

CREATING

COMMUNITY

AS WE

AGE





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FILLING THE GAPS

A Unity booklet this past year called *Spiritual Keys to Aging Well* became one of the most popular in years with thousands of people ordering it. We began to wonder what other needs of seniors our booklets might meet.

We know statistically that seniors are often prone to social isolation and loneliness, especially since the pandemic. Friends and spouses may have died, family moved away, or work ended. National health organizations consider loneliness a serious health risk. Older people who already feel marginalized, such as immigrants or those in LGBTQIA+ communities, are especially vulnerable.

Campaigns to end loneliness have been underway in Britain for a decade, sponsored by governments and charities. In New York, “Dr. Ruth” Westheimer, 95, convinced the governor to appoint her ambassador to loneliness for the state. “The first thing to do is have the courage to admit you’re lonely,” Dr. Ruth said. “Then you can do something about it.”

So how about a booklet on finding and building community as we age? We called together Unity ministers and other New Thought writers from their 50s to 90s and asked them to share how they create community and how that process helps them care for body, mind, and spirit as they age.

We hope this booklet provides you with inspiration and ideas for creating a community where you feel connected, vibrant, and appreciated.

Your Friends in Unity

PS: This past year’s *Spiritual Keys to Aging Well* booklet is available at unity.org/booklets.

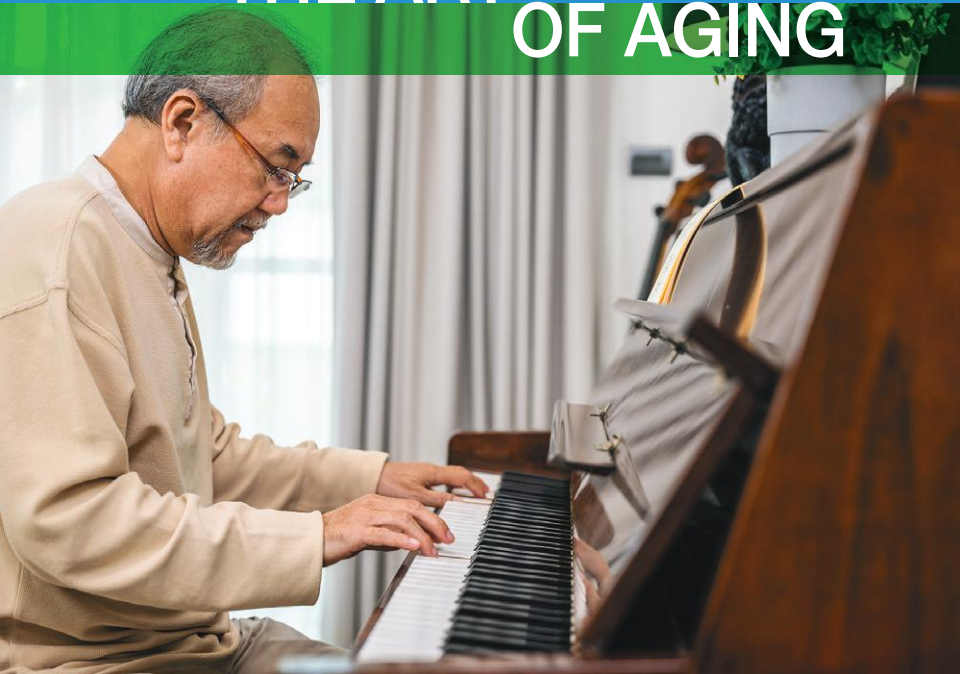
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THE ART OF AGING



Rev. Kathy Beasley

Throughout our lives, we go through changes, transformations, and evolutions. Some changes are expected and celebrated while others present difficult challenges. Aging is one such change that can be met with resistance, apprehension, and fear. However, as we age, we become something like abstract artists, exploring new dimensions of ourselves, casting aside the conventions of what we ought to be, and truly expressing ourselves authentically.

Both aging and creating abstract art are about transformation. As we age, we change physically, mentally, and emotionally. We might lose some physical abilities but gain new perspectives, values, and insights. Creating abstract art is a similar transformation. I begin with a blank canvas, searching for the colors, shapes, and textures that will bring a new vision to life. As I work, the piece begins to take on a life of its own, shifting and morphing as new ideas and techniques emerge. As we age and as we create, we must let go of preconceptions and allow ourselves to embrace the unexpected.

Aging and abstract art are also similar in the expression of our experience. As we age, we accumulate experiences that shape our identities and perspectives. We might remember the joys of childhood, the trials of adolescence, the struggles of young adulthood, or the fulfillment of our later years. These experiences help us understand the world around us and navigate it more skillfully.

In the same way, an abstract artist draws on experiences to move through the creative process. Whether it is a devastating loss, a transcendent moment, or a profound realization, each artist brings a unique perspective and depth of feeling to the art. Among the greatest lessons I've learned since picking up a paintbrush is how much willingness and trust it takes to experiment and risk, to try something new purely for artistic expression, without the safety net of past successes. The same is true with aging.

At the same time, there are ways in which aging and abstract artistry diverge. Where aging can sometimes be seen as something to avoid or fight against, abstract art is celebrated because it embraces the unexpected, the unconventional, and

the challenging. As an abstract artist, I am still learning not to be afraid to take risks, break the rules, and blaze new trails. I have treated aging, by contrast, as a deficit or flaw, something to be hidden, ignored, or even denied.

We all have the potential to create
something beautiful with our lives ...

However, just as abstract artistry can challenge our preconceptions and open us up to new possibilities, aging can catalyze us to rethink our assumptions, embrace our strengths and limitations with greater compassion and equanimity, and live more fully in the present moment.

We all have the potential to create something beautiful with our lives—to use the materials of our individual experiences, passions, and being to create a life that draws us closer to deeper understanding and liberation.

As we age, remember that each breath and brushstroke is a step toward discovering more of ourselves and embracing the unknown. Let us not be afraid to make a few mistakes along the way, knowing we can learn from mistakes in ways that can transform our sense of self and alter our views until something new is born—an artistically crafted life. So don't shy away from life's risks; grab your brush, some paint, and a canvas and move boldly into the art of aging.

ACTION STEP

Today, engage in a creative expression that reflects your journey of life. Call forth the wisdom gained through the years into a tangible form of abstract art. Celebrate the unique masterpiece that is your life, one brushstroke at a time.

AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER

I embrace the artistry of wisdom and resilience. Each passing year is a stroke of beauty upon the canvas of life, revealing the masterpiece of a life well-lived. I affirm gratitude for the lessons and embrace the evolving hues of experience. I am a tapestry of strength, creativity, and grace, weaving a legacy of timeless beauty. Amen.

Rev. Kathy Beasley is a senior manager for the Unity Prayer Ministry.

KEEP FINDING JOY



Rev. Vernelle Nelson

There is a huge difference between getting old and aging gracefully. One of the best ways to guarantee that the aging process does not affect our quality of life is to make sure we do not give up those things that bring us joy.

