

summer 2020

# ECHOES

UNDER THE RIMS



ADAPTATION



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# ABIDING & ADAPTING

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THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS that surfaced and advanced in pandemic fashion this year has impacted the lives and livelihoods of people within every region of the earth, including Montana. Impacted societal sectors include, but are not limited to: health care, business, commerce, work force, finance, education, energy, transportation, travel, entertainment, sports, politics, social protection, social relations, family relations, religious faith community engagement, and planet well-being.

To say the least, people have had to adapt in realms of both public and private life. For many, these adaptations have been unsettling, challenging, and at times disappointing.

By definition, adaptation is the evolutionary process whereby an organism becomes better suited to its life circumstance and environment. This process may be structural, physiological, or behavioral in nature, or a combination of all three. Scientists

teach that adaptation is the most essential factor living beings have in order to continue surviving into the future.

In response to the public health circumstance created by the coronavirus, St. John's United is among those life contexts that needed to implement adaptations for purpose of safeguarding the health of residents, patients, children, volunteers, and employees as best possible. Some adaptations were swift and short-lived. Other adaptations are evolving and will continue to evolve into the future. As author H. Jackson Brown, Jr. wrote, "When you can't change the direction of the wind, adjust your sails."

Within this issue of Echoes you will find a feature article composed primarily of photos and captions. The photos are of St. John's United residents and staff adapting to realities associated with the COVID-19 virus.

The other feature articles also relate to the theme of adaptation. One highlights the trend of an increasing proportion of older adults living within the United States, which is especially so for Montana. What are the realities associated with this demographic shift and how do organizations such as St. John's United need to adapt in order to effectively provide human services?

A second article highlights the launch of an innovative and

collaborative St. John's venture — a Nursing Apprentice Fellowship Program. This program is structured to provide selected students who are pursuing a career in nursing with clinical work experience at St. John's and financial support for their higher education tuition.

A third article is the offspring of a doctoral study that researched the importance of life callings, meaning-making, and purpose in the lives of older adults — vocation. Research findings from this study will be implemented into life enrichment programming within St. John's communities once it is safe to do so.

For now, may the peace of God and sound health abide with you during this remarkable season of adaptations.

Rev. Dr. Tom Schlotterback  
VP of Mission Advancement

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**2019 MEMORIALS**



# CREATING SOLUTIONS

## ST. JOHN'S UNITED NURSING APPRENTICE FELLOWSHIP SIGNING DAY

Photo includes, left to right: **Kylee Mead** (Student), **Jordyn Haemmerle** (Student), **Tom Schlotterback** (VP of Mission Advancement), **Stan Hill** (Betti Foundation), **Reina Cazabel-Boe** (Student), **Kathleen O'Leary** (Deputy Commissioner for MT Dept. of Labor), **David Trost** (President and CEO), **Berkley Cox** (Student), **Darleen Barreto** (Student). Not in photo: **Montana Delhousaye** (Student).

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF invention. Invention's twin sibling: adaptation.

When faced with need, humankind has amazing ability to find creative solutions. Tired of eating raw food? Invent fire! Weary of traveling miles by foot? Invent the wheel! The pages of history are filled with examples of adaptations, but need knows no time boundaries.

In these early years of the twenty-first century, St. John's United finds itself in greatest need of nursing professionals. In any given

week, St. John's United functions with an average shortage of twelve nurses and fifty certified nursing assistants (CNAs), impacting our ability to deliver expert care for older adults. Health care needs for people of all ages currently outpaces the availability of nursing student graduates. In a state like Montana, ranked fifth in oldest population in the nation, this situation is untenable.

What drives the shortage of nursing professionals? First and foremost, a competitive marketplace in terms of compensation for

nurses exists in communities with multiple hospitals and senior health care providers. In terms of education, a limited number of highly competitive nursing education slots are available for those pursuing careers as LPNs, RNs, and BSNs. Many students desiring to become nurses simply cannot obtain the course work. For some, the cost of higher education and realities of student debt are barriers to furthering their educations. Lastly, the availability and interchangeable nature of employment opportunities in the service economy contributes to the

shortage of CNAs in Montana.

