

Faith and Spirituality
Ministry Resources:
“A Tool Box”

Spirituality and Faith

Spirituality engages the “sacred” in search of an enduring sense of meaning, purpose and hope. Spirituality is expansive, multi-dimensional and runs deep. Faith, a dimension of spirituality, thrives in religious communities via sacred practices that encounter God and God’s activity in one’s life and the life of the world. A range of the breadth of older adult spirituality and faith *perspectives, practices and resources* are gathered here as:

- 1) ***Approaches to Older Adult Ministry***
- 2) ***Growth in Personal Faith and Life***
- 3) ***Sacred Spaces and Experiences***
- 4) ***Vital Faith Practices***
- 5) ***Hope***

Within each of these five areas are included:

- 1) Materials providing *perspectives* on older adult spirituality, faith and ministry
(See “***Background Readings***”)
- 2) A variety of *practical ideas and activities* (See “***Practices***”)
- 3) A list of supportive materials (See “***Resources***”)

This “***Tool Box***” is designed so that its user can enter at any point to find resources that enhance their spiritual life or ministry with older adults.

Area One:
Approaches to Older Adult Ministry

Who in a faith community will come alongside older adults? Who in a church might mobilize the congregation and its leadership to unleash its capacities to minister to and with older adults? Who will identify the gifts of older adults revitalizing them and encouraging them to serve in their congregation, community and beyond?

Certainly pastors and other staff such as deacons, Directors of Christian Education and parish nurses might. A team of lay leaders could join a pastor and staff in ministry with older

adults. Older adults might organize themselves and employ their spiritual gifts of leadership to become” Elders in Action” or a “Congregational Elder Corps” leading the congregation as it becomes a “Center for Positive Aging.”

With whomever leads, *ALOA (Adult Lutherans Organized for Action)* and its members stand ready to accompany and learn together in a new season of ministry by, with and for older adults. This “Tool Box” is one asset ALOA brings to the conversation. You can contact ALOA at: ALOA.serves.org; (Website) or aloa4u@gmail.com; (E-mail).

As ALOA joins congregations of all sizes in every region of the country, it finds the following array of ideas and materials helpful in discerning a congregation’s *purpose and approach to ministry* with older adults’ faith and spirituality.

Background Readings

A Deepening Love Affair – The Gift of God in Later Life by Jane Thibault; 1996

Written to enrich the spirituality of older adults who are still searching for “some thing more,” to experience the abundance of life Christ has promised.

The Grace of Aging: Awaking as You Grow Older by Kathleen Dowling Sing (Wisdom Publications); 2014

Opportunities for spiritual awakening occur among the wonders and challenges of older adulthood. This is a guide into older adult emotional-mental-spiritual dynamics of aging.

Falling Upward: A Spirituality for Two Halves of Life by Richard Rohr and Paula Darcy (Jossey-Bass); 2011

How might humans grow spiritually throughout their lifetime? Rohr and Darcy encourage older adults to embrace the whole human journey, placing focus on the second half of life by closely following the path and concerns of Jesus.

Practices

Spiritual Health Surveys

The Spiritual Luster Survey by Richard P. Johnson utilizes 20 questions to identify 10 areas of a life of faith that can be more fully developed through faith practices.

Two other surveys provide helpful frameworks for what older adults in a particular congregation might need through a ministry in a local context. *Spiritual Health Assessment: discipleshiplabs.com and christiangrowthresources.com*

Older Adult Ministry Surveys

ALOA has constructed a short multi-dimensional survey part of which will be taken by the whole congregation and all of which will be taken by older adults (age 62 and older). The survey will assist congregations in designing ministries that drawn upon the gifts of older adults and identify older interests and challenges that need to be addressed within that particular congregation's context. This survey is available at aloa4u@gmail.com.

Richard H. Gentzler, Jr., D.Min, Director, Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries has developed a survey that's available at: GBOD | UMC, POB 340003, Nashville, TN 37203 Telephone: 615-340-7173 E-mail: rgentzler@gbod.org Web: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/older-adult-ministry-survey-forms>

Strategies for Older Adult Ministry

A wide variety of strategies (purposes and approaches) for older adult ministry are present or under development in congregations across the United States. Some congregations will do one of these ministries; some are doing all of them; some are doing two or three. They are provided here to stimulate the imagination of older adult ministry:

1) ***Community of Care (CC)***

A congregational ministry of caregiving with older adults through compassionate contact-connection-communication-community building-cagegiving.

