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**November/
December Upper
Room Devotionals
are available
outside the
keypad door.**

THE **UPPER
ROOM**
DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



Advent: Love Makes A Way

This Advent, we will focus on how *Love Makes a Way* based upon John 1 -*and the Word became flesh and lived among us...full of grace and truth*. During Advent, we will reflect on how God, in Jesus Christ made a way in order to be with us (even through great obstacles and struggles) and to bring hope and wholeness into a broken world. And how in Christ, Love continues to make a way into all our lives. This is particularly true during 2020, as we have all had to make new ways of being and doing. This year has been a time of living in the unknown and holding onto faith.

This advent, we will further tap into the strength and adaptability that our incarnational God gives in Christ to keep trusting and serving during challenging times!

We invite you to join together in these Advent offerings:

Worship on Sundays

Join us for worship at 10am online or 10:30 for Drive in Worship - you may remain in your car or experience the seasonal weather and sit outside in the parking lot!

Advent Mid-Week Prayer in the Sanctuary

Join us for a 30 minute mid-week time of prayer in the sanctuary on Wednesday evenings throughout Advent at 6:30pm

Masks and social distancing required

December 2nd, 9th, and 16th at 6:30pm led by Pastor Darcey

Children and Youth Advent Ministries

On December 20th we will premiere the *Youth and Children's Christmas Program* on our online worship!

The Children's Ministry Team will also be providing Advent Calendars and devotional materials to guide discipleship with our children

WORSHIP on CHRISTMAS EVE

4:30 Drive in Worship with Carols and Candlelight and Holy Communion
6:00 Online Christmas Eve Worship

2021 Stewardship campaign: ALL IN!

ALL IN! While uncertainty continues to surround how we gather and worship, we continue to operate with the certainty that God is with us. It is hard to prioritize when we are struggling and juggling to keep family, school and work all on the right path. And yet we cannot, and should not, fail to make God our first priority. God calls each of us to be a part of the Christian community. And it takes all of us. We can be ALL IN.

We are blessed to have committed members of our church who continue to provide ongoing financial support. For 2020, our stewardship campaign yielded \$600,000 in estimates from over 100 families and individuals. These estimates have been largely met this year and provide the financial foundation for our staff, facilities, missions and programs. We hope to equal this amount in 2021 and are off to a solid start. However, as our worship styles have altered, estimates of giving have been coming in at a slower pace than years past. If you have yet to do so, please contact our church office with your estimate of giving.

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” Ephesians 4:16.

During these uncertain times in regards to how we gather and worship, the certainty of our mission remains. How is God calling you to be ALL IN as together we build up the body of Christ?

Tom York

Stewardship Chair



December Birthdays

December 1

Debbe Harless
Angela Messer

December 2

Ed Flippen
Saja Alexander

December 7

Mac Dirom

December 8

Sally Beth Reaves

December 12

Virginia Ritenour

December 15

Diana Hudson

December 16

Linda Bartlett
Karen Willis

December 17

Terry Painter
Julie Lewis

December 18

Milton Franklin
Jill Snead

December 19

Pat Vines
Zachary King

December 21

Brenda Anderson
Jeff Williams
Abby Craig

December 22

David Stuckey

December 24

Tom Traylor
A.C. Little
Andrew Markey

December 26

Bob Sledd
Joy Moretti

December 27

Teddy Cunningham

December 28

Bob Sadler
Donna Johnson
Susan Shelton

December 30

Martha Narron
Jun Chang

December 31

Susie Rothenberg
Brenda Kleinholz





Zoom Offerings



Sundays: 8:30 am Contemporary Christian Sunday School Class
 10:45 am Preschool Sunday School
 11:15 am K - 2nd grade Sunday School
 11:45 am 3rd - 5th grade Sunday School

Wednesdays: 11:00 am Zoom in for Prayer

Thursdays: 11:00 am Prayer & Praise Service

WAYS TO STAY CONNECTED!

We have two offerings for adults on Sunday morning:

Contemporary Christian

Grow in wisdom and love as we engage in a variety of studies, have in-depth conversations about Scripture and the world around us, and support each other in discipleship and in life.

Leader: Randy Reaves

Location/Time: Zoom/8:30am

Good News

The Good News class practices in-depth Bible study to help us take in the full depth and breadth of Scripture in community with fellow disciples.

