

# Eldercare's Changing Times

The Rev. Gordon Webster

*Chaplain, Westminster Worship Ministry*

As a Presbyter in the 1990s I remember the Presbytery of the Genesee Valley being called into session as the corporation for the Rochester Presbyterian Home, Kirkhaven, and Valley Manor. We no longer exist for our eldercare institutions as their corporation.

On July 31, 2014 the Board of Seniors First concluded the legal decision making to transfer Valley Manor from its oversight to the administrative care of the Board of the Episcopal Senior Living Community. Seniors First CEO Jim DeVoe reported that action both in the Presbytery Newsletter and at the September Presbytery meeting.

Jan Packard and I continue to represent the Presbytery on the Kirkhaven Board. She pays attention to the worship life at Valley Manor, and as Chaplain at Rochester Presbyterian Home, I do so there. Our colleague, the Rev. Elaine Hiscock, does so at Kirkhaven.

As the Affordable Care Act enters its second year, it is transforming the way health care is financed in New York State. Monroe County, through its Department of Social Services, will no longer be handling Medicaid for hospitals and nursing homes, but instead New York State will now administer 60-70% of Medicaid. These national and state changes in financing health care are beginning to have an impact on our eldercare institutions.

In the meantime, the Board members of the now three Boards for the Rochester Presbyterian Home, Kirkhaven, and Valley Manor are engaging the question: What next for our eldercare?

The one dimension all three have in common is spiritual presence. As the boards address issues of care priorities – RPH's eldercare and memory care, Kirkhaven's dementia care and rehabilitation therapies, and Valley Manor's independent living plus – and financing possibilities, the residents of all can address their spiritual needs and concerns.

The Eden Alternative at RPH identifies three spiritual needs: boredom, loneliness, and helplessness. The entire caregiving of all staff, including the chaplain, continues offering the residents evidence-based ways of meeting each need. (**NOTE: RPH receives no Medicaid assistance**)

The households and Pathways approach at Kirkhaven find spiritual guidance as chaplain, volunteers, nurses, and activities staff learn together and cooperate in caregiving, endeavoring to treat residents as persons first, rather than patients first. (**NOTE: Kirkhaven does receive Medicaid**)

Volunteers who lead worship in Valley Manor, while others volunteer valued activities of music, games, and community building, truly help evoke a spiritual presence of joy, meaning, and loving relationships. (**NOTE: Valley Manor is private pay only**)

In eldercare's changing times let our spiritual presence with one another be creative, meaningful, and faithful.