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**January/February
Upper Room
Devotionals are
available outside
the keypad door.**

**THE
UPPER
ROOM**
DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Begin Again

If there ever has been a year when we would like a fresh start and a new beginning, it is the year 2021. For 2020 was a challenging year between the pandemic, politics, and deeper sweeps at justice. While we bring forward the learning and lessons from 2020—the value of being in-person and the appreciation of things we had to go without—we look forward to turning the page of a new day and renewed energy.

This hope of a new start is a theme threaded throughout scripture. The possibility that people and circumstances and perspectives can change due to God's help is a cornerstone of the biblical witness.

We invite you to join with us in worship beginning on January 17th for a worship series called *Begin Again*. We will explore for six weeks some of the many times God set before people in scripture the opportunity to choose a new direction. And the grace that God not only points the way, but also gives the interior strength of the Holy Spirit to walk every step on a new path. Chances are, each of us needs a refresh in some area of our life. Maybe it is our marriage that needs some renewed hope and a recommitment to positive practices. Perhaps we need Christ to give us more tools in our faith's toolbox in terms of how we approach our real concerns and worries. Or maybe it is finally time, now is the year, when we really try our hand at forgiving that person or ourselves. Wherever you need to *Begin Again*, God is with you and the scriptures remind us again and again that "all things are possible with God (Luke 1:37)."

We look forward to beginning again with you on January 17th!

Beginning again and again,

Pastor Darcey

Worship January 2021

We will continue to offer worship on Sundays and remain committed to offering an onsite option every week. Worship in January will be 10am online and 10:30 Drive in at the church. We would love to have you join us for worship each Sunday!

January Birthdays

January 1

Chris Oubre
Wendy Travis

January 2

Katherine Anthes
Himans Alexander

January 3

John Gresham
Roger Dowdy

January 4

Karen Carter

January 5

Chris Price
Jackson Vines

January 6

Betty Hatcher
Jo Washburn
Sarah Anthes

January 8

Paul Pitts
Mark Whetstine
Will Mann

January 10

Kate Morrison
Alexa Cornett

January 11

Melinda Sledd

January 12

Cathy Reid
Maggie Hiatt
James Gilliland

January 13

David Hudson
Zoe Bell

January 14

Sarah York

January 15

Ann York
Megan Gilliland

January 16

Gene James
Vince Narron

January 17

Drew Johnson
Mac Stuckey
Nathaniel Walunas

January 18

Burk May

January 19

Cheryl Bowles

January 20

Joyce May
Jack Stuckey
Kate Stuckey
McRae Stuckey

January 21

Ed Kross

January 22

Nick Gilliland

January 23

Betsy Hiatt

January 24

Cindy Spieth

January 25

Paula Tatar

January 26

Don Jeffrey

January 27

Whit Anthes
Carson Moum

January 28

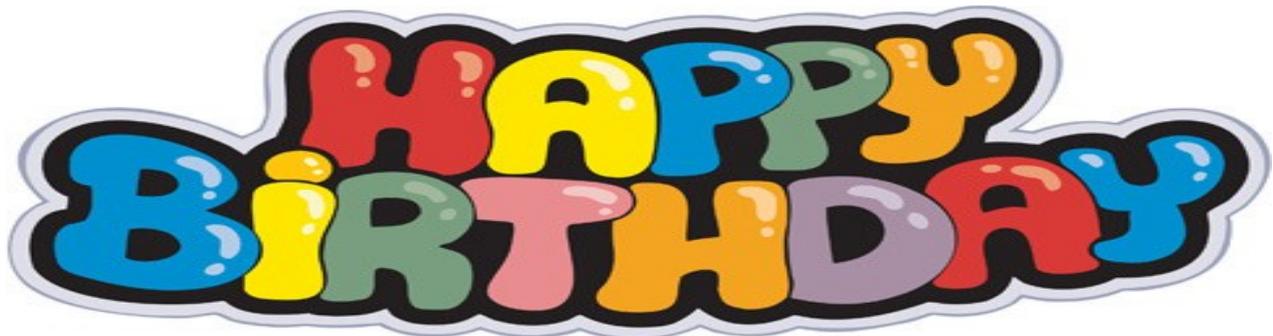
Bill Kuehl

January 30

Adam Kemp
Cline Wood
Rhodes Ritenour Jr.

