



RIVER ROAD CHURCH
BAPTIST



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Churchwide Retreat in February 2022

RIVER ROAD CHURCH

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#BeTheChurch

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Pastor's Column

By the time you read this article, it should be just a few days prior to the First Sunday in Advent. I have always loved Advent—the decorations, the music, the Gospel readings, the anticipation—and I trust I'm not the only one. I especially love Advent at River Road Church. I am eager to light the Advent wreath. I look forward to changing into our purple stoles and paraments. I long to sing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*. And this year, I am expectant and joyful for other reasons as well.

It was on the First Sunday of Advent, November 27, 2016, that I began as pastor of River Road Church. I can hardly believe that it has been five years already—time has flown by! I still remember how thankful I was to climb those pulpit steps for the first time to preach in our breathtaking sanctuary. I remember well the enthusiasm of the congregation, the hope for great ministry together, and the love forming between us. I pray for many more years together.

I am anxiously awaiting Advent this year because of the creative ministry offerings your church staff is planning. We are well aware that many of us long for a normal Advent season, while at the same time, many families—especially those with very young children—

still remain cautious in indoor gatherings. We are beginning to plan our Christmas Eve offerings, with all the beauty and majesty we love and appreciate with those services. As we plan what we pray will be holy, meaningful, and safe gatherings, we hope that you will make plans to attend...and perhaps invite a friend who may need to be uplifted by the glory of that night.

Last, a difficult year and a half of COVID and all the accompanying restrictions, not to mention the death and loss, I am awaiting Advent in a way that is perhaps different from other years. While I have always *loved* Advent, I feel as if I *need* Advent this year. I need to feel hope as we sing the first Advent carol. I need to feel peace knowing that Christ is coming. I need to feel joy while lighting the Advent wreath, remembering God's evergreen and everlasting promises. And I need to feel the love of this congregation, as we join our hearts in worship of the One who loves us so much that he became one of us.

Happy Advent, River Road family!

Daniel

RIVER ROAD PRESCHOOL

What a tremendous turnout we had for Fall Family Fun Night this year—over 300 children in costume! We hope this successful joint church and preschool event is the start of many more to come.

With November on the calendar, our thoughts turn to our community and showing our thankfulness for all that we have. Each class is collecting the full Thanksgiving menu for a family in need. These will be collected and delivered before Thanksgiving. RRP is supporting Henrico Christmas Mother in its endeavor to provide warm hats, gloves, and mittens for all of those in need this chilly winter season. Our Christmas tree is in the preschool foyer for you to add your warm collections to. These will be picked up the week after Thanksgiving. Pastor Anna Miller led the students in chapel on Wednesday, November 10 with a special message of *thanks*. Don't look now, but I think I see a turkey trotting by—students in Junior Kindergarten will run in the turkey trot the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. They will definitely burn some calories to be ready for a big Thanksgiving feast.

This December, our students will have a chance to shop for their family members in our Santa's Workshop. How can you help? We are collecting donations of wrapping paper and gift tags to wrap up these treasures. Donations can be brought to the preschool office. Our afternoons will be spent in fun enrichment Christmas camps during the month of December. Students will have fun crafting at Gifts Galore, play Reindeer Games, travel the globe in Christmas Around the World, and have some fun with Christmas Classics. On December 8, RRP families will come together for a day of Christmas Celebration in honor of Jesus's birth. Pastor Daniel Glaze will start our morning with chapel, and students age three and up will sing Christmas Carols in the sanctuary to their families. The courtyard will have transformed into the North Pole, where Santa waits to greet teachers and students alike! The morning wouldn't be complete without milk and cookies in the classroom. Our youngest friends will enjoy a Christmas sing-along the following week with musician Chris Campbell. There will be many a jingle bell to ring while all of our friends come to sing. And last but not least, our teachers will enjoy a Staff Christmas Party and lunch on December 10!

At River Road Preschool, we are thankful for the many blessing we have received. From the support of River Road Church, to the trust families place in us to care for their children, we are grateful to be part a community that values the genuine love and commitment we have for each and every child in our care.

