



Senior Chatter

A publication of the Office of Aging/Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston
Summer 2022, Volume 45 Issue 2



Older Adults: Maintaining Healthy Roots



The Spring newsletter highlighted some recent reflections from Pope Francis on old age. First, he held out a beautiful image of the Church as a tree. He emphasized that we are called to recognize and give special attention to maintaining a healthy root system (older adults) so that the young church can bear good fruit. This summer edition will offer some practical ways for the Church community to recognize and support older adults as wise and valuable members of its community.

At the Parish:

- Survey the gifts or talents of older or retired adults. Create opportunities to utilize their gifts and life experiences in service to the parish community.
- Support senior group clubs with a designated spiritual director or with adult faith formation.
- Designate staff or volunteers to work with the Office of Aging to learn how to respond to families with older adults. These include referral resources on aging issues related to spiritual growth, finances, caregiving, aging at home support, and end-of-life care planning.
- Provide adult learning opportunities for older adults to share their wisdom about aging issues with other families (e.g. how to care for loved ones with dementia or caregiving support)
- Partner with existing parish organizations (e.g., Knights of Columbus, St. Vincent DePaul Society) to provide support services to older adults (e.g., drivers to doctor appointments, handyman home maintenance).
- Celebrate older adults at liturgies or receptions for Grandparents Day or service recognition.
- Partner with community organizations (e.g. Carepartners, Texas; Amazing Place) which provide congregational support for families with caregiving needs.

At Home:

- Ensure loved ones are engaged socially and maintain some level of physical activity (e.g., walking).
- Help loved ones to envision the support they will need as they age.
- Encourage loved ones to maintain annual medical exams and discuss support for medical issues.
- Open conversations about end-of-life wishes; ensure they are recorded in legal documents (e.g., wills, advance directives)

—> Visit the **Office of Aging webpage** for resources on caregiving, aging-in-place, and end-of-life care planning: <https://www.archgh.org/aging> Checkout the tab: **Directory for Senior Living** in the **Livebinders Senior Directory** (Ctrl + click to open).

SENIOR SENATES

Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston

CENTRAL SENIOR SENATE-2022

President - Delois Semien

NORTHERN SENIOR SENATE-2022

President - Ella Ledet

SOUTHWEST SENIOR SENATE-2022

President - Gayle Naar

SENIOR SENATE MEETING DATES

All senior senates are in-person

CENTRAL: 1st Monday of each month
St. Dominic Auditorium - 10 a.m.
2403 Holcombe Blvd. - Houston, TX 77021

NORTHERN: 2nd Monday of each month
St. Edward Church - 10 a.m.
2601 Spring Stuebner, Spring, TX 77389

SOUTHWEST: Quarterly meetings – 10 a.m.
St. Cyril of Alexandria Church
10503 Westheimer Rd. - Houston, TX 77042

OFFICE of AGING MINISTRY STAFF

Director

Mark Ciesielski, LMSW
mciesielski@archgh.org

Associate Director

Olga Najjar, MATP
onajjar@archgh.org

Administrative Assistant

Lena Estrada
lestrada@archgh.org

OFFICE of AGING

2403 Holcombe Boulevard
Houston, Texas 77021
Office Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Phone: 713-741-8712 - Fax: 713-741-8775



**Archdiocese of
Galveston-Houston**

Office of Aging Updates

Summer greetings, dear Seniors!

Many parish senior groups around the Archdiocese have been regrouping their memberships for in-person gatherings. This includes the three senior senates. The members have been overjoyed with the social interaction and exchange of activities. Our staff is working this summer with the senate officers and members to plan fall senate gatherings.

As of this week, our office has a full staff with Olga Najjar (associate director) and Lena Estrada (Administrative Assistant). See their autobiographies in this newsletter.

With a reduced staff, we are reassessing how we can best serve seniors. The office is

- visiting parish senior clubs upon request
- presenting a regional “aging-in-place” seminar scheduled for **Saturday, September 17 at St. Maximilian Kolbe Parish**
- providing training to parish staffs how to address family requests for caregiving and other older adult support services

Strengthened by God’s grace, we can work together to age with dignity and support.

Mark Ciesielski



*Mark your
Calendars*

Upcoming senate meetings from 10 am—Noon

- Central Senior Senate Meeting: Thursday, Sept. 8
- Northern Senior Senate Meeting: Monday, Aug. 8
- SW Senior Senate Meeting: Wednesday, July 27

Next Chatter due

September 15, 2022

OUR LADY OF THE ASSUMPTION—Harvest Years

We have met a couple of times at Luby's for our Luncheon/Meeting. The members seem to enjoy the freedom from cooking and the clean-up afterward. Our organization will not meet formally during June, July and August for vacation, and hopefully we will be ready to begin our busy fall and holiday season when we resume our monthly luncheon/meeting on Sunday, September 18th. Mildred Krolczyk one of our members went to be with our Lord on May 27, 2022. May she rest in peace. Our Assistant Pastor, Fr. Franco Cecchini CRS left our parish to go back to Treviso, Italy on June 9th. At our Thanksgiving luncheon/meeting on November 20th, we will celebrate a memorial service for all of our deceased members. Please keep them and all of the sick, suffering, dying, the caregivers, the Ukrainians, and all the members of the armed services in your prayers. Stay cool and be safe this Summer.

