

## From Garden to Flower Pot

Recently I noticed one of the flowerbeds in which the Staff at the Wesley Village (where I work) had planted bulbs. This is the fourth Spring since they were planted. A fair number of the bulbs did not blossom this year. This made me think about a meditation I planned to share with the Staff at an annual event. Was this a metaphor for the direction of our lives? As we age do we grow (as it were) smaller and smaller gardens?

Ultimately I shared with the Staff the understanding that the older adults who live in our community once had large gardens, in which so many bulbs blossomed. They all come to us with histories filled with families and grown children, with careers that added purpose to their lives, with relationships that sustained them and gave their lives meaning, and with spiritual journeys that have guided them. Yet when they arrive, their "garden" is much smaller. Their families are often out of state, they have long since retired from their careers, many of the relationships have ended with death or moving to be near families, and their ability to worship and their spiritual needs met in a familiar setting is no longer possible. Indeed many of them feel as if they have nothing left to nourish and grow.

We mused about what that meant as we seek to minister to/with them. I suggested that we <sup>help them</sup> discover the meaning and the joy that is still possible as they cultivate new growth, even if it seems as if the most they can do is to be content with a "flower pot." We then reflected on the specifics of how we can do that in the context of our jobs.

Out of that meditation came this article and these questions!

How much richer would our ministry with/to older adults become if we called our older adults to the new life Christ always offers?

How much richer would it be if we expected them to continue being a valued member of the community, offering their gifts and talents where they are?

How much richer would it be if we refused to see their physical limitations as a barrier to the servant ministry to which we are all called?

How much richer would it be if we stopped sympathizing with their weaknesses, but instead witnessed to how much they still have to offer?

I am still playing with the ramifications of these questions and offer them to you as you think about ministry with/to older adults. I offer one last question! Is your ministry presently allowing the "garden" of life to grow, even if it is confined to a "flower pot?"

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