

ANNUAL REPORT OF ELDER CARE MINISTRIES

Our region began a new chapter this year in its ongoing ministries with and among elders. I am grateful for the opportunity to help write this new chapter, which will use the significant programs and initiatives designed by Kathy Black and Marie Carpenter as a starting point.

As we come to understand new trends and developments among the aging population in today's world, we have a unique opportunity to expand the scope of the region's elder care ministries. Rather than simply imaging the senior adults among us as frail or forgetful, we can recognize that an overwhelming majority of individuals in the third of life are vibrant, engaged, inquisitive, contributing members of their communities, including their communities of faith.

That shift of perspective enables us to expand our vision for how congregations—both individually and in cooperation with one another—in our region might minister to and among elders. Here are a few possibilities we hope to explore during the upcoming year:

- Develop new programs and ministries that engage elders in opportunities for authentic community, stimulating learning, and meaningful service.
- Be proactive in helping individuals imagine and plan for living fully and faithfully during the third of life.
- Shift paradigms about church growth and recognize the outreach potential that lies among the increasing number of aging Baby Boomers.
- Provide training and ongoing support and resourcing for leaders and teams that plan and implement ministries for specific segments of the aging population—both within their congregations and larger communities.

To help imagine how to write this new chapter of our region's elder care ministries, I have been and will continue to:

- Meet with pastors and other congregational leaders to learn about the elder care ministries that already are in place and talk about new possibilities.
- Consult with chaplains, care-facility administrators, and advocacy-group leaders about existing resources and emerging needs related to elders in Rhode Island.
- Work with others on the regional staff to imagine new ways to integrate elder care ministries with other programs and ministries within the region and to build capacity as we move forward.
- Assemble task forces to focus on specific aspects of our emerging work.
- Develop programs and worship experiences for congregations and other groups.

I am grateful for the outstanding elder care work that has been done over the years in our region, excited about the new chapter we will be able to write together, and incredibly honored to be able to share in this critical area of ministry.

Peace and grace,
Kathryn Palen
Associate Executive Minister for Elder Care Ministries