

Senior Moments

Celebrating the Gifts of Mature Christians

Winter 2022

Our Hearts Are Light

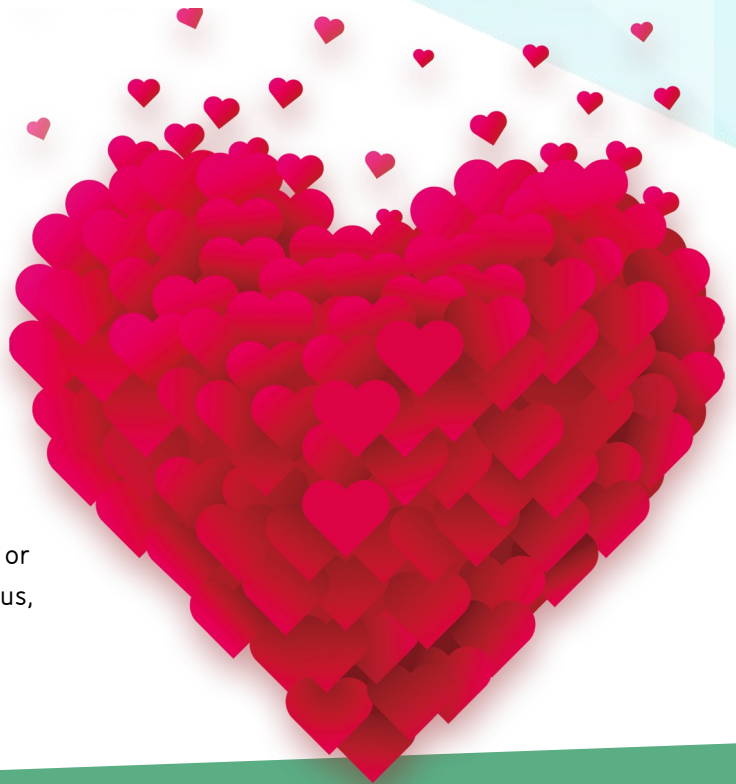
By Rev. Cliff Winter

Do you have a heavy heart? You know what makes it heavy: long sadness for a loved one's death, diagnosis of a health problem, expensive house repairs, memory loss, Alzheimers, fender bender, grandchild gone astray, ...and you can probably add to the list of woes that weigh on the heart.

Lightheartedness is preferable, but with advancing years, that lightness may be more elusive or infrequent. We particularly admire those who are gifted with a jovial spirit and positive outlook, though we know they deal with the same challenges as ours. Good cheer, joy, and gladness are God's gifts to the Christian.

Popular advice says surround yourself with optimistic people; avoid the naysayers. Not a bad idea, but it misses the call to serve the downhearted. The sad and lonely need God's comfort and blessing through our words and presence. And the overly positive vibes that some exude make us wonder, "What is he on?" or "Is she always like that?," or "Is that genuine?" (Forgive us, Lord, for being judgmental and negative.)

(Continued on page 4)



Work of the Older Adult Committee

*By Tom Perry, Kansas District Older Adult Ministry Committee Chairman
and Senior Ministry Leader of Trinity Lutheran Church*

The Christmas decorations are down, the new year has begun, and the time has come to get back to work. Work, that is, on trying to fulfill our calling as God's children, by spreading the Gospel message. We as older adults are perfectly positioned to enhance the church through our service.

(Continued on page 3)

A NEW BEGINNING for Older Adult Ministry

By Clifford Winter

New beginnings are at the heart of the Christian life.

We come forth new each day in Christ's grace because of baptism. We are renewed by an atmosphere of forgiveness and acceptance among God's people in worship, family, and fellowship. And while we older adults experience diminishment and loss on various levels, we also experience new opportunities, new relationships, and new promptings of the Holy Spirit. A new calendar year brings opportunities for assessment of our congregation's "health" regarding ministry to, for, and with older adults.

A new Wichita resident told me of the welcoming friendliness of one of our area congregations. That congregation has several senior women who, without fail, welcome everyone to worship. They may be listed as formal greeters or not. Point is that they serve everyone by their presence, smile, and kindness.

The pandemic has been a limiting curse for everyone. Yet God's Word and promises continue true. Our Lord is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." The darker the path, the brighter and more useful is that Word which is a "lamp unto my feet and a light for my path" (Ps. 119:105).

