



The Presbytery of Scioto Valley

Older Adult Ministry Committee Newsletter

December 1, 2020

To: Anyone over 50 and those who minister to those over 50:

Greetings from the Older Adult Ministry Committee of Scioto Valley Presbytery

We are sending this via email, but you will find it as well on the Presbytery website under Nurture and Outreach Commission, Older Adult Ministry.

In our Covid-19 world we all hear stories of 90+ persons who are managing ZOOM, while we also hear stories of those who are feeling shut-in, shut-out, lonely and discouraged. While each person is dealing with these times in his/her own way, we are aware of those who may long for the old "snail mail way of receiving messages."

To that end our small committee has prepared a potpourri of resources for you. You, or whomever it is in your congregation who cares for these folk, may use them as you wish, as a mailing to some of your shut-in members, assembling the pieces which fit their situations. Or you may find sermon tidbits, or thoughts for a weekly mailing. Whatever is useful for you, we send to you with joy.

We begin with our Chairperson's report on the recent POAMN conference (with helpful links), followed by Janis' and Liz's transition thoughts from fall through Christmas. Then Betsy has offered a lovely meditation for a Blue Christmas or any time, concluded with Ron's offering for us a Christmas Eve prayer. Finally, remember Jeannie's weekly newsletter with its Advent suggestions, particularly the Blue Christmas materials.

In the midst of stewardship and budgets and overall planning for a different Advent/Christmas, it is easy to overlook those who have served faithfully in the past. Hope you find something helpful to you in your ministry with them.



Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network

Fall 2020 POAMN Virtual Conference

by Rev. Désirée M. Youngblood, Chair

Because of the pandemic, the Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network held their conference virtually this year. You can find recordings of the conference at: <https://poamn.org/>.

The first day, my former theology professor at Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Rigby, was the keynote speaker. Dr. Rigby spoke on "Why Ask Why? Faith and Lament in Times of Crisis." This was a very powerful topic in our current situation. What especially struck me was her plea for us to bumble along instead of marching in with all of the answers. She said that there is no "one size fits all" answer to the great why question. Rather, we should allow the possibility that there are multiple answers. Dr. Rigby recently explored this thought of bumbling in *Insights: The Faculty Journal of Austin Seminary*. To see her article "Bumbling Forward in Faith," go to

<https://www.austinseminary.edu/resources/publications> (scroll down the page to find the current Fall 2020 issue of *Insights*, page 12).

We broke into discussion groups and pondered over where God is in the world and do, we lament. Do we believe that God is a God of providence—with us always, and everything that happens is God's will? Do we believe that God is a deist—that God set the world into motion then stands back and watches as we bumble along? Do we believe that God is theistic—that God is always with us like a parent, but allows us to learn from our own mistakes instead of controlling everything we do? Do we believe in each of these at different times? I know that I switch around a lot. I might side with deism and think God is standing back, and then see a miracle happen, which makes me fall back into believing in providence. Most of the time, I am a theist, but I do swing between all three frequently. How about you?

Do we allow room for lament? I believe that lament is an important part of our relationship with God. If we are too afraid to take off our kid gloves and ask God the tough questions, then what kind of relationship do we have with God? If we unquestioningly believe what we hear and read and never grapple with the tough questions, how can we hang on to our faith in the tough times? I find it easier to ponder an issue when I am not in distress, which then allows me to handle that situation when it comes along. I guess you could say that I am a planner.

On the second day, Rev. Sally S. Wright, Associate Pastor for Pastoral Care at Village Presbyterian Church in Prairie Village, Kansas, was the keynote speaker. Rev. Wright spoke on "Know My Heart: Pastoral Care While Social Distancing." She spoke about how we can still feel the intimacy of God during a pandemic. She gave practical ideas about how to help your congregation to still feel connected while having to stay physically separated. Another good resource that she mentioned to help congregations from the Presbyterian Mission Agency can be found at <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/scattered-church/>.

