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

THE UPPER ROOM
DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

As we make our way through the 40 days of Lent and particularly move towards Holy Week and Good Friday, I continue to find it remarkable and humbling to realize that we worship a God who chose to include suffering in their story. If you consider the historical narratives of those in power, usually power (and especially one with ultimate power) is used to insulate one from suffering. Freedom from pain is what demonstrates their superiority. Suffering is something humans do – the creation suffers, not the Creator.

This is what makes the life and ministry of Jesus and even more, his death and resurrection, truly stand out. Jesus shows us how God deals with the pain of this world and thus how we can respond as well. First, we see in Jesus' ministry that he was willing to enter into the pain of others and make a difference when he believed it was his work to do. The majority of Jesus' ministry involved responding to people in their immediate physical or emotional brokenness and need. He didn't avoid their pain by getting busy with his carpentry work or by telling himself that someone else would take care of things– he took time to engage. We also notice that while we tend to focus on his individual interactions with people, Jesus in a sense took on the entire Roman and religious systems of the day who wanted to hold onto their power and position at any cost. In other words, Jesus was willing to stand up by serving well in the lives of people and families as well as on the societal level.

Secondly, Jesus not only was willing to notice and respond to the needs of others, but he was also willing to enter into places of suffering himself. Jesus refused to back down from who he was as God's son and refused to let the normal operations of the day such as fear, jealousy, suspicion, and rage be the order of his days. He refused to allow any threat to shake him from his mission of calling people to love God and neighbor in such a way that it changed them in the process. He refused to be moved even if it meant moving to a cross and from this life into death.

And yet, thirdly (notice the third reference), through the resurrection, Jesus showed us that even suffering can be redeemed. Jesus showed us that pain inflicted, or pain received need not be the headliner or the final chapter in our stories—as people or as peoples. We can, by God's grace and resurrection power, live as people whose times of suffering and pain, can be processed through the lens of resurrection hope and promise.

As we make our way to Holy Week, I invite you to marvel again and even drop to your knees in response—that we worship a God in Jesus Christ who did not bypass suffering for his own sake, but entered in for ours. As we see the pain in the Ukraine or identify our own wounds and walk through our own valley times, remember that in the pattern of Christ, we too can see and respond, and that even in the pain, we too are offered resurrection hope and promise. Like Jesus, we too can let love be the order of our days and mercy be the place where we land!

In the promise of Resurrection now and forever,
Pastor Darcey

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

April 3 Simplify Inputs

April 10 Palm Sunday

April 17 Easter



April Birthdays

April 1

Janey Campbell
Grant Clarke
Bridget Wood

April 4

James Cather

April 5

Molly Banta

April 6

Andrea Franklin

April 7

Michael Moosally

April 8

Kay Quagliano

April 9

Becki Mann

April 11

Jimmy Dameron

April 12

Joan Peterson
Rory Buchholz

April 13

Anne Grayson Craig
Aubrey Cosby

April 14

Justin Jagnarian

April 15

Bill Bell

April 16

Stacy Wood

April 17

Sean Conner

April 18

Robert Best
Steve King
Maria Thomas

April 21

Stephen Rhodes

April 22

Linda Vines
Jordan Harless

April 23

Michael Thomas
Matt Benson

April 24

Gerould Ward
Harold Clarke
Eddie Clark
Alyssa Cather
Will York

April 27

Chip Mann
Karen Duer-Potts

April 28

Buddy Hiatt

April 29

Douglas Peterson
Sawyer Brokamp



Engagement Opportunity



Greeters/Ushers are needed for the 9:00am and 11:00am worship services

Here's why hospitality matters:

1. Loving people to life begins with the first friendly faces encountered at our doors.
2. First-time guests need an appropriate welcome, clear directions, and the sense that there are people there who knew they were coming and are able to help them.
3. If someone does not feel welcome at church, they are likely to never return.
4. Scripture teaches us to extend hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2) and to serve one another following Jesus' example (John 13:12-17).

Come be part of this essential ministry!

For more information or to volunteer, email Lori at engagement@riverroadumc.org or give us a call at 740-7061.

“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.”

Romans 12:9-13

It is a great time to be a youth at River Road UMC! As our building reopens, our youth continue to have an impact in the learnings and the life of the church. Here is what we have going on.

- Our 2022 Confirmation class is in full swing with 5 confirmands. We look forward to Confirmation Sunday on June 5th and hope to share the moment with our whole church family.
- Youth Sunday School continues to dive into our sermon scriptures and apply them to our lives today. Questions can range from *How we work to love others (even those we don't really like)?* to *What instrument would Jesus play today?* We cover a wide range!
- Youth Group lunches and activities range from picnics to stuffing eggs to just chatting.
- Basketball hoop is back up, pickleball net just arrived and the bingo ball is rolling.

April will have a missional focus for youth as we support the Community Egg Hunt, Clean-Up Activities and Rebuilding Together Richmond. We have a wonderful group of students here at our church where all are welcome!

