that Jesus loves them. I whispered that God remembers them, even if they do not remember him. As I left I walked through the gate this time, out into the dazzling snow-white day.

As I drove home, Martin Luther King’s words framing this day echoed through my mind. Even though he spoke of the racial injustice of his day, I easily drew the parallels to my day of service with the frail elderly. “I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this national will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.’”

I wondered if those who can’t pray any longer are equal in the eyes of the church. I wondered if those who don’t remember God and can’t get to the church campus to worship are remembered by their church family and considered equal to those who faithfully fill the pews and lend their tithes and offerings. I wondered what would happen if more of the outside world went inside the care home, offering love and care and Christ. I wondered.

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New Life for Old: Spiritual Formation and the Retirement Experience

By Jerry Haas

Investing more than \$5000 in one’s own spiritual formation at age 63 or 73 or even 83 may seem like an act of foolishness or selfishness or both. Don’t most of us resolve faith issues when we’re in our teens or twenties? Aren’t belief systems and worship patterns worked out in mid-life, if not before? What could one possibly learn about faith and spirituality at this point in one’s life?

“A lot!” say the seniors who have participated in The Academy for Spiritual Formation®, a program developed more than twenty years ago by GBOD’s Upper Room®. Open to people of all ages, many of the participants in “The Academy” are in the fifty plus category, and the occasional octogenarian is a welcome addition. Many people find that entering into retirement is a good time to do some “soul work,” since a number of faith issues come to the fore in these years. Personal and corporate identity, loneliness, meaning and purpose are some of the themes at this juncture. Where does one go to get a handle on these challenges?

Pastor Preston Bright had seen this crisis in others. Then he came face to face with his own retirement and decided to attend the two-year Academy for Spiritual Formation in San Antonio as part of the transition. “When you retire as a minister, you give up a lot in terms of recognition. The phone doesn’t ring very much, you’re not needed a lot, other pastors don’t call.” The identity issues are huge – who am I, now that I’m retired?

Phyllis Annett’s story is different. She spent years away from the church, wandering back only in retirement to a local congregation and a small group of fellow learners. One of them gave her a copy of *Weavings* (an Upper Room magazine),

which she dearly loved, and in it, she found a bind-in card promoting the Academy. “I was just starting to come to life and then, wow! So much began happening for me.” Phyllis completed the two-year Academy in Burlingame, California, but that wasn’t enough for her. She went on to take the Spiritual Directors training at the Mercy Center and now serves as a volunteer prison chaplain. “I loved reading the books the Academy exposed me to – they are so much deeper than the “pop” Christianity stuff you see in most bookstores.”

Jack Hansen is completing the two-year Academy in Alabama, entering into it intentionally as part of his retirement plan. “The way I looked at it, I spent nine years in higher education preparing for my career and another two years in post-doctoral work; why not spend some time getting ready for this new phase in my life.”

The structure of the Academy is something that seems to work well. Participants gather for five days every calendar quarter – a total of forty days in retreat over the two-year period. The rhythm of returning again and again to the same retreat center with the same

group of participants provides continuity but also space to pursue other things in life. Preston continued to work during the Academy, retiring just as he finished the two-year commitment; Jack continues to do consulting work while enjoying his family and adjusting to a new home.

“I could not have kept going without intentionally focusing on my spiritual life,” Preston declared. “My retirement was complicated by dealing with my aging parents –the most stressful thing I’ve ever had to deal with.” In comparing the Academy to other experiences, Preston identified its value in helping him to let go. “At other retreats, I would get all revved up, motivated by inspirational speakers and promises I’d make to myself. Then I’d go home and get depressed, realizing I’d built up a bunch of expectations for myself I

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TELL US ABOUT YOUR MINISTRY WITH OLDER ADULTS

The Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministry invites you, the person responsible for Older Adult Ministry in your church, to complete the following survey. (You may be the pastor, a staff member, or a volunteer leader of Older Adult Ministry in your church.) We do ask that each church submit only one survey. Our purpose in asking for your input is to (1) update the Center’s database and

(2) enable the Center to become an information clearinghouse, connecting churches seeking resources to churches that can provide specific assistance to those churches. **By completing, detaching, and submitting this survey you agree to become a part of this information sharing connection.**

By taking part in this survey you provide important knowledge

concerning the United Methodist Church’s overall ministry with older adults. We hope that as you gather information, this survey will stimulate your congregation’s vision for an intentional ministry by, with, and for older adults. The Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministry staff thanks you in advance for your time and help with this project. May God bless your ministry with older adults!