Some other helpful links mentioned during the conference are:

Quick sheets from the Office of Christian Formation (Remote Faith and Re-Entry):
<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/office-of-christian-formation/>

Quick sheets from POAMN (Supporting Older Adults During COVID-19 and Online Memorial Services): <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/theology-formation-and-evangelism/office-of-christian-formation/partner-associations/>

Resources from PAHSA (Presbyterian Association of Homes and Services for the Aging) on Dementia <https://www.pahsa.org/dementia-friendly-resources.html>



"In Touch" Janis Hamrick, Team Member

I love imagery! I imagine myself outside amid my garden of roses and blooming fall flowers. I am sitting at my little glass top wrought iron table sipping my coffee or tea and enjoying a bit of fellowship with my God, nature, and a friend. It's a beautiful, heavenly day! The cloudless sky is as blue as the ones I remember while living in New Mexico. The magnificent sunshine casts its rays of brilliance onto the lake and highlights the palate of colored fall leaves here in beautiful Ohio. I am so happy to be alive!

I take a deep breath and put my hand over my heart. I thank God for yet another day to be grateful that my heartbeat is strong and well. One never knows when it may get very tired & worn. I actually pray to the creator God to heal any problems unseen in my heart; then I put my hand over my liver (right side under my rib cage) and pray the same thing and so on. God is the great Healer!

When my hands have finished doing their work, I fold them, get quiet and sing some of my favorite songs, "O How I love Jesus," "Something Beautiful," "Count Your many Blessings," and "In the Garden" to name a few. Some poetry and Psalms come to mind.

The 23rd Psalm is a favorite. Today I am not "walking through the valley of the shadow of death," but I am walking through the valley of "indecision" – he is with me! The last verse of Thanatopsis reminds us to "so live that when our summons comes to join that caravan that moves through that mysterious realm of death, that we go soothed and sustained by an unfaltering trust and lie down to pleasant dreams." (Note: not a word for word quote.)

One thing I want God to know is that I love mankind and will do all I can to live in peace and harmony.

My wonderful neighbor arrives to join me at the table. She has read the morning newspaper and shares the topics of concern. We both love our country and trust in God's power, mercy, and grace. My neighbor's name is Joan. She has been my prayer partner and friend for at least 10 years. Breakfast is a plus and enjoyable, but our real goal is to connect; to know each other's needs and schedules. Often, she has medical questions that she asks me. I am a nurse and continue to stay current on medical issues.

We read our daily devotional books out loud; then, "Jesus Calling" and the scriptures listed for the day. We pray! When finished with the good news of God's faithfulness and amazing grace, the day begins with joy! Our discussions are focused on Him. Our prayers are in his care! God invites us to give him our burdens. He will make our trials end in victory and He can do that because He has the power. He wants us to experience one abundantly blessed day after another.

When this COVID-19 is over, we can focus on sharing with friends and family, and deepen our connections with each other and God. We can share our stories of how we have reached out to God in different situations for encouragement, perseverance, and hope.

"We just keep on, keeping on" as Joan says. This day has been a close encounter with a bit of fellowship. My thoughts have been shared with YOU! Blessings

And it All Changed! CRE Liz Tietz, Team Member

Mid-March 2020! I am 65 and suddenly I am at risk! No more meetings, no more Sundays in the pew! Grocery shopping's a "no, no!" "We'll do it for you, Mom." I am 80 and I receive my 'care list' invitation! I will be receiving a weekly uplifting 'missive.' My son's spring break visit is cancelled! I am 100 and I remember my friends whose mothers had died of Spanish Flu.



And so, it goes! The months stretch on! I have learned ZOOM! I have learned click list! I have acquired a 'wardrobe' of masks! I have sorted my closets and tossed out useless papers from my office! And, yes, I have received dozens of 'care calls' and 'care messages.' And I have worshipped with a coffee cup in my hands!

And I planted my garden and enjoyed its beauty and closed it up for the winter. And 'mask walked' with friends. And now fall is upon us, winter is closing in!