2) ***Positive Aging (PA)***

Supporting older adults' baptismal identity and call by providing faith formation-information on vital aging-skills-service-wisdom-leadership-“finishing strong”-celebration of elderhood Older adult spiritual, mental, physical, emotional and social wellness are the goals here.

3) ***Older Adult Spiritual Gifts (SG)***

Older adults' spiritual gifts are identified, honed and invested in building up the congregation.

4) ***Intergenerational Ministry (IM)***

Integration of older adults, those in the 3rd, 4th and 5th generations, and their unique roles with those in the 1st and 2nd generations; i.e., writing Lenten devotionals for the whole congregation or video taping older adult faith stories.

5) ***Community Outreach (CO)***

Identifying needs and engaging needs and challenge in the community-context of the congregation so that the “neighbor and the world might thrive.”

6) ***Congregation and Community Partnerships (CCP)***

Developing working partnerships between the congregation and service providers in the community. See for example: Redeemer Lutheran, White Bear Lake, MN, a hub for 2nd Half with Lyngblomsten, a life enrichment center that takes an integrative approach to supporting adults aging well in their communities. The centers are designed to connect older adults to community services, resources, and opportunities to enhance their quality of life. See more at: Lyngblomsten.org

Resources

Designing an Older Adult Ministry by Richard H. Gentzler, Jr. (Discipleship Resources); 1999

This book presents ways to develop and strengthen ministries with older adults. Its about the needs and issues of older adults. Its a tool in helping congregations evaluate their current ministry. It provides a variety of models for ministering to and with older adults

An Age of Opportunity: Intentional Ministry by, with and for Older Adults by Richard Gentzler (Upper Room); 2018

This is a companion book to *Designing an Older Adult Ministry*. It provides information and outlines for developing and/or strengthening ministries by, with and for older adults in order to enhance their spiritual growth and well-being.

No Act of Love Is Ever Wasted – The Spirituality of Caring for Persons with Dementia by Richard Morgan and Jane Thibault; 2009

Relying on their many years of experience in spirituality, Thibault and Morgan offer a fresh hopeful model of dealing with life and death in the realm of Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia.

Lyngblomsten Care Center, St. Paul, Minnesota

Lyngblomsten is both a care community and a center promoting positive and effective aging. It partners with families and congregations in developing older adult wholeness.

Encore Ministry, Golden Cross Foundation, Nashville, Tennessee

A Ministry of the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church that provides a breadth of ready-to-use older adult ministry resources.

Adult Lutherans Organized for Action (ALOA), Clearwater, Florida

A non-profit ministry working closely with The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod and The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America providing leadership and resources in older adult ministry, i.e. webinars, ministry “toolkit,” coaching, conferences, etc.

Area Two

Personal Faith and Life Narratives

Older adults draw meaning and direction from their understandings of God and God’s actions. They often weave their identity and activities around their sense of God’s presence in everyday life. God’s story and their stories intertwine and become a vital narrative at the heart of their existence. Strengthening their faith by addressing critical questions and expanding their understanding of Scripture and the tenets of faith are at the heart of their spirituality and wholeness.

Background Readings

World Without End by Thomas Keating (Bloombury Continuum); 2017

How much of God's presence can one experience at a particular point in one’s life? Keating claims the purpose of a person’s lifetime is to have the time and space for the integration and the transformation of body, soul and spirit through experiencing more of God’s love and goodness.

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

Palmer’s book is a wondrously rich mix of reality and possibility, comfort and story, helpful counsel and poetry in the voice of a friend. It’s an honest wake-up chime, no matter where one is in their time line, because somehow, these pages hold all of time—past and present, stirring together—refreshing the spirit.

Intimacy with God by Thomas Keating (Crossroad); 1996

This book is filled with insight, practical advice and wisdom on the way that Centering Prayer can deepen one's intimacy with God. Centering Prayer is a movement of Divine Love designed to renew the Christian Contemplative tradition. It consists of consenting to the call of the Holy Spirit, and responding to God's presence and action within.