Rather than lamenting the reasons for the shortages and accepting less than full staffing, the St. John's United Board and executive leadership have implemented a solution known as the St. John's United Nursing Apprentice/Fellowship. The program is designed to provide CNA work experience to students as early as their junior year of high school while offering tuition credits that will be applied to their college tuition costs up to \$8,000 per year. Ideally, apprentices will graduate tuition-debt free.

To accomplish the education part of the program, St. John's has partnered with Billings Public Schools high school Career Center and Miles City Community College. The Career Center currently employs St. John's nursing staff to teach CNA courses for high school students. Miles City Community College has agreed to reserve student applicant slots each year specifically for St. John's apprentices. City College – MSUB has been an eager participant in conversations, and while they are not able to reserve student slots, they earnestly welcome its already-selected nursing students to participate in the St. John's program.

Upon graduation, some of the nursing apprentices may continue work within St. John's communities for many years. Others may seek employment elsewhere in Billings, relocate to another community or out-of-state. In either case, apprentices leave St. John's having received first-class health care experience with no obligation to St. John's.

The apprentice/fellowship

program has been endowed for its initial phase by the Bruno and Evelyne Betti Foundation with a generous gift of \$1,000,000, with an additional matching gift challenge of \$500,000. Already, \$310,000 has been gifted by donors for the match according to Tom Schlotterback, Vice President of Mission Advancement for St. John's. The matching challenge ends March 31, 2021.

Evelyne Betti was the aunt of long-time St. John's supporter and board member, Stan Hill. "Born in Central Montana, Evelyne always had a soft spot for the state of Montana and its people," recounts Hill. "Her desire was to help children develop into fine human beings and citizens. She wanted to see children become responsible adults who would do meaningful things with their lives and make a positive difference in the world."

Though the Bettis were never acquainted with St. John's, Hill personally witnessed SJU's deep commitment to resident care during the years his mother was a resident at The Vista on the main campus in Billings. He remains grateful to this day for the love and dignity his mother experienced. Upon learning of the nursing apprentice program, and understanding the vision of his aunt and uncle's legacy, Hill linked the St. John's Foundation and the Betti Foundation together for common good.

Born out of scarcity and obstacles, and then incubated in gratitude with a desire for common good, the nursing apprentice/fellowship program holds great promise for meeting resident needs today and tomorrow at St. John's United. ♦

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# NEW FRONTIER

## A NEW IMPERATIVE

CONSIDER THIS: TWO-THIRDS OF all of the world's people who have ever lived to be 75 years old are alive today. Given that this statistic is thirty years old, it is safe to say that the numbers have changed somewhat, but not likely trending downward. Is this cause for concern or opportunity knocking? Both!

Age Wave is the phrase coined by Ken Dychtwald, Ph.D., psychologist and gerontologist, referencing a burgeoning population shift arising from three distinct, yet related, causes: the Post-World War II Baby

Boom, increasing longevity, and exponential advances in medicine leading to interventions that push against the limitations of our biology. The global projections of people aged 65 and older by the year 2050 are staggering. The year 2050 seems far away, but in the tiny real estate occupied by the state of Montana, the demographic shift has already arrived.

In his Age Wave research and advocacy, Dychtwald makes the connection between health span and life span. Life expectancies keep climbing, but does one's health keep pace with the number

of one's years? Not necessarily so. Advancements in treating chronic conditions have resulted in people living longer – but not always healthier – with diseases and conditions that once shortened lives. And what about brain span in conjunction with longevity? There is strong evidence that dementia-related conditions are on the rise simply because once-life threatening conditions have been conquered. Aging healthy has become the new social imperative.

Montana ranks fifth in the United States for oldest population. With just over one million citizens,

there are nearly 225,000 people over the age of 65 based on data from the Montana Department of Commerce. If total population holds relatively steady, in less than ten years, the 65-plus population will exceed 30 percent of the state's citizenry. It's not so much the number of people over the age of 65 that is worrisome, it is the number who are living well into their nineties and beyond, when the manifestations of aging become more evident.

