

Mid-Atlantic OAMNews

January 2003

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Older Adult Ministries Committee,
Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, PC(USA)
Sunnyside Communities
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Mid-Atlantic OAMNews – is a monthly e-newsletter dedicated to the promotion of spiritual health and well-being of older adults and their families – offering information, resources, model ministries, stories, and humor!

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A Christian View of Aging: excerpted from **Aging: God's Challenge to Church & Synagogue**, by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. and Donald F. Clingan, 1996. Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN.

In their book **Aging, The Fulfillment of Life**, Henri Nouwen and Walter Gaffney define aging as *the gradual fulfillment of the life cycle in which receiving matures in giving and living makes dying worthwhile*. Aging is an experience that is so profoundly human that it breaks through the artificial boundaries between childhood and adulthood, and between adulthood and old age with a rainbow of promises. It can move from the darkness of pessimism into the way of light and hope. For example, an aged person like Simeon (Luke 2:25-32) can break through all pessimism and reveal new visions, new sounds, and new light for life. Aging can be a growing into the light in such a way that as we age, we see new visions, hear new sounds, and find new directions for living in service to God and to our fellow human beings. Jesus called this being "lights of the world and the salt of the earth" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Thus, aging is so filled with promises that it can lead us to discover more and more of life's treasures. Aging is not a reason for despair, but a basis of hope; not a slow decaying, but a gradual maturing; not a fate to be undergone, but a change to be embraced.

Aging is the fulfillment in life that God revealed through Jesus. The death and resurrection of Jesus has become the sign of continual hope and new life for many who seek the light in their aging lives. Jesus was the light that came into the darkness, and revealed to us that the life cycle of *aging is not a return to second childhood, but one step forward in the journey of our salvation.*

Nouwen and Gaffney remind us that every human being has only one life cycle to live, but together our aging can become the fulfillment of the promise of him who by his life, aging, and death brought new life to the world. Every man and woman who has discovered the deep meaning of his or her own aging, therefore, has a unique opportunity to enrich the quality of his or her own life by sharing the experience of aging as a fulfillment of life with others.

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Outstanding Older Adult Award 2003

We invite all congregations to nominate a person 60 yrs+ for this year's Outstanding Older Adult Award. Nomination materials were sent to each church in November and are also available from our website. ***Please submit your nomination to your presbytery office by March 3, 2003.*** The purpose of the award is to honor a person who exemplifies positive images of aging personally, in the life of the church and/or community. Further, this nomination process offers an opportunity, at every level of the church, to recognize older persons who, by their example, serve as role models to all the generations for growing older with a sense of God's grace. Questions? E-mail Jan at jmcgill@bev.net

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Myths and Realities + A Resource

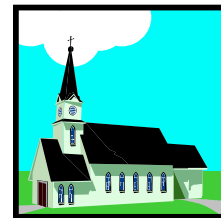
Most older Americans believe that taking care of their health is very important, but the majority do not feel knowledgeable about how to prepare for a healthy old age, according to "American Perceptions of Aging in the 21st Century." Participants in the continuing NCOA (National Council on the Aging) study rated **having a family and friends (88%) and taking care of one's health (86%) as most important to a meaningful and vital life, followed by spiritual life (67%). However, only 36% claimed to know ways to prepare for a healthy old age.** To view the most recent information, go to www.ncoa.org and click on Publications. Go to Research Publications and choose to download "American Perceptions of Aging in the 21st Century" Pamphlet.

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National News on Aging – Visit our website to keep up with current events in the field of aging by reading NCOA Week and Global Action on Aging.

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Congregational Sharing – submitted by Shelby Jean Whitt, Advocate of Aging for Presbytery of Eastern



Although I loved the church I was going to and the people attending, it hit me one Sunday there was something missing. I saw folks come to worship every Sunday with the same bland expression before and after the service and I felt something was missing.

After some discussion with others in the church the idea was set in motion to promote a fellowship evening once a month for the congregation and friends. Dinner was prepared and a charge of \$4.00 covered the cost of the food. In the beginning we had dinner and a show for the congregation once a month (now every other month). I asked different members to be in the shows – to sing, tell stories, to dance, and do skits. We began to see each other in a different light. People were responding in a friendlier way. The greatest benefit was to see how the attitudes changed on Sundays: everybody smiling when they came to and from the church. I felt the people were not "missing" anymore. It's amazing what smiles and hugs can do for the congregation. I know God has blessed and is blessing each of us through this Fellowship.

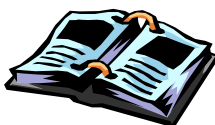
We have been doing this program over 10 years in our church and it's still a fun evening of Fellowship and Foolishness and thus was born the **Squires Prime Time Players**.

It is through the love of God the Father that we have been blessed.

Post Script: Does this story ring any bells with your congregation? If you'd like to correspond with Shelby, you may find her at shelbyjwhitt@juno.com.

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Mark Your Calendars!



Leadership Events

February 15: *Equipping the Saints* in Norfolk, VA sponsored by the Presbytery of Eastern Virginia: go to this link <http://www.pcusa-peva.org/index.htm> and click on **What's New**.

March 1: *The Mega Event* in two locations! Sponsored by New Castle Presbytery. Keynote and workshops taking place simultaneously at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, DE and at Wicomico Presbyterian Church on the Eastern Shore of MD! Theme: **Leading Change in the Church**. For information contact the Presbytery office: (302) 366-0595 or by e-mail at ncp@ncpresbytery.org

March 31-April 2: *Come to Massanetta* and bring a group of adults prepared for a good time! Come to study the Psalms with a knowledgeable leader and expect large

doses of enrichment, fellowship, education, and fun. For information contact Laura Holbrook, Program Director at Massanetta at laurah@massanettasprings.org Phone: 888-627-7774

******March 20-22: *Encircling Care: A New Vision for Congregational Caregiving***, Louisville, KY, sponsored by Health Ministries PC(USA) and The Center for Congregation and Family Ministries, Presbyterian Theological Seminary. For Clergy, Specialized Ministers, Parish Nurses, Pastoral Counselors, Seminarians, and Caregivers. Conference details at www.pcusa.org/health/usa and look for the name of this conference.

May 12-16 at Montreat: Skills in Older Adult Ministry: *Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow.*

October 6-10: Fall Older Adult Conference

October 23-25: POAMN (Presbyterian Older Adult Ministry Network) Annual Conference, in Tempe, Arizona at the Fiesta Inn. **Theme: *Health, Spirituality, Well-Being.*** **Workshops:** Conscious Aging, Native American Spirituality, Reader's Theater, Grief, Healthy Ministry, Low Impact Exercise, Taize, Needs Assessment, Presbytery Representatives, Introduction to Older Adult Ministry

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Plan Ahead! Mother's Day/Father's Day Offering 2003

Please plan to honor your loved ones by:

- Participating in this year's Mother's Day/Father's Day Offering in May or June
- Celebrating Older Adults Month in May by planning a special worship service, program, or activity. Watch for information on resources in upcoming newsletters
- Contributing to the Mid-Atlantic OAM Endowment Fund (PCUSA Foundation)



Grand Expectations

An intergenerational tour to Great Britain – June 26-July 8, 2003, featuring Yorkshire, Holy Island, Durham Cathedral!!!! Led by Jan McGilliard – for details and photos, check out the web site!

Have a story or model to share? Comments? Suggestions for articles? Questions? I'm glad to hear from you at jmcgill@bev.net.

Jan McGilliard, Editor
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