- Trudy Witzkoske

ST. JUSTIN MARTYR - Mavericks

The Mavericks celebrated their 26th anniversary in April with a catered Italian meal followed with live music and dancing. Our monthly bus trip took us to Chappell Hill to see Texas wildflowers. We had lunch at Chappell Hill Bakery & Deli for BBQ and of course kolaches for dessert!

We took a tour of the Brookwood Community, a residential and vocational facility for adults with disabilities, in Brookshire in May. We had lunch in their café and shopped in the gift shop and nursery. Many baskets of flowers followed us home on the bus! Kent Clingerman from Harris County Precinct 4 spoke to us about programs and services available to us seniors at our monthly meeting.

Our June bus trip took us to the Hindu temple, Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, in Stafford. After lunch at Luby's we toured the Rosenberg Railroad Museum in Rosenberg. Two of our longtime members, Donna Martin and Barbara Brasseaux passed away recently. May they rest in peace.

- Marilyn Tovsen

ST. MAXIMILIAN KOLBE - Kolbe Seniors

The St. Max Kolbe Seniors are enjoying monthly meetings though our numbers are not back to what they were pre-Covid. We are gaining new members each month. We have enjoyed entertainment by Rex Harris, played BINGO, and this month we will view a video history behind the stained glass windows in our church. We are looking forward to playing Bunco, having urban critters from the Texas Wildlife Rehabilitation Center come visit and in September, hosting the Office of Aging Seminar on Aging in Place. We have trips planned to the Joshua, Jericho, and Jesus Exhibit, an Astros game and the Newman Castle in Belleville with Precinct 3. In the meantime, just trying to stay cool on these hot summer days.

- Becky Keels

**World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly
Sunday, July 24, 2022**



ST CATHERINE OF SIENA — Club 55+

We have been shut down for over 2 years because of the pandemic and a lot has happened during that time. Only 1 officer out of 4 remains and our luncheon group has all gone as well, so we need to start from scratch. The good news is that we held a meeting on Sunday, June 12 to reactivate and three things happened: We had a large crowd, most of them were new to our group and we ended up with a full slate of officers. We will have a planning meeting in July to lay out the 2022/23 season, assign committees to handle luncheons out, speakers, etc. We will open our new season in September.

- Bob Mitchell, outgoing President

ST. PHILIP NERI - Senior Friends

Our group returned to in-person meetings in April 2022 and welcomed several new members. The Senior Friends attended Mass at 10:00 a.m. on May 1 wearing red, received a blessing from the Pastor, Fr. Chris-Mary Alimaji, and then went to lunch at Luby's. Our May meeting attracted even more new members. At the end of the meeting, the group played Bingo led by a representative from Amerigroup. The group will recess for the summer, and we are looking forward to resuming regular monthly meetings and activities in September 2022.



- Myrtle Coleman

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA (SPRING) - Senior Friends

In March we took a day trip to Brookwood Community in Brookshire. We had a delicious lunch, a walk among their lovely garden and a trip to their gift shop. No one could leave without finding something to bring home.

Our speaker for April was County Commissioner Tom S. Ramsey, P.E. of Harris County Precinct 3. Mr. Ramsey also brought Bert Keller, Special Projects and Mary Valka, Transportation to our meeting. This was an introduction to our new Precinct Leadership.

In April we also had a day trip to the Antique Rose Emporium in Brenham. So many roses and flowers to enjoy and purchase! Before leaving town we had lunch at "This Could Be Heaven" that included amazing desserts.

In May was our End of Year Banquet catered by Carrabba's. Our Senior of the Year is Mary Lou Helminiak. Congratulations Mary Lou! She will also be our President when we start to meet again in September. Keep cool Seniors! Prayers for all our Senior Friends past and present and Peace in the Ukraine.

