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**January/February  
 Upper Room  
 Devotionals are  
 available outside  
 the keypad door.**



**Were You There? Lent 2023**

Out of the doldrums of winter and from the seemingly lifeless soil, you will begin to see some pops of green and buds of new growth. If you really want to see them, however, you will need to look intentionally and downward. As the earth spins and the globe orbits, we are headed into another time of transition from the dormancy of winter to the forward motion of spring. This is also the time that heralds a particular season in the life of the church and an invitation to think about the new life offered to us in Christ.

This is the season of Lent--the six weeks that begin on Ash Wednesday and crescendo on Easter Sunday, with some significant touchstones along the way (think Maundy Thursday--when we remember Jesus' last supper with the disciples and Good Friday--when we remember Jesus' death on the cross).

Historically, the season of Lent in the church has been one when we turn up the focus on our faith and allow God to ask us some pointed questions:

- Who or what is it I truly worship? Luke 12:34
- What are my priorities? Matthew 6:33
- Am I living as a follower of Jesus? Matthew 4:18-20
- Am I seeking justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with God? Micah 6:8

These questions come to us through additional spiritual practices during the season of Lent--in other words if you want to join in with all creation this spring and experience spiritual growth, we encourage you to take on a spiritual practice. Here are some suggestions:

- Download the Bible with YouVersion** – it has options for daily prayers and devotionals as well as bible reading plans.
- Commit to worship** – Our theme for Lent is **Were You There?** We will focus in on some of the people who were there during the last 24 hours of Jesus' life as a window into the meaning and power of Jesus' death and resurrection.
- Join a small group** – more specific information about Lenten studies is coming from Tom.
- Commit to fasting from something** – Fasting is a spiritual practice where you abstain from a habit (chocolate, eating out, social media, gossip, negativity). Every time you are "tempted" by what you are fasting from you can say a prayer or do an act of justice or mercy. For example, you might give the amount of money you would spend eating out to buy food for the food pantry.
- Give to the Lenten jars** – Sponsored by our Children's Ministries, we will have mason jars available beginning on February the 19<sup>th</sup> to be returned on Easter Sunday. Any money given in these jars that will go to benefit Rise Against Hunger, an international hunger ministry that provides meals and nutritional supplements around the world. We will do a food packing event for Rise on April 16<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday after Easter. This is a tangible way to make giving a part of your family's everyday routine and a means by which you can talk with your children and/or grandchildren about how Jesus calls us to love our neighbor.

There are many ways to hold hands with all of creation as we grow towards the light in Christ this Lenten season!

In the power of the resurrection and the hope of Jesus,  
 Pastor Darcey

## Worship - Proverbs: Words for Life

January 29	Wisdom
February 5	The Fear of the Lord is the Beginning of Wisdom
February 12	Iron Sharpens Iron
February 19	Trust in the Lord

### Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 22

Ash Wednesday Service at 6:30pm

Fellowship Hall

## February Birthdays

### February 1

Delaney Weston  
Reid Weston

### February 4

Claire Benton

### February 6

Soyon Chang  
Amanda Jagnarian  
Abraham Rhodes  
Juanne Alexander

### February 7

Alicia Talley

### February 8

Alain Markey  
Jimmy Benson

### February 9

Danny Barrett  
Khasara Dye  
Temple Barrett

### February 10

Gib Seese  
Ben Blevins

### February 11

Sue McGlamery

### February 12

Bernard Fuemmeler

### February 15

Ed White  
Kathleen Fulton  
Brandon Oubre

### February 16

Ina Mae James  
Beverly Morrison

### February 19

Stephanie O'Neill

### February 20

Ellen Reaves

### February 23

Emileigh Benson  
Josh Neighbors

### February 24

Lupe Blevins  
Patty Willis  
Martha Hotinger

### February 26

Daisy Banta  
George Eapen

### February 27

Leslie Gayne

### February 28

John Honea





## The Donut Wall is Back!

The coffee will be hot, and the donuts will be round.

Donut miss this chance to grab a sweet treat and enjoy a few minutes of fellowship with your church family.

### Fun Facts:

\* The word *shrove* is a form of the English word *shrive*, which means to obtain absolution for one's sins by way of confession and penance. Shrove Tuesday was named after the custom of Christians to be "shriven" before the start of Lent.