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

Pipher offers a timely examination of cultural and developmental issues women face as they transition from middle age to old age. In every life stage, women contend with ageism, misogyny and many types of loss. Yet, contrary to stereotypes, most older women are genuinely happy and filled with gratitude for the gifts of life.

Practices

Bible Study

Some Bible study guides are designed for older adults. See for *Example: Growing Older and Wiser by Dale and Sandy Larson; (InterVarsity Press); 2005*

Lectio Divina

Latin for Divine Reading. A traditional monastic practice of Scripture reading, meditation and prayer intended to increase communion with God and knowledge of God's Word. Here Scripture is not for studying, but a living word that speaks. The four steps of Lectio Divina are read, mediate, pray and contemplate.

Dwelling in the Word

A participatory bible study method that draws small groups of people into dialogue with the text and each other. Contact: *Church Innovations at churchinnovations.com* for more information.

Centering Prayer

A movement of Divine love designed to renew the Christian Contemplative tradition. It consists of consenting to the call of the Holy Spirit, and engaging God's presence and action within. (Thomas Keating)

Books on Faith

Read/discuss popular authors on faith, i.e., C.S. Lewis; Richard Rohr; Mother Teresa; Wendell Berry; Brian Maclaren, etc.

Biographies

Read/discuss books on the lives of people such as: Helen Keller; Abraham Lincoln; Ann Frank; Bill Gates; Ruth Bader Ginsburg; Eleanor Roosevelt; etc. Pay attention to the ways spirituality supports and guides their lives.

Life Skills Studies

Take the Strong-Campbell Interest Inventory; develop new skills in a field of one's strong interest; use the skills to serve others.

Journaling

Each day write *thoughts-feelings-actions* regarding faith in your daily life; return to these writings with some regularity to reflect on what one has written.

Life Review

Remembering, writing and reflecting on the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences and events of one's past and present looking for transitional and transformative events. Notice themes. Look for a story line. Investigate unanswered questions. Pray about discoveries. Act on what you learn.

Devotionals

Many, many organizations have short, daily inspirational material usually consisting of a Bible passage, commentary and prayer. Some online devotionals contain music and podcast presentations. In some congregations, older adults write devotional or the entire congregation.

Story Telling

Describe events, times, relationships, accomplishment, etc. by weaving them together paying full attention to detail, themes, human pathos.

Faith Story Videoing

Reminisce and recite and tape a person's faith journey across a lifetime. Archive the videos for multiple uses in a congregation's ministry. Give them as gift to children and grandchildren.

Writing One's "Autobiography"

Brainstorm, outline, research, reflect and write of the days of one's life. When, where, how and through whom does God show up? Ask: in what way am I God's hands in service of my "neighbor?"

Resources

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

Life review is a personal, self-evaluative form of reminiscence with intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions. The nature and quality of these dimensions change with age. Because the process and outcome of life review in the elderly varies, Molinari and Reichlin bring together and draw on a variety of fine researchers and practitioners to lay out its structure and capacities.

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

Exploring the many dimensions of life that come together in many stories and weave into the big story of life, this book facilitates aging creatively and meaningfully. It's a guide for anyone interested in recalling and writing the story of one's life.

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

This is a guide to applying spiritual principals in life. It is a wise alternative to the deluge of metaphysical commentary that is unhelpful to those who are trying to find meaning in this often challenging world and hope to become better people in the process.

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

A book of short meditations offering thoughts about ways to know, love, serve and enjoy God and one another in the last third of life. Because of the vast differences in the way people age, this book attempts to address the spiritual concerns of both hail and the frail, whatever their chronological age.

Contemplative Outreach.org

An organization founded to develop a web of people, resources and activities to support the centering prayer movement.

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

For Pennington, Lectio Divina is letting our Divine Friend speak to us through his inspired and inspiring word. This practice requires faith,

humility, openness and listening from within.

