



# Ministry on Aging Work Group Newsletter

Providing resources and information for ministry by and  
to senior adults.

Volume III

Issue 2

May 2009

The Ministry on Aging work group seeks to serve in response to God's love in Christ Jesus, acting as a bridge to the congregation of this Synod in advocating dignity and justice for senior citizens.

\*\*\*\*\*

- Pastor Barbara Wills, Chair.
- Connie Johnson, Board of Ministry in Mission liaison
- Pastor Bill Straka
- Pastor Harriet Danielson
- AIM Peg Torrin
- Dorothy Juhl Zelle.
- Judy Stone
- Sonnee Steveson

\*\*\*\*\*

- Lynn Peters, Associate Professor of Social Work Wartburg College Resource Consultant

## "Visiting Elders" Heard by Bill Straka:

"You ask me to talk about important events in my faith life? Really!? I'm a little surprised you'd ask, since I've been in this congregation for almost 70 years and you're the first one to ask me that question . . . But you know, it is a good one, and now that I think about it, I'll try to talk a little bit.

I guess my earliest memories are of how long the worship took and not wanting to go -but my parents made me. And not only worship and Sunday School but I had to be in the Christmas Program. I must have been 4 or 5 because their part in it was reciting The Christmas story from the bible. One stands out in my memory any way because while doing our part in a full, dimly lighted church the whole place suddenly grew super bright and I felt quite warm and different.

I don't remember talking to anyone about this at the time but when I got to be 8, or so, I started to notice I saw things differently and felt differently. I still complained about having to go to church, but at other times realized that I was more motivated to pay attention to what was going on in church. While that felt good, I also realized that those who disrupted and who complained about having to go to church caused me to wonder why, sometimes even to feel some anger toward them. While this was confusing and perplexing, it was helpful many times to be able to think about Holy Communion through this time too, remembering Jesus is Really Present.

You know...the most important time--that special brightness and being warmed at age 4 or so -well that hit me again, 50 years later. I was injured pretty bad a few years ago, so bad that when I landed on my back I experienced light 10, 20 times greater than earlier in church and pain from my knees to my neck like my body exploded with hurt way beyond what I thought I would ever experience or could ever endure.

The first night in the hospital when no movement and maneuvering would lessen it plus fears I couldn't endure and anger. I found myself muttering, "Didn't Jesus promise He'd be present when I needed him the most?" And, thankfully, not long after that, I found myself muttering, "Come Lord Jesus be my guest." I still find myself muttering that more and more.

## Old Pictures

Scanning old pictures into my hard drive—  
Vignettes from the past again come alive!

Mother and Johnny—he must have been one,  
Long before my time, he was the first son.

Then Dad in his uniform, home from the war,  
With Johnny beside him, almost, not quite, four.

Then little Barbara—that's me in a buggy,  
White high tops, bonnet and smile—oh so  
"huggy"!

Bobby is next, bright eyes and a curl,  
He was the youngest—all boy, not a girl!

So many memories come to my mind  
As I relive the past—a journey through time.

Now Mother and Dad and Johnny are gone,  
But though they aren't here, with Christ they live  
on.

*Barbara Wills*

*February 28, 2009*

If you have faith stories to share, original poetry or information for the Ministry on Aging Work Group newsletter please contact the newsletter editor, Peg Torrin at:

[ptorrin@hotmail.com](mailto:ptorrin@hotmail.com)

or

2280 250<sup>th</sup> St., Denver, IA 50622

## Book Review

***Compassionate Caregiving: Practical Help and Spiritual Encouragement*** (Lois D. Knutson, MDiv, Bethany House Publishers, 2007).

Reviewed by: Lynn Peters, Associate Professor of Social Work, Wartburg College

According to the *National Family Caregiver Alliance*, 34 million Americans – 16% of our population – are currently providing some type of informal care to an older family member. Most are middle age (35-64) and a significant number are retired, themselves. While family caregiving can be richly rewarding, it can also be fraught with stress, especially for those who are juggling multiple commitments and responsibilities.

Rev. Lois Knutson, currently on the pastoral care staff at the *Bartels Lutheran Retirement Community* in Waverly, has published a book that provides personal comfort and a wealth of practical information for family caregivers. It is a comprehensive resource, with guides for providing hands-on care, communicating effectively with health care professionals, managing family relationships, and selecting an appropriate care facility. Best of all, Knutson recognizes the tremendous stress that can accompany family caregiving and explains how “taking care of the caregiver” is an essential consideration. Emphasizing family caregiving as an important spiritual calling, her book contains many scriptural references and words of encouragement that give guidance and support to those in need.

Pastor Knutson will be presenting a workshop on spiritually-based family caregiving at this year’s Synod Assembly, planned for June 5-7 at Luther College in Decorah.

## Five Wishes

*Five Wishes* is a document designed to help you communicate how you want to be treated if you are seriously ill and unable to speak. This document, which is valid in 40 states—including Iowa is unique. It looks not only at medical needs, but also personal, emotional and spiritual. For more information about *Five Wishes* and the Aging with Dignity organization go to [www.fivewishes.org](http://www.fivewishes.org) or call 1-888-594-7437. Individual copies of *Five Wishes* are \$5 each. Information about a family package is available on the website.

## New from the Ministry on Aging Work Group

Did you know we have our own website—thanks to Barb Wills and Wartburg College? The site includes information useful for those working with senior adults, useful links to other sites and an online version of the Ministry on Aging Work Group newsletter. To access the site go to [www.flcnorthwood.org](http://www.flcnorthwood.org) . Follow the senior adults link.

## Coming Soon

Some of you have already used our first power point presentation designed to give an overview of the some of the issues involving senior adults. We are currently working on a second power point “End of Life” decisions.

## Newest Member

At our February meeting we met the newest member of the Ministry on Aging Work Group. Connie Johnson is the Board of Ministry and Mission representative for our group. Connie is a teacher and lives in Cedar Falls.