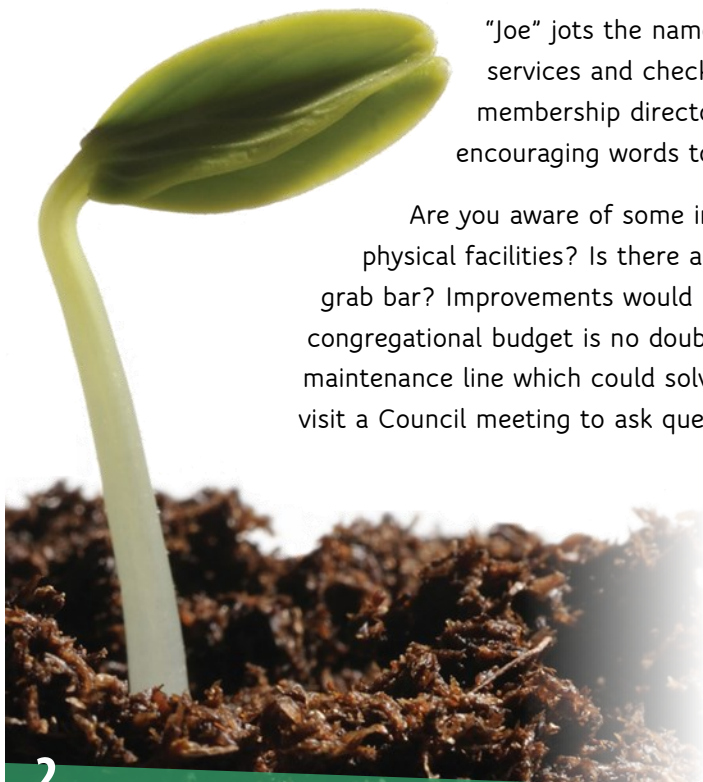
Amidst a long list of personal sadness and tragedy, a friend spoke of her visit to her pastor. "People told me to go see him so I went but didn't expect much. He mostly listened for that hour. Later I realized that his listening allowed me to get a lot off my chest. And the rest of that day I held onto a small cross to remind me of God's protection."

While some of us are less mobile or even homebound, we can still serve in vital ways.

"Joe" jots the names of those he heard in the prayers in the live-streamed Sunday services and checks the congregation's newsletter for needy individuals. Using the membership directory, he addresses envelopes and sends relevant CareNotes and encouraging words to several people each week.

Are you aware of some inaccessible, inconvenient, or dangerous aspects of your church's physical facilities? Is there a trip hazard threshold, poorly lit hallway, or need for a railing or grab bar? Improvements would bless more than just the older adults! Although the 2022 congregational budget is no doubt set, there may be some "wiggle room" in the properties or maintenance line which could solve a problem or two. Why not speak to the Properties Chair or visit a Council meeting to ask questions and make suggestions?

Just as God blessed us with a new calendar year, so we now have fresh opportunities to serve God and his people in many ways. . . especially also to, with, and for older adults.



Work of the Older Adult Committee

(Continued from page 1)

Many of us have been lifelong believers, are experienced in church work, have influence over children and grandchildren, have available time for volunteering, and often have resources readily available. Over half of the members in the Lutheran Church are over 60 years old. We need to work with our gifted pastors to help support the mission of the church into the next generation. With the tidal wave of older adults retiring, the time has never been better.

Urging and encouraging enhanced Older Adult Ministry in our congregations is the mission of the Kansas District Older Adult Committee. This issue of our newsletter marks the fourth of the quarterly letters made available to Kansas congregations. During this past year in addition to articles from the committee, we have enjoyed articles from national synodical representatives Dr. Rich Bimler and Dr. Robert Zagore, Executive Director of the Office of National Mission, LCMS. We have had insights from Kansas President Justin Panzer and Jim Bradshaw, Assistant to the President. We have had viewpoints from Rev. Mark Schulz, Pastor of Trinity in Mission/Shawnee, a pastor of a larger congregation. Rev. Dennis Fangmeyer of Trinity in Medicine Lodge and St. Johns in Nashville, Kansas, has shared many of the needs of the smaller congregations. Retired Pastor Cliff Winter has given us insight drawn from his many years of service. We have tried to give you suggestions and resources to enhance your congregation's Older Adult Ministry and ways of starting a new ministry if your congregation does not currently have one.

Funding has been secured for another year for the Older Adult newsletter. We want to make this publication one that you will read and use as a resource. Please email suggestions and ideas which will be helpful to you. You can email them to Tom@tlcms.org.