Center for Action and Contemplation

Seeks to empower individuals to live out their sacred soul tasks in service to the world through contemplative programs and resources:

Centering Prayer

A movement of Divine Love designed to renew the Christian Contemplative tradition. It consists of consenting to the call of the Holy Spirit, and consenting to God's presence and action within. (Thomas Keating)

Welcome Prayer

A method of consenting to God's presence and action in physical and emotional events and situations in daily life. The purpose of this prayer is to deepen our relationship with God through becoming aware of God's presence in the ordinary activities of our day. See "consent-on-the-go" at *Contemplative Outreach.org*

Jesus Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.

Prayer of Good Courage

God, you have called us to ventures where we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love is supporting us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Area Three
Sacred Space and Experience

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

Rohr engages the life of St. Francis of Assisi and identifies the true self. He presents a six session course that explores the richness of simplifying life, without taking a vow of poverty.

Into the Silent Land by Martin Laird (Oxford); 2006

This is a guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation. Martin Laird invites one to move away from places of distraction into a silent place where God is waiting. This book is a guide for those who desire to journey deeper into the silence of God.

Open Mind, Open Heart by Thomas Keating (Crossroad); 2006

This is a classic handbook that helps a practitioner establish the practice of centering prayer.

Practices

Quiet Time in "Sanctuaries"

Quiet time in safe and "holy" places (sites-buildings-nature-presence of gracious people, etc.) "usher" older adults into the presence of God. Develop a list of what older adults find generative.

Engaging Worship

Develop varied types of brief and longer services that are familiar to older adults. Much loved familiar music is especially important in these engaging services. Involve older adults in planning and leadership in regular worship service. Ask them to submit and lead in prayers. Utilize them in sermons through faith story videos or interviews.

Exploring Nature – Creation

Provide an "atlas" of quiet beautiful locations for sitting or hiking especially aligned with the seasons. Plan excursions to particular sites for time together in God's handiwork.

Relationships

Relationships are at the heart of faith at every season and area of life. Faith at its living core is a relationship with God. Faith is born in relationships. Faith is transmitted through relationships. Faith is strengthened through compassionate trusting relationships. Promoting "friendships with people of faith," developing "communities of faith" is the foundation and fountain of Christian faith and spirituality.

Meditation

A practice where an individual uses a technique i.e., mindfulness or focusing the mind on a particular thought, or activity to enhance attention and awareness of God and God's presence in one's life. It often generates a mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable sense of God's love for the meditator.

Prayer

Prayer is communicating with God. It builds our relationship with Him. Prayer may be individual or corporate. It may be conveyed through words, art or music. Prayers may also be done in silence and solitude. Christian prayers often take the form of thanksgiving, praise, petition, intercession, confession or lamentation.

Spirit-filled events

There are conferences and seminars that provide teaching and learning and empowerment by the Holy Spirit moving among and between those gathered. Attendees are usually invited to participate in times of conversation, teaching, prayer, music and worship. These events usually bring renewed spiritual energy to those who attend.

Concerts

Music, especially singing often carries a divine message and provides occasions for older adults to celebrate their love for Jesus and brings renewal. Concerts inspire; they teach; they carry God's love into the hearts of the listeners.

Life and Death Moments

The beginnings, milestones and endings of life are sacred moments. Develop meaningful marking and celebrating of life transitions; develop "patterns of rituals and support" for older adults' limitations and losses.

Resources

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

This book's message: "Ordinary happiness depends on happenstance. Joy is that extraordinary happiness that is independent of what happens to us. Good luck can make us happy, but it cannot give us lasting joy. The root of joy is gratefulness."

The Inner Voice of Love by Henri Nouwen (Image); 1999

This is Nouwen's secret journal from a time when he lost his self-esteem, energy to live and work, his sense of being loved and even his hope in God. Each entry in itself can spark a starting point for one's spiritual journey.

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

The basic condition to hearing the call of beauty and God is to respond in silence. If one's mind is full of noise, one cannot hear God's call to life and to love. Paraphrasing Hanh's sayings with Christian focus becomes a powerful form of meditation

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

Vietnamese Buddhist monk Hanh continues the ecumenical dialogue he began in his book *Living Buddha Living Christ*. Hanh tells us to bloom where we are and cultivate a mindfulness in our own religious tradition.

Area Four ***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

Retrieving the lost art of contemplative prayer as practiced in the 16th century monastic tradition, Hall provides 500 Scripture texts for prayer and contemplation.

