



Rev. Chester Phelps Scholarship

- 2 Adults' Ministry
Veterans Day Luncheon
- 3 Christmas Eve Services
A Night in Bethlehem
- 4 Children's Ministry
ADVENTure Lunch
- 5 Youth Ministry
Winter Summit
- 6 Missions Ministry
Generous Holiday Spirit

RIVER ROAD CHURCH

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explorer

Inside the Explorer

Page 2
Catch Your Breath
Brunch

Page 3
TFC-Kids Missions

Page 4
Youth & College
Christmas Parties

Page 7
Faith In Action on
MLK Day

A NEW WAY TO SUPPORT THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

River Road Church has long been a strong supporter of theological education—particularly through the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. In support of students, faculty, staff, and the mission of BTSR, we gave generously toward scholarships and institutional support for many years. Last year, when we received the news that BTSR needed to close, in the midst of our sadness, we gave generously once again so that students would have options for transfer and faculty would receive generous severances.

Since BTSR's closing, the Board of Missions and I have been praying and dreaming about how we might continue to fund theological education through our congregational giving. In late 2019, I presented to the board a plan which I believe does two things: one, it continues to support students pursuing God's call and two, it honors someone dear to River Road Church. They unanimously endorsed the plan.

Therefore, I am pleased to announce that River Road Church has begun a strategic partnership with Passport Camps to fund scholarships for ministerial

students. Not only is Passport a trusted mission partner of River Road, but they already have access to many ministerial students who work as summer staff. River Road will fund the scholarships and Passport will advertise, recruit, and select students to receive awards.

In addition to our being able to support and bless seminary students, here's what I'm incredibly excited about. Passport's president, David Burroughs, loved my idea, but asked for one modification. He asked that we name this the **Rev. Chester Phelps Scholarship**, after his good friend and our Minister to Youth Emeritus. After drying my eyes, I told David that I couldn't think of a better tribute.

Through your generous giving to River Road Church, you are helping to send students to seminary through the Phelps Scholarship. And if you would desire to give a personal gift to this scholarship, please speak with me and I'll help to coordinate that.

I'm incredibly excited about all God has in store through this scholarship!

Daniel



adults'

MINISTRY

BY ANNA PERRY MILLER

Soul Feast Bible Study

In this Sunday evening Bible study, a great time of reading, reflection, conversation, challenge, and support was shared among the twenty participants of varying ages. Each person considered the faith practices that support their growth and development towards maturity. We tried some of these on our own and shared about the experiences. Weekly as we talked, it was clear that many of us understood pieces of discipleship in new or fresh ways. The appreciation and care people had for one another was evident as we prayed together and listened with intention.

Veterans Day Luncheon

In celebration of the service offered by women and men among us who have served the people of the United States through their service in the military, we shared a special luncheon and service. Rev. Todd Combee, retired military chaplain, was with us to share words of encouragement and gratitude to our veterans. Thirty five individuals who served, or came to offer support and thanks to those who have served, gathered in the Fellowship Hall for lunch, recognition, and message, along with some excellent music shared by Rev. Paul Honaker.



In addition, our preschool children came and started us off with a patriotic welcome, singing "America the Beautiful." We ate off of placemats made especially for our celebration by these children and others within the River Road Preschool.

Catch Your Breath Brunch

Just prior to the holiday season rushing in, more than twenty River Road ladies gathered for a morning brunch and time of thoughtful reflection. There was enough food to feed us for three days and it was delicious!

As we reflected, we learned about *la posada*, the Inn, and how many Latino communities go through a ritual of finding one posada where the holy family can enter, after nights of rejection. In hearing the story of one communities' journey, we discovered words that resonated within us, writing them onto booklets to take home, so they could encourage us through the busy journey towards Christmas.

The warmth, conversation, thoughtfulness, and laughter provided a sense of grounded well-being as we departed.



christmas eve

SERVICES

BY DEAN MILLER

A Night in Bethlehem

I have attended many Christmas Eve services through the years. There were some that I merely attended, others which I have led, and one or two where I just felt glad to have gotten to the end. I have heard beautiful, angelic music as well as “joyful noises” from children and others. Live action, videos, and animals parading across the church lawn. I may not have seen it all but I sure have seen a lot. And you know what? It has all been meaningful in its own way. This is especially true of the services at River Road this past year. I was fortunate (and I mean that sincerