

Task Force on Older Adult Ministries

Membership

Ms. Missy Morain, <i>Co-convenor</i>	Los Angeles, VIII
Ms. Jeri Sedlar, <i>Co-convenor</i>	New York, II
The Rev. John Belzer	Oklahoma, VII
Dr. Alma Belzer	Oklahoma, VII
Ms. Betsy Bowman, <i>deceased 5/2011</i>	Washington, III
Ms. Christy Campbell	The Church Pension Fund
The Rev. Robert Carlson	Maryland, III
The Rev. Pat Coller	The Church Pension Fund
Ms. Ruth-Ann Collins	The Episcopal Church Center
Ms. Claire Cowden, <i>until 8/2010</i>	Northwest Texas, VII
Mr. Matt Ellis	Indianapolis, V
Dr. Kenneth Forde, <i>as of 10/2010</i>	New York, II
The Rev. Warren Frelund	Wyoming, VI
Dr. Jim Gambone, <i>until 8/2010</i>	The ReFirement Group
The Rev. Bud Holland	Pennsylvania, III
Dr. Melody Marshall	Florida, IV
Ms. Vycke McEwen, <i>EC Liaison</i>	Oklahoma, VII
Dr. Ruth Mitman	Connecticut, I
Mr. Rick Miners, <i>until 8/2010</i>	New York, II
Dr. Gary Stewart	Lexington, IV
Dr. Pamela Teaster, <i>as of 6/2011</i>	Lexington, IV
Ms. Ann Thompson, <i>until 8/2010</i>	Florida, IV
Ms. Rose Samuels, <i>deceased 10/2011</i>	Long Island, II
Ms. Christina VonBank, <i>until 10/2010</i>	ELCA Board of Pensions

Representatives of the Commission at General Convention: Ms. Missy Morain is authorized to receive non-substantive amendments to this report.

Summary of Work

The Task Force on Older Adult Ministries convened for the first time during the 2010-2012 triennium by an act of the 76th General Convention. The Task Force evolved from the Task Force on Senior Ministries formed in 2003, which was a ministry of The Office for Ministry Development. The Task Force on Older Adult Ministries is mandated to determine programs currently being offered by congregations, dioceses and provinces, to establish a method of sharing this information, and to explore ways the church can connect with each other in intergenerational opportunities. The Task Force is also directed to create a comprehensive plan to raise awareness of issues related to older adults.

The Task Force met in March, June and October of 2010; in February and August of 2011; and in March of 2012. All meetings were held in New York, NY. The Church Pension Group provided support to the Task Force through staff assigned to support the group, provision of meeting space and covering transportation expenses for the Task Force to meet through the triennium.

A Promise Made: we are charged with identifying programs *by, with, and for older adults* currently offered by congregations, and establishing a method of sharing this information with churches that want to explore or expand this ministry. The emerging aging of the baby boom generation and the longevity revolution identified the need for clergy, lay leaders and congregations to expand their vision of the value and challenges of older adults. To meet these goals, the task force developed an online survey, requesting that the Diocesan Bishops, and Provincial Coordinators, including those in Province IX, endorse the distribution of the survey within each congregation. Fifty innovative older adult or inter-generational ministry programs emerged from the 330 completed questionnaires, and were targeted for further exploration by individual task force members.

Simultaneously, the Task Force completed an analysis of on-line denominational and private, public and non-profit resources on aging issues relevant to raising awareness and informing leaders and congregations. Results included a vetted list of general and specific online links on aspects of aging and spirituality plus a targeted bibliography of resources.

To increase awareness of the task force and its work and to gain information about Older Adult Ministries:

- A press release announcing the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries was issued in March 2011
- Recognition of the national celebration of Older Americans Month was publicized in Bulletin Inserts of May 8, 2011
- Test pilots to recognize Older Adult Month (May 2011) were conducted in the Dioceses of Washington and Lexington
- The Task Force was represented at the Province VII Older Adult Ministry Conference, Abundant Living Conference, Kanuga's Christian Formation Conference, Everyone, Everywhere, Building the Continuum...The Episcopal Church Summit on Camps, Retreats and Faith Formation and meetings of Chaplains to the Retired Clergy
- The Task Force met with representatives from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America as well as with the Rev. Dr. Richard Gentzler, the director of the Center on Aging and Older-Adult Ministries for the General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church to gain an ecumenical vision on aging in the church
- The Task Force met with representatives from The Standing Commission on Lifelong Christian Formation, The Standing Commission on Health, The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations, and the Episcopal Church Office of Diversity, Social and Environmental Ministries

The Task Force recognized the need to provide clergy and lay leaders with a motivational and action-oriented Resource Guide to inspire them to include older adults in all congregational ministries. A diverse online Guide, grounded in lifelong Christian formation, will be introduced in May 2012 to coordinate with Older Americans Month. The Guide will include practical, accessible current congregational program information plus essays from church leaders from all orders of the ministry, and an elder-friendly church checklist to assist parishes in assessing their own intergenerational appeal.

A brochure including key aspects of the Guide, which is found on The Episcopal Church website, listed under Older Adult Ministries, which is a part of the Formation Cluster, will be available at General Convention.

The Task Force was also charged with formulating a comprehensive plan *to raise awareness and address the emerging crisis in health, care giving and faith issues which cross generational and economic borders*. In response to this charge, the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries determined that one strategy for fulfilling these objectives was by increasing the awareness of, and need for, education on the growing issue of elder abuse, which encompasses health, caregiving and faith issues. Through an elder abuse expert on the Task Force, we learned that clergy are often the first professionals people turn to on this topic, and as the general population and, as a consequence, congregations grow older, clergy and parishioners will be confronted with more issues of abuse and self neglect.

By reviewing available, pertinent research on the topic, the Task Force discovered that, when turning to clergy on this issue, people did not receive the help they expected or anticipated. Clergy indicated that they were aware of abuse in their congregations but felt that they needed to know risk factors, how to identify abuse, and the best strategies for offering clear, concise directions on what to do should they suspect elder abuse is occurring.

In March 2011, a subgroup of Task Force members, in the Diocese of Kentucky, who are also elder abuse professionals, with support from the Bishop and the Canon to the Ordinary, conducted an Elder Abuse webinar test pilot in the Diocese.

The Task Force has also created the following: 1.) a letter of introduction on the topic directed to bishops and other clergy, 2.) a series of lessons with basic information on the five areas of elder abuse, complete with case studies (used during Advent 2011), 3.) a fact sheet for use and distribution by The Episcopal Church, and 4.) a document identifying resources to educate and assist clergy with overcoming barriers to assisting abused persons and confronting the abusers.

Proposed Resolutions

Resolution A151 Response to the Call of The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, that the 77th General Convention adopt the following text as A Response to the Call of The Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation: A Call to Action by the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries:

Our vision for The Episcopal Church is that each congregation will be a place where people of all ages are welcomed and valued, where The Episcopal Church will provide resources and assistance to its members as they go through the lifelong process of aging, particularly those times of change when new callings need to be discerned, and where the grace and fellowship of the local congregation will surround each of its members, wherever they may be in the aging process. Our vision for our Episcopal Church is that we will support dioceses and congregations in their ministry with older members, and that this support will be reflected in policies, worship, and training for all the ministers of the church.

We Invite The Episcopal Church:

- To embrace older adults in all parts of the life of the Church.
- To recognize our almost universal fear of our own aging.
- To examine our own individual process of aging.
- To encourage all generations to make their own discoveries in the journey of lifelong aging.
- To foster liturgical rites and traditions that embrace older adults.

We Inspire The Episcopal Church:

- To celebrate and learn from the individual, intra-cultural and inter-cultural diversity in aging.
- To understand that spiritual discovery and discernment is a lifelong process.
- To respond to injustices toward older adults.
- To recognize that all older adults have the right to be loved, accepted and included.

We Challenge The Episcopal Church to become a transforming community that:

- Includes people of all ages as participants in baptismal ministries.
- Responds to the changing culture as it relates to aging.
- Confesses that no one has the “whole truth,” or completely understands the aging process.
- Believes aging starts at birth and ends at death—it is a life process.
- Allows for ultimate freedom, individuality in aging.
- Provides a place of resource and solace for families dealing with aging.
- Understands there is a wholeness in aging, including mind, body and spirit.

This call to action is grounded in our understanding of the Baptismal Covenant and our identity as Episcopalians. Lifelong Christian faith formation in The Episcopal Church is lifelong growth in the knowledge, service, and love of God as followers of Christ and is informed by Scripture, Tradition and Reason.

Explanation

This Call to Action was developed in response to a need expressed in the Church and by the 76th General Convention in D004 for additional resources and encouragement which celebrate lifelong Christian formation for older adults. Informed by our exploration and engagement with the Baptismal Covenant, the Five Marks of Mission, and the Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation the prophetic voice of the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries emerged and this Call to Action reflects the urgency of the need of the Church to engage with depth and breadth the education and formation of people of all ages.

All generations working creatively, sharing wisdom and perspectives can enrich formation. The church is most especially enriched when all ages are connected in formation and there is no graduation from our work as Christians.

To assist the Church in the implementation of this Call to Action a guide to facilitate conversations and action in congregations, dioceses and provinces has been developed.