What are your interests? What hobbies or activities did you enjoy before your body began to slow down? While you may not be able to maintain the same pace, you certainly do not have to give them up altogether.

If you saw the movie *The Bucket List* with Morgan Freeman and Jack Nicholson, you know that it's possible to create new adventures, even if you have never had a specific experience before.

Being engaged in things that stimulate mental and physical activity, whether new experiences or things that you have enjoyed for a lifetime, is the best way to stave off cognitive and bodily decline. Many local recreation departments offer programs and activities specifically designed for seniors. If you live in a 55+ community, there is a strong likelihood that you will be able to find classes, fun events, and regularly scheduled activities right outside your door.

Chair yoga, water aerobics, game days, card parties, golf, bowling, and pickleball tournaments are just a few things that seniors enjoy. Libraries, museums, and art galleries also offer lots of opportunities for seniors to get out of the house and get involved, as do local performing arts centers—they are always in search of volunteers to help out in numerous ways. Volunteering at a performing arts center is an ideal way to see concerts, plays, and special performances free of charge.

The common thread here is interaction with others. Whether you decide to take an art class at your local library, join an exercise class, or sign up to volunteer at a museum, you will find yourself in an environment where you can meet people, make new friends, and engage in stimulating conversation.

As our bodies change and physical challenges impede our ability to do some of the things we once did easily, we are often tempted to give in to minor aches and pains. But the more we give in to small discomforts, the greater the discomfort will become. The worst thing we can do when our shoulders, wrists, knees, or hips bother us is to stop moving.

In the 1960s, one of my great aunts was literally at death's door. A family member walked into her hospital room and pleaded with her, begging, "Don't die! You won't die if you keep moving. Even if you just move a toe—*move something!*" Apparently, it worked because she woke up from a coma and lived another 15 years. The family member who encouraged her lived to be 100. After his death, our somewhat morbid family joke was, "Guess he stopped moving." To this day, we laugh heartily as we share memories of these loved ones, but there was truth in his plea. Movement and being active are the keys to being fully engaged in life and aging gracefully rather than just getting old.

Although they had major health challenges, both of my parents lived their lives to the fullest until just a few months before they transitioned. Their choices taught my brother and me how to age gracefully, and by our example, we are teaching our children and grandchildren the same lesson.

It is inevitable that our bodies will get old and life as we know it will eventually come to an end. We can choose to give in to changes in our bodies or elect to lovingly embrace the process and focus on our quality of life, remaining actively involved in our favorite pastimes, enjoying lunches and outings with friends, and savoring all that life has to offer. We can choose to sit and spend our days watching reruns of television programs from our childhood or stay in the present, interacting with family, peers, and our community. We can decide that our best years are behind us or excitedly look forward to the next day and the next adventure.

I choose the latter!

INSPIRATION FROM SCRIPTURE

I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

—Philippians 4:13

In old age they still produce fruit; they are always
green and full of sap.

—Psalm 92:14

Even to your old age I am he, even when you turn
gray I will carry you.

—Isaiah 46:4

Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal
dignity for just such a time as this.

—Esther 4:14

If you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and
my commandments, as your father David walked,
then I will lengthen your life.

—1 Kings 3:14

Rev. Vernelle Nelson heads Unity Golden Life Ministries in South Florida where she offers pastoral care and leads semimonthly beach meditations. She also teaches classes and workshops and serves on the faculty of the Unity Urban Ministerial School.

ISN'T THAT INTERESTING?



Rev. Lauren McLaughlin

Not long after we moved into a lovely independent living facility in Florida, a friend asked my husband John if he was enjoying his new lifestyle. “I’m okay with it,” he said, “and Lauren is ecstatic.”

He was right. I was ecstatic. If you challenged me to describe some of my strengths and weaknesses, I would unabashedly tell you that I am an excellent homemaker but a really bad housekeeper. I love creating an attractive, comfortable, and peaceful living space, but maintaining it, day in and day out—not so much, especially in my ninth decade of life.

I turned our new two-bedroom apartment into an ideal living space for John and me. Then a very nice person came every week and cleaned it, changed the bed, and took away the dirty laundry. How could I not be both delighted and grateful about that?

That wasn't all. We enjoyed terrific meals every night—meals I didn't have to prepare or clean up after. All I had to do was sit down and be served. (One of the reasons Unity cofounder Myrtle Fillmore is my “shero” is because she chose to go about her spiritual work and leave feeding her family to her mother-in-law. She and I were definitely kindred spirits.)

Every day, my new community offered opportunities for entertainment, from exercise classes to musical groups, line dancing, and even drumming. My choices were mind games like Jeopardy! and brain teasers, but I had good friends who preferred more vigorous activities like aerobics, water zumba, chair yoga, and tai chi instead.

I also found a dynamite Scrabble partner for twice-weekly games. Other neighbors chose bridge, mah-jongg, or even poker.

Besides the availability of both planned and unplanned activities, we were welcome to create our own. A resident who loved to knit organized a twice-weekly meetup where members made hats and mittens together for people in homeless shelters. Another resident put together craft shows four times a year and donated the proceeds to Toys for Tots for Christmas. A retired professional clown introduced juggling classes, which helped to improve balance, maintain dexterity, and potentially wow our grandchildren. And there were annual resident-generated fashion shows, talent shows, and open mic nights, plus a teddy bear tea and an annual Kentucky Derby party.

My gratitude for the freedom and inspiration that my new living environment provided continued to grow, even though the transition to independent living took a little effort. I found that setting an intention to avoid resistance and embrace change was wise for me because facing new realities is inevitable.

First of all, you are sharing physical space with many other people, and that space has to be maintained 24/7 to keep everyone happy and safe. Elevators need maintenance. Areas of the building will be cut off for painting and cleaning. Services will be interrupted. Sometimes life, even in “paradise,” is inconvenient.

Also, no surprise—change is constant. Residents move out, staff members are replaced, activities are discontinued, and excursions to favorite restaurants and entertainment spots are canceled on short notice. If you don’t roll with the changes, some of your joy will diminish.

I accepted navigating those changes, including ones that the aging process fostered in my own life, by embracing the phrase *Isn’t that interesting?* each time a new challenge presented itself.

Asking myself *Isn’t that interesting?* turned my attention to whatever was happening in the present moment without feeling the weight of how things used to be or how they might become. In the present moment, I could choose my next step, and that power to choose restored my sense of control.

When we ask *Isn’t that interesting?* it allows for the full scope of the present experience to be revealed, and that makes it possible for us to focus on what is good about what is happening now.

And isn’t *that* interesting?

RETURN TO THE PRESENT MOMENT

When my thoughts are mired in the past or in speculation about the future, I miss the present moment where life actually happens and all possibilities exist.

Whenever I find myself filled with regrets or worries, I stop, focus on the now, and ask myself *How does the sky in my world really look today? Is it stormy and fierce, or is it clear and blue?*

I take a deep breath and allow myself to take inspiration from all that is around me—the air I breathe, the sounds I hear, the beauty I can see. They are all mine right now.