\* Pancakes have been long been associated with Shrove Tuesday, an opportunity to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the Lenten fast.



## SHROVE TUESDAY PANCAKE SUPPER

Pancakes, sausage, baked apples, coffee, and juice

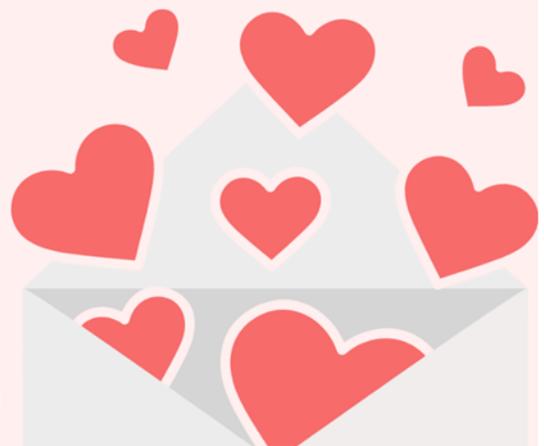
Donations accepted for RRUMC food pantry ministry

River of Lifers (adults 50+)

## Hands-On Mission Project

Loving people to life by crafting gifts for our friends in assisted living

Tuesday, February 28, 10:00am in the Fellowship Hall



For more information contact Lori at 740-7061 or [engagement@riverroadumc.org](mailto:engagement@riverroadumc.org)

**Confirmation Class Upcoming!** Our Confirmation class for 2023 will be kicking off on Sunday, February 5th. Contact Tom if you know any youth (7th-11th grade) who may be interested in joining our program this year. Confirmation is a wonderful time for youth to discern and make their own choices about our church and how to follow Christ.

**Youth Group** for Middle School and High School meets every Sunday at 5:30. Second Sundays of each month we join together with other UMC Youth groups for a large gathering as part of the West End Circuit. Key Dates Upcoming:

Feb 3rd-5th: Retreat at Westview on the James

Feb 20th: Tubing at Wintergreen

March 12th: River Road UMC hosting



## ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

Small Disciple groups remain a great opportunity to plug into the life of our church, hold each other accountable for our faith journey, and deepen relations with each other and with God. We'd love to have you plug in to our continuing set of discipleship opportunities.

In February, we will be launching a Lenten book study over the six weeks of Lent. More information forthcoming as to times and locations - hopefully there is a convenient time for you to join in! Neighborhood life groups continue to be discussed and are emerging as well. Here are other ongoing opportunities to plug in for your discipleship journey:

- Adult Bible Studies - Sunday morning at 10:00. New discussion every week!
- Contemporary Christian Class - Sunday morning at 10:00. Current book discussion *Short Stories by Jesus* by Amy-Jill Levine
- New Life Group - Thursdays at 6:30. Geared towards those in their 20/30s. Bible study and community
- Monday Morning Bible Study. Mondays at 10:00. Now studying the Gospel of Mark

We are also blessed to have a number of community groups meeting at our church. Here are a few that are always open for our broader community:

- Community Bible Study for Women: Every Tuesday at 6:00
- Autistic Teens Community Group: 3rd Friday at 5:30 in the basement
- Alzheimer's Care Giver Support Group: 4th Thursday at 6:00

Reach out to Tom at [tom@riverroadumc.org](mailto:tom@riverroadumc.org) if you are looking to join (or lead!) any of our discipleship groups. Leaders always needed!

## CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Join us Sunday mornings!

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

### **Preschool Discipleship for February:**

Have you noticed any heart-shaped candy boxes or giant teddy bears in stores yet? It's that time of year when we do extra special things to show people how much we love them. One sweet way to do that has always been with candy hearts. Candy hearts are such a fun way to show someone you love them, which goes perfectly with what we are teaching preschoolers this month. After all, everything Jesus did while He was on earth was to show us how much He loves us. And if there's one thing we really want preschoolers to know, it's that Jesus loves them.

### **Memory Verse for February:**

"HOW WIDE AND LONG AND HIGH AND DEEP IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST."