- Sarah Doyle

CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD - 55 Plus

Looks like summer arrived really early this year! Sounds like a good time for a trip!. Our recent adventures: visiting the Newman Castle/Bakery in Bellville, Tx. with a bonus stop at the authentic Blacksmith Shop downtown . Next was the George W.Bush Library where there is always something new we missed the first time we were there. We would like to take this opportunity to say, Kudos to our outgoing President that has been with us for 3+ years. Thank you, Lance and Janice Rayne. Lance, kept communication lines open through Covid and brought us back as soon as he could. We celebrated with a pot luck brunch for our June meeting. The gavel was passed to Andrew Singer and wife, Shirley who will be our Social chair. An exciting year is ahead of us . It really is all about community . May we continue to reach out and pray for those that are in need. - Helen Moorman

ST HELEN, PEARLAND – Super Seniors

Our meetings are beginning to recover after all. The members are so happy to meet again and not have to wear masks. Of course, there are some who feel the masks are needed. We had a great speaker from the Office of Community Development in Pearland at our April meeting. May 4th, our Trip Coordinator, Pauline Roark, scheduled a trip to the Holocaust Museum with a side trip to tour Christ Church Cathedral. It was a wonderful day with lunch at Treebeards. Hopefully, our day trips can continue as Pauline is planning more with an upcoming trip to the Bush Library. The Rosary Makers enjoyed their luncheon Wednesday 18th at Marie Stryk’s home, and they will now take a summer break. We do continue to have more people joining our active group. We welcome all to attend our meetings. Stay active and stay well.
- Ginger Shea

ST. CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA—Savvy Seniors

Greetings from the Savvy Seniors from St Cyril. We have been meeting in person for a few months. It is a joy to get together in person though the Zoom meeting was very good. We had a presentation from the fire department in May showing how to use a fire extinguisher. We are going to have Pat Gavin to entertain us in July. I have requested to have the Mass Shooter Program but still waiting on a date. These can be virtual presentations. We have also change our meeting date and time to the first and third Tuesday at 11 AM. We are always glad to get new members to join.

- Gayle Naar

“The whole of society must hasten to take care of its elderly — they are its treasure! — who are increasingly numerous and often also more abandoned. When we hear of elderly people who are dispossessed of their autonomy, of their security, even their home, we understand that the ambivalence of today’s society with regard to old age is not a problem of occasional emergencies, but a feature of that throwaway culture that poisons the world we live in.” Pope Francis, General Audience June 1st, 2022

SOUTHWEST SENIOR SENATE

With great joy, we have started having in person meetings again. It is wonderful to see everyone. We are planning a Bingo Day for July 27 and a catered lunch. Looking forward to enjoying a good day.

It seems like a long time since we went about our daily lives and I see so many changes in our surroundings and this is progress.

I want to thank Mark Ciesielski in facilitating our Zoom calls and the invitations from the other Senates to join in on their meetings.

- Gayle Naar, President

OLGA NAJAR—Office of Aging Associate Director

Olga was born and raised in Juarez, Mexico but has lived in the United States since 1995 (Houston since 1999). She is married with 2 young adult children.

Olga was a medical doctor in Mexico for more than seven years. She has served the past six years as the Director of Social Services and the liaison for Hispanic community at St. Martha Catholic Church in Kingwood, Texas. In addition, she completed formation as a Spiritual Director from the Cenacle in 2020 (now called the Emmaus Spiritual Center).

Most recently she earned a Masters degree in Pastoral Theology from The University of St. Thomas in May, 2021. She joins the Office of Aging with a focus on supporting existing “aging” resources and providing outreach ministry programs and services to our seniors. Personally, her vision concentrates on the value of accepting and integrating respect and compassionate care for older adults, especially to those who are marginalized by our society. Olga looks forward with gratitude and enthusiasm for serving seniors.

LENA ESTRADA — Office of Aging Administrative Assistant

Lena has a background in non-profit, social service. She brings 10 1/2 years of experience with United Way of Greater Houston as a worker in the call center helping callers with referrals to community resources and programs. She also worked on special projects with UT Health as a recruiter for the smoking cessation project and with M.D. Anderson. This included work as a recruiter and case manager for cancer study.

Prior to this, she worked 10 1/2 yrs. with Catholic Charities as an administrative assistant/intake for the Family Counseling Department. During hurricane Ike, she provided case management services in Galveston.

They are like trees planted in the house of the LORD, that flourish in the Temple of our God, that still bear fruit in old age and are always green and strong. (PSALM 92:13,14)



Regular Vaccinations for Aging Well

Receiving regular vaccinations is important for everyone's health, especially older adults who are at risk for more complications from the seasonal flu and shingles. Vaccines can help build and maintain immunity from contracting a variety of diseases and viruses, including influenza, pneumonia and COVID-19.

If you contract one of these viruses, having a vaccine can prevent or lower your risk of developing serious symptoms that may require hospitalization or even lead to death. According to the [National Center for Health Statistics](#), influenza and pneumonia are estimated to be the cause of death for 50–60,000 people each year. The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) reports that just over 1 million people have died from COVID-19 in the U.S.