Older Adult Ministry Survey For Local Church Leaders

Please read the following entries and rate the quality of the ministry in your church by circling 1-4 (4=Very Good, 3=Good, 2=Fair, 1=Poor). If your church does not have a particular ministry, please circle 0=N/A, indicating that the ministry or program is Not Applicable to your church.

KEY 4=VERY GOOD 3=GOOD 2=FAIR 1=POOR 0=NOT APPLICABLE
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OUTREACH/SERVICE/MISSION

1. Transportation for Older Adults (e.g., to/from Sunday school and worship services)	4	3	2	1	0
2. Transportation for Older Adults (e.g., to/from medical/legal appointments, physical therapy)	4	3	2	1	0
3. Meals on Wheels Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
4. Visitation Ministry Involving Older Adults	4	3	2	1	0
5. Our church provides these ministries to local nursing homes:					
a. Worship	4	3	2	1	0
b. Bible Study	4	3	2	1	0
c. Hymn Singing	4	3	2	1	0
d. Communion	4	3	2	1	0
e. Other Ministry to Nursing Homes _____ _____					
6. Adult Day Care Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
7. Respite Care Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
8. Congregational Health Care Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
9. Parish Nurse Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
10. Healing Ministry with Older Adults	4	3	2	1	0
11. Prayer Ministry with Older Adults	4	3	2	1	0
12. Intergenerational Ministry (older adults involved with children and/or youth)	4	3	2	1	0

KEY 4=VERY GOOD 3=GOOD 2=FAIR 1=POOR 0=NOT APPLICABLE

13. Short-term Mission Projects Involving Older Adults					
a. Local	4	3	2	1	0
b. National	4	3	2	1	0
c. Global	4	3	2	1	0

HOME MINISTRIES

14. Visit Homebound Members	4	3	2	1	0
15. Take Communion to Homebound Members	4	3	2	1	0
16. Provide Tape Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
17. Minor Maintenance and Home Repair (e.g., painting, carpentry, auto repair)	4	3	2	1	0
18. Home Chore Ministry (e.g., cooking, cleaning, sewing, paying bills)	4	3	2	1	0

WORSHIP/CHURCH SCHOOL

19. Our Church Has an Annual Older Adult Recognition Service	4	3	2	1	0
20. Large-Print Materials Are Available in Worship (e.g., Bibles, hymnals, songbooks, worship bulletins)	4	3	2	1	0
21. Large-Print Materials Are Available in Sunday School Classes (e.g., Bibles, hymnals, songbooks, curriculum)	4	3	2	1	0
22. Hearing Devices Are Available in Our Sanctuary	4	3	2	1	0
23. Church Buildings are Physically Accessible (e.g., ramps, doors and doorways, bathroom facilities)	4	3	2	1	0
24. Our Church Administers an Annual Accessibility Audit	4	3	2	1	0

ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

25. Our Church Offers Educational Seminars Covering These Topics:					
a. Health care	4	3	2	1	0
b. Computers and New Technology	4	3	2	1	0
c. Finances	4	3	2	1	0

KEY 4=VERY GOOD 3=GOOD 2=FAIR 1=POOR 0=NOT APPLICABLE

d. Pre-retirement	4	3	2	1	0
e. Caring for Aging Parents	4	3	2	1	0
f. Raising Grandchildren	4	3	2	1	0
g. Alzheimer's Disease	4	3	2	1	0
h. Grief and Loss	4	3	2	1	0
i. End-of-Life	4	3	2	1	0
j. Advance Directives (e.g., living will, durable power of attorney)	4	3	2	1	0
k. Other Topics (please be specific) _____					

