

SPRING/SUMMER 2010

# Pathways



QUARTERLY JOURNAL of the EPISCOPAL DIOCESE of ATLANTA



**GODLY AGING:** *Growing older with grace*



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# Welcome

BY NAN ROSS, EDITOR

For about two decades my aim in life has been to become a wise old woman. And having just passed 60, I've got a good chance at meeting at least the age requirement. This edition of

Pathways is devoted to the topic of aging gracefully—some new approaches for viewing this process, as well as the gifts that growing older brings. I think you'll be amazed at the knowledge and expertise that emanates from our diocesan community on this topic. Our thanks and respect go to each of the talented and faithful contributors to this edition and to all those who do the important work of ministry with elders.

## ABOUT THE COVER

Anna and Simeon are characters in Luke's gospel, the wise elders of the temple who recognized the infant Jesus as the Messiah. Our cover attempts to recapture this unique moment depicted in Rembrandt's masterpiece (at right), *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*, which hangs in the Kunshalle in Hamburg, Germany. Our Anna is Deacon Lily Anne Rein, SSAP, of Decatur. Our Simeon is Archdeacon Charles Gearing of Stone Mountain. Mother and child are Anahita Acker and four-month-old Diana Rezaee Acker, Cathedral of St. Philip members. Joseph is Dan Murphy of Church of the Epiphany, Atlanta. Our setting is the Cathedral. And our photographer is Jim Pettit of St. Aidan's, Alpharetta. Visit [www.jamespettitphotography.com](http://www.jamespettitphotography.com).



The Episcopal Diocese of Atlanta is a community of 54,700 members in 25,000 households and 95 congregations in Middle and North Georgia. It is part of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion.

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1. Bishop of Atlanta J. Neil Alexander blesses people gathered for the April 11 consecration of the new home of St. Benedict's Episcopal Church, Smyrna. Also pictured are the Rev. Canon Alicia Schuster Weltner, who guided the planting and development of the new congregation, and Assistant Bishop Keith B. Whitmore. (PHOTO: BILL MONK)
2. The Ballet de Folklorico de San Felipe, a new folk dancing group of the Hispanic congregation at the Cathedral of St. Philip, performs for the diocese's annual Taste of Latin America celebration. The event raised money for outreach projects in Latin America. (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)
3. Participants in Happening, a renewal weekend for youth in grades 10-12, gather in February at Camp Mikell, Toccoa. (PHOTO: KIM SMITH)
4. Bishop Mdimi Mhogolo of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika preaches to clergy of the Diocese of Atlanta during a Holy Week Renewal of Vows service at the Cathedral of St. Philip. (PHOTO: NEWELL ANDERSON)
5. The Rev. Dr. John McCard (right), pays tribute to the Rev. Derwent Suthers at St. Martin in the Fields, Atlanta. Suthers, a lifelong painter, donated scores of his paintings for auction so that the parish can open a community center in Chamblee for needy people. (PHOTO: BILL MONK)
6. The Atlanta Urban Intern Program brings together young adult female interns with teenage girls in Peoplestown for afterschool activities and conversation at Emmaus House. (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)
7. Anthropologist Jane Goodall pauses with children of Garrison Afterschool Program at Church of Our Saviour, Atlanta, during her February visit for Roots & Shoots, a program of the Jane Goodall Institute. The youth-driven, global network promotes care and concern for animals, the environment and the human community. (PHOTO: SUSAN LONGLEY)



# Embracing the second half of life

BY J. NEIL ALEXANDER

A few years back, Margaret Guenther, an Episcopal priest and popular writer on Christian spirituality, wrote a wonderful book entitled, *Toward Holy Ground: Spiritual Directions for the Second Half of Life* (Cowley, 1995). The title alone is worthy of serious reflection (and the rest of the book is good, too).

Long before most of us get “old,” we find ourselves in the second half of our lives. If one considers a full life to be “three score years and ten,” then the second half of begins at thirty-five! That means for most of us, it’s not too soon to think about the spiritual dimensions of our second half.

Now well into my second half of life, lots of things have changed. I am sometimes amazed at those things that used to drive me crazy but now don’t faze me much at all. I’ve made peace with traffic, for example. It is what it is and it doesn’t raise my blood pressure much anymore. And, of course, there are some things I used to think of as peripheral at best that I presently hold to be of the utmost importance, like taking time to rest. In the second half of life I’ve actually learned that I feel better and am more productive when I get adequate amounts of rest. Like most people, when I was younger I used to pride myself on how little sleep I needed. Now I wonder what I might have accomplished in those years with a little more sleep!

In the second half of life, I have developed new levels of tolerance for risk. When it comes to the body, I am increasingly risk averse: I no longer climb extension ladders to clean out the gutters or do heroic yard work that might cause a tree to fall on me (or my house!). But in matters of faith, I’ve discovered I am more willing to risk following the leading of the Holy Spirit, to listen to the Word with fresh ears and an open mind, to welcome the stranger, to look for good in the other, and to wander toward less comfortable places of the heart than would have been true in the first half of life.

Although I’ve been blessed with a wonderful family and many loving friends for my entire life, I find

that relationships—real relationships, not just acquaintances—are of life-giving importance at this point. Among the gifts of the second half of life are the long-term relationships that have made me who I am. It’s been interesting to think about those friends from the first half of life I thought I would have forever but have fallen away, compared with those that are truly lifelong. I cherish them. And the longer I know them, the more precious to me they become.

I suspect most of us would admit that the greatest gift of the second half of life is to have been around long enough to know that, in some small way, one’s life has made a difference.

You’ve been a faithful spouse, a loving parent, a trusted friend, an honest worker, a good citizen, a loyal follower of Jesus, a dedicated member of the body of Christ, and that’s what counts. When we’re young, it is so easy to take these things, and so much more, for granted. The second half gives us the time and the wisdom to appreciate them in new ways, and in ways that make life new all over again.

Growing older gracefully is one way of looking at it. But for now, I’m just going to call it gracefully embracing the second half of life.

To God be the glory!

*I suspect most of us would admit that the greatest gift of the second half of life is to have been around long enough to know that, in some small way, one’s life has made a difference.*

# GREY THEOLOGY



*“What does all that have to do with me now? They were young, all of them, and Jesus only thirty-three when he died. He suffered, yes, but only through one night and one day. Three hours on the cross, and I have been praying to die every day for ten years.”*

—LIFELONG EPISCOPALIAN, AGE 95

# A Christian's path to the season of wisdom

BY NANCY J. BAXTER

She was in a nursing home bed, lying immobile, her face drawn with the pain of osteoporosis and arthritis. Life was no gift to her and hadn't been for a long time. She had outlived her children and all her friends. After being moved to a new community years before, she had lost all connection with her parish. She could not swallow; nutrition was administered through a tube. She could not see. With her hearing aid, she might have enjoyed listening to the television or radio, but her hearing aid had disappeared. Interminable nights and days were marked by painful shifts in position by ever changing staff whose names she did not know. Her guardian, a grandson, lived in another state.

Our conversation came about because the nurse in charge of wound care was an Episcopalian. I was told that when asked if she would like to speak with a priest, her blind eyes "lit up." Later, my wonder at blind eyes lighting up was joined by amazement at the power of this hidden Christian voice. Her question, all her questions, have since been answered in the fullness of life in God, but her voice remains vivid in my memory. She was questioning the affirmations of a faith long and strongly held. She was wrestling alone with God at the very edge of her own grave, a frail old woman taking on the Ancient of Days. She was issuing a challenge, a theological challenge, to the church.

The goodness of creation, the *imago Dei*, the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, baptism, eucharist, vocation: What does all that have to do with old people? How can the church begin to develop an understanding of the Christian faith and old age so that the long-livers among us are fully included and empowered?

## BEGINNING TO SEE OUR SIN

We begin always where we are. Where we are, both as a culture and as the church, is in a hall of mirrors where the distorted images of old people are seen darkly. Fear of old age and of death, with its attendant denial, and the American glorification of youth, power, and action have resulted in the perception of old people as

powerless, nonproductive, unattractive, uninteresting, useless, and even burdensome. Elders often see themselves in these ways. "But I can't do anything anymore!" is a frequent lament by those whose lives used to be full of meaning but now seem empty and without purpose. In the wider culture, women and men are valued for what they can do. It is not surprising the dominant images of old age are negative.

The American media are full of reports of "active seniors" who do not fit these negative perceptions, elders who enjoy good health, who are still working or volunteering, elders who are "staying busy." The unmistakable message in the media is that fullness of life requires action, productivity, and continuing good health. Anything else is a shadow life.

Seeing our sin requires that we recognize the extent to which the operating beliefs and structures of the church reflect the culture instead of standing boldly in witness to the faith we hold in Christ. Elders value themselves—and are valued for—what they can continue to do in the faith community. They have long experience; they have time; they are among the most committed at the core of many of the church's ministries. It is not surprising that the church wants elders to "keep on keeping on" for as long as possible. It is not surprising that remaining active in traditional ways is the desire of older parishioners. The alternative is not acceptable! All share the heresy that elders are really full members of the Body only as long as they manage to remain active. After that, they fall into the shadows of the inactive list and then on into the ranks of the disappeared.

