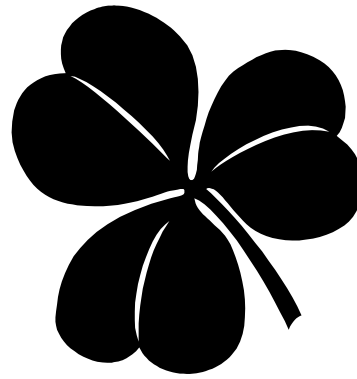


Mid-Atlantic OAMNews
March 2003



This newsletter is sponsored by:
Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, PC(USA)
Sunnyside Communities
The Presbyterian Homes, Inc. of NC

Mid-Atlantic OAMNews – is a monthly e-newsletter dedicated to the promotion of spiritual health and well-being of older adults and their families – offering information, resources, model ministries, stories, and humor! Visit our web-site at www.synatlantic.org and click on Older Adult Ministries. Jan McGilliard, Editor

In this issue:

St. Patrick, Evangelist and Pastor
Upcoming Events

A Sermon: “Defending Our Hope,” by Rev. Aaron Fulp-Eickstaedt

A Hymn: “Now Praise the Hidden God of Love”

Church/Community Connections - A Model

Cast Me Not Off in Old Age, by Elaine Tiller

Love as a Winter Grace, by George Gunn

St. Patrick, Evangelist and Pastor

As we enter into a season of Lent, we pay tribute to Patrick the evangelist and pastor, and his remarkable journey from boy slave to educated priest.

The person we know as St. Patrick was born in NW Britain sometime around the turn of the 5th Century. At 16 Patrick was captured by a group of Irish slave traders and he came into the possession of a chieftain named Milch. He was put to work herding cattle in County Antrim. It was on the slopes of Slemish, near Ballymeana, that Patrick experienced an extraordinary surge of prayer as he records in his “Confession.”

“But after I had come to Ireland I daily used to feed cattle, and I prayed frequently during the day; the love of God and the fear of Him increased more and more, and faith became stronger, and the spirit was stirred; so that in one day I said about a hundred prayers, and in the night nearly the same; so that I used even to remain in the woods and in the mountains; before daylight I used to rise to prayer, through snow, through frost, through rain, and I felt no harm; nor was there any slothfulness in me, as I now perceive, because the spirit was then fervent within me.”

Patrick dreamed of going home. Eventually he escaped and caught a boat to France where he trained as a priest. He returned to Britain and there he had a further prophetic dream. In the dream he saw a man coming from Ireland who gave a letter to Patrick entitled “The Voice of the Irish.” As he read this, he heard the voice of many Irish people beckoning him to come walk with them. This dream was his call to Ireland, and, following his consecration as bishop, he arrived in 435 A.D., probably at Strandforth

Lough. During the next three decades he engaged in vigorous and effective evangelistic work and, by the time he died in 461, he left behind him thousands of baptized Christians, and many communities that were blossoming into life.

The prayer life of the early Celtic Church is worthy of the admiration of Christians of every tradition. In this church you find contemplative hermits leading austere lives of fasting and contemplative prayer. You also find Pentecostal enthusiastic prayer. Perhaps the Celtic Church, more than any other, was true to St. Paul's exhortation to the Ephesians, to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." (Eph. 6:18 NIV) From ***The Soul of Celtic Spirituality: In the Lives of its Saints***, by Michael Mitton

Blessed Three,
I come in humility,
I come by grace,
I come with confidence,
I pray in your name,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

+++++

Upcoming Events

March 18, 2003: Charlotte Presbytery: A Training Workshop for Senior Advocates: **The event includes:** *Identification of Senior Needs and Concerns...How to Access Local Resources...Regional, State, and Federal Resources....Putting It All Together: The Paper Trail. 10 AM-3 PM at Covenant Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC. Co-sponsored by Charlotte Presbytery OAM Team and Charlotte Mecklenburg Council on Aging. Cost: \$5 per person (includes lunch). Registration Deadline: March 7, 2003. Contact: Paige McRight at Presbytery of Charlotte: paige.mcright@presbyofcharlotte.org*



