



Ramonalynn Bethley—Lead Pastor

What's the Difference?

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." --John 13:34 & 35

In his book, *Growing True Disciples*, George Barna compares the actions of believers to non-believers. While this book was written and the data calculated twenty years ago, I would venture to guess that the statistics still ring true.

INDICATIVE BEHAVIOR	CHRISTIAN	NON-BELIEVER
Loving	99%	95%
Compassionate	94%	95%
Donated to help others	47%	48%
Carry significant debt	33%	39%
Volunteered in community	29%	27%
Gave to homeless or poor	13%	12%
Corrected change error (\$)	19%	19%

We have just celebrated what I consider to be one of the holiest days of the year, Easter. It is not an event where we hunt eggs, show off our new clothes and shoes, or gather as family around the table for a huge meal. You may do all those things, I do, but Easter is so much more than an event. It is a lifestyle that should distinguish us and set us apart from non-believers. Not that I want to see a bigger gap between believers and non-believers, I don't think society could handle that, but I do think living like a believer should make us stand out.

- We believe Christ died for our sins.
- We believe in a risen savior.
- We believe Christ is alive in the world today.
- We believe Christ will come again.
- We believe death has no power over us because we believe in eternal life.

These beliefs are unique to Christians. That alone distinguishes us. That alone sets us apart. It is what makes us "Easter people." People who have a very good reason to act differently, to forgive faster, to love unconditionally, to serve unselfishly, and to live with an integrity and faith that is, well, different than someone who does not believe.

They say to dance like no one is looking, well I say, live like everyone is watching.

Be "Easter people"!!
Pastor RL

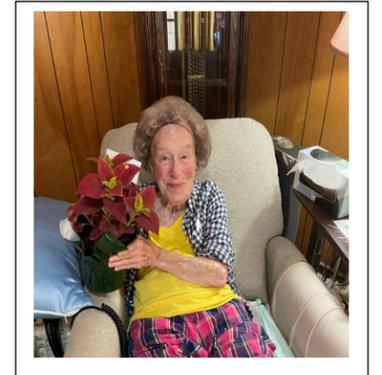
UNITED METHODIST WOMEN NEWS

Before Easter, United Methodist Women delivered 24 live plants and several other gifts to our homebound members, both at home and in various care facilities. Those visits were tremendously appreciated by the recipients and a blessing for those ladies who made the deliveries.

Our April meeting was held at the Cenla Pregnancy Center in the Baptist Building. The Center provides numerous services for women who find themselves in an unplanned pregnancy. Claire Lemoine, Executive Director and her staff offers kind, compassionate care and education for their clients. UMW members assembled baskets of baby supplies for their lovely boutique.

On May 17, we will learn about the programs and services for women at the YWCA when Katie Vanderlick speaks at our monthly meeting at the church.

All FUMCA women are welcomed and encouraged to participate in UMW.



Brandon Tubbs—Program Director

It's planting season, at least that's part of what I associate with this time of year. Good Friday, at least around home, was the customary day to put new seed in the ground. The day often aligned with the right temperate and rainfall needed for new seed to sprout and for plants to take root. Sometimes, though, the religiously significant day for our Jewish friends and Christians alike falls early. Attentive planters plan accordingly before starting a garden or setting new row crops. Starter sets and greenhouses provided the safe space and proper climate for seeds and young plants.

My grandfather would often save seeds particularly from a crop that was just right. The good tomato had the perfect balance between acidity and texture. A sweet watermelon that had ripened by the kiss of the sun, or a new variety of okra that had grown abundantly and fried even better. Grandpa would nurture those seeds and guard them through the winter before starting them in just the right soil. Of course, he couldn't keep the seeds too many years in a row because the crops just would not produce or taste as well. When Grandpa started plants from the seeds of those particularly good crops, the outcome proved to be well worth the effort, and it didn't cost as much. He saved a purchase.

Grandpa, Grandma and the younger generations planted the young seedlings in the garden at the first good change. Not every plant survived, but most did. Moving from indoors to outdoors, while transferring from rich compost to dirt, exposed to the sun where it once had shade, causing the plants to experience an initial shock. What was vibrant and green appeared withered for at least a day or two. Not all the young plants took root and survived, but most did. The roots just needed time to expand into new soil. The plants had to adjust to the changes that they had experienced, in just a little while.

If you've ever transplanted an established tree or plant — maybe one that needs to be repotted — you'll notice this change, too. Moved from the familiar ground — soil that may have grown stale and appeared less nutritious — the plant struggles for a day or two. It takes time for the plant to find itself and for its roots to reach the nourishment of the new ground. What had been beautiful to behold struggles for a little while. In time, the plant has established roots in new ground, and the plant looks more alive than it had in years. Master gardeners and prudent farmers know this. They give the ground the time, care and attention that it needs so that the plants can grow, thrive and produce good fruit. The right mix of time, care, water and nourishment allows plants — even plants that may have appeared weakened over time — to take new roots, find new life and to produce a bountiful harvest. The right mix of patience, endurance, diligence and deliberate steps by the farmers are vital to that work and the fruits thereof. May each of us do our part as we partner and co-labor with God, preparing the fields and the harvest.

THE GATHERING
WEDNESDAYS FROM 5:00-7:30

FOR CHILDREN: 5:50
Nursery (Ages 6 weeks to 3 years) 5:00-7:00

Children Activities (Pre-K to 5th Grade) 5:50-7:00
 *Worship, Crafts & Games

Youth Bible Study & Activities (Grades 6-12) 6:00-7:00

ADULT SMALL GROUPS 6:00-7:00

Whine & Dessert: A Moment for Moms (Bistro)
 *Fill your coffee cup & your spirits as you gather with other moms to share hacks, ideas & support.

Cards & Conversation (Fellowship Hall Lounge)
 *Come as early as 1:00 or stay late for conversation over a game of cards, dominoes, checkers or chess.

Stepping Stones (Stepping Stones Room)
 *A small group for young adults who gather to discuss current topics and scripture while doing life together.

Bible Study with RL & Friends (Transitions Room)
 "Entering The Passion of Christ" a 6 week Bible Study on the last days of Jesus.

FOR OUR MUSIC LOVERS

Handbells	(Handbell Room)	5:30-6:15
Chancel Choir	(Choir Room)	6:30-7:30

Current Worship Series



Sermon Series:

Starting May 1 - Living 3 Simple Rules:
 John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church had 3 simple rules to live by:
 Do no harm, do good,
 and stay in love with God
 But we learned them as children:
 *Play Well with Others
 *Pretty is As Pretty Does
 *Dance with the One that Brung Ya
 They are simple, but not easy!
These sermons along with the book Three Simple Rules by Ruben Job will be the focus of the May Bible Study on Wednesday nights @ 6



FIRST CHURCH
 FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH of ALEXANDRIA

THE MESSENGER
May 2022



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9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

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To make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Transforming our community by BUILDING relationships to GROW active disciples who SHARE the life changing lessons of Jesus.