Milestones Circle: Sharing Our Lives Now

DATE: November 22, 2026

TOPIC: The Joys, Trials, and Tribulations of Aging

Facilitated by: Barbara Boshard and Kathie Bergman

Opening Words and Chalice Lighting:
"Aging is not for the weak. One day you wake up and realize that your youth is gone, but along with it, so go insecurity, haste, and the need to please…Aging means letting go, it means accepting, it means discovering that beauty was never in our skin…but in the story we carry inside us." (Meryl Streep)

"Beautiful young people are accidents of nature, but beautiful old people are works of art." (Eleanor Roosevelt)
Check in:

Without cross-talk, please state briefly how you are doing now.

Song:
Turn! Turn! Turn!
Song by
The Byrds

To everything (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (Turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose under Heaven
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to laugh, a time to weep
To everything (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (Turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose under Heaven
A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones
A time to gather stones together

To everything (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (Turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose under Heaven
A time of love, a time of hate
A time of war, a time of peace
A time you may embrace
A time to refrain from embracin'
To everything (Turn, turn, turn)
There is a season (Turn, turn, turn)
And a time to every purpose under Heaven
A time to gain, a time to lose
A time to rend, a time to sew
A time for love, a time for hate
A time for peace, I swear it's not too late
Songwriters: Peter Seeger. For non-commercial use only.

Reading #1: How Church May Boost Mental Health (AARP Now)
Research links regular worship to lower rates of depression, among other health benefits…New research has found that active religious participation can influence your mental health and well-being. For decades scientists have investigated the link between religion and health. Now a new large study of more than 6000 adults age 50 and older and living in Ireland has found that individuals who regularly attend religious services have fewer depressive symptoms that those who consider religion important but who don't worship frequently…One possible explanation…is that worshipping with others and the increased social and emotional support from one's religious social networks can combat the isolation of living alone…There are also some possible

nonsocial, psychological benefits…including an increase ability to cope with stress…research on religious involvement shows links…as well (to) physical health.
https://www.bing.com/search?FORM=SLBRDF&PC=SL06&q=aarp+how+church+may+boost+mental+health

Reading #2: The Darker Side of Growing Old, the parts of aging we won't Talk About by Mark Sanford, Ph.D.
…We spend a great deal of time learning how to live well in old age, but the more difficult question is how we live when old age begins taking away the very things that once make life feel worth living…. What is left for me now? Researchers studying the darker side of aging have described older people who experience loneliness, disconnection, and fear of further decline. Some come to feel that life itself has lost meaning…I have come to realize that grief in old age isn't necessarily something a person gets over. Sometimes it becomes an ongoing part of the person's everyday life…Research on older adults make an important distinction between social isolation and loneliness. A person can be surrounded by people and still feel lonely. Hearing loss, declining mobility, illness and the loss of family and friends can all increase the risk…Maybe the person's world has become so diminished that effort no longer seems worth the price… when suffering cannot be eliminated, one of the most important things another person can do is witness it – to name it, give it a voice, and remain connected to the person experiencing it…I see what this is costing you, I am still here…

https://medium.com/illumination/the-darker-side-of-growing-old-b12973c28d25

Reading #3:Aging Optimism: How Attitudes Toward Aging relate to Health and Well-Being (AARP Now, by Cheryl L. Lampkin, March 12, 2026)
In many cultures, including the United States, aging is often framed through a lens of decline…reinforcing the idea that growing older is inherently negative…New AARP research, however, suggests a more nuanced reality…
Key Findings at a Glance
- *44% of adults 35 and older have a positive view of aging, with little variation by age group.*
- *Personal and family experiences, especially caring for or observing older relatives, are the strongest influences on attitudes toward aging.*
- *Although health conditions increase with age, more health challenges do not automatically lead to more negative views of aging.*
- *Adults with a positive view of aging are more likely to rate their physical health and brain health highly.*
- *Positive attitudes toward aging are associated with better mental well-being and lower levels of depression and anxiety.*

When asked what shapes their attitudes toward aging, most adults point to personal and family experiences, particularly caring for or observing parents, grandparent, or other older relatives. These experiences can influence views in different ways: witnessing illness or loss of independence may heighten concern, while seeing older adults remain active and engaged can inspire confidence and hope…Attitudes about aging are closely linked to how people assess their own health and well-being. Adults with a positive view of aging are substantially more likely to rate both their physical health and brain health as excellent or very good. They also report higher overall mental well-being and lower levels of depression and anxiety…Together, these findings suggest that how people think about aging may play an important role in shaping not only how they feel emotionally, but how they experience health and cognition as they grow older.

https://www.aarp.org/pri/topics/health/brain-health/aging-attitudes-optimism-health/?msockid=0c94ebb761ec64e415fbe22a65ec67e8

Questions to consider:
1. What have been some of your joys or best parts of aging?
2. What have been some of your challenges about aging?
3. What concerns about aging if any, would you like to share with our group?

4. How does our church impact on you in regards to aging?
5. What aspirations or things (if any) do you want to accomplish/experience in the rest of your life?

Meditation/Quiet Reflection: We will take a few minutes in silence to reflect on the readings, and on the questions to consider. If you wish, use the back side of this paper to jot down your thoughts.

Sharing/Listening round our Circle. Choose one or more questions to answer or choose to speak on a related topic. We will first go around our Circle to ensure that everyone gets an equal opportunity to speak. Please be cognizant that this is not the time for "crosstalk."

Sharing part 2: Thoughts and Questions: You are invited during this time to *verbalize the questions or comments* in your heart and mind that may spark discussion on our monthly theme. Participants may speak in no particular order and respond to each other, respectfully.

Sharing part 3: Possible further information? As time allows, please share your recommendations of books, movies, writers, websites, etc. that offer more on today's theme.
Check Out: This is the time to share a last word or to make a request of the Circle friends for tangible care from one another.

Closing Words and Extinguishing the Chalice:"Nothing is inherently and invincibly young except spirit. And spirit can enter a human being perhaps better in the quiet of old age and dwell there more undisturbed than in the turmoil of adventure." (George Santayan)

Date and topic for the next meeting: Dec. 27, 2026

What was your working life/career like for you? Facilitated by Jeanne Murphy and Kathie Bergman