If I am not happy, nothing is holding me in a space I don't want to be in. I am free to move, to shift, to change my current experience if I choose. What is to be is up to me. Right now is the starting line for *What's next?* And if I allow it, my new world will reveal itself right now.



Rev. Lauren McLaughlin is a retired Unity minister in Boca Raton, Florida, whose mission is to inspire through her books, articles, and podcast interviews, and as a spiritual and emotional support counselor.

CHURCH: A READY-MADE COMMUNITY



Rev. John Beerman

Participation in a church can meet our social and community needs, especially as we age. Think about changing the paradigm of church. Shift your thinking from church as a place to meet your worship needs to one that meets your social needs as well. The truth is, we older folks need community more than ever to rally our spirits and validate our lifetime of stories. Begin to think outside the box about church. Opportunities for social interaction and support can be discovered wherever you attend.

Would you like to find a community where you can be active and supported in sharing ideas by participating in the milieu of creative activity? A center where you will have the opportunity to grow and flourish once again as in your youth? Where you will find renewed energy, a new outlook, and a release from the boredom that comes with playing it safe by staying at home?

See church attendance in a new light. Churches are intergenerational communities of like-minded people who come together to express themselves and their deepest longings. Express yourself freely and your church experience will be healthy. If someone is telling you how things are and what you must do or believe, find another church where you will be accepted and loved just as you are, with no exceptions or conditions.

If you don't have a church, explore several in search of a loving, supportive, and healthy congregation. You need not go to the type of church you were raised in or have been told to attend. You will know you have found something that might work if you feel peace within as you participate in a service, orientation, or class.

Church as a community works because we can feel safe expressing our deepest fears, our deepest desires, and our

longing for acceptance and love. Where else could you be your true self if not among those who are walking a spiritual path with you? Within a healthy fellowship, there should be mentors, teachers, and seniors who sense what you are looking for.

It's not easy for anyone to venture into a new community, especially a closed one. Explore a new church carefully, and if you get a sense there is a clique or power group that runs everything, keep looking. There are loving, open, and accepting church communities where the congregation has a sincere desire for new people and is willing to support you for a while. Be prepared to do your part by introducing yourself and letting people know you are new. Eventually, you will be supporting new people yourself.

Lean into the love available and allow yourself to be vulnerable (something many of us are frightened of). It might be uncomfortable to open up about yourself, but vulnerability fosters growth and healing. Don't be afraid to open yourself to those you trust.

Church has a poor connotation for some because in some churches there has been abuse, disregard, and authoritarianism among its leaders. A lot of those practices have been cleared up, but the bad taste and memories are still there for some. A healthy spiritual community desires to grow and change—it's how they stay alive. Any organization unyielding to change will not survive for long.

If you truly are courageous, step out into the light of pure consciousness. Know that any spiritual community is going to have some people you don't like, but that should not prevent you from being in the community and willing to promote change.

AFFIRMATION

Today I intentionally step out into the light of pure consciousness. I become vulnerable to change and reaching out for help. I am on my way to discovering a community—one that is healthy for me and others.

CHURCH SEARCH

To find a Unity center near you, use the Find a Unity Community function on the Unity website at unity.org/search/community. You may check listings for both in-person and online services and find links to individual churches. For other branches of New Thought, check the websites of Centers for Spiritual Living (csl.org) and the Universal Foundation for Better Living (ufbl.org), which have similar lists and locators.

Rev. John Beerman is a retired minister living in Dunedin, Florida.

FINDING FRIENDSHIP



Rev. Ric Schumacher

I'm retired now and that's appropriate for someone my age. Throughout the years I have acquired and collected many things, some of which are precious to me, but nothing in my life is more precious than the friendships I have. As the years have gone by, I have lost more than one friend for different reasons, and it saddens me. The day-to-day associations I once enjoyed are gone.

Early in my retirement I retreated to the comfort of home and family. I found it easy to consider who and what I had lost. A.A. Milne wrote in *Winnie-the-Pooh*, "You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes." Yet retirement for me became staying in my corner of the forest, and the forest can be a dark, lonely, and sometimes frightening place. I soon discovered paradoxically that I needed to retreat to go forward; it was a brief rest on my life journey.

Reaching out to old friends with a simple phone call
renews me and gives me the opportunity
to pour out my love.

I discovered that I cannot make a new friend, but I can be one. I cannot make an old friend, but I can connect with one. Reaching out to old friends with a simple phone call renews me and gives me the opportunity to pour out my love. In the winter of my life friends may become fewer but friendships become deeper and richer.

Recently I volunteered for an organization whose mission is important to me, and I have met some wonderful people. Our common interest is the foundation upon which new friendships

are built. In reaching out, I found a community of people and new connections that are the beginnings of new friends. In this, I find new joy.

It can be hard to define what a friend is, and there are probably as many definitions as there are people. Friendship is a loving relationship. For me a friend is a person I have loved and who has loved me; it is a shared sacred trust. By this definition, I am blessed to have and have had many friends.

I am older now, but I am never too old to love. Maybe in aging I have learned to love in a more universal way. Now the love I share is divine love. When I choose to share love, I must, according to spiritual law, receive love in return. To reach out in friendship is to ensure that I find friendship because that is the unfailing spiritual law.

In closing, my friend, I find that love is the sure foundation upon which friendships are built. We are bound together, friend to friend, with golden chains of love. I find friends wherever and whenever I love.

Rev. Ric Schumacher is a retired minister in Tallmadge, Ohio, and founder of Group Twelve Productions, LLC.

SHARING MICRO-MEMOIRS



Rev. Christina Garza

Research shows that disconnection is a national epidemic. Reported feelings of loneliness and isolation are at an all-time high. Despite the many ways we have to connect, we are not using them. But one great way to connect is online—a concept driven home for me during the Covid-19 pandemic.

During the quarantine, I was part of a church team led by congregant Sharon Myers that worked to support elders in our community. We called them weekly to check in and pray. Out of this energy, Sharon had a “spirit idea” to begin conducting micro-memoir classes online with our elders to keep them busy. Micro-memoirs are short, creative, stand-alone stories based on personal reflections or experiences. They are explorations of a moment in time with a particular person(s), personal item, trip, childhood memory, or theme. Class members chose their topics and wrote about the death of a loved one, a childhood memory, coming to terms with the past, a near-death accident, a travel journey, leaving home, and more.

The micro-memoir idea took off, and numerous online classes formed. After reading a few pieces and being thoroughly inspired, I felt these stories needed to be shared with the world. I suggested we create a book. Once the pandemic subsided and in-person events were allowed, we organized an event with light food, wine, and music where authors read their pieces, and we raised money to publish the book.

We then engaged our youth to provide images for the stories. It was a way to create intergenerational conversation. Our youth shared digital images, photographs, paintings, and other creative formats that were carefully paired with the theme of each story.

We sold the books as a fundraiser for the church. Some of the book's images from the youth were eventually auctioned off to raise even more money. The micro-memoirs became bigger than we could have imagined as a "friend-raiser," "fun-raiser," and fundraiser.

