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Happy New Year! John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote a prayer that we call the Covenant Prayer. John Wesley encouraged Methodists to pray this prayer at the beginning of every new year as a way of remembering their baptism. Starting the new year with prayer is not the way our culture markets January 1. Our culture emphasizes that we should get in shape, get rid of the clutter in our homes, or go “dry” in January. Early Methodists instead encouraged people to worry more about their inner life. In our Methodist tradition we are encouraged to pray, to fast, to journal, and to meet together in small groups so that we can be attentive to our souls. Could being attentive to your soul be a good new year’s resolution for you? How do you start? That’s a good question and here’s another one, “How is it with my soul?” That is where you start as you invite Jesus to help you examine your soul. Jesus wants to help you answer that question. You may hear the answer if you jot your thoughts down or just free write whatever comes to mind. If it is not well with your soul, pray for guidance on what you can do to help mend it. If it is well with your soul, give thanks. If this self examination is hard for you, find a friend, a prayer partner, or a small group where you can ask this question of each other. Sometimes when others put their thoughts to words, it stirs your thoughts. God speaks to us through family, friends, and neighbors. However you choose to approach this “How is it with my soul challenge” remember to include time for prayer. Will you consider starting the year with this part of John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer instead of at the gym or on the treadmill (or you could also pray this as you work on your quads)?

Lord, make me what you will.

I put myself fully into your hands:

put me to doing, put me to suffering,

let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and with a willing heart

give it all to your pleasure and disposal.

Happy New Year Disciples!

Pastor Sarah

Welcome our newest members: Jim and Sherri Ferrara

Jim and Sherri began looking for a church after their recent move to Goochland. They chose to commit to this church community because “River Road UMC was friendly and welcoming. We never felt like an outsider.”

Jim and Sherri met in their college days at Virginia Tech. They have three sons and five grandchildren. Jim retired from Dominion Energy after 34 years and Sherri retired from Amelia County Public Schools after 33 years. Sherri continues to enjoy teaching part time at Brightpoint Community College, while Jim enjoys golf. Their hobbies include spending time with family, traveling, and gardening.



Welcome to the River Road UMC family!

**January/February
 Upper Room
 Devotionals are
 available in the
 Welcome Center
 and Narthex.**



Worship Series beginning January 7

The Faith We Sing

9:00 am - Contemporary Worship in the Fellowship Hall

11:00 am - Traditional Worship in the Sanctuary

Read through the Bible in 2024

Commit to deeper discipleship this year by spending 30 minutes a day in Scripture.

Click here or scan this QR code to download the Bible in One Year app. Printed reading guides are also available in the Narthex or Welcome Center.



January Birthdays

January 1

Chris Oubre
Wendy Travis

January 6

Betty Hatcher
Sarah Anthes

January 13

David Hudson
Zoe Bell

January 18

Burk May

January 24

Cindy Spieth

January 29

Adam Kemp
Cline Wood
Rhodes Ritenour Jr.

January 2

Katherine Anthes
Himans Alexander

January 8

Paul Pitts
Mark Whetstone
Will Mann

January 14

Sarah York

January 19

Cheryl Bowles

January 25

Paula Tatar

January 31

Tom Simmons

January 3

John Gresham
Roger Dowdy

January 10

Kate Morrison
Alexa Cornett

January 15

Ann York
Megan Gilliland

January 20

Joyce May
Jack Stuckey
Kate Stuckey
McRae Stuckey

January 26

Don Jeffrey

January 4

Karen Carter

January 11

Melinda Sledd

January 16

Gene James
Vince Narron

January 22

Nick Gilliland

January 27

Whit Anthes
Carson Moum

January 5

Chris Price
Jackson Vines

January 12

Cathy Reid
Maggie Hiatt
James Gilliland

January 17

Nathaniel Walunas
Mac Stuckey

January 23

Betsy Hiatt

January 28

Bill Kuehl



Life is messy. Let's talk about it.

