



# EncourAGING and Equipping Congregations for Older Adult Ministry

*Intentional ministry by, with, and for adults in the second half of life*

March 2023

## Aging With Purpose

Throughout this issue, content by Dr. Mary Manz Simon focusses our attention on "super seniors" (those age 80 and above). These articles highlight how three individuals have defined these years as they age with purpose.

**"Senior seniors," or those age 80 and above, comprise one of the fastest growing demographics in the United States.** Three of ALOA's leaders fit into this category. Each shared a wealth of wisdom as revealed in the following interviews. But I laughed out loud when I received their responses. One responder addressed each question directly and succinctly; the second shared personal examples; the third introduced several new vocabulary words. What obvious diversity among three "Senior seniors!"

**Dr. Doris Hanson** was an early Regional Volunteer Associate for ALOA, then joined the Board in 2001 and served as President from 2003 thru 2006. Now a nonagenarian, Doris was overheard more than ten

years ago, musing, "I wonder what impact I could have during the next five years that could be my legacy." At 94, Doris continues to add to her legacy through the village movement in Florida.



**Octogenarians in the United States number more than 12 million.**

**Dr. Roland Martinson** joined the ALOA Board in 2019. He is the author of *Elders Rising: The Promise and Peril of Aging*, in which he brings together the "folk wisdom" of 53 women and men he interviewed across the country. Roland (Rollie) came away from those encounters having learned that congregations seemed to be the primary facilitators of older adult quality of life. He brings this passion to the mission and work of ALOA.

See page 2 for more

**ALO A's purpose:**  
*Equipping persons in the second half of life as disciples of Jesus Christ for their service to family, church, community and world.*

## Attitude is Important for Doris Hanson

### How often do you think about your age?

I really haven't given much thought to the subject. Life is just going on. I am aware I have quite a lot to do before I "leave". All during my years I have felt humbly proud to have reached this far—thanks to the G's — good luck, good genes, and God. At 94, I talk of having another 7 or 8 years but that may or may not be...

### What motivates you?

What motivates me to keep going is maintaining good health and a reasonably clear mind, plus finishing whatever I can. When either my health or mind go bad I want to be ready and not leave too big a mess behind.

### How have your goals changed through the years?

I don't do goals well, so I mostly look around and see things that need doing. If I can, I try to do them or else look for someone who can. "To whom much is given much is expected." Now I no longer feel I have to do everything. I don't have to bring something to the potluck.

### How has growing older matched your expectations about aging?

As much as I knew about aging I didn't think about it in personal terms. But we can't overemphasize the importance of good nutrition and exercise all through life and regular medical attention, i.e. vaccinations etc. Don't wait until late in life when things start wearing out. Maintaining good health is a habit that pays off.

### What advice can you share?

Travel while you can. Give things away, like money and collections. Plan for your body's

final disposition. Tell folks what you would like in the way of a service and then enjoy making new (younger) friends.



*Doris Hanson*

It is never too late to look for a church and pastor who will stand ready to accept you and be there, even if you have been unchurched for fifty years. An important role for pastors and congregations is to bring unconditional love and security to those of us facing what is honestly unknown.

### What do you look forward to?

One 95-year-old said she was not afraid to die because she had always enjoyed traveling to new places. Attitude is important for all.

## Relationships Matter More to Rollie Martinson

### At your current age, what do you see as your purpose in life?

I have two big, foundational purposes. The first, I aim to "grow down" well, i.e. to wisely tend my later years of aging. The second purpose is to live in such a way that those around me might have better lives.

### Do you look at people or situations differently now than you did at age 65?

I do look at both people and situations

# AGING WITH PURPOSE

differently. With an awareness of the shortness of my future and with a deeper sense of what truly matters, I consider almost everything from a more poignant, grateful, more meaningful perspective. Certain things and relationships matter more.

## **In what ways does setting goals change as you go through your eighties?**

My goals are shorter-termed and of greater valence.

