

## Against the Odds

The objective of this composition is about scrutinizing the *Religious Educational Centers for Learning Author & Text Selection Criteria* and attempting to present a case for contributing older aged, intelligent, eight-year higher education, proven 40-year successful financial planning career, 71 years a Christian, 56-years married, and six years of wife dementia caregiving.

A good friend warned the author about *Introduction to Aging Ministry: A Handbook, "Feed ALL My Sheep"* the expected reception from the religious, educational community:

Colleges and seminaries don't put a lot of belief in self-published, self-promoted books. Not to say that university professors won't include them in their reading list for specific classes, but they won't likely be a driving force for a change or addition to a curriculum.

They also pay pretty close attention to professional training and degrees of the author, usually again giving more credence to Ph.D.'s and similar prestige status degrees.

They are less likely to pay attention to older voices unless there has been a successful religious history of credible impact.

Older sounds heralded by and in active collaboration with younger views are more likely to gain traction.

Universities and seminaries need to know they are responding to genuine needs and very realistic vocational opportunities. While they are training a broader age spectrum than 18-20 years, ministry leadership within churches for second-half adults usually lands with older adults and generally in a volunteer role. Now the vocational track is fragile, though the need is real.

In response to these hurdles, the following stories by respected religious scholars reinforce the genuine need and very realistic vocational opportunity for responsible aging ministry course work. Robert W. Chism, CAM credentials are different but not less than the noted authors.

*"Age 65 is old. The origins of this "age threshold" date back to the 1880s in Germany when Otto von Bismarck created the first pension plan in Europe. He determined an age that could be called "old" and decided on 65. However, the average life expectancy at that time was only 45! "Old" came 20 years after most people had already died! Even at the signing of our present social security legislation—which provided income for those 65 years of age for the remainder of their life—average life expectancy was only 61.9 years. A person born in the year*

*2000 can expect to live from 92 to 96 years! Age 65 does not identify a date when any significant change occurs in our physical, intellectual, or spiritual functioning,"* according to **DR. CHARLES ARN** Professor of Outreach and Ministry, Wesley Seminary Marion, Indiana.

Ministerial and Professional Background: He has 30 years of experience and leadership in the field of congregational life, health, and growth. He has authored 15 books, edited five others, and is a regular contributor to several nationally known pastoral websites. He is a popular speaker nationwide and overseas. **DR. ARN** became actively involved in the church growth movement as his father, Dr. Win Arn, began to pioneer the study and application of church growth principles to North America in the early 1970s.

Education: B.A., Seattle Pacific University MS, University of Southern California, and Ed.D., University of Southern California.

*"Perhaps the most shocking reality is not that our population is aging but that many churches have done virtually nothing to understand or prepare for this something thirty or more-year demographic change. With growing numbers of older adults in our pews, congregations have an opportunity to be blessed by the gifts, prayers, presence, service, and witness of their more former members,"* according to **DR. RICHARD H. GENTZLER, JR.**, Executive Director ENCORE Ministry, Tennessee Conference-UMC.

Ministerial and Professional Background: an adjunct faculty member at Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN, teaches classes on aging. He is on the board of directors of the Council on Aging of Middle Tennessee. He is a resource consultant for the Tennessee Conference Committee on Adult/Older Adult Ministries and the Golden Cross Foundation. He also serves as chair of the Nashville Area Older Adult Ministry Network.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Social Science from Shippensburg University (Shippensburg, PA), Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, DC), Doctor of Ministry from Boston University School of Theology (Boston, MA), and a Certificate in Aging Studies from Boston University Institute for Geriatric Social Work.

*"It would be impossible to overstate the need for a dynamic and empowering curriculum for leaders who will minister to those in the Second Half of Life. A tremendous need exists for seminaries and universities to train and equip the leaders who will understand and empower the elderhood life stage both inside and outside the structured Church,"* according to the **REV. CHUCK STECKER, D. MIN, Ph.D.** President Center for Intergenerational Ministry, President/Founder of A Chosen Generation.

Ministerial and Professional Background: As an Army Lieutenant Colonel, Chuck served in various critical leadership and staff positions, including three years on the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Pentagon. **DR. STECKER** has served the Lord in the local Church in various ministry and leadership positions. After his retirement, he served with Promise Keepers for three years as the Regional Director of the South-Central Region. In 1997, Chuck launched a ministry, Mission Capable Men, and then A Chosen Generation in 2000. Chuck has taught at Denver Seminary and Christ for the Nations Institute.