This winter, connect with a Bible study group and dive into the book of Ecclesiastes. In six sessions, we'll read and discuss the first half of the book, tackling questions about the meaning of life, true fulfillment, the value of work, and how to find contentment. This study is for adults of all ages with two meeting options:

Sundays on Zoom at 7:00pm beginning January 21

Mondays in person in Room 205/207 at 10:00am beginning January 22

Sign up in the Welcome Center or by clicking this link: [Ecclesiastes Bible Study Sign Up](#)

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

GriefShare Grief Support Group Starts January 20

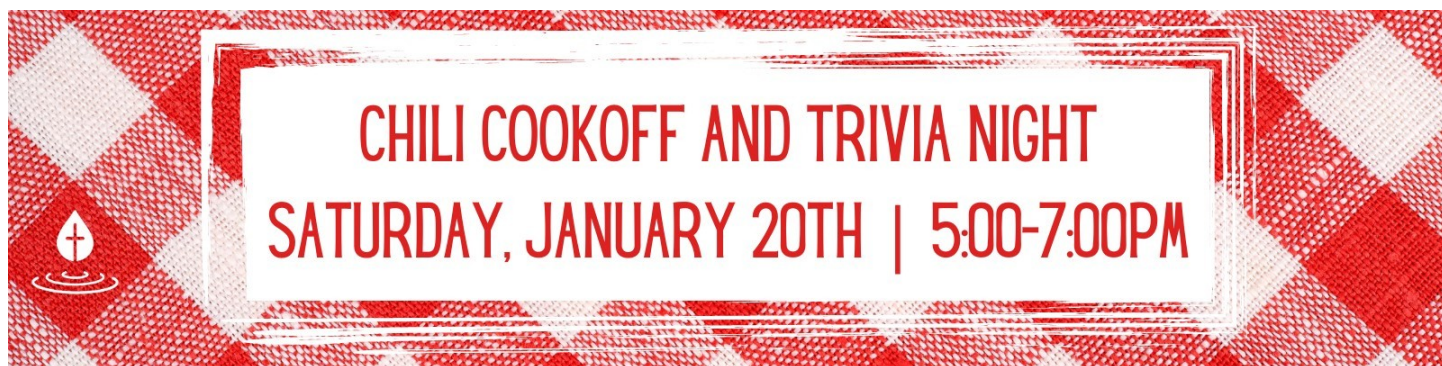


This 13-week grief support group focuses on important topics associated with the death of a loved one. Weekly videos feature nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories, and are followed by enriching group discussion. Many grieving people find they are only beginning the work of healing when friends or family have returned to their daily life routines. Too often people, including Christians, tend to stuff their grief instead of allowing it to do the God-given work for which it is intended. Don't allow fear of what others may think to keep you from what could help you. Confidentiality is very much a part of this program.

Your bereavement experience may be recent or not so recent. You will find encouragement, comfort, and help in grieving the death of a spouse, child, parent, sibling, other family member, or friend. No matter the cause of your loved one's death, this is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling. You will learn how to recognize the symptoms of being stuck in grief and that you do not need to live in bondage to certain emotions. You will learn valuable information about dealing with the changes in your life and renewing your hope for the future.

GriefShare will be held Saturday mornings at River Road UMC beginning January 20, 2024, from 10:00am-12:00pm.

For more information or to sign up, contact Jeni DiCristina, at jhdicristina@gmail.com or 919-649-4922.



Small Group Prayer Study

Happy New Year!

Coming in the New Year! Mark your calendars. The Prayer Team will be sponsoring a **4-week** small group study on prayer. Whether you describe yourself as a prayer warrior or a beginning pray-er, you are welcome to join us. Watch the newsletter for more information.

Topics to include: The Basics, Intercession, Healing, Answers

Dates: February 18, 25 and March 3, 10

Time: Sundays at 10 a.m.

YOUTH

Youth are great! In 2024, we will start a study of Luke and continue to meet for Youth Group on Sunday evening. We also have small groups meeting for Sunday School, evening bible study or morning breakfast at Chick-Fil-a! All 6-12th graders are welcome anytime.



Decorating for Christmas!



Youth Night out at Busch Gardens



Finishing up our Graduation Block on the Basement Wall



Intergenerational Advent kick-off Sunday School

PRAYER TEAM

Happy New Year from the RRUMC Prayer Team! January often finds us joining gyms or attempting other positive changes. It's not always easy to keep these resolutions. This year, why not join the Prayer Team?! There are no monthly fees and no special clothing or equipment is required! As an additional bonus, you will be an integral part of a vibrant ministry which requires little and offers much. With a small commitment of time, you and those for whom you pray will benefit.