January 31

Dale Huggins
Tom Simmons





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

Starting on Sunday, January 10, I will be offering a small group on the sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer via Zoom. I will host one group on Sundays at 2pm, and I will also offer another group on Wednesdays at 7pm. If you are interested in joining, please let me know by contacting me at ed@riverroadumc.org

For those not familiar, Bonhoeffer was a German pastor born in 1906 and raised in Berlin. He was executed at the Flossenburg concentration camp in 1945, shortly before its prisoners were freed by allied forces. He was executed because he was part of a conspiracy to remove Hitler from office, at first via legal means, and then by assassination. It is easy to focus on his heroic stand against Hitler, but there are other compelling reasons to let Bonhoeffer speak to us today. He sought to be faithful to Christ in the midst of a changing world, one rife with political tension and human suffering. Bonhoeffer met the pain and fear of the world with gentleness. A life-changing year for Bonhoeffer came in 1930. At age 24 he had earned two PhDs, but had to be at least 25 to be ordained as a pastor. He was offered a fellowship to study at Union Seminary in New York City. There he met a fellow student named Frank Fisher, an African-American whose father was the pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Through his friendship with Fisher, Bonhoeffer became a youth leader at Abyssinian Baptist where he learned to love African American spirituals and saw the painful reality of racism and injustice. It is likely his experience in Harlem helped him to see sooner than others that Hitler was a real threat to Germany, Europe, and the world.

Even though he came from upper class German society, his life of discipleship did not let him stay safely there. He ministered to youth in working class neighborhoods. He taught a confirmation class of fifty rowdy boys in working class north Berlin; their previous confirmation teacher had died of a heart attack many believed was caused by these youth. His gentleness and enthusiasm and sincere interest in their lives won them over. In prison he was a source of comfort and encouragement to his fellow inmates, and often to the guards, who smuggled his letters out of prison to his friends and family, unread and uncensored by the authorities. As Bonhoeffer saw and experienced an old world passing away and a new one being born, he was eager to help shape a church that could respond to such a world with love and courage as it followed in the way of Jesus Christ. While Bonhoeffer had the chance to ride out the war in New York City, he found he could not do so. He wanted to help Germany rebuild after the war and knew he could not do so with integrity if he did not share in full the experience of the war. Bonhoeffer did not lean on his social status or academic credentials, but on Jesus' faithfulness to him and on his striving to be faithful to Jesus.

What makes Bonhoeffer's sermons worth our attention is that he does not focus on social issues or partisan politics, but on Jesus Christ. As a preacher Bonhoeffer wanted his sermons to be a way for Jesus to enter into the reality of our lives. He doesn't want us to become members of polite society or members of this cause or that political movement, but disciples of Jesus who follow him in the middle of the pain and joy of our lives and the world. I invite us to come together and hear the voice and call of Jesus as we listen to brother Dietrich and to each other.

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. SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE

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

3. FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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

January Newsletter

Join us for Sunday School Zoom calls each Sunday morning:

10:45 Preschool

11:15 K-2

11:45 3rd-5th

In Toddler & Preschool This Month: This month is going to be Out of This World! We are going to use this fun and exciting theme to help teach preschoolers about the most amazing thing ever, which turns out isn't a thing at all. No! He's a person! You know who I'm talking about – Jesus! We are teaching preschoolers that Jesus is amazing! And, we're doing it by sharing stories about some of Jesus' amazing miracles. Jesus displayed an amazing understanding of God when He was at the temple as just a young boy. The people who heard Him were amazed! Jesus calmed a storm with just a word. Amazing! Jesus filled fishermen's nets with fish. Amazing! Jesus healed a blind man with mud and spit. Amazing! This world, well this universe, is filled with amazing things, but nothing will ever be more amazing than the One who created it all. Jesus is amazing, and we want our preschoolers to know it!