BY DANIELLE SIMONE



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

This has been an exciting beginning to a new year in children's ministry at RRCB. We kicked off with the church-wide Celebration Sunday. It was a wonderful afternoon filled with games, food, and fellowship. On Sunday evenings, children have met with Dr. Bob in courtyard for choir. After choir, children have participated in Missions & More with Mrs. Sandy. In Missions & More, we have been learning about loving God and loving others.

We also resumed our Wednesday night suppers and enjoyed our meals on plaza. Children joined me on the playground for fun and fellowship. In September, we also had our first toddler/preschool fun day. The children played on the playground, listened to a story, and sang some songs. The children really enjoyed playing together and meeting new friends.

Sunday school classes for children and children's church resumed in October. It has been wonderful seeing the children in the Sunday school hallways. Children's church has been meeting outside in front of the chapel. It has been refreshing talking about God's world and how we should live like Christ while experiencing God's creation: birds chirping, wind blowing, and ants crawling across the sidewalk. As the weather grows colder, our children's church will move back into the chapel.

We also had a wonderful Family Night and Trunk or Treat event. This event was organized with the preschool, and the turnout was incredible. Due to weather, we had to move indoors, but our trunk volunteers turned doorways into creative "trunks." There was a balloon lady, inflatables in the Fellowship Hall, and a book fair. Everyone had a great time.

In the coming months, we have more exciting things happening in the children's ministry at RRCB. We have toddler/preschool fun mornings planned for November and December. We are so excited for Advent this year. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, November 28, for our ADVENTure Fair from 3-4pm. Children and youth are invited to attend our fair. There will be activities for families to participate together, like creating an Advent wreath, and creating a devotional advent cube. Hot chocolate and cookies will be provided. Please make sure you register your family. On Friday, December 3, there is a family Christmas lights scavenger hunt planned. Children and their families will spend time together hunting items on their lists, and then meet at the church for a treat. During the month of December there will be opportunities for children and their families to experience the Advent season.

BY SANDY ROONEY



CONCERT SERIES

In September, River Road Church resumed the *E. Carl Freeman Concert Series* with a superb organ recital by Christopher Martin. Chris' choice of repertoire combined well-known organ pieces with lesser-known but highly engaging pieces. We had an excellent turnout, and many people watched the livestream of the recital.

In October, the newly-formed vocal ensemble *Vox Humana* and its music director, William Bradley Roberts, gave its premiere concert at River Road. We had another large audience, and there was substantial livestream attendance, also. Their program was widely varied, and it highlighted several fine works by women and African-American composers.

Thank you to all those who support the *E. Carl Freeman Concert Series* through your attendance and/or contributions. People from the Richmond community and beyond consistently express their gratitude for our musical outreach.



BY BOB GALLAGHER

YOUTH MINISTRY

After a good summer with many youth events, CampRVA, weekly dinner gatherings, and MissionRVA, youth have settled into a fairly normal fall routine. We are meeting weekly on Sunday for Dinner (outside) and Youth Group for fellowship and Bible Study. We are working our way through the highlights of the Bible this year as a means to remind ourselves of the good stories that are throughout the Bible and see God's plan and love for us throughout the Bible. Plans are in place for a Winter Retreat in January, Passport, and Mission Trip this summer. After a really hard 2020, it's good to be back in an almost normal routine.

Pictured: Family Fall Kickoff, Youth after they packed lunches for CARITAS, and a recent Sunday Night gathering when Dr. Glaze taught youth group.



Youth Save the Dates

- **November 28:** Adventure Fair (Taking the place of ADVENTure Lunch)
- **December 11:** Youth Christmas Party
- **January 14-16:** Youth Winter Retreat
- **February 25-27:** Churchwide Weekend of Wonder Retreat
- **June 19-25:** Mission Trip to Bluefield, VA
- **July 11-16:** Passport Youth Camp



After almost two years the youth participated in CBF Virginia's Fall Retreat at Eagle Eyrie in the middle of November. As someone who believes passionately about the experience of retreat and camp ministry, I was so pleased to be able to take our youth away for this weekend. Retreats provide moments for students to relax, laugh, worship, and bond in an environment that is outside of their everyday world. When this happens, that's when the good stuff in ministry happens. This year's fall retreat provided space for students to hear the message that they are loved as they are, they are noticed, and invited to the table. Thanks be to God for a beautiful fall weekend in the mountains, for time together worshipping, learning, and growing.