The National Council on Aging goes a step further to address

the ability of older adults to stay economically secure. The greatest worry of retirees is outliving their financial resources. More than 25 million Americans over the age of 60 struggle with rising housing costs, increasing health care bills, nutrition deficits, and diminished savings. Living longer is financially challenging even for many who consider themselves in the middle class. Not surprisingly, only about one-third of all adults over 50 feel financially prepared for their expected longevity.

National Institutes of Health –

Health Services Research study in 2002 concluded this:

The economic burden of aging in 2030 should be no greater than the economic burden associated with raising large numbers of baby boom children in the 1960s. The real challenges of caring for the elderly in 2030 will involve: (1) making sure society develops payment and insurance systems for long-term care that work better than existing ones, (2) taking advantage of advances in medicine and behavioral

*continued on next page*

## SUCCESSFULLY SERVING OLDER ADULTS

**HEALTH CARE** options in home-based settings for preventive and rehabilitative care, daily health and home maintenance, coupled with chore and personal care services.

**FITNESS & HEALTH** programs that cater specifically to those over age 65 to prevent, reverse, or better manage chronic conditions such as Type 2 diabetes, orthopedic wear and tear, cardiac and pulmonary diseases.

**HOLISTIC WELLNESS** programs focusing on seven dimensions of wellness: emotional, intellectual, physical, social, spiritual, financial, and vocational.

**HOUSING** options designed with aging in mind to serve across all socio-economic demographics, with special focus on quality affordable, and low-income options.




**CONNECTEDNESS** facilitated and virtual experiences that fend off social isolation and work to build and maintain personal connections as one ages.

**ADVOCACY** for societal and policy shifts that address the longevity needs of older adults.



show that by 2030, twenty-three of Montana's fifty-six counties will have populations over age 65 that exceed 30 percent. The hidden reality is that a great many of those over the age of 80 in those counties will be forced to relocate to more urban areas chiefly to obtain services that make aging easier: health care, functional housing, nearby family, and broader retail and commerce options.

The Age Wave affects communities of all sizes and all demographics within. How elders are cared for speaks volumes about what those communities value. The last Baby Boomer will turn 65 in 2029 and 80 in 2044. How we adapt to the challenges and opportunities of an aging population will impact generations beyond. 

Ken Dychtwald, *Age Wave* (New York: Bantam, 1990), 6.  
James R. Knickman and Emily K. Nell, "The 2030 Problem: Caring for Aging Baby Boomers," *Health Services Research* 37, no. 4 (2002): 849-884.

health to keep the elderly as healthy and active as possible, (3) changing the way society organizes community services so that care is more accessible, and (4) altering the cultural view of aging to make sure all ages are integrated into the fabric of community life.

to be found – the silver lining in the silver tsunami. Companies, brands, and organizations that are willing to adapt their business models to accommodate the needs and desires of older adults have very bright futures.

Rural states such as Montana will be called upon to address how to serve older adults in their communities of origin if at all possible. Current projections

Amidst the many reasons to be concerned about the coming decades, there is great opportunity



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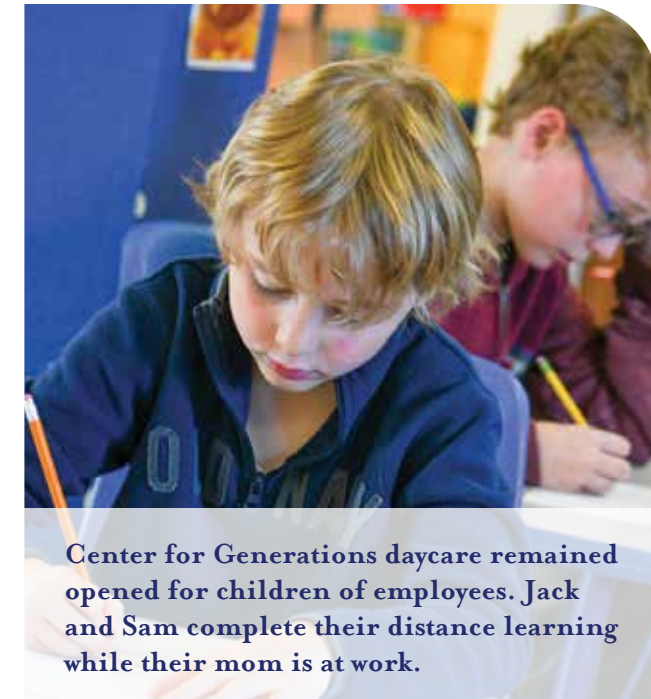
Powers Cottage residents Jeanne Berg and Beverly Keller enjoy a visit from the Moving Forward therapy horses.



Hospice employee Josh Bureau completes a daily health screen when coming onto the SJU campus.



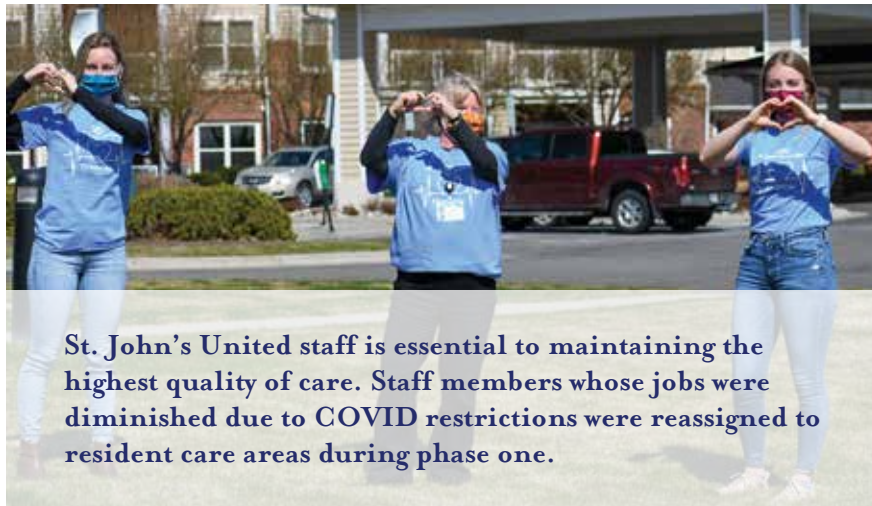
Vista residents have been practicing social-distanced chair yoga regularly.



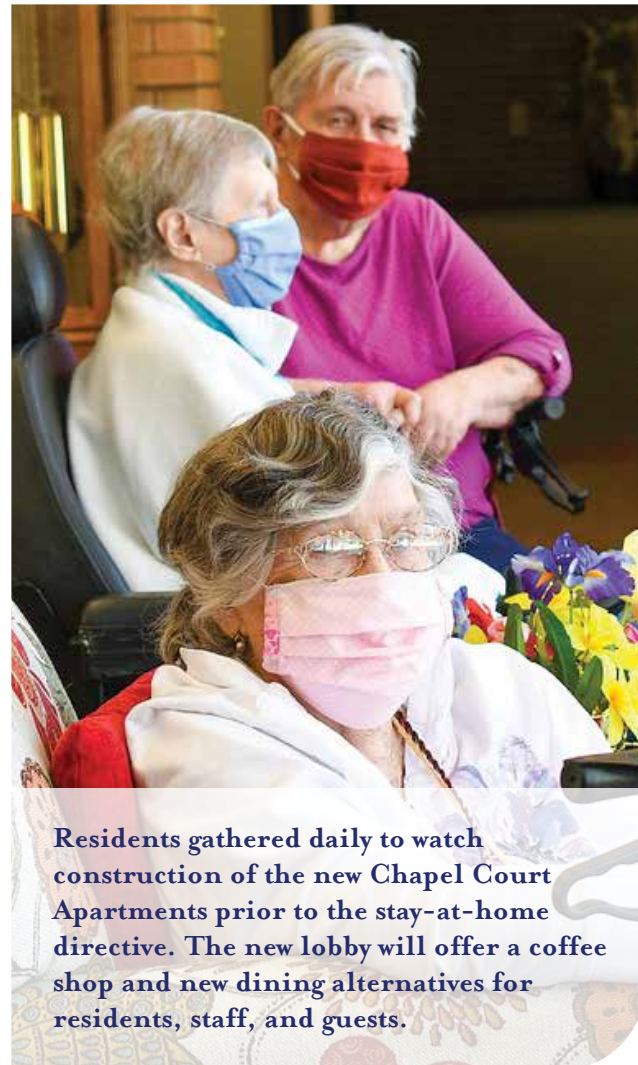
Center for Generations daycare remained opened for children of employees. Jack and Sam complete their distance learning while their mom is at work.

