



Sisters AGING WELL Together

A Privileged Ministry Within Ministry: A Practical Approach



2026 Program Overview and Registration

A Geriatric Certificate Program for US Women Religious Congregations

June 22-25, 2026

Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center, Sandy Springs, GA



Sisters AGING WELL Together

A GERIATRIC CERTIFICATE PROGRAM FOR US WOMEN RELIGIOUS CONGREGATIONS

It is essential for Community leaders and those responsible for elder care within their Communities to have the appropriate knowledge, information, and resources to support the culture of religious life and foster the continued well-being and growth of each elder in the context of both the current times and those of the future.

PRAISE for Sisters Aging Well Together

The Faculty and Staff create a comfortable and interactive learning environment. This multi-disciplinary program offers a wealth of knowledge, opportunity to explore challenges, and a gentle reminder that ours is indeed a privileged ministry.

Read more praise for
this program on page 7.

What decisions are needed to support the culture and ensure long-term benefits for the entire Community?

It is the experience of the Avila Institute of Gerontology that religious Communities can benefit by coming together to collaborate, share, and discuss ways to support the culture of religious life and the well-being of sisters with great sensitivity to both elder members and the Community at large.

This certificate program provides Communities with practical information that addresses our current lived reality and offers guidance to plan strategically, ensuring that Communities can continue to thrive. The four-day in-person program will address these issues.

Have Questions? Contact Deacon Tony Silvestro

tonys@avilainstitute.org
or call 518-537-5000 ext. 1309



REGISTRATION AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Thanks to the generosity of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation scholarships are available based on the needs of your Community.

Registration and Scholarship Options

Our objective is to make the program available to as many Communities as possible. Given the varied needs of Communities, several options are available.

- **Option One:** Your Community can pay for your participation in the program.
- **Option Two:** Your Community can pay for a portion of your participation in the program.
- **Option Three:** Your Community will require a full scholarship for your participation in the program.

Registration and scholarship cover the following (\$2,345 per sister):

In-Person Geriatric Certificate Program Training

- An in-person Geriatric Certificate Program (GCP) for women religious congregations **over a four-day period**, including room and board.

Please note: Travel and local transportation are not included in program costs.

Three Post-Conference Virtual Meetings

- Customized content based on the pressing needs of the participants' Communities.
- Continued training on the AIG Care Transitions Assessment tool (CTA) and interpreting the results.

Access to the AIG Online Subscription Library

- Free access to all programs and Religious Community specific content for one year.

Scholarship Qualifications

To qualify for a scholarship, applicants must commit to the following:

- Attend and actively participate at the four-day Geriatric Certificate program.
- Attend and actively participate in at least one of the three Post-Conference Meetings.
- Implement at least one part of the CTA within their Community and report back on the results.
- Train at least five (5) other sisters and report back on the results.
- Complete and submit all pre/post-tests and surveys.
- Utilize the AIG online learning library.
- Complete and submit a reflection paper.

In-Person Training Date and Location

Monday-Thursday, June 22-25, 2026

Day One begins with lunch at 12:00 p.m.

Day Four ends at 1:00 p.m.

Ignatius House Jesuit Retreat Center

6700 Riverside Drive NW

Sandy Springs, GA 30328

www.ignatioushouse.org

Register Online

Based on your Community's needs, please complete and submit the online form as soon as possible. **Space is limited.**

Registration and payment are due no later than Friday, May 22, 2026.

Register Online

(click the link or copy and paste)

<https://forms.office.com/r/iYV2uk3axw>



IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSION DESCRIPTIONS



Above: Participants and AIG Staff at the Sisters Aging Well Together Conference at Avila, May, 2025.

DAY 1—Monday, June 22

KEYNOTE – The Privilege of Being Called an Elder

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Do we see being an “elder” as a privilege? Do we fear this term? In order to address one’s fears about aging, it is essential to first name those fears. This interactive session will allow us to come to terms with our own fears of aging and ascertain if we are prepared to answer those fears so we can minister to others.

