

Aging With

Grace



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INTRODUCTION

Getting older is no picnic. Our bodies don't look and function as they once did. Our self-image and confidence may take a hit. Our mortality suddenly looms large.

And yet, some people age with poise and grace. They maintain their optimism, spirit, humor, and vitality no matter what.

What's their secret?

This booklet shares stories, lessons, and spiritual guidance on how to navigate the experience of aging, from the inside out. May it help rekindle your own ageless spirit and make every day of your life the best it can be.

Blessings on your journey,

Your friends in Unity

THAT PIONEER SPIRIT

By Rev. Mark Fuss

When my niece Kiernan was in kindergarten she once asked my grandmother Gladys, “Grandma, were you a pioneer?” My grandmother replied with a smile, “No, honey. I’m not quite that old.” We all had a good chuckle, but truth be told, my grandmother always exhibited the pioneer spirit. It’s that strength of character, will, and faith that said, “No matter what comes my way, I will get through this.”

My grandma was a Southern woman with an indomitable spirit. Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines *indomitable* as “impossible to defeat or discourage.” We just called it “backbone.” Looking back I can see the impact my grandmother’s positive approach to life had on my young mind. The words “quit” and “complain” were not in her vocabulary.

I’ve heard it said that “Life is 10 percent what happens to you and 90 percent how you respond to it.” Grandma Gladys faced repeated life challenges with great love and great strength. Her faith was her anchor in life.

Shortly after her 50th birthday, my grandma contracted Guillain-Barré syndrome and was paralyzed from the waist down. She was told she would never walk again. Within months she had persevered and taught herself to walk with crutches—overcoming a debilitating illness and never complaining, standing on her firm foundation of faith and family. For the next 42 years she lived a full and happy life, traveling the world, and doing it all on crutches.

When my grandma made her transition a couple of years ago, I was honored to give her eulogy. In preparation for that task I

sat and thumbed through her well-worn Bible. There were notes and comments written in the margins throughout. When I came to the Book of Job, I found that over the title she had written, “Tried, Tested, and Triumphant!”

That is the pioneer spirit I saw in my grandmother. She faced every challenge, every illness, every joy with the same positive trust and strength. She did what needed to be done.

Erma Bombeck once said, “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left and could say, ‘I used everything you gave me.’”

That was my grandma, a pioneer for sure.



AGING WITH GRACE

By Rev. Claudell County

In Hinduism, a person's life is separated into four stages: student, householder, retiree, and ascetic (investing one's remaining time to the sacred). I have studied this since my early days in a yoga ashram, but I never applied it to myself.

Someone gave me a book that included a reference to the first and second halves of life—first the “doing stage” of the accomplisher, producer, and achiever; then the “being stage” of the meditator, mentor, and philosopher. I wondered: *Did these stages apply to me?*

A short time later, my family doctor said to me, “When people become elderly, their bodies ...” (I didn't hear a word after that.) *Elderly? Was he talking to me? Impossible.* Even though I would be 70 on my next birthday, I was still strong and happily serving others.



I began to contemplate aging.

A good friend asked me who I would be if I didn't attach my self-worth to being a minister, professor, counselor, or musician. These designations had defined me and had told me what to do and what not to do each day. Who was I if I no longer served in these ways? (I must have forgotten my true self as a beloved child of God!) I began a new identity search.

Looking at aging, I had to observe my beliefs and feelings about death and the afterlife. Was I comfortable with the thought of my body dying? How long did I have to live and what could I fit into that time? How many books could I read and how many old friends could I visit? I downsized. I felt panicky. I studied the literature on living longer: losing weight was the No. 1 priority to prevent heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and dementia. I took an honest, objective look at my weight and health. What had I done? I found myself depressed and confused.

Facing the facts was painfully necessary to make the needed changes to reach peace within myself. Still, I had no solutions, no words, and no answers. I opened to guidance—the only path left. I had to find peace and a true sense of myself.

In meditation I contemplated what my life could be like. What did I need to do? The words came ... *just BE ... everything will be shown at the right time ... you cannot make anything happen ... you have nothing to DO. BE ... one calm moment at a time.*

Since then, I've learned to walk gently into unknown places without crippling fear. I have received nudges and have followed them. With each day I unwind from the past and downsize my stuff. I have observed my self ... just being me, and it has freed me to be happy. Somewhere along this journey, with peace in my heart, I will release all that I have been and be all that *I AM*. And this will be Grace—a gift from God.



AGING AIN'T FOR SISSIES

By Rev. Margaret Flick

“Getting old isn’t for sissies.”—Bette Davis

I used to laugh at this quote; now I understand it. Aging gracefully takes courage and humor. People who age with grace have an approach to life worth emulating. My friend Juanita, who died at 97, was one such person. She taught me to:

- *Have a passion or an interest that keeps you vibrant.* Juanita was an artist whose creativity spilled over into all areas of her life. What helps you see the beauty in the world?
- *Be who you are.* Juanita was always herself. She didn’t sugarcoat things, she didn’t feel sorry for herself. She kept her wicked sense of humor and loving ways throughout her life.
- *Create the life you want.* The Unity teaching that “thoughts held in mind produce after their kind” means we create our reality. We have the power to create the life we want, and my friend created an amazing one.
- *Be grateful.* Be grateful for everything.
- *Be kind.* Being kind and respectful affects us from the inside out. Kind people are often happier people. Be there for people in a way that honors who they are and what *they* need.
- *Pray.* Affirmative prayer creates our reality in the moment, which is why we pray without ceasing. Appreciation is a prayer, gratitude is a prayer, love is a prayer.