A reminder for our Here I Am app - youth can register on the 'River Road Youth' page to stay plugged in and informed as to the latest activities.



ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

During morning devotional time this month, I read this passage from Ephesians chapter 3:

"I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge"

Whether zoom, hybrid, or in-person, the value of small group connections within our church remain strong as we all continue to learn about the love of Christ. This Lenten season, we have over 40 people engaged in small group studies. From Van Gogh to Courage, the material is a small component that sparks the rich conversation between members of our church. It is always wonderful to see how our classes attract members of our church, as well as friends and others in the community who are looking to learn.

A number of suggestions have emerged over the past month for future small groups - both spiritual and social in nature. Thirsty Thursdays have started back up on the first Thursday of each month for adults to gather in a setting outside of our church grounds. As spiritual development does not take off for the summer, we will have some new class offerings in the month of May. In particular, we'll work to use our 10:00 Sunday School hour as a great way to bring together members that attend different services.

Continue to pass along your ideas!

Blessings,
Tom York

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

April 2022

- We are 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 dates:

- **April 9th from 11 AM - 1 PM for the Easter Egg Hunt!**
- **July 18th - 21st from 9:15 - 12:15 for VBS!**



K- 5 Discipleship For April:

Life can sometimes feel like a giant puzzle. All we can see is the piece we're experiencing right now, and we're not sure where it fits into the greater picture that is forming. We can't always understand why some things happen to us or those we love. Yet, despite our confusion, we can have hope. God has kept promises throughout history. We can believe that God will continue to be with us through what we face now. Even in the toughest times, we can have hope because we know God is always working and can make something good out of something bad.

Preschool Discipleship For March:

Have you ever called someone your BFF? Maybe just the sound of it has you thinking of someone right now. BFF—Best Friend Forever. It's hard to be a BFF, even with the best of intentions. It's hard for you and me, but not for Jesus. Jesus is the one friend that not only wants to be our friend forever, but He can actually keep up His end of the promise. And, He went through a lot to make it possible. That's why, this month, we are sharing the Good News with preschoolers that Jesus wants to be my friend forever. Your friend. My friend. Their friend. Everyone's friend—forever! The best things that go together are my friend, Jesus, and me. And nothing, not even death, can come between us and His promise, because we go together forever and ever.

CREATION CARE

First, things to be thankful for: 1) "The plan to develop large-scale wind farms along nearly the entire coastline." (NYT; 10/14/21) "Restoring Nature While Building.... Increasingly, developers don't just aim to preserve nature, but also promote their role in restoring it." (NYT; 3/16); 3) "Massive solar facility more than half completed in Spotsylvania." (RTD; 7/27/21); 4) "Northern Virginia leaders approve plastic bag tax." (RTD; 9/21/21); and 5) The LCV produces an annual environmental scorecard which not only evaluates all states, but also all members of Congress on their environmental track records. Virginia is in the green.

Key concerns include: 1) "We're All Inhaling Microplastics.... We know that inhaled plastics can produce inflammation and lesions in the lungs, and repeated exposure is suspected of leading to respiratory problems like asthma and cancer." (NYT; 6/26/20); 2) "Urban neighborhoods that were redlined by federal officials in the 1930s tended to have higher levels of air pollution eight decades later." (NYT; 3/11); 3) "Sea ice over Antarctica shrinks to its smallest concentration on record.... Both Antarctica and the Arctic are warming faster than the global average." (RTD; 3/19); and 4) "[S]omber sea rise projections for coastal communities. By 2050, Virginia and other states along the Gulf and East coasts are expected to experience a 1-foot jump. Virginia has experienced more relative sea-level rise than anywhere else on the Atlantic Coast." (RTD; 2/23).

Things we can do include: 1) Planting native trees, flowers and plants, clover, moss and ground cover (instead of sterile lawns that need to be fed and watered) and replacing gas-powered mowers and leaf-blowers with electric ones; 2) Embracing the 7 R's of "shrinking our footprint": Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Rent (or borrow), Recycle and Rot; and 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, Wild Virginia, etc.); Amen.... Respectfully submitted, Michael j Wriston, Chair, Earth Advocacy Committee, RRUMC

UMW has changed their name to UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

Beginning March 2022, the United Methodist Women will call themselves United Women in Faith to be more open and inclusive of all women. The new name is part of a refreshment of the worldwide organization to include a new look, new feel and new and improved programs. The organization started over 150 years ago and has over 800,000 members all over the world. There have been lots of name changes over the years but the focus remains to help women, children and youth. Here at River Road UMC we will immediately begin to use the new name United Women in Faith instead of United Methodist Women. The Circle name will remain as Francis Allen/Alice Weed Circle.