EPHESIANS 3:18, NIV

### **K-5 Discipleship for February:**

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN RESPECT AND GOD'S CHARACTER, AS SHOWN THROUGH GOD'S BIG STORY

We often think about respect in terms of vertical relationships we have with others—respect for parents, teachers, and people in authority. Those are important, but equally important are the more horizontal relationships we have with people, like siblings, friends, and even people we may not get along with. This idea of valuing others and having mutual respect is seen all throughout Scripture and is a necessary way to communicate with others and demonstrate God's love with them. We see throughout Scripture that all people have value because they were created in God's image. God values us and wants a forever relationship with us. God sent Jesus to make that possible. We follow God's example when we show others that they have value too.

### **Memory Verse For February:**

"DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WANT THEM TO DO TO YOU."

LUKE 6:31, NIRV



**FRANCES ALLEN/ALICE WEED CIRCLE**

The Francis Allen/Alice Weed Circle meets the second Tuesday of every month. Everyone is invited to the next meeting on February 14th at 10:00 AM.



United  
Women  
in Faith

**BOOK CLUBS**

The First Monday Book club will meet February 6 to discuss *The Magnificent Lives of Marjorie Post* by Allison Pataki, led by Beth Berteneau.

On March 6, *Yellow Wife* by Sadeqa Johnson will be the topic of discussion. Johnson is a local writer living in Chesterfield County. She was featured in last month's Richmond Magazine and writes local historical novels. Beth Wilson suggested we take advantage of guest speaker Jamie Ford being the Henrico Reads author and speaking at Tucker High School March 30. We can go as a group and then discuss his new book, *The Many Daughters of Afong Moy* on April 3. So, lots of good books to keep reading!

We meet at 7PM at Ann York's home, 2800 Chancel Lane. All are welcome to come. Just show up or call Ann at 907-748-0446.

The Second Monday Book Club will meet February 13 to discuss *The Measure* written by Nikki Erlick, led by Judy Metz. March's selection *The It Girl*, by Ruth Ware, will be presented by Anne Dudley.

Please come by 11129 Woodbaron Court for the gathering and reviews.

<b>CREATION CARE</b>
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Greetings Church Family,

I want to highlight a few things to be thankful for that support caring for God's earth:

- 1) "There was a massive investment (2.5 billion dollars) into solar energy within the state of Georgia. (WSJ, 1/12, p. B3);
- 2) "Richmond City was given 1.5 acres that will be earmarked for preservation. It was purchased and donated by the Capital Region Land Conservancy" (RTD, 1/10, p. A 8).
- 3) "A Company called Tree Energy Solutions proposes making a synthetic gas from hydrogen (cleaner than fossil fuels) . . . to run factories, power airplanes and heat homes in the future" (NYT, 10/11, p. B1).

Here are a couple of things to be aware of:

- 1) "Foundation says Chesapeake Bay health still a D-plus. . . . The biggest challenge is still changing farming practices" (RTD, 1/6, p. A1);
- 2) "Richmond's high-poverty areas need tree planting, not removal. . . . Trees represent more than potential memorials, without trees urban spaces can become affected by a phenomena called the heat island effect" (RTD, 12/21, p. A 13).
- 3) Indoor pollution present in people's homes-such as radon, mold, and carbon monoxide.

What can you do to support creation care!

- 1) To address indoor pollution: a) test for radon; b) Clean up mold, fix leaks; ventilate bathrooms, laundry and cooking areas; use exhaust fans while showering, cooking or running the dishwasher, etc.); c) have your heating systems checked annually; d) look for low- or no-VOC (volatile organic compounds) or low formaldehyde labels when shopping for paint, couches, mattresses and wood products and e) increase fresh air exchange whatever way you can.
- 2) Recycle old batteries (e.g., Lowe's and/or search @ Call2Recycle or GreenCitizen);
- 3) Embrace the 5Rs: Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Rent and Recycle.

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

### GIFTS FOR THE MANGER

Collectively you donated almost \$10,000 through Gifts for the Manger for UMCOR-Hurricane Relief, Mission Trips, CrossOver Healthcare Ministry, and Open Table. We are blessed by your generosity to be able to support these missions.

### SAFE HARBOR

Thanks to your generous donations for Angel Tree, we were able to provide gifts for children at Safe Harbor as well. These children are sheltered by Safe Harbor because they have been forced from their homes as a result of domestic violence or trafficking.