Someone once said, “The basis of a beautiful life is a beautiful mind.” The people who age gracefully have a beautiful mind, a beautiful heart, and a beautiful soul. We can all find that beauty in us.

APPRECIATING THE SIMPLE

By Rev. Ed Townley

The idea of aging gracefully would not have made sense to my younger self, since the possibility of aging at all seemed remote, given my self-destructive choices. That changed—well, everything changed—



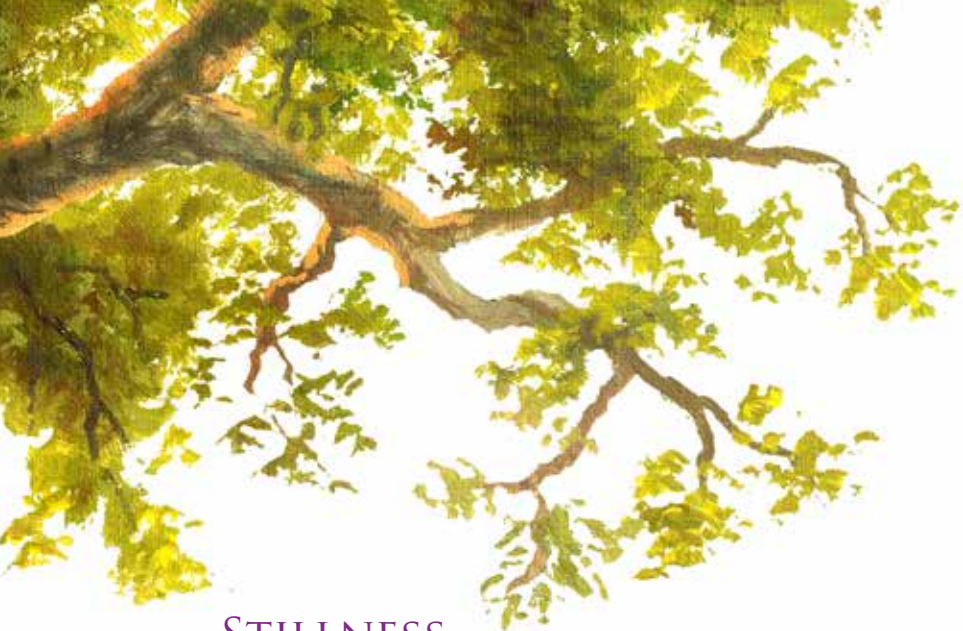
when I found myself in a program of recovery at age 30, staggering from meeting to meeting, trying to make sense of what was happening.

I couldn't deal with any complicated explanation or advice; the pithy, pointed hints posted on meeting walls were all that I could grasp. The most stunning information I found on countless church basement walls was something that would never have occurred to me on my own: One day at a time!

Today I find in those five one-syllable words the secret to pretty much everything. Certainly they express everything I know about aging gracefully: One day at a time. The Truth is, by living one day at a time, aging becomes nothing more or less than an expression of the dualistic illusion that is the essence of our mortal experience. If I focus on whatever might be defined as "aging gracefully" in a physical sense, I am giving power to the very idea of aging. My intention instead is to enjoy this rich and wonderful life experience one day at a time. By being open to each day's opportunities, we discover creative choices for shifting our collective consciousness into a new, elevated dimension that is the kingdom of heaven.

So the secret to aging gracefully is to give thanks that in Truth I do not age at all! Oh, sure, my physical form is nearing the end of its usefulness; and it will, at some point, be time to set it down and begin the next stage of my ongoing spiritual journey. But it's one day at a time!

Today I appreciate the many, many ways in which the whole human package—physical body, mortal mind—serves my spiritual purpose. I see to the needs of that body as they express. I tend to that mind with Spirit-focused prayer and meditation. The day unfolds gracefully. And my ageless Self moves me forward in an energy of infinite love—one day at a time.



STILLNESS

By Tom Baker

When I am old, old, old as old as
an oak glowing enormous and gold
at a dappling day's end; when
my face is as wrinkled as
the face of a pond in the wind; when
remembering is my work and
a nap is my recreation, then
I will be still enough to pray, to
hold sunlight in my hand and
wait for love
the way love has of old
waited for me.

IT'S WHAT'S INSIDE THAT COUNTS

By Rev. Paula Mekdeci

When my grandmother turned 95, I asked her: “Well, Gan, how does it feel to be 95?” She paused, shrugged her shoulders, and said, “No different.”