SUPPORT GROUPS

26. Telephone Reassurance Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
27. Widow-to-Widow Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
28. Caregiver Support Ministry	4	3	2	1	0
29. Adult Children of Aging Parents	4	3	2	1	0
30. Alzheimer's Disease	4	3	2	1	0
31. Other Support Groups (please be specific) _____					

RECREATION/SOCIAL MINISTRY

32. Our Church Has These Activities Available to Older Adults:					
a. Travel/Trips	4	3	2	1	0
b. Fellowship Meals	4	3	2	1	0
c. Fine Arts/Senior Theatre	4	3	2	1	0
d. Other Activities (please be specific) _____					

33. Would you tell us about any other ministries and/or programs your church offers to older adults?

(Please be specific and attach a separate sheet, if necessary.) _____

Tell us about your church: (please print or type)

34. Your Name _____
(FIRST) (LAST)

35. Church Name _____

36. Church Address _____

37. City _____ 38. State _____ 39. Zip Code _____

40. Does your church have a Church Council/Committee/Team on Older Adult Ministries?
___yes ___no

41. Does your church have a paid Church Staff Coordinator/Director for Older Adult Ministries?
___yes ___no

42. Does your church have a Church Volunteer Coordinator/Director for Older Adult Ministries?
___yes ___no

43. Church Telephone _____ 44. Church E-mail _____

45. Church Website _____ 46. Annual Conference _____

47. Church Size: Total # of Members _____ 48. # of Members 65 Years & Older _____

49. What best describes the location of your church?
a. Metropolitan area ___ b. Suburb ___ c. Town ___ d. Rural ___ e. Other ___

50. Identify the primary ethnic group represented in your church:
a. White ___ b. Black (this group includes African, African American, Haitian, etc.) ___
c. Asian (this group includes Filipinos) ___ d. Pacific Islander ___
e. Hispanic/Latino ___ f. Native American ___ e. not specified ___

Thank you for taking time to complete and return this survey to:

Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., Director
Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries
General Board of Discipleship, The United Methodist Church
POB 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003

***By completing and submitting this survey you agree to become a part of this information sharing connection.
May God bless your ministry with older adults.***

(New Life From Old continued from page 5)

wasn't living up to – again. At the Academy I found myself settling in – this is who I am. I no longer felt a need to compare myself with an idealized image of what it means to be a Christian or a minister.”

The schedule for each day at the Academy is surprisingly simple. Morning Prayer is followed by breakfast and the first lecture; then silence for an hour, followed by discussion. The afternoon pattern is similar, ending with Holy Communion. Covenant groups meet in the evening, followed by Night Prayer. Lectures cover sixteen topics related to Christian spirituality. During the first year, participants commit to their own spiritual growth by practicing a spiritual discipline of their own choosing. In the second year, their creativity is unleashed in a variety of ministries. The idea is to share something of what they have experienced with their church or community.

Jack Hansen decided to use his background in research and questions from his own life for his second year project. He wondered how other professionals – those not necessarily in the Academy but other active Christians – had approached retirement. To find out, he developed a structured interview process and committed himself to conduct twelve interviews. “My goal was to see if there are some generalizations that can be made, and then to pass on this knowledge so that churches could address ministry issues related to retiring professionals more effectively.” While he is still completing the interviews, he ventured a hypothesis, “The first years after retirement seem to be a time of considerable spiritual growth. Many people in the last years of their career are extremely busy. They’ve put on hold matters of faith that they now have time to explore.” Facing a “desert” time with losses and transitions precipitates the hunger and helps them to connect on a deeper, more spiritual level to life.

What are the best things about the Academy for those in retirement or close to it? With a twinkle in his eye, Preston expressed it this way, “I’m not nearly as pragmatic as I used to be.” He went on to talk about the importance of friendships, worship, and a stronger commitment to lifelong spiritual learning. Practical concerns are means to an end – not ends in themselves.