Leader: Dr. Jim Davia

Location/Time: not meeting at this time

I went to seminary in New Jersey, and I was part of a large contingent of native Californians there. I grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area and could see the sun rise over the bay and set over the ocean. After settling into student housing just before fall semester began, a gaggle of Californians, and on whatever honor I have, I swear I was not among them, decided to head out to the Jersey Shore to watch the sun set. They were rather dismayed when the sun kept moving over the beach and set behind a 7 11 to the west. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west, whether over the Pacific Ocean or behind a convenience store.

This is a time of year when we long for the sun to set later, when 5:30 is the new 10pm. We don't like the dark. But according to Genesis, God created both night and day, and called both good. In the Jewish tradition the day begins not at sunrise, but at sunset. God's work of creation and new creation begins in the dark. During Advent we are invited to sit in darkness, to let the night do its work and prepare us for the dawn. To borrow a phrase from C.S. Lewis's description of Aslan, the Christ figure in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the dark is not safe, but it is good.

Barbara Brown Taylor, in her book "Learning to Walk in the Dark," wrote, "I have learned things in the dark that I could never have learned in the light, things that have saved my life over and over again, so that there is really only one logical conclusion. I need darkness as much as I need light." Advent is a time of night, of preparation, of waiting. After a devastating year we want to accelerate to Christmas, sprint to the new year, and put 2020 in the rearview mirror. But we can't rush growth. There is no shortcut to transformation. Darkness has its difficult but good work to do, and Advent invites us to not rush the night, but to let it do its work.

A person was asked about a particularly painful time in life, and the response was, "Those are good days to have behind me." We will all be glad to have these days behind us, but let us not forget that God works in the darkness to set the stage for dawn. What have we seen this year that we have not noticed before? Who have we seen that we have not noticed before? What have we learned? How have we grown? How have we resisted growth? Once we have let the night God has created and called good do its work, may God's promise in Luke 1 be fulfilled: "By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."

In Christ's Service,
Ed



RRUMC YOUTH ONLINE

YOUTH@RIVERROADUMC.ORG

1. DAILY DEVOTIONS

*join our email list to receive
daily devotionals to follow*

2. ZOOM CHECK-IN

*join us on Wednesdays at 5:30pm
to check-in with other youth friends*

3. SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE

*live on Sundays at 5:15pm!
join us for an online version of youth group*

4. FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

*follow us on Instagram for more
daily inspiration and information about
upcoming youth events*

Happy December, River Road Families!

Advent, which marks the beginning of the church year, is “the first gleam of Christmas,” writes W.E. Sangster. “It heralds the entrance of the Divine into human history; it is heaven descending to earth; it is a great event casting its brilliance before it.” Sangster adds: “It is as though a trumpeter had taken his stand upon the turrets of time and announced the coming of the King. ‘Get ready,’ he seems to say. ‘Get ready. He is coming!’”

In Toddler & Preschool This Month:

Merry Christmas! We are going to have an incredibly sweet month as we combine the Christmas story with Christmas cookies! It is going to be so much fun! While cookie cutters, decorations, and excitement will fill this entire month, the focus will be Jesus—specifically, Jesus is God’s Son. We want every preschooler to know that what we are celebrating this time of year is the wonderful truth that God loved the world so much that He gave us His only Son, Jesus. We pray that we will all enter this month with the same wonder the shepherds had as they heard the good news for the very first time—a wonder that will inspire us all to go and tell everyone, everywhere that Jesus is God’s Son.

Our Memory Verse This Month:

“GOD LOVED THE WORLD SO MUCH THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY SON.” JOHN 3:16, GNT

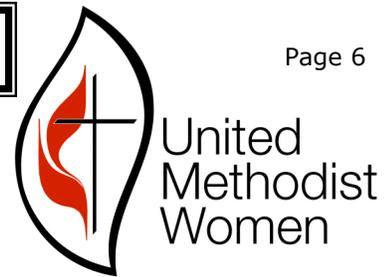
In Elementary This Month:

Christmas can be filled with all sorts of emotions. Some people easily experience the joy of the season. Some rest in the hope that God is making all things new. But others struggle to find peace due to life’s circumstances. With all that’s going on this time of year, we thought it’d be great to go back to the basics and simply celebrate Christmas. The truth is Jesus is the best gift God ever gave. Jesus was proof that God loves us and we can trust God no matter what. Because of Jesus, it’s possible for us to have a relationship with God that will last forever. As we remember the Christmas story, we take time to celebrate the greatest gift the world has ever known and rediscover joy and hope and peace as we rest in the unconditional love of God.

