

"It was only after my mother died that we realized she had long term health insurance. It would have made things a lot easier if we had known beforehand. We never had to place her in a nursing home, but we sure worried about how we would pay for it if the need would have arisen."

This daughter's story is all too typical. Too often older adults (for a variety of reasons) do not share a clear list of information a caregiver would need to meet the needs of a sick or incompetent older adult. When crises arise family members or friends are often left without the information required to do the best possible for their loved one.

Increasingly it is not enough to have a living will, a medical proxy, or someone with the power of attorney. Insurance information, both health and life, are important pieces of information for a caregiver. Wants and wishes about care, about location of health care facilities, doctor and hospital preferences are valuable tools for a caregiver.

What a vital ministry it would be if churches would offer occasional sessions on planning for crises of illness and disability! Creating a list with the older adult to be kept on file at the church, as well as sharing this list with the designated caregiver would offer comfort to all concerned.

In a time of high costs, increased options, and better informed older adults, and desire to have our wishes followed, it is necessary to plan ahead and to make a list that is as specific as possible.

What better setting to make these choices than within the community of faith, where our beliefs about life and death are considered important? What better setting than the church who sees beyond the temporal and envisions death as a gateway, rather than a closed door?

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(I am available for workshops, speaking, and preaching on themes related to Older Adult Ministries. I would love to help congregations organize sessions on planning for crises of illness and disability. Reach me at 203-378-4702)