Impact of Change and Stress as We Transition in Life and Ministry

Francis Battisti, Ph.D.

Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN

Routine and tradition are an important part of one’s identity. This is especially true for those who have

lived Community Life for a large part of their adulthood. Many have been part of their Community for 60 or 70 years - and beyond!

Aging often brings about changes in people’s lives that require a transition into a new way of living and serving. These changes can be quite stressful because they necessitate leaving behind or altering certain actions, routines, and traditions.

In this session, we will discuss coping with change and how we can navigate the impact it has on the elders we serve. Strategies for combatting the stress associated with moving from independence to dependence will be discussed.

Discussion

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

**DAY 2—Tuesday, June 23****The Transformation of Aging –
Understanding Normal Aging****Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS**

As we age, we tend to experience changes in our physical and cognitive abilities. For many, this means a slowdown in some of our functions. Today, we view those near the age of 65 to be in the beginning stages of that slowdown, with gradual decline occurring in the years thereafter. But some people experience decline that is considered beyond normal aging, particularly with regard to the decline in cognitive skills associated with dementia.

In this session, we will discuss the differences between normal aging and abnormal aging, steps that we can take now to address risk factors for abnormal aging, and how Communities can develop a plan to provide the appropriate care for members as they age and continue to transform to their best selves.

Culture of Care**Clare L. Horn, LCSW**

Person-centered care is a method of providing care for the person in alignment with her needs, preferences, history, and beliefs. A culture of care that accounts for all of these considerations for each individual member while maintaining the stability of the whole Community is an essential ingredient in the person-centered care recipe.

In this session, we will discuss the foundational principles of person-centered care in the context of religious life, methods for assessing the culture of care within a Community, and how to support Community Members as they age in continuing to build relationships with self, God, others, and all creation.

**Being vs Doing: What Brings
Meaning to My Life Now?****Clare L. Horn, LCSW**

As we age, changes in our bodies and mind can limit our abilities to serve in the ways that we are used to, which may mean that the ways in which we find our purpose must also change. Those who live very active lives can sometimes have a difficult time “winding down” and finding alternative ways to stay involved in religious life. Did my position define who I am? In this session, we will discuss how we can begin to discover the value in moving from “doing” to “being.”

Collaborative Conversations**AIG Faculty**

This session offers dedicated time for meaningful table conversations—sharing wisdom, learning from one another, and reflecting on the insights gained throughout the conference. It supports one of our core goals: fostering connections among Sisters and encouraging collaboration across Communities, recognizing that we are stronger together.

**Recognizing when Death is Near:
Preparing for Grief****Sr. Lois Wetzel, O.Carm., RN, BSN**

In “Recognizing Signs When Death Is Near,” participants will gain a comprehensive understanding of the various aspects of end-of-life care. The session will cover essential topics such as creating a comfortable environment for the dying, the importance of presence as a form of care, and effective communication strategies to support both the person and their loved ones during the death vigil.

The presentation will provide greater insight into the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services in end-of-life situations.

The Gift of the Moment and Self-Care**Francis Battisti, Ph.D.****Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN**



IN-PERSON TRAINING SESSION DESCRIPTIONS, *continued*

DAY 3—Wednesday, June 24

Letting Go – Loss, Grief, Finding Meaning in Life, and Staying Connected

Francis Battisti, Ph.D.

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Sr. Mary O'Donovan, O.Carm.

As we age, it is expected that we will lose things – health, independence, loved ones and friends, and even meaning. These losses often produce grief as we remember and miss those things that once brought us joy and peace. Grief is a normal part of the aging process, but how we handle that grief plays a big part in our overall health and well-being. It is important to recognize and confront the emotions that we experience following a loss in a way that allows us to process grief, practice self-care, and continue moving forward on the journey.

In this session, we will discuss the experiences of loss, of grief, how to help others find meaning in life when one is grieving, and the importance of staying connected to those who have journeyed with you.