Phyllis was inspired by two of the women presenters in particular, one a Catholic nun and the other an activist for social justice. She loved the bonding that happened in her covenant group between men and women and on an intergenerational basis. Perhaps for Phyllis the greatest resolve has to do with a passionate and even growing commitment to her ministry as a layperson. She has tapped a



deep and vital source of energy for her life from which she gives generously to others.

Jack echoed the strong sense of spiritual community that the Academy has provided to him and to his wife Pat, who is on the leadership team for the Academy in Alabama. “To have a group of Christians with whom I can share deeply, as they pray for me and I pray for them, that has been an incredible gift to Pat and to me.”

The Academy provides a wonderful context for lay and clergy to work out matters of faith as they approach, enter into, and journey through retirement. Spiritual issues tend to come back again and again in our lives, though in different forms, and so we need a structure and a community to face into them as we age. The Academy for Spiritual Formation® provides a context, a habitat, in which people like Jack, Preston and Phyllis can bring their questions honestly, struggle and be affirmed for who they are. Then God can do the rest.

The stories of these three persons – Preston, Phyllis and Jack – involve their participation in the two-year Academy. Besides this extended program, many Five Day Academies for Spiritual Formation® are offered around the country. More information can be found at www.upperroom.org/academy or by contacting the Academy office at 1-877-899-2781, ext. 7232 (toll-free) or at academy@upperroom.org



The Reverend Jerry Haas is the director of the Academy for Spiritual Formation and Emerging Ministries. You may contact him by e-mail at jhaas@gbod.org.

HONORING OUR ELDERS IN TODAY'S CHURCH

By Ron Sauer



When I use the term elders, I am referring to a very specific group of Christian people who should be defined not only by their ages but, even more significantly, by their past and present roles of participation within the life of our congregations. Consequently, it is my belief (and practice) that our honoring of those older adults, our elders, requires a somewhat different approach than that which we might utilize for many other church-related groups.

But what are those differences that necessarily tailor and define the “honoring of our elders”? I think there are several. First, we need to learn of and then utilize their historic perspectives upon those ministries of their past, which can be vital sources of wisdom and experience for our continued numerical and spiritual growth. We can also provide the more active elders with current positions of ministry in relation to whatever aging limitations might be individually involved. But to always emphasize that these elderly member’s worth is in their being who they are, not in the doing of what they perhaps can (or cannot) do. Additionally, it will be important that we continuously

update our assessments of their unique physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Subsequently, we will be more informed in our constructing an overall plan of ministry involving these above issues, with a special emphasis upon developing and facilitating a program of visitation to those older adult members who are either shut-ins or reside in nursing and retirement homes. In a more general sense, we should always seek to honor our elders with certain formal, as well as informal, expressions of respect and appreciation for their very dedicated years of volunteer service as they helped to sustain the various ministries within today’s churches. In return, I assert that we will receive certain blessings from these elders, as represented in the historic tradition of the blessings that Jacob gave to his twelve sons and the twelve tribes of Israel.

Therefore, I am writing this book as a user-friendly handbook, which I envision as one that is both motivational and informational for those of you involved in the older adult ministries of your church. I think that it can be a way in which you may gain some further insight into the honoring of your own precious elders and to explore a few constructive means by which you can further express that honor to those older adults of your faith community. Many of these are ways that I have found to be effective during my ministry to our own elders at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Louisville, Kentucky.



