

Volume 7 No. 1

BRANCHING OUT

LIVING BRANCHES

Live & Grow – Together

Spirituality — AND — AGING

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: TEN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES | LAMB CHOP LOLLIPOPS

Lessons from Dad



OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, my father and I have had many conversations about life, aging, and retirement living. He and my mother reside at a community in the Lancaster area and have experienced life at every level of care. His reflections have often given me much to consider long after our conversations are over and allow me to have new perspective.

One time dad said to me, “I don’t want to become an angry old man, so I want to focus on the positive.” Another time I saw this prayer written on a post-it note at his desk, “Lord, let me be your servant.” My father, like many residents at Living Branches, is growing older and experiencing some health challenges. It is difficult at times but he wants to maintain a positive outlook on life. He wants to allow God’s love to influence his daily perspective so he can continue to find purpose in each day.

I would reflect that many times the persons I observe at Living Branches to be the most satisfied or joyful are often not the most able-bodied. These persons choose gratitude and kindness. They do not dwell on loss, but instead focus on what they can do for others. They find things to celebrate, whether that is in their lives or the lives of family and friends. Many of them may be able to identify with the apostle Paul who wrote, “I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation,” Philippians 4:12.

When I encounter residents who exude this contentment, I am often reminded of something Dr. Norman Loux once said to me many years ago. He challenged me with this idea: “As we get older, we become more of who we are.” If that is true, then our daily influences certainly do matter. And that makes me exceedingly grateful to spend my days at Living Branches surrounded by residents who have peace in their futures, use their gifts to serve others, and contribute to a community of purpose and joy.

Edward D. Brubaker

EDWARD D. BRUBAKER
President/CEO

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Spirituality — AND — AGING

An interview with Margaret Zook

By Donna Godshall, Sales Counselor

“GROWING OLD IS NOT FOR SISSIES!”

We’ve heard that phrase – maybe even declared it ourselves. Often we think of aging as a season that comes with challenges; it can also bring opportunities to explore, find new ways to use the gifts God has given to each of us, and continue growing into the person God always intended us to become. It can also bring a unique awareness of the meaning and purpose of our faith and an increased ability to connect with God. It brings a time of learning to journey inward to our sacred centers where God is with us in the most intimate way.

In the world of retirement communities, we have a long history of providing high quality physical care to those in the omega (the last letter of the Greek alphabet) season of the aging journey. There’s been a focus on cures, managing, and controlling – “fixes” delivered through tools that health care and medicine can provide. Later we learned to also emphasize wellness, nutrition, and continuous learning. We’ve built fitness and aquatic centers, added dieticians to our staff, and have growing libraries. But more recently, there is an increasing awareness of



MARGARET ZOOK
DIRECTOR OF CHURCH AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Margaret Zook returned to Living Branches in her new role in 2014. She serves as chair of the Penn Foundation board of directors, as a board member on the board of directors for Univest Trust and Univest Foundation, and as a deacon at Salford Mennonite Church. She and her husband Wilbur are proud parents of two and grandparents of eight.

Living Branches has given priority to educating, supporting, and affirming the purpose, joy, and caring of older adults. If you would like to have conversation about how your church or organization can partner with us in this vital ministry, please contact Margaret at 215-368-4438 or by email at Margaret.Zook@LivingBranches.org.

“A desire to belong to something greater than ourselves grows as we become older.”

the importance of spirituality to the well-being of seniors. We are learning how to integrate spirituality into the services we provide and have a deeper understanding of how that creates meaning and purpose in the lives of older adults.

Living Branches has taken intentional steps to place a priority emphasis on spirituality – both for our residents, the seniors that are part of congregations and churches to which we are connected, and the older adults that live in the community around us. Recently, I visited with Margaret Zook, director of church and community relations at Living Branches. Her passion for understanding that aging is a spiritual journey was quickly apparent. “One of the biggest yearnings I hear from people that are aging is a need to belong,” shared Margaret. “A desire to belong to something greater than ourselves grows as we become older.”

