

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

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### **Christmas with the Ederly**

The United Methodist Church quarterly, *Center Sage*, highlighted the book, *Welcoming Christ to Christmas: Alternative Worship at a Nursing Home* by Mari Ann Kusmertz-Chell. It can be found at: [www.aging-umc.org](http://www.aging-umc.org), then *Center Sage (Fall 2009)*, then close to the bottom of the page you'll see the book title listed.

A large group Christmas Eve service has possibilities. We are accustomed to worshiping in a group, not in a small room with 2 or 3 people. To sit among family and friends, smell the candles burning, listening to (taped) organ music, possibly with a Pastor wearing a traditional robe – imagine the memories and renewed hope this would bring about.

The following are excerpts from Issue 18, Fall 2009 of *Center Sage*, a Resource for Leaders of Mid-Life and Older Adult Ministries published by the United Methodist Church under the direction of Richard H. Gentzler, Jr.:

**One of the loneliest places on earth at Christmas is a nursing home or a skilled nursing facility.** Many residents may not be able to "go home" for the holidays for a variety of reasons. Remaining residents are in need of a Christmas celebration not just by secular parties, but by the church bringing the full meaning of the incarnation of Jesus and the hope of his coming to them.

Christmas Eve can be a busy and hectic time for churches and pastors, as well as church members. A Christmas Eve service at a nursing home is easily done and can be a blessing rather than a source of stress. The first step is:

- Send a cordial letter to both the director and activities director offering to provide a Christmas Eve service with punch and cookies.
- Choose a nursing home that needs you.
- A good time to hold a service is 2:00 p.m. which avoids mealtimes, yet early enough to avoid conflict with other plans.
- Recruit a team... musician, someone to share a short message, scripture readers and a detail person.
- Just before Thanksgiving, confirm your presence with the nursing home personnel.
- On the first Sunday in Advent, begin promoting the alternative program.
- Provide postcard invitations to the activities director for invitations to residents' families
- Verify arrival time for team leaders.
- Copy the words (large print). Bulletins are not necessary.
- Keep it simple, 30 to 35 minutes and organized.
- Turn the holiday into what it is all about, which is welcoming the incarnated Christ to dwell amongst us in Spirit and in truth.

To view samples of the Christmas Eve Invocation, Christmas Eve Music, and the Christmas Eve Order of Worship/Bulletin, go to [www.aging-umc.org](http://www.aging-umc.org).

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**The Seniors are Coming!** From [www.BuildingChurchLeader.com](http://www.BuildingChurchLeader.com), Ideas & Resources for Outreach-Oriented Church Leadership Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2009 e-newsletter, by Drew Dyck, Leading Outreach Editor.  
[www.buildingchurchleaders.com/downloads/practicalministryskills/ministrytosenioradults](http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/downloads/practicalministryskills/ministrytosenioradults)

Every eight seconds, someone in American turns 60 years old.

If you've been following the debates over healthcare and social security, you're well aware of a dramatic demographic trend affecting this country. Our population is aging. By the year 2030, about one out of every five Americans will be a senior citizen.

When most Christians think of cutting-edge outreach, they envision colorful subcultures: gang members, bikers, juvenile delinquents plastered with tattoos. Rarely do we pause to consider the more obvious, but just as important groups, right in our communities. I believe that seniors constitute a largely forgotten field of ministry.

If you need training on how to reach this growing group, check out [Ministry to Senior Adults](#). You'll find useful information about this demographic along with fresh ideas to reach them. [Find it here!](#)

Seniors are becoming a larger and more significant part of our world. Let's learn more about their interests and needs, and reach out to them with the love only found in Christ.

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### **Life Expectancy at All Time High; Death Rates Reach New Low**

From the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Press Release. U.S. life expectancy reached nearly 78 years (77.9), and the age-adjusted death rate dropped to 760.3 deaths per 100,000 population, both records, according to the latest mortality statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The report, *Deaths: Preliminary Data for 2007*, was issued August 19, 2009, by CDC's National Center for Health Statistics. The data are based on nearly 90 percent of death certificates in the United States. The complete press release is found at: [www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090819.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/media/pressrel/2009/r090819.htm).

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**Group Communion** – Consider group (ecumenical perhaps), communion service. I've a list of ideas to use – from the smell of a burning candle, thickened juice/wine if swallowing is a problem, inviting family and staff, use a large loaf of bread, organ music (most likely taped), maybe clergy can bring a robe to wear for the care facility service. People are use to group communion, and have never had communion by themselves in a small room until they live in a nursing facility. For more ideas on how to make older adults feel part of your church community, contact **Older Adult Ministry Task Force Moderator Darlene Shepherd** at [dshep@mahaska.org](mailto:dshep@mahaska.org) or 641-673-5793.

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