Discussion

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Is it Care-Giving or Care-Partnering? Discussion

Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS

Clare Horn, LCSW

Francis Battisti, Ph.D.

Helen E. Battisti, Ph.D., RDN, CDN

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm

In our elder years, understanding the story of our lives more deeply can bring us comfort, peace, and wisdom. Having an awareness that one is on a journey – both internally and externally – and how that journey has brought us to the current day can help to alleviate the stress associated with age-related transitions.

In this session, we will discuss the importance of honoring one's story and the benefit of conducting a life review, so we transform from a caregiver to a care-partner. In this transformation, we begin to understand the importance of self-care as part of care-partnering.

Forming a Care Team

Alfred Norwood, MBA, BS

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

A holistic approach of care requires a team that provides pastoral, spiritual, medical, social, physical, cognitive, and psychological care. This team can provide insights into the various needs of the individual and how the Community can respond to those needs. In this session, we will discuss how to form the care team, what areas of expertise are needed, and what actions the team must take to plan for future needs.

DAY 4—Thursday, June 25

An Assessment Tool Designed for Care Transitions

Shane Cooney, BA

Sr. M. Peter Lillian Di Maria, O.Carm.

Accurate assessment of the health and wellness needs of both individual members and the Community as a whole is an essential component in the sustainability of any religious Community.

In this session, we will discuss how to utilize the AIG Care Transitions tool, a dynamic measurement instrument that produces a snapshot of the entire Community at the time of assessment while also gathering data that will help the Community identify current and future issues related to care and transition. Knowing that each Community will have its own unique set of goals and challenges during transition, the material is organized in sections that are to be used when needed for specific situations.



PRAISE for Sisters Aging Well Together

Special thanks to the Conrad Hilton's generous gift of making this conference possible. "Sisters Aging Well Together" was one of the most well-orchestrated conferences and offered "top notch" presenters. Topics were relevant and touched my heart as well as educating my mind. Thank you to all who planned and organized these memorable days.

Sr. Cory Canon

Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill

This conference provided a plethora of resources that can be used when we return to our sisters. The speakers were quite expert in their fields and engaged well with us. Their availability, knowledge, and expertise made every day a real time of much learning in a most pleasant atmosphere and environment.

Camille Panich, SCN

Sisters of Charity of Nazareth

The Avila Institute of Gerontology has provided a wealth of knowledge and love through the Sisters Aging Well Together conference. I am leaving much richer and eager to return to my Sisters to share with them the beauty, sacrifice and love that comes from growing old together.

Sr. Peter Marie Lewandowski

School Sisters of Christ the King

This conference was wonderful. Full of very valuable information and concepts. I am very new to working in the Health Facility with our elder Sisters - "only two weeks old." This conference helped me to develop within myself a sense of the mission involved in the ministry.

Sr. Ruthann Bedinghaus

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

This program has been a true gift. Helpful in so many ways regarding aging, religious life and care partnering with dignity and love. The staff presented with passion and compassion for aging persons, were well researched, and made learning enjoyable. I am most grateful for having this opportunity. Thank you.

Sr. Cindy Kaye, RSM

Sisters of Mercy

I really appreciated the interaction between the attendees. It was good to share with one another the joys and challenges of ministering to our elders. The workshop was right on with practical information that I can apply to my situation. The speakers were outstanding, willing to answer any questions.

Sr. Cheryl Darr

Sisters of Notre Dame

I'm very grateful for the time and space to receive the wisdom/advice of so many on this important topic of caring for our elder Sisters. I am particularly grateful to be able to network with other religious communities on this topic as well as professionals in their respective fields of expertise!

Sr. Ave Maria Hayes

Dominican Sisters of Mary,
Mother of the Eucharist

This was a totally worthwhile experience. Whether you've worked with elders for a day or twenty years, you will learn new tools, make new friends, and be better prepared to accompany your sisters and each other. The faculty is excellent!

Kathy Flynn, OP

Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa