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Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries

Center Staff

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., *Director*
Teri Kline, *Assistant to the Director*



PO Box 340003
Nashville, TN 37203-0003
Phone: 877-899-2780 Ext. 7173
Fax: 615-340-7071
Email: rgentzler@gbod.org
Website: www.aging-umc.org

Grandparenting

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

“Over the river and through the woods, to grandmother’s house we go.” Lyrics written in 1844 by Lydia Maria Child paint a picture of a family making their way to grandmother’s house on Christmas Day. But in today’s world, that picture doesn’t always reflect reality. Many children are already living in a grandparent-headed household. And, for many of these children, no parent is living there—the grandparent is the primary caregiver.

According to the 2000 US Census, there are over 4.5 million children under 18 living in grandparent-headed households. One-third of these children have no parent present in the home.

When parents have been unable or unwilling to care for their children, grandparents have stepped in as a safety net to keep these families together and out of the formal foster care system. In fact, there are eight times more children in grandparent-headed homes than in the foster care system.

Grandparents raising grandchildren are responding to a problem in the middle (parent) generation, such as a death of the parent, illness, divorce, immaturity, incarceration of the parent, parental substance abuse, child abuse, or neglect. Grandparents are motivated by the love they feel for their grandchildren and step in to fill a gap created by the problem.

But the challenges many of these families face can seem insurmountable. Grandparents raising grandchildren must deal with issues relating to child care, education, medical care (including

Grandparenting continued from page 1

insurance coverage), legal concerns, faith development, and emotional support. While grandparent-headed families cross all race and socio-economic levels, these grandparents are more likely to live in poverty than other grandparents.

Much like society in general, increasing numbers of grandparents in our churches are raising their grandchildren. In our effort to support leaders of

older adult ministries, this special issue of *Center Sage* is on grandparenting. We hope leaders will find the articles and resources helpful for their ministry with grandparents raising grandchildren.



*Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Director, Center on Aging
& Older Adult Ministries
General Board of Discipleship*

Intergenerational Programs—Faith-Based Possibilities

By David J. Fetterman

It's Sunday morning and four-year-old Brianna returns to her pew after being accompanied to the restroom by "Grandma Mary." "See you after church," her surrogate grandmother whispers as she lifts Brianna onto the bench. Young and old hands give her a boost as they help her back to her perch between mom and her older brother. Still squirming, Brianna joins the diverse voices of the congregation in a hymn as she looks over the crowd to scope out her playmates when the service is done. On Sunday, Brianna's company isn't limited to her pre-school friends and immediate family. Some of her favorite playmates have gray hair.

As intergenerational professionals we spend much time exploring innovative program options to bring together young and old, yet we often overlook existing settings like Brianna's church which offers her opportunities to be surrounded with church family members of all ages. Faith communities are natural contexts within which to do intergenerational programming. Many faith communities have likely been doing intergenerational programming within the scope of their faith-based activities but have not labeled it as such. There is the rural congregation, for example, whose members have never heard of intergenerational programs, but who conduct weekly religious education in one room with participants of all ages interacting during that hour. Some congregations connect new or prospective members with older members of the faith community who agree to serve as their mentors as they begin their journey with this community of faith. Another congregation regularly takes its children and youth to visit and worship with residents in a local Skilled Nursing Facility. The list of

examples could go on. Churches, synagogues, mosques, temples, and other houses of worship are natural environments within which intergenerational interactions can thrive because they are not limited in their missions to one age or another, but rather exist for people of all ages.