Our Memory Verse This Month: “EVERYONE WHO HEARD HIM WAS AMAZED.” LUKE 2:47, NIV

Week 1: Jesus Teaches at the Temple Luke 2:41-50

Week 2: The Four Friends Mark 2:1-12

Week 3: Calming the Storm Matthew 8:23-27

Week 4: Catching Fish Luke 5:1-10

Week 5: Healing the Blind Man John 9:1-12

In Elementary This Month: The psalmist wrote, The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, (NIRV). God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate it. We do that by taking responsibility. From the work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use; life is filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God's character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God forever.

Our Memory Verse This Month: “SUPPOSE YOU CAN BE TRUSTED WITH SOMETHING VERY LITTLE. THEN YOU CAN ALSO BE TRUSTED WITH SOMETHING VERY LARGE.” LUKE 16:10A, NIRV

Week 1: Greatest Commandment Matthew 22:36-40

Week 2: Bigger Barns Luke 12:13-21

Week 3: Ant and Sluggard Proverbs 6:6-8

Week 4: Parable of the Bags of Gold Matthew 25:14-30 (NIV)

Week 5: Use Words Wisely Ephesians 4:29

FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE:

The FA/AW Circle's next meeting will be on Zoom, January 12 at 10am. The Zoom link will be emailed out closer to time. Hope to see you there.



WOMEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST:

January 14th Virtual Women's Prayer Breakfast: Please mark your calendars now and join other ladies from River Road for breakfast on the second Thursday in January. 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 January 25, we will discuss *This Tender Land: A Novel* by William Kent Krueger. 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:

" Mark Warner's diligence led to the Great American Outdoors Act...which some have billed as the most important environmental legislation in generations" (RTD, 9/8, p. A15); 2) "Companies that refine crude oil into fuel are increasingly using such putrid scraps to make a renewable version of diesel that can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions...without requiring an investment in expensive new vehicles and factory gear" (NYT, 12/4, p. B1); 3) "Building the Most Functional City Imaginable....In Helsinki, sustainability is not just a buzzword. It's become a guiding principle for urban development" (NYT, 12/2, p. B7); 4) "By mid-century, Mr. Biden has vowed, the entire US economy will be carbon neutral" (NYT, 11/5/20. P. A10); 5) "President Xi Jinping of China pledged that his country would adopt much stronger climate targets and achieve 'carbon neutrality' before 2060" (NYT, 12/10, p. A17); 6) "The world as a whole is dangerously behind schedule in slowing catastrophic climate change....But....there are signs of a sea change, including some of the biggest polluters in the world" (NYT, 9/23, p. B1); and 7) "A large swath of southern Chesterfield county once envisioned as a single-family subdivision mostly will be preserved in its natural state for the foreseeable future" (Chesterfield Observer, 11/4, p. 11).

But not to lose track of ongoing concerns, e.g.:

There is push to "approve a final wave of large-scale mining and energy projects on federal lands...to try to ensure the projects move ahead " (NYT, 12/20, p. 1); 2) "Rising greenhouse gas emissions from worldwide food production will make it extremely difficult to limit global warming to the targets set in the Paris climate agreement, even if emissions from fossil-fuel burning were halted immediately...But...limiting overall warming this century to 1.5 degrees Celsius....could be achieved through 'rapid and ambitious' changes to the global food system...'Food systems are sort of the dark horse of climate change'" (NYT, 11/6, p. A10);

Gifts for the Manger – We are accepting Gifts for the Manger until January 10. As a reminder the designated organizations this year are three crucial missions in these times of pandemic and related economic insecurity. 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 where 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. It is not too late to remember or honor a loved one with a gift to one of these missions. Thanks to Karen Carter for leading this mission ministry. Our Christmas Eve offering went to Rise Against Hunger. Thank you for your donations to these ministries.