We rejoice in the beauty of this fall season, grateful for days of warmth and sunshine. As we leave them behind us, Thanksgiving 'safety' plans are being made, and just around the corner, Advent, calling us to deeper reflection, and then to welcome the Christ child in new ways this year. Gone will be the family gatherings. Gone will be the community meals. Gone will be the candlelight worship services.

What can I give Him, poor as I am? The words of that little poem.... Simple things perhaps, pictures or homemade cards or hand written letters, or recipes or memories, prayers and blessings, mission gifting in their names...serve your Christ through faithful example, sharing and giving ... simple things – 65, 80, 100 years– in this COVID-19 year, what can I give Him by encouraging others?

Friends, this could have been any person's journey, and with the approaching season could be any one's possibilities. Read on now for one person's thoughts.

Winter is upon us – snow and freezing weather 'All is safely gathered in' and I am safely protected in my home. Yet there are those who suffer, and they need my daily prayers. And when my hands feel idle, what can I do?

I can write! I can write of my childhood, of my school days, my own grandma, and my tall and handsome grandpa. I can write of how we played, my friends and I, what we played and maybe a first birthday party. I can write to my children, to my grandchildren and their grandchildren.

I can write of my country life (or my city life), and maybe my first night away from home, or my summer camping when I was eight. What was my church like? Were there pennies in a penny bank in my little Sunday School? What kind of vacations when I was six? Or twelve? What do I know of my baptism? Or memories of my confirmation?

What about my high school? What subjects did I take? When did I learn to drive and what was my first job? My first date? Memories of my graduation? And college days? And what fun to tell of my wedding day, or even our romance?

Hello again! I've been reading 'The Pioneers' by David McCullough. We would know so much less of our history had not people written of their days and their lives. What do you want your descendants to know of you and your family 100 years from now? It's just a thought, not necessarily my own, but partly inspired by a Kendal friend whose cheery voice inspires me every time I call.

Peace to you this Advent season.

HOMEcoming, Rev. Betsy Maurath, Team Member

Read Isaiah 35:1-10. The beautiful images in Isaiah 35 offered hope to exiles who felt weary and "weak in the knees." God's people living in exile had plenty to fear. They were surrounded by very real and powerful enemies. They had witnessed the destruction of their homes and their beloved Zion. They felt abandoned by God. Their lives seemed barren and dried up. They had fearful hearts that needed to be comforted and encouraged.

In Isaiah 35, God promised restoration and homecoming. The dry and barren places in their lives would once more be made lush and green, overflowing with springs of living water and bright with abundant blooms. Their grief and despair would be replaced with everlasting joy. God promised to build a remarkable highway through

the wilderness, leading the exiles home to Zion. God would provide safe passage through the desert and God's people would be able to travel with confidence.

This is good news for us. This Advent, more than ever, we need a word of hope — “Behold, your God is coming!” We too are a weary people, living in a fractured world, surrounded by torn-apart families and neighbors living fragmented lives. We too are aware of those who suffer, physically and spiritually, from loss of vision and loss of hearing, loss of freedom to move and loss of freedom to speak. We too know what it means to have feeble knees and weak hands and fearful hearts.



Isaiah 35:1-10 provides encouragement in a year when so many of us have felt like exiles in our own homes. Isaiah reminds us that we await the One who is coming to transform and renew us. In this season of Advent, we are invited to open our hearts and joyfully make room in our lives to welcome the Christ-child—God-With-Us. In a world of conflict and fear, we find comfort and safety in Christ who shows us the way home. We live in an “in-between time” as Isaiah's people did—a time of waiting for promises to be fulfilled. We are called to watch and wait and take heart.

A Christmas Eve Prayer, submitted by Rev. Ron Botts, Team Member

Loving God, Help us remember the birth of Jesus, that we may share in the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and worship of the wise men. Close the door of hate and open the door of love all over the world. Let kindness come with every gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ brings, and teach us to be merry with clear hearts. May the Christmas morning make us happy to be thy children, and Christmas evening bring us to our beds with grateful thoughts, forgiving and forgiven, for Christ's sake. *Robert Louis Stevenson, Author of Treasure Island*