Our Memory Verse This Month:

“TODAY IN THE TOWN OF DAVID A SAVIOR HAS BEEN BORN TO YOU. HE IS THE MESSIAH, THE LORD.” LUKE 2:11, NIRV





FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE:

The FA/AW Circle's next meeting will be on Zoom, December 8 at 10am. The Zoom link will be emailed out closer to time. Hope to see you there.

WOMEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST:

December 10th Virtual Women's Prayer Breakfast: Please mark your calendars now and join other ladies from River Road for breakfast on the second Thursday in December. We share what's going on in our lives, prayer concerns, and even helpful ideas for meeting some of the challenges we're all facing. Fix your own favorite bowl of cereal or muffin and pour yourself a cup of coffee. Then settle in on your phone or computer for a chat via Zoom! This group is open to everyone! You will receive a church wide email a few days beforehand with the Zoom ID number and Password/Conference Call phone number to make it easy to connect. Hope to see you there!

BOOK CLUB:

Book Club continues to meet via Zoom at the same time - 7PM on the fourth Monday of the month. Zoom information will be forwarded to everyone on the Book Club current list a few days before the meeting. If you wish to be included, please phone Ann York, 907-748-0446.

On December 28 we will discuss *One Day in December* by Josie Silver.

Keep reading everyone and the Club is always open to new members and book suggestions to read.

CREATION CARE

News from *Creation Care*: Things to be thankful for, to be concerned about, or to DO!

First, a few things to be thankful for: 1) "BP PLC is joining with renewable-energy company Orsted A/S to produce hydrogen from wind power, the oil company's first big project that....will play a role in the transition to low-carbon energy" (WSJ, 11/11/20, p. B11); 2) "The energy industry has experienced its worst year in decades because of the pandemic, but clean sources for generating electricity have still managed to grow" (WSJ, *ibid*, p. B5); 3) "The hotel industry has fallen behind other real estate sectors in adopting energy-efficiency measures, but a Connecticut developer hopes to change that by converting an office building into what could be the most energy-efficient hotel in the country...The developer and architect, Bruce Becker - whose firm Becker & Becker is based in Westport - is building the hotel to meet net-zero energy standards" (NYT, 11/11/20, p. B7); 4) "President Xi Jinping of China pledged that his country would adopt much stronger climate targets and achieve 'carbon neutrality' before 2060 (NYT, 9/23/20, p. A10); and 6) "As oil prices plunge and concerns about climate change grow, BP, Royal Dutch Shell and other European energy companies are selling off oil fields, planning a sharp reduction in emissions and investing billions in renewable energy. The American oil giants Chevron and Exxon Mobil are....doubling down on oil and natural gas and investing what amounts to pocket change in innovative climate-oriented efforts" (NYT, 9/23/20, p. B1).

Continue to pray and work: 1) "The United States contribution to coastal plastic pollution worldwide is significantly larger than previously thought, possibly by as much as five times" (NYT, 10/31/20, p. B10); 2) "Study: 1 to 2 million tons of US plastic trash (annually) pollutes water and land" (RTD, 11/2/20, p. A10); 2) "5 Ways Climate Is Changing Hurricanes....1. Higher winds....2. More rain....3. Slower storms....4. Wider-ranging storms...5. More volatility...a forecaster's nightmare" (NYT, 11/11/20, p. A19).

Things we can do include: 1) Speak up! 2) Modify our behavior (e.g. "A mix of behavioral solutions could lead to improved climate....including switching to plant-rich diets, avoiding 'over-eating'], and more conservation-minded [and efficient] farming practices....could slice 2380 billion tons of greenhouse gases annually" (RTD, 11/6/20, pp. A12-13); 3) Buy more BP and Shell Oil gas 4) Support local, and wider, efforts to protect and/or rehabilitate 'wetlands' and other 'degraded' or natural ecosystems, one of the priorities of The Nature Conservancy & Ducks Unlimited; 6) Minimize use of single-use and other plastics; 7) Join the Slow Food movement (e.g. Slow Food RVA) with its tenets to *buy local, cook more, and eat more 'mindfully' and healthily and 'in harmony' with friends and family*; 8) Join and support the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a host of other non-partisan nonprofits working *daily* to create a more sustainable world, e.g., The Nature Conservancy; Greenpeace; EDF; Ducks Unlimited; Sierra Club; Audobon Society; WWF, etc.; and 9) toast Becker & Becker! (:). Amen....Respectfully submitted, Michael j Wriston, Chair, Earth Advocacy Committee, RRUMC

Holiday Missions

We collected **76** Thanksgiving boxes for Hearth of Henrico, smashing last year's record of 53. Thanks to all who donated food and funds. You have made it a more thankful holiday for so many families in Henrico. Thanks to Jane Boaz and her team for leading this mission.

