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**July/August  
 Upper Room  
 Devotionals are  
 available outside  
 the keypad door.**



**Lessons from COVID-19**

With the pandemic's end in sight, What are our takeaways?

by Rhodes B. Ritenour

For most of us, earlier this spring (March 13<sup>th</sup>) marked the one-year anniversary of our worlds ceasing to operate normally. We remember institutions closing, schools shuttering, and that last day in the office. These pandemic times have compelled me to reflect, learn and remember.

I was making ham biscuits for Easter when I heard Merle Haggard's song, "Are the Good Times Really Over?" We must be more careful, thoughtful and selective, but our best days are still ahead — not in spite of COVID-19, but because of it.

**Don't miss the simple experiences.**

COVID-19 required us to work and go to school from home. Proximity to family, without the distraction or outlet that extracurriculars provide, has made me focus on what is most important. I have been able to have dinner with my family almost every day — and sometimes even lunch. My son and I have experienced what Mr. Rogers once opined, "Pretending doesn't require expensive toys." My daughter still prefers the expensive toys. I've been in awe of how well my wife can manage our lives, while still practicing and teaching law.

These small experiences make up life, and are collectively more important, than the big events. COVID has made our entire family slow down. It's helped me understand how much time I had previously spent away from home and has inspired me to rethink my commitments. Do I really need to miss dinner three or four nights a week? Could I prioritize my board service?

On her seventh birthday, my daughter told me, "It'll be so sad when coronavirus is over, Daddy, because you won't be home as much." I've spent more time not only listening to my virtual first grader, but actually hearing her.

**Isolation compels you to look inward.**

It's healthy to ask yourself tough questions, answer honestly and confront the findings. When you're busy running between events, it's difficult to take time out. But with fewer ballgames, only takeout, and before we returned to church in -person, opportunities abound to assess your life. How strong is my relationship with my spouse? Am I contributing to my family adequately? Is my career fulfilling? Am I a good parent? Do I set a good example? Am I so busy living life that I'm not enjoying it or appreciating it? What am I doing every day to pursue my dreams? More than anything, I tell my kids that I want them to be thankful and kind. But it took a pandemic for me to assess whether I'm living up to that standard.

**There is virtually no substitute for certain in-person experiences.**

My wife and I have learned that while appreciated, online and drive-in worship services are not viable substitutes for gathering in person. The same is true for other cultural institutions, like the Richmond Forum.

*...Continued on next page*

## Teach Us To Pray

July 4—Teach Us To Pray: Daily Bread

July 11—Teach Us To Pray: Forgive Us As We Forgive Others

July 18—Teach Us To Pray: Lead and Deliver

July 25—Teach Us To Pray: Kingdom, Power, Glory, Forever

We will continue to offer worship on Sundays.

Worship in July will be 10am online and 10:30 in the Sanctuary!

We would love to have you join us for worship each Sunday!



### SUMMER OFFICE HOURS

Through Labor Day, the office will be open from 7am—5pm Monday—Thursday.

Eva will be working four ten-hour days.

We will have a volunteer in the office from 9am—noon on Fridays.

Continued from cover...

Feelings of isolation from family and friends were exacerbated by separation from our church family. It is nice to catch up with people on Sunday morning, share in their successes and challenges, and realize that not only are most of us having similar experiences, but we are here to know, support and pray for each other. We miss that time when we did not have to pick sides, consume real or social media or experience noise, even for just an hour. Which is why we are incredibly thankful to return to worship in the sanctuary to reconnect with our church family.

COVID-19 has compelled us to confront not only all that we have, but all that we have at risk. I remain optimistic that these lessons will help ensure that the good times really aren't over for good!



## Sunday School Offerings

Sundays: 8:30 am Contemporary Christian Sunday School



Thursdays: 11:00 am Prayer & Praise Service

### Small Groups for Summer

The Contemporary Class will begin a book study on The Lord's Prayer on Sunday July 4th to coincide with our summer sermon series on the same topic. It will run for approximately 6-8 weeks. If you are interested in joining the class, which is meeting via Zoom on Sunday mornings at 8:30, please email Randy Reaves - [randalreaves@verizon.net](mailto:randalreaves@verizon.net) so he can send the Zoom link.

