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March/April Upper Room Devotionals are available outside the keypad door.

THE UPPER ROOM
DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

I remember distinctly being in the Welcome Center on February 16th and the chair of our Staff Parish Relations Committee, Dave Johnson pointed at me and said, “we need to talk about the virus.” “The one primarily overseas” I asked? “Yes.” He said, “we need to make plans.”

By the first week in March, the leadership had communicated to the church that there would be some changes in how we engaged with one another in worship. We would refrain from handshakes, hugs, and Holy Communion would be served in individual small cups rather than from the common cup. Little did we know when we sat together in worship in the Chapel, the Fellowship Hall, and the Sanctuary on March 8th that this would be the last time we would worship in person in the building for now almost a year. Indeed, we began this time of pandemic in the 40 day season of Lent and in some ways it feels like we never left. We have continued on in a somewhat Lenten state of disruptive routines and giving things up. Except of course usually in the Lenten season, we choose which routines become disrupted and which things we are going to give up. In some ways the pandemic made choices for us and yet we too always have choices about how we are going to respond—particularly as people of faith.

And so as we are at this one year anniversary mark of living life within the pandemic, here are a few reminders as people who follow Jesus.

1. It is ok and even biblical to lament—to express our sorrow or griefs or frustrations—before God (one third of the psalms are “lamenting that things are not as they should be¹”). In his book, *God and the Pandemic* (which the Contemporary Christian Sunday School class is studying right now), the theologian and priest N.T Wright highlights that lament is a faithful initial response as we navigate during this long, Lenten-like time. In fact, rather than blaming or raging, it is powerful to stand with people in their pain as a witness to the God who stands with us in Jesus Christ.
2. And, we are people who choose hope. Even as we lament the things that are not as they should be, we also live in the light of God’s hope. We are people of the resurrection and this informs our future hope and our present reality.
3. And we are people who continually choose to serve. We remember that we worship Christ who chose to wash his disciples’ feet, feed the hungry, and weep at the tomb of his friend. We are people who serve not only as what we do, but because it is who we are. Yes, we serve through our church and its missions. We know this because we have seen an increase in our missional giving and engagement during the pandemic. And we also ready ourselves for ways we can serve neighbor in our daily cadences. Whether it is checking in on our neighbors, picking up groceries for a vulnerable community member, or encouraging a school-aged child struggling with missing friends, we look for ways to bear witness to the hope that sustains us. We remember that we exist to “love people to life” as Christ has done and is doing for us. This is as vital now as ever before.

Blessings in this time, and for all times in Jesus Christ,
Pastor Darcey

¹ *God and the Pandemic* by N.T. Wright

Worship March 2021

Giving It UP

- March 3 Giving It Up: Letting Go of Anger
- March 14 Giving It Up: Letting Go of Jealousy to Let God Satisfy
- March 21 Giving It Up: Letting Go of Greed to Let God Be Enough
- March 28 Palm Sunday
- Giving It Up: Cheering for Whom God Cheers For
- April 4 Easter Sunday
- Giving It Up: Christ Gave it All so that We Could RISE with Him!

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

March Birthdays

March 1

Barb Abu-Jaber

March 2

Cathy Clark
Bill Gayne

March 4

Melinda Eastman

March 5

Joe Dailey

March 6

Judy Metz
Gabbie Rhodes
Sarah Rhodes

March 7

Janelle Graeter

March 8

Charlie Dameron

March 10

Barbara Gifford
Dakan Honea
Izzy Honea
Bradford Hulcher
Beth Stuckey

March 14

Becky Beattie
Pat Clark

March 15

Bob Sanford

March 17

Howard Edmiston
Marie Huggins
Violet Swann

March 18

Tom York
Meghan Grau

March 22

Carolyn McCracken

March 23

Catherine Conner

March 26

Starr Alexander

March 27

Martha Williams

March 31

Jim Hotinger
Olivia Messer
Gene Waters



SMALL GROUPS



SUNDAY MORNING 9:30



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

In March we find ourselves immersed in Lent. For many Lent means giving something up – sweets, caffeine, or some other kind of pleasure. The reason pancakes are a traditional meal on Shrove Tuesday, the day before Ash Wednesday, is that, in the days before pre-mixed pancake batter, one could use up all the sugar and shortening in the house to make pancakes and remove those temptations from the house come Lent.

If saying no is one side of the Lenten coin, saying yes is the other. I say no to buying coffee so I can set aside that money to support mission. I say no to time spent on Netflix so I can say yes to more time spent in spiritual reading and prayer. I say no to time spent on social media so I can say yes to connecting with people through letters and calls, and, when it is safe, in-person. Part of the work of Lent is shifting our attention from what distracts us and agitates us to that which increases our love for God and neighbor.

