

## REPORT OF ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE MINISTER FOR ELDER CARE MINISTERIES

My favorite song from one of my favorite musicals asks: How do you measure a year? The song suggests the possibilities of measuring it in daylights or sunsets, in midnights or cups of coffee, in inches or miles, or in laughter or strife.

As we think about measuring the past year in our region's elder care ministries, let me suggest another possibility. Let's measure the year by glimpsing some of the work it included:

- Helping design a March event on ministry to older people for the American Baptist Women's Ministries of Rhode Island and serving as the keynote speaker at that event.
- Featuring our elder care ministries in a profile with Yale Divinity School's Career Services. The profile highlights ministry with older people as a possibility for current and future divinity students.
- Presenting workshops on *Talking About Your Wishes* for congregations in our region. These workshops provide participants with opportunities to reflect on and identify the conversations they may need to have concerning end-of-life plans and other issues.
- Coordinating the region's hosting of a combined youth choir of fifty middle- and high-school youth, along with thirty-four adult leaders, from two Baptist congregations in Texas for a week in June. In addition to singing at two churches and several nursing homes, the youth and their leaders helped with service projects planned by our elder care ministries. Those projects included staining an accessibility ramp at Lakewood Baptist Church and doing yardwork for older members of that congregation; completing a landscaping project at Ethan Place Assisted Living; working on landscaping at Bethany Baptist Church and yardwork for an older member of that congregation; painting classrooms at Pawtucket's First Baptist Church; cleaning and moving furniture at Community Church; working in the garden at First Baptist Church in America; and doing landscaping at Phenix Baptist Church.
- Partnering with Canonicus' Service Camp to work on projects that benefitted older home owners. One of the projects allowed us to collaborate with Tabernacle Baptist Church.
- Completing certification as an instructor of Mental Health First Aid, an eight-hour course that gives participants tools to identify when someone might be struggling with a mental-health or substance-use problem and connect them with appropriate support and resources. We offered the first training session for our pastors in late October.
- Leading a workshop during the annual MissionWorks conference. The workshop explored ways that congregations can embrace ministry with and for older people.
- Hosting a Christmas luncheon for retired clergy in our region and a Christmas party for American Baptist residents at John Clarke Retirement and Nursing Center and members of our regional staff.
- Completing a successful three-year partnership between elder care ministries and Lakewood Baptist Church.
- Preaching for and participating in worship with a number of our congregations.

The song I mentioned earlier ultimately suggests that we measure a year in love. I am proud to say that I think that all we do through our region's elder care ministries can be measured in just that way—as a gift of love for the people whose lives we are able to touch and transform.

For that and the opportunity to work with you and on your behalf, I am grateful.

Rev. Kathryn Palen  
Associate Executive Minister for Elder Care Ministries