It was an answer that both inspired and alarmed me. On the one hand, I loved that she still felt youthful inside. On the other hand, I’d always thought (hoped?) that as one becomes elderly, one somehow feels different in a way that makes it okay.

I mentioned it to my mom who nodded in agreement with Gan’s comment. “You never grow old behind the eyes,” she said.

Well, that explained a lot. It explained why my grandmother could sometimes say blunt and surprising things; how she could be more irreverent than one might expect from an elder.

It also explained why my mother was so vital and alive into her own old age. Even as an “elder,” Mom loved dancing with her husband, listening to my husband play oldies but goodies on the piano, going to Hawaii, being with her children and grandchildren, and talking with me and/or my sister late into the night.

My grandmother and mother have both passed on now, but they have left me lasting lessons about aging. First: Don’t let your chronological age be an issue—just keep going. Keep living. Keep finding ways to delight in what you *can* do and the simple pleasures in life.



And second: Beauty is on the inside. You may fret about how you look on the outside, but people love what's on the inside. My grandmother and mother were beautiful to me no matter what their age. What I noticed, and what I most remember, was the sparkle in their spirit and the twinkle in their eyes; the love they shared; and the people they were.

Sometimes when I look in the mirror or see my picture and realize I'm not the young whippersnapper I used to be, I remember that when others look at me, they don't fixate over my outer appearance like I do. They connect with the Spirit inside me. And so can I!

FUR FRIENDS

By Rev. Toni Stephens Coleman

It helps to have friends when getting older. Not just people friends, but fur friends. I have never intentionally chosen an orange cat, but they have chosen me. It must be a soul thing.

My first cat was Applesauce Pat. He nurtured me through my earliest years and my mother's illness until I was put into the judicial system. Then, like everyone else, he was gone. I like to think that he was so special that someone took him in. Many years later, the thought of his purr and mew are still comforting to me. I think every orange cat who has come to me since then has some essence of his precious soul. He fine-tuned my nervous system to the purr and mew of the cats who followed.

Today I live with the fifth in the legacy. Orange cats have been a more stable presence in my life than people. Applesauce Pat, Sandy, Sunshine, Nicholas Nichelby, and Nicholas Nichelby II all gave their independence over to me, melting into my body to share breath, warmth, and heartbeat at the end of each day. They purred me to sleep, removing all care and concern. They taught me about ease and grace.

Cats don't live as long as people, so when mine have come to the end, whether they have gone with a surprise jolt of stroke or a simple last breath, there has been a remarkable gentleness present. It has not been easy for me losing my best friend. However, I found their little souls would peek at me from around a door or wake me in the middle of the night to tell me they were all right.

Nicholas Nichelby, my soul cat for 18 years, led me to a second Nicholas Nichelby only three weeks after he died. I went to see a

puppy. A big orange cat followed me around. The rescue person told me his name was Nicholas Nichelby. He needed a home. He stood on the ledge in front of me and nudged me under my chin. I knew it was the activity of God—serendipity.

Several months after bringing Nicholas Nichelby II home we found the puppy for us, a 7-week-old teagle (terrier-beagle) named Miss Mali. Nicholas was big brother, teacher, and

mentor to the puppy. They are close friends

and add a peaceful layer to life. They have no awareness of aging, yet their relationship adjusts as they mature. They enjoy the blessings of each day and each other. I feel fully caressed with a little dog snuggled on one side and a big orange cat snuggled on the other.



As I have gone through health challenges, this second Nicholas has been my night nurse, leading me to the bathroom, making sure I got back to bed safely, then purring me to sleep. When I was too tired, he knew what I needed and gently touched my cheek to tell me. He has helped me live gracefully through difficult experiences.

Fur friends are helpful health managers. When I have my blood pressure taken, I imagine I am petting Nicholas. It visibly calms

me! Nick coaches me as I exercise. Miss Mali is a ready walking companion. They are truly gifts of grace!

AGE IS A STATE OF MIND

By Rev. Jeanmarie Eck

“I refuse to grow old gracefully!” my mother asserted, as she punctuated the end of the story of how she beat diabetes. In my mind, my mother has always been the picture of aging gracefully. But for her, the idea of “growing old gracefully” is distasteful. It means accepting the regular course of aging by looking old and feeling old. Instead, she sees herself as strong and sharp and able to do everything she desires.

My mom gave birth to me when she was 42 years old, at a time when it was much less common to have children in your 40s than it is now. But she never let age define her.

She taught me by the way she carries herself that aging is a reflection of your thinking—and Mom refuses to think old. She always has friends who are younger than her and keeps her mind sharp by doing crosswords, reading a variety of books, keeping up with the news, and doing her mentally challenging work as a medical transcriptionist. She taught me that the key to staying young is to stay active, both mentally and physically.

