Too often we are not intentional about engaging our mid-life and older adults in faith formation. Sadly in our worship and program planning, we often do not consider that our spiritual growth and church experience can take on new life as we age. We fail to remember that one of the blessings of aging is the opportunity to leave a legacy: to teach and mentor others in leadership at every stage of our faith journeys. There is a rich history and tradition in our churches and denomination that only those who have experienced it can pass on to younger generations and new church members.

The stories of the faith learned and experienced by our older adults need to be honored and celebrated. One way to do this is through an Older Adult Recognition Sunday. United Methodist congregations worldwide are invited to celebrate Older Adult Recognition Day during the month of May. The Virginia Annual Conference has designated the first Sunday in May of each year as Older Adult Recognition Sunday. Use this day to show appreciation and support for the older adults who continue to enrich and strengthen our faith communities. It is also a call to action to be advocates in addressing the needs of older adults in the congregation and community.

We encourage your church to celebrate Older Adult Recognition Sunday. Your congregation can choose the first Sunday in May or another date that best fits your need. Use the day to recognize what older adults bring to our congregations and to identify ways to help them continue filling vital roles in mission and ministry. Invite one of your senior members to share their story with the congregation, to let everyone know how they came to know Christ.

For additional resource help, visit the website for the Discipleship Ministries. Select “Leadership Resources,” then “Older Adults.” (www.umdiscipleship.org)

Worship Service Suggestions

The following worship service suggestions are offered by the Virginia Conference Older Adult Ministries Council and Virginia United Methodist Homes, Inc. Tailor the suggestions to your congregation.
Jesus answered him, “Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. 24 Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

25 "I have said these things to you while I am still with you. 26 But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.

28 You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I am coming to you.’ If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. 29 And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.

- John 14:23-29 (NRSV)

**SUGGESTED HYMNS**

“Come, All of You” - **UMH** 350
“Come Down, O Love Divine” - **UMH** 475
“God the Spirit, Guide and Guardian” - **UMH** 648
“Savior, Again to Thy Dear Name” - **UMH** 663
“Nothing Can Trouble” - **TFWS** 2054
“Where the Spirit of the Lord Is” - **TFWS** 2119
“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace” - **TFWS** 2171
“My Life Flows On” - **TFWS** 2212
“You Are Mine” - **TFWS** 2218
“Father, We Have Heard You Calling” - **W&S** 3150
“O God, in Whom We Live” - **W&S** 3153
“Send Us Your Spirit” - **W&S** 3185

**UMH** – The United Methodist Hymnal   **TFWS** – The Faith We Sing   **W&S**—Worship & Song
**OPENING PRAYERS**


God of Life, your risen Son has gathered us into the church, nourished us with his body and blood, and poured out upon us your Holy Spirit. Grant that we may receive the blessing of your grace, so that we may love you with all our hearts, and gladly feed your sheep in the name of Christ. Amen.

Steve Garnaas-Holmes
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Lord of all nations, you hold this fragile world securely in your hands; at the same time you are so personal as to live within each believer through your Spirit. Meet with us this day. Help us to see you in the faces of our sisters and brothers, to hear you in the words of Holy Scripture and to be nourished by you at your table. Convince us of your presence as we worship so that we may be inspired to live our lives for your glory and offer your love to all. Through Christ, our Lord and Savior, we pray. Amen.

Constance Cherry
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**A LITANY FOR OLDER ADULT RECOGNITION SUNDAY**

A conversational litany based on John 14:23-30 paraphrased from NRSV and AMP translations of the Bible

Leader: In His instructions to His disciples, Jesus told them, “Those who love Me” will do what?

Response: *If I love Jesus I will keep His Word.*

Leader: Jesus also gave them a promise: “If you love Me…”

Response: *To His followers, including me, Jesus promises that He and God, the Father, make their home with us.*

Leader: Who does Jesus promise that the Father will send?

Response: *“The Advocate, the Holy Spirit”*

Leader: What does Jesus tell His followers the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will do?

Response: *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will “teach” me “everything and remind” me of all Jesus said.*

Leader: Are there other names for the Advocate, the Holy Spirit?

Response: *Yes: Comforter, Counselor, Helper, Intercessor, Strengthener, and Standby.*

Leader: Where is the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, in the world today?

Response: *The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, makes His home in all who believe in Christ Jesus.*

ALL: *Thanks be to our Lord for His gracious gift of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be in us and working with and for our benefit as followers of Christ.*

Written by Rev. Carol Bookwalter, York River District Member, Older Adult Ministries Council
Children’s Message

Today’s message is about how Jesus, the son of God, tells us that God has sent Jesus to share God’s Word and that God will send the Holy Spirit, or an Advocate or a Helper, in Jesus’ name, to “teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.” (John 14:25 NRSV)

Do you know what a magnet is and the power it has? I am using a magnet, a piece of paper, and a sewing needle, to show you how God can guide us by His unseen hand.