BY MARNIE FISHER-INGRAM

SUNAGO: YOUNG ADULTS MINISTRY

We welcome **Beth Rooney** as our **Seminary Intern for Young Adult Ministry!** Beth is a first-year student at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond and is a Baptist House of Studies Scholar. Beth will be creating and renewing ministry to River Road young adults (post-high school and young professionals). The name for this ministry, *Sunago*, comes from a Greek word found in the Bible meaning *Gather Together*. As these young adults *gather together* for ministry, worship, and service, may they know that their church family *gathers together* in support and prayer for all the exciting ministry and mission dreams we have for them. Welcome to *Sunago*, Beth!



River Road young adults have been gathering since the summer for fellowship and conversation. During the summer we met in a variety of backyards for fellowship, a devotion, and snacks (most important!). We had a lot of fun seeing the Flying Squirrels play and making a venture to do some ax throwing (see pictures). As college students have transitioned back to school, we now meet every other Tuesday night online for a brief time of check-in, a game, and a faith moment. We are currently calling this Tuesday-night group *Sunago* which means “gather together” in Greek. Over the course of this semester, different people in our group have shared their faith stories and how their story is impacting them in their current lives. It’s become a meaningful time and a great way to connect despite the miles that separate our students and young adults from one another. Any young adult from college-age all the way up to later 20s is free to join us! Reach out to Beth at bethrooney@rrcb.org and she can give you all the details.

BY BETH ROONEY

Upcoming Dates:

- **November 24 at 12:30PM:** Friendsgiving at Marnie’s House
- **December 7 at 7PM:** *Sunago* Zoom Gathering
- **December 16 at 6PM:** Christmas Party at Marnie’s House



MISSIONS MINISTRY

Board of Missions Strategic Planning Team

The Board of Missions is a very active group of individuals that strives to keep our church family engaged, aware, and challenged in their faith through acts of service. These acts of service center on an individual's ability to offer his or her gifts in a variety of formats including prayer, time, finances, in-kind donations, and other services. The goal is not for the members of the committee to do these things (although in many instances, they do) but rather to create the opportunities for the entire church body to become involved in serving outside our congregation. These opportunities span from local to state to global and from a few moments to days and weeks on end. Our congregation's involvement is fairly robust as a recent survey has suggested, but we can always strive to do more and to do so more effectively.

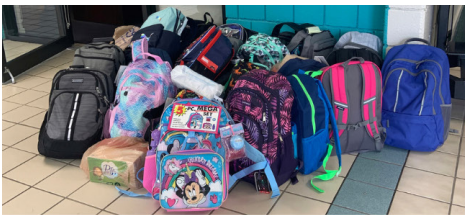
With this in mind, the Board of Missions has engaged in a dialogue that we trust will bring some refinement and focus in our task of serving as the hands and feet of Christ in this world. This dialogue is taking place among a subset of the Board of Missions, some select representatives of our church family, as well as the congregation as a whole. Throughout this process, we hope that we will be able to create some strategic processes that will help us be more intentional in the manner in which we reach out to those beyond the walls of our church. These processes will allow for greater impact with all of our resources as well as a more focused approach as we enter into (and exit) partnerships with like-minded organizations. Our hope throughout all of this is that more individuals will become aware and more engaged in missional activity and that those activities will strive to meet intentional designed outcomes that reach those most vulnerable in our world and share the love of Christ with them.

We hope to draw some conclusions from this process by early spring of next year and begin implementing concepts and strategies shortly thereafter. If you would like to offer any thoughts on the missions focus and strategy of our church, please feel free to reach out to Tim Merritt, chair of the Board of Missions, or Daniel Glaze. And above all, please be in prayer for this missional process.

BY DEAN MILLER



Photo from team presentation on at Wednesday Night Supper & Fellowship.