One writer I've become more familiar with this Lent is Simone Weil, who lived from 1909-1943. Born to nonreligious Jewish parents in Paris, Weil had a strong desire to stand in solidarity with those who suffered. Her father was drafted in WWI, and at in 1915 at the age of 6 she refused to have anything sweet because soldiers like her father on the front lines had no sugar. In 1934 she quit her job as a teacher and worked in factories to be in solidarity with the struggling working class. As Germany went to war with the rest of Europe, she moved her parents and older brother to America and then traveled to England where she hoped to receive training to become part of the French Underground but died of tuberculosis before she could return to her native France.

In her twenties she had several mystical experiences that opened her to the Christian faith. In her short life she learned to notice and pay attention to people who often went unseen. This way of attentiveness that increased her love shaped her understanding of prayer. Weil wrote, "Attention, taken to its highest degree, is the same thing as prayer. It presupposes faith and love. Absolutely unmixed attention is prayer. If we turn our mind toward the good, it is impossible that little by little the whole soul will not be attracted [to the good] in spite of itself."

I remember one of my college professors trying to warm up the class on a Monday. He said he was flipping channels on TV over the weekend and saw a movie that was so bad that an hour and a half later he turned off the TV. We have a habit of paying attention to the people or events that make us angry or jealous. There are things we love to hate. But attention is a form of prayer, and we should be careful how we pray. This Lent, as we say No to the things that distract us and incite us, may we offer our attention and say Yes to those who increase our love and urge us in the way of Jesus Christ despite ourselves.

In Christ's Service,
Ed

sunday morning check-in.

11:00 am.

(outdoors and socially-distanced)

sunday night live.

4:30pm.

(live on Youtube @RRUMC Youth)

mid-week check-in.

(individual reach outs during the week)



follow us on social media.



@riverroadyouthumc



@RRUMC Youth



youth@riverroadumc.org

**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: When race car drivers hear the call to “start your engines,” the mission is clear, and they are ready to go, go, go! The same can be said for those of us who follow Jesus. Jesus is calling each of us to start our engines and go do what He has prepared us to do. His call is to “love each other the way I have loved you.” Yes, the mission is clear, and it’s time for us to help our preschoolers get ready to go, go, go and love, love, love—like Jesus!

And, how do we love like Jesus? We put others first and are a good friend. We share with others, help others, and say kind words to each other. When we do these things, our light shines bright and the love of Jesus shines through us.

Preschoolers want to show everyone that, “I can do it. I can put on my shoes. I can make my bed. I can carry heavy things.” Let’s help them add, “I can love like Jesus,” to that list. Now, start your engines!

Our Memory Verse This Month: “LOVE EACH OTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.”

JOHN 15:12, NIV

Week 1: Light of the World Matthew 5:14-16

Week 2: Washing Feet John 13:3-17

Week 3: Love One Another John 13:34-35

Week 4: Palm Sunday Matthew 21:1-16

In Elementary This Month: PATIENCE IS WAITING UNTIL LATER FOR WHAT YOU WANT NOW.

Waiting is a part of life. Thankfully, we don’t have to wait on our own. God can help us experience the patience we need to wait well. After all, God is patient. God is in control and knows what’s best for us. Even though God’s people had been waiting for years for the promised Savior, at just the right time, God sent Jesus. As we are created in God’s image, we can reflect His patience in our lives. We can be patient when we remember what God has done and trust God no matter what.

Our Memory Verse This Month: “WAIT FOR THE LORD. BE STRONG AND DON’T LOSE HOPE. WAIT FOR THE LORD.”

PSALM 27:14, NIRV

Week 1: Simeon Waits for the Messiah Luke 2:25-35

Week 2: Golden Calf Exodus 32:1-35

Week 3: Esau’s Impatience Genesis 25:24-34

Week 4: Palm Sunday Matthew 21:1-11



Frances Allen/Alice Weed Circle – March 9

Frances Allen/Alice Weed Circle has been busier than you might think via Zoom. Several things I'd like to mention. We have had about six to seven people tuning into Zoom! This month we teamed up with Congregational Care and provided Valentine gift bags with sweet treats, salty nibbles as well as hand sanitizer, tissues, chapstick and a scripture verse. Charlotte and Mark very safely put it all together for us. Congregational Care folks delivered them! Also, and even more important, we sent Valentines with a note either with the gift bag or separate from it (not allowed due to health reasons). We know how important it is to stay in touch with people during these Covid 19 times and we will be forever grateful when they are over.



United
Methodist
Women

Ash Wednesday (February 17) we began a Lenten collection of diapers and wipes for "Little Hands" which will continue until Easter. We have teamed up with the Missions Committee on this project (or they have teamed up with us!) The drop-off location is the same as the Ginter Park food collection near the key pad door with a sign. Christie Bondurant will move them inside on a regular basis. There is a huge need for these items which are not covered by any programs (e.g. WIC, etc.)