Mom also taught me by the way she beat diabetes. It was a major scare for her to be diagnosed with prediabetes since her own mother, after years of diabetes, had died in surgery to implant a pacemaker. My mom lived through that same operation and was determined to no longer follow in her mother’s footsteps. Her doctor told her to cut out sugar, and through prayer and the power of will, Mom completely changed her diet. No more late-night snacks other than an apple, and no sweets. She focused on protein, vegetables, and fruits and lost about 30 pounds within three months. Her doctor was in awe. He said he had diagnosed



many people with prediabetes, but had never seen anyone follow through as my mom had. Her blood sugar fell to normal levels and has remained there. She is steadfast about staying young and healthy.

I most recently saw my mom when she came to visit us for my daughter's first birthday. She said the keys to keeping young were a healthy diet, regular exercise, a good skin care routine, keeping one's mind sharp, an active prayer life, and being in a church community. When we went to church together, she asked for prayer that she will live to see her granddaughter grow up. She said her deep love for her family is the leading motivation for her healthy choices.

When I became pregnant at 39, I knew I could raise a child in my 40s because my mom did it and never let her age stop her. She taught me that with God and perseverance, you can do whatever you set your mind to, including living a full life and never looking your age.

CHOOSE YOUR APPROACH

By Rev. Paul John Roach

Aging is inevitable; our approach to it is not. We all hope to live and die with dignity and grow old with grace. Circumstances can make that difficult, but we can always choose how to view and interpret those circumstances.

I watched my mother age prematurely as she spent five years constantly caring for my profoundly disabled sister, Margaret. Exhausted from the process, she agreed to place my sister in the hospital for a week so she could get some rest. After only three days in the hospital, Margaret died, perhaps because the nurses could not offer the same tender and sensitive care my mother had provided.

My mother was only in her early 30s at the time—but I saw her lose her teeth and become grey-haired from sadness, guilt, and grief. My father drowned his sorrows in alcohol, and although they eventually moved on with their lives, they always carried a certain world-weary sadness.

My dad died of a heart attack when he was just 52; my mom followed him five years later, again from a heart attack at age 52.

Their deaths, devastating to me at the time, became strong motivation for choosing a different approach when faced with tragedy. My now 30-year career as a Unity minister began as a conscious choice to see life and consciousness differently. My mother and father were good, decent people, but they never had the opportunity to grow old with grace. Instead, two other people in my family have shown me how to handle the senior years successfully.

My mother-in-law, Emily Patrick, mother of my late wife, Davis, died this past summer at age 95. She was in robust health until a year before she passed. A community theatre actress for much of her life, she continued to act and direct plays into her 90s. When I asked her the secret to aging, she told me, “Stay curious. Exercise your brain in whatever way works for you.” In her case, I’m sure it was learning and mastering lines. She followed current events, too, and kept up with a wide variety of new and old friends.

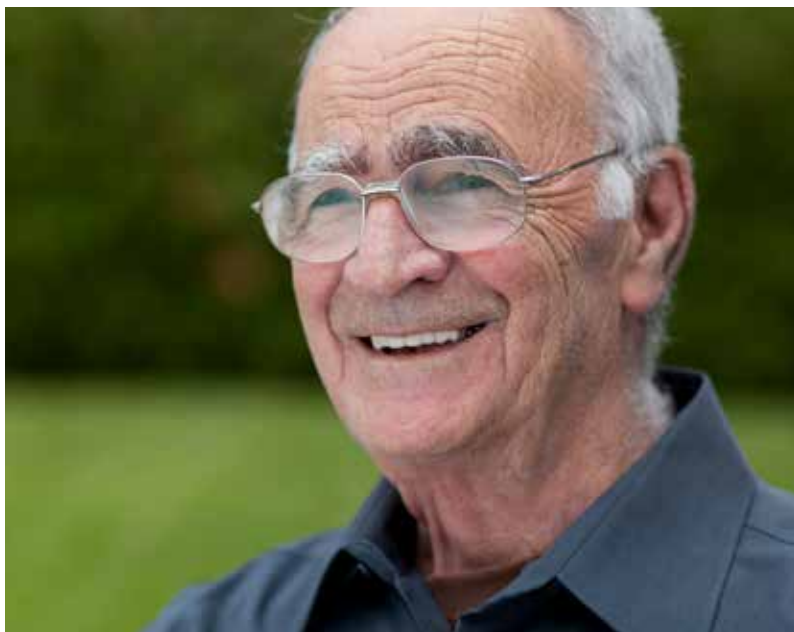
My father-in-law, Frank, the father of my wife, Wendy, is 88. A figure skater when young, he has been athletic all his life. A longtime private pilot, he took up sailing in his 70s and still plays a full round of golf. When I asked him the secret of aging, he said, “Stay active. Get up out of your chair and do something, anything. Don’t stay put.” Good advice to all would-be couch potatoes!



What I have learned from my relatives and my own experience is that aging is a choice. Circumstances do not define us. Stay curious and active to maintain your brain and body functions. No matter what ailment comes your way (and both Emily and Frank have had a few), you, too, can grow old with grace.

A NEW WRINKLE

By Rev. Michael Korpan



A few years ago, I was home writing a paper for one of my seminary classes when I answered a call on my cell phone. The caller was Gloria, a friend of almost 40 years who said to me, “Michael, I’m calling to let you know that Hubie (her husband) died.”