As we age, our immune system doesn't work as effectively and previous immunity we may have built up can weaken. Older adults are more likely to experience serious complications from viruses and diseases, so it is important that older adults receive regular vaccinations. The following are common recommended vaccines for older adults:

- **Seasonal flu vaccine:** It is recommended that everyone age 6 months and older receive a yearly flu vaccine. Older adults are recommended to get the high-dose flu vaccine, which is specifically designed for adults age 65 and older.
- **Pneumococcus vaccines:** Pneumonia is often a secondary condition caused by viruses like the flu and COVID-19. Experts recommend getting this vaccine if you have a chronic disease, have a weakened immune system or are age 65 or older.
- **Shingles (Herpes Zoster) vaccine:** Shingles and chickenpox are caused by the same virus. While chickenpox is often considered something mainly children get, the virus can become active again as you get older and lead to shingles, a painful skin rash. To prevent this, experts recommend getting the two-dose vaccine if you're age 50 or older.
- **Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (TDAP) vaccines:** TDAP is recommended for everyone, especially if you are regularly around babies or young children. These vaccines help prevent contracting whooping cough, tetanus, pertussis and diphtheria.
- **COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots:** Vaccines and boosters for COVID-19 are important for preventing or reducing serious symptoms. They help your immune system build better protection against the virus, including its variants.

To learn more about recommended frequency for receiving these vaccines, [view the Adult Immunization Schedule](#). Medicare, Medicaid and private health insurance plans typically cover the cost of receiving many of these vaccines. If you don't have insurance, you might be eligible for assistance. To learn more and find a vaccine provider, [visit the Texas Department of State Health Services Adult Safety Net Program website](#) or call 800-252-9152.

For more information about programs and services for older adults, [visit the Health and Human Services Age Well Live Well webpage](#) or call 2-1-1.

- Written by: Olivia Burns, HHS Aging Texas Well Coordinator

It is extremely difficult for human beings to understand and process the fact that our lives will one day come to an end. It is even more difficult to process that the better we are prepared for that end, the better the transition will be.

Our different cultures face and process the death of their loved ones differently. In the United States, even when we are separated by culture, language, etc., what keeps us together is respect and dignity of older adults and the roots they represent for generations to come. The dignity of older adults is our responsibility and above all as a church, they are what represents and dignifies our family tree. Multiple generations represent those roots of the tree, and we and our children represent the fruits. If we do not care for and respect these roots, the tree will fall or dry up. Most importantly, if we do not understand the cycle of life with compassion and love, our children and grandchildren will enter the rhetoric of “the era of waste” where the elderly are discarded or forgotten. It is extremely important to make our young people aware that the elderly are the source of wisdom and experience. We can start doing this by seeking their advice and wisdom when planning parish community and family projects.

Three important points that we can do to dignify and foster respect for older adults:

- 1) Pray with them and ask them what their wishes are for the end of their lives.
- 2) Listen to their histories including how they cared for their own parents in their old age.
- 3) Open with them a relationship of love and empowerment by helping them proactively to feel included.

Entendiendo nuestros ciclos de vida con compasión, amor, y respeto por los adultos mayores

Es sumamente difícil para ser humano entender y procesar el hecho de que nuestra vida, algún día llegará a su final, y más aún procesar que entre mejor estemos preparados para ese final, mejor será la transición.

Nuestras diferentes culturas enfrentan y procesasen de diferente manera la muerte de sus seres queridos. En los Estados Unidos aun cuando nos separan la cultural, el idioma, etc. Lo que nos mantiene unidos, es del respeto y la dignidad por los adultos mayores y las raíces que ellos representan para las generaciones venideras. La dignidad de los adultos mayores es nuestra responsabilidad como sociedad y sobre todo como iglesia, ellos son lo que representa y dignifica nuestro árbol genealógico, las diferentes generaciones representan las raíces del árbol, nosotros y nuestros hijos representamos los frutos, y si no cuidamos, y respetamos estas raíces, el árbol se caerá o se secura y nuestros hijos y nietos entraran a la “RETORICA de la época del Desecho”. Es sumamente importante concientizar a nuestros jóvenes de que los ancianos son la fuente de la sabiduría y la experiencia y que, si sabemos incluirlos, hacerlos participantes de nuestros proyectos, que recurramos a ellos para un consejo o una opinión en nuestras decisiones tanto familiares, comunitarias y sociales.

He aquí tres puntos importantes que puedes tomar en cuenta para dignificarlos y motivarlos.

- 1) Ora con ellos, pregúnteles cuales son sus deseos cuando terminen sus días.
- 2) Escuche su historia, tal vez puedan compartir la experiencia que ellos tuvieron con sus propios padres.
- 3) Abra una relación con amor y empoderamiento, haz que sientan incluidos y proactivos.