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Christmas in the Movies: Seeing God Reel to Real

The Advent season is the church on-ramp to Christmas. It is the four-week time period that leads up to Christmas Day. Thus the Advent weeks are a time filled with seasonal traditions. Just think of what you and your family do to prepare for Christmas (during Advent). Do you decorate? Make travel plans? Prepare particular food or schedule baking days? In addition to hanging greens and frosting cookies, one of the touchstones of the season for many is watching Christmas movies. And there is a short shelf of Christmas movies (we could debate which belongs on the shelf) that qualify as “classics” that we return to year and year again. Many of these movies have become favorites because they communicate timeless themes that resonate with the human condition, such as hope, the possibility of change, the need for love and belonging, and humility as a lifegiving way of being.

Interestingly, these are also themes for the Advent Season. Advent is the time leading up to Christmas that highlights waiting upon God, looking to God for promises fulfilled, and looking to ourselves to do the work with God that change requires. This Advent season, we are going to let the scriptures guide us through the Advent themes using engagement with some of our classic Christmas movies.

On November 27th, Rev. Dr. Craig Kocher will begin with Charles Dicken’s *A Christmas Carol* to consider the gospel themes that grab hold of us through this tale. On December 4th, Pastor Darcey will bring together John the Baptist and *The Grinch* to look at the powerful change that God offers to us and demands of us. December 11th will focus on Mary’s willingness to see her blessings even when things were challenging and George Bailey’s struggle to see that he was already living the blessed life in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Lastly, on December 18th, with the Peanuts gang, we will wade through the commercialism to consider the meaning of the season in *A Charlie Brown’s Christmas*.

We hope you will join with us for 9am or 11am worship for a powerful, gospel, and cinematic experience of the purpose of this Advent season. The aim is to see God from reel to real, from the screen to more fully in the living of our days!

Advent hope, peace, joy, and love,
 Pastor Darcey

**November/
 December Upper
 Room Devotionals
 are available
 outside the
 keypad door, in
 the Welcome
 Center, and
 Narthex.**

Advent Worship: REEL TO REAL

Nov. 27 The Christmas Story - Guest preacher Craig Kocher

Dec. 4 How the Grinch Stole Christmas

Dec. 11 It's a Wonderful Life

Dec. 18 Children's Christmas Program at 9am

A Charlie Brown Christmas at 11am

Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Services

On Christmas Eve, we will have two (2) services:

4:00pm—Contemporary Service

7:00pm—Traditional Service with Holy Communion

On Christmas Day, we will have one (1) service at 10:00am

On New Years Day, we will have one (1) service at 10:00am

December Birthdays

December 1

Debbe Harless
Angela Messer

December 2

Ed Flippen
Saja Alexander

December 7

Mac Dirom

December 8

Sally Beth Reaves

December 12

Virginia Ritenour

December 15

Diana Hudson

December 16

Linda Bartlett
Karen Willis

December 17

Julie Lewis

December 18

Milton Franklin

December 19

Zachary King

December 21

Brenda Anderson
Jeff Williams
Abby Craig

December 22

David Stuckey

December 24

Tom Traylor
A.C. Little
Andrew Markey

December 25

Fiona Betzhold

December 26

Bob Sledd
Joy Moretti

December 27

Teddy Cunningham

December 28

Donna Johnson
Susan Shelton

December 30

Martha Narron
Jun Chang

December 31

Susie Rothenberg
Brenda Kleinholz





Throughout the month of December, original Christmas artwork will be displayed in the Welcome Center. Be sure to browse the collection and view Christmas through the eyes of our resident artists, young and old.

We would love to include your artwork! Bring your originals (any medium) to the church office by December 11th and we will add them to our gallery.

Contact Lori Alford for more information: 740-7061 or engagement@riverroadumc.org



Spread some Christmas cheer as we go out in groups to sing to River Road UMC residents at Lakewood and Cedarfield senior living communities. Meet at church by 5:30pm to carpool to either location. We will return around 6:30pm for hot chocolate and s'mores.

Click here to sign up: [S'more Caroling Sign Up](#).

Looking for ways to connect?