One of Margaret’s key roles is to partner with churches to provide resources that will help congregations develop a better understanding of spirituality and aging. “Even in our churches, it is often assumed that one’s faith journey will continue to develop as they age without too much communication about it. Often seniors feel de-valued as many churches focus on growing the congregation in numbers and so the emphasis is on youth, young families, and keeping up with technology. We have much to learn about creating atmospheres where seniors can also remain connected and use their spiritual gifts,” shared Margaret.

“Spirituality is belonging in a relationship with a God and belonging to a community of faith where we

practice that belonging. Older church members have a more difficult sense of where they belong. Life as a young person in a church was a role; we had jobs in the church—Sunday school teacher, elder, pastor, worship team. As we get older the jobs in church are no longer what we do, so defining our belonging in our community of faith becomes more difficult,” explains Margaret. “I believe defining that role for older church members will become more and more important as baby boomers live longer. The boomers will explore their spirituality just as they explored other aspects of their lives. We want to help congregations think about that exploration.”

WISDOM WITH AGE

It’s been said that “because the world is so desperately in need of wisdom,

God created elders.”

There is a wisdom that only comes with aging. “We want to help churches understand that the wisdom of the seniors in their congregations is wisdom that will help us in the future. It needs to be asked for, received, and honored,” stated Margaret. “At Living Branches, we are focused on developing specific knowledge about how to seek out the wisdom, generosity, and mentoring gifts of our senior adults.”

In the communities of Living Branches, there is a strong connectedness to our spiritual roots and an honoring of practices that encourage spiritual growth. This creates a culture that cannot be manufactured or produced—because it comes out of the lives of people. In

the New Testament, the Apostle Paul equates our faith journey to running a race. No matter in what stage of the race we each find ourselves, we all have a desire to finish well. Here at Living Branches we run the race together—in community, with perseverance, and with purpose and joy. And we run the race with confidence, believing the profound truth that spiritual growth can be nurtured through all seasons of life... even in, and perhaps especially in, the omega season. And so we say with Apostle Paul, “...I am reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me...I’ve got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I’m off and running, and I’m not turning back.” (Philippians 3:12-14, The Message)

10

Spiritual Practices *for Older Adults*



1. PRACTICE GRATITUDE – Expressing our gratitude for the small and large graces and gifts of each day infuses our lives with meaning, even in the midst of great difficulties.

2. PRACTICE RESTING – When we give ourselves permission to do nothing but rest for a period of time, we are renewed, restored, and gain a fresh perspective on our life.

3. PRACTICE WONDER – Pay attention and be astonished... whether it's a sunset, snowcapped mountain peaks, the song of a bird, or the sweetness of a baby's smile...then tell others about it.

4. PRACTICE CREATIVITY – See your life as a creative work in progress and discover new ways to express your innate creativity. Challenge yourself to experience new things.

5. PRACTICE KINDNESS – Giving others the benefit of the doubt or making that small extra gesture contributes to our spiritual growth and expands our capacity for compassion. We can always find a way to be kind.

6. PRACTICE RELEASING – Voluntarily release excess possessions, unrealistic expectations of others and ourselves, old grudges and resentments. New energy is discovered when we release what we no longer need and things that are weighing us down.

7. PRACTICE BREATHING – Attention to breathing becomes a form of centering prayer or meditation. Even a short period of consciously, slowly breathing in and breathing out reminds us of the gift of having the breath of life and centers us for what lies ahead.

8. PRACTICE CONNECTING – Studies have shown that those with significant ties to others fare better in the aging process. So practice making new connections and keeping old ones vital. And put yourself in places where you can most easily connect with God on a regular basis.

9. PRACTICE MAKING MUSIC – We all have a need for melody and rhythm. Join a choir or instrumental group, sing with the radio, or dance to the music that others make. Finding ways to join in the music of your life gives an increased sense of vitality and belonging.

10. PRACTICE BEING WHO YOU ARE – Be true to your own uniqueness. Say “yes” to the things that bring you joy and quit doing the things that don't. Give thanks for the journey you've taken. And then share yourself, your wisdom, and your joy with the wider world.