The book, *Words of Wisdom*, now in its second printing, became a community passion project. It began as a way for elders to have something to do during the pandemic but evolved into a way to create connection, community, and purpose. It allowed younger generations to honor and value elders and their stories. It became a way for elders themselves to understand the value of their voice and the need to speak their truth by giving meaning to their lived experiences. Storytelling is powerful!

It began as a way for elders to have something to do during the pandemic but evolved into a way to create connection, community, and purpose.

I am now senior minister in a new church where our community has taken on the micro-memoir process. The classes are a way to get to know other congregants on a deeper level. Bonds and friendships are forged in the process of sharing stories. When you learn something deeply personal about someone, you can see and feel oneness more easily. When you feel an intimate connection, you are more willing to have openness, compassion, and forgiveness. In churches and spiritual centers where our humanness can cause conflict and get in the way, these story connections become a powerful way to anchor a community.

WAYS TO CONNECT

I encourage everyone to explore how online opportunities could support your spiritual engagement and development. That could be creating a micro-memoir project for your church or taking a micro-memoir class, or taking a class of any type where you engage and share your life and story.

More recently, I have learned you can also use technology like tablets to share your daily life stories. I recently bought my mother a tablet that makes video calls easily, creating better communication between us and less loneliness for her. There can be no substitute for in-person communication, but now we get to share a meal and our stories with each other via video with just the touch of a button on her tablet.

Let's affirm that technology can be a spiritual tool. Affirm with me: *I open to the wonders of online engagement as a way to experience and express the Divine. I open to new ways to connect, grow, and deepen my relationships with myself and others.*

Rev. Christina Garza is senior minister at Unity of Nashville, Tennessee.

**KEEP MOVING—
TOGETHER!**



Angie Olson

We all know we should exercise and move more, but in caring for elderly loved ones, I've learned that regular movement and activity become especially important as we age. Remaining independent in later life depends on maintaining strength, flexibility, and stamina for everyday activities.

Regular exercise strengthens bones and muscles, reduces the risk of disease and falls, positively impacts brain health, and maybe best of all, improves our mood.

The great news is that there are numerous ways to be active every day. It doesn't have to seem overwhelming or boring. And it doesn't have to take an hour of strenuous exercise at the gym every day to see results. Doing fitness activities with others just adds to the fun.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

- **Start or join a gardening group in your area. Gardeners are some of the strongest people I know with all the bending, lifting, and daily watering.** It's a great way to have community but also build strength and flexibility. I especially enjoy the added sunshine and caring for plants that bring me joy as they grow. Start small to build up stamina, and take care in the hottest months to stay cool.
- **Taking a 30-minute stroll with a group of friends is another great way to stay active and connected to your community.** Through the years I've had numerous groups of walking buddies. While walking we solve each other's problems and laugh so much, while also getting our heart rates up and motivating each other. Some of my favorite memories are from regular walks with friends.

- **Low-impact water aerobics is a wonderful activity in later life because it strengthens your core without straining your joints.** Having been to several water aerobics classes throughout the years, I can say the attendees were some of the warmest and funniest people I've ever met! And you can usually find people of all ages at these classes. The instructors guide each activity knowing that each person is at a different fitness level. Best of all, it just feels refreshing to be in the water!
- **Yoga is one of the most grounding types of movement I have found.** You can start with gentle poses, then slowly build your practice as you gain strength and confidence. There are even beginning yoga classes designed for older adults that include seated options. I recently attended a yoga class at my local YMCA, and everyone was so friendly and kind. I loved the relaxing music and Zen energy of the group. I particularly liked the fact that I could modify poses as I needed based on my own fitness level.
- **Dancing is a group activity that everyone can do.** Don't say you can't dance or worry about what you look like. Just invite some friends over, put on some music you enjoy, and flow with the music. I'm not a particularly good dancer, but I've learned that nothing clears my head or makes me feel like I can take on the day like dancing. My body and my heart thank me every time. And if my girlfriends and I dance, we all laugh until we cry. Group dancing can make you feel like a teenager again.
- **Strength training is one of the most protective activities seniors can do.** By building muscle, you'll have better balance, coordination, and bone density. There are classes designed for seniors that use free weights, and even classes and videos that show you how to use your own body in

strength training; think sit-ups, squats, lunges, and so on. Don't forget to do a short warm-up before you begin! My husband's grandmother lifted large cans of tomatoes as weights every day until she was in her 90s.

- **Don't forget that you can find online instruction and classes for all types of fitness activities.** Whether you are looking for chair yoga, stretching, tai chi, or Pilates, you can find free videos on YouTube, many of them designed specifically for seniors. So, invite your bestie over and pull up a video.

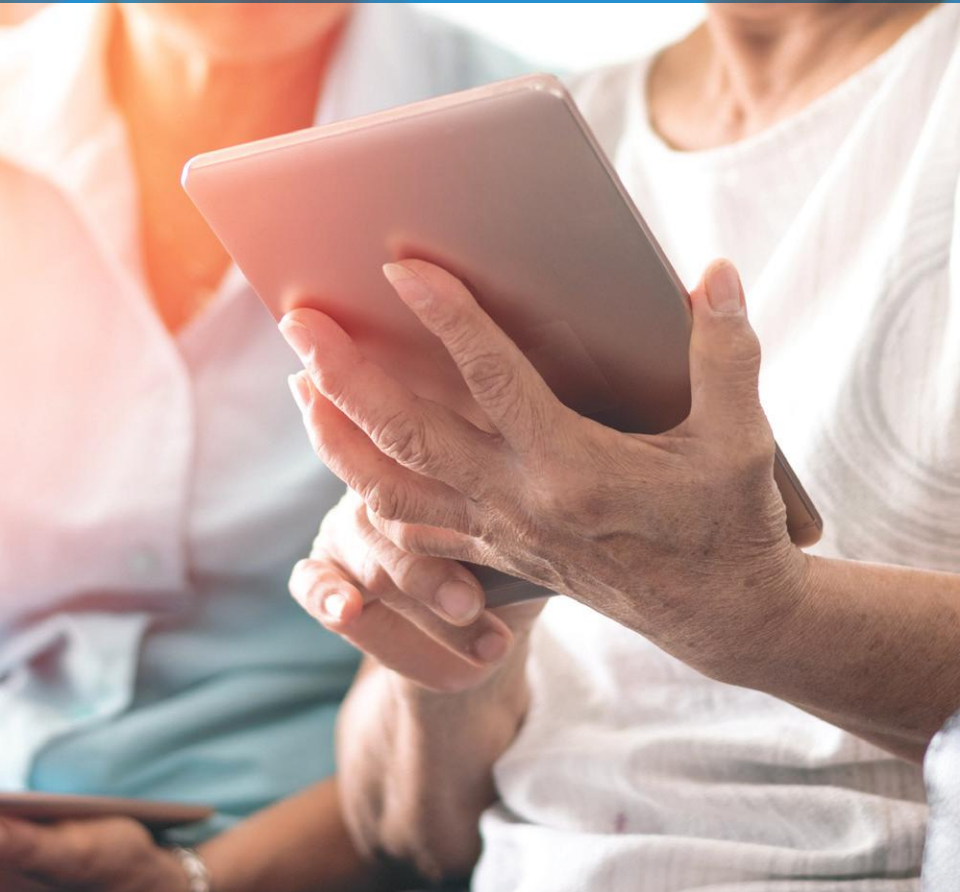
ACTION STEP

Pick one group fitness activity in your local area and give it a try. Or pick an easy, 15-minute online video and invite a friend over so you can do it together. Just take a baby step toward becoming more active. Your future self will thank you!