- ✓ New small groups are always forming
- ✓ Volunteers needed in various ministries
- ✓ Missions opportunities abound!

GET ENGAGED!

For more information, contact Lori Alford:
740-7061 or engagement@riverroadumc.org

YOUTH

November has been a month to give thanks for the youth of our church, their impact, their support and their love. The youth are breaking in the church van, and youth group focused on our food drives and our environmental impact during the month. Some upcoming December events:

Nov 27, 5:30: Youth Group Church Member Outreach- taking a Van Trip!

Dec 3, 2:00: Carytown shopping and Highland Support Praise Festival

Dec 11, 5:30: Churchwide S'mores and Caroling

Dec 22, 5:00: Christmas Party

Stay up to date on the Youth Page on our Here I Am Church App! We continue with Sunday School, Morning Breakfast gatherings and other items as well.



Adult Discipleship

During this time of Thanksgiving, I am thankful for all those who support our discipleship small groups through their attendance and engagement. The attendance takers, the dessert bakers, the participators, the conversation makers, and the party takers. Communities make a difference - across discipleship, missions, music, and social outreach.

I am particularly thankful for the number of discipleship leaders who make our small group studies a reality over the past year.

Randy Reaves

Bob Wilson

Jaimey Honea

Jon Francisco

Lori Alford

Donna Johnson

Rev. Roger Dowdy

Traci Craig

Ann York

Dave Johnson

Bess Traylor

Deb Schumacher

Barb Abu-Jaber

Laurel Marks

Rev. Darcey Johnson

In January, we will be starting up an Alzheimers Support Group, working on another Life Group, and developing our Lenten Studies. Reach out to tom@riverroadumc.org if you are looking to join (or lead!) one of our discipleship groups.

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Join us Sunday mornings!

River Road Kids Discipleship Hour is at 10AM in the Sunday School wing and Children's Church is held during the 9 & 11AM worship services in the Sunday School wing.

On December 18 there will be a Children's Christmas Program at the 9am worship service.

Preschool Discipleship for December: Christmas is about celebrating the most special person . . . Jesus! Jesus is special because Jesus is God's Son. We don't have to buy Him a gift, and we don't have to wear fancy clothes to His birthday party. But we can celebrate Him. So, let's throw a pajama party to help our preschoolers celebrate and learn that Jesus is God's Son. We want our preschoolers to know that God loved the world so much that He gave His Son, Jesus, to be our friend forever and to make a way for us to always be with Him. It's our biggest hope that you will create such a memorable month for preschoolers that they will never forget that Jesus is special because Jesus is God's Son

K-5 Discipleship for December: James, the brother of Jesus, wrote that every good and perfect gift comes from God, but the best gift God ever gave was Jesus. From the beginning, God has had a plan to rescue the world from the consequences of sin. Jesus is the fulfillment of God's plan. Because of Jesus, it's possible for us to have a relationship with God that will last forever. As we remember the Christmas story, we take time to celebrate the greatest gift the world has ever known.

RACIAL JUSTICE LEARNING 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 6:00pm on zoom to discuss our current book or podcast. We just recently completed the series from UMC Discipleship

Ministries: **Courageous Conversations about Race.**

[How to Have a Courageous Conversation: Racism](#)

We have some wonderful books, movies and podcasts coming up for 2023 and would love to have you join us.

Our spotlight book oforDecember is:

Caste: The Origins of our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

The Pulitzer Prize–winning, bestselling author of The Warmth of Other Suns examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives today are still defined by a hierarchy of human divisions.

The Racial Justice Learning Group was recently able to attend an evening with Isabel Wilkerson at the Modlin Center.

Through community partnerships with 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.

FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE

The Francis Allen/Alice Weed Circle will meet on Tuesday, December 13th at 10:00AM in room 205/207.



United
Women
in Faith

COAT DRIVE

UWF and the Circle are collecting winter coats for men and women this winter for CARITAS. There is a huge need for these as the cold weather arrives. We will collect them in room 203 or the yellow cooler near the keypad door. Thank you River Road for caring and participating in this endeavor!