# #AloneTogether

In the wake of COVID-19 and prior to Governor Bullock's stay-at-home directive, the St. John's United Incident Command Team made the difficult decision to close our doors to visitors in order to safeguard the health of our residents. The daily health screenings, social distancing guidelines and use of masks have drastically changed the landscape but our mission of providing a nurturing environment of hope, dignity and love has remained steadfast. ♦



St. John's United staff is essential to maintaining the highest quality of care. Staff members whose jobs were diminished due to COVID restrictions were reassigned to resident care areas during phase one.



Residents gathered daily to watch construction of the new Chapel Court Apartments prior to the stay-at-home directive. The new lobby will offer a coffee shop and new dining alternatives for residents, staff, and guests.



At Mission Ridge, we have kept active while social distancing with line dancing.



WyndStone Wellness Coordinator Whitney Buechler made sure residents had the opportunity to get out and stretch their legs.



When family visitation was limited, Cottage Activities Coordinator Shelley Russell ensured each resident of the cottages received extra TLC.



Resident Helen Ottenbreit stayed busy by connecting with Cottage Activities Coordinator Dustin Turnbow about books and music.



Music Director Kristin LaVé kept the residents entertained with her beautiful piano playing.



Thank you to Jersey Mike's for donating over 350 lunches for Nursing Appreciation Week.



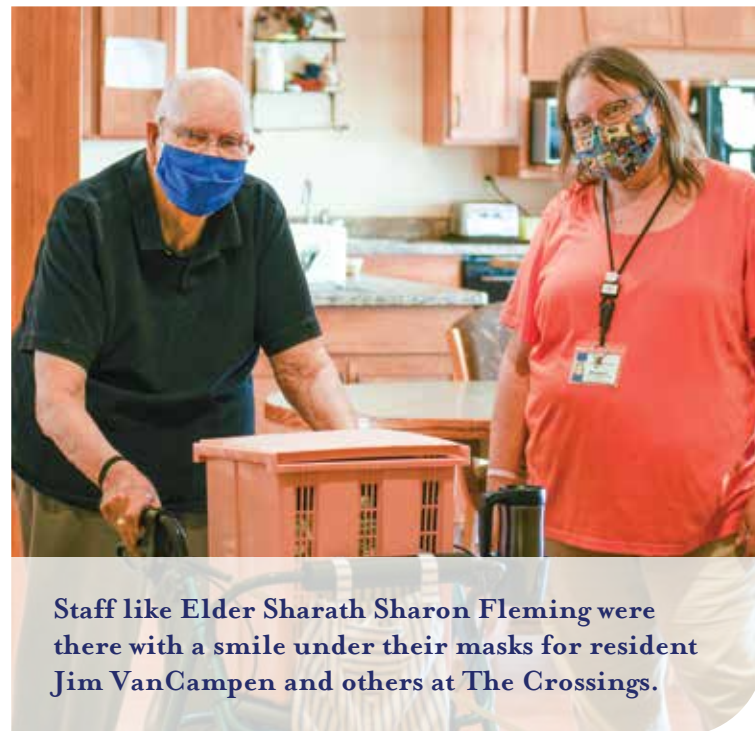
Esther Strong participates in an outdoor exercise class from her balcony at Mission Ridge.



Activities Coordinator Julie Betts led more than a few games of hallway BINGO for the residents of WyndStone.



Resident John Clovis gets outside for some vitamin D on the WyndStone grounds.



Staff like Elder Sharath Sharon Fleming were there with a smile under their masks for resident Jim VanCampen and others at The Crossings.