They involve joining our children in accompanying and assisting our grandchildren in critical life decisions, financial matters and wonderful shared experiences. They involve the “shedding” of things rather than their accumulation. They sometimes have to do with shared conversations and decisions regarding end of life.

## **What needs of octogenarians can ALOA realistically help to meet**

ALOA is a trusted resource for individuals on a wide range of resources and issues on aging, especially on matters of faith.

## **What are churches missing?**

Congregations are made up of more older adults than any other generation. Become a spiritual well-spring and quality of life community for older adults.

Congregations can be “beloved communities” of friendship, support, recreation, care and service for those of us in our eighties. It’s also one of the few communities for us that are truly Inter-generational. At church, those



*Rollie Martinson*

in our eighties can rub shoulders, tell faith stories, and be surrogate grandparents and “elders.” The list of our needs that can be met is long: faith home; friendship; worship; Bible study; timely information on aging; care; and service opportunities.

## **What inspires you today?**

My family: Sherry, my wife of 59 years. Our children and their wives and their children. Our grandchildren inspire me greatly and often. The magnitude of the universe and nature which is God’s doing, our home. Good books and poetry. Looking back on my life with gratitude.

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Each year, generous donors support ALOA with Choice Dollars® that we use to positively impact ministry for older adults.

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# REWIREMENT: REFOCUSED LIVING

Older Americans are working longer. This trend to extend the years of employment has resulted in a new descriptor for this population category, "yold" or the "young-olds." Some "yolds" retire, but then begin working again. After all, research shows the expanded work life boosts mental, physical, social and financial fitness.



Ken Holdorf

**Pastor Ken Holdorf** fits into this category. He retired from full-time pastoral ministry before serving as Director of Senior Adult Ministry at Prince of Peace, Carrollton, TX, a part-time position he has held for the past 21 years. He also served on the ALOA Board of Directors from 2014 through 2021.

We asked Ken about post-retirement work.

## 1. At what age did you intend to retire?

I planned to retire at age 62. After serving Trinity, San Angelo, TX, for 20 years, it

was a good time to move on, for me and for the congregation. Prince of Peace, Carrollton, Texas, was ready to put me to work on a part time basis as director of senior adult ministry. I was asked to do more, though, so serving in adult education and as school chaplain almost made the position full time. I still worked part time at Lowes and spent time with my woodworking hobby. I do not plan to retire because God has a plan and a purpose for me as long as I have breath here on earth.

## 2. Is "encore career" an accurate term to describe a job after retirement?

My retirement could be called an "encore career," as I was still doing pretty much what I was doing before retirement. However, I would be careful using the term "encore career." Many people retire and begin work that is entirely new. I would prefer the word "rewirement" or "refocusing living."

## 3. What keeps you going?

In my 80's, my energy level has begun to change, but God has continued to give me opportunities to grow. He supplies the energy to continue tasks and projects. Woodworking allows me to be active while using less energy.

## 4. What would you suggest to a retired person who considers returning to the work force?

Every person will have a different situation. Talk to others who have retired or who are in the process. Talk openly with a spouse, family member, previous co-worker or friend. Keep an open mind to God's leading. He wants you to live with a feeling of value and significance. God may guide you into a situation that you never thought about or thought would or could happen. The book, *Shaping a Life of Significance for Retirement* written by R. Jack Hansen and Jerry P. Haas has been helpful to me and others.

## 5. How can a congregation help?

- Offer special support for anyone deciding when to retire or what to do after retirement. Congregations could provide an annual conference, "Before and After Retirement."

# Diversity Within the Demographic

Glancing at the input of all three "Super Seniors" in this issue is a vivid reminder that cross-generational thinking is alive and well within ALOA's target population.



That fact is also true among the older adults in your

congregation. Those who are 80 years old experienced the Vietnam War, the Recession of 2008, 911 and the recent pandemic differently than those who are 90. Researchers indicate that cross generational teams outperform single generations. The different insights Boomers and octogenarians took away from living through the same events can help us all navigate today's unpredictable times.