Despite the pandemic, the missions committee is gearing up for the usual **Christmas missions** this year. You should have received an email with the Sign-Up Genius link to choose one or more angels for the Angel Tree mission. Show some Christian love to a child with an incarcerated parent by providing a gift from that parent for Christmas. There will be monetary donation options for those who are uncomfortable shopping, as well as contactless drop off for gifts. **Gifts for the Manger** is also fast approaching. As you select gifts for your loved ones, don't forget the true meaning of Christmas. Make gifts in honor or in memory of those important people in your life and make a difference for others in honor of Christ's birth. This year the committee chose three crucial missions in these times of pandemic and related economic insecurity. The three options this year will be: 1) Open Table, which builds relationships between members of the faith community and those experiencing economic or relational poverty. Our church is currently sponsoring two tables, one with a family and one with an individual. Your gifts will support these two tables and build funds for future tables. 2) Preventing Homelessness – the gifts will be divided between three RRUMC non-profit partners who are actively and successfully preventing and ending homelessness, Housing Opportunities Made Equal (HOME), Housing Families First, and Virginia Supportive Housing. 3) Shalom Farms, which provides healthy food to promote healthy lives, including providing fresh food to our partner Ginter Park Food Pantry.

The Food Pantries

Last month, the missions committee purchased a clothes rack for Ginter Park Food Pantry and provided a substantial financial donation that will enable the Pantry to purchase more food from Feed More at a very low cost. From our volunteers we have learned that their shelves empty virtually every week with the increased demand brought on by the pandemic. We continue to support the food pantries at both Ginter Park and Welborne with your generous donations of food each week.

Ginter Park is in need of a freezer. If you have one you would like to donate please contact A.C. Little at vpi69@hotmail.com.

Blanket Project

We collected 28 blankets to be distributed to our mission partners at CARITAS, Ginter Park Food Pantry, Safe Harbor, which supports survivors of domestic and sexual violence and human trafficking, and the Youth Hub at Catholic Charities, which provides support for youth experiencing housing instability and homelessness. Thank you to all who made or purchased a blanket, providing the warmth of Christian love to those in need this winter. If you missed the blessing of the blankets but would still like to donate a blanket, you may bring it to the church and we will provide it to these partners. Special thanks to Sandy Jolley, Karen Carter and Ed Kross for coordinating this project.

We are blessed to be able to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. At holiday time, it is more important than ever to remember the least of these. For more missions information, contact Ann Hodges at ahodges@richmond.edu or 804-339-9440.



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December 2020

Articles for the
January 2021
Connections are due
December 20, 2020.



We're on the web at
www.riverroadumc.org

WORSHIP PLAN for DECEMBER

As you know, church leadership seeks to offer both an online and in-person worship format.

For the month of December, the in-person worship format will be a **Drive in Worship Service at 10:30am** where you can either remain in your car OR there will be a designated area where you can set up your lawn chair and worship outside. We will provide more details in email or mail communication and an email sign-up will be forthcoming! You can also call the church office at 740-7061 to sign up for worship during the month of December.

Online will continue to begin at 10:00am.

Open Arms Christian Preschool



It's been a blessing for OACP this year to provide a wonderful faith-based, educational preschool for all our children. The children have been in a safe learning environment where they are able to engage with other children and have fun! This month we are preparing for the Christmas season to celebrate and learn of the birth of Jesus Christ and we're all excited to share our Christmas Program virtually this year with families! The children will also be celebrating with a special "Birthday" Party for Jesus in their classrooms with their teachers and friends.

We are currently accepting children on our interest and waitlist for Summer Camp 2021 and 2021/2022 School Year. If you have family or friends that may be interested in having their children in our program, please have them reach out to Nora Hamlet, 804-754-0227 openarms@riverroadumc.org for more information.



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

Helping children grow with open hearts, open minds and open arms.