*From the Preface of **Honoring Our Elders in Today's Church** by Rev. J. Ronald Sauer, Copyright © 2007. Used with Permission. For more information you may contact Rev. Sauer by e-mail at saueron@earthlink.net.*

COLE HONORED BY COMMITTEE

The Reverend Dr. Elbert C. Cole received the Outstanding Leadership Award for his many years of faithful service to older adults in The United Methodist Church. The award, given by the United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries on Thursday, August 17, was presented to Dr. Cole in Nashville by the Rev. Hazel Bennett, chair, of the UM Committee on Older Adult Ministries, and Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., director, of the Center on Aging and Older Adult Ministries of the General Board of Discipleship. Dr. Cole, founder and former

President and CEO of Shepherd Centers of America, has played a significant role in the field of aging and older adult ministries for more than 40 years. He was pastor of Central United Methodist Church, Kansas City, MO when the first Shepherd's Center was started. Dr. Cole has been a visionary in the area of religious gerontology and instrumental in helping to establish the UM Committee on Older Adult Ministries. The



United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries made the presentation at the Symposium for Conference Leaders of Older Adult Ministries at Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville.

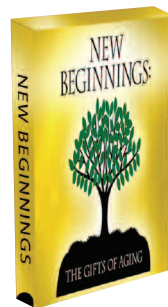


Resources

New Beginnings: The Gifts of Aging

New Beginnings: The Gifts of Aging video received an Award of Merit in the DeRose/Hinkhouse Memorial Communications Awards competition of the Religion Communicators Council as well as The Communicator's prestigious Crystal Award of Excellence in Religious/Inspirational Category. This award winning video looks at aging in our society and provides a glimpse at a variety of church ministries that are being enjoyed by older adults. Lives are changed, transitions are occurring and new beginnings are taking place for countless numbers of older adults in our congregations.

Filmed on location around the U.S., *New Beginnings* comprises individual short stories of older adults and the role



their faith plays in churches and communities. Among the several short stories explored in this video are vignettes including feeding the homeless, tutoring children, visiting the home-bound and career transitions.

Produced for the UMC by The General Board of Discipleship's Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries and the UM Committee on Older Adult Ministries.

To order copies of this video in DVD or VHS format:
 (Phone) 800-972-0433
 (Web) www.uppperrroom.org/bookstore
 Request "New Beginnings: The Gifts of Aging"

OLDER ADULT MINISTRY GRANTS 2007

The United Methodist Committee on Older Adult Ministries, meeting in March 2007, faced an exciting but difficult task: determining the disbursement of grant funds available for this year.

You will realize the difficulty of the task when I tell you that we received 59 applications requesting a total of over \$135,000.00, but we had only \$38,000.00 to award in grants to 26 applications.

Excitement came as the wonderful proposals were prayerfully and carefully read and the vision of such great possibilities was imagined. Then came the heartbreaking task of reducing allocations, and finally eliminating those which could not be funded. The recommendations were

presented to the full committee for final decision, and our hearts were saddened and burdened by the necessity of having to turn down over 1/2 of the applications because the Committee only had enough funding for 26 grants.

We congratulate those who received an award, and we express our deep regrets to those who did not.



Your friend and colleague in Christ,
 The Reverend Hazel C. Bennett
 Chairperson: UM Committee on Older Adult Ministries
 e-mail: hazelc@emeraldism.com

Parish Nurse

First UMC of Apopka
 Apopka, FL
 \$1250
 Parish Nurse Training

OWLS – Older Wiser Livelier Souls

Baldwinsville FUMC
 Baldwinsville, NY
 \$1255
 Community Older Adult Ministry Program

Christian Music Therapy

Wesley Village
 Macomb, IL
 \$2500
 Christian Music Therapy with Older Adults

Sew n' Sews Outreach

FUMC
 Hutchinson, KS
 \$1143
 Sewing Outreach for Older Adults

Transforming: A Regenerative Community

United Methodist Elder Care
 East Providence, RI
 \$700
 Training for Eden Alternative Ministry

Clair Community Bible Study

Clair Memorial UMC
 Irvington, KY
 \$1220
 Community Bible Study Outreach with Seniors

Older Adult Ministries in Small and/or Rural Churches

Sunshine District
 Rocky Mountain Conference UMC
 \$1500
 Creative Ministries with Older Adult in Small and Rural Churches

Feeding of the Elderly and Homebound

Liberia Annual Conference UMC
 Monrovia, Liberia
 \$2500
 Meal Program for Homebound Elderly