We are seeking members for two roles: one in which you commit to volunteer in the chapel one Sunday every eight weeks and one in which you commit to pray daily from home (or wherever you are) for persons and situations submitted on prayer concern cards or prayer wall sticky notes.

It is our hope that you will make prayer a priority in 2024 and consider joining us on the Prayer Team as a very real way of "loving people to life."

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 January:

Preschoolers are learning a lot of important things. How to put away their toys. What is wrong. What is right. When to say please, thank you, and I'm sorry. But learning important things doesn't stop after preschool. It never stops! That's why we want to make sure preschoolers know that they have the BEST Teacher teaching them important things—the MOST important things—for the rest of their lives. And He wants to be their friend forever! Yes, it's Jesus! So get ready to search for some CLUBHOUSE CLUES and help preschoolers discover that Jesus teaches me important things.

Memory Verse for January:

"THE PEOPLE WERE AMAZED AT HIS TEACHING."

MATTHEW 7:28, NCV

K-5 Discipleship for January:

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

In Psalm 24:1, David wrote, "The earth belongs to the Lord. And so does everything in it." (NIRV) God is the author of creation, and God has entrusted us to care for and cultivate the world we see around us. We do that by taking responsibility. From work we need to accomplish, to people we meet, to the words we use, life is filled with moments where we can decide to reflect God's character, take responsibility, and use what we have wisely. When we follow through and do what needs to be done, we can point others to Jesus, the One who took the ultimate responsibility for us and made it possible for us to be with God forever.

Memory Verse For January:

"SUPPOSE YOU CAN BE TRUSTED WITH SOMETHING VERY LITTLE. THEN YOU CAN ALSO BE TRUSTED WITH SOMETHING VERY LARGE."

LUKE 16:10A, NIRV



What does Women's Ministry 2.0 look like at RRUMC? The 2.0 means change and we're so glad you have been asking! 2024 will bring "new and improved" opportunities to learn, serve and connect. The specifics are beginning to take shape as you read this article. More will be coming in Connections, but right now, here are the basics:

*Women's Ministry will be the umbrella over the different small groups for women, such as these that already meet monthly – mission-focused ladies' gathering, two book clubs and ladies' breakfast. These will continue.

*We hope to have new small groups forming for women to meet on other days and at various times. Think about when would be best for you. Would weekday evenings or weekends during the day be good?

*Have you ever thought,

I would enjoy that ladies' group, but I can't meet then;

I wish our church offered a ladies' night out;

I'd like to be involved in a mission project;

I would like to meet more ladies in our church family;

I've seen a need in our community and think our church could help.

Be thinking and watching. It's an exciting time! The opportunities seem endless! We can't wait to see what ideas spring forth!

Current opportunities:

*Our mission-focused small group (to be named soon) meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 10:00 at church in room 205/207.

*Our two book clubs meet on Mondays:

1st Monday at 7:00 at Ann York's home

2nd Monday at 1:00 at Bess Traylor's home

*Our ladies' breakfast meets on the 4th Friday of each month at a variety of local restaurants.

Please contact Tammy Hacker at mngirlinva88@gmail.com to ask questions or share your ideas.

BOOK CLUB:

Daytime Meeting:

We are celebrating our fourth year of meeting and turning the pages of some incredible historical fiction and we look forward to another year of stimulating discussions.

The Exiles by Christina Baker Kline will be our Monday, January 8, selection, presented by Bess. This is a story of "grace born from hardship, the unbreakable bonds of female friendships, and the unfettering of legacy".

All are welcomed to 11129 Woodbaron Court to join our stimulating discussions at 1:00 pm. Call Bess at 804-747-7494 for questions, directions or suggestions. It is great to rest during the busy months ahead with a good book. Enjoy!