## BEGINNING TO CONFESS OUR SIN

We have not seen and honored the image of God in old people. We have not recognized that in the creation every season of human life has been named good. We have not affirmed that old age has been vested with meaning and purpose by God.

*Continued on next page*

# Grey Theology

*Continued from previous page*

We have refused to accept that the incarnation of God in Jesus includes the old, and the Body of Christ cannot be whole without them, even those hidden at home or in elder care facilities.

We have failed by structuring the apostles' teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and the corporate prayers of the church so that many, if not most, of the oldest members are prevented from keeping their baptismal vows.

We have neglected younger elders in our Christian formation programs by failing to provide educational experiences and training in spiritual practices which support them in welcoming the transition into old age and which equip long livers to continue growing in the faith as the circumstances of their lives change.

We have limited the ministry of Christ in the church by not recognizing that the old are called to minister in vocations grounded in their identity as aged and graced with slowly ripening fruits of the Spirit. We have failed to move beyond the challenge to be "doers of the Word and not hearers only," leaving those rich in being without a vision and without structured ways to offer their gifts. We have continued to ask elders to keep on doing, as they have done in the past, failing to challenge and prepare

them to respond to new opportunities to be in the service of God's reign and to hear the call to new ministries to which their long years have finally brought them.

We have set aside the understanding of parish as a whole geography of grace. In the geography of grace, those who have quietly disappeared are found and included. The parish church has become a place to which the faithful come for as long as they can, instead of a community that gathers the faithful within its boundaries, including the hidden and homebound, into the sacramental life of Christ. Many in the shadow of death we have failed to invite to the table.

In our rush to live in resurrection light, we have left behind many who are moving more slowly now, or not moving at all, but whose journeys are taking them to places we fear and prefer not to know.

## THE THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

The mystery of redemptive suffering stands at the heart of the Christian faith. For many Christians, if old age has meaning, it is to be found in the passion and crucifixion of Jesus. The experiences of body-betrayal, stripping and exposure, medical assaults, humiliations, physical pain, weakness, loss of relationships, experiences of abandonment and isolation, all leading inexorably to death, offer the consolation of participation in the suffering of Christ. Certainly, old age can be full of suffering, but old age is more than suffering, just as the life of Christ is more than suffering. The church's theological task is to understand the gift of life in old age in the light of the whole story, remembered and celebrated through all the seasons of Christian living.

## THE HIDDEN GREY SEASON

It was not given to Jesus to grow old, and that counted against him in the eyes of his contemporaries. His early death marked him, as did his execution on the cross, as a person identified with sin. Long life, a sign of God's favor, was denied him. Jesus was all the more despised because of his premature death. The old, who seem to have outlived their lives and whose increasing years seem







only a burden, are frequently regarded in the same way, as cursed not blessed. Theirs is an untimely timeliness. The world has no use for the old, but the church is called to recognize in the despised and rejected the face of Christ and to celebrate the grey season in which elders' lives are closely "hid with Christ" in the kairos of God.

Although Jesus was young, he was an elder in the faith. The richness of his being was experienced by all who met him. Many simply wanted to be near him, to hear him and perhaps touch him. In his ministry, the energetic preaching and teaching and healing were constantly balanced by hidden times of communion with God, as if he were surrounded by a cloud. Solitude and prayer, reflective times, silent times, times of struggle and temptation, times of fertile imagination, these times served to undergird his active ministry with deep wisdom.

Ever since the blazing white of the Resurrection and the flaming red of the first Pentecost, the church has moved through the colorful seasons of the Christian story hardly aware of the grey times which lie within them and provide balance. More than ever before, in our frenetic day, the church needs to uncover and claim the grey season, the season in which Christians are called to become wise.

#### GREY MENTORS

There is a rich, but hidden, tradition of grey mentors who can show the church the way. These mentors are more often found in the background of the biblical

narratives and Christian tradition. The focus of attention is rarely on them. In Luke's story of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, the old people step briefly from the shadows to receive the Messiah whom they recognize. Their recognition is the sweet fruit of faithfulness which ripened over long years.

The grey mentors of our own day are in the shadows of the life of the church. Who they are and what they have to offer remain hidden unless they are willing to speak and the church is willing to hear. Sometimes what they have to say is hard to hear. Being with them, hearing them, touching and being touched by them is the way we can begin to create an authentic grey theology.

*The Rev. Nancy J. Baxter is a retired priest of the Diocese of Atlanta and founder of the Society of St. Anna the Prophet, a religious community of The Episcopal Church.*

**Far left:** The Rev. Nancy J. (Nan) Baxter pauses in front of Emory Healthcare's Wesley Woods Center following a Thursday afternoon worship service. Retired from her work as chaplain at Emory University, she has founded an Episcopal religious order for women 50 and over. **Above:** Baxter and the Rev. Barbara Ryder of Decatur, wearing the vestments of the Society of St. Anna the Prophet, serve communion at the Wesley Woods Center. (PHOTOS: NAN ROSS)



# Down Memory Lane

*Georgia Tech researcher explores memory and aging*

BY PEGGY J. SHAW

A miniature black-and-yellow caution sign sits atop Professor Anderson Smith's desk as a reminder of the work he does on memory: *Caution: Senior Moment in Progress*.

The message is light-hearted, but Smith's research work at Georgia Tech is serious stuff. For more than 25 years, his studies on normal cognitive aging have been funded by distinguished scientific organizations, such as the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute of Mental Health.

"My goal is to understand how normal people operate," explains Smith, the Regents Professor of Psychology at Georgia Tech and a member of St. Anne's Episcopal Church. "To understand people with pathologies, you have to understand normal people."

Recently, Smith has been conducting a study involving episodic memory, a form of memory that allows people to remember significant personal events. "We've been looking at memory illusions, false memory," says Smith. "These are things that never happened—and older adults are more susceptible to them."

"If you give some people a list of words to memorize, for example, they would bet their car that the word 'sleep' was on the list, even if it wasn't."

Describing the study reminds Smith of one of his favorite quotes from Mark Twain: *When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not; but my faculties are decaying now and soon I shall be so I cannot remember any but the things that never happened.*

Smith's humor says something about his indomitable approach to a subject that most people find unnerving. For example, he recommends simply accepting the forgetfulness that becomes more prevalent as we age. "You're just developing the normal things that happen with memory loss," he says.

Smith even advises people to stop worrying about Alzheimer's. In fact, he, himself, would not get the new genetic marker test for Alzheimer's. "You are four

times more likely to get it (if you have the gene), but it doesn't mean you will get it," he explains. "I don't want to know. Don't worry about things you can't control. Worry about the things you can do something about."

One of those things is exercise. Smith recommends regular, aerobic exercise that can stimulate certain regions of the brain. And he suggests exercising the brain itself with books or crossword puzzles.

Doing service or professional work helps people cope with the challenges of aging by giving their lives purpose. "People who are successful really do like what they're doing," says Smith, who, among other things, does mission work, serves on the board of Senior Citizen Services, and helped found the Saint Anne's Terrace retirement community in Buckhead.

"That gives me contentment and satisfaction," he explains. "I want to make a difference in the world for me. I want to enjoy what I'm doing and know it's important."

Smith also believes that a fulfilling spiritual life can help people cope with aging and stay cognitively fit. "I think happiness and contentment are important to healthy aging, and what does faith give you but contentment?" he reasons. "Religion gives you a conceptual framework to order your life."

Smith says that adapting to the reality of memory loss as we age is important. "Be adaptable. Be flexible," Smith counsels. "Remember that successful aging is not the absence of cognitive change but adaption to cognitive change. Composer Aaron Copland said, 'When I noticed changes, I started playing pieces slower so when I got to the build-up, I could do it.' He was adapting."

"I write more things down," Smith admits. "I put the umbrella by the door. It's all about coping."

Researchers have yet to find a drug or herbal supplement that improves memory. In one recent trial, Ginkgo biloba, for example, was found to have no effect, and Aricept, perhaps the most widely prescribed drug for

*“When I was younger, I could remember anything, whether it had happened or not; but my faculties are decaying now and soon I shall be so I cannot remember any but the things that never happened.”*

—MARK TWAIN

Alzheimer’s, may slow down the progression of the disease but only for some people.

Smith notes, most of us can get out every day and do things that we enjoy and that make us healthier. We can stay true to our own selves, and live with gratitude.

“And if you’re worried,” he adds, “then exercise and eat healthy—and remember that successful aging is the ability to adapt.”

*Peggy J. Shaw, a member of the Cathedral of St. Philip, is a freelance writer and lives in Decatur.*

Anderson (Andy) Smith is a faculty member at Georgia Tech, as well as the university’s senior vice provost for academic affairs. He has won both the Sigma Xi Sustained Research Award and the Outstanding Teacher Award at Tech, where he was director of the School of Psychology. **Below:** At his Atlanta home, Smith reviews the results of memory tests conducted by his department. The Georgia Tech Memory Lab seeks volunteers who will participate in memory testing. The tests consist of a few computer tasks, as well as several worksheets. Some remuneration is provided. To participate, call the Memory Lab at 404-894-7559 or write [gtnemorylab@gmail.com](mailto:gtnemorylab@gmail.com). (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)



## REMEMBER THIS!

Everyone is unique, but when it comes to memory certain things may help us all, says Anderson Smith, a researcher on cognitive aging and member St. Anne’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta.