Thank you, River Road Church! Your continued support of our missions projects and ministries has had an impact in our local community and beyond. To name a few, and some are pictured above, we have supported Baptist Centers and Wellborne UMC food pantry with monthly food collections; Bland Ministry Center during the Lloyd Jackson Memorial Mission Trip; CrossOver Ministry, Tuckahoe YMCA, and Church Hill Wellness Center for back-to-school collections; Afghan refugees with hygiene kits;

Camp Alkulana; CARITAS with meals; The Doorways; and Oregon Hill Baptist Center with Thanksgiving food baskets.

Upcoming Missions Opportunities:

- **Thanksgiving Offering** to Support Wellborne UMC food pantry
- **November 28:** Church Hill Christmas Store deadline
- **December 5:** First Sunday Food Share
- **December 21:** WMU Connectors gathering

WEEKEND OF WONDER

FEBRUARY 25-27, 2022

In 2022, a special committee of the Board of Christian Education & Spiritual Formation is planning a churchwide retreat, Weekend of Wonder, for children, youth, and adults. Learn more about Weekend of Wonder at rrcb.org/wow or contact Rev. Anna Perry Miller.

Our theme for this gathering is wonder, and it will be designed to help us reconnect, or maybe connect for the first time, with the astonishment and awe that comes with following our marvelous God. The weekend will consist of segments for the whole community and some times that are age specific. In addition, there will be topics of study and activities that you get to select based on your own interests.

The planning team has designed the weekend timeline to make it easy for individuals and families of every age to participate. Here is a general schedule for our weekend:

- Friday, February 25: 5:30-7:30 p.m.
- Saturday, February 26: 9:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
- Sunday, February 27: 9:30 a.m.-12:00 p.m.



Registration for Weekend of Wonder is now open!

This is a two-step process. Before you send your payment, please read through all of the details at rrcb.org/wowreg.

In the event that Weekend of Wonder should be rescheduled, registrants will be contacted directly. After registering, and as the retreat gets closer, participants may be contacted to provide additional information or make selections for the retreat (i.e. meals, break out groups, etc.).

Registration Fees (fees increase on January 1, 2022):

- Individual – \$50 (\$60)
- Couple – \$75 (\$90)
- Household of 3 or 4 – \$100 (\$115)
- Household of 5 or more – \$125 (\$140)

Illusionist Nate Staniforth

is the featured speaker and presenter for our *Weekend of Wonder*. He will introduce us to and remind us of the magic of the world



around us, encouraging a state of wonder.

No rabbits. No top hats. No smoke machines. Nate's shows feel more like jumping out of an airplane than a night at a comedy club. He abandons the ubiquitous style-without-substance bravado so often associated with magic and appeals instead to the imagination and intellect of his audience. The journey is wild, visceral and immediate, and like all great art, encourages us to open our minds and hearts, and see the world in new ways.

"When you're young, it's easy to be amazed," says Nate Staniforth. "As you get older, that experience of astonishment gets harder and harder to find. Good magic isn't about deception. It's about trying to see things the way you saw them before they became ordinary."



Paul Wallace will focus on the wonders we can know through science and most specifically astronomy. Paul is a professor, pastor, scientist, writer, and speaker, currently

teaching physics and astronomy at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia, and serving as Pastor for Adult Education at First Baptist Church of Decatur. Paul writes and speaks at the intersection of faith and science, enjoying conversing in everyday language and speaking from his own experiences as a person. Paul has a PhD in physics from Duke University and a MDiv from Emory University's Candler School of Theology. Some of you have read pieces of his writing in the *Nurturing Faith Journal*.

He is one of several excellent workshop leaders who will guide us on Saturday afternoon. Participants will have the opportunity to select two sessions out of seven selections. These will focus on a wide variety of topics and experiences because we know that each person experiences awe, joy, and wonder in different ways. The areas of focus are: science, photography, art, music, sports, movement and meditation, and poetry.

Wednesday Night Supper & Fellowship

It has been a great pleasure and convenience to have a good dinner at a reasonable price by chefs Chris Ahart and Madelyn Albright on Wednesday evenings. They do such a fine job preparing varied and tasty meals. The fellowship we have enjoyed under the tents has been a wonderful break from the isolation of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the timing of our Chancel Choir rehearsals immediately afterwards is very convenient. For those not attending choir sessions, there has been special program offerings.

—Charles O’Neal



Wednesday Night Supper & Fellowship, as well as program offerings will resume in January 2022.

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