The committee is excited about two new events being added to the 2022 Calendar. In addition to the resumption of the Saints Alive After 55 event, an event has been added in May in the Kansas City area, and later in August in Hays. (See "2022 Events" on page 7.) We plan to have an informative presence at the Kansas District Convention in June. We are also actively looking for "connectors" from each congregation to help spread the word to and keep their individual congregations updated.

The year 2022 will be a pivotal year in establishing a strong ministry utilizing the gifts and talents of older adults. Please be a part of this call to service and encourage your congregation to get heavily involved.



Our Hearts Are Light (continued from page 1)



A November 2021 group tour of Egypt which my wife and I hosted led me to study religious beliefs of the ancient Egyptians. I learned about the “Weighing of the Heart.” This belief, recorded in the Book of the Dead, has nothing to do with whether one is lightheartedly happy or downheartedly sad in life.

For those rulers and rich who could afford the 70-day mummification process, the heart of the deceased was left in the body. The belief was that after death a person’s heart would then be weighed on a scale before Osiris, god of the dead and the afterlife, and 42 deities.

This “Weighing of the Heart” judged a person’s behavior. The deceased was interrogated about a long list of offences ranging from raising the voice to stealing. If innocent, the person’s heart was lightweight, without infractions. These dead were then allowed to enter the afterlife.

If the heart of a dead Egyptian tipped the scale down due to the weight of wrongdoings, the heart would be gobbled by Ammit, a terrifying composite beast: part crocodile, part lion, part hippo.

The incentive for good living which produces a lightweight heart is clear. Avoid Ammit!



In contrast, we Christians are truly “light of heart.” It is not that we are free of offenses when measured against God’s Holy Law, the Commandments. We are heavy with guilt, sinning daily, and “indeed deserving nothing but punishment,” worthy only of consignment to hell.

However, and this “however” makes all the difference between Christianity and Egyptian beliefs as well as between all other religions: in the Great Transfer of our offences to the head, heart, and body of Jesus on the cross, our hearts are lightened. All sinful weights are lifted. Sin’s burden is gone.

Jesus became sin for us who did not even fully recognize the sin in us. That means his heart became “heavy,” as it were, with all our wrongs. Our hearts are thus made light as a feather.

God has not only created a pure and clean heart within us, to borrow David’s words in Psalm 51:10, but he has created a “light” heart as well.

That’s why you can do what Luther suggests after you say your morning prayers: “Then go joyfully to your work, singing a hymn...” You are, after all, light of heart.

Older Adult Ministry Symposium

*By Tom Perry, Kansas District Older Adult Ministry Committee
Chairman
and Senior Ministry Leader of Trinity Lutheran Church*



We are excited to announce that Trinity Lutheran of Mission/Shawnee will host an Older Adult Ministry Symposium on Saturday May 14. This event was originally to be given in May of 2020, but because of the pandemic, it was postponed. We are happy to report that the speakers slated for the original are set to speak this May.

Popular author and older adult proponent Dr. Richard Bimler will speak, giving us insight into what is happening across the country. The work of our universities in the area of gerontology reflects the rapid rise of seniors in our churches and communities.

Jim Bradshaw, Special Assistant to the President for the Kansas District will talk about working to enhance Older Adult Ministry in our local congregations.

We will follow these talks with a discussion time including both men and led by Tom Perry, Trinity's Senior Ministry Leader. A boxed lunch will be provided, and we will enjoy it while participating in an easy service project. Information and registration forms will be available in early February. Both church workers and lay people are welcome to attend. Come listen to these dynamic speakers and be a part of a growing ministry.



The senior-citizen population is growing three times faster than the rest of the American population.



According to the Census Bureau, the elderly population will double by the year 2050.



By 2050, 1 in 5 will be over the age of 65.

