



# Ideas for Ministry for and with Older Adults

From the Older Adult Ministry  
of the Kentucky Conference

## DRAWING CLOSER: FAITH AND ART

In an effort to reach out to seniors in the church community, The Center for Creative Arts, an outreach ministry of Shady Grove United Methodist Church in Glen Allen, Virginia, launched Drawing Closer, an intergenerational class that explores the parallels between our faith journey and the creative process. Funded by a grant from the UM Committee on Older Adult Ministries, and the GBOD's Center on Aging & Older Adult Ministries, the class provided an opportunity for seniors and youth to enjoy fun and fellowship while creating art on the church campus, and will also be offered at a local nursing home.

Drawing and painting are relaxing meditative activities. However, seniors are often reluctant to try something new, sometimes because of disabilities, or financial constraints. Even committing to an eight-week class seemed daunting when faced with the often unpredictable infirmities of aging. The idea of a relaxed, faith-inspired class where they could interact with young people from the church enticed ten seniors to give it a try. The class provided a chance for young people in the church to minister to, learn from and build relationships with the seniors. The youth also participated in an interactive training session at a nursing home where they learned about some of the disabilities of aging.

Each class began with inspiration from Scripture, and was followed by an art lesson. For example, "Faith" centered upon First Corinthians 13:12, NIV, "For now we see only a dim likeness of things. It is as if we were seeing them in a mirror. But someday we will see clearly." Students were then presented with an out of focus, upside down image and encouraged to draw the basic shapes. With successive images in clearer focus, the artists added more detail to their drawings. When they turned their work right side up, they were amazed to see that they had drawn a fully recognizable figure. Other classes focused on light, line, perspective, and negative space.

The laughter heard down the hall each day infused the whole building with joy! The seniors, who often struggle to get dressed and get out, enjoyed the class so much that we heard many accounts of how making it to class was a priority each week. The class ended with an exhibition of artwork and a reception. Frank Basil, our Youth Director, wrote: "This was a great opportunity

to help Shady Grove as a church draw closer together. I believe it helps for our youth to learn from our seniors and understand the love they have for Shady Grove and for our seniors to know the Church has a bright future... We must continue to draw closer as a church and to God to be the faithful disciples we are called to be.”

From “Center Sage”, Issue 22; Fall 2011. By Susan Brown