**WORKSHOP 1: ELDERHOOD – A WORK IN PROGRESS**

Tuesday, September 20th, 6:30 pm at the Fellowship

Please bring a snack or desert to shared

**“HINDSIGHT, HUMOR, AND HOPE: WHO, ME, AN ELDER?”** is a series of 6 workshops that will be held every other Tuesday evening this fall. The program is a part of the Unitarian Universalist Association “Tapestry of Faith Program for Adults.” Below is a brief introduction to the program and the goals of the program.

**Introduction**

Imagine…that you are having your portrait made, your face carved in beautiful wood. Not all of us would feel comfortable, especially as we grow older, with someone noticing our wrinkles and spots. At times we fear that our faces will betray us, showing our soft spots and weak places…

But if we trust in the force that created us—the force that knows us at our core and cherishes us the way an artist cherishes her creations—we may feel less afraid. If you’ve ever made anything, you know that mistakes can lead to new discoveries and unintended beauty. If you’ve ever carved, you know that the grain, the natural material you work with, is as fascinating as anything you could imagine.  — Eliza Blanchard, in [*The Seasoned Soul: Reflections on Growing Older*](http://www.uuabookstore.org/The-Seasoned-Soul-P17212.aspx)

Unitarian Universalist congregations are actively intergenerational. We value and encourage interaction between the age groups. But, sometime after the age of sixty, adults begin to sense having moved over a threshold into older folk territory. That can be startling to the soul and the ego! They may be contemplating retirement from paid employment and find it a difficult adjustment. They may be assessing the volunteer or paid commitments they want to continue, which ones they want to renegotiate or change, and what new experiences they are eager to embrace. If they are healthy, they certainly don’t feel old. They may wonder, “How did I get here? … I can’t be that old!”

For some people, retirement from the workforce means that their adult identity and day-to-day life appear to vanish as familiar habits and connections are no longer there. For some, a lessening of family or work commitments opens time and energy for trying new roles and experiences. Hindsight, Humor, and Hope journeys with people as they begin to redesign their later years into a time of reflection, discernment, soul stretching, and new life possibilities. This gift of extended years finds many people becoming elders with deep personal questions such as, Who am I now? and What will I do that is meaningful? In six two-hour workshops, this program invites participants to develop deeper understanding and appreciation of their elder stage of life and the path they traveled to reach it.

Demographers say there will be a large increase in the number of people reaching elderhood in the years ahead. Older people have an opportunity to redesign their personal time from *doing* 24/7 to *being* 24/7. They may still be employed, often part time, but for many the senior years present a gift of reclaimed time to read; experiment with personal expression like painting, photography, and music; connect with family and friends; engage in a hobby; and/or discover new ways to reach out to others.

People hold attributes in their senior years that young folks have yet to develop. There is no fast track for obtaining wisdom; it comes via life experience and discernment. Elders may not move as fast as young folks or have the stamina to stay up late socializing as they do, but they are rightfully valued in roles that draw on their wisdom, experience, and skills. Those reaching this life stage need tools to help them better understand their rightful place in the community and accept it for the gift that it is. There are ways to live this stage of life with meaning and intention. Each of us is much more than a physical body. Each of us also is a spiritual being holding faith, hope, and love within. It takes thought and reflection to discern what to bring forth from the deeper, spiritual self to deal with what is happening in the community, the family, and the world.

The elder treasure of wisdom and insight is grounded in experience and a deepened understanding. As elders become aware of and bring forth inner gifts, as they commit to caring for themselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually, they can proudly wear the tee shirt that says, “Aging Is the Ultimate Extreme Sport.”

**Goals**

This program will:

* Encourage participants to support one another and not be alone
* Identify and explore the positives about being an elder
* Use journaling as well as color and line as expressions of spirituality and creativity
* Lead participants to claim inner wisdom
* Help participants come to understand being an elder as a time of spiritual richness
* Invite participants to remain adventurous in thinking about the future
* Challenge participants to find ways to mentor others.