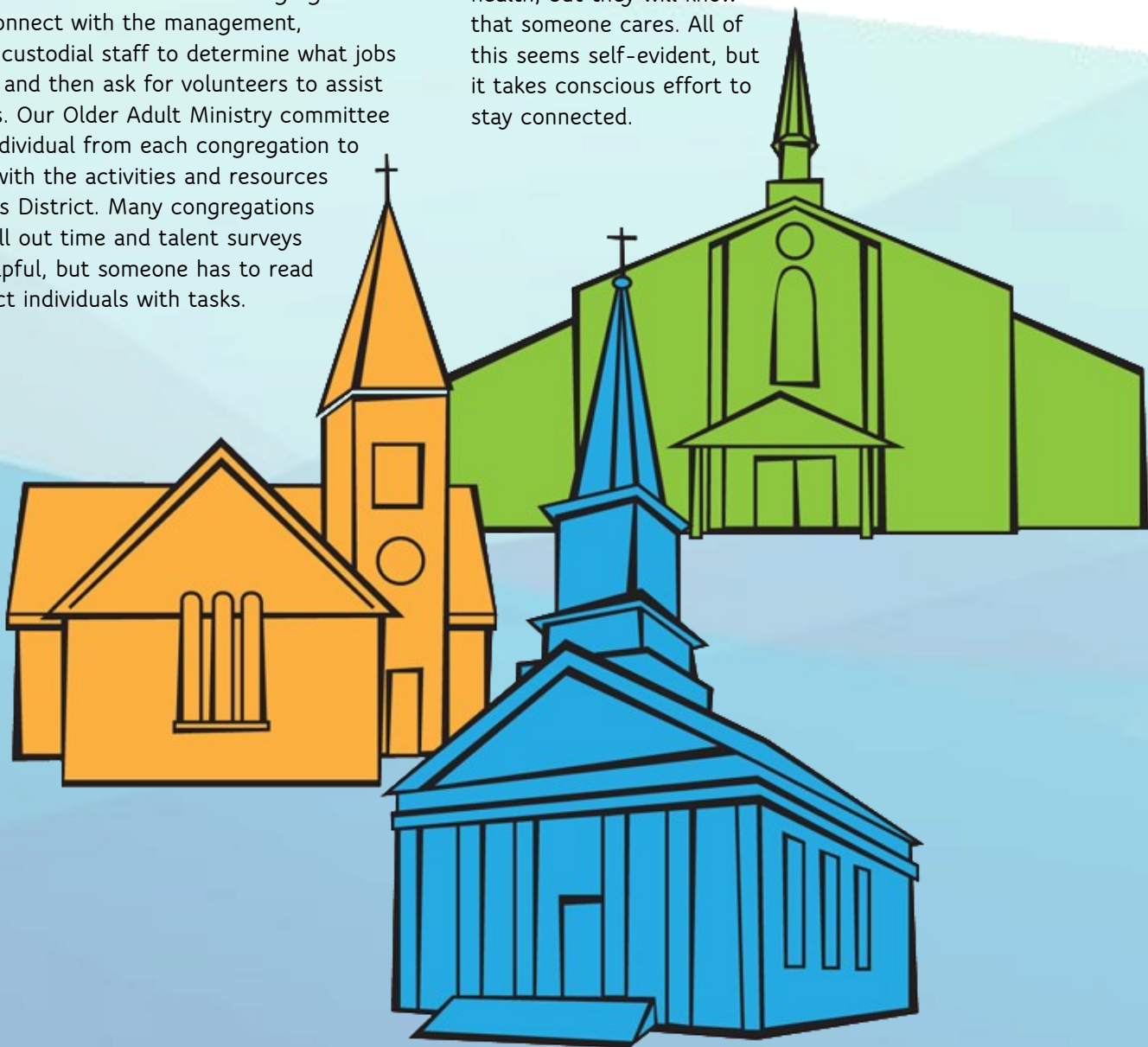
**Group registrations
are encouraged!**

Caring for Each Other in Larger Congregations

By Betty Amey, Older Adult Committee Member and Retired Lutheran Educator

Older Adult Ministry in larger congregations can be a challenge as it is easy for individuals to get lost in a crowd. Our pastors have a large number of sheep in the fold. Many of our working and retired seniors have gifts to offer, volunteer willingly, and are a tremendous blessing to the congregation as a whole. Their talents, wisdom and energy are valuable assets to ministry. Pastors and lay leaders should not hesitate to help members find their niche within the congregation family. One older adult could ask for volunteers to each connect with a different shut-in of the congregation. Another could connect with the management, maintenance, or custodial staff to determine what jobs need to be done and then ask for volunteers to assist with the projects. Our Older Adult Ministry committee is seeking one individual from each congregation to stay connected with the activities and resources within the Kansas District. Many congregations have members fill out time and talent surveys which can be helpful, but someone has to read them and connect individuals with tasks.