Angie Olson is vice president of digital marketing and strategy for Unity World Headquarters.

SPIRITUAL ZOOMING IN



Noelle Sterne, Ph.D.

Getting older doesn't mean disconnecting from other people or avoiding events. When you can't attend or meet in person, consider Zoom. It has some surprising benefits, especially on spiritual topics.

Granted, you've got to master a little (more) technology. And a Zoom smile doesn't replace a real hug. But I've found Zoom to be a great boon, especially when my work is piled up (writer-editor, I work at home), I can't face the traffic, or I'm just too tired to go out. For the housebound, Zoom is a special blessing. Spiritual Zoom classes are a wonderful resource for new learning, new friends, and new inspiration.

The detriments of Zoom were studied by Stanford University researchers: We get weary staring at a screen. Our attention may drift. Our brains thrive more with in-person communication. Voices sometimes drop off. Seeing ourselves onscreen can be a jolt, especially for women (Jill Waldbieser, *Work Life*, June 11, 2021).

Such objections have merit, but I've found several more-than-balancing advantages to Zoom: time saved, no need to travel, comfort of my own space, uncrowded "room" of many members, connection from any location, connection through any electronic device, meeting recordings and transcripts available anytime, and ability to "chat" with group members. Zoom is not the only way groups gather online, but it is free and used widely.

My interests are especially in spiritual learning, so I tune in to Unity Sunday and midweek Zoom services and register for book study groups. I've taken courses in *Spiritual Economics*, *A Course in Miracles* (ACIM), *Real Wealth*, and other spiritual books such as *The Four Agreements*.

In the book study meetings, homework is often given. It prods me to engage with the material, learn from it, use it in my life, face myself more honestly, and stretch my assumptions and perceptions. I write out my responses and use them in the group talks.

The Zoom space is safe. Members share with poignant honesty their work quandaries, relationship troubles, serious illnesses and operations, abuses, addictions, failures, deep bouts of depression, or deaths. The confessions move me (sometimes to tears) and encourage me to voice my own uncomfortable, embarrassing, painful thoughts and experiences.

The admissions also inspire help. Members don't offer therapy but tell of similar circumstances (frequently with triumphant outcomes), empathy, reassurance, and love. From the study books, they point out rescuing spiritual principles.

We relate victories—a grouchy neighbor smiles, an estranged daughter phones, or a lump disappears. And we freely compliment each other—how much another person has calmed down, grown, or become more energetic and optimistic.

With several members, too, I've developed warm friendships. We email, call, visit, enlighten each other with lessons and applications from the classes, and admit we need each other.

The members rally around in crises. One night, the leader announced that a regular member, Flora, had had a serious accident and was in the hospital. The leader suggested we send our phone numbers to Flora so she could decide whom to call. I sent my number.

Two days later, Flora called me. We had a long conversation about the Truth and her truths. The talk nurtured us both. Many other members supported her with calls, prayers, and texts. Two weeks later, she appeared onscreen at our meeting, said she was home, and took part as usual.

Facilitators' styles vary. They may read, ask for feedback, contribute their own experiences, or punctuate the discussions with prayers. With the prayers, I'm always buoyed and feel the virtual hugs enfolding me.

The groups bring out our generosity and love. They're perfect avenues for practicing the principles we're studying—compassion for a member who's grieving, patience for one who can't find the right words, acceptance of a speech eccentricity, or love for a member wavering in trust.

Zooming in means focusing in, zeroing in, or pinpointing. Spiritual groups remind us to center in on, discern, and apply universal spiritual principles to our lives. I encourage you to spiritually Zoom in.

FIND AN ONLINE CLASS

Installing Zoom on your computer or device may take some patience. For help, watch a YouTube video or contact a tech friend or 10-year-old.

For meetings and classes, search Unity sites such as *truthunity.net/events*, a collection of online classes happening all over the country. For ACIM, the Miracle Distribution Center (*miraclecenter.org*) has an extensive list of groups. Ask friends. Notice authors you like and search for them online. I discovered one leader and her classes through her wonderful story in a Unity booklet.

Most fees are by donation. Recognize that each leader's style is different and may or may not appeal to you. Try out a class or two; be honest with yourself. If you don't like the class, you won't get the full benefit and may be tempted to skip meetings.

PRAYER

Through universal divine love, I, (your name), draw to me the perfect beings I need, and the perfect beings who need me draw me to them. We freely share our gifts and love.

Noelle Sterne, Ph.D., is an author, editor, and spiritual counselor based in South Florida.

CREATE A FAMILY OF THE HEART



Rev. Alberta Ware

The idea of creating a family of the heart immediately brought to mind my family of Second Sunday Sisters. We are a group of friends (two of whom are actually sisters) who meet every second Sunday of the month. It came about like so many new experiences—as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

We missed seeing each other at church services and classes and the other in-person activities that came to an unceremonious halt. Tekla Syers, our host, reached out to the rest of us to share how much she really missed us. To bring us together, she offered to prepare a special meal so we could break bread together and reconnect. We determined we all had been inoculated and boosted, and since there was sufficient space in her dining room, it began. (Each month we contribute money for the next meal before we leave so there is no financial burden on her.)

We do so much more than eat! To be sure there is a lot of talking, as we have solved all the problems of the world, our churches, and our homes. Sometimes we have moments of meditation and quiet, as well as various music-inspired sessions. We also celebrate each other's accomplishments as well as those of family members.

Recognizing our need to have person-to-person contact (most of us live alone), we look forward to this time together. We truly appreciate and are grateful for the deep bond that has occurred and continues to bless the Second Sunday Sisters.

I asked some of them to share what coming together as a family of choice means to them:

"It's a wonderful opportunity to share some real sisterly love."

"I love Second Sunday Sisters because it gives me the opportunity to fellowship with like-minded teachers, ministers, and women making a difference in the world in their own way. These women share gems of wisdom freely, which provides me the extra *umph* I need that carries me through the week."

“As many of us were growing up, common themes about aging—fraught with misbeliefs—were spoken around us.

Save now for retirement because when you become older, you'll have limited income and be poor.

Eat your vegetables. You need strength now to enjoy life because you will become weak, frail, and ill when you get old.

Read books now because when you become older you won't be able to see, remember, and appreciate a book.

“If there is anything I have experienced at this stage of my life, it is that these themes are negated by the existence, love, and caring of my vibrant Second Sunday Sisters. None of us lack prosperity, health, vitality, mental alertness, or intelligence. All of us understand and reinforce—through prayer with and for one another—the goodness of God's love and protection that sustains us. And we can pass that on to others. Everyone has this same opportunity to create a family of the heart that will be of like mind and embrace the beliefs and principles that make the journey of maturing an exciting one. So go for it!”