Evening Meeting:

On the first Monday of each month, Book Club meets at 7 PM at Ann York's home, 2800 Chancel Lane, 907-748-0446. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please call Ann and you will be placed on the email list that goes out to remind everyone of the meeting. We will not meet January 1, New Years Day, but will meet on January 8, 7PM, 2800 Chancel Lane. We will discuss *Lucy by the Sea* by Elizabeth Stout. It is the last in a trilogy. If you have time, the other two books are rather short and read quickly...*I am Lucy Barton* and *Oh William*. Looking ahead, in February we will discuss *Behind Closed Doors* by B. A. Paris. Please call Ann York, 907-748-0446, if you are interested. Hope to see you there!

HOLIDAY MISSIONS

You showed the love of Christ to over 80 children and their incarcerated family members by providing gifts for **Angel Tree**. Thank you and thanks to Laurel Marks, Jaimey Honea and Connie Whetstine for their leadership of this mission.

GIFTS FOR THE MANGER

If you haven't yet made your gift to Jesus, it is not too late. Checks or online gifts for Gifts for the Manger are still being accepted. Donate to the Karl and Jane Bren Center at Virginia Supportive Housing, UMCOR, food pantries, and/or Helping Children Worldwide. All are organizations **loving people to life** in Richmond and around the globe.

MISSIONARIES

The two global missionaries that we have funded for a number of years have retired. This year we decided to give our global missions funds to Daniel Christian Mohr, a global mission fellow serving a two year mission in Austria. You can read more about him [here](#). Daniel is a recent graduate of UVA from Sterling, Virginia, who has been active in the Virginia Annual Conference. We also support two missionaries who grew up in our congregation. Alicia Talley, daughter of Kate Meilink, is serving in the Middle East through Cru. Stephen Irwin (son of Chuck and Sandy Irwin) and his wife Kelly serve with Sixteen: Fifteen in Richmond, helping churches know God's heart for the nations. We are so proud of these River Roaders heeding God's call, and are happy to be able to support their important missions.

COMMONWEALTH CATHOLIC CHARITIES FOOD AND FINANCE FUND

The church regularly gets calls from community members in need of financial help for items such as rent and utilities. The church office has maintained a list of referrals, but often callers indicate that they have tried these organizations without success. The staff did some research to determine which organizations are effectively meeting these needs, and identified Commonwealth Catholic Charities (CCC) as the one that provided the help most callers seek. The Missions Committee will be donating funds to CCC to assist in this mission. Now, when callers are referred by our church, we know that we are sending them to a place with the resources to effectively assist – resources to which we have contributed. A representative of the organization will speak about their services on January 28 and we will present them with our donation.

ONGOING NEEDS - FOOD PANTRIES AND SAFE HARBOR

Thanks to those who made Gifts for the Manger contributions to the food pantry and to those who used the advent calendar to collect food gifts for January. Most-needed items remain the same -- peanut butter; 15 oz. cans of tomato sauce; 1 lb. spaghetti; canned fruit and vegetables; canned soups and beans; canned chicken and tuna; boxed cereal; oatmeal; ravioli/spaghettios; non-refrigerated microwave meals; diapers and wipes (sizes 4, 5 and 6 are most needed). Standard, non-glass container sizes are appreciated for packing purposes. Updates regarding particular items are on the app.

Also watch for more information about our **Super Bowl Sunday food competition!** The need is great – who will step up to meet it in a big way?

“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 Laurel Via, laurel.via@richmond.edu or (276) 492-6795.



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

January 2024

**Articles for the
February 2024
Connections are due
January 20, 2024.**



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

The church staff would like to express our gratitude to each of you who contributed so generously to the year-end love offering on our behalf. It is a pleasure and a joy to serve Christ with you! Thank you, and may God bless each of you in the new year!

Thank you!

Open Arms Christian Preschool

We had so many great things happening December at OACP. Our children participated in the annual Christmas Performance where they were able to share "The Christmas Story" with their families and friends that came that day. Afterwards the children celebrated the birth of Jesus with a Birthday Party! The children also collected mittens, hats and scarves on the "mitten tree" that were donated to CARITAS and Ginter Park Shelter.



This month we will begin sending out offers to new students for the 2024-2025 School Year. It's not too late to be part of the Preschool Program at OACP! If you or anyone you know is interested in our Preschool, please contact the Preschool Director, Nora Hamlet, at 804-754-0227, or email her at openarms@riverroadumc.org for more information for the 2024-2025 school year.



OPEN ARMS
CHRISTIAN PRESCHOOL

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