**AEROBIC EXERCISE:** “Aerobic exercise makes you healthier in the brain, and the brain is an organ of the body. The healthier you are, the better you will be. If you can get out every day or do something that keeps you active and healthier, then do it.”

**HAVE FAITH:** “Faith can guide you and keep you calm. I think happiness and contentment are important to healthy aging. What does faith give you but contentment? For many people it reduces anxiety.”

**AVOID WORRY:** “Be adaptable. Be flexible. Worry about the things you can do something about it.”

**KEEP YOUR MIND ACTIVE:** “Use it or lose it—there’s some evidence for that. You can do crossword puzzles, but I read mystery novels.”

**CONSIDER SERVICE WORK:** “I do ministry to older adults, and it makes me happy.”

**ACCEPT FORGETFULNESS:** “You’re just developing the normal things that happen with memory. I write things down. Keep the umbrella by the door.”

**ADAPT TO CHANGE:** “Successful aging is the ability to adapt.”



FIRST PERSON

# A recipe for healthy aging: diet, exercise and Christmas parties

BY TED JOHNSON

The keys to healthy aging are not a mystery. Eating a good diet and participating in regular, vigorous exercise are paramount. And going to more Christmas parties may help, too.

There is strong, consistent evidence supporting the positive health benefits of diet and exercise; I know this because of my study and work as a geriatrician (a physician who studies aging and treats older adults).

Our Western diet is too high in fats (particularly in polyunsaturated fats). What we should eat is commonly described as a Mediterranean diet. Adding a nightly glass of red wine has positive health benefits (cheers!) for most. Studies have repeatedly shown that caloric restriction allows laboratory mammals to live longer, though that approach to longevity sounds less appealing.

As for exercise, regular physical activity reduces the chance of heart attacks, improves mobility and reduces the rate of accidental falls. Walking and jogging are good, and individuals even in their 90s living in a nursing home benefit from supervised weight training.

But why should going to more Christmas parties be linked to reporting better health? While it might be a recipe for too much food and not enough exercise, a study did in fact show that reporting a higher number of Christmas parties attended was linked with better health.

Ellen Idler, Ph.D., director of Emory University's Religion and Public Health Collaborative, came to this conclusion by considering results of other studies that showed socialization and having hobbies are associated with lower rates of dementia. Those reporting membership in social groups also reported better physical function. Another bit of evidence is that those scoring high on a spirituality scale and belonging to a religious community are also linked to better health.

Thoughtful readers recognize limitations with epidemiological evidence such as this. There is a

difference between things that simply happen at the same time (associations) and one thing coming first and directly resulting in the second thing (causations). One element of the causation dilemma is the chicken-or-egg issue. Are healthier people simply able to attend more Christmas parties and, by extension, those in poor health are forced to pass on invitations? Or is it that belonging to a vibrant, spiritual, welcoming community can actually help you age better? We may not be able to tease these apart, but I'm inclined to believe the latter is just as important, if not more so.

While I learn about aging as part of what I do at work, I learn just as much in my community and church. Recently, I was offered a chance to participate in an adult education series on aging for my parish and to teach one session. I jumped at the chance.

While I am intentional about trying everyday to feel the calling that brought me to service as a geriatrician, this may not be very outwardly visible while I am serving as a practicing clinician in a federal- or state-run hospital. While I still hold my ongoing work in service to our nations' veterans dearly and as ministry, I also can embrace my newer opportunities for work at the Wesley Woods Center of Emory University. But teaching a class at church is another step in bringing together two very important parts of my life—my 22 years of membership in the Episcopal Church and my 20 years as a physician. At Wesley Woods there is not only a tolerance of explorations of the link between religion and health, but a nearly 50-year platform of religious service to older adults in Atlanta.

I try to keep lectures interactive. At my church class, we opened with an icebreaker where attendees could respond to a number of different questions. One question turned out to be the most frequently answered: "What was your favorite age, and why?"

The majority of attendees answered, "right now," or, "my current age." I knew from my reading and work with



*Lost in all the doom and gloom of statistics about the impending demographic wave (the Silver Tsunami) of our aging nation is the fact of how much volunteer work, leadership, and caregiving is offered to our society by these older adults.*

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patients that many adults, and particularly older adults, feel younger than their years. While likely true for many at the lecture, there was also a healthy embracing of accumulated years, hard-earned experience, acquired knowledge, and even some aches and pains.

Lost in all the doom and gloom of statistics about the impending demographic wave (the Silver Tsunami) of our aging nation (e.g., the number of Georgians over 65 will double between now and 2030) is the fact of how much volunteer work, leadership, and caregiving is offered to our society by these older adults.

Open a health or health-and-beauty magazine today or turn on the television. We appear as a society to be struggling to look younger and feel younger (and thinner); older people are half-deaf, forgetful or near-sighted, or all of these.

For a contrast with our society's negative connotations of aging, try out the term "church-elder." I come up with sage, wise, leader, and involved. This is very much the concept of "elderhood" embraced by Bill Thomas,

founder of the Eden Alternative and an innovative thinker about how we run nursing homes. Just try to find an organization or a neighborhood that is more intergenerational than your parish.

My parish, and I would imagine yours, too, is a great place to see this in action. It may be through vestry membership, mentorship, outreach ministries, or home visits. There will be caregiving responsibilities, and the church community itself can be part of the solution. And some of our church elders host fabulous Christmas parties!

*Ted Johnson, M.D., is site director for the Atlanta Veterans Administration Medical Center, associate professor in the Emory University Department of Medicine and director of its Division of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology. He is a member of St. Bartholomew's, Atlanta.*

*Listen to a podcast featuring Ted Johnson on "A New Look at Old Age" at <http://whsc.emory.edu/soundscience/2010/johnson.html>*



*Hughes, Randall*

## Retiree Randy Hughes finds encore career as legal volunteer, teacher

*Q: Some have called what you're doing now an "encore career." How have you gone about transitioning from a full-time job as an attorney to becoming a retired yet still working attorney?*

A: When I knew I was going to retire I contacted Steve Gottlieb at Atlanta Legal Aid and asked him if he had any suggests as to where I might volunteer and help out his organization. During our conversations we arrived at assisting the Georgia Senior Legal Hotline and the HeLP project. I simply started volunteering for the Hotline the first week of my retirement and started with HeLP not long after that. I had been teaching at GSU Law School since 1999 and told them I would like to continue.

*Q: What effect has your experience as an involved church member had on this stage of your life?*

A: I have always tried to be involved in the parish and decided to continue to be involved. My idea of retirement was to keep active but lead a less stressful life. My involvement in the parish was not stress producing.

*Q: How do you see this work continuing as you age?*

A: I hope to continue as long as I'm reasonably healthy. I don't see retirement as a period of inactivity but as a period of a more relaxed life style. My schedule leaves a lot of leisure time and with most of my activities I have the understanding that I can travel as I desire. Of course that means I sometimes can't attend and must connect by phone or e-mail while traveling.

*Q: What should our readers know about the needs of indigent hospital patients and their families?*

A: I can speak only to the legal needs of such children. However, it is apparent that legal issues frequently impact the health of such children. For poor families with ill children the challenges are great. Ill children demand not only monetary resources but additional time. With many very sick children it is hard for the family to be as economically productive as they would otherwise have been. The needs of these families and their children range from economic subsidies like Social Security to medical subsidies like Medicaid. These families frequently have difficulty navigating the bureaucratic structures surrounding the subsidy programs that can address their needs. But the needs of such families are more varied than just needs for economic and medical subsidies. There are frequently housing issues, for example: mold that is contributing to a child's difficulty with asthma, and educational issues, for example: needs for special education programs for disabled children. Also, there are frequently domestic relations issues that affect the children. These can include custody, child support and divorce problems.

*Q: As someone who has worked in health care for many years, please tell us we can do to advocate for sound public health-care policies in Georgia? At the national level?*

A: In my opinion the single biggest problem in health care is the level of uninsured in our country. Most people can get emergency medical care, but so much money and suffering would be saved if the uninsured were cared for before their conditions rose to the level of an emergency. I consider it a fundamental part of the Judeo-Christian ethic to address the suffering of others. I think the best way to continue that tradition is to address the problem of the uninsured. All levels of government have a role to play in providing care for the uninsured, and the present legislation is the federal response. Time will tell whether it successfully addresses part of the problem of the uninsured. However successful it may be, it will not solve the entire problem. At least 10 million people are not covered by the reform legislation, and eventually we have to address that issue.

**Above left:** Randy Hughes discusses with a group at Hughes Spalding Children's Hospital whether it's possible for the hospital to provide medical assistance for an uninsured child. Pictured with him are a medical student from Morehouse College and a legal-aid lawyer whose office is at the hospital. (PHOTOS: NAN ROSS)

## THE HUGHES FILE

Randall L. Hughes was born in Winter Haven, Fla., on Dec. 19, 1940. He was raised in a Southern Baptist church and in 1976 became an Episcopalian when seeking "a church in which to raise my children that emphasized love and grace, not fear and punishment."