United
Women
in Faith

FRANCIS ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE

Join us for another lively Circle meeting on April 12th at 10:00 in the large Sunday School classroom. We will have a speaker from Shalom Farms to update us on how they are growing and providing food for the "food deserts" in Richmond. After the meeting the ladies will go to lunch at O'Charley's at 9927 Mayland Dr. and Gaskins Road in Henrico.

In the past, the Circle had sponsored a birthday party for the residents at The Hermitage Richmond that have March birthdays. But this year we thank Bess Traylor, RRUMC's representative to their Auxiliary, for assembling gift bags for each resident that has a March birthday and dropping them off at The Hermitage Richmond. Thank you Bess for finding ways to reach out and share God's love with our neighbors.



COLLECTING LARGE PRINT BOOKS FOR THE HERMITAGE RICHMOND

The Circle is also collecting large print books for The Hermitage Richmond. The seniors that live there really enjoy them. If you have any large print books that you may not need anymore, please consider donating them to The Hermitage Richmond by leaving them in the box in the Activities Room. Thank you!

MOTHER'S DAY BAKE SALE

Mark your calendars! The United Women in Faith at RRUMC will be raising money for the Healing Place for Women at the CARITAS Center in Richmond by having a bake sale on Mother's Day, May 8th after each church service. Please consider helping by baking cakes, pies, bars, or cookies and leaving them at the church on Saturday, May 7th. The more bakery goods we can sell, the more financial support we can give to the Women's shelter. Thank you!

BOOK CLUB

Meetings are the first Monday of the month at 7PM and are held at the home of Ann York. If you are interested, please call Ann, 907-748-0446, and she will email you every month with the details. The book for April 4 will be *Factory Man* by Beth Macy. It is the story of the furniture manufacturers in Virginia and what happened to the industry. May 2 we will discuss *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles. So, start reading and come and join a group of book lovers...

SPRING MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

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. Once again we will pack meals as a church for those less fortunate and will share a meal together after the packing is complete. 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. Sign-ups will be available soon.

REBUILDING TOGETHER

The Rebuilding Together Spring Build is scheduled for Saturday, April 30. We have terrific team captains who have volunteered to lead the work to repair two homes in the Oak Grove and Bellemeade neighborhoods, where we also serve through the Micah mission. 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.

KITS FOR CONFERENCE

This year we will be collecting hygiene kits for the Virginia Annual Conference. These will be delivered to UMCOR for use around the world where needed. The kits are provided to those forced to leave their homes as a result of conflict or natural disaster. Watch for information about the collection dates, which will begin this month. A list of items needed for the kits can also be found [here](#).

DONATIONS FOR UKRAINE

If you would like to donate to those suffering as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, here is a link to the Conference web page with information about how to donate. <https://vaumc.org/ukraine/> A direct link to UMCOR for donations can be found here. <https://umcmmission.org/umcor/how-to-assist-the-ukrainian-people/> We have sent \$5000 contributed by church members to UMCOR for Ukrainian refugees. Thank you for your generosity in this humanitarian crisis.

THANK YOU

EVA HUSTON PANTRY - Thank you for your generous donations to the Eva Huston Pantry, founded by our own Esther Tuopay and her family in memory of their mother. The children in the orphanages and schools in Liberia will be thrilled by your gifts, which will be shipped for July delivery.

ONGOING NEEDS - FOOD PANTRIES

We are grateful for your continued support of the food pantries and Safe Harbor. Most-needed items are peanut butter; tomato sauce in 15 oz. cans; 1 lb. spaghetti noodles; canned fruit and vegetables; canned soups and beans; canned chicken and tuna; ravioli/spaghettios; 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.

CALLING ALL GRADUATES:

We will be recognizing our graduates on Sunday, May 22. Please send the names of high school, college and graduate program graduates who are part of River Road UMC to Eva at eva@riverroadumc.org by **May 2**! Include the school they are graduating from, along with the college they will attend (for high school graduates) and their degree (for college graduates).





RIVER ROAD
UNITED METHODIST
LOVING PEOPLE TO LIFE

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April 2022

Articles for the
May 2022
Connections are due
April 20, 2022.



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

PRAY FOR OUR CONFRIMANDS!

Please keep our confirmands in your prayers as they explore and grow deeper in their faith.

Our confirmands are:

Isabella Benson
Noah Benson
Charlie Dameron
Grace Johnson
Lindwee Manning

Join us on June 5 at the 11am
service for Confirmation Sunday!



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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

We've been busy at OACP with lots of fun learning! In March the children had fun on Dr. Seuss day, and they also had a green day celebrating St. Patrick's day. We've had warm weather along with enjoyed time outdoors and our tennis classes that started up in March. OACP invited Maymont to come and visit the children. During the visit, the Maymont visitors taught the children about creatures and their different features. The children also had a chance to see "Dacon" the box turtle. This year we introduced a childcare App that the teachers use to send all communication to families. Families can message teachers via the App and all the fun activities and events are shared with families each week in a newsletter from the teachers. It's been so great having direct communication, via the App, with families!

OACP is now accepting registration for 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

