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



Simplify

Holding Less to Live More

Our two-year-old Thea began a preference that has now become a habit. Whenever we leave the house to go anywhere, she has items that she insists on taking. It might be a stuffed unicorn, a sippy cup, and graham crackers. Or she may mix it up and wear Daddy's Boise State baseball cap with a mini-library side of books. Many times it is adorable to see which things make the cut for the grocery store or preschool voyage. However, the more you take on, the more you have to keep up with (and the more Mom ends up carrying)! In fact, it even can be that all the stuff she insists on carrying with her distracts her from the new place we are visiting. Her hands are too full of the past to be present. So we made a new rule, that she takes one item with her. That way her hands are free to hold onto what is hers to tend and she is free to explore with novelty.

Thea's need to hold onto increasingly more than what she may have needed reminded me of our Lenten theme for 2022: ***Simplify, Holding Less to Live More.*** Many folks are carrying a multitude of things in their literal and metaphorical arms these days. These things include raising children to caring for aging parents, balancing work and home responsibilities, thoughts and habits that impede life rather than giving it, and tending to relationships to keep them healthy and connected. There is often a deep desire to downsize or consolidate, to clear out, to declutter- in other words to simplify our lives so that we can focus more on what is lasting on what matters. So how do we decide what is ours to do and when we begin to hold too much, or that we hold things in a way that is soul-wearying?

This is where the discernment of faith comes in to help us re-purpose and simplify. Because there is always an interesting math occurring in the scriptures, and particularly in the gospels. While there is a multiplication and expansion element- God calling Abraham and Sarah to become a nation, a multitude and Christ choosing 12 disciples and then forming the church to impact first thousands and then millions- there is also an ever-present simplification. There is one greatest commandment-love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and strength and your neighbor as yourself (Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Matthew 22:23). There is one Lord, one baptism, one Father of us all (Ephesians). Because we follow Christ, there are some places we do not go and attitudes and actions we resist taking on. Because we follow Christ there is a simplicity of focus (without being simple) that better allows us to enter into the layers and complexity of our lives and the world.

Each week in Lent, beginning March 2nd with Ash Wednesday through April 17th, Easter, we will listen as God challenges us to Simplify our lives in alignment with the Gospel. We will simplify in order to be a part of God's multiplication!

Peace,
 Pastor Darcey

Our Lenten Series Theme is
Simplify: Holding Less to Live More

March 2	Ash Wednesday Service at 6:30pm
March 6	Simplify Temptations
March 13	Simplify Your Focus
March 20	Simplify Schedule
March 27	Simplify Stuff
April 3	Simplify Inputs
April 10	Palm Sunday
April 17	Easter



It is time!

We are excited to offer contemporary worship in the Fellowship Hall at 9:00 beginning on Sunday, March 13th. This will be two years to the day after the pandemic changed our routines. That is why it is time to begin anew and re-engage with worship-we will see you all and your families on March 13th!





This spring there are many ways for you to get connected with your church family in worship, discipleship, missions, and service. Look inside this newsletter for more information on each of these opportunities:

Worship on Sundays at 9:00 and 11:00am

Contemporary worship re-launches Sunday, March 13 at 9:00am! Come celebrate with us and be part of the new things God is doing in and through River Road UMC.

Adult small groups, youth group, and kids' discipleship

There's something for everyone! New groups are forming for the Lenten season. Connect with your church family as you study God's word together.

Missions Opportunities

Make a difference in the lives of our neighbors by donating non-perishable food items for our food pantry partners. Additional hands-on missions opportunities will be coming up next month.

Join the Team!

Volunteers are needed in children's ministry, to sing with the choir, and to serve as a greeters/ushers. Use your gifts to love people to life!

Questions? Email Lori at engagement@riverroadumc.org or give us a call at 740-7061.

We have a number of opportunities for youth to engage at the church throughout March! Come on by, bring a friend and enjoy some time together during any of our recurring meetings:

Sunday Morning at 10 for Youth Sunday School (grades 6-12)

Wednesday evenings at 6 for High School Bible Study (grades 9-12)

Youth Lunches after church on the first and third Sunday! Missional opportunities and fellowship.

Youth can sign in to our River Road Youth page on our Here I Am Church App to stay up to date with the latest happenings and activities.



ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

Join a small group study this Lenten Season! During Lent, we will have a number of groups discussing and reading Courage, by Rev. Tom Berlin. This is a series of six devotionals about how our Christian Faith can give us the courage to impact the world around us in a positive manner.

Three different times are available for this six week study of Courage.