Resolution A152 Recognition and Action on Elder Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That the 77th General Convention reaffirm our Baptismal Covenant to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being,” and recognize the urgent need to address the critical issue of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation; and be it further

Resolved, That every bishop, deputy, and the people they represent live out their baptismal promises, become informed and immediately address elder abuse, neglect and exploitation in our communities; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries identify existing programs including those offered by congregations, dioceses, and provinces in order to establish a method of information sharing, examine ways that the Church can expand ministries addressing elder abuse, neglect and exploitation, and explore how to collaborate with other organizations on this critical issue; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries produce a resource to inform the Church regarding this critical issue, and provide ongoing training recommendations to the 78th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$15,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Explanation

By 2030, people 65 and older will comprise approximately 20% of the population in the United States. One third of The Episcopal Church is 65 and older, ranging from those with highly active lives to those who are extremely physically and cognitively challenged. As the People of God we are called to respond to these changing realities.

Elder abuse, neglect and exploitation is an under recognized problem with devastating consequences. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, for every reported incident of neglect, exploitation, or self-neglect, approximately five go unreported.

The Episcopal Church played a leadership role in the ecumenical fight against child abuse. As people of faith strive to safeguard all God’s People, The Episcopal Church again has the opportunity to lead the fight against elder abuse.

The budget allocation will be supplemented by additional funding sources. Partnerships in this project will be explored; including The Episcopal Church Offices of Lifelong Christian Formation, Social and Economic Justice, and Government Relations, as well as United Thank Offering.

Resolution A153 Continuing the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, that the 77th General Convention authorize the continuation of the 12-member Task Force on Older Adult Ministries to continue exploring ways in which The Episcopal Church will expand ministries by, with and for older adults, serving as a catalyst for

change in response to the dramatic shift in culture regarding aging; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention recognize it is critical for the Church to address the opportunities and challenges of aging, in means, which are proactive and responsive to living out our Baptismal Covenant. While promoting and celebrating the gifts aging brings to the Church, the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries will serve as a prophetic voice to call upon the Church to name unjust actions such as age discrimination, lack of health care, abuse, and to advocate on behalf of all people systemic and governmental changes to address the seriousness of aging issues; and be it further

Resolved, That in recognition of God's good gift of aging, the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries will continue to lift up the ministry and mission of people of all ages so that the Church can respond in action to create transforming communities of faith; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries be comprised of individuals with a background in this ministry area and represent a cross section of the Church, and that such a task force uniquely positioned to look at the wider scope without being constituent specific; and be it further

Resolved, That the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries work collaboratively with the Formation and Vocation Team of the Episcopal Church Center, the Episcopal Church Office for Governmental Relations, and the Church Pension Group, report annually to the Executive Council, and provide a complete written report to the 78th General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$36,400 for the meeting expenses of this Task Force.

Explanation

The numbers of older persons in our society is growing exponentially. The needs and opportunities within this age group are on a parallel course.

The work of the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries during the recent triennium has engaged these concerns and realized the need to focus this work in response to the Baptismal Covenant, the Five Marks of Mission (General Convention Resolution 2009 D027), and the Charter for Lifelong Christian Formation (General Convention Resolution 2009 A082).

In response to the Five Marks of Mission the Task Force on Older Adult Ministries is calling the Church:

- To Proclaim The Good News Of The Kingdom by recognizing that aging is a gift from God, and a universal condition, and we all age.
- To Teach, Baptize, And Nurture New Believers by engaging authentic multigenerational responses to transitions in life and to empower congregations, dioceses and provinces to strengthen their mission and ministries.
- To Respond To Human Need By Loving Service with the expectation that the church will respond to older adults to create and strengthen opportunities in learning, to address human needs, to advocate for justice, fairness and equity, to acknowledge the incredible gifts that older adults share with the Church, and to insist on the full inclusion of older adults in all facets of the church's life.
- To Strive To Safeguard The Integrity Of Creation And Sustain And Renew The Life Of The Earth so generations that follow will benefit from our work and be better prepared to address ever changing societal and cultural shifts.

As the People of God, we are inextricably connected to each other. The Baptismal Covenant requires us to take on and seek to create a just and compassionate world. We are engaged in this life journey, which defines who we are as a church. There is an abundance of opportunities to engage in this work through the critical issues in health care, poverty, housing, physical, emotional and financial abuse. This is holy work, a gift from God and not a burden. We do this so that we might transform unjust structures of society.

The proposed budget accounts for a twelve member task force with three face to face meetings, three conference calls and three WebEx meetings during the triennium.

Resolution A154 Call to Celebrate Older Americans Month

Resolved, the House of _____ concurring, That this 77th General Convention of the Episcopal Church encourage dioceses, congregations and individuals to celebrate Older Americans Month by designating one Sunday in the month of May to raise awareness of important issues related to aging and to honor God's gift of the presence of older adults in our lives and their ministries amongst us.

Explanation

Modeled after and expanding upon Older Americans Month, this is an opportunity for Episcopalians to focus on the contributions and challenges faced by our older sisters and brothers in Christ.