He is a member of St. Martin in the Fields Episcopal Church, Atlanta, where he serves as a verger and vestry member and spent a number of years as a mentor for Education for Ministry. He is a member of the board for the Diocese of Atlanta's Institute for Ministry and Theological Education.

Hughes is a graduate of the University of Florida and Duke University School of Law and has been a member of the State Bar of Georgia since 1968, specializing in health care law. He has been named Atlanta Health Care Lawyer of the Year on several occasions.

He currently serves as a faculty fellow for Georgia State Law School and as a volunteer for the HeLP project, a collaboration of Georgia State Law School and the Children's Healthcare System. Since 2008 he has volunteered for Atlanta Legal Aid Society, which provides free legal services to indigent patients of Children's Hospitals and their families.

Hughes and his wife, Linda, who is retired after a career in the business aspects of health care, were high-school sweethearts and have been married 47 years. They have two adult children and four grandchildren.



FIRST PERSON

# A year of spiritual discernment

*New religious community for women 50+ puts focus on simplicity, creativity and balance*

BY KATHERINE MITCHELL

I had recently retired and moved to Atlanta to be closer to college friends and family and was eager to find my place in a new setting. Nancy Baxter, a retired Episcopal priest whom I had met briefly through a mutual friend, came by for a housewarming visit. I was fortunate to get better acquainted with her and learn more about what she envisioned for a new Episcopal religious community for women that she'd founded, the Society of St. Anna the Prophet.

*While we still live in our own homes, SSAP members are intentional about community life. We pray for each other and ask for prayers. We participate in ministry together. We keep confidences absolutely.*

I liked all that I heard that day in February 2008: The Society of St. Anna the Prophet (SSAP) focused on godly aging. It was studying ways to revolutionize care for elders. It required women to be 50 or older to apply for membership and asked members to take vows of simplicity,

creativity and balance. The new society included a discernment process that was well-defined, and it held only one required meeting a year. I was instantly engaged in thinking about godly aging and inspired by the thought that I might bring more simplicity, creativity and balance to my life by associating with a community of like-minded women.

What was not immediately clear in this introduction to the SSAP was how I could associate with such a community (since membership was for Episcopal women and I was a lifelong Methodist). I didn't know whether I

had a calling to ministry with elders. I also didn't know at that time how much I would need the support of the SSAP within just a few months when the health of my own aging parents took a steep, downward turn.

Clarity on these issues developed in the following months when the health of my mother (aged 83) and my stepfather (aged 87) began to decline. Seeking God's will concerning their care and the courage to carry it out, I began participating in Morning Prayer at nearby St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church. In just a few months, the warmth, care and prayers of that small group prompted me to attend confirmation classes and made it clear that I wanted to become an Episcopalian. Although I did not seek confirmation as an Episcopalian because of the SSAP, it did clear the way in January 2009 for me to apply for a provisional year with the society.

I learned more about "the Annas" that year. I learned that in its inception, the SSAP had been inspired by Anna, the only woman of advanced age named in the New Testament (Luke 2:22-38). Seeking to reflect Anna's recognition of the Christ in the infant Jesus, the SSAP included ministries to both the very young and the old.

At my first SSAP convocation I was introduced to about 30 women—some ordained and some not, all living in different circumstances and members of various parishes. As a provisional member, I read two books, reflected, prayed, participated in a team ministry with elders at Emory Healthcare's Wesley Woods Center, chatted regularly with an assigned mentor, and participated in three optional retreats.

I tried on the vows of simplicity, creativity and balance and attended optional Sunday afternoon porch meetings where we knitted, made pot holders and discussed our common reading, *The Gift of Years* by Joan Chittister and *What Are Old People For?* by Henry Alford.

At the end of 2009 I submitted a written report on my discernment to date. My reflection for that report helped



After sharing eucharist with residents at Wesley Woods Towers, several members of the Society of St. Anna the Prophet gather at a nearby restaurant. From left are Julia Bottin, a member of Christ the King Episcopal Church, Lilburn; Eleanor Pritchett, St. Bartholomew's, Atlanta; the Rev. Barbara Ryder, Church of the Epiphany, Atlanta; and Joyce Hunn, St. Bede's, Atlanta. (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)



me realize that the SSAP had had a more profound impact on my life than I could have anticipated. The dominant theme in my exploration of creativity had occurred in the challenges and anxieties related to caring for my mom and her husband. I had made progress in responding to them in a spirit-filled, creative manner when they were frustrated and difficult. I had rallied my six siblings to be unified in our plans for providing physical, spiritual and financial support to our parents.

My primary exploration of balance involved putting myself in situations that maximized my receipt of unconditional love and acceptance so that I had a reserve of the same to give when dealing with difficult people and situations—particularly those involving my aging parents.

During my provisional year with the Society of St. Anna the Prophet, I benefited enormously from the retreats and porch meetings, experiencing the joys of knowing my new sisters and being known, caring for the SSAP community and being cared for. I grew spiritually and am still rethinking and rearticulating what it means to be a Christian. Two examples come to mind: My experience introduced me to the blessings and challenges of living in community. While we still live in our own homes, SSAP members are intentional about community life. We pray for each other and ask for prayers. We participate in ministry together. We keep confidences absolutely.

Another surprise was discovering that a ministry with elders seemed to suit me. A 40-year educator, I had found in the past that my primary ministries were ones that allowed me to express my gifts of teaching and exhortation, particularly in the arena of public education. These ministries were packed with activity, and I had targeted children and adults. I had no suspicion that I would enjoy weekly worship services with elders at senior living centers.

Just this week I gazed lovingly at the congregation assembled at Wesley Woods and thought: This weekly eucharist is not so much about providing ministry to seniors as it is about being in community with elders—the nine SSAP members in attendance as well as the 12 residents and their caregivers. All of us are being transformed by the experience of regularly gathering at the Lord's table.

Sensing several indications that I may have a vocation with the SSAP, I took vows in January for a novice year with the society. I wrote a simple *regula* (Latin for rule) specifying my spiritual disciplines for the coming year, believing that intentions in the areas of creativity, simplicity and balance will further my spiritual growth and better equip me for the abundant life as an elder.

*Katherine Mitchell lives in Atlanta and is a member of St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church.*

# Awesome elders BY NAN ROSS

## *Nella Crooks: Centenarian is used to blazing trails*



Nella Crooks has always been a trailblazer. She left her birthplace in Jamaica when she was 19 and moved to Boston. She organized one of the first black Girl Scout troops in Virginia, and spent 13 years

as a missionary with her husband, Kenneth, back in Jamaica. After raising four children, she started college, and in her 60s earned a master's degree. She wrote her autobiography, her husband's biography and published three books of poetry.

And today she's demonstrating to her friends and loved ones what it's like to have lived for well over a century. Last Oct. 1 Crooks celebrated her 108th birthday, making her possibly the oldest Episcopalian in the Diocese of Atlanta. She's been a member of St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Fort Valley for 55 years.

"My mother has always had a positive attitude," said her daughter, Nella Jenkins. "She loved being able to travel and help others. When she had a choice of serving as a missionary in Africa or Jamaica, she chose Jamaica, saying 'Why don't we help the people we came from?' She's always had people in her life. She's a real people person and very outgoing."

Crooks moved to Fort Valley in the mid-1950s with her husband, Kenneth, a biology professor at Fort Valley State College. In 1955, they had the opportunity to meet the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. After King delivered a speech at the college, he came to the Crooks' home for tea and signed the family's guest book.

When her husband died four years later, Crooks went to work as a resident manager at the college dormitories. The students called her "Oma Nella," German for Grandmother Nella.

Today she lives in a nursing home in Perry, where she's very well cared for, her daughter said. "She is an amazing woman."

## *Wheeler Conkling: 'Right place, right time' means working as missionary in his 80s*

Wheeler Conkling says that throughout his business career he always found himself "in the right place at the right time."

Conkling is a World War II veteran who rose to CEO for Airwick Industries in New York before retiring to Naples, Fla. There he served his Episcopal parish as senior warden and volunteered at a homeless shelter.

When in his early 80s his wife's health began to fail, he helped care for her. They moved to Roswell retirement center to be near family, and three years later she died.

While worshipping at St. David's Episcopal Church, Roswell, in 2004 with his daughter, Melissa, he heard about a group that was heading to Honduras as mission volunteers. "I thought it would be good to see what life is like in a third-world country," he said.

By the end of his first weeklong trip to Tegucigalpa, Honduras' capital, he knew he was in the right place once more. Conkling started working as a volunteer

coordinator for groups coming from the U.S. to work on projects for LAMB Ministries. He stayed for five years, but made trips back to Roswell for medical care and to see his family, which was "very loving and supportive," he said.



Conkling reflected, "I realized I had the time and the energy, and I didn't want to go back to the retirement center. I was anxious to be active, and if I was called to do this, this is where the Lord wanted me." Eventually, he became LAMB Ministries' business manager and coordinator of building projects, and all without being able to speak fluent Spanish.

"This been a great opportunity that I've been lucky to have," said Conkling. "I've learned that you get a lot through giving." His projects complete, Conkling is back in Georgia now. Again, in the right place at the right time—and turning 90.

## PEOPLE

### NEW CALLS

The Rev. **Joseph Greene** has been called as rector of the **Church of the Redeemer, Greensboro**. He had been a curate at St. Columba's, Johns Creek.