Starting March 2nd: Wednesdays at 8:00 AM at church or via Zoom. Led by Tom York

Starting March 6th: Sundays at 5:30 PM at church. Led by Donna Johnson

Starting March 7th: Mondays at 10:00AM at church. Led by Lori Alford

And it is never too late to join some our other small groups in progress.

Racial Justice, meeting 2nd and 4th Sunday evenings via zoom

Contemporary Christian Class, meeting Sunday mornings in person and via zoom

Study of The Chosen, meeting Sunday evenings via zoom

Van Gogh and Lent, meeting Monday evening via zoom

Just contact Tom or anyone in the Church Office to sign up or learn more!

Tom

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

- Starting March 13th we will be back to **TWO** worship services! Contemporary in the Fellowship Hall at 9 AM and Traditional at 11 AM in the Sanctuary. We are SO excited to be offering both worship services and to have the kids back in the Sunday School rooms!

- River Road Kids Discipleship Hour will be at 9 AM in the Sunday School wing.

- Children's Church will be held at 11 AM in the Sunday School wing.

- Save the date: April 9th from 11 AM - 1 PM for the Easter Egg Hunt!!!**



K- 5 Discipleship For March:

This month we are focusing on how cooperation is a spiritual concept that originates with God. God created us to work together in a community. Throughout the Bible, we see how God brought people together to accomplish something big for Him. When we work together, we reflect on what Jesus envisioned for His followers. Our love for one another can point people to Him.

Preschool Discipleship For March:

In preschool this month we are focusing on the time when Jesus lived here on earth. He lived a life that very clearly said, "Everyone can be friends with Me!" While not everyone took Him up on His invitation, those that did were changed forever in the best way. That is why we are teaching preschoolers that no matter what kind of shoes we wear, everyone can be friends with Jesus. We can be friends with Jesus no matter how young or old. We can be friends with Jesus wherever we live and whatever language we speak. We can be friends with Jesus no matter how much money and education we have. There are no special requirements to be friends with Jesus. It's a come as you are kind of friendship that lasts forever. Everyone can put on their shoes and follow Jesus because everyone can be friends with Jesus.

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
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 28

Lori Alford

March 31

Jim Hotinger
Olivia Messer
Gene Waters



FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE:

Come join us for the Francis Allen/Alice Weed Circle meeting on March 8th at 10:00am in room 205/207. Everyone is invited for inspiration and fellowship.



BOOK CLUB:

The Book Club continues to meet, although in February we met by Zoom. We meet the first Monday of the month at 7PM. The meeting is usually held at Ann York's home at 2800 Chance Lane off of Church Road. If you are interested in discussing books of all varieties, please call Ann at 907-748-0446 and your name will be included on the email list that lets everyone know about the upcoming meeting. In March we will discuss *Cloud Cuckoo Land* by Anthony Doerr, author of *All the Light You Cannot See*. *Factory Man* by Beth Macy is for April. It is non-fiction about the Bassett Furniture Company in southwest VA. To really get a head start, we will discuss *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles in May. We love new members, so start reading and join us.

CREATION CARE

First, things to be thankful for: 1) "The water industry has identified wastewater as a viable and sustainable source for not only quality water but also for recovering resources while minimizing footprint and energy demand" (Science, 1/27, pp. 377-8); 2) The Maryland Green Schools Program (MDGS) "a sustainable school program that is ... aligned with the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program....provides PreK to 12th-grade students with ... opportunities to make changes to reduce environmental impact..and encourage sustainability" (see maeoe.org/green schools); 3) "People are doing a lot more secondhand shopping these days. Secondhand clothing is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the global fashion marketplace" (NYT, 2/3, p. D1); 4) "[F]rank conversations have led Sapna Palep and her daughters to create Girls With Big Dreams, a line of undergarments for tweens, which include reusable underwear that offers an environmentally friendlier alternative. . . ." (NYT, 2/3, p. D3); 5) "Africa's 'Great Green Wall' initiative . . . aims to plant 100 million hectares of trees and shrubs along the Sahel. . . . Once completed, the greenbelt could double rainfall...and hold back the Sahara from expanding southward" (Science News, 2/12, p. 7).