Talking with God in Old Age: Meditations and Psalms by Missy Buchanan; (Perfect

Paperbacks) 2010

Buchanan address the worries, fears and frustrations that face older adults. She gives hope to older adults while encouraging them to maintain an open dialogue with God. Each reading provides a candid conversation with God along with related passages from the Psalms.

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

De Mello shares the treasures of St. Ignatius Loyola's classic text, *The Spiritual Exercises*, opening up the centuries-old text in his no-nonsense style. De Mello introduces the time-tested practices of Ignatian spirituality to help one find "God in all things."

Practices

Worship

Develop varied types of brief and longer services that are familiar and designed to engage older adults' interaction with God and each other. Much loved familiar music is especially important in these engaging services. Involve older adults in planning and leadership in regular worship service. Ask them to submit and lead in prayers. Utilize them in sermons through faith story videos or interviews.

Candle and Cross

Lighting a candle can be a call to spending time with God. It remind us that Christ is our light and he is with us even during our times of darkness. Christ will always light our way. The Cross is a visual reminder of what Christ Jesus has done for us. It symbolizes our spiritual journey: "take up your cross and follow me."

Personal and Corporate Prayer

Grow a rhythm of daily/weekly conversations with God guided by scripture (i.e. Psalms), shaped by one's faith and focused on the realities of daily life. Praying alone in one's own way is essential. Praying together as a small group in a "ministry of prayer" for each other, the congregation and the world is a critical ministry for older adults.

Hymn Singing

Most older adults who have been practicing Christians for a significant period of time have hymns and music of the faith that "feeds their spirits." They love hymn singing or these songs being sung to them or sung by the congregation.

Listening to Christian Music

One way to settle into one's sacred space for prayer or meditation is listening to music. Sometimes it is helpful to choose a hymn or song based on a scripture reading for the day. Older adults might be encouraged to put together their own music selections on their devices.

Spirituality Acted Out in a Faith Community

In community we act out our Christian love through daily living, loving and serving others. In community we gather at the communion table and are strengthened in our call to show Christ's compassion to others. We ask: How does a Christian community of older adults embody a life of Christ together. We might ask: Can we discover together how to best love one another? Serve one another? Have each other's back? Forgive one another? Be reconciled with one another? Mature in faith together? Might an older adult ministry explore these "callings"?

Spiritual Gifts

There are Spirit-given capacities found in the body of Christ for building up of ministry. Older adults can take a Spiritual Gifts Inventory to find their spiritual gifts. They might use the *Spiritual Gifts Assessment Tool- Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* written by Neal Boese and Patricia Haller. Once they have discovered each spiritual gift, they can work together to "fit" them into the congregation.

Holy Listening

Grandmothers and Grandfathers...and older adults everywhere can play an important part in soul-making with each other and especially with the generations after them. They can be spiritual individuals who have the time and the wisdom to wait patiently in out-of-the-way places of the spirit and quietly bring new things to birth in others.

Spiritual Direction

Spiritual Direction assists older adults to develop their relationship with God guided by a mature Christian who has been trained in discipleship. Holy Listening is at the core of spiritual direction. It is listening to one another and most attentively to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Spiritual directors/guides are available in all regions of the country.

Dwelling in the Word

A participatory bible study method that draws small groups of people into dialogue with the text and each other around matters of faith and the

realities of daily life. Contact: *Church Innovations at: churchinnovations.com*

Serving Others

The responsibilities and delights of serving others doesn't end at age 55 or 65 or 95; opportunities more than likely will change, but not go away. Older adult ministries can be agents in gathering and facilitating possible opportunities fitting older adults' capacity to serve i.e., giving food, clothing, disaster response funding, disability ministries, hospitals, and faith practice of advocacy. These are some examples of the many ways to serve others.

Blogging

Rich Bimler, an expert on humor and aging, has mastered a blend of wit and wisdom in his writing. In addition to spiritual insights, prayerfulness, and reflection, the reader can count on healthy doses of humor and irony in Rich's work. Go visit Rich at www.cph.org/m-129-rich-bimler.aspx or start your own blog. Older adults have the wisdom, the experience and curiosity that truly matters.

