

I've been thinking a lot lately about the question someone asked recently. It was one of those **Aha** moments. One of those times when clarity comes and suddenly everything is reframed differently. The question was "What do you think is the goal of ministry with/for older adults? Reflexively I answered it is *hope*! The goal is to be an effective witness for *hope*! That moment led to a look at our shared ministry with every age level. When all else is said and done, isn't that the goal of Christian witness? Isn't that the message of Jesus, the message of an empty tomb? Isn't that the message of Easter, the message of resurrection? In God's economy there is always this factor called *hope*. No matter where or how we do ministry we are those who affirm *hope*. In other words we are those who, in every circumstance, affirm that new life, abundant life, resurrected living is still possible. We offer that assurance in the name of one who never forgot that "*all things work together for the good for those who love God.*" What does this look like in older adult ministries?

A glimpse is seen in the following story. Mary was showing me some paintings she had done at a class in our assisted living community. I was stunned! They were quite good! What stunned me was that Mary had even attended the class. When I first met her she appeared resigned to be with us, but not thrilled. It was not her first choice. She had come reluctantly as a last resort in managing her life. Medical issues were uppermost; she talked constantly about them. Even though encouraged to become involved, she had resisted. "What made you go to the class?" "I was bored and so I figured I'd give it a try. Was I surprised to discover I had talent! Had I not been here I might never have known. Who would have thought an old woman over eighty would discover a new talent and a new love?"

Who? The one in whose name we do ministry, the one who called people of every age to abundant living, that is who! Ministering with older adults is about calling them to *hope*, to seeing new life that is abundant, to see resurrected living in the midst of change and loss. It is about creating environments and relationships in which the aging might discover "a new talent and a new love." It is not easy! It does not always happen! But it becomes more likely when we keep the goal in mind, <sup>we</sup> challenge the aging to see possibility and hope in every circumstance of their lives. <sub>John</sub>

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