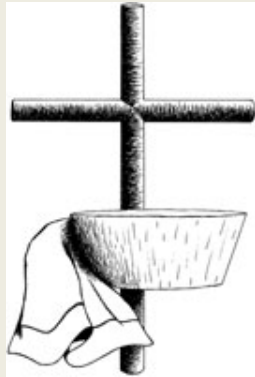


Deacon update



**So that your days
may be long...**

November 2012

Recently my last deacon training of the year was held at a long term care facility, appropriate given our focus on pastoral care with older adults. My co-presenter, Kim Ebersole, director of Family Life and Older Adult Ministries, started us off by asking the attendees to line up according to their response to the question “How old is old?” Those who felt that 50 was already kind of “pushing it” grouped together in one corner of the room; the cluster of those advocating for the mid-80s were in the opposite corner, with everyone else filling the space between. Not surprisingly, the “elders” in the room were clustered at the far end of the age-scale, anxious to push out the number attached to “old” as far as possible!

One of the livelier parts of the day was when the group shared what their congregations are currently involved in with this age group, using as a framework the traditional four functions of deacons—health and healing, advocacy and support, discipleship and hospitality, and even—or perhaps especially—unity and reconciliation. I listed these activities on sheets of sticky-backed flipchart paper; we soon ran out of wall space to post those densely-written pages. That was a good problem to have.

Our day together clearly demonstrated that there is lots going on in our congregations as we offer ministry with our elders— regardless of how you might think of that age group! As we move into this holiday season, a season we often tend to think of in terms of children, I encourage you to also remember the older adults in our families and congregations. Is someone in need of healing from a hurt? Is there a place to be an advocate for someone unable to speak for himself? How might the hospitality of the season be shown in meaningful ways, ways that make it clear that we follow Christ in all we do? Is there a need for reconciliation, a need to mend old wounds and start fresh? Think on these things, on ways to

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make this season a time when the faces of our elders light up just as brightly as those of our children and grandchildren.

Honor your father and your mother, as the Lord your God command you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
Deuteronomy 5:16

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donna Kline". The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent loop on the 'D' and a long tail on the 'e'.

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