Before I could digest what she was sharing and formulate an expression of condolences, she added, “and it was beautiful.” I understood. Hubie had passed with grace.

I know this booklet is about aging with grace versus dying with grace, but I believe that is a distinction without a difference.

In Unity we often talk about the importance of “letting go,” or “Let go and let God.” Nevertheless, whenever we let go we die a little bit. We can let go by kicking and screaming, making the experience horrible. Or we can release in youthful anticipation, celebrating the new life ahead. This is dying with grace.

Aging with grace is much the same. Becoming (growing) is always preferable to simply being (maintaining). We know this intuitively when we’re very young, as we gladly forego crawling for walking, and eagerly trade adolescence for young adulthood. We anticipate and embrace the more advanced levels of life and all the privileges they bring. If we appreciate that what is coming is a new phase of the precious gift of life, we can embrace it gracefully.

I have been blessed to watch two mothers-in-law go through the aging process. In each case there were no complaints or regrets about what once was. Each knew hardships that turned into blessings, and new opportunities. Over the years their crow’s-feet would slowly transition to eagle’s claws, but it didn’t matter. All of us around them celebrated each new facial wrinkle as representative of their joy in experiencing each wrinkle in their lives. Each of these women knew the preciousness of life and lived it gracefully.

Personally, I vividly recall the morning several years ago when I looked at my face in the mirror and mumbled to myself, “Good Lord! When did this happen?” Such awakenings may be rude but they still are awakenings. They bring forth moments of decision. The aging will continue regardless. If we see the process as part of the miracle of life, and are joyful that there is so much more to become, then we age with grace. Imagine how dull life would be if there were never a new wrinkle!

AGING TAKES TIME

By Rev. Toni Stephens Coleman

Aging takes time
Like making fine wine.
We start out green
With hope and possibility
Leaning toward the sun.
We think we know it all
Yet we don't ...
Then we are crushed and
squeezed

Sifted and selected
Disciplined and enhanced
into form.
Through years of maturation
We come to fruition and bloom
Into an elegance and grace
And find our optimum place
In the scheme of things
Aged and sublime and fine.