The Rev. **Charles C. (Chris) Starr** of Decatur has been called as rector of **Church of the Atonement** in Sandy Springs. A priest of the Diocese of Atlanta since 1993, he served as a development officer for Episcopal Relief and Development.

The Rev. **Richard Game** has been called as rector of St. Patrick's, Dunwoody. He has been assistant rector at **Trinity Church, Columbus**.

### ORDINATIONS

The Rev. **Elizabeth Schellingerhoudt** was ordained a priest Feb. 21 at St. Bartholomew's, Atlanta. She is a graduate of Candler School of Theology at Emory.

### REST IN PEACE

The Rev. Canon **Herbert J. Beadle**, a retired priest of the Diocese of Atlanta, died March 16. He was 86. Canon Beadle served at the Cathedral of St. Philip from 1983-1988 and directed St. Jude's Recovery Center in Atlanta from 1966-1983. His funeral was April 17 at the Cathedral.

### MILESTONES

**St. Mark's Kindergarten**, a ministry of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in LaGrange, is observing its 50th year of service to families of preschoolers. Church members, former teachers, directors, students and parents gathered recently to celebrate—many traveling from areas throughout the Southeast to reunite with old friends and recall their days as a part of the St. Mark's family. The oldest active preschool program in the area features a curriculum that includes music, painting and movement classes, along with weekly chapel.



Former Atlanta Mayor Shirley Franklin, who grew up in the Philadelphia parish founded by the first African-American Episcopal priest, Absalom Jones, told a packed Cathedral of St. Philip Feb. 15 that "religion and social action must go hand in hand.... To honor Absalom Jones, we must live the gospel." Bishop of Atlanta J. Neil Alexander presided over the celebration, which was sponsored by the Atlanta chapter of the Union of Black Episcopalians. From left are Franklin; Norma Givens of St. Luke's, Fort Valley; Heather Knapp of the Church of the Epiphany; and Dr. Carol Marsh-Lockett, St. Timothy's, Decatur. (PHOTO: BILL MONK)

The Rt. Rev. J. Neil Alexander, bishop of Atlanta, dons the robes of the 23rd chancellor of Sewanee: The University of the South during the opening convocation of the Easter semester. Alexander was elected chancellor to chair the university's Board of Trustees and serve on the Board of Regents. He succeeds the Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parlsey Jr., bishop of Alabama. The chancellor is elected from the bishops of the university's owning dioceses for a term of six years. (PHOTO: WOODROW BLETTEL)

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed (above right) presents The Phoenix Award to the Rev. Austin Ford, recognizing Ford's lifelong work in improving the lives of Atlanta's poor and disadvantaged. The Phoenix Award is the highest honor bestowed upon an Atlanta citizen. Ford, who founded Emmaus House, also received a proclamation from the City Council designating March 1, 2010, as "Father Austin Ford Day" in the city of Atlanta. Assistant Bishop Keith Whitmore, present for the occasion, told Ford that he had been named a canon missionary of the Diocese of Atlanta. (PHOTO: DEXTER CHAMBERS)



## Elder network offers community for caregivers and a wake-up call for the church

BY ELIZABETH SCHELLINGERHOUDT

How do we care for our parents as they age, especially when we are geographically separated? How are they—and we—nurtured spiritually as they near death and as we provide care? What is the role of the church in the aging process, and how do we remain faithful to life in Christ as we age?

Questions like these confronted two priests, the Rev. Carolynne Williams, canon for pastoral care and elder ministry at the Cathedral of St. Philip, and the Rev. Martha Sterne, associate rector at Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church, Atlanta, as each provided care for an ailing mother from a long distance. As the conversation between the two colleagues continued, they were sure that others in the Diocese of Atlanta face similar challenges.

Indeed, Cynthia Zenner, a parishioner at All Saints', Atlanta, was grieving the death of her mother, and in her mother's memory she developed a program at her parish about caring for elders with dementia. The work Zenner did creating the program eventually led her to Williams and Sterne and the growing number of others in the diocese seeking questions about support for caregivers and elders. As a result of these and similar one-on-one conversations (see sidebar), an initiative was sparked

in the Diocese of Atlanta now known as the Diocesan Elder Network (DEN).

According to Zenner, now the group's leader, DEN has collected wisdom and experience around the diocese to address the issues faced by her own family and many families in parishes of the diocese. They've learned that caring for family members is a growing national concern. According to the American Society on Aging, nearly one out of every four U.S. households provides care to a relative or friend over 50; 40 percent of care givers are also raising children; and 64 percent of care givers work either full- or part-time. Nationally, the Episcopal Church formed the Task Force for Older Adult Ministry (OAM) in response to the 2003 General Convention call to assess ministry opportunities with and for an aging population both within and outside the church.

DEN focuses its efforts on action in the context of individual parishes. Since forming a year ago, the network has helped several parishes through a three-step process that DEN member and Holy Innocents' parishioner Jackie Stradley helped develop. The three steps are: 1) Engage in conversation with others in the parish to discover what opportunities exist to be

**Left:** Holy Innocents' parishioner Jackie Stradley leads a portion of a recent DEN meeting at the Cathedral of St. Philip's Lanier House. Stradley helped the group develop a three-step plan to share with parishes wanting to improve their ministries with elders. (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)

intentional about ministry with elders and with those who are providing care for elders. 2) Enlist DEN to facilitate an organizing meeting with the goal of identifying one or two actions for your parish. 3) Carry out the identified actions, and then repeat steps one and two.

Stradley, who is also the executive director of the Betty and Davis Fitzgerald Foundation, cared for her mother for 15 years before her mother died in 2008. Says Stradley, "Caring for my mother and grieving her death ignited a passion to reach out to others in similar situations. And at age 60, I am committed to the call of Christ to continue my own spiritual journey and to enable others to continue theirs throughout the aging process. If parishes will follow these three simple steps, we will find that we will all grow spiritually."

Two area parishes have taken up DEN's offer to help with an organizing meeting. Marsha Bond, St. Bartholomew's parishioner, DEN member, and a long-term care ombudsman for Atlanta Legal Aid in Decatur, says that her parish had two action items from its organizing meeting. The group determined that educating their parish about elder issues was an important first step, and the parish presented an adult-formation series called "Godly Aging." Looking at aging from theological, medical, and quality of life perspectives, the Sunday morning series drew more than 50 participants—of all ages. The second action item, in progress, is to look at its existing pastoral care infrastructure to formalize pastoral care visitation, transportation and socialization ministries for elders within the parish.

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta also has held an organizing meeting. Joan Purdon, the parish's director of health ministries and DEN member, says that St. Luke's first action item is to build on an existing ministry called One to Another, in order to focus on the needs of elders within the St. Luke's community. Using a database of volunteers, One to Another is a program that coordinates meal deliveries, transportation, yard work, moving assistance and other support for parishioners at times of birth, death, illness, unemployment and other life challenges.

Purdon estimates that as much as 80 percent of her work is supporting parishioners who are providing care for family members. She sees the intentional effort to increase assistance to elders in the parish through One to Another as a critical need. The second action item coming from the St. Luke's organizing meeting is to collect and include elder stories in the life of the parish, paying special attention to opportunities to add intergenerational richness to the life of the parish.

## WHAT IS DEN?

The Diocesan Elder Network's mission is to identify and connect with the concerns of elders in parishes by supporting individuals and families through education, resources, emotional care and spiritual care. DEN's goals are: 1) to bring attention to the growing needs of parishes to be organized and intentional in efforts to address the issues of elderly members and caregivers and 2) to actively share how our faith is teaching us to acknowledge and honor our own aging process.

## GETTING STARTED

DEN can help your parish organize its elder ministry efforts. Here's what the group recommends:

Begin having conversations—one-on-one—with other members of your parish. What are your concerns? What are others' concerns? What is in place now? What untapped energies and gifts can be brought to the parish by its elders?

Contact DEN chair Cynthia Zenner at [czenner1@earthlink.net](mailto:czenner1@earthlink.net) for assistance in planning an organizing meeting at your parish.

Begin the journey of growing into life as an elder or supporter of elders as you put in place the action items developed at your organizing meeting.

## A GRAYING CHURCH

According to the Episcopal Church's Task Force for Older Adult Ministry (OAM):

The fastest growing age segment in the country is 85 and above. By 2050 the projection is 4.2 million people over age 100.

Currently one in every eight Americans is age 65 or older, and over one in four live alone. Every hour, 330 Americans reach the age of 60. These same baby boomers will start turning 65 during this triennium. Within 10 years, the age 85-plus population will increase by 40 percent (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services).

More than one in three Episcopalians are age 65 or older, and they range from very active to homebound. Another 41 percent are age 45-64, which means three of every four members are age 45 or older. Think of it in terms of economic stressors alone (retirement age, technology gaps, social services, Social Security, and Medicare) and then wonder at the impact on local congregations.

The OAM was challenged by the 2009 General Convention to address these questions:

How do we recognize, honor and use the experience, wisdom and gifts of older adults?

How do we develop ministries that integrate and weave multiple generations together spiritually?

How do we cultivate Christ's message of hope and service for older adults, families, and their caregivers?