Education: an ordained minister of the Gospel with the Evangelical Church Alliance and has earned a Doctorate of Ministry specializing in Christian Leadership.

*"The Church needs to become aware of the gifts that its older people can offer. All too often, older people are kept on the sidelines, handing out bulletins, singing in the choir, but never called on for more critical tasks in the life of the Church. Many people in the encore of life desire to give back. These are vibrant, creative, and energetic people, but they are so often left on the sidelines of the Church,"* according to **DR. RICHARD L. MORGAN**.

Ministerial and Professional Background: A former college professor, **DR. MORAN**, also worked as a career counselor at a community college in North Carolina. He is Recipient of the 2013 Legacy Award from the POAM of the Presbyterian Church, USA, for his nineteen books, many presentations, and elderhood work.

Education: a graduate of Davidson College (AB), Presbyterian Seminary (M.Div.; Them; Ph.D.), and Wake Forest University (MA in Counseling).

***Introduction to Aging Ministry: A Handbook***, "Feed ALL My Sheep" by Robert W. Chism CAM is the Official, first of its kind, 21st Century handbook on Aging Ministry.

*"It is not another traditional pastoral care text. The handbook focuses attention on pastoral and broader societal aspects of aging. The book addresses student's preparation in ministering to both ends of the life cycle, IE, adolescents (ages 12-20), and elderhood (ages 65-84) in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.*

*It provides Bible colleges, seminaries, and other religious centers of learning for training today's clergy, professors, students, and lay leaders with the knowledge necessary coursework in ministering all ages, **Robert W. Chism, CAM.***

Christian and Professional Background: He has been a Christian for 71-years, IE only seven years less than his entire life, a husband, father, grandfather for 67-years, and a caregiver for his wife who has second stage dementia for seven years. Before his protirement elderhood career, Bob completed a 40-year successful

financial & strategic planning executive business career. He worked for four employers:

Price Waterhouse & Co. (Cleveland based International Certified Public Accounting firm) ComCorp, Inc. (Cleveland based National Weekly Suburban Newspaper Chain) Jepcor, Inc. (Chicago based International Dinnerware Wholesaler) Kenall Manufacturing Co. (Chicago based International Lighting Company).

In his aging ministry career he---

Has completed 15 years of researcher

Founded New Beginnings ([www. gonewbeginnings.org/](http://www.gonewbeginnings.org/)), an online state of the art learning center for all ages, plus

Written numerous articles, 11 guides, and 14 previous books aging ministry course work and equipping tools that he has been instrumental in developing.

Business Education: Management Master's degree from J L Kellogg Graduate School of Management Northwestern University (Illinois) Magna Cum Laude Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Bowling Green University (Ohio) and Certified Public Accountant retired (Ohio and Illinois).

Religious Education: He obtained Certification in Aging Ministries (CAM) from the Center of Christian Leadership, School of Theology, Anderson University (Indiana), in Gerontology, and Aging Readings. Note at the time; there was only one religious, educational center offering CAM. In 2020, 15 years later, there are only two. He holds an Honorary Doctor in Christian Leadership from Los Angeles Development Church & Institute (California).

**The Introduction to Aging Ministry: A Handbook** condenses---

Over 2,500 pages from numerous articles, eight guides, and fourteen previous books

15 years of research

40 years of a successful executive financial and strategic business careern

Eight years of formal higher education

71 years a Christian

56 years of marriage

55 years a father

20 years a grandfather

Six years of wife dementia caregiving

The author knows he cannot do it alone. All things are possible with the Lord and with reader help, including the religious, educational leadership.

Ways you can help include the following:

Pray for acceptance of *Introduction to Aging Ministry: A Handbook* by the religious, educational community,

Adopt a spiritual learning center to pursue inclusion of aging ministry course work for their accredited degree programs,

Be a spokesperson as a member of the Aging Ministry Accreditations Crusade,

Be a leader in your Church for aging ministry,

Write an article,

Make a video, or

Email [chism.w.robert@comcast.net](mailto:chism.w.robert@comcast.net) on other way(s) you wish to participate in making a difference for aging ministry and “Feed ALL of God’s Sheep.”