BOOK CLUBS

Book Club meets the first Monday of each month at Ann York's home, 2800 Chancel Lane, 7PM. December 5 we will discuss **Breathing Lessons**, Pulitzer Prize winner by Anne Tyler. January 2 we will read and discuss **Remarkably Bright Creatures** by Shelby VanPelt. February 6 will be **The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post** by Alicia Partaki. Marjorie Post is the person who built Mar A Lago. So, all of you readers come join us and keep reading!

If anyone is interested, contact Ann York, annyorkak@gmail.com or 907-748-0446, and you will be put on the mailing list. I will sent out notifications of the meetings to everyone on my list.

The Second Monday Book Club met in November. Having lived in Chile, Brenda presented a wonderful discussion on *Violeta* by Isabel Allende. December's selection is *The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post: A Novel* written by Allison Pataki presented by Bess. Join us in our Second Mondays afternoons of stimulating and fascinating book discussions. Contact Bess Traylor for more information. 804-747-7494.

CREATION CARE

First, things to be **thankful** for:

1) "U.S. Will **Tighten Methane Restrictions**. . . . The **EPA** will require firms to **monitor** production facilities for leaks and **fix** them" (WSJ, 11/12-13, p. A8);

2) "**Belize Pledges** to Protect Its **Reef**. . . . The deal, known as **blue bonds**, is an example of an approach that has allowed a growing number of **developing countries** to cut their debt by **investing in conservation**. . . . Under the blue bonds deal, the **Nature Conservancy** lent Belize more than \$350 million to enable Belize . . . **to buy back international bonds**. . . . The deal **freed up more than \$200 million** to be spent in other areas. In **exchange**, Belize agreed to **designate 30% of its waters as protected**" (NYT, 11/8, p. A8);

3) "The **FAA** recently approved **unleaded fuel** for small (propeller) aircraft, a **huge improvement** given that, without approved unleaded fuel), small aircraft have been the **biggest lead emitter** in the U.S." (Weekly Planet, 11/16);

Gifts for the Manger: November 27 – December 24



“**Gifts for the Manger**” is how our congregation celebrates Christmas. Gifts for the Manger allows us to give God what we believe God wants for Christmas. Below are the highlighted mission efforts that you can donate to in memory of, in honor of, or as a Christmas present. Gifts for the Manger information and gift cards are in the Welcome Center and Narthex. The causes being supported this year are:

Healthcare (Local)

CrossOver Healthcare Ministry – CrossOver is a non-profit organization that provides high-quality, compassionate healthcare to uninsured and Medicaid patients in the name of Jesus Christ. CrossOver receives no direct federal funding and has no access to federally-funded prescription drug programs so relies on the support of volunteers and donors to sustain its mission.

Faith Relationships (Local)

Open Table is a group mentoring process to form intentional relationships by connecting an individual or family experiencing poverty (economic poverty, relational poverty or both) with a faith-based community to transform lives. After 6 weeks of training, members commit to weekly one-hour meetings for one year, interspersed with other opportunities for connecting throughout the week. Our congregation is currently supporting its 7th and 8th tables with members from RRUMC. Previous table members maintain ongoing relationships with the families and individuals from the table. Your gift to Open Table will help these families and provide “seed money” to sustain future tables.

Disaster Relief (Regional/National)

United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) Hurricane Recovery – UMCOR is the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church, and is working in the U.S. states and territories that were devastated by hurricanes this fall. Your donations will be sent to UMCOR to assist in its ongoing disaster relief efforts in the Florida and Puerto Rico, along with relief for other places damaged by flooding and tornadoes. www.umcor.org

Service (National/International)

Mission Trip(s) -- There is a mission trip in the early planning stages for 2023 to Mountain T.O.P. in Tennessee, which focuses on reducing substandard housing, supporting lifelong learning and leadership, and promoting overall wellness. Giving towards these trips will allow us to serve in a community on Christ’s behalf.

There will be tables in the Welcome Center and the Narthex to provide information as well as inserts in the bulletins throughout Advent. **Gift choices /monies will be collected in the offering plate this year.** No monies will be collected at the display sites. Christmas cards for Gifts in Honor and informational card inserts are available at the display.