Maximize the experiences and wisdom across generations at your church by answering these questions:

**1** Could reverse mentoring, when younger mentor older, make a positive difference in specific ministries?

**2** How effectively do current activities and programs meet the needs of younger and older people within the "senior" demographic?

**3** In what ways can you identify and capitalize on the generationally related strengths of those aged 65-85 and above?

**4** When compiling a list of candidates for church offices, how is age used to build high-performing teams?

**5** What organizational practices at the congregational level tap into the varied strengths of older adult generations?

Building on the diversity reflected within the "senior" demographic can add depth to older adult ministry, strengthen other church initiatives and enrich individual lives. And when you read about the ALOA "senior seniors" in these pages, ask yourself, **"How can our congregation capitalize on this type of elder wisdom through intergenerational connections?"**

## Support ALOA

Every donation helps support and further older adult ministry in our congregations. Use the enclosed envelope or go to the blue [Donate Now](#) button on our website.

*Rewirement.... from page 4*

- Treat retirement as an important milestone. Help older adults celebrate what can take place after retirement by going back to work, finding a different joy or volunteer. Develop small groups of retirees for fun and fellowship.
- Keep track of all retirees to make sure that "no one lives alone." Every congregation can incorporate a ministry of Faith Stories for people of all ages. Encourage senior adults to share their stories of how God has blessed them over the years and how God has seen them through difficult and hard times. Everybody has faith stories to tell.

ALOA has information and resources to help congregations to make good use of anyone who is identified as "retired." God still has a job for you.

# TRAVEL IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF PAUL

## Greece & Footsteps of Paul Tour

September 18 – 28, 2023

Walk in the footsteps of the apostle Paul on a 10-day tour of Greece that includes a 3-day cruise of the Greek Isles.



On this all-inclusive guided trip, you'll experience the sites of early Christianity while you enjoy first class hotels and luxury cruise ship accommodations.

Visit historic sites in Athens, Thessaloniki, Philippi, Ephesus, Patmos, Crete, Santorini, Delphi and more in the hands of highly experienced tour directors. The ALOA travel group will be led by George Algozzina.

Tour package includes:

- Round-trip transatlantic airfare on regularly scheduled flights
- First-class accommodations
- Deluxe motor coaches
- 3-day Greek Isles cruise
- Breakfast and dinner meals
- Taxes, gratuities, entrance fees, ground transportation & baggage handling



**Cost: \$4,627.00** per person/double occupancy from Tampa. Additional departure cities on request. Information, video and registration under **Events** on our website, or at [aloaserves.org/greece-tour-footsteps-of-paul/](http://aloaserves.org/greece-tour-footsteps-of-paul/)

**Questions?** Call 800-930-2562 or email George Algozzina at [george@aloaserves.org](mailto:george@aloaserves.org)

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## Ironwood Springs Lutherhostel

October 2-6, 2023

Stewartville, Minnesota

Join us for a week of learning, worship, outdoor activities and fellowship at Ironwood Springs Christian Ranch.

This year we welcome Drs. Mark & Rhoda Schuler to present ***The Stones Cry Out: Archaeology and Spirituality in the Holy Land.*** Hear their insights, as they will have just returned from spending 3 months in Israel. The Schulers recently retired from full-time teaching at Concordia, St. Paul.

Pastor Frank and Deaconess Jan Janzow will explore ***Faith Stories*** as they lead devotions and music. The Janzows served in Waukesha, Wis. for 37 years.

Each day will include topics of local interest and optional outdoor activities. Try the zip line or the cornhole tournament, hiking and more. Lodging is in comfortable hotel-style rooms in the camp's Miracle Lodge.



**Cost:** \$660 per person/dbl occupancy includes program, lodging and meals.

Limited single occupancy option at \$710/per person. Camper and commuter registration available; check our website for further details.

For information or to register, go to: [aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/](https://aloaserves.org/events/ironwood-springs-lutherhostel/)

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