

***Spirituality and Faith:
The Heart of Older Adult Well-being:
Ministry Perspectives and Resources***

Spirituality

- Enduring sense of meaning, purpose and hope
- Expansive, multi-dimensional; it runs deep and engages that which is “sacred”
- The heart of older adult well-being

Faith

- Dimension of spirituality – Primary for Christians
- Thrives in religious communities via sacred practices
- Participating in God’s actions in one’s life and the life of the world
- Vital faith that matters

Older Adult Spirituality and Faith Perspectives and Resources:

- Personal Faith and Life Narrative
- Hope – the Sustaining Promises
- Sacred Experiences and Spaces
- Vital Faith Practices

Personal Faith and Life Narratives

Finding Meaning and Direction in Understandings of God and God’s Actions

- Weave identity and activities around a sense of God’s presence in everyday life
- God’s story and their stories intertwine and become a vital narrative of their existence
- Faith and life story that addresses their critical questions
- Expand their understanding of Scripture and the tenets at the heart of their faith and life story

Background Readings

World Without End by Thomas Keating (Bloombury Continuum) 2017

On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity and Getting Old by Parker Palmer 2018

Intimacy with God by Thomas Keating (Crossroad) 1996

Women Rowing North: Navigating Life’s Currents and Flourishing As We Age by
Mary Pipher 2020

Practices

<i>Bible Study and “Conversation”</i>	<i>Lectio Divina</i>
<i>Dwelling in the Word</i>	<i>Centering Prayer</i>
<i>Books on Faith</i>	<i>Biographies</i>
<i>Life Skills Studies</i>	<i>Journaling</i>
<i>Life Review</i>	<i>Devotionals</i>
<i>Story Telling</i>	<i>Faith Story Videoing</i>
<i>Writing One’s “Autobiography”</i>	

Resources

Life Review-Life Review Reminiscence in the Elderly – A Review of the Literature by Molinari and Reichlin 1985

In Our Stories Lies Our Strength-Aging, Spirituality and Narrative by William Randall 2014

The Spirituality of Imperfection: Story Telling and the Search for Meaning by Katherine Ketcham and Ernst Kurtz 1992

Pilgrimage into the Last Third of Life – Seven Gateways to Spiritual Growth by Richard Morgan and Jane Thibault 2012

The Spiritual Luster Survey by Richard P. Johnson

Spiritual Health Assessment: discipleshiplabs.com and christiangrowthresources.com/spiritual

Contemplative Outreach.org

Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures by Basil Pennington 1998

Centering Prayer

Welcome Prayer

Jesus Prayer

Prayer of Good Courage

Hope

Sustaining Promises

Older adults’ trust in the promise of God’s accompanying presence and their confidence in ongoing life with God forever are foundational for facing changes, disease, loss, and decline as the end of their life moves ever closer.

Background Reading

Almost Everything: Notes on Hope by Anne Lamott (Random House) 2018
Life Gets Better: The Unexpected Pleasures of Growing Older by Wendy Lustbader 2011
Joyfully Aging: A Christian's Guide by Rich Bimler (Concordia) 2019
Elders Rising – The Promise and Peril of Aging by Roland Martinson (Augsburg) 2018
On the Brink of Everything: Grace, Gravity and Getting Old by Parker Palmer 2018

Practices

<i>Focused Bible Studies</i>	<i>Book Studies</i>
<i>Life Stories and Story-Telling</i>	<i>Questions, Reflection and Discussion</i>

Resources

The Unfolding of the Miracle by Julie Yip-Williams (Penguin Random House) 2020
A Good Day: A Gift of Gratitude by David Steindl-Rast, Louie Schwartzberg, et. al. 2013
When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times by Pema Chodron 2016
Your Legacy Matters – A Multi-Generational Guide for Writing Your Ethical Will by Rachael Freed 2013

Sacred Experiences and Spaces

Participation in faith communities, visiting hallowed spaces and living through powerful experiences make God real for older adults. Especially in times of crisis, these sacred communities, places and experiences strengthen their faith as they encounter huge challenges, poignant questions regarding their beliefs, and finally death.

Background Reading

The Art of Letting Go by Richard Rohr. (Audio Book – Sounds True) 2017
Into the Silent Land by Martin Laird (Oxford) 2006
Open Mind, Open Heart by Thomas Keating (Crossroad) 2006

Practices

<i>Quiet Time in "Sanctuaries"</i>	<i>Engaging Worship</i>
<i>Exploring Nature – Creation</i>	<i>Relationships</i>

Meditation
Spirit-filled events

Prayer
Concerts

Life and Death Moments

Resources

Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer: An Approach to Life In Fullness by David Steindl-Rast
and Henri Nouwen 1984

The Inner Voice of Love by Henri Nouwen (Image) 1991.

Silence: The Power of Quiet in a World Full of Noise by Thich Nhat Hanh
(Harper One) 1999

Going Home with Jesus and Buddha as Brothers by Thich Nhat Hanh
(Penguin) 2005

Vital Faith Practices

Worship, hymns, prayer, faith and life conversations, Bible study, holy listening, meditation, journaling and spiritual direction strengthen older adults' faith, as older adults age, navigate crises and heal in the wake of their losses. Older adults reference their active participation in these practices as one of the mainstays of their lives.

Background Reading.

Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina by Thelma Hall (Paulist Press)
1988

Talking with God in Old Age: Meditations and Psalms by Missy Buchanan (Perfect
Paperbacks) 2010

Seek God Everywhere: Reflections on the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius by
Anthony De Mello 2010

Practices

Worship
Personal and Corporate Prayer
Listening to Christian Music
Spiritual Gifts
Spiritual Direction
Serving Others
Faith and Life Conversations

Candle and Cross
Hymn Singing
Spirituality Acted Out in a Faith Community
Holy Listening
Dwelling in the Word
Blogging
Pilgrimages

Meditation
Zoom Friends
Butterfly

Journaling
Good Friday Rock
Practicing Gratitude & Wonder

Resources

Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth by Richard J. Foster (Harper One) 2018

Pray as You Can: Discovering Your Own Prayer Ways by Jean Gill 2010

The Practice of Spiritual Direction by William A. Barry and William J. Connolly (Harper One) 2009

Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction by Margaret Guenther (Cowley Publishing) 1992

Lectio Divina: Renewing the Ancient Practice of Praying the Scriptures by Basil Pennington (Crossroad) 1998

Meditation: How to Meditate: A Practical Guide to Making Friends with Your Mind by Pema Chodron 2013

Center for Action and Contemplation www.centerforactionandcontemplation.org
www.hebronlutheran.org

Contemplative Outreach www.contemplativeoutreach.org

Centering Prayer