BY GRACE WE AGE

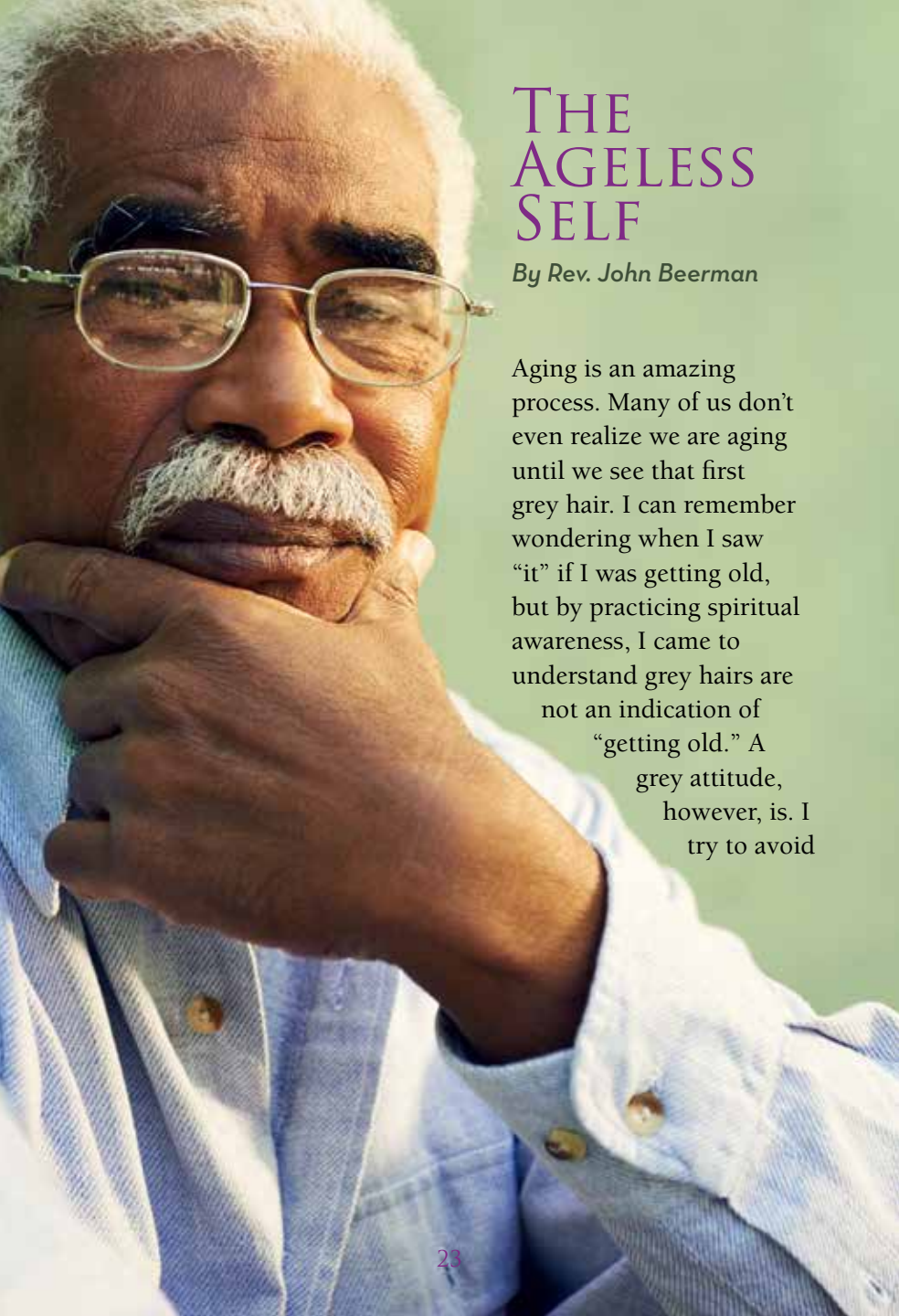
By Rev. Melody Martin

We age from the moment we are born. What is it that empowers us to age? I propose it is grace. Charles Fillmore defines *grace* as “Good will; favor; disposition to show mercy; aid from God in the process of regeneration” (*The Revealing Word*, p. 88).

I believe grace is unconditional love and the power from God in the process of generation. It has been by grace that I have been empowered to live this life with a visible disability. It has been by grace that I recovered from being run over by a large truck. And it is by grace that I live my life as my abilities lessen.

Grace is both a gift and a given. When we consciously receive it, the power of grace grows within. When we are aware that we are loved unconditionally, we can move into being unconditional love. When we become aware of the power within, we can use that power to intentionally create. It is by grace that we age, transform our lives, and transform the world!





THE AGELESS SELF

By Rev. John Beerman

Aging is an amazing process. Many of us don't even realize we are aging until we see that first grey hair. I can remember wondering when I saw "it" if I was getting old, but by practicing spiritual awareness, I came to understand grey hairs are not an indication of "getting old." A grey attitude, however, is. I try to avoid

“grey attitude” days by recognizing and expressing my true spiritual nature.

Aging is normal, healthy, and inevitable for the body. However, the Spirit within me never ages or gets old. It is powerful and indestructible, and it is my true Self.

Many grey hairs later, I have come to appreciate my hair and my body as they age. Our bodies are not who we are; they are the shrine we reside in. As we begin to understand the relationship of body, mind, and soul (the Unity threefold expression of Spirit), we become free to manifest Spirit more abundantly.

Our bodies are but an outer expression of the perfection of the Christ Mind, and our soul is the inner expression of the same mind. As I focus my attention on being one with the Christ Mind, my body ages gracefully, and the grey hairs are no big deal. If I choose to focus on keeping my body looking youthful, I can get discouraged.

When I look in the mirror today, I see beyond my physical self to an ageless expression of Spirit that loves to sing, play, and be silly, just as when my body was much younger. Charles Fillmore discovered the truth of spiritual dominion over his body when at age 94, he said he “fairly sizzled with zeal and enthusiasm.” He experienced health and wholeness at 94 as a demonstration of Spirit’s timeless expression of youth.

We, too, can age gracefully. In fact, we can age with grace, dignity, and the knowledge that Spirit is who we really are and Spirit does not age, wrinkle, or have grey hair. Spirit will also be with us when our bodies are ill or tired. I thank Spirit every day for being my true self as my body ages, and for nurturing my body, mind, and soul.

REFRAMING RETIREMENT

By Joyce Flowers



Yesterday my assistant hinted that she wanted to know when I would retire. My first reaction was to recoil in fear and annoyance. To me, bringing up the subject of someone else's retirement is akin to asking them if they've gained weight over the holidays (of course) or forgotten to put on lipstick (egad) or are aware of spinach between their teeth (yikes)! Of course, we know as we age that we will eventually think about retiring from our full-time jobs. It's just not what we want to think about right now.

For me the topic of retirement brings up loads of worries since I tend to worry about everything that I have not yet experienced. "Don't ask me not to worry," someone said. "The things I worry about don't happen!" With respect to retirement, I worry about money and loneliness and boredom and depression and feeling completely useless and regretting the decision to retire and feeling a terrible loss.

I was tired of feeling fear-ridden and grumpy about the topic. So I decided to approach it spiritually instead of through the internet. I've found that improving our spiritual condition is the only way to accomplish something that will be difficult for us.

Robert Brumet's *Finding Yourself in Transition* helped me immensely. He equates encountering transition times in our lives with encountering white water while canoeing. He writes: "It is very interesting to note that the most dangerous part of the trip can also be the most rewarding." During these times we can make rapid progress in our spiritual growth. *Daily Word* magazine suggests, "By turning within for divine guidance, I have the assurance that I am following the path that is right for me."