Faith and Life Conversations

Martin Luther asserted that the "mutual conversation and consolation of God's people" is a way to participate with a gracious God in "gracing" the world. So older adults in conversation and caring conversation and "God talk" participate not only with each other, but with the presence of God.

Pilgrimages

Many older adults have places of significant impact on their faith from their past or their understanding of the Biblical narrative. They speak of the inspiration of returning to their "sacred places." Individuals or groups of persons from a church may visit cathedrals or national memorial cemeteries or cemeteries of loved ones. Sometimes a visit to the church of their baptism or confirmation or to the "holy land" have powerful contributions to an older adult's faith.

Meditation

A practice where an individual uses a technique i.e., mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular thought or activity, to enhance attention and awareness of God and God's presence in one's life. It often generates a

mentally clear and emotionally calm and stable sense of God's love for the meditator.

Journaling

Each day write *thoughts-feelings-actions* regarding faith in your daily life; return with some regularity to reflect on what one has written.

Zoom Friends

Many seniors have found a new type of faith community where they can weekly meet and pray with friends in a safe way. It's a place for sharing joys, needs and sorrows. Zoom friends help to alleviate feelings of isolation. It a place of uniting with out needing transportation.

Good Friday Rock

This is a rock with a black cross on it. It helps one to remember that burdens can be left at the foot of the cross. This rock helps to remember the season of Lent, a period of repentance and forgiveness. It may symbolize giving oneself to God as one sings each week in Lent: "Take, oh, take me as I am; summon out what I shall be; set your seal upon my heart, and live in me."

Butterfly

The butterfly reminds one of God's new life. It symbolizes one's spiritual journey. Along the journey are times of waiting (like being in the safety of a cocoon). Waiting leads to transformation. From the cocoon comes a beautiful butterfly, a form of new life. This experience will happen over and over again on one's spiritual journey.

Practicing Gratitude & Wonder

God's gifts of the whole cosmos, each human life and salvation are glorious, free and full of wonder and promise. To remember, celebrate and give thanks is to participate in the reality and love of God and anticipate one's future with God forever.

Resources

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

Foster divides disciplines into three movements of the Spirit. The inward Disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting and study are ways for personal examination and change. The outward Disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission and service help prepare us to make the world a better place. The

Corporate Disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration brings us closer to one another and to God.

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

Jean Gill has written one of the most helpful books on the life of prayer. She offers descriptions of a wide variety of prayer forms that can be integrated into daily routines. She recognizes that a variety of personalities are nurtured by different styles of prayer and that one form may come easy for a period of time but run dry after a while.

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

Spiritual direction guides people in enriching their relationship with God. It provides simple examples for asking questions and giving support. Barry and Connelly layout the practices and goals of spiritual direction. This is a fine guide for a beginner.

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

Older adults have the time and the wisdom to wait patiently in out-of-the-way places of the spirit and quietly can bring new birth in others. Such can occur both in spiritual direction or as a practice taken up in congregation's ministry with older adults.

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

Lectio Divina is Latin for Divine Reading. It is a traditional monastic practice of Scripture reading, meditation and prayer intended to increase communion with God and to increase knowledge of God's word. Here, Scripture is not for studying, but a living word that speaks. The four steps of Lectio Divina are read, mediate, pray and contemplate.

For Pennington, Lectio Divina is letting our Divine Friend speak to us through his inspired and inspiring word. This practice requires faith, humility, openness and listening from within.

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

This book on meditation is descriptive and details different methods of meditation. It guides the reader to "make friends with our minds."

Center for Action and Contemplation www.centerforactionandcontemplation.org
www.hebronlutheran.org
A fine practical resource for meditation.

Contemplative Outreach www.contemplativeoutreach.org
A fine practical resource for meditation

Centering Prayer

A movement of Divine Love designed to renew the Christian Contemplative tradition. It consists of consenting to the call of the Holy Spirit and consenting to God's presence and action within. (Thomas Keating)

Area Five

Hope

Hope - older adults' trust in the promise of God's accompanying presence and their confidence in ongoing life with God forever are foundational for dealing with 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

Anne speaks of how when we are at our bleakest, we can rediscover hope and wisdom buried deep within and make life better. Lamott discusses her journey to finding hope while blending sobering truth and enlivening inspiration.

