**The Wisdom of Elders**

*Elders play a key role in every community in which they participate. This session is intended to reflect on the special wisdom and insight about life, faith, and God that often, though not always, come with age.*

**An excerpt from James Hollis' *“Finding Meaning in the Second Half of Life”***

"The world is

more magical,

less predictable,

more autonomous,

less controllable,

more varied,

less simple,

more infinite,

less knowable,

more wonderfully troubling

than we could have imagined being able to tolerate when we were young."

As I ponder this passage, it seems to offer two insights into humanity’s relationship to the universe. First, human beings have far less ability to know, understand, predict or control life than we think we do. And second, that most people spend their youth ignorant of or denying this fact, while maturity is largely defined by become aware of this and integrating it into one’s soul.

*Here are some possible jumping off points for your discussion:*

* As you look at the list, which of these descriptions of the universe seem particularly delightful to you….which of them seem scary? Any of them leap out to you as especially true for your own life experience?
* Are there aspects of the spiritual life that used to feel more knowable or secure to you, but that now feel more mysterious or cloudy? Is that mystery comforting or unsettling? Could it be both?
* The passage seems to suggest a difference between how older people and younger people perceive the world. Do you agree? What are some particular gifts or perspectives that you believe older people bring to church communities? How about younger people?

**A Prayer:**

God of all, we thank you for the wisdom and insights that come with maturity. We bless you for the journeys and challenges and discoveries that have brought us closer to knowing the truth of your universe. And we offer gratitude for those who have made these journeys before, and share their wisdom with us. Guide us, each year, deeper into the mysteries of your presence in our lives, and comfort us, when those deeper mysteries bring uncertainty or confusion, with the sustaining gift of your love and care. In the name of your Spirit we pray, amen.