Things to be concerned about: Rethinking lawn care (i.e. "Nearly everything about how Americans 'care' for their lawns is deadly. Pesticides prevent wildflower seeds from germinating and poison the insects that feed songbirds and other wildlife....Mulch, piled too deep, smothers ground-nesting bees....But the gasoline-powered leaf blower exists in an environmental category all its own, spewing pollutants...into the atmosphere at a literally breath-taking rate...[H]ydrocarbon emissions from a half-hour of yard work with the two-stroke leaf blower are equivalent to a drive from Texas to Alaska in a 6200 pound Ford F-150 pickup...." (NYT, 10/25, M. Renkl);

And, of course: Things we can do include: 1) Rethinking lawn care (see above) which should include reading and *applying* the invaluable knowledge disseminated in Douglas Tallamy's extraordinary book *Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard*; 2) Promoting a green schools initiative in Virginia; 2) Checking out CBF's *Save the Bay* (February) newsletter (e.g. check out cbf.org/calendar or cbf.org/casa); 3) Speaking up; 4) Embracing the 7 R's of "shrinking your personal footprint": *Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Rent* (or borrow), *Recycle & Rot*; and 5) 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, Wild Virginia, etc.); Amen....

Respectfully submitted, Michael j Wriston, Chair, Earth Advocacy Committee, RRUMC

<u>SPRING MISSION OPPORTUNITIES</u>
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RISE AGAINST HUNGER

Our meal packing event for Rise Against Hunger is scheduled for April 24, the Sunday after Easter. Mark your calendars and join us for a family event that benefits the hungry. This event is always great fun for a good cause and an opportunity for the entire church to join together to make a difference for hungry people around the world.

REBUILDING TOGETHER

The Rebuilding Together Spring Build is scheduled for Saturday, April 30. Watch for more information about how you can help repair homes to help homeowners unable to do those repairs remain in their homes safely. Our work helps rebuild and retain community in local neighborhoods.

EVA HUSTON PANTRY

Esther Tuopay delivered the Christmas gifts we collected in the fall to the children in the orphanages and schools in Liberia. We have another opportunity to support these children age 5 through high school by collecting clothing, bedding and hygiene items for Esther's July visit. Bring your new and gently used sheets, blankets, pillows, shoes, and short-sleeve t-shirts, along with new socks and underwear, feminine hygiene products and toothbrushes and toothpaste to the yellow bin outside or the Welcome Center. You may also donate funds (online or to Eva in the office) to purchase these items and help pay the cost of shipping. Deadline for donations is April 3. Let's make the lives of these precious children a bit more comfortable!

ONGOING NEEDS - FOOD PANTRIES

We are grateful for your continued support of the food pantries and Safe Harbor. Most-needed items are peanut butter; canned corn; tomato sauce in 15 oz. cans; 1 lb. spaghetti noodles; canned fruit and green beans; canned soups and beans; canned chicken and tuna; ravioli/spaghettilios; boxed cereal; oatmeal; non-refrigerated microwave meals; and diapers and wipes. Standard sizes are appreciated for packing purposes and no glass containers.

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

SAVE THE DATE

VBS**July 18th-22nd****9:15am-12:15pm**



RIVER ROAD
UNITED METHODIST
LOVING PEOPLE TO LIFE

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Henrico VA 23229
Phone: 804-740-7061
Fax: 804-740-3367
Preschool: 754-0227

March 2022

Articles for the
April 2022
Connections are due
March 21, 2022.



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

RACIAL JUSTICE TASK GROUP

The Racial Justice Task Group is a resource generating, information and action-based committee committed to understanding and reconciliation of global, national and local racial injustices. We offer nurturing and engaging opportunities through our Racial Justice Learning Group for our congregation to participate in and explore their own journey toward racial reconciliation.

Our Learning Group meets on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month at 5:30pm to discuss our current book. We just completed **How to Fight Racism** by **Jemar Tisby**. For the months of March, April and May we will be watching, reading and discussing the series from UMC Discipleship Ministries: **Courageous Conversations about Race**.

<https://discipleship-ministries.teachable.com/p/courageous-conversations-racism-free>

Through community partnerships with Belmont United Methodist Church Race and Reconciliation Group and Voices of Jubilee, our Task Group is building relationships to continue the collective work of Racial Justice.

All Are Welcome

Please contact Jaimey Honea at jaimeyhonea@yahoo.com for additional information

Open Arms Christian Preschool

Love was in the air in February at OACP (even more than usual) 😊 The teachers spent special time with the children teaching about caring for others and how we show our love. The children participated in many projects throughout the month and were able to gather together in a celebration with their friends.

Registration for currently enrolled OACP families has ended and we have now opened up registration to new families that may be interested in our program (Fall 2022). If you, or your family or friends, are interested in attending OACP please reach out to Nora Hamlet, 804-754-0227 openarms@riverroadumc.org.



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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