ANGEL TREE

Angel Tree signups are out. You can sign up online or take an angel from the tree in the Welcome Center. Show some Christian love to a child with an incarcerated parent by providing a gift from that parent for Christmas. Thanks to your past generosity we have committed to over 100 children this year. Help us make Christmas real for these children. For questions, contact Laurel Marks, laurelmarks@yahoo.com.

HEARTH OF HENRICO THANKSGIVING BOXES

With your help, we collected 75 boxes filled with Thanksgiving meals for those in our Henrico community who are financially challenged and suffer food insecurity. We appreciate the leadership of Laurel Via and Michael English for this mission. "For I was hungry and you fed me. . . ." Matthew 25:35. You made Thanksgiving happier for our neighbors.

ONGOING NEEDS - FOOD PANTRIES

At holiday time, the need for food at the pantries at Ginter Park United Methodist Church, Belmont United Methodist Church and St. Paul's Catholic Church and for residents of the shelter at Safe Harbor is greater than ever. Most-needed items remain 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; diapers (sizes 4, 5 and 6 are most needed); and wipes. Standard container sizes are appreciated for packing purposes and no glass containers. Watch for weekly updates regarding particular needs.

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.

CREATION CARE continued

Things to be **concerned** about:

1) "**Greenwashing**" (i.e. claiming to be doing more to combat **climate change** than you are actually doing). "The corporate world is awash in such behavior. . . . But the most common move in the **green-washing playbook** . . . is to buy **carbon offsets**. . . . While some types offsets are productive, many are viewed . . . as **worse than useless**" (SI, 12/22, pp. 11-17)

2) "The World Is **Falling Short** of its **Climate Goals**. The Actions of **Four Big Emitters** Show Why" (NYT, 11/10, p. A8);

3) "What the 2022 **climate change conference means for Virginia**. . . . [T]he current commitments from the international community would lead to a total warming of **4.5 degrees**. . . . Even if **all emissions** stopped immediately, **Earth** would warm an **additional 2 degrees**. . . . 'Leaving the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (**RGGI**) is a **bad move** for all Virginians **because** there's built-in money for **flood** and **climate change** resilience within the state - which **we need**'" (RDT, 11/6, p. A1)

Things we can **do** include:

1) **Spending wisely** (i.e., supporting only companies and stores whose **products, policies** and **practices** are **environmentally-friendly** and/or **sustainable**);

2) **Committing** to the **3 Rs** of sustainable living: **Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

Respectfully submitted, Michael (j Wriston), **Chair** (River Road United Methodist Church) **Earth Advocacy Committee**



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

8800 River Road
Henrico VA 23229
Phone: 804-740-7061
Fax: 804-740-3367
Preschool: 754-0227

December 2022

**Articles for the
January 2022
Connections are due
December 18, 2022.**



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

STAFF LOVE OFFERING

During Advent and Christmas, we often reflect on the people and special moments of the year that we are grateful for or especially appreciate. Many of these special moments happened through the ministries of our dedicated and hard working River Road UMC staff, who inspire, empower, and equip us all to *Love People to Life*. One way to express our appreciation and gratitude is to participate in the annual Staff Love Offering in December. If you would like to participate, please make your check payable to River Road UMC and note Staff Love Offering on the memo line. You can give online and choose "Staff Love Offering" or place your check or cash gift in an envelope marked Staff Love Offering in the collection plate or drop it at the church office through the end of the year.

Thank you for your kind and generous support for our staff!
Staff Parish Relations Committee



Open Arms Christian Preschool

The teachers and children have been having a wonderful time celebrating the season of giving in November! The children and families collected canned foods to donate to the Food Pantry and did the drop off the week before Thanksgiving. Children also celebrated being thankful at Fellowship Friday before Thanksgiving and had an ice cream sundae party with all their friends!



In December we are looking forward to putting on our annual Christmas Performance on Wed., Dec. 14th and celebrating the birth of Jesus with a birthday party! We have lots of exciting things happening at Open Arms! If your family or friends are interested in attending OACP please reach out to Nora Hamlet, 804-754-0227 or openarms@riverroadumc.org.



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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