Desda White, Interim Director of Congregational Life

## July Birthdays

**July 1**

Sterling Dameron

**July 2**

Conley Kemp

**July 3**Connie Whetstine  
Blair McLarin**July 4**

Julia Messer

**July 6**

Mark Forberg

**July 7**

Lauren Potts

**July 9**Mandy McLarin  
Joanna Thompson**July 10**Robin Ely  
Ashley Barrett**July 11**

Ann Hodges

**July 13**Horace Payne Jr.  
Courtney Barrack**July 14**Mike Cosby  
Josh Busscher**July 16**

Debby Waters

**July 17**

Melissa Conner

**July 18**Brenda Vaughan  
Kim Cosby  
Steven Ebert**July 19**Fay Seay  
Alicia Hotinger  
Ruben Blevins**July 20**

Stacie Cornett

**July 21**Sam Kemp  
Greg Bowles**July 22**

Karl Bren

**July 23**

Percy Flippen

**July 24**

Martha Mullen

**July 25**Harry Yost  
Katie Ely**July 26**Beth Wilson  
Mary York  
Ashlyn Cosby**July 28**Jaimey Honea  
Elizabeth York  
Ryan Stuckey  
Trey Gayne**July 31**

Trent Keith



## **Summer Youth: What's Happening this Summer!**

I am so excited for what Youth has in store this summer here at River Road UMC!

### **Bible Study:**

I am thrilled to announce a summer youth bible study is beginning July 11 after church around 11:30am in the youth basement! This will continue through the end of the summer. Each week we will talk about different things so if you can't come one week, don't worry about it, just join us the next!

### **Mission Opportunities:**

This summer there are many different mission opportunities for youth to get involved with because it is so important to be involved in our community!

On the Calendar:

- Belmont UMC Food Pantry- July 2, 8-11am
- Micah Initiative- July TBA
- Shalom Farms- August TBA

### **Other Fun Events:**

I have lots of other ideas on events including going to a Flying Squirrels baseball game as well as hopefully some other fun hangouts!

On the Calendar:

- Pool Party- July TBA

Let me know if anyone has any ideas or activities that you want to happen this month!

Spencer Moun

Summer Youth Coordinator

Email: [youth@riverroadumc.org](mailto:youth@riverroadumc.org)



**CHILDREN'S MINISTRY**

**Join us Sunday mornings for outdoor Children's Church! Parents, you have the option to worship as a family or children may join us for Children's Church outdoors at 10:30 AM (mask optional)**

**This summer we are focusing on studying the Lord's Prayer during Children's Church! We'll be breaking down the prayer and discussing how and why we pray. We pray this sermon series and the discussion in Children's Church will lead to some fruitful conversations at home this summer!**

**Summer Family Fun Dates:**

**6/30- Meet at Deep Run Park at 5 PM. Park in the back parking lot by the soccer fields and bring your bikes!**

**7/17- Meet at Richlands Creamery at 5 PM for dinner and ice cream! Bring your own picnic dinner or buy dinner there.**

**8/14- Back to School Pool Party! Time and Place TBA!**





### **FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE**

The Frances Allen-Alice Weed Circle is taking the summer off but looking forward to seeing everyone on September 14th at 10:00 AM in the Activities Room at church. All women are invited to enjoy each other's fellowship while doing God's work.

### **WOMEN'S PRAYER BREAKFAST**

We will not meet during the summer. We will resume in September.

### **BOOK CLUB**

For July, our selection is *Atomic Love* by Jennie Fields. It is historical fiction about the Manhattan Project in Chicago.

For August, Mandy has suggested the Hunger Games Series, by Suzanne Collins. They are young adult fiction so we decided to read all three to discuss - *Hunger Games*, *Catching Fire*, and *Mockingjay*. Mandy said she will gladly lead the discussion.

So, a lot of good summer reading!! If interested in the group, email Ann York at [annYorkak@gmail.com](mailto:annYorkak@gmail.com) If you wish to be included, please phone Ann York, 907-748-0446. Our next meeting will be July 28.

<b>CREATION CARE</b>
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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) "Developer cancels Keystone SL pipeline project....over long-standing concerns that burning oil sands crude could make climate change worse" (RTD, 6/10/21, p. A 12); 2) "Ford expects 40% of its global sales to be battery-electric vehicles by 2030" (RTD, 6/1/21, p. A8); and 4) "The Fall Line Trail, connecting communities from Ashland to Petersburg, is being steadily developed" (RTD, 6/20/21, p. D 1) and a few key concerns: 1) "Study Ties Over 1/3 of Heat Deaths to Climate Change" (NYT, 6/1/21, p. A 11); 2) "U.S. Far Behind in Going to Sea for Wind Power" (NYT, 6/7/21, p. A 1); 3) "Wealthy Nations Promise to Take Action on Climate but Do Nothing about Coal....which is a primary contributor to global warming" (NYT, 6/14/21, p. A 15); 4) The shrinking viability of migration paths that enable migratory deer and elk and other wildlife to thrive and survive (RTD, 5/29/21, p. C 2); and 5) The hidden costs of transitioning to clean energy (e.g. as reported by the International Energy Agency, "It requires mining industries and infrastructure that don't exist...the transition is a 'shift from a fuel-intensive to a material-intensive energy system...and toward big-footprint mines....and subsequent chemical processing and refining") (WSJ, 5/12/21, p. A 19).