I took these thoughts into meditation, seeking a deep spiritual connection and wisdom. What came to me was a long-forgotten conversation with a dear friend about how much I was dreading turning 40. When asked what would make it okay, I answered spontaneously and from the heart: "The only thing to make turning 40 okay would be to be on a Greek island at the time!" "So," my friend suggested, "let's do exactly that!"

I am now planning my trip upon retirement to Paris, France. I'm going to get busy saving and get busy planning. And isn't that what it means to turn from dread and fear to love and excitement, to reframe the event as a wonderful opportunity to have our heart's desire?

I'm going to stop avoiding the topic of my retirement and start embracing it instead. I'm going to read more books on the topic and begin to cultivate a feeling of delight within myself about this opportunity. I'm going to give Spirit that "little willingness" that opens me to greater faith in a wonderful future filled with events created by a thoughtful, grace-filled Universe.

Here's to aging with grace!

I AGE WITH GRACE WHEN I LIVE WITH GRATITUDE

By Rev. Clive deLaporte

*When you have an attitude of gratitude, you wake up
saying ‘thank you.’—Maya Angelou*

Our ministry was recently invited to provide an afternoon of spiritual music at a local senior center. It was on that afternoon that I had the blessing of meeting Mavis. On entering the music hall I noticed her immediately. Her presence was obvious and her energy captivating.

For a brief moment we made eye contact and although we had never met, I felt a distinct connection with her as a kindred spirit. It wasn't until later in the afternoon that I got to meet and talk with her for the first time. I was immediately engaged with her enlightened presence and youthful vitality.



Unable to contain my curiosity any longer, at one point in our conversation I asked her age. She looked at me thoughtfully for a moment and smiled knowingly as she replied that her age was neither chronological nor biological, but eternal. Mavis continued to explain that she had released the concept of age and aging from her consciousness, her body, and her life.

“I asked because you have a quite remarkably youthful presence and vitality.”

“Gratitude!” she responded.

“Gratitude?” I asked.

“Yes! Yes, I wake up joyfully to the dawn and blessing of each new day in an attitude of gratitude for all the divine good that is, and all the divine good coming to be.”

Mavis went on to say that she lives with no regrets, releasing each day to what is past and receiving each new day as a gift, a divine present, with gratitude. She is joyfully thankful for the gift of life and the opportunity to explore and experience the infinite possibility of being and becoming. To this she attributed the attitude and intention that empowers her to release the concept of age and the consciousness of aging, and to live through the stages of her life with gratitude and grace.

When we later parted, I thanked Mavis for sharing her insights and inspiration on aging with me. She smiled and winked, and before turning her attention again to the room, said to me, “The gratitude in me sees and blesses the gratitude in you.”

Without hesitation and an instant smile, I replied, “And so it is.”

Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.—Ralph Waldo Emerson

MEANINGFUL MILESTONES

Rev. Barbara Hadley

One way to mark life's milestones is with rites of passage. For my 40th year, I started a new business and successfully faced the challenges of inventory and employees. For my 50th year,



I commissioned an artist to do a soul painting to guide me through the coming decade. I have turned to that painting many times for support and guidance, hearing God speaking through the beautiful images.

This year marks another milestone and I have planned a spiritual journey with a small group of Truth seekers. We will separate ourselves from our familiar world and travel together, forming bonds and bridges with other cultures.

These milestones give me perspective. I can look back on my life and see pivotal times that developed within me the spiritual gifts of patience, determination, and love. These spiritual gifts have lifted me through the accompanying losses of loved ones and disappointment.

Milestones can be intentional, such as a choice made for a certain birthdate, or unintentional, such as the change thrust upon us by a medical challenge or a sudden job change. Marking milestones helps us see how we have persevered, overcome, triumphed with God's guidance. This yields strength for whatever is ahead on life's journey.

I affirm: *Seeing milestones, I am strengthened spiritually for the journey.*



BEAM ON, GRANDMOTHER!

(FEBRUARY 6, 1915–NOVEMBER 10, 2011)

By Rev. Elise Cowan

I met Margaret Hauschild in 1999. Her eyes twinkled like she knew a secret and when I introduced myself, her quiet chuckle touched my heartstrings. We were at a Wednesday night service at a church other than Unity, and she told me she and her husband John had come there a few years ago wanting to teach a class. She said the church had no interest in their classes but invited them to “keep showing up!”



We sat down in the “living room” of the church that night as a group of ragtag souls, most of whom had lost their way in life, including me. Margaret was beaming her love and light while her husband was in quiet contemplation, rubbing his short cropped hair. I felt an immediate attraction to this woman who looked old enough to be my grandmother (she was 89 and I was 37). I was new in town and it felt good to have a warm welcome.

I eventually found Tyler Unity Center. One day as I was looking for a place to sit, I saw Margaret in her usual beaming glory and I eagerly sat beside her. Now we had two experiences in common.

She and John appeared at a funny hat party on New Year's Eve in 1999. Margaret was sparkling and radiant. This woman had more joy and love of life than anyone I had ever met. It continued even after John made his transition a few months later. Margaret inspired me to find happiness in all of life, no matter what.