From host Tekla Syers: “Each gathering is different and always warm, always comforting, reinforcing. They bring such joyful, grateful, positive energy into my home every month—you can't buy that. I begin to wonder on Tuesday who will make it to Sunday's magic mix. If the meal isn't ready, we feast on catching up until it is. I feel safe with them. I miss them when we don't gather. I'm less connected externally; I don't laugh as much. They validate a part of me no one else sees (and that I'm only now coming to know). We relax, open our hearts, and eat!”

CREATE A FAMILY OF THE HEART

Call a few people you talk to on a regular basis, then include two more about whom you often say: “I haven’t spoken to ____ in a while. I should give them a call.” Propose forming a group. Get together (in person or online), choose a name for yourselves, and connect in peace, joy, and harmony.



Rev. Alberta Ware is a staff minister at Christ Universal Temple in Chicago and dean of ministerial training for the Johnnie Colemon Theological Seminary.

ASKING FOR HELP



Veronica Walker-Douglas, LCSW

Asking for help begins with an understanding that circumstances can improve when we are willing to consider available options. These options can provide a path to enhance or remedy a current situation.

For the aging population, this requires vulnerability. Asking for help will likely mean stepping outside of comfort zones and the sense of safety found in narratives of “this is how it’s always been” and “this is what I’ve always done.”

For many, asking for help goes against messages we have received about being strong, self-reliant, and independent. Those around an aging person may need to provide reassurance and frequent reminders that asking for help is not meant to deny their right to make decisions or diminish their independence but to enhance their continued quality of life. Seniors may verbalize concerns that will require validation and empathy from a genuine place of compassion.

Even when someone realizes that assistance would be helpful, there may be an increased need to exert control and exercise authority regarding decision-making. Self-preservation calls for maintaining dignity and reassurance that one is being truly seen by those who are suggesting assistance.

The aging population is especially sensitive to knowing their needs are being heard and addressed. Anyone, including loved ones, must request permission to assist and respect the senior’s right to self-determination. Once there is an agreement, the older adult and members of their support network should remain receptive to following guidance and adhering to

recommendations. This support network will expand and evolve around a circle of family, friends, churches, and agencies ready to advocate and activate outcomes through information, applications, and recommendations.

As a licensed clinical social worker in the states of Illinois and Indiana for more than 25 years, I understand the importance of the aging population's access to life-enhancing resources. In the past, I have had the honor of working with this group and their families to apply for senior services administered by the Department on Aging and other related agencies. Case managers are essential in coordinating the various service components, including homemaking (laundry, housecleaning, shopping, cooking, and other duties), meal delivery, transportation, enrollment in day programs and activity centers, respite care, facility placement, home repairs, and financial assistance.

Medical monitoring can be provided in the home with a physician's order and a payor source. Community resources are also available for private/paid services. Often, the senior may voice concerns about anyone other than family and friends having access to their home and personal information. Service coordination and monitoring should be ongoing to safeguard safety and trust.

The aging population benefits from a support network to meet the individual needs of the senior:

- Family/friends are the foundation for rendering emotional, psychological, physical, and other support and championing their loved ones to others.
- Communities/agencies serve as the hub for referrals and resources that support care for seniors in their homes and the community.
- The church empowers and encourages faith and trust in a higher power that continues to grant grace and blessings throughout the aging process. Engagement is fostered through visitation and check-ins when they cannot attend services. The church can also serve to supplement community services.

As human development continues throughout a lifespan, many will enter their golden years as a time of reaping the rewards of lives lived in the service of families, friends, occupations, communities, and churches. How do we, who stand on their shoulders, express our heartfelt appreciation? We continue to listen to their stories, value their visions, cherish their contributions, and commit to help bridge the journey of each beautiful soul.

PRAYER

Thank you, God, that throughout our lives and especially in our golden years, we are renewed, abundantly blessed, and eternally held in divine love.

ACTION

If you know a senior who needs additional supportive services, contact your local Department on Aging for information on the referral and assessment process. Next, arrange a conversation with the senior and any requested significant others to discuss current needs and willingness to tap into available resources.

An initial plan of action can be developed with tasks assigned. Bear in mind that if the senior can participate in decision-making, they must consent to any services. Finally, encourage the completion of advance directives and assignment of healthcare agent(s) and power(s) of attorney for finances to ensure the wishes of the beloved seniors will be followed.

Veronica Walker-Douglas is a clinical social worker in Illinois and Indiana and is affiliated with Christ Universal Temple in Chicago.

CARING FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH



Rev. Elizabeth Longo

As we grow older, our world tends to shrink unless we find things to keep us mentally engaged. It is essential that we prioritize our mental health and cultivate a sense of belonging within a community. Aging is part of life, and it is of utmost importance that we make an effort to focus on our well-being.

In my golden years, I prioritize self-care above anything else—beginning with caring for my mental health. I start my day with prayer and meditation. Then I spend time journaling and focusing on all the blessings in my life. Knowing that what I focus on expands, I make it a point to practice gratitude. Then as I plan my day, I make sure that I make time to connect with loved ones and activities that enhance my well-being.

When feelings of loneliness arise and I start feeling down, I may reach out to someone who will hear me with a caring heart. Sometimes I remind myself these feelings will pass, and I engage in an activity that brings joy to my heart.

Finding a sense of purpose, learning something new, and daring to go beyond our comfort zones is essential to our well-being. Seeking connections and remaining active is good medicine. When the challenges that are part of aging arise, it is important to have a mental health plan. Talking to a friend, asking for prayer, or reaching out to a therapist are ways to care for our soul.

I find that practicing meditation and mindfulness helps me notice my self-talk. Once I realize I am focusing on thoughts that are not life-enhancing, I deny that they have any power over me. Then I focus my mind on affirmations of truth. Taking a few conscious breaths while focusing on my heart space relaxes and aligns my spirit, mind, and body.

Being part of a spiritual community is the greatest gift in my life. There I connect with like-minded people and engage in creative activities. I belong to a book club. Reading is one of the ways I keep my mind active. I also enjoy playing sudoku and word games. Crossword puzzles are another way to keep the brain engaged.

Recently I joined an art class in my community. I've always loved creative activities, and painting with a group is even more enjoyable. I walk 30 minutes a day. I make it a mindfulness walk, bringing curiosity and wonder to the moment. Three times a week I go to the gym where I have met and made new friends. I make it a point to connect with my neighbors on a weekly basis.

Connecting with younger people fills me with vitality and joy—and I learn new things. One of the things that stresses and frustrates me is when I am faced with technological challenges. Having someone I can count on to help and teach me is fundamental to my well-being.

I have a friend I admire who is in her 90s and remains active and fully engaged in her community. Her faith is strong, and she dedicates her time to things she loves. She is an avid reader who loves music and going for walks. I asked her what her secret to aging so well was, and she said that belonging to a community and keeping her faith strong keep her going. I make time to listen to her and gain from her wisdom.