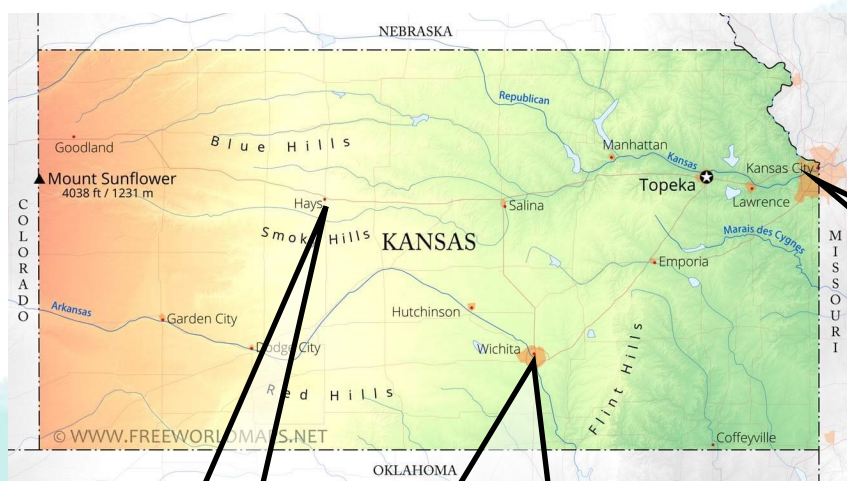
How do we keep individuals who are failing in health and energy from just slowly fading into the background? This seems to be especially difficult during this time of Covid. Some do not want to bother anyone with their troubles. For those members, someone must reach out to them. If we are not seeing a member in the pews for a week or two, we each can take the responsibility to call that individual and tell them they have been missed. That alone will open up a conversation. Maybe they have just been traveling or are protecting their health, but they will know that someone cares. All of this seems self-evident, but it takes conscious effort to stay connected.



2022 Events - Saints Alive after 55

By Barb Geuy, Older Adult Ministry Committee Member and Chair of Saints Alive After 55

New Year's Greetings and Blessings to all of you in the Kansas District! I am pleased to announce that we have three different gatherings on the calendar for 2022, all of them in different areas of the state.



August in Hays

Finally, our third gathering will take place in Hays on August 13-14 at Messiah Lutheran Church. Rev. Dr. Rocco Mallardi of Hays and Rev. Michael Schmidt of Natoma will be in charge. Plans are still being made for this get-together, so more information will be coming as soon as the schedule is set.

July in Wichita

Next, after a two-year hiatus, our Saints Alive After 55 event will again be held at the Spiritual Life Center in Wichita on July 18-19. We have shortened the event by one evening to make it a bit more cost effective. Our guest speaker will be Mark Schoepp, former Executive Director of ALOA/Adult Lutherans Organized for Action. Bible study leader will be Rev. Dan Myers, Associate Pastor, Holy Cross, Wichita. The theme for the event is "Rejoice Always" I Thess. 5:16-24. We will certainly rejoice with our speakers, interest sessions, music, games, food, and fellowship.

May in Mission

There is a Symposium scheduled for May 14, 2022, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 5601 W. 62nd Mission, Kansas, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Speakers will be Dr. Rich Bimler, Ambassador of Health, Hope, and Aging, and Jim Bradshaw, Assistant to the President for Education and Youth, KS District of the LCMS. The schedule includes both speakers, discussion on creating and enhancing Older Adult Ministry, lunch, and a service project. Registration forms will be ready in early February.

We hope that by adding two more events for our Saints Alive after 55, many more Kansas Lutherans will be blessed by these gatherings. See you in Mission, Wichita, and Hays!



Older Adult Ministry Resources

The following is a small list of resources that may be helpful when building an enhanced older adult ministry. As the year progresses, we will add more to the list. If you have recommendations or needs, please feel free to contact us.

ALOA

aloaserves.org

Adult Lutherans Organized for Action is a national Lutheran older adult organization with helpful resources.

Kansas District Website

kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry

This is a webpage on the Kansas District website.

Older Adult Task Force Comprehensive Report

Find it at: kslcms.org/caring-ministry/older-adult-ministry

Tom Perry

Tom@TLCMS.org

Contact me with any questions, suggestions, or helpful tips.

What Is a Connector?

Our Kansas District Older Adult Ministry Committee is seeking a lay person from each congregation:

1) to advocate for older adult activities in their own congregation, 2) to receive and distribute this newsletter in their congregation, and 3) to publicize the annual Saints Alive gatherings.

We call these important people "Connectors." Their "connections" with their congregation's seniors, pastors, church staff, and with the District's gatherings and communications will glorify God as fellowship, service, and education for and by seniors flourish.

Tell your pastor you'll serve as a "Connector." Then inform Pastor Cliff Winter of your commitment at cliffwinter@yahoo.com.

**Send name and email address of
Congregation Connector to
CliffWinter@yahoo.com.**

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