Adapted from Top 10 Spiritual Practices for Older Adults By Nancy Gordon, Director California Lutheran Homes Center for Spirituality and Aging

GOOD READS

PRAYERS OF AN OMEGA: FACING THE TRANSITIONS OF AGING

by Katie Funk-Weibe (1984)

Katie speaks for anyone in the omega (that last letter of the Greek alphabet) years about the challenges of aging with a touch of humor.

NECESSARY CONVERSATIONS

*by Richard and Marlene
Kauffman (2013)*

The Kauffmans, family counselors, urge adult children and parents to have direct conversations and work together in making important decisions about the journey of aging.

FALLING UPWARD

by Richard Rohr (2011)

Father Richard Rohr seeks to help understand the tasks of the two halves of life and to show the second half as not a loss but a gain ... to be experienced as “falling upward.”

A TASTE OF THE SEASON

Lamb Chop Lollipops

A new twist on a springtime classic

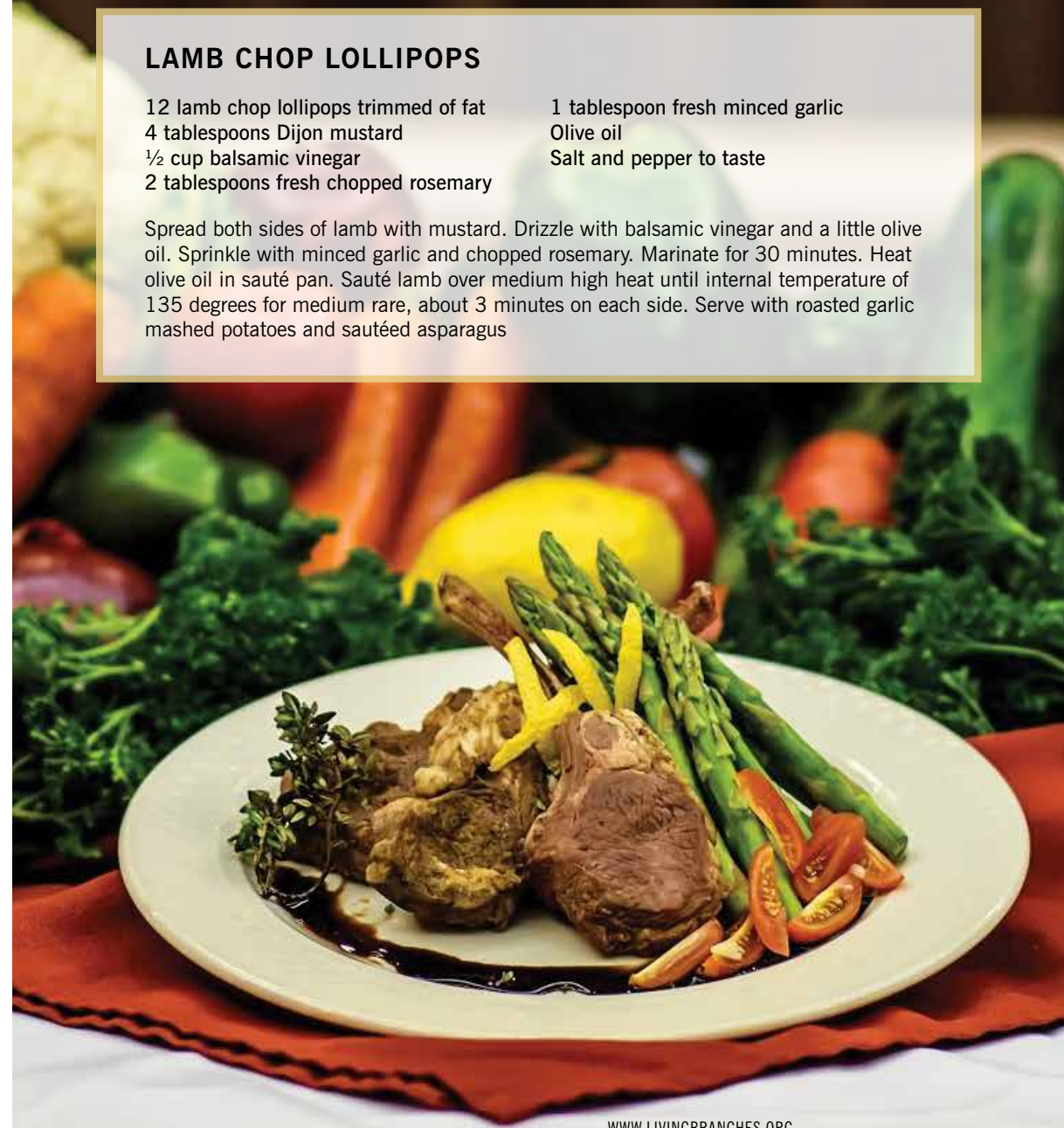
SERVES FOUR

LAMB CHOP LOLLIPOPS

12 lamb chop lollipops trimmed of fat
4 tablespoons Dijon mustard
½ cup balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons fresh chopped rosemary

1 tablespoon fresh minced garlic
Olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste

Spread both sides of lamb with mustard. Drizzle with balsamic vinegar and a little olive oil. Sprinkle with minced garlic and chopped rosemary. Marinate for 30 minutes. Heat olive oil in sauté pan. Sauté lamb over medium high heat until internal temperature of 135 degrees for medium rare, about 3 minutes on each side. Serve with roasted garlic mashed potatoes and sautéed asparagus



**RUSSELL
ROTHMANN**
Executive Chef, Dock Woods

Russell Rothmann has been the executive chef at Dock Woods for five years. He is a graduate of Johnson & Wales University and has brought restaurant, banquet, and community experience to the organization. Through Russ' leadership of the culinary program Dock Woods staff has been able better accommodate resident requests and increase resident satisfaction with the dining program. He has led the team to embrace Culinary Promises like using fresh vegetables, fresh – never frozen – beef and fish. He has implemented several popular weekly action stations in the main dining room such as the healthy creation and Asian stations. Russ' passion