Happy Hearts

Ebenezer UMC
 Orlando, FL
 \$2000
 Enrichment, Fellowship and Sharing Ministry

Refuge for Latch Key Seniors

Trinity UMC
 Houston, TX
 \$1000
 Life Maintenance Needs Ministry with Seniors

Senior Fun Days

Mill Creek UMC
 Montoursville, PA
 \$984
 Fellowship and Enrichment Ministry with Older Adults

Living Waters

Crawford UMC
 Mobile, AL
 \$2500
 Comprehensive Service Program to Isolated Older Adults

Reach Out Senior Adult Ministry Project

Grayson UMC
 Grayson, GA
 \$800
 Phone Tree Outreach for Older Adults

Seniors Day Out

Calvary UMC
 Brownsburg, IN
 \$1250
 Intentional Community Older Adult Ministry

(Older Adult Ministry Grants 2007: continued from page 5)

Clothes and Blankets to Older Adults

South Congo Conference UMC
\$1000
Clothing & Blanket Program for Elderly

Food & Utensils for Older Adults

East Congo Conference UMC
\$1000
Meal Program for Older Adults

Older Adults to Fight HIV/AIDS

Central Congo Conference UMC
\$1000
Intergenerational Program
Combating HIV/AIDS

Finding Fitness

Maumee UMC
Maumee, OH
\$1500
Program of Increased Flexibility for Seniors

The Seniority Project

Marcy-Newberry Association
Chicago, IL
\$1500
Arts & Crafts Projects with Seniors

Each One Reach One

Triad Native American UMC
Greensboro, NC
\$2000
Church Volunteer Caregiving Program

Angels on Call

Golden Gate District
California-Nevada Conference UMC
\$1250
Friendly Visitor/Pastoral Ministry Program

Coming Fully Alive – A Joint Venture

Grace UMC & Senior New Ways
Yuba City, CA
\$1000
Intentional Spirituality and Aging Ministry

Churchland Connection

Centenary UMC
Portsmouth, VA
\$2000
Older Adult Service Support

Get Connected – Stay Connected

Phoebe's Place of Maple Park UMC
Chicago, IL
\$1000
Church Drop-In Center for Seniors

Barnitz/Mt. Zion UMC's Older Adult Ministries

Barnitz/Mt. Zion UMC's
Carlisle, PA
\$1650
Life Enrichment Program for Seniors without Partners

Older Adult Ministry

FUMC of Voorheesville
Voorheesville, NY
\$2500
Visitation Ministry

OLDER ADULT MINISTRY EVENTS

September 29, 2007
Aging in the 21st Century
Location: Civic Center,
Charleston
West Virginia
Contact: Susan Belcher
Phone: 304-425-8128
Email: susangwp@inetone.net

October 13-14, 2007
Creative Challenges for Elders
Location: Wesley UMC
Fresno, CA
Contact: Carole Urzua
Phone: 559-224-1947
Email: caroleurzua@sbcglobal.net

November 5-7, 2007
Aging in the 21st Century
Location: West Branch
Michigan
Contact: Pastor Betty Blair
Phone: 810-359-8215
Email: LEXUMC@sbcglobal.net

February 22-23, 2008
Seminar on Aging & Ministry
Location: Asbury Theological
Seminary
Wilmore, KY
Instructor: Richard H. Gentzler
Contact: Beverly Johnson-
Miller, PhD
Phone: 859-858-2092
Email: Beverly_Johnson-Miller@
asburyseminary.edu

LOOKING AHEAD

October 13-15, 2008
All God's People: Faith Formation Throughout the Life Span
Location: Nashville, TN
Sponsor: GBOD/Family, Life Span and Latino Ministry Team

If you would like to receive more information about this event as it becomes available, send your contact information to Dr. Richard H. Gentzler at rgentzler@gbod.org.