Angel Tree – Our congregation once again demonstrated its incredible generosity, providing more than enough gifts and funds for the Angels we committed to adopt. As a result, we were able to donate the additional funds to United Methodist Family Services to provide gifts for the residential youth there, who are unable to visit their families for the holidays due to Covid-19. You have lived into the spirit of the season, making a blessed Christmas for many children and youth in our community. Thanks to Laurel Marks for leading this mission ministry.

Year End Gifts to Mission Partners – As a result of your generous giving to missions this year, we were able to provide year end financial gifts to several of our mission partners, including CARITAS, Highland Support Project and Ginter Park Food Pantry. We were able to help Ginter Park purchase a freezer also.

Ginter Park is seeking new and gently used winter clothing for men, including coats, gloves, stocking caps and scarves. Also needed are new men's heavy socks. These can be left in the food donation box outside the keypad door. Other clothes are not needed at this time. Tony and Jean Barnette continue to deliver your donated food to Ginter Park and Welbourne each week. As the pandemic continues and no additional government relief is available as of this writing, the need grows. Karen Carter, who volunteers handing out food, reports that the recipients of the donated food are grateful for your prayers as well.

We are blessed to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. Thank you all for your strong support of missions during the very challenging year of 2020. You made a difference in the lives of many, as the pandemic exacerbated the difficulties faced by many of our neighbors. We look forward to working together on missions in 2021. For more missions information, contact Ann Hodges at ahodges@richmond.edu or 804-339-9440.

CREATION CARE continued

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' (i.e., reducing waste and obesity), and more conservation-minded and efficient farming practices....could slice 2380 billion tons of greenhouse gases annually" (RTD, 11/6/20, pp. A 12-13); 3) Subscribe to *The Atlantic* (and its spin-off, *Planet*); 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); 5) Minimize use of single-use and other plastics; 6) 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*; 7) 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 8) toast and thank the Chesterfield County Board of Supervisors for re-zoning the so-called Matoaca project (see item #7 above) (:) Amen....Respectfully submitted, Michael j Wriston, Chair, Earth Advocacy Committee, RRUMC.



**RIVER ROAD
UNITED METHODIST**
LOVING PEOPLE TO LIFE

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January 2020

**Articles for the
February 2021
Connections are due
January 21, 2021.**



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

All In!

Thank you to the congregation for your continued financial support of River Road United Methodist Church and our ongoing mission. During 2020, your continued support has been outstanding. As we wrap up our stewardship campaign for the upcoming year of 2021, we continue to see strong support.

Based off the responses received, we anticipate giving to be about 3% less in 2021 than 2020. While our current members continue to support River Road UMC, the primary reason for the shortfall is the lack of new families joining the church in 2020. This is somewhat expected due to the constraints from COVID-19 and the difficulty of meeting new people in this environment.

We still hope to hear from a number of people who continue to be active members of the church, but have yet to make an estimate. It is never to late to provide an estimate of giving for 2021. Your estimates greatly help our church planning by providing a reliable source of support of our ministries over the long term. You can pass along your estimate to Eva Booth, our church secretary, via any means you prefer.

Thanks again. The love and support of our congregation makes stewardship easy.

Tom



Open Arms Christian Preschool

Happy New Year to you all!!! We are now almost 1/2 way through our school year and ready to enjoy the winter weather! December was a wonderful month for us at OACP and a time to celebrate the birth of Christ and the true meaning of Christmas with the children. Visit our Facebook Page to check out the "virtual" Christmas Performance the children put on in December to share with their families.



This month our current families have until 1/31 to register their children for 2021 Summer Camp as well as 2021-2022 Preschool Year. Beginning February 1, 2021 we will offer open spots to any students not currently enrolled at OACP! If you have a child (or know a family that has a child) that is interested in our Summer Camp or 2021-2022 School Year please have them reach out to Nora Hamlet at 804-754-0227 or email at openarms@riverroadumc.org to get on our waitlist! We are all very excited for another great summer and school year (next year)!



**OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL**

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