Bess Traylor is all prepared for the Hermitage birthday party in March. Last March 10th our Circle went to the Hermitage in person. It was wonderful - a full house, and the table decorations, gifts and food were amazing. Both the Circle ladies and the birthday guests had a wonderful time. Joy and Jake provided the music and many people sang along! AND, no one was sick at all. This was the beginning of Covid if you recall (or when I was first really aware of it). This year will certainly be different. We care very much for the Hermitage residents and Bess has some beautiful party favors for them despite the fact that we can't join them. It will be a wonderful thing to be back to normal. There are approximately seven March birthdays this year.

Coming up in May is our traditional "salad luncheon" for the preschool teachers and staff. This will be a little different too! It will not be cancelled, it will simply be different. Frances Allen/Alice Weed has plans and we would welcome as many ladies as would enjoy being a part of us to join us on Zoom and certainly join us when we are back together again! All are welcome!

If anyone has a Sunshine donation they would like to give, please mail it to Judy Metz. We miss Everybody!!!!

WOMEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST:

March 11th Virtual Women's Prayer Breakfast: Please mark your calendars now and join other ladies from River Road for breakfast on the second Thursday in March. 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 March 22, we will discuss *Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis* by J. D. Vance. Keep reading everyone, and the Club is always open to new members and book suggestions to read.

Lent is our traditional season to focus on missions. As you have already begun to experience, this Lenten season our theme is Giving it Up: Letting Go to Live in God. Through worship, daily devotionals, small groups, and missional action, we are considering what we need to “give up” in order for the Holy Spirit to “take up” more fully in our lives. Each Sunday service will offer a video of one of the missions that River Road supports. In addition, as is our custom, the entire Easter offering will fund the Missions portion of our budget. We are so blessed by the way the congregation has stepped up to help fulfill the increasing need for missions in this time of pandemic and look forward to seeing where God is leading us this year.

In addition to a generous Easter offering, we encourage you to practice sacrificial giving by participating in the three Lenten missions opportunities.

Shelter Support through the Lenten Jars – throughout the season of Lent, fill your Lenten jars with donations for Virginia Supportive Housing. These donations will go to help those moving from homelessness or shelter situations into more permanent housing with upfront costs such as rent and utility deposits. If you don’t have your jar yet, they are available at the church by the keypad door.

Hunger Response – We are also collecting specific food items for Ginter Park Food Pantry – **spaghetti noodles, 15 ounce cans of tomato sauce or pasta sauce in plastic jars, and canned fruit in 15 oz cans.** These are in addition to our normal collection. You can drop these off any time in the bin outside the keypad door.

Children in Poverty Response – We are joining with United Methodist Women to collect diapers and baby wipes for [Little Hands](#), a wonderful nonprofit that provides babies with these necessities which are not available through any government benefits. Again, you can drop off baby wipes and diapers anytime in the bin outside the keypad door.

ADDITIONAL DONATIONS DUE TO CONGREGATIONAL GENEROSITY

The Finance Committee dedicated part of the budget surplus for 2020 to Missions, creating the opportunity to provide additional funding to some of our missions. The Committee allocated money to Virginia Supportive Housing to aid in the organization’s Covid-19 vaccine effort and to the Samaritan Fund, which helps members of our congregation who are in need.

GERANIUM SALE

The Geranium sale is back and will raise funds for Shalom Farms, which helps meet the need for healthy food in the Richmond region. Geraniums are \$4.50 and come in 4 inch pots in red, hot pink, white, and salmon. They will arrive Friday April 9 and will be distributed safely in the church parking lot. To order, text or call Ellen Reaves at 804-229-4277. Checks are payable to UMUMR.

For more missions information, contact Ann Hodges at ahodges@richmond.edu or 804-339-9440.

CREATION CARE

Let me just say, if I may, that "the Earth Advocacy Committee is (this month) just celebrating America's return to (world) leadership in combating global warming and climate change including, but not limited to rejoining the Paris climate accord." Michael j Wriston, Chair



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

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March 2021

**Articles for the
April 2021
Connections are due
March 21, 2021.**



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

Holy Week Services

Maundy Thursday—April 1

Worship will be offered on-line and on-site

Good Friday—April 2

Worship will be offered on-line and on-site

Easter Sunday—April 4

We will have on-line worship and Worship on the Lawn

More information to come

Open Arms Christian Preschool



SNOW was a focus in Preschool for February! The children had so much fun exploring the snow! Teachers involved snow in the classroom activities, going out and exploring the snow. One class even took out the shovels and helped clear the courtyard! They had lots of FUN! As much as we all LOVED the snow, we are ready to welcome in SPRING soon!

We are finalizing our 2021-2022 School Year Classes. If you have a child (or know a family that has a child) that is interested, in 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 ALSO hiring for Substitute Teachers and Assistant Teachers for the 2021-2022 School Year. Substitute Teachers do not need experience and have very flexible schedules based on needs for substitutes in the classroom! If you, or anyone you know, is interested in either of the positions please reach out to Nora!



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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