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

March 31-April 2: Need a Winterlude? ***Massanetta Springs Conference Center*** invites you to God of All Ages: an adult conference for Bible study, fellowship, shared meals, worship and song, rest, renewal and relaxation. Featuring Dr. J. Hayden Hollingsworth, M.D., retired cardiologist, longtime Bible teacher, writer, and storyteller. For information contact Laura Holbrook, Program Director at Massanetta at laurah@massanettasprings.org Phone: 888-627-7774

May 12-16 at Montreat: Skills in Older Adult Ministry: *Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow. Keynote Speaker:* Lois Hayman-El. Music leader: Eric

Wall. **Workshops:** From Doing to Being...Come Care Through Clay...Telling Your Story...Older Adult Needs Assessment...From Caregiving to Care-receiving. Visit the Montreat web site at: www.montreat.org for further information!

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

Please plan to honor your loved ones by:

- Participating in this year's Mother's Day/Father's Day Offering in May or June
- Celebrating Older Adults Month in May by planning a special worship service, program, or activity.
- Order a free Older Adult Week Planning Guide from Presbyterian Distribution Services at 1-800-524-2612, Item # 70250-03-717 or download from our website.

+++++

A Sermon: Defending Our Hope, by Rev. Aaron Fulp-Eickstaedt, Co-Pastor of Concord Presbyterian Church, Statesville, NC

+++++

A Hymn: "Now Praise the Hidden God of Love" set to O Waly O Waly, #402 in the Presbyterian Hymnal. Here are the words:

Now praise the hidden God of love, in whom we all must live and move,
Who shepherds us at ev'ry stage, through youth, maturity and age:
Who challenged us, when we were young, to storm the citadels of wrong;
In care for others taught us how God's true community must grow:
Who bids us never lose our zest, though age is urging us to rest,
But proves to us that we have still a work to do, a place to fill.

WORDS: Fred Pratt Green (Acts 17:23-28)
MUSIC: O Waly Waly (English Folk Melody)
Words c. 1982 Hope Publishing Company



Church/Community Connections – a Model

In a partnership with the Kent Hospice Foundation, the interfaith Chester Valley Ministers Association (Kent & Queen Anne's Counties on the eastern shore in Maryland) are co-sponsoring a community showing of the PBS series "**& Thou Shalt Honor.**" As part of the Kent Hospice Foundation's ongoing efforts to promote and support care-giving efforts in the community, the public will be invited to come view the program and join in discussions on how the faith communities and other concerned partners can improve support for older adults in this rural Maryland community. Just recently, the Kent Hospice Foundation established an inter-faith pastoral care team as part of its chaplaincy services. *Submitted by Rev. Sara Holben, New Castle Presbytery*

Editor's Note: To purchase a copy of **And Thou Shalt Honor**, hosted by Bill Moyers, go to pbs.org and click on "Shop PBS" – enter the title into the search line and you'll see the prices for this video. Price for a regular video is \$29.95 and DVD version is \$39.98. Hardcover book is \$24.95.

+++++

Cast Me Not Off in Old Age, by Elaine Tiller

Over the past 12 years, I have worked with senior adults in local congregations in the Washington, DC metropolitan area to develop senior adult ministries serving congregations and their community.



But a sad, frustrating tendency often gets in the way. Seniors frequently have to be convinced that they and older adult programs are important enough to be part of the regular congregational budget and committee structure, just like children's work, youth work, family ministries, and single ministries. I often encounter resistance to the idea that the senior adult work should be planned and funded, too. Seniors often seem comfortable being an adjunct, an appendage, a bump on the structure, rather than an integral part of the congregation through its formal structure and budget.

Indeed, seniors frequently dig into their own pockets to support their own programs, thus defeating hope of senior adult work being owned by the *total* congregation, rather than limping along as an add-on, important only to a few.

