



MINISTER'S COLUMN

MARCH 2024

The Gift of Transformation

Dear CUF folks,

Last month, Pastoral Friends and I began leading a six-part discussion of *In Later Years: Finding Spirit and Meaning in Aging*, by Bruce Marshall. *In Later Years* is a collection of interviews with older adults, mostly retirement home residents and others over 70. Through reading and reflecting on the book, and listening to participants' reflections, I've gained insight into a life experience that I've pretty much avoided thinking about. Partly that has to do with our youth-centered American culture, partly that has to do with the losses that come with advanced age. The book has really helped me to see positive, life-affirming aspects that accompany those losses. No matter what age we are, we are all aging, all undergoing transformations of mind, body, and spirit, whether or not we notice, accept, resist, or embrace them. As the saying goes, "old age ain't for sissies." Still, every life stage has its challenges - how many of us would like to relive our early teen years?

Let difficulty transform you. And it will. In my experience, we just need help learning how not to run away.

~Pema Chodron

Whatever age and stage of life we're in right now, we have a great opportunity this month to get help learning how not to run away from its difficulties. We will get help from each others' stories, sorrows and joys. We will get help from focusing as much on our gritudes as our gripes, by seeing transformation of growing and growing older as a gift. How will we receive that gift? The central question of *In Later Years*, is "what gives us life?" I think that question is an essential one for all of us, for all our lives. Discovering what gives us life, and making choices based on our discoveries is a part of learning how not to run away from difficulty, but letting it transform us. This month, I look forward to hearing your stories of transformation, of what gives you life.

Peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name of the author, written in a cursive style.