Beyond intergenerational opportunities in houses of worship, what special contributions can faith-based organizations make to intergenerational programming? Faith-based intergenerational programs have recently become popular because of the hospitable political climate in the United States, where President Bush has cited the importance of faith-based organizations and the legitimacy of government funding to them. But is there a deeper rationale for exploring the value of faith-based intergenerational programming? I believe the explanation for this growing trend extends beyond the way the winds are currently blowing across the political landscape in the United States or elsewhere. Some of those reasons include the following:

Over the years intergenerational programs have reached out to two groups of people who are often marginalized in society—the young and the old. These are groups that have often been relegated to the peripheries of societal decision-making, the value of their input overlooked. The young and the old have been on the wrong side of power equations in

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our communities. Their viewpoints have not always been taken seriously. Some of that power differential is changing with growing numbers of older adults and with the strength of groups like Generations United and AARP; but as a society we still have some road to travel before the young and the old are seen as central to our societal values. In this, faith communities can speak with a powerful voice for those who often find themselves on life's fringes.

Faith communities seek to empower the powerless, to give voice to the voiceless, and to bring into the center of our communities those who too often are left on its outskirts. Christians claim a wonderful tradition in this regard when they relate Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke, spoken upon a return visit to his home synagogue. In these words he quotes from the Hebrew scripture, the prophet Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19, NRSV). These words, spoken from a Judeo-Christian tradition, echo sentiments from other faith traditions, as well: The powerless and those perceived to be on the margins of life are of value. As persons of worth, these marginalized ones—like the young and the old—are given a special place in the work of faith-based communities. That special place makes possibilities for the connection of intergenerational and faith-based in the creation of programs.

Intergenerational programs are about building bridges between disparate groups, such as teenagers and older adults, in ways that mutual understanding and caring can develop. They are about reaching out to the frail and dependent to provide a sense of compassion and connection, such as when older adults care for children in a daycare center or when children visit older adults in a dementia unit. They are about identifying community problems and issues and working together

to find solutions, such as seeking ways to end gang violence in an urban neighborhood. In ways like these, intergenerational programs work toward the wholeness of the people and communities involved. With that basis, they are rich with faith-based possibilities.

Faith-based communities also seek the wholeness of persons—body, mind, and spirit. Turning again to the Hebrew scripture, there is a wonderful biblical term, *shalom*, which has root meanings that include the concepts of completeness, wholeness, and harmony or well-being. It occurs over 250 times in Judeo-Christian scripture. The seeking after wholeness—of individuals, of groups, of systems, of communities—is central to the values of many faith congregations. As intergenerational programs work toward wholeness, *shalom*, there are wonderful possibilities for connecting

them with faith communities.

Finally faith-based intergenerational programs can bring together two powerful resources: intergenerational interactions and people's faiths. In the union of those two resources, connections can be made between and among people, mutual

understanding can be fostered, and the fabric of our communities can be strengthened. None of this needs to suggest proselytizing. Faith-based intergenerational programs don't need to have goals of increasing congregational membership to be effective and worthwhile. Instead, their goals have to do with creating environments in our congregations and communities where dialogue, not dissension, is valued; where people make meaningful connections with one another; where peace and wholeness—*shalom*—are paramount. Those things are rooted in our sense of the spiritual—that which gives life meaning and value. Those things are rooted in many of our faith traditions, yet they transcend any one of our faith traditions. In the transcending is opportunity for dialogue among faith traditions. This dialogue that joins faith-based resources to intergen-



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erational possibilities can assist in the creation of a society that views intergenerational interactions as not just nice, but necessary.

Think for a moment about where you see faith-based intergenerational work being done in your community. Perhaps it is rooted in faith-based communities such as temples, mosques, churches, or synagogues. Perhaps it is grounded in social service agencies that have faith-based missions. Take another moment to consider where your community could benefit from the addition of faith-based intergenerational programming. Examples abound. Consider several:

1. Support group of grandparents who are raising grandchildren. The group has been together in one form or another since the mid-1980s. Hosted by a faith-based social service agency, the group is faith-based in their orientation. Prayer and scripture are central to their meetings and to their identity. Group members range in age from their 50s to their 80s. Each one is raising at least one grandchild; the grandchildren range in age from young children to teenagers. They are seeking support for their intergenerational family and have looked to a group that is grounded in a faith tradition for the strength and hope that they need.