Campus Chaplain Pastor Elisabeth Daniels and resident Lee Perin played some lively games of cribbage.





# AWAKENING VOCATION IN OLDER ADULTS

“TELL ME,” PROMPTS THE POET Mary Oliver, “what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” Oliver’s question, which is embedded within her poem, “The Summer Day,” points to the matter of life calling—vocation.

The term vocation is not easy to delineate. The most common societal understanding is in reference to a person’s employed work or professional occupation. People speak of vocational training, vocational schooling, vocational counseling, or choosing a vocation. With such talk, the words vocation and vocational are virtually synonymous with the words career and technical.

The term, however, originates from the Latin roots vocare (to call, invite, or summon) and vox (voice) and in sum means, calling. Greek equivalents are kalein (call), klesis (calling), and kletos (called). The concept of vocation predates the origin of its Latin roots and has continued to evolve within human communities and religious traditions for thousands of years.

Vocation is a deeply human quest that is capable of generating big life questions. These questions include, but are not limited to: Who am I? Whose am I? Why am I here? How shall I live? Who really matters to me? What really matters to me? To what do I devote my life? Conversations related to the concept of vocation provide opportunity to tap into some of the deepest thoughts people have about the divine, religion, spirituality, identity, relationships, and life commitments. Vocation offers pathways for people to explore and discern nothing less than the meaning of life and to consider what constitutes a life well lived.

Vocation is less about calculating a

*“Vocation is not only about what we do; it is about who we are and how we are. Vocation has to do with the kind of persons we are called to become.”*

*– John Neafsey*

detailed life plan and more about moving toward responsiveness to callings in the midst of human experiences and relationships. Author and poet John O’Donohue observes, “The nature of the calling can change over time, taking a person down pathways never anticipated. The calling opens new territories within the heart; this in turn deepens the calling itself.” Clinical psychologist John Neafsey submits that vocation “is not only about what we do; it is about who we are and how we are. Vocation has to do with the kind of persons we are called to become.”

Parker Palmer approaches the term and concept of vocation from perspective of his own Society of Friends (Quaker) religious tradition; a tradition that frames vocation as a matter of “letting your life speak.” For Palmer, vocation is a gift to be received through listening; deep-soul listening. He writes, “Before I can tell my life what I want to do with it, I must listen to my life telling me who I am. I must listen for the truths and values at the heart of my own identity, not the standards by which

I must live—but the standards by which I cannot help but live if I am living my own life.”

Even though exploring and discerning life callings involves deep-soul listening, by its nature vocation is not a solo life effort. It is relational, nested within a larger community and giving ethical priority to those life behaviors that will benefit the community. While each person in the world has differing vocations, these are all part of a common walk of human life. Within his book, *Wishful Thinking*, Frederick Buechner describes vocation as “the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.” True vocation joins self and service together.

Furthermore, vocation is not limited to a sole period within a person’s life span at the exclusion of other periods. Isolating the concept of vocation as pertaining solely or primarily to the stage of young adulthood, for example, could leave middle-aged adults or older adults feeling as though exploration and discernment about life callings does not have much to

do with them. Meaning-making, however, is important for all. Author Kathleen Cahalan writes, “Vocation is about the whole of your life, your whole life long.”

More often than not, the spirit of Mary Oliver’s poetic question about what to do with “your one wild and precious life” is directed at those who are younger in age and possibly emerging into adulthood. Those who direct such inquiry toward the young are typically caring, curious, and supportive. People speak of those who are young as having their whole lives ahead of or in front of them. By casual manner of public listening, Oliver’s question seems less commonly directed toward those who are living into late adulthood or older adulthood years. This difference in aim of inquiry is predictable. It may be related to the cultural perception that elders have already lived their “wild and precious lives.”

