

**PRESBYTERY of DES MOINES**  
**Older Adult Ministries (OAM) and Congregational Health Ministry**  
**MAY '09 E-Newsletter**

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Dear Presbytery Congregations,

My name is Sue Nelson, and I am on the Presbytery Older Adult Ministry Committee along with Moderator Darlene Shepherd and Martie Larsen, CLP. I am currently serving as an Elder at Ankeny Presbyterian Church and have been a church member since 1971.

Several years ago it became apparent to me that many of us who were in on the beginnings of Ankeny church were ageing (very gracefully of course). Also, about that time my mother was experiencing some serious health issues. I became aware of concerns that seniors have as they age, and I began to see ways that I felt churches could minister. Two years ago when I became a session elder, I talked to my pastor about my interest in Older Adult Ministry, and the Session approved the start of an Older Adult Ministry. We formed a team of interested members, and came up with the following goals:

1. Seek to have APC older adults feel that they are a very vital part of our church community.
2. Determine if the spiritual, social, and physical needs of older adults are being met, and if not, determine if there are ways APC can minister to them.
3. Encourage and promote intergenerational activities within APC.

Our OAM Team made a questionnaire and at our first function which was a catered luncheon with the Pride of Iowa Barbershop group as our entertainment, we asked about 36 members to fill out the questionnaire to determine what they would like our group to do, when to meet, and how often. They definitely liked the idea of a meal and social activities. Some also suggested informational programs and mission work. As I look back on the past year and a half that we have been meeting, I noticed that a lot of our focus has been socialization. I began to feel a little guilty that we hadn't incorporated more mission or spiritual needs. Then I read the April 2009 *The Mayo Clinic Health Letter* under the section "Health Tips" (Getting Social) which I will quote:

'As you age, it can be a challenge to develop or maintain ties with people outside of close friends and family. It may not be easy, but being part of a social group, whether it's a formal support group, a church group, a club or just friends at the coffee shop, is proved to provide benefits, including:

1. Stress reduction – Group involvement can help buffer day-to-day worries or help you get through a difficult time. It can also offer compassion, support, perspective, humor, inspiration, or even just a ride to the doctor or grocery store.

2. **A sense of purpose – Lending a hand or an ear to others in a group increases your sense of belonging and self-worth. Many groups do something to help others in the wider community.**
3. **Motivation – Knowing that other members of your group will be meeting at 8 a.m. to exercise or do a volunteer project makes you feel needed and motivated to go.**
4. **Collective experience – Comparing notes or brainstorming on certain aspects of your health may help you get more prompt or better health care. Shared experience can help build interconnections, bolster your mood and psychological health, and provide strength to deal with issues.**
5. **Staying sharp – Engaging in conversation or activity with a variety of people has been linked in many studies to a slowing mental decline.’**

**Here’s my Challenge to myself and you (whether young or old) – Socialize – You’ll help yourself and others!**

**P.S. Many of the Bible studies recommend that you develop a spiritual support group, too.**

**May God bless your ministry,**

**Sue Nelson  
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### **Three things to keep in mind**

**THING ONE:** (to borrow from Dr. Seuss)

**May 19 – Pre-meeting meeting on older adult ministries issues.** If you will be in other meetings, perhaps there is someone who would sit in for you. Lets share triumphs, programs, what didn’t work – and help each other in building and/or expanding our OAM programs. One goal listed in the “Older Adult Ministry – A guide for the Session and Congregation” is helping the congregation become informed and engaged with OAM – the whole congregation, not just of the Committee on Older Adult Ministries.

The broad scope of OAM covers in part, aging. Also elder abuse, grandparenting, missions, education, evangelism, worship and other areas. There will be a variety of books to look through to give you a good idea on purchases, including one for the middle years – when we deny we are aging.

**We will meet at 1 p.m. in the lounge (near the lunch room) at Park Avenue Presbyterian Church in Des Moines and again at 6 p.m., during the meal to**

accommodate those with conflicting schedules. Going in the west door of the church, use the small door, and south of that, the hallway to Fellowship Hall – to the left is the lounge. There will be signs – don't depend on my directions. (my car well knows how to turn around.)

**THING TWO:**

**POAMN (Presbyterian Older Adult Ministries Network) Conference in Tucson on Sept. 29 – Oct. 2, 2009.** This will be a combined conference of POAMN and AARMS. The person who attends can be Clerk of Session, a Sunday School teacher, a person who is interested in older adult issues – elder abuse, housing, discrimination, missions, etc. Notify either Darlene Shepherd ([dshep@mahaska.org](mailto:dshep@mahaska.org)) or the Presbytery Office for further information.

**THING THREE:**

**These e-mails are intended to be interactive.** Do you have someone in your church who could send an article to be included in a future e-mail about your OAM program? Or perhaps you have read an article of special interest. (Be aware of copyright laws). Martie Larson recently submitted an extremely interesting article for a previous mailing. And Sue Nelson's article for this mailing is a perfect example of a older adult ministry startup in the Ankeny church. Send your comments, articles, suggestions to Darlene Shepherd ([dshep@mahaska.org](mailto:dshep@mahaska.org)) 316 N. Fourth St., Oskaloosa, IA 52577-2239.

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