This is out-and-out ageism from senior adults who feel unworthy and from others in the congregation who minimize the value of senior adult work. We pay heavily for such attitudes. We lose the opportunity for the senior adult ministry to affect the total life of the congregation and to be integrated into that life. We also lose the opportunity for young and old to confront their fears of aging and to begin to accept their own aging and that of others. When senior adult work is not part of the education committee or another committee, important cross-generational dialogues and programming are likely to be missed. Opportunities to learn from each other, to share with each other, and to build bridges of friendships are lost.

A good example of this cross-fertilization is a congregation that recently recognized the need for their youth to study the Bible in order to teach Bible topics on a mission trip. Fortunately, the congregation soon recognized that the church members who knew the Bible best were the senior adults. Each senior was paired with a youth for Bible study, resulting not only in a good program but also in the development of long-term friendships across the generations.

Denominations, as well as individual congregations, also practice de facto ageism as they downgrade or do away with their aging ministries and drop their offices on aging from the official structure. At this time in our history, when the congregations need to provide leadership in faithful aging, including continued spiritual development, we have

gone in the opposite direction and cut out or downgraded our national denominational work in aging.

Congregations and denominations, meanwhile, continue to have a heavy representation of gray-haired members who are pioneering long life for themselves and generations to come. We need to support older persons, to assure them that they are not cast off in their old age (Psalm 71:9) and to learn from the wisdom found among the aged and understanding brought by long life (Job 12:12).

Elaine Tiller is the former executive director of Baptist Senior Adult Ministries in Washington, DC

+++++

Love as a Winter Grace, by George Gunn

Set your wintering heart now on the highest gifts and I will
show you a way that beats all.

If I speak with the wisdom of a passing generation and with a
premonition of heavenly passages, but speak without love,
I will only pontificate or chatter aimlessly.

And if I have power to see into the future, to quote seers and sages,
and to claim a guru's knowledge; and if I have a legacy of faith which promises to
remove mounting fears, but I share that knowledge and faith without love,
I achieve next to nothing.

If I share my accumulated wealth and if I will my organs to a host of grateful recipients,
but become a donor without love, I gain nothing of eternity.

Love in one's later years demonstrates patience (tried) and kindness (tested);
It sees no reason for jealousy of competitors nor for boasting of great
achievements; it is not haughty nor dogmatic.

Love that has matured does not need to say, "We never did it this way before"; it does
not hold hands with anger nor does it harbor a grudge forever; it takes no
satisfaction in others failing, but rejoices when perseverance prevails.

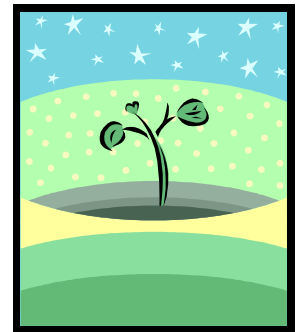
Love in the third age bears with its infirmities, believes that life still has meaning, finds
hope in every circumstance, endures in spite of dire predictions.

Love, in fact, never despairs. As for forecasts and folk wisdom, it will come and go; as
for soothsayers, they will grow silent; as for great books, they will gather dust.

For our human insight grows dim and our futuring gets foggy; but when the perfection of
one's worth and divine destiny is realized, the dim will fade further and the fog-
bound will drift away.

When I began this life journey, I spoke of fulfillment and of possessions to be mine; I
thought only of self serving and material goals. I played a child's game of hide
and seek.

When I came to midlife, I looked inward for meaning and gave up my childish ways.
And now we see finding and losing, life and death, life's paradoxes; but soon we will
behold each with new eyes, even as we are beheld.



Now we are broken and whole, strong and weak, diminished, but in God's good time we shall find our courage grown larger, a winter grace. We shall watch the wake of our life with joy and accept our mortality as God's gift.

So a faith that the best is yet to be, a hope that embraces memory, and a love of life, these three abide, but the greatest of these is to love life.

Make love your companion.

George Gunn is a retired pastor living in Banner Elk, North Carolina. He wrote "Love as a Winter Grace" in 1991 following a Conference on Aging sponsored by the Presbytery of Western North Carolina.