Things we can do include: 1) Speaking up and advocating; 2) Supporting local, and wider, efforts to protect and/or rehabilitate wetlands and other degraded or natural ecosystems (e.g., one of the priorities of The Nature Conservancy & Ducks Unlimited); & 3) Joining and supporting 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; Audubon Society; WWF, etc.). Amen....Respectfully submitted, Michael j Wriston, Chair, Earth Advocacy Committee, RRUMC

**FOOD PANTRIES**

We continue to collect food for the food pantries, along with Safe Harbor. When we have enough food, we support the pantries at Belmont UMC and St. Paul's Catholic Church, in addition to Ginter Park and Welborne. We will support these organizations as long as the need continues and as long as we are able through your generous donations. The most needed items include peanut butter and jelly; spaghetti noodles; canned fruit and vegetables; canned soups and beans; canned milk; canned chicken and tuna; ravioli/spaghettios; cereal; individual snacks such as fruit cups, apple sauce, and crackers; meal boxes like Hamburger helper; mashed potatoes; bags of pinto and black beans; and diapers and wipes. Standard sizes are appreciated for packing purposes. We will update this list using the app and email as needs vary or when particularly urgent needs arise.

In addition to food, Ginter Park has reopened its clothes closet and is again accepting clothing donations.

**SHALOM FARMS**

For additional support to the hungry we have made a financial donation to Shalom Farms, which provides fresh food to those in need. Mark your calendars for our fall work day at Shalom Farms on September 25 and watch for further information on how to sign up to volunteer on that day.

**“For I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat. . . .” Matthew 25:35 NIV.**

**VIRGINIA INTERFAITH CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY**

Ann Hodges is River Road's congregational liaison with The Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, an organization that “engages people of faith and goodwill in advocating economic, racial, social and environmental justice in Virginia's policies and practices through education, prayer and action.” If anyone would like more information about the organization, contact Ann whose information is below. You can learn more about the organization and sign up for their mailing list at <https://www.virginiainterfaithcenter.org/about/>

**SCHOOL KITS**

Thank you for the school kit donations! They will be distributed to students tutored by our River Road volunteers.

Oak Grove teachers are very excited to be back in the building with their students this fall. Our annual school supply collection Apple Tree will return in July. Look for more information soon! Your continued support of Oak Grove students, teachers and volunteers is SO appreciated!

Thanks be to God for leading us to love our neighbors. For more missions information, contact Ann Hodges, [ahodges@richmond.edu](mailto:ahodges@richmond.edu) or 804-339-9440.



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LOVING PEOPLE TO LIFE

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July 2021

Articles for the  
August 2021  
Connections are due  
July 20, 2021.



We're on the web at  
[www.riverroadumc.org](http://www.riverroadumc.org)

## The Charles and Carol Burlage Missions Fund

It is with gratitude that the leadership of River Road United Methodist Church share the formation of The Charles and Carol Burlage Missions Fund, which will be stewarded by the Board of Trustees. This fund will, increasingly over time, support local "hands on" mission efforts as well as scholarships within The Open Arms Christian Preschool. This gift has been established by Carol in partnership, honor, and in memory of her husband Charles Burlage who had a God-given talent for business and a keen mind for many pursuits, including making better the communities where they lived and supporting people in need. We thank Carol for this generosity and look forward to how God will deepen our missional identity and widen the good we can do in the name of Christ!

## Open Arms Christian Preschool



Summer Camp at Open Arms Christian Preschool has begun! The children have had a "WILD" time during the first few weeks of camp in the SAFARI! They are enjoying the summer with all their friends and having lots of outdoor adventures, including water days each week!

If you have a child (or know a family that has a child) that is interested in our program (for 2021-2022 or 2022-2023 school year – we already have students on this list) please have them reach out to Nora Hamlet at 804-754-0227 or email at [openarms@riverroadumc.org](mailto:openarms@riverroadumc.org)! 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 classrooms! If you, or anyone you know, is interested in being part of this extraordinary Ministry at RRUMC please reach out!



**OPEN ARMS**  
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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