2. Congregation that pairs teenagers with older adult members of the community of faith during its annual membership training program. The older adults serve as mentors for these newcomers to the congregation's membership. These pairs interact in formal class sessions as well as in less formal encounters in the hallway of the congregation's building or over pizza at a local restaurant. Through word and example, the older members share how their faith has guided and sustained them over the years. The teens share the joys and struggles that they face today. During their time together they learn about one another's worlds. They walk a bit of their life roads together. Often, the relationships that are formed during the membership training classes continue long after the teens have joined the congregation.

3. Intergenerational religious education program that occurs in one congregation at various times throughout the year. The congregation noticed that often children were not welcomed in the formal, traditional worship service. Some adults were even heard to say, "Worship is for grown-ups." Wanting to

create an atmosphere where the youngest to the oldest felt invited into the community of faith, they developed a series of special programs. Each program had a theme which was carried out through the morning. The regular schedule for that day was suspended. Learning centers were created on the first floor of the building. Little children helped older adults create a craft. Teenagers interacted with older members at the drama center. Participants sat together—mingled, not segregated by ages—during the closing worship time. People began to see one another in a different way. Participants began to see the purpose of worship and religious education differently.

4. Ecumenical mission trip to Mexico. As stated on their website, "Fourteen travelers journeyed to 5 struggling Mexican Indian communities to witness efforts to overcome poverty and live in dignity during an 8-day social justice trip." They "spent days and nights" in several communities "where communal meals were served and celebrated and trees planted at family home sites as well as along semi-arid croplands." The delegation was multicultural and intergenerational, ranging in age from 10 to mid-70s. This was the seventh trip to Hidalgo by the Strategic Pastoral Action Network.

In an October 2000 address to the "Symposium of Faith-Based Organizations and Community Development," Gary Melton, Director of the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life at Clemson University, said: "Faith-based organizations almost always are established as communities of service motivated by the desire to protect the dignity of human beings created in God's image." Intergenerational programs also protect the dignity of human beings by speaking for the marginalized and seek to build bridges of understanding and trust. Uniting faith-based resources with intergenerational strategies opens a world of possibilities for people to find ways to understand each other, for the powerless and marginalized to be given new voice, and for communities to be strengthened.



David Fetterman (djfett@adelphia.net) is currently a Spiritual Counselor for Family Hospice & Palliative Care, Pittsburgh, PA. Previously, he was Director of the GrandKIN Raising GrandKIDS Program at Generations Together, University of Pittsburgh. Ordained in The United Methodist Church, David has served a number of parishes as both Pastor and Minister of Education.

Are You Raising Your Grandchildren?

By David and Denise Meister

According to the 2000 US Census, more than 6 million children across the country are living in households headed by grandparents or other relatives. Of this number, more than 2.4 million grandparents are responsible for meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren.

When our two children reached adulthood, we found ourselves looking forward to spending more quality time together. With a son engaged to be married and a daughter living on her own with her two young children, we anticipated more time for our hobbies, travel, spontaneous dinners out, and activities that we had put on 'hold' during the child-rearing years.

But the warning signs were there...all was not well. In today's society, single mothers raising young children face enormous challenges. Their lives are a pressure cooker of worries, financial stress, housing problems, healthcare concerns, stable employment, and quality childcare. Caught in this cycle of frustration and despair, many people escape into drugs and alcohol. The spiral downward leads quickly to loss of employment, unpaid bills, eviction notices, and poor living conditions. And then "the call" comes. Ours came when our distraught daughter called and told of our two grandchildren being removed from her apartment by Protective Services. Fifteen minutes later Denise was at the courthouse to "take our grandchildren home" rather than have them placed in the foster care system to stay with strangers. Thus started a journey we never anticipated or planned, that of raising our grandchildren.