### MISSIONARIES

In addition to supporting Alicia Talley, who grew up in our church, and leaves this month for a mission in the Middle East, we have provided funds to support James Alford, son of Lori Alford. James began a three month mission in January in Mazatlán, Mexico with a team from Youth with a Mission.

### ONGOING NEEDS - FOOD PANTRIES

The demand for food at Ginter Park UMC, Belmont UMC and St. Paul's Catholic Church, and for residents of the shelter at Safe Harbor continues. The temporary increase in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits implemented during the pandemic will end after February's benefits, so food pantries anticipate a rise in the need for food. Your support is much appreciated. 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. Weekly updates will highlight particular needs. Thanks to Tony and Jean Barnette, George and Sari Eapen, Mark and Connie Whetstine, Stephanie and Daniel O'Neill, Tom York, and the youth group for their work on this mission.

### UPCOMING MISSIONS

Mark your calendars for **April 16** when we will be doing **food packing** for **Rise Against Hunger**. The Christmas Eve offering provided enough funds for 10,000 meals. Other spring missions include the **Eva Huston Pantry** collection and repairing homes with **Rebuilding Together**. Watch for more information about these important missions.

“And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.” Hebrews 13:16.

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.

## RIVER ROAD 101

Are you new to the River Road UMC community? Interested in learning more about church membership? Connect with us at our next River Road 101! We'll enjoy lunch together while learning more about what it means to be part of our church family.

**Sunday, March 5, 12:15pm**

Room 205/207

Lunch provided

RSVP by Sunday, February 26 to Lori at  
[engagement@riverroadumc.org](mailto:engagement@riverroadumc.org)





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

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February 2023

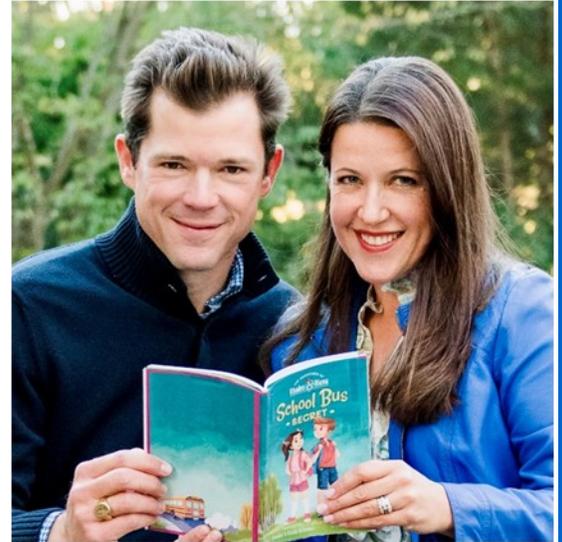
**Articles for the  
March 2023  
Connections are due  
February 20, 2023.**



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

River Road's own Rhodes and Alana Ritenour have published their first children's book! *The Adventures of Rhodes and Alana: School Bus Secret* is about Rhodes and Alana if they had met at 8 years old. While the book does share some of Rhodes' experience with diabetes, it is more broadly a story about friendship, support, and resilience, written for elementary age readers, as well as their parents, and grandparents.

Copies are available through [bookshop.org](http://bookshop.org), [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), and [barnesandnoble.com](http://barnesandnoble.com). Locally, you can support the authors at a book signing on Monday, February 13th from 7:00-8:00pm at Twin Hickory Public Library in Glen Allen.



Congrats to the Ritenours!

## Open Arms Christian Preschool

The children have been having a lot of fun and learning experiences at OACP with the start of the new year. There have been themes on Winter Weather, Polar Animals, and Space. It's been so fun to learn with these new themes and the teachers are preparing for a February where they will celebrate "Kindness and Love" to one another.

In January OACP opened up registration for the 2023-2024 school year to current families. Beginning in February, new families on the waitlist will be offered spots they can secure. OACP will be hiring for a Full-Time Assistant Teacher beginning Summer 2023. If you or any of your family and friends are interested in the open position or enrolling a child at OACP please contact the Preschool Director, Nora Hamlet, at 804-754-0227 or [openarms@riverroadumc.org](mailto:openarms@riverroadumc.org).



**OPEN ARMS  
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL**

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