



The Oakletter, May 31, 2026

In his 2022 book *Don't Look Back*, Will Willimon wrote that the median age in the United Methodist Church is 63. He also wrote that any organization whose median age is 63 is automatically in decline, and he added that if it were not for the disaffiliations the church was going through at that time, aging would be the biggest thing on our plate. Is now a better time for us to consider the issue of the aging church?

I think that the issue may be discipleship. Even though I didn't attend Sunday school between the ages of 12 and 27 and was never part of a United Methodist youth group, I have the sense that the church's teaching on discipleship could be improved. If the church doesn't seem, to me at least, to be engaged in discipleship in ways that the Gospel teaches, what lessons about discipleship have been taught and what ministries have followed?

I think that the church is going to have to engage in discipleship as the Gospel teaches, regardless of our median age. My sense is that younger people are not involved in the church because they want but haven't seen from us the personal engagement described in passages such as Micah 6:8 and Matthew 25:31-46.

Any thoughts or senses I have on this topic are late-breaking. I don't think that discipleship and personal engagement on behalf of the kingdom of God were on my radar before the last few years. What I've seen in the church since COVID informs what I say above.

Please be thinking and praying about how the church can have a physical impact on the community. We know that we are called to fish for people and that fishing means going to the fish. We also know, thanks to Will Willimon, that anyone we're going to meet in the church is probably going to be around 63.

Again, please consider the issue of the aging church, and please share your thoughts with your new pastor.

Thanks,

Ned

Trinity Sunday Gospel lesson, Matthew 28:16-20

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Birthdays: Lisa Bailey, Steve Rudis, and Valerie Hunsberger, May 31; Danny Etheridge, June 1; Chuck Litten, June 2; Wendi Butler, June 3; David Grubb, Adam Hendrickson, and Sarah Martinez, June 5

Collections at present: *Mission of the month [blessing box]: canned vegetables [May];
canned fruit [June]

*UMW for kits for conference, through May 31

*Annual Conference offering benefiting the M.J. Kim Fund and Center for Advocacy and Belonging, through June 14

This Week at Oaklette:

Sunday, May 31: Sunday school and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; Trinity and Peace with Justice worship service and children's church [S. Castellow/K. Hill] @ 11 a.m.; confirmation class @ 5 p.m.

Monday, June 1: Food pantry @ 10 a.m. [K. Hill/J. Rooks]; church council meeting @ 6:30 p.m.; HRM Band @ 7 p.m.

Wednesday, June 3: choir practice @ 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 4: Bible study @ 10 a.m.

Sunday, June 7: Sunday school class and SOTM @ 9:30 a.m.; worship service and children's church @ 11 a.m. [**note: volunteers needed**]

Our prayer list includes: Pastor Tyrone Armstrong, Donna Baker, Preston Basnight, Barbara Bennett, Tanya & Steve Benton, Chris Carney, Sandy Carraway, Megan Carroll, Chesapeake Fire Dept., Coastal Va District & DS Givens, Kaylee Cuccorillo, Rylee Amelia Dimitry, Billy 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 confirmation class, Our Pastor

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