Unfortunately, our daughter was not able to overcome many of the obstacles in her troubled life. Reunification between our grandchildren and their mother was not possible. Good progress was met with setbacks. After the court terminated parental rights, we officially adopted our grandchildren. Our decision never took any deliberation; it was what we



needed to do. Your heart speaks and you respond.

A lot of time has passed since we received "the call." Many changes have occurred in our lives. Denise retired early from her teaching career to be a "stay-at-home mom" and a "home-school" teacher for our grandchildren. We have had to reorder our priorities, put some goals on hold, and adjust to becoming a one-income family. While our income loss was substantial and continues to be a real struggle, we are "making it." We feel good knowing that our grandchildren are safe and secure and in our care.

The greatest joy is being able to see our grandchildren daily and to share our love in a healthy, safe, secure, and loving environment. We are giving our grandchildren "their inheritance" now, not in material wealth, but by surrounding them with the love of God that they need and deserve. They will grow up

knowing that their biological mother loves them and still has them in her heart but could not, under the circumstances of her troubled life, raise them. They will grow up knowing that our family is unique and blessed, that while grandpa "does the daddy things" and grandma "does the mommy things," their biological mother gave them the precious gift of

life. They will grow up knowing they are loved by many and are special in God's sight.

Church leaders need to know some things about this growing population. Grandparent-maintained families are more likely to live in poverty and to be uninsured than parent-maintained families. In addition to the many legal issues, there are issues of health, education, and housing. Persons who find themselves thrust into raising their grandchildren need to know that support systems and resources are available. Programs like the Kinship Care Project (see Resources, page 8) can be a valuable resource for grandparents raising grandchildren.

Raising grandchildren is a very demanding responsibility. It can tax your energy, stress the family finances, and change relationships within and outside the family. While your friends may be enjoying "the empty nest," your "nest" is once again full. The tidy home becomes an obstacle course of Hot Wheel cars

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Many grandchildren being raised by their grandparents carry emotional scars, and in some cases, post-traumatic stress.

and the bathtub hosts rubber ducks and plastic boats. Isolation from peers leads to loneliness. Friends your age are on “a different track.” Often, grandparents raising grandchildren don’t seem to socially fit in.

The church can help these grandparents through prayer and outreach. Beyond just giving advice, help can be extended through lending a hand with the children when a weary grandparent is in need of a break. Respite care or volunteering to give grandpa and grandma a night out (a date) can be a wonderful ministry.

Many grandchildren being raised by their grandparents carry emotional scars, and in some cases, post-traumatic stress. They, too, need our compassion. They grieve a great loss and miss their mommy or daddy. The day and age of a two-parent household with a “Mommy” and a “Daddy” has changed. The church must be inclusive in its ministry with these hurting children. We need to address the concerns of this population and not settle for sending a check to a faraway place. There is a mission field in our own neighborhoods and communities.

Please hug these grandchildren and embrace those brave, caring souls (grandparents raising grandchildren) who are willing to do what it takes in sharing their parental love in a very unselfish way. Despite experiences of ridicule and judgment and feelings of guilt in having a child not make it as a parent, a congregation that shows compassion, support, understanding, and love to people who find themselves raising their grandchildren will truly be the Body of Jesus Christ!

Written by Rev. Dave and Denise Meister First United Methodist Church of Buchanan, Kalamazoo District, West Michigan Conference, who are raising their 3 grandchildren: Darian, Justice, and Heaven. Give them a call at 269-695-3896 for help, guidance, or support for yourself or others who are raising their grandchildren or a relative's child.

Resources

Kinship Care Resource Kit for Community and Faith-Based Organizations: Helping Grandparents and Other Relatives Raising Children

This kit is designed to help churches:

- Understand what kinship care is;
- Learn how to offer services and support to kinship care families;
- Discover the kinship care resources that are available to families;
- Find national and state kinship care organizations and resources.

