

Review: Aging: Growing Old in Church

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Aging: Growing Old in Church

By Will Willimon (Baker Academic)

Will Willimon quotes John Wesley as saying, “Christianity is a social religion; to turn it into a solitary affair is to destroy it.” These timely words, however, are not about quarantines or shutting down churches due to a pandemic. Instead, they refer to just one of the many challenging realities of our retirement years—and *Aging* wants to take on all of them.

Willimon, the retired dean of the chapel at Duke Divinity school, tells it like it is. He’s like a doctor who walks into the exam room and bluntly tells you some unfortunate diagnosis: “You’re old!” He delves into a long list of crises, including health, finances, isolation and faith. *Aging* tells many stories from literature and life to make some very difficult, even harsh, observations about the last chapters of life.



Then, like the doctor in the exam room, Willimon follows up with a realistic list of possible and hopeful options. He doesn’t rely on simple, canned Bible answers, though he does use the Bible extensively. He even includes several of his sermons. He also calls upon the Christian faith, exclusively.

How we maintain our own spiritual health, and how churches can help to minister to the elderly, are important themes of the book—with the author placing the responsibility to act on each individual and church. Willimon knows. He has researched, he's observed, and he's living out the journey through the retirement years.

The reader will get the clear picture that growing old, especially as we get older and older, is hard work—both for the individual and the church. But there is much promise and reward in the hard work for those who will do it.

Whatever your age, this book—part of Baker's "Pastoring for Life" series—is not too late (or too early) for you to read—not as a devotional but as a guidebook. I believe its best use is for those who are preparing for, or approaching, retirement years. Additionally, churches that need to "up their game" in providing ministry for retirees will also greatly benefit.

Karl Fickling, coordinator

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