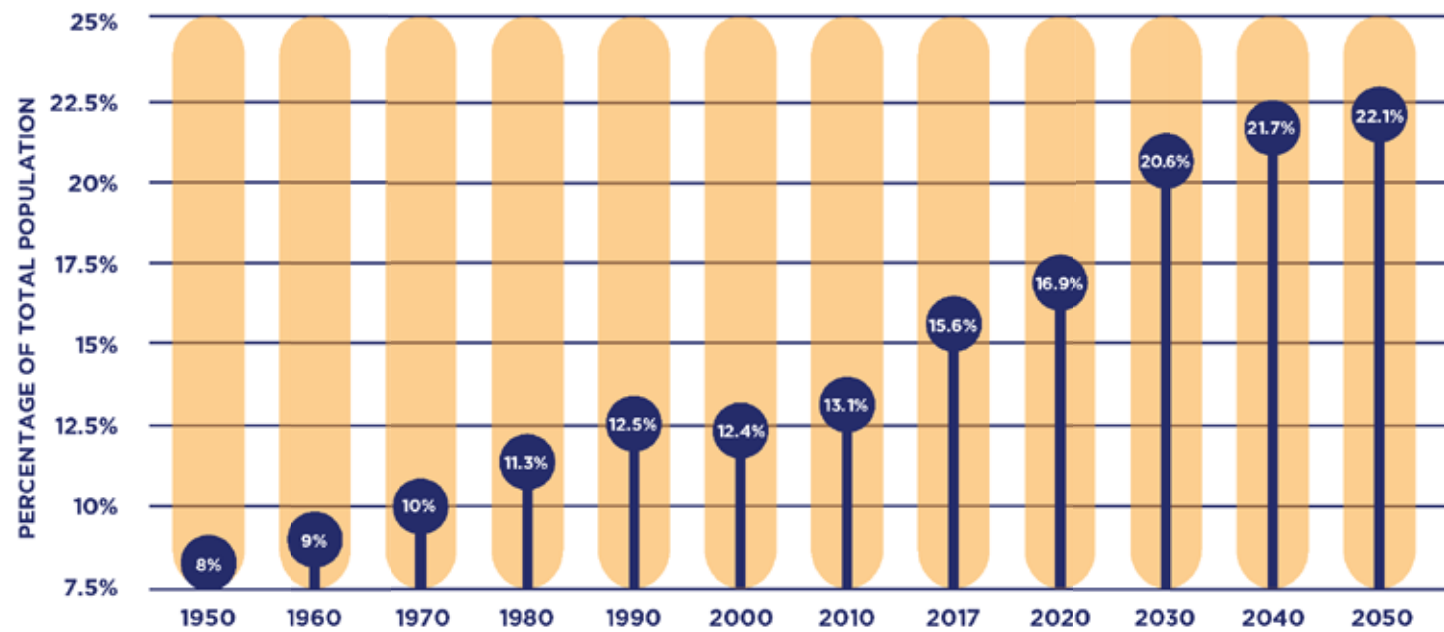
Scholar and author Martha Nussbaum observes that as people age they often spend time thinking and talking about the past, usually their own past. They may gaze back

*continued on next page*





## TOTAL U.S. POPULATION AGE 65 YEARS AND OLDER



### Sources

ChildStats.gov; US Census Bureau  
© Statista 2019

### Additional Information:

United States; ChildStats.gov; U.S. Census Bureau; 1950 to 2017; 65 years and older

in time at the span of their lives, as if figuratively looking into a rear view mirror. Conversely, younger people tend to gaze ahead in time when considering the span of their lives, as if figuratively looking through a forward glass windshield. Life journey and calling for the young are commonly referenced with language of future tense.

This difference in forward view and rear view gaze between the young and the old raises questions about vocation, such as: Does exploration and discernment of vocation have an age minimum at which it tends to begin, or an age limitation at which it tends to end? How might a lifelong perspective about callings influence understanding of the concept of vocation? Do adolescents think about life calling

as their bodies and minds live through an experience of intense transition? How does an aging adult who recently moved into an assisted living context consider the concept of vocation? Do those diagnosed with dementia have vocation? What about those enrolled in hospice care and who are knowingly approaching the end of life? Is retirement from employed work for older adults an equally pivotal time for considering vocation as when emerging adults are in schooling and at threshold of entering the employed workforce? More specifically, scholar Joyce Mercer wonders, "What does vocation in the lives of older adults look like?"

