

REPORT OF ASSOCIATE EXECUTIVE MINISTER FOR ELDER CARE MINISTERIES

“What do you like best about your work?”

I continue to be surprised by how often I am asked that question. Regardless of the frequency of the inquiry, I have yet to come up with a simple or quick response.

The reality is that I find energy, joy, challenge, and reward in so many parts of the work I am honored to do alongside and on behalf of our American Baptist Churches of Rhode Island. Here are just a few glimpses into that work from the past year:

- Developing workshops that are available to congregations and other gatherings within our region. The workshops cover topics ranging from planning for the end of life to rethinking ministry to older people to how art can enrich people as they age. (Examples include conducting and recording grandparent-grandchildren interviews at Wakefield Baptist Church and presenting a program on the use of *Five Wishes* during Calvary Baptist Church’s Seniors Christmas Luncheon.)
- Preaching for and participating in worship with a number of our congregations. During the summer I had the opportunity to develop a four-part sermon series, along with worship resources, that explored what it means to travel a lifelong journey as people of faith.
- Presenting two major new workshops: *How Music Reaches Our Seniors* during MissionWorks 2017, an event sponsored by our region and the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts, and *The Spiritual Gifts of Aging* during the Senior Agenda Coalition of Rhode Island’s annual Senior Conference and Expo.
- Establishing an elder care ministries team for our region. Joining me on the team are Jim Hopper, Warwick Central Baptist Church; Ron Provencal, Lakewood Baptist Church; Kurt Satherlie, Jamestown Central Baptist Church; Pam Viets, Wickford First Baptist Church; and Lisa Williams, Ebenezer Baptist Church.
- Participating in a research project at the University of Rhode Island. The Engaging Generations project matched URI students with older persons to meet one to one on an ongoing basis regarding technology but also to build intergenerational relationships.
- Serving on the Supports to Remain at Home subcommittee of the statewide Age Friendly RI initiative.
- Confirming a major service project to rehab homes of older people in June 2018. This project will involve a group of 80 youth and their sponsors from Texas, as well as leadership from our region. In addition to benefitting seniors, it will provide us with opportunities to learn about the viability of future rehab projects.
- Beginning collaboration with Dr. Jennifer Davidson, associate professor of theology and worship at American Baptist Seminary of the West, on using the frame of a “rule of life” to help people think about/prepare for retirement.
- Implementing Music and Memory, a national program that uses music to help individuals with memory issues, at John Clarke Retirement and Nursing Center. This effort will help us determine the viability of introducing similar programs at other sites within our region.
- Continuing conversations with pastors and lay leaders of congregations within the region about shaping/expanding ministries to/with older people.

I am grateful to be able to engage in this work with you and look forward to all the opportunities the upcoming year promises to bring for our region's elder care ministries.

Rev. Kathryn Palen
Associate Executive Minister for Elder Care Ministries