How do we examine, explore, and create innovative and contemporary liturgical, spiritual and service ministries by, with, and for all generations in the Body of Christ?

## Diocesan Elder Network

*Continued from previous page*



**Above:** Cynthia Zenner of All Saints', Atlanta, leads the Diocesan Elder Network, which is gathering collected wisdom and experience from around the diocese to address the issues faced by her own family and many families in parishes. (PHOTO: NAN ROSS)

Supporting caregivers and elders needing care is critical, DEN's leaders agree. However, as all good questions do, the questions which helped form DEN have led to other, larger questions. Why do we undervalue and even devalue aging and our elders in our culture? How do we show respect and value for those members of our communities who have lived long lives, tapping into the wisdom and spiritual maturity that is in our midst? In a church heritage that takes pride in ancient liturgy and traditions, how do we create an ethos which demands the same honor for the long-livers in our midst? How do we learn to recognize that even though the aging process may weaken us in some areas, we gain strength in other areas?

The mission of DEN is to work with those in ongoing caregiving situations; equally important is engaging in the spiritual journey of aging at whatever age we find ourselves. We are all aging, and the members of DEN understand that an important part of their work is to be formed as persons who honor their own aging process as holy work. We are all invited to join the journey into holy aging.



*The Rev. Elizabeth Schellingerhoudt lives in Decatur and is a priest of the Diocese of Atlanta.*



# There are 5 parish-initiated centers for retirement in Diocese of Atlanta

BY JAMES CLARKE

The Diocese of Atlanta is fortunate to have had six congregations that have worked determinedly to provide five nonprofit retirement living centers for people with varying income levels. Here is a brief summary of what is available under the aegis of Episcopal churches in Middle and North Georgia. Contact each facility for more information.

## FOR LOW OR MODERATE INCOMES

For people who have low or moderate incomes and assets, there are three facilities that operate under the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and offer safe, decent and affordable housing. To qualify for housing offered by these facilities, one must be at least 62 years old or be covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### **Cathedral Towers**

2820 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, 404-231-3020

[www.cathedraltowers.org](http://www.cathedraltowers.org)

Services include: one-bedroom (650 sq. ft.) apartments that are carpeted, individually controlled heat and air conditioning, stove, refrigerator, and utility fees are included in the rent. Units that are handicapped accessible are also available. There is a laundry, a library, an attractive lobby, and an exercise room with classes offered. It is convenient to nearby stores, a bus line, and a number of churches. Weekly van service to the grocery store also is offered. There are also planned activities for residents.

### **St. George's Court**

110 N. 10th St., Griffin, 770-229-5405

Similar to Cathedral Towers, St. George's offers most of the same amenities. In addition, residents are furnished with cable TV at no extra charge. There are five two-bedroom apartments.

### **St. Paul's Apartments and Village**

1330 Forsyth St., Macon, 478-745-0829

Also similar to Cathedral Towers, St. Paul's offers most of the same amenities with the addition of a volunteer food program that offers lunch Monday–Friday.

## TWO CONTINUING-CARE COMMUNITIES

People with adequate income and assets who want to retire in a community that ensures living arrangements as they age find that continuing-care retirement communities offer services and amenities.

### **Canterbury Court**

3750 Peachtree Road, Atlanta, 404-261-6611

[www.canterburycourt.org](http://www.canterburycourt.org)

Sponsored by Atlanta parishes St. Luke's and All Saints', Canterbury Court has offered since 1965 independent living to nursing care—all under the same roof. To qualify for admission, one must be at least 62 years of age, be capable of independent living and have adequate income and assets. However, endowments provide financial assistance to applicants and residents as determined on a case-by-case evaluation. Apartments range from studios (355 sq. ft.) to three bedrooms (2734 sq. ft.), with amenities available to all residents regardless of apartment size.

### **St. Anne's Terrace**

3100 Northside Parkway, NW, Atlanta, 404-238-9200

[www.stannesterrace.org](http://www.stannesterrace.org)

Affiliated with St. Anne's Episcopal Church, St. Anne's Terrace is the smallest independent living community in the area and offers a variety of one- and two-bedroom apartments. To qualify for admission, one must be at least 62 years of age, be capable of independent living and have adequate income and assets. The website offers a virtual tour that reveals spacious living quarters, well-appointed rooms for recreation, fitness, reading, and an inviting dining room. The grounds are well manicured with nice walking areas.

*The Rev. James (Jim) Clarke retired in 2000 after 20 years as a retirement center administrator and as priest-in-charge at St. Mary's, East Point. He has since served Diocese of Atlanta parishes as an assisting and interim priest in Hartwell, Toccoa, Clayton, Sautee-Nacoochee, Blairsville and Clarkesville.*



# Guidebooks for graceful aging

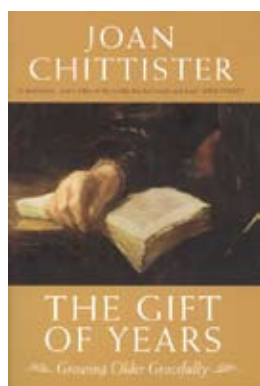
BY LINDA SCOTT

THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF ATLANTA  
RESOURCE CENTER

All items mentioned here are available for purchase through the Cathedral Book Store.

For more information, contact  
Lscott@episcopalatlanta.org, 404-601-5353,  
or the bookstore, 404-237-7582.

Visit the Resource Center online:  
[www.resources.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.resources.episcopalatlanta.org)



## The Gift of Years: Growing Older Gracefully

By Joan Chittister;  
BlueBridge, 2008

Joan Chittister brings her prophetic wisdom to a youth-focused culture, reminding us in this collection of essays that there are tremendous gifts to be received and examined in the second half

of life. She explores the many dimensions of aging, the purposes and concerns, struggles and surprises, the potential and the joys. This is a guidebook to pick up again and again while traveling the uncharted path to what she calls “the summit-time of life.”

## Like Trees Walking: In the Second Half of Life

By Jane Sigloh; Cowley Publications, 2007

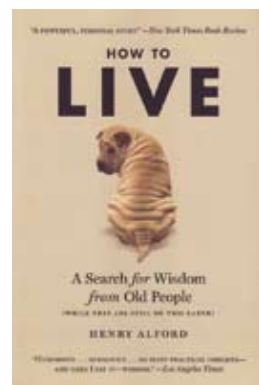
Fast approaching the “golden years” of retirement? Retired Episcopal priest Jane Sigloh offers 39 reverent and irreverent facts and fantasies of growing older. The reflections provide insight into her thoughts on the challenges and opportunities that maturity brings. Dip into any of the four-page conversations whenever you feel called, for example: Starting with Yes, Holy Uselessness, Emptiness of Being, God’s Spies, Side by Side, or Angel Wings.

## How to Live: A Search for Wisdom from Old People

By Henry Alford; Twelve/  
Hatchette Book Group, 2008

“Part family memoir, part Studs Terkel,” reads the book jacket, “this book is more than just a compendium of sage advice; it is a celebration of living well.” Henry Alford

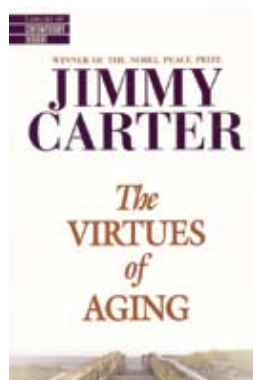
launches his collection of interviews with elders like Granny D, who made headlines a decade ago for walking across the country to draw attention to campaign-finance reform. Alford, who is 45 as he begins his quest of speaking to people over 70, finds and defines wisdom.



## Toward Holy Ground: Spiritual Directions for the Second Half of Life

By Margaret Guenther; Cowley Publications, 1995

Margaret Guenther explores spirituality in midlife, which can be entered at any age, when one undertakes the tasks essential to a mature faith: a tolerance of ambiguity, an exploration of limitation and mortality, discipline and simplicity, fruition and fulfillment. With a solid sense of humor, she looks at the practical aspects of spirituality: intercessory prayer, the need for community, lightheartedness, detachment, preparing for “a good death” and crafting a rule of life.



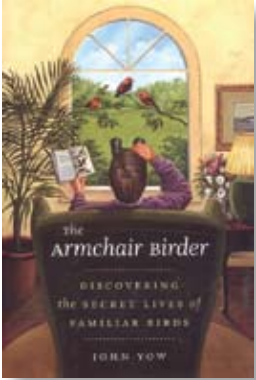
## The Virtues of Aging

By Jimmy Carter;  
Random House, 1998

Involuntarily retired from the highest level of employment in the land at age 56, Jimmy Carter has some experience in retirement living. When anticipating his 70th birthday, he was asked what he felt were his best years and he replied, “Now is the best time.” The short, descriptive writings in this “book of virtues” will explain his answer.



## Celebrating creation



### **The Armchair Birder: Discovering the Secret Lives of Familiar Birds**

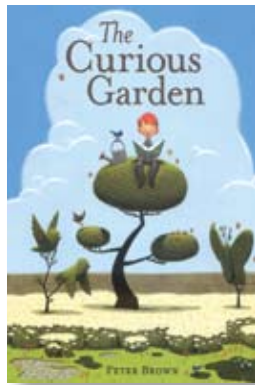
By John Yow; University of North Carolina Press, 2009  
Bird lovers, take heart! John Yow, from Acworth, Ga., reminds us that the most fascinating birds can be the ones perched right outside our windows. He provides

humorous, and at times irreverent, essays on the lives of 40 different birds you probably already recognize and see every day. He begins in spring with the Carolina wren.