To order, contact Children's Defense Fund, Child Welfare and Mental Health Division, 25 E Street NW, Washington DC 20001. 202-662-3568; childwelfare@childrensdefense.org.

"Second Time Around...Grandparents Raising Grandchildren"

Second Time Around is curriculum for grandparent support groups. Researchers at Western Michigan University, in cooperation with the Michigan State University Extension, received funding to develop a curriculum for use in training grandparents in the "not-so-new" role of parent. Drawing from community, university, and private resources, the project resulted from collaborative effort of attorneys, researchers, professors, and technical advisors in assembling the "need to know" subject matter that will contribute to successful parenting the "second time around." The curriculum guide, teaching resources, and instructional materials represent a critical resource for working with these grandparents and their grandchildren.

The curriculum contains materials applicable for 8-16 sessions. Topics include:

- Notes to the Sponsor Organization
- Notes to the Facilitator
- Understanding Your "Not-So-New" Role: Grandparents in the Role of Parent, Again
- Promoting Personal Well-Being
- Refining Parenting Skills
- Building Relationships
- Working with School and Community

- Managing Finances
- Exploring Legal Issues
- Looking to the Future

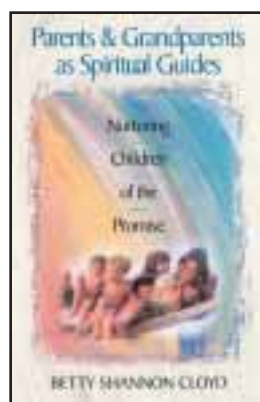
For further information, contact: Linda L. Dannison, Ph.D., Family and Consumer Sciences, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI 49008, 269-387-3704, Linda.dannison@wmich.edu. To purchase this curriculum, send a check for \$75 (includes cost of postage) to WMU at the above address and refer to #386-007-327.

Grandparent's and Other Relative Caregiver's Guides

CDF has also written four guides to help kinship caregivers learn about important issues affecting the children in their care. They offer information on federal programs, eligibility requirements, and how kinship caregivers can enroll the children they are raising. The four topics are:

- Child care and early education programs
- Food and nutrition programs
- Health insurance
- Raising children with disabilities

Guides are not currently available in print but can be found at: www.childrensdefense.org/childwelfare/kinshipcare/default.asp. Leaders may save, print, and copy for unlimited distribution.

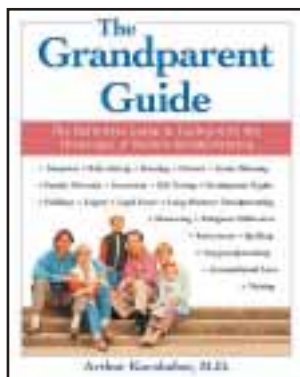


Parents & Grandparents as Spiritual Guides

Nurturing Children of the Promise
Betty Shannon Cloyd
(Upper Room Books, 2000)
164 pages; \$13.00

Cloyd explores the simple ways parents and grandparents can introduce children to the presence of God and nurture them spiritually during daily, routine activities. This must-have book includes biblical models of spiritual guides along with insightful stories from children, Christian educators, and the author's own family experience.

A Grandparent as a Spiritual Guide



The *Grandparent Guide: The Definitive Guide to Coping with the Challenges of Modern Grandparenting* is to grandparents what Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care* was to generations of parents. Author Dr. Arthur Kornhaber, America's leading expert on grandparenting, illuminates spiritual guidance as one of

many roles for grandparents. Kornhaber says, "Acting as a spiritual guide involves teaching your grandchild to harvest such fruits of the spirit as love, tolerance, compassion, reverence, joy, peace, gentleness, faith and kindness." And while parents also teach these values, their primary focus is on the child's immediate care, education, and social skill building. But grandparents can transcend the pressing needs of now to concentrate on soul nurturing. And by setting an example of goodness, tolerance, kindness, and understanding, you can counteract some of society's toxicity. Here are some of Kornhaber's suggestions.

