



The Oakletter, April 26, 2026

I'm being pepper-sprayed in the picture above. I didn't have to be pepper-sprayed, but since my sailors were being pepper-sprayed, I chose to be pepper-sprayed, too.

It was the summer of 2008, and I had volunteered to be chaplain for a battalion going to Iraq. Chaplains are non-combatants, which is why I did not have to be pepper-sprayed, but I wanted to stand with my sailors. They were being pepper-sprayed in case they were ever in a riot where pepper spray was used. I could have been in a riot with them, and I wanted to be prepared.

That's one thing about the military: We train like we fight. That's a mantra I took from those days. Here are two more: "One team, one fight," and "complacency kills." All of these applied back then.

"One team, one fight" may apply to the church, too, and "complacency kills" definitely does. That's why I'm preaching on Acts 2:42-47 Sunday, because the church that's described there is far from complacent.

I hope to touch on this Sunday when I talk about our being under the lordship of Jesus Christ. I have a particular association with the phrase "under the lordship of Jesus Christ" and it's how I plan to start the lesson. It comes from a tough time years after I left active duty, and it, too, is a mantra worth having. For the record, here's what someone told me at that time: "Unless we come under the lordship of Jesus Christ, we're all lost."

I invite you to think about what it means for us to be under the lordship of Jesus Christ and about how having this as mantra can be an antidote to complacency. However you may feel about complacency and the church, I hope we can agree that being under the lordship of Jesus Christ is the way that leads us and the church to life.

Thanks,

Ned

Sunday's Epistle lesson, Acts 2:42-47, CEB

The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved.

Birthdays: Carolyn Williams, April 26; Buzz Castellow, April 27; Barbara Buchanan, May 1; Patricia Wynne, May 1

Anniversary: Jim and Kaye Herndon, April 28

This Week at Oaklette:

Sunday, April 26: Sunday school class and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; worship service and children's church @ 11 a.m. [K. Hill/S. Castellow]; confirmation class @ 5 p.m. at Salem UMC

Monday, April 27: Food pantry [N. Helsel/S. Price] @ 10 a.m.; HRM Band @ 7 p.m.

Wednesday, April 29: choir practice @ 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 30: HSOBX @ 8:30 a.m.; Bible study @ 10 a.m.

Saturday, May 2: Fresh Expressions workshop at Epworth UMC in Exmore, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Sunday, May 3: Sunday school and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; worship service and children's church [**note: volunteers needed**] @ 11 a.m.; confirmation class @ 5 p.m. at Salem UMC

New to the prayer list: Chris Carney, our confirmation class, May 2 Fresh Expressions workshop in Exmore. **Also pray for:** Pastor Tyrone Armstrong, Donna Baker, Preston Basnight, Tanya & Steve Benton, Sandy Carraway, Megan Carroll, Chesapeake Fire Dept., Coastal Va District & DS Givens, Kaylee Cuccorillo, Rylee Amelia Dimitry, Bille East, Jay Eckert, ForKids, Joyce Gaston, Freekind Virginia, Bill Gilliam, Kaye Herndon, Ethel Hickman, Debbie Hodges, Home School Out of Box, Earl Jenkins, Teal Jenkins, Pat Johnson, Karon Hardy, Brian Lincoln, Dave Lorence, Rose Marie Madu, Wayne Magner, Walter Nebrotskie; Pat Newbern, Dakota Rebel, Ray & Bob Rosales, Rhonda Roughton, Loretta Smith, the League of Advocates, Virginia Conference & Bishop Sue, John Tandy, Marilyn Washington, Monica Whitehurst, Phyllis Buchanan Wolfe, Our Country & Military, Our Pastor

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