for food is evident in the menus he creates for special events including the Big Band and Valentine's Day Banquets as well as the annual Dinner for the Friends of Dock Woods and Dock Meadows. Russ is also invested in the dining services team, taking the time to teach others as he strives for excellence. He has been able to train members of the team in everything from washing dishes to cooking and he never turns down an opportunity to cultivate the community relationship that defines Dock Woods.

THE HAPPINESS Doctor Is In

A Mayo Clinic physician offers a joyful plan based on science

By Sue Campbell for Next Avenue



DR. AMIT SOOD, 48, estimates, based on average life span, that he has 10,000 days more to live.

That sense of finite time helps him focus his attention, show compassion, be GRATEFUL, and help others — all actions that lead to happiness. Sood chooses happiness. And he wishes for you to choose it, too. His recently released *Mayo Clinic Handbook for Happiness* pulls together easy things to incorporate into a busy life to boost joy and fulfillment.

The Mayo Clinic researcher, educator, and clinician grew up in India and was a young medical student during the massive 1984 chemical spill in Bhopal. He witnessed the resulting injuries and suffering of people whose homes and lives were destroyed by the accident. When he moved to the United States a decade later, he thought he would find, he says, “the Disneyland of the world.” And yet, he saw suffering, stress, and pain in this country, too.

Why, he wondered, is HAPPINESS so elusive? What is it about the human condition that pulls us to the negative?

The problem, his research showed, is our brains. They are not designed for peace and happiness but to constantly scan the environment for what could harm us, looking always for what’s wrong or out of place.

And our minds wander — most of us spend 50 to 80 percent of our time thinking wandering thoughts. We can’t seem to help it. When Mayo gave people 174 choices of activities that made them happy, “thinking” came in dead last. Yet, it gobbles up our finite days.

So how to break free of the brain’s relentless churning, its pull to the negative?

“If we can do that,” Sood says, “we gift ourselves with joy, positivity, resilience, better productivity, and better thought.”