- Drive the speed limit, insist on paying the correct price, return excess change, and tell the truth.
- Demonstrate reverence for nature.
- Help others who are less fortunate.
- Display kindness and compassion toward others.
- Show respect for others' beliefs.
- Involve your grandchildren in your own rituals of faith and the positive aspects of your belief—with their parents' permission, of course.

Even if you aren't religious, Kornhaber believes that by blessing your grandchild with your approval or by invoking God's blessing on the child, you give a priceless gift. Take the opportunity to nurture your grandchild's soul. It's a role that uniquely suits you.

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Primetimers 2004 Events

<http://gbgm-umc.org/vim/features/primepro.htm>
Primetimers is an educational and mission service experience for older adults sponsored by the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

August 22-27:

A Glimpse into the Land of Lincoln
Midwest Mission Distribution Center
Chatham, IL

August 29-September 3:

Exploring Your Faith with Lewis and Clark
Alton Collins UM Retreat Center
Eagle Creek, OR (near Portland)

September 13-24:

South of France and Its Christian Heritage
Romans, Drôme (southeastern France)

October 24-30, 2004:

Life on the Bayou Teche
UMCOR Sager Brown
Baldwin, LA

For additional information and registration, call toll-free 877-882-4724 or email: primetimers@gbgm-umc.org.



Building a Ministry for Homebound and Nursing-Home Residents

By Marie White Webb

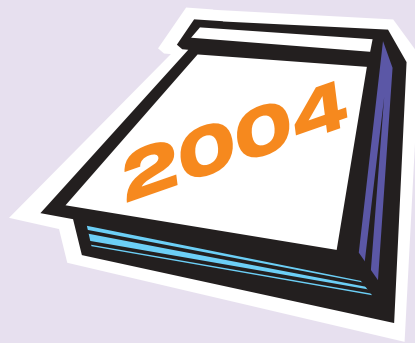
"In this practical resource, Marie Webb gives clear evidence of her understanding and insight into ministry with people who are homebound or living in continuing-care retirement communities. Full of helpful ideas, this book invites readers into the world of the

frail elderly and provides valuable information to equip clergy and laity for this important ministry. This approach allows readers to gain a better understanding of some of the issues concerning aging and ways to develop a ministry that meets their needs."

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., Director,
Center on Aging & Older-Adult Ministries General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church

(DR403) ISBN 0-88177-403-0
64 pages; \$8.00, 10 or more \$6.80

Call 1-800-972-0433 to order
or visit www.discipleshipresources.org



Older Adult Ministries EVENTS

Older Adult Ministry Course

Sponsor: Wesley Theological Seminary
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: 4500 Massachusetts Ave., Washington, DC
Contact: Dr. Susan Willhauck
202-885-6482
swillhauck@wesleysem.org

April 14-17, 2004

Joint Conference on Aging
Sponsor: ASA and NCOA
Location: Hilton Hotel, San Francisco, CA
Contact: Rodney Jackson
415-974-9643
registrar@asaging.org
www.agingconference.org

April 21, 2004

Conference Council Training
Sponsor: Central Pennsylvania Conf. Council on OAM
Facilitator: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: Conference Center, Mechanicsburg, PA
Contact: Rev. James Fox
717-264-4227
foxypa@innernet.net

April 27-May 7, 2004

General Conference of The United Methodist Church
Location: Pittsburgh, PA
Information: www.umc.org

May 6-9, 2004

Norman T. Allers Academy on Older Adult Ministries
Presenter: Dr. Henry Simmons
Location: Rosalyn Center of Richmond, VA
Contact: Rev. Chris Hughes
888-525-3586
chughes@sejumc.org

May 13-14, 2004

Older Adult Ministry in the 21st Century
Sponsor: Twin Towers Retirement Community
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: Twin Towers Retirement Community, Cincinnati, OH
Contact: Rev. Henry Marksberry
514-853-2746
mhenry@twintowers.org