There is good reason to consider Mercer's question, given the

growing proportion of older adults now living throughout the world. The year 2035 will mark the first time in United States history that the number of people 65 years of age and older will outnumber people 18 years of age and younger. This demographic shift is a trend, not a blip. The trend will likely prompt one of the more significant social transformations within the twenty-first century. How will society respond to challenges and opportunities related to this trend? More specifically, how will elders respond to this trend and how will society respond to elders? What notions will elders have about the concept of life calling—vocation? How will they explore and discern their vocations in the world? How will elders awaken to the concept

of vocation in ways that provide a deeper sense of meaning-making and clarity of life purpose as they age? Can a theological exploration of vocation be beneficial to elders? If so, what forms of vocational exploration and intentional discernment might be most beneficial?

In response to these and related questions, St. John's VP of Mission Advancement, Tom Schlotterback, researched the possibility of awakening a sense of vocation within older adults through a four-session life enrichment experience. His research and academic writing were a culmination to completing a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Twelve older adults whose average age was 72 participated in the study. Research methodology was crafted with intent to prompt life storytelling, evoke imagination, invite inquiry, and encourage discovery. Each session included a liturgical opening, large and small group storytelling practices, and a uniquely contemplative experience called Sacred Landscapes — a mix of poetry, live music, and photography projected onto screen. Each participant was also provided a book with guided reading for

supplemental learning.

Quantitative and qualitative research data were collected, measured, and evaluated. Outcomes of the study revealed a high measurable impact among all participants — an awakening to a meaningful sense of vocation. Participants unanimously affirmed and advocated that this life enrichment experience be offered to residents living within St. John's communities and to others.

Within a post-study interview one participant said, "I think there are many opportunities to improve people's lives through an experience like this. The potential for using this format is huge." Another participant stated, "The experience was genuine and authentic. I would tell people to take the time to do this. Clear your schedule." Another added, "I think this experience is a great study for any age. I know older adults who would benefit from this experience but I think it would be so good for young people to also; to gain a sense of what vocation is. I think it would enrich their lives and they would have a better sense of giving back to society. I think it would be good for people living through

middle age. It's not just for older people. It's valuable for anyone."

Once it is safe to do so, intent will be to repeatedly offer this awakening vocation experience within St. John's life enrichment programming so that many people may consider Mary Oliver's important question. "Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day," in *House of Light* (Boston: Beacon, 1990), 60.

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U.S. Census Bureau 2018, *Older People Projected to Outnumber Children for First Time in U.S. History*, September 6, 2018, <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/cb18-41-population-projections.html>.

## COMMEMORATIVE BRICKS

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**St. John's United  
Seeds of Kindness  
Annual Fund**

**MEET MEG**

Meg is one of many older adults at St. John's United whose retirement income, insurance and other support does not cover the total monthly cost of living and health expenses. At St. John's, we have many people just like Meg, and this is how we handle them. They stay.

They stay until the end of their days as cherished members of our community. Many people don't know that St. John's United has a shortfall of more than \$2 million every year because of resident care costs not fully covered by personal resources and assistance programs.

And this is where you come in. St. John's United is coming to the community to ask for your partnership and investment. As an organization, we have put ourselves on the line for many years to care for our older adults. We invite you to join us.



**COMPASSIONATE CARE**

St. John's is dedicated to providing compassionate care to all people, regardless of ability to pay. When residents outlive their financial resources, St. John's continues to welcome and serve them in the place they call home.

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**Please see envelope included in this issue for ways to give.**

**2019 MEMORIALS**

We give thanks for all of these lives remembered this year and extend our gratitude to the donors whose memorial gifts now support living opportunities within nurturing environments of hope, dignity and love.  
*If we included or omitted a spouse in error, please let us know.*

**IN HONOR OF:**

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Make an immediate, outright charitable gift using cash or other appropriate assets. This allows the donors to see the results of the gift during their lifetime.

### GIVE LATER

Make a charitable gift upon death using estate tools and bequests. Giving in this manner allows the donors to retain control and use of their assets during their lifetime.

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