She began to come to me for haircuts at the hair salon where I worked. Every time I saw her she emitted that same loving acceptance and grace. We discovered over the next few years that we both loved to play Scrabble, and she could not be beat! I fell in love with this beautiful woman and one day I suggested to her that since we had so much in common, I was going to adopt her as my grandmother. She squealed in delight and said she would love that.

Soon after, her son Richard decided it was time to move his mother to Columbia, Missouri, where he lived so he could take care of her. I got married and my husband Ken and I began to travel to Unity Village near Kansas City, Missouri, to take Spiritual Education and Enrichment classes. Each visit included a side trip to Columbia to visit "grandmother." Ken fell in love with her, too, and she with him.

These trips gave us much more time to visit and Margaret always delighted in telling about the wonderful life she had lived—how she had been an English teacher when that was frowned upon for women; how she had married and had children; how she became a licensed Unity teacher; and most of all, how she loved life!

AGING REDEFINED

By Rev. Frieda King

I had a friend who refused to age. She said aging was a lie. She advised her friends not to buy into beliefs about aging and the ingrained societal belief in the aging process. Willingly, she let life unfold through her by actively participating in stage acting, dancing, traveling, friendships, and learning French. My friend lived her conviction of agelessness.

Watching her age gracefully, it was easy to agree with my friend and her ideas on age. It helps to look at aging from a mental and spiritual perspective. Our feelings about



aging are based on our perception of life and our attitudes about aging. Aging can be viewed as an idea, not a fact.

I also saw how my dauntless elder friend benefited from her association with a Unity church and her practice of Unity spiritual principles and beliefs.

Today aging is being redefined in light of the growing population of seniors. A *Huffington Post* article on May 21, 2014, indicated a change in how we think about age and when “old age” begins. Aging was earlier thought to begin around 68. As of 2014, “old age” is considered to be age 80 and above.

In addition, the growing number of seniors between retirement age and 80 or older have modernized the elder years. Many have begun new careers or are working beyond usual retirement



age. A significant number are attending college, taking adult education classes, and traveling—adding up to spirited living for many seniors. Observing today's senior population, “aging” seems to occur to the degree aging is emphasized or disregarded.

As Unity founders Charles and Myrtle Fillmore taught, we have a resolute power of life within us and the capacity of regeneration within every cell and molecule of our body temple. Our mind does not age and our physical abode maintains

its vibrancy through physical and mental fitness and exercise.

Certainly my friend gifted those who knew her with an unflinching propensity to live a healthy and vibrant senior life. Yet we can begin at any age to enjoy the gifts in each day and feel thankful for every moment of life and learning. We can be happy for each increment of time and every breath, rather than giving too much attention to our numerical age.

We can affirm: *Cheerfully, I greet every year, each moment as a cherished occasion to express life at its fullest and best.*

DEFYING PERCEPTIONS

By Rev. Lesley Miller

It hurt each time Aunt Mollie would introduce me as her “friend” when I still considered myself her “niece.” It was a painful reminder how, after 30 years in the family, most of the ex-in-laws had dropped me in the divorce. Not Aunt Mollie. We kept our regular lunch dates, had long drives to her eye appointments in Philadelphia, and even had Thanksgivings at my house after she moved to a nursing home.

Aunt Mollie would introduce me at the diner or Macy’s. Even in her 80s, she seemed to be known by everyone in Middlesex County who wanted to pay their respects and appreciate her late husband, “the Judge.” She knew all their names and situations, and would later share snippets with me from their half-century in the little law office across from the courthouse. I helped her clean out that office after Uncle Mike died.



Aunt Mollie wasn't born in this country, but you wouldn't know it. Slender and attractive, she couldn't have children, a regret she carried quietly for the most part. Her energies went into being her husband's legal secretary, entertaining for his career, and keeping their home. They were the *it* couple of their day. It always amazed me how they lived and worked together every day and still got along. To the outside world it looked as if she stayed back, let him shine, make the decisions, and literally do all the driving. Maybe that was true, until in their 80s, everything changed.

His dementia was sudden; no cause found. That's when I saw Aunt Mollie defy all perceptions of her. She took driving lessons and got back on the road to be with him every day in the nursing home. When she slipped on ice getting home one night, the broken shoulder didn't keep her home; she hired a driver. After Uncle Mike passed, she sold the house, choosing an apartment next to a shopping center with a Barnes & Noble, restaurants, and a Dollar Store. She walked there every day.

The driving went badly, which was when I got to know her better. She was not the fickle person people saw. She took pride in her strength, independence, and knowing what was going on in the world. She had clear opinions, some very traditional, but others surprisingly modern for someone born in 1915.

On one of our drives she shared how she admired my learning to fly; if she could do things over, she would have liked that. No, she didn't want to go for a ride. She liked the idea of a woman pursuing what she loved. We were two single women finding our way in the world, me in my 40s, then 50s, and her in her 80s, then 90s, supporting each other, growing and adapting as the rules changed around us. She lived to be 98, feisty and opinionated to the end. Grateful for our time together, I understand now why Aunt Mollie called me her "friend."

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