May 25-26, 2004

Older Adult Ministry in the 21st Century
Sponsor: Centenary UMC
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: Centenary UMC, Winston-Salem, NC
Contact: Rev. Jack Yarbrough
336-721-3261
yarbrouj@hotmail.com

July 18-22, 2004

SoulFeast: In Search of Authentic Christian Spirituality
Sponsor: Upper Room Ministries
Location: Lake Junaluska, NC
800-491-0912
www.upperroom.org/soulfeast

September 18, 2004

Older Adult Ministry in the 21st Century
Sponsor: The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: UM Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, KS
Contact: Karla Woodward
913-745-2205
karla.woodward@cor.org

October 6-8, 2004

A Growing Faith in the 3rd Age of Life
Sponsor: Mature Adult Division, Texas Conference
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: St. Matthews UMC, Houston, TX
Contact: Rev. Dean Robinson
713-695-2010 • jd Robinson@stmatthewsmethodist.org

October 14-18, 2004

The Many Facets of Christian Education
Sponsor: Christian Educators Fellowship
Location: Radisson Hotel, New Orleans, LA
Contact: Corinne Van Buren
615-749-6870 • chedfel@cs.com
www.cefumc.org

October 16, 2004

Conference on Aging
Sponsor: Trinity UMC
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: Trinity UMC, Elkhart, IN
Contact: Rev. J. A. Leatherman
574-294-7602 Ext. 104

November 5-6, 2004

Leadership University
Sponsor: Central PA Conference
Presenter: Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.
Location: Calvary UMC, Lawrenceville, PA
Contact: Rev. Gary Weaver
570-827-2627
revgdw@yahoo.com

Center Sage

Coming Soon in Center Sage

The theme of the next issue of *Center Sage* will be **Caregiving**. If your church has a caregiving or related ministry, we would like to hear about it and perhaps feature it in the next issue. If you are interested in submitting an article, please contact us for details no later than 1 May 2004:

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: _____ Email: _____

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.

In Memoriam

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our good friend and mentor the **Reverend Dr. Donald F. Clingan** who died on March 23, 2004 in Springfield, Illinois. He was the former executive director of the National Center on Ministry with the Aging, sponsored by the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Don was the founding president and first executive director of the National



Interfaith Coalition on Aging (NICA), now a constituent unit of the National Council on Aging. He was a recognized leader in the field of religious gerontology and older adult ministries and was a much-sought-after speaker and workshop leader. Many leaders of older adult ministries in The United Methodist Church were well acquainted with Dr. Clingan through his writing and workshop seminars. In 1996, he coauthored the book, *Aging: God's Challenge to Church and Synagogue*, with the Rev. Dr. Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. His loving wife, Jackie, two children, and two grandchildren, survive him. The field of religious gerontology has lost a giant, but God has gained a good and faithful friend.

The General Board of Discipleship of
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OLDER ADULT MINISTRY



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The Graying of the Church

**A Leader's Guide for Older Adult
Ministry in The United Methodist Church**

By Richard H. Gentzler Jr.

(Discipleship Resources, 2004)

96 pages; \$12.00; 10 or more, \$10.20 each

Without a doubt, both society and United Methodist congregations are “graying.” Nearly 50% of United Methodist church members are 60 or older. Life expectancy in the U. S. has increased from 47 years in 1900 to 77 years in 2000. The number of people age 65 years or older is expected to double in the next 25 years.

The Graying of the Church is based on extensive research which indicates that what leaders of older adult ministries want most is help in identifying new ministry models, ways to motivate older adults, and general resource information. All of these areas (and more!) are addressed in the book.

Primary audience: Local church leaders who plan and provide ministry with older adults; clergy; parish nurses; Christian educators; Stephen ministers; nurture, health & welfare teams/committees; evangelism teams/committees.

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or visit [www. discipleshipresources.org](http://www.discipleshipresources.org)