Knowing that aging is a part of life, I prioritize my well-being by keeping my mind curious and engaged by belonging to a spiritual community and doing the things I love. I begin my day in prayer, listen to my heart, and remind myself that my greatest purpose is to know my oneness with God. I make it a point to connect with loved ones daily and plan some fun activities. I remind myself to keep stretching and learning new things. Life is a gift. I count my blessings and share my gifts with everyone I meet.

STEPS TO CARE FOR MY MENTAL HEALTH:

- Keep my faith strong. Pray daily, have a prayer partner, and belong to a spiritual community.
- Keep my mind engaged by learning new things. Read daily. Journal. Be willing to stretch beyond my comfort zone.
- Keep active. Daily walks, yoga, or some form of exercise is good medicine.
- Reach out to loved ones, friends, or neighbors. Have social connections.

PRAYER

With a grateful heart, I meet each day. I spend time in the Silence listening to divine guidance. Today I give all my burdens to God. I open my heart to God's loving presence to guide me every moment of my day. Divine love opens the way to my good, and I go forth with a radiant light to connect with loved ones and engage in activities that enhance my well-being. I count my blessings, keep my mind engaged, and treat myself with utmost self-care.

Rev. Elizabeth Longo is a coach and ministry consultant in South Florida.

ACKNOWLEDGING GRIEF, LOSS, AND LONELINESS



Rev. Karen R. Shepherd

As we age, we may find ourselves facing grief, loss, and loneliness at an increasing rate. Due to the reality of illness and death among family and acquaintances, the need to deal with such matters confronts us.

One of the criticisms of New Thought philosophy is that we fail to look at the realities of life, instead choosing what's called a "spiritual bypass." Spiritual bypassing is using spiritual ideas and practices to sidestep or avoid facing anything unpleasant or threatening. In other words, we put on a happy face instead of confronting a matter directly, which actually prolongs the time needed to heal. We cannot heal until we deal. We must acknowledge the depth of feeling brought on by whatever has occurred. Nothing can defeat us if we can muster the courage to face it.

I have had to do this three times in my life—once upon the death of my father 22 years ago, the death of my mother eight years ago, and currently with the recent loss of my husband of 33 years.

Both my parents' lives ended while in hospice care. My husband went back and forth about consenting to hospice. First, he resisted the idea. Then the next day when I arrived at the hospital, he had asked the doctors to remove the support devices keeping him alive. I had talked to him earlier, but he neglected to tell me this was his plan. I did not object because the doctors determined he could make that decision. He had suffered enough.

A representative from hospice came to talk to us. But before we could sign up, he changed his mind again, stating that he hadn't fully understood what hospice meant despite the long explanation given the day before.

The roller-coaster ride continued. The doctors decided to resume treatment. Finally, it became apparent that the treatments were not improving his condition, and he accepted

the fact that he was not going to get better. After further discussion, the decision was made to discontinue all life-saving measures and provide only palliative care. But he transitioned before he could be put in hospice.

The five months between his initial hospitalization and his transition were a time filled with hospital and rehabilitation facility visits. I was living alone during that time, foreshadowing my current state of living alone.

During that time, I got to know my neighbors in ways I previously had not. It redefined my way of living in community. One neighbor took on the task of tending our yard because he knew how meticulously my husband kept our yard. I got acquainted with one neighbor's little grandchildren. My neighbors have come to my aid when I needed help with packages and have checked on me regularly to see if I need anything.

I have also learned and appreciated the value of friends and family, particularly my sister who sat with me for many hours during the numerous hospital stays my husband endured. My nieces, nephews, and cousins also provided and continue to provide invaluable support.

I always planned for my husband's eventual homecoming, but it became increasingly apparent that it was not going to happen. I had to acknowledge and accept this reality.

I have always taken pride in being fiercely independent. However, as I grow older, I have learned to ask for and accept help when needed and offered.

PRACTICE

Since my husband's transition, I have slowly resumed holistic practices that I stopped while attending to him. I belong to three prayer groups that meet at different times by phone daily or weekly. I also have an excellent prayer partner. I participated in these groups both before and after my husband's transition, serving as an additional avenue of support.

Here is an affirmation that can help in such circumstances without trying to bypass facts or feelings:

I rely on the Christ within to help me acknowledge, accept, and grow through feelings of loss and loneliness to an even richer expression of life.



Rev. Karen R. Shepherd leads Unity Good Shepherd Ministries, an alternative ministry in Cleveland, Ohio.

CREATING PRAYER PARTNERS OR GROUPS



Rev. Edith Washington-Woods

To counteract loneliness or isolation, I have found that having prayer partners helps fill the void. We may pray together in a video conference or a phone call. This practice has sustained me for years.

I had never heard of anything called a *prayer partner* until the first time I went to Unity Village for classes. One of our assignments was to pair up with a classmate and pray with each other for the week.

I thought this was odd but did as instructed. We prayed near the fountains, in a classroom, in the Fillmore Chapel, or other places on the beautiful campus. I found it very connecting in a way I had not experienced before.

After we prayed with and for each other, I always left feeling connected, inspired, and lifted up.

Later in seminary we prayed weekly in groups. My group included a couple of classmates studying for ministry and a recently ordained minister, all meeting at the home of a longtime minister. Each of us shared prayer requests. After we prayed with and for each other, I always left feeling connected, inspired, and lifted up. Praying in a group with one of our elders gave not only him but all of us a deep sense of belonging.

After I was ordained and began looking for the right church to serve, I remembered the difference praying with others had made in my life, so I asked friends to be prayer partners. My

goal was to have seven for each day of the week. I invited some in Unity and some from other spiritual communities. To my surprise, all of them said *yes*.

To this day I have prayer partners, including five of the original eight. At age 64, I have prayer partners who are younger than me and several older than me. My oldest prayer partner is close to 80.

Having prayer partners each day keeps me from feeling isolated. All of my prayer partners are now close friends. We check in during our prayer time—sometimes talking for 10 minutes and sometimes two hours. (You can agree on a time limit if you prefer.)

My prayer partners and I have experienced life. We have shared moves, the passing of loved ones, the births of grandchildren, life-threatening illnesses, and release of jobs. We talk about whatever is going on in our lives, and we are there to support each other.

Initially, I thought I was seeking prayer partners to assist me in finding my next church. What I discovered was a support system for all aspects of my life. These partners were not people just to pray with; we were there to be a community. We were there to lean on each other in life's ups and downs.

As we get older, creating prayer partnerships with one person or a group of people will assist us in being healthy.

FINDING PRAYER PARTNERS

I invite you to start by asking three people to be your prayer partners. Decide whether you want to pray with them individually or form a group. Prayer partners aren't necessarily good friends to start. Think of people whose spiritual walk you admire or perhaps those you have heard pray on occasion or who have spoken about the importance of prayer.

Here is a prayer to help you: Divine love, flowing through me, I am seeking ways to create community and connection. In the silence of my own being, I ask, who are three people whom I can ask to be prayer partners with me? I am relying on my innermost being to lead me to those people at the right times. I now prepare to act on my guidance and ask, knowing I will receive.