THE FIRST STEPS

Sood created a four-step plan that’s been tested and is in practice at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn. He teaches it to doctors trained there, nurses who work there, and patients undergoing treatment for everything from cancer to heart disease. Next, he’s taking it to the city of Rochester, teaching it to high school students.

“This is meant to be very real-world,” Sood says. “I am not sitting on a mountain in a monastery thinking up great ideas. Most of what I’m doing is on the run. This is where the rubber meets the road.”

Before you even begin, Sood says, you need self-awareness about your wandering, ruminating mind. For most of us, this is easy to see when we stop and sit for five minutes. That’s step zero.

Step one is harder: Train your attention. For anyone who’s tried to meditate and given up, Sood can relate. “Why do we teach a method that results in failure for 95 percent of people?” he asks. Instead, he prescribes two small, specific activities.

First, when you wake up in the morning, instead of getting caught up in what you have to do that day, stop and think about a few people in your life who are making you happy — picture them in your mind, one by one. That’s it.

Next, for the first three minutes when you come home and greet your family, resolve not to improve anybody. “Praise them,” Sood says. “Focus on their novelty. When was the last time you stopped and looked at the color of your loved one’s eyes, or the way she ties her hair differently every day, or the care she puts into the clothes she wears?”

“These two simple practices immediately give you joy. And they are immediately available to you. They don’t deplete your energy or willpower, and they will connect you better with your family,” notes Sood.

Step two: Cultivate emotional resilience. Attention teaches us to hold positive thoughts. But they will slip, and resilience helps us quickly recover from negativity and roll with life’s stressors, which surely will come.

To become resilient, Sood has you use five broad principles, and he’s assigned each a day of the week — a theme for your day you can always turn to when things go wrong. Over time, using the principles builds your ability to bounce back from adversity.

THE SCHEDULE:

Monday: Gratitude — focus on what is right

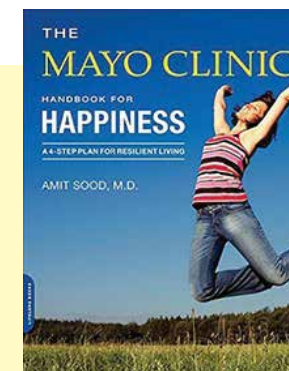
Tuesday: Compassion — recognize that when people are upset, it’s a call for help

Wednesday: Acceptance — creatively work with what is, be open to possibilities, control the controllable

Thursday: Meaning — it is very important, Sood says, to know why you are here. If you don’t know, he says a good answer is: “I am an agent of service and love, to make a little corner of the world happier and more hopeful than I found it.”

Friday: Forgiveness — choose forgiveness to help yourself

“When you have this schema, you can remember when your thoughts turn negative to ask: ‘What is today? Acceptance? How can I accept what is happening?’” Sood says.



ONE DAY AT A TIME

The next steps are to incorporate a mind-body practice and then finally, once your mind is in better control, to make dietary or physical changes. These last steps are easier if you have mastered your attention and developed resilience.

“It’s important to sequence,” Sood says, “so do the first two steps together.”

Happiness, Sood says, is a habit. Some people are born with or grow up learning it, but others have to choose it.

Going back to the 10,000 days he has left to live, Sood says: “I am not like the pigeon sitting on the tree closing my eyes and thinking the cat can’t see me. The cat can see! This realization that I have finite time makes me appreciate the days I have. If I have two pancakes on my plate, and that is all I have, it makes me eat more gratefully and with greater presence.” Presence enough to make time to look into the eyes of loved ones, and see the colors there.



COME ONE, COME ALL! (2)

The Souderton Mennonite Homes Country Auction is one of the mostly highly anticipated events of the year. Residents donate baked goods and gently used household items for a community-wide auction. This year Pam Tavor, life enrichment coordinator, served as the auctioneer and the auditorium was filled with residents waiting to bid on pies, cookies, picture frames, games, and more!

CAR CLUB OUTING (3)

During the first week of February, Living Branches Car Club members gathered bright and early to head to the Lansdale train station. Their destination: the 2016 Philadelphia Auto Show! The group braved the winter weather for a day of walking in Center City. They enjoyed the exhibit at the Pennsylvania Convention Center and headed across the street for lunch at Reading Terminal Market. Our close proximity to the regional rails made for an exciting day that still returned everyone home in time for dinner!

BOWL AWAY THE BLUES (4)

In the summer months we long for the Jersey shore and in the winter months we turn to indoor activities! In an effort to ditch the winter blues and cabin fever, the Living Branches motor coach took group of residents to Earl Bowl for an afternoon of friendly competition. Marci Christian, fitness center coordinator at Souderton Mennonite Homes, and Brent Daubenspeck, fitness center coordinator at Dock Woods, accompanied residents from both campuses. Some residents came along as spectators and others laced up to partake in the fun.

A TASTE OF HOME (5)

Just before Christmastime, Gerry Moore, life enrichment coordinator for Dock Meadows, invited residents to an afternoon of baking. For many of us, baking homemade cookies, pies, and treats is one of our favorite holiday traditions. And for residents it is no different. The ladies got together to bake cookies for the annual Dock Meadows Christmas party. And as always, they started cleanup by licking off the beaters – it seems we aren't the only ones who love cookie dough!

SAVE THE DATE

SPRING DISCOVERY TOURS

Discovery Tours are designed for first-time visitors to Souderton Mennonite Homes and Dock Woods. Each event begins with light refreshments and a brief presentation to explain the communities and help you become better acquainted with Living Branches. Then you'll take a tour of the community center and residents' homes, visiting a villa, a cottage, and an apartment. A shuttle will be provided for the tour. There is no fee for this event, but registration is required. **To register, visit www.livingbranches.org/events.**

DOCK WOODS – 2:00 P.M.

April 14, April 27,
May 10, May 25

SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES – 2:00 P.M.

April 13, April 28,
May 11, May 26



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JULY 1, 2015 THROUGH DECEMBER 31, 2015

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SPRING FLEA MARKET

The Souderton Mennonite Homes Auxiliary hosts the annual spring flea market featuring coffee and baked goods, furniture, books, decor, and a Mother's Day plant sale. Stop by to shop, pick up flowers for the mothers in your life, or enjoy some treats baked by residents! All proceeds benefit the Souderton Mennonite Homes benevolent care ministry. This will be the last year for the Spring Flea Market and we hope you'll join us for one last hoorah!

SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

Saturday, May 7
7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

FUTURE RESIDENT CELEBRATION LUNCHEON

The annual celebration luncheon for future residents will be held in June. Invitations will be mailed six weeks prior to the event. Please respond by May 31.

SOUDERTON MENNONITE HOMES

Tuesday, June 7

DOCK WOODS

Tuesday, June 14





Lacher & Associates
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Clayton Landis
David and Carolyn Landis
Henry Landis
Landis Decorating
Grace Leatherman
Patricia and Spencer Lee
Henry and Carol Longacre
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Richard and Patricia Nyce
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Larry and Barbara O'Neill
Donald and Romaine Pannabecker
Allen and Tina Pannell
Loren and Eileen Parmer
PATHS, LLC
Podulka Family Trust
William and Jean Press
Providence Mennonite Church
Eileen Prusinski

Althea Quintrell
Barbara Rafter
Rita's of Harleysville
James and Kendra Rittenhouse
Norman and Alice Rittenhouse
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Arlene Rosenberger
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Steven and Ruth Swartley
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SPRING FLEA MARKET

The Souderton Mennonite Homes Auxiliary hosts the annual spring flea market featuring coffee and baked goods, furniture, books, decor, and a Mother's Day plant sale. Stop by to shop, pick up flowers for the mothers in your life, or enjoy some treats baked by residents! All proceeds benefit the Souderton Mennonite Homes benevolent care ministry. This will be the last year for the Spring Flea Market and we hope you'll join us for one last hoorah!

SOUDERTON
MENNONITE HOMES

Saturday, May 7
7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.