### **The Curious Garden**

By Peter Brown; Little, Brown & Co, 2009

For children, this is a story about a boy named Liam who is out exploring his drab, gray city when he comes across a struggling garden. He decides to help the plants grow and, bit by bit, the city is transformed. This is a story about a boy's dream and how the efforts of one small person can help change the world. The perfect story for springtime!

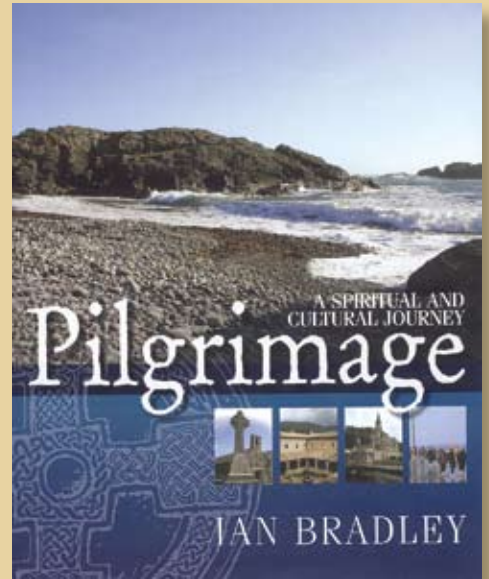
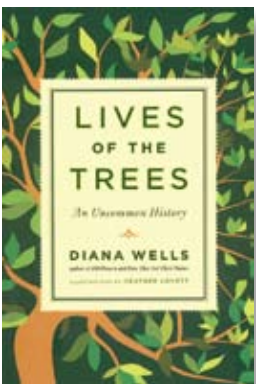


### **Lives of the Trees: An Uncommon History**

By Diana Wells, illustrations by Heather Lovett; Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2010

From the origins of their names to their use in sacred rituals, from medicinal properties to their place in art, this book gives us the biographies of 100 different

trees. Learn what trees have meant in our culture through time and how they continue to protect our planet to this day. This book is not for botanists; it's for everyone. It is a story of our long relationship with trees, a story of friendship from the beginning of time.



### **Pilgrimage: A Spiritual and Cultural Journey**

By Ian Bradley; Lion Hudson, 2009

Beautifully illustrated, this book explores the origins of pilgrimage from the exodus experience of the Jews and Jesus' own practice of going up into the hills to pray, to our contemporary experience, visiting sites like Santiago, Lourdes, Medugorje and Czestochowa, trekking St. Cuthbert's Way to Lindisfarne and wandering the beaches of Iona. Blending historical and factual information, personal experience and pilgrim stories, meditations and prayers, Bradley brings to life one of the most vibrant expressions of Christianity today.



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**A Planetary View**  
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**Coming to Your Voice:**  
**Exploring the Creative Process**  
KIRBY & SANDY SHELSTAD

**September 5–6**  
**The Language of Loss:**  
**Putting Grief into Words**  
AMY LYLES WILSON

**September 10–12**  
**Why Pray?**  
DR. JAMES L. CRENSHAW

**September 10–12**  
**Celtic Spirituality and**  
**Jungian Psychology:**  
**Spiritual Resources for**  
**the Modern Soul**  
JERRY R. WRIGHT

**October 8–10**  
**The Buddha's Four**  
**Nobel Truths:**  
**A Blueprint for**  
**Dancing with Life**  
PHILLIP MOFFITT

**October 29–31**  
**All Things Made New:**  
**On Being a 21st**  
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**Soul Refreshment:** The Snail's Pace  
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**Upcoming publishing and deadline dates:**

- Fall 2010 issue (publishes September 1) deadline: **August 1**
- Winter 2010-2011 issue (publishes December 1) deadline: **November 1**
- Spring 2011 issue (publishes March 1) deadline: **February 1**
- Summer 2011 issue (publishes June 1) deadline: **May 1**
- Fall 2011 issue (publishes September 1) deadline: **August 1**
- Winter 2011-2012 issue (publishes December 1) deadline: **November 1**

*Lord let me  
know my end,  
and what is  
the measure  
of my days;  
let me know  
how fleeting  
my life is.*

PSALM 39:4

## The Last Window BY CAROLINE WESTERHOFF

Moira extricated herself from the cocktail party conversation as quickly as she could. She did not want her indignation to splash all over the offending man. “Why do you choose to work with old people?” he had asked. “It must be so depressing. But I guess all you need are patience and a loud voice.” “I find the work exciting,” Moira responded softly, as she always does when presented with the all-too-familiar query. She turned on her heels and moved to a group across the room.

She is indignant that our culture is so ageist. She becomes irate when people think she is in a job that is depressing (“In the first place, why would I do that to myself?”), when they think nothing about making stereotypic comments regarding the elderly. Her eyes light up with passion when she talks about her vocation: “Older adults are just like anyone else in the world, and I find working with them tremendously exciting. Oh, the stories they have to tell if we will just listen to them!”

Moira Keller is a licensed clinical social worker and a geriatric case manager for Sixty Plus Older Adult Services at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta, offering complimentary support, education, and various services to older adults and their families. I first met her after calling in a state of panic to make an appointment. My

mother was about to arrive from New York after my stepfather’s death, insisting on living alone in her house two hundred miles away from my home in Atlanta. Her New York friends and family gave me stern warnings that her dementia was too advanced to allow such a thing. Terrified of incurring Mother’s considerable wrath, I had no idea what to do. Through my priest, I did know where to turn.

Assigned to our case, Moira warmly greeted my husband John and me and ushered us back to her office. She had a soothing voice and a calming demeanor; the guidance she gave us was upbeat and lifesaving. In Moira’s presence, my fear subsided or at least became manageable.

Our introduction took place nine years ago. Now Moira and her husband, George, join me as parishioners of St. Anne’s Church in Atlanta, where my husband, John, serves as a priest associate.

Moira looks suffering and death in the face more regularly than most. One day recently I asked her to explain the specifics of her work.

*Continued on next page*

## The Last Window

*Continued from previous page*

“You two were fairly typical clients: middle-aged or older children worried about their parents,” she told me. “January can be a busy time for me, when after Christmas visits, grown children realize how much mother or dad has declined.” Moira makes a home visit and functional assessments of how the person in question is getting along on a day-to-day basis. She thinks of herself as a “Columbo,” the detective of television-series fame, trying to put the pieces together and find out what the situation really is. Then depending upon what she discovers, she brings in or recommends a support system.

In our case, she referred us to a neurologist and a physician who specializes in the care of elderly patients. She agreed with the determination of our New York friends and family that Mother could not live alone and gave us the names of several nearby assisted living facilities to check out. The neurologist supported her assessment. After Mother with her furniture moved into her spiffy but unwelcome home, Moira made several more visits to make sure she was settling in as well as possible. She gave us literature and tips on how to best manage ourselves in the wake of her anguish and anger.

**Below:** Moira Keller is a licensed clinical social worker and a geriatric case manager for Sixty Plus Older Adult Services at Piedmont Hospital in Atlanta. Sixty Plus provides educational and supportive programs designed to help the well-being of older adults and their families. It offers a Sixty Plus Aging Helpline (404-605-3867), geriatric care management, dementia education and support program, caregiver workshops and support groups. Information: [Sixty-plus.email@piedmont.org](mailto:Sixty-plus.email@piedmont.org)



Even as Moira stepped back, I knew I was free to call her if the need arose. While I did so only once or twice, just knowing she was out there boosted my confidence and stiffened a sagging backbone. I likened her to a guardian angel, keeping watch over my family as we struggled to love each other through those dark days.

“This is the bulk of what I do,” Moira summarized. The most difficult but often the most interesting cases with which she deals involve people, usually living alone, about whom she is worried and whose family continues to ignore her concerns. “The family might have solid reasons (for example, abuse at the hands of this relative),” she admits, “but they are not sharing them with me.” Moira tries to establish relationships by focusing on the stress they must be experiencing and thus to gain their trust. “Once they understand that I am not there to judge them, the situation can greatly improve.” While her focal point is on the older adult, the entire family system is her client, caregiver stress often a major issue. She has even tended caregivers who have attempted suicide: “It can get that bad.” She did not have to convince me. I never contemplated taking my life, but I experienced too many moments of grinding despair: “Will this ever end?” Followed by guilt, when I realized that I was anticipating Mother’s death.

Moira went on, “Unfortunately a lot of people don’t have family (I often hear about them from physicians), and so I have to turn to neighbors and churches when they are available.” HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) helps her sort out what she can reveal and still guard the privacy of her clients. As a clinical social worker, Moira is a mandatory reporter to Adult Protective Services of any circumstances in which she believes older adults are at risk and all avenues she has explored for their relief have proven dead ends.