If two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. —Matthew 18:19



Rev. Edith Washington-Woods is minister at Unity of Gaithersburg, Maryland.

GROWING OLD TOGETHER



Rev. Saba Mchunguzi

I was speaking with a friend of mine who mentioned that after her recent birthday, she was in her eighth decade. It sounded strange to me, especially since I was older and never referred to myself like that. Eventually I realized she meant she had turned 70, but hearing it put that way made it seem a lot older. I know of many people in their 60s or 70s who ask the rhetorical question: *Where did the time go?*

The truth is that it is important for people to prepare for old age when they are young. On the one hand, this may seem obvious and it makes sense, but on the other hand, many people have not done it and still are not doing it. My wife and I have two adult children, and we have been telling them for many years to be mindful of what they do now because it will affect their lives when they get older. Things such as diet, selection of profession or business, how to manage finances, and the types of relationships you develop and maintain are all important factors in the life you lead later on.

My wife (who I must admit is younger than me) often proudly says that we were friends first, and our friendship evolved into something greater as time went on. Now we're both proud to say that our friendship has lasted and endured for 40 years. Throughout the years, we've enjoyed each other's company and are still able to laugh at and get pleasure from the simple things in life.

We've experienced many of the common trials and tribulations of a long-term relationship, but through it all, we've been able to overcome. We've developed patience and more understanding of each other, and we are clearer about our own and each other's strengths and weaknesses. We confronted the expected and unexpected changes that each of us went through throughout the years and became stronger as a result of it.

One of the factors that helped us remain together these many decades is that we were committed to learning and living according to New Thought spiritual principles. They enabled us to have hope and faith that we would be able to accomplish our goals and aspirations and also deal with the challenges life presented. We found that having a strong spiritual foundation

was truly necessary to living a productive and good life. My wife says, “How do people live without God?” We can testify to the many “miracles” that have taken place in our lives as a result of our believing, applying spiritual principles, and patiently and faithfully awaiting the manifestation of our good.

Another important aspect of the two of us aging well and happily is that we have always supported each other’s dreams and goals. We never felt diminished or less important when the other was focused on a particular project or activity. We have given each other space to pursue and manifest the divine ideas that Spirit has given to us, even though we may not have fully understood or agreed with them. Cheryl has always supported me in the ministry and has been instrumental in its success throughout these years. I have supported her as she developed her private psychotherapy practice and especially now with the opening of her new wellness center. It is important for each person in a relationship to have their own independence and interests and to express their own talents and abilities. As such, each one feels fulfilled on their own as well as a family.

In Eric Butterworth’s book *Life Is for Living*, he wrote, “The life within us is God within us, and the God-life that is flowing through us at eighty is the same life that animated, sustained, and energized us in infancy, at eighteen, and at thirty ... So-called age is not the deterioration of life, but the deterioration of our faith, our enthusiasm, our will to progress.”

Regardless of your age, or where you are in life as a couple, know that you can begin now to build a consciousness of community and deeper connectedness with your partner and others around you.



AFFIRMATIVE PRAYER

I realize that everyone is a divine being, a divine expression of the one presence and power that is God. Recognizing my oneness with others, I strive to see the good in all people and I cheerfully connect with them. I look forward to new and exciting endeavors with my life partner. I know that we have been brought together to experience life fully and joyfully. I embrace the idea that I am eternally youthful, vibrant, and expressive and I look forward to living the rest of my life without fear, hesitation, or worry. I see and welcome good and only good manifesting daily in every aspect of my life, world, and affairs.

Rev. Saba Mchunguzi is minister at Unity of Huntington in Huntington Station, New York.

LIVING IN THE LAND OF LONGEVITY



Marilyn King-Compton

I was in my early 80s when I was first confronted by a few surprising challenges. As usual, by applying the power of my spiritual principles, those issues were unable to get my attention. Then the realization of aging stepped up and slapped me in the face. I had landed in the “land of longevity.”

Life expectancy in the United States is 79.11, according to the United Nations, and slightly less by other sources. I am 95 as I write this. Studies reveal that longevity is influenced by genetics, the environment, and lifestyle. For me, time evolved so quickly that little attention was given to the inevitability of aging or to the possibility of living an unusually long life.

I have held onto faith and the truth of my being that “the Father and I are one” (John 10:30). I have become more in tune with the spirit of God within me that does the work. I believe the scripture, “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be the glory” (Ephesians 3:20).

I was well into the throes and baggage of longevity when the unprecedented period of the Covid-19 pandemic swept the nation. Restrictive guidelines concerning personal and outside contact, limitation of movement, and home isolation and confinement were put into place. Many of those in the aging community were directly affected, and some did not survive. Sadly, this included two of my most dear, 98-year-old cousins.

During this period of seclusion, in no way was I going to allow age to become a deterrent or be overwhelmed by the news or what others might be experiencing. No time for feelings of depression or defeat! I called forth the presence and power of

Jesus the Christ, my Way Shower, companion, comforter, and counselor. Living in this awareness, I felt as though I could overcome and conquer anything.

Prayer, meditation, and sitting in the Silence let me hear the still, small voice that said, *Stay busy and develop your skills!* Obeying, I began to increase my limited knowledge of computer technology. Capable friends were helpful. This allowed me to delve deeper into my genealogy research, which had been set aside temporarily. This venture took me on a most rewarding journey.

Through a smart TV, several informational seminars were available. A personal Zoom account enabled me to join family gatherings and other groups virtually, where I found new people and new ideas. Investigating online banking regarding the depositing of checks and making payments or transfers proved most beneficial. Increased cell phone usage and text messaging renewed relationships and created new ones.

On Sundays via YouTube, I could still worship and support my church, Christ Universal Temple in Chicago. Tuesday and Thursday evening classes were no longer being held at the Empowerment Center for Better Living, but I could reach them via Facebook. I could also enjoy services with Westside Center of Truth on Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

Thankfully, the pandemic is behind us and I survived, “standing on my two big spiritual feet,” as Rev. Johnnie Colemon, D.D., taught us. “My help comes from the Lord ... He will not let your foot be moved” (Psalm 121:2-3).

I am immensely grateful for longevity, and I must continue to be worthy of this blessing. Therefore, much quality time is spent

in thought and contemplation toward the enhancement of my inspirational writing pursuits, the results of which will become a part of my legacy.

I hold fond reflections of my mother and father living into their 80s and 90s. Her, quietly singing the old spiritual “Take My Hand, Precious Lord.” Him, finding solace in the 23rd Psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd ...” I am strengthened still by their resilience.

At 95, I am still meeting the challenges of aging, giving all the glory and honor to the spirit of God within me.



Marilyn King-Compton is a long-standing member of Christ Universal Temple in Chicago, Illinois, and for 40 years has been a contributing writer to Daily Inspiration for Better Living.

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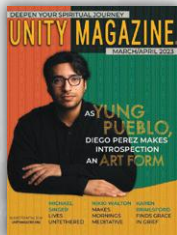
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