Life Gets Better: The Unexpected Pleasures of Growing Older by Wendy Lustbader; 2011

This book exemplifies the process of growing older and wiser. It lays out the manner in which certain benefits mature over time. Lustbader recognizes that life is complex with both uplifting and spirit crushing events, and wise and foolish choices. Older adults can reflect on their experiences and in dialog with others further enjoy their own lives and provide wisdom to their communities.

Joyfully Aging: A Christian's Guide by Rich Bimler (Concordia); 2019

This a piece written through lens of the Christian faith and incredible humor to help people — including the author himself — “celebrate the gift of aging.” The gospel lives here at its best in the plain words of a learned theologian who is at the same time a joyful comic. Welcome to hope.

Elders Rising – The Promise and Peril of Aging by Roland Martinson (Augsburg); 2018

Drawing on scripture, social science and personal interviews, Martinson identifies six assets that nurture quality of life for older adults. Ways in which these assets can be supported and strengthened by families and congregations provide promise and hope for older adults' quality of life in their futures.

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

Palmer's book is a wondrously rich mix of reality and possibility, comfort and story, helpful counsel and poetry, in the voice of a friend. It's an honest wake-up chime, no matter where one is in their time line, because somehow, these pages hold all of time—past and present, stirring together—refreshing the spirit.

Practices

Focused Bible Studies

Some Bible study guides are designed for older adults. See for example: *Growing Older and Wiser by Dale and Sandy Larson; (InterVarsity Press); 2005*

Choose passages on hope and God's promise i.e., Jesus resurrection, Lazarus resurrection, John 14, Psalm 103, etc.

Book Studies

Read/discuss popular authors on faith and hope i.e., C.S. Lewis; Richard Rohr; Mother Teresa; Wendell Berry; Brian Maclaren, etc. Read/discuss books on the lives of people mark by promise and hope such as: Helen Keller; Abraham Lincoln; Ann Frank; Bill Gates; Ruth Bader Ginsburg; Eleanor Roosevelt; etc. Pay attention to the ways God's promises and hope supports and guides their lives.

Life Stories

Remembering, writing and reflecting on the intrapersonal and interpersonal experiences of one's past and present, looking for places of God's promises and hope in transitional and transformative moments. Describe events, times, relationships, accomplishment, etc. by weaving them together paying full attention to detail and paying close attention to hope and God's promises.

Questions, Reflection and Discussion

As older adults travel the third season of life, losses, limitations, disappointments, depression and their impending death weigh heavily on their minds and spirits. There are times when seniors have doubts about God's love and goodness, even

God's existence, as experience days of severe pain and the end of their lives. To provide small group, two person and individual safe places to face and explore these quest honestly and directly strengthen older adult faith and quality of life.

Resources

The Unfolding of the Miracle by Julie Yip-Williams (Penguin Random House); 2020

This is a personal memoir about death and dying, along with triumph about life and living. Life can be unfair at times, even devastating. Mourning is allowed. Feel sorry for yourself. Don't let these feelings take over your life. Life is for living and there is much more living to do.

A Good Day: A Gift of Gratitude by David Steindl-Rast, Louie Schwartzberg, et. al.; 2013

This book stirs gratitude for the blessing of life and the everyday wonder and beauty of nature. It offers a transformative perspective on life.

When Things Fall Apart: Heart Advice for Difficult Times by Pema Chodron; 2016

Chodron helps readers to cope with the grim realities of modern life, including fear, despair, rage and the feeling that we are not in control of our lives. Through reflections on right mindfulness, Chodron orients readers and gives them language with which to shape their thinking about the ordinary and extraordinary traumas of modern life.

Your Legacy Matters – A Multi-Generational Guide for Writing Your Ethical Will by Rachael Freed; 2013

A guide to writing one's "ethical will" in which personal values, historical stories, learnings and blessings to succeeding generations.

This Faith and Spirituality Ministry Resources document is one section of ALOA's Older Adult Ministry Toolkit, currently in development. Find out more at aloaserves.org or aloa4u@gmail.com