PRIMETIMERS EVENTS

September 30-October 5, 2007
Embracing Iowa: Urban & Rural Social Justice
Location: Wesley Woods Camp
& Retreat Center
Indianola, IA

October 6-13, 2007
I Don't Feel Nowhere Tired: Come Far From Where We Started
Rural Mission Inc.
Location: Johns Island, SC

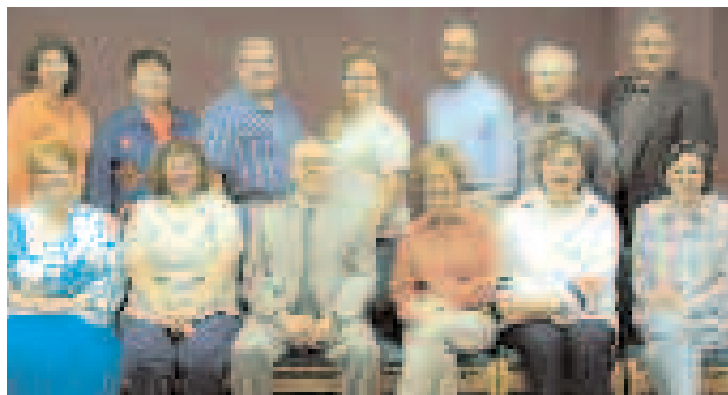
October 14-19, 2007
Globalization: The Challenge of Global Community
United Methodist Seminar Program, GBGM
Location: New York, NY
October 21-27, 2007
Life on the Bayou Teche:

History, Culture, and UMCOR Sager Brown
Location: Baldwin, LA
Primetimers Contact:
Kim Lehmann
Phone: 877-882-4724
E-mail: primetimers@gbgm-umc.org

February 3-15, 2008
2008 Mission Travel Study to Palestine & Israel
Sponsor: Mission Volunteers Program - GBGM
Contact: Una Jones
E-mail: ujjones@gbgm-umc.org
Phone: 212-870-3792
or
Contact: David Wildman
E-mail: dwildman@gbgm-umc.org
Phone: 212-870-3735

SPOTLIGHT

Wesley Theological Seminary Class



In April, twelve people participated in the Wesley Theological Seminary course, Issues of Aging and Older Adulthood, being offered in Nashville, TN. Dr. Richard Gentzler, director of GBOD's Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries, was the

instructor. Participating in the course were: Christine Anders (Iowa), Alan Carroll (Ohio), Jean Carroll (Ohio), Beth Ezell (Tennessee), Dana Hanlon (North Carolina), James Ludwick (Ohio), William McOmber (Ohio), Pat Nelson (Pennsylvania), Carol Schmitkons (Ohio), Berta Spencer (North Carolina), Doug Watts (North Carolina), and Clara Welch (Georgia). Some of the many issues covered in the course included: health care, financial issues, elder abuse, retirement, caregiving, and end-of-life concerns. The two-credit course is one of several classes needed to complete the Certification in Older Adult Ministries. For more information on the Certification program, please contact the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry at 615-340-7375 or certification@gbhem.org

Wesley Theological Seminary will offer another class in the Certification program in Spring 2008.

Correction

In Center Sage, Issue 13, the correct title for Bishop Jack M. Tuell's book should be: *From Law to Grace*.



General Board of Discipleship of
The United Methodist Church
Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministry
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www.aging-umc.org

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If you are interested in submitting an article in *Center Sage*,
please contact us for details no later than 14 November 2007:

Teri Kline, Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries
tkline@gbod.org toll-free 877-899-2780 ext. 7177

If you wish to add your name to our mailing list, modify your current address on our mailing list,
submit an article, or publicize an event, please complete the following:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone w/area code: _____ Fax w/area code: _____

E-mail: _____

Add to mailing list Change of address

Remove me from mailing list Other: _____

I want to submit an article for publication in *Center Sage* on the topic of: _____

I have an older adult event I want to publicize in *Center Sage*: _____

Please detach and mail to Teri Kline, Assistant, Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries,
PO Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003 or fax to 615-340-7071.