I asked Moira if she ever accompanies someone through death. “Yes, it’s not uncommon for me to get new clients whom I realize are terminally ill or even actively dying, but for whatever reason, those around them are unaware.” Her early hospice work serves her well as she pulls together family and doctors. These cases are hard but rewarding, poignant and professionally

demanding. They draw on everything: psychotherapy, medical knowledge, and her spirituality. Moira says, “They remind me why my calling feels like such a good fit. I have a little tiny window of life to try to make things right. I believe there is always the possibility of something new.”

She reviewed for me psychologist Erik Erikson’s eight Stages of Psychosocial Development. In the last stage, maturity, our work is to achieve what Erikson calls integrity: the belief that we have done all we needed to do, that the trip finally was worth it. Persons who are unable to find a sense of fulfillment and completeness will end up in despair and fear of death, much like the characters in Samuel Beckett’s complex and disturbing play *Endgame*. Clov and Hamm find themselves stuck in repetitive loops that never allow closure: they cannot shut the door on one existence in order to open up another. Moira sees her challenge as helping people die with a sense of integrity and not despair, to see death as the culmination of a life well lived.

When I asked Moira how she helps her clients move toward integrity and away from despair, she described the approach of narrative gerontology, in which older adults are encouraged to look back and reflect on their lives and how they have unfolded.

Even those with memory issues can cycle back and recall familiar hymns and special events from their childhoods. As they remember and relate their stories, they have the opportunity of coming to terms with themselves and their families. If they tend to judge themselves too harshly, the presence of someone like Moira, who makes no judgment, can move them toward acceptance and peace. She gives them the opportunity to become a new creation. We were born to die, and while we cannot choose how, when, or always where we die, we can affect our attitude toward and response to our dying. Moira has given her life to being empathetically present to others in the final chapter of their earthly stories. A Roman Catholic priest friend defines empathy as “exquisite attunement.”

Moira hopes that her being present will make a difference. She also knows that it may not. Her client may reject her help. Her client still may die in despair, as my mother did. Her client still may die carrying a load of guilt or sense of failure. Her client may die in lonely fear and suffering. But just maybe another person is inside trying to get out and cannot do so alone. Just maybe Moira is the one who can offer the liberating hand that brings a measure of peace. She knows that she cannot write the ending (I presume even God chooses not to write the ending). But as she is willing to join God in the cast of characters, Moira believes that she can possibly participate in a transformation of the outcome, in a turning of the page as the story goes on.

I would like to believe that Mother found that measure of peace before her death a long year after her arrival in Atlanta, but I have no evidence that she did. However I do not believe our journey ends when we take our final breath: Moira’s tiny last window looks out on the vast mystery of eternity and the hope of our going, as the Prayer Book says, “from strength to strength.” I can hope that Mother’s renewal is not done.

I was with her when she died and then with her body for two amazing hours. During this time, I began to feel a deep peace sink into my bones. With Moira’s guiding hand, I knew I had done my best. I could say that the trip of the last months had been worth it. I could imagine that Mother perhaps had absorbed more of the care surrounding her than she was able to express. I had become a new creation, and I am certain there are many in Moira’s cluster of families who join me. I pray that my children will find a Moira when their turn comes to accompany me as I pass through the last window.

*Caroline Westerhoff is the Diocese of Atlanta’s former canon for ministry. This article is excerpted from her yet-to-be-published fifth book, written with her husband John Westerhoff, Fear: The Pilgrimage from Anxiety to Hope.*



# Events around the Diocese of Atlanta



## FARMERS MARKET REOPENS AT CATHEDRAL

The Peachtree Road Farmers Market is back for its fourth season on Saturdays at the Cathedral of St. Philip, 2744 Peachtree Road, Atlanta. The market is open

Saturdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in the parking lot. In addition to locally grown foods, the market features a variety of items for sale. A yoga class, open to the first 10 people who arrive, is offered from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Demonstrations by local chefs are planned most Saturdays at 10 a.m. The market continues weekly into December.

## MOTHER'S DAY TEA, MAY 9

St. Bede's Episcopal Church will host a benefit Mother's Day Tea at 2 p.m. Sunday, May 9, at the church, 2601 Henderson Mill Road NE, Atlanta. All are welcome to honor mothers, daughters, sisters or special people. Included are a silent auction and drawing, with proceeds benefiting Emory's Winship Cancer Institute. For tickets (\$10 in advance and \$12 at the door), call 770-30345.

## CARIBBEAN-AMERICAN FESTIVAL, MAY 15

St. Timothy's Episcopal Church will host its 16th annual Caribbean-American Festival from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday, May 15, at the church, 2833 Flat Shoals Road, Decatur. The day will feature the plaiting of a maypole and crowning of the May queen, African dancers, Caribbean and American foods, steel band music, a fashion show, children's activities and door prizes. Booths are available for rent. Admission is \$5. Information: 404-241-7711.

## HIGH TEA WITH JAZZ AND FASHIONS, MAY 15

The women of the Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, Atlanta, will present High Tea with jazz performances and a fashion show at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, May 15, at the Cathedral of St. Philip, 2744 Peachtree Road, Atlanta. For tickets (\$50 per person), call 404-755-6654.

## PUBLIC NARRATIVE WORKSHOP, MAY 15

A workshop titled "Speaking Your Passion for Mission" will focus on a process called public narrative from

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10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, May 15, in room 381 at the Cathedral of St. Philip. Public narrative has been described as "the art of translating values into action." The workshop is designed to give individuals and groups greater clarity, energy and motivation for ministry. Join three General Convention deputies who have been trained in the public narrative process—John Andrews of Clarkesville, the Rev. Claiborne Jones of Atlanta and Vicky Partin of Columbus—for the day. \$15 covers lunch and materials. Information: [www.episcopalatlanta.org](http://www.episcopalatlanta.org)

## DAY 1 SUMMER SERIES FOCUSES ON HUNGER

To commemorate its 65th anniversary of weekly broadcasts, the Atlanta-produced "Day 1" national radio program will air a four-part series starting June 13 that will focus on "Faith & Global Hunger" in support of the Millennium Development Goals. Four prominent leaders will address the issue, and a wide range of audio, video, and text resources for individuals and church groups will be available at <http://hunger.day1.org>. Speakers are: W. Hodding Carter III, State Department spokesman under President Carter, journalist and author (June 13); the Rev. Dr. Barbara K. Lundblad, professor of preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York, Lutheran cleric, former pastor and frequent Day1 preacher (June 20); the Rev. David Beckmann, president of Bread for the World since 1991, Lutheran cleric, former World Bank economist, (June 27); and the Rt. Rev. Michael Curry, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina (July 4).



## CHURCH TOURS FOR SENIORS

St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Atlanta is offering tours of its historic building and stained glass windows to senior groups of 10 or more. The tour is free and given by a trained docent. A lunch or tea can also be provided for a small charge. For more information or to schedule a tour, please contact Bobby Mays 404- 231-0744 or Susan Brooks 404-351-8662.

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# God bless eldersness

BY MARTHA STERNE

*The Rev. Martha Sterne is associate rector at Holy Innocents' Episcopal Church, Atlanta. She is the author of "Earthly Good: Seeing Heaven on Earth."*

When did *elder* get to be a bad word? Where did we make some silly wrong turn in this culture and begin to associate elder with unattractiveness and weakness? When did we start thinking it is better to have surgery to recapture teenager-ness rather than live into the beauty of the faces we have earned—every wrinkle, every laugh-line, every wise and knowing look that no teenager could dream to master. I remember a different time, and I want to reclaim it.

I thought my grandmother was the most beautiful woman in the world until the day she died at 86.

She was tiny, formidable, lovely. She had a wide mouth and dark Creole eyes and she cried easily—the only crier in my rock-bed Presbyterian family—because she alone among us had the wisdom to know some things are worth crying out loud about. She hummed a lot. Low and soft, she almost always hummed I guess some melody of the universe only she could hear—usually a cheerful comfortable sound, unless she spotted something untoward like a crooked hem or a jar of jelly that had clouded. Or a grandchild misbehaving. Then the hum glided into a minor key until she straightened out whatever had gone awry.

She hummed and sometimes she groaned. And often she touched. She stroked. Her fingers were cool and soft on your forehead or your palm or your back. We would sit as close to her as we could and listen to her read a fairy tale or one of the Oz books. I can see my little brother, about eight years old and pretty much of a beast; I can see him laid out blissful and quiet while she read to us and stroked the bottoms of his feet.

She had a hearing aid. She called it her “telephone.” My grandfather got one, too, to keep her company but



nobody thought he really needed it. She had an earpiece attached by a wire to a little machine about the size of a cigarette lighter pinned to her slip, right above the heart. Sometimes there was static and it made fierce crackling noises and whistled. Then she would cut it off because it was just too annoying and confusing. And she also cut it off if she was bored. At large gatherings, she mastered the art of the interested look and the encouraging nod, and all the time, I knew she'd cut her hearing aid off. I envied her.

But if there was silence and if you looked right at her and if you talked right to her heart, well, she could hear everything you wanted to tell her. She listened with her heart and she could hear way down deep, and she could hold in her heart just what you wanted and needed her so badly to know.

My grandmother and my grandfather were the deeply respected and profoundly beloved elders of our family and their church. Perhaps yours were, too. Can you dream of anything better to grow into being? God bless eldersness. May we reclaim the power and the beauty.

# Pathways<sup>+</sup>

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