“When I lift this needle with my fingers and then let go of it you will notice how it drops immediately to the floor. Now, when I lift this magnet in the same way, and then let go of it, it will also drop in the same manner. But now I am going to hold this magnet up, and bring the needle close to the magnet. Now when I let loose of the needle with my fingers, you see how it is held by the magnet. The gravity, or as we would say, the weight of the needle which would cause it to fall to the floor, is overcome by some greater or stronger power which is in the magnet. Now, you cannot perceive the power with any of your senses; you can neither hear it, smell it, taste it nor feel it. You can see the effect of that power, but the power itself you cannot see. In like manner, there are powers and influences all about us which we cannot perceive with any of our senses, but which are constantly exercising their influence upon us and upon things about us.

But now, by the use of this paper, I desire to show you something additional. I am going to place the magnet above the paper, and the needle below the paper, and show you that even through the paper this influence or power which holds the needle exerts itself.

You will see now that when I lay the needle lengthwise against the paper, with the magnet upon the opposite side, that the needle is held up against this paper and does not fall, as it would if the magnet were removed. You will notice also that, as I move this magnet from place to place, the needle on the lower side of the paper follows the magnet. In this simple little experiment you are able to see the magnet, but suppose for a moment that this paper were increased in size until it was as large as the ceiling of this entire room. You will understand that then the magnet and any person moving the magnet might be entirely out of sight, and as the magnet would be moved from place to place on the upper side of the paper, entirely out of view, the needle on the lower side, which could be easily seen, would move from place to place, following the magnet.”

This little experiment illustrates to us not how God guides us, but it will show us that there are powers unknown and unseen by us which can hold and guide. “[I]f we are willing to be led by His Spirit, and to walk in His way, God is willing to guide us, if we will come to Him and ask Him for the Holy Spirit to lead us in the way in which He would have us to walk.” God knows all things, the future as well as the past. He cannot be mistaken and must therefore know beyond the possibility of error what will be for our good. God not only knows what will be our good but He desires good, therefore we should let Him guide us.

“[H]ow does God guide us? He guides us by the teachings of His Word. He has told us in the Bible how we ought to live, what is for our present and eternal good. God guides us by the Holy Spirit, and it our duty to come to Him daily and ask Him for the presence and power of the Holy Ghost to guide us through each day, and to bring us at last to Heaven above.”

Shared by Janie Nuttall, Richmond District Member, Older Adult Ministries Council

We are equipped and empowered to obey the Word no matter what our age or where we are along our journey of faith.

The losses and frailties of our older adult years may contribute to fear and an attitude of anything but “abundant life.” To live as Jesus commands challenges each of us. It is impossible to obey without the power of the Holy Spirit. For seniors facing the challenges of aging bodies, there is a temptation to feel disempowered. Yet, the work of the kingdom is not done through our own power. There is no retirement from the commandments of Jesus. Within our churches, we sometimes overlook the vast resource of our older adult members. Remind them of Jesus’ call on their lives to share the Good News, and remind younger members of the wisdom our older adults might share.

The Holy Spirit teaches us to live fully in the peace of Jesus.

In a world, which seems increasingly foreign and anything but peaceful, senior adults may feel more and more estranged. Simply watching the evening news may cause fear and discomfort. Jesus gives us a peace, which defies the world’s understanding. While our culture frequently encourages a devaluing of age and equates youth, physical beauty and vitality with worth, Jesus reminds us his peace is not based on the false peace the world gives. He demonstrated repeatedly God’s valuing of those the world does not. The Holy Spirit comes to encourage us and give us the assurance of God’s love, the value of each of God’s children no matter what our age or circumstances. The Holy Spirit equips and empowers us to live in truth.

Older adult members of our churches can witness to their personal experience with the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and journey of faith.

Many older adults have experienced great loss and suffering at various times in their lives. Those, who know God’s love and have relied upon the Holy Spirit, have a rich knowledge of the power and peace we all need to face the challenges of living as followers of Christ in an unloving world. Young members may or may not have an appreciation of the resources available in building intergenerational relationships. As a pastor, gerontologist and assisted living administrator, I have seen failure to communicate between generations contribute to frustration and unhappiness for everyone concerned. Jesus teaches us to love, to appreciate the worth of each individual, and see each one as a child of God. Loving is best done by building relationship, only done by spending time together. As younger and older members of our congregations come together to build the kingdom, each individual gains from the other.

Written by Suzanne Spencer, Winchester District Chair, Older Adult Ministries Council
**Suggested Benedictions**


May the Christ who walks on wounded feet walk with you on the road.
May the Christ who serves with wounded hands stretch out your hands to serve.
May the Christ who loves with a wounded heart open your hearts to love.
May you see Christ in everyone you meet, and may everyone you meet see the face of Christ in you. Amen.

May the Spirit of God be in you.
May the Spirit go ahead of you, and come behind you.
May the Spirit stand beside you, guard over you from above and support you from below.
May the Spirit comfort you, tell you all you need to know, and give you power to serve.
May the Spirit unite you with God, and with the children of God, to live a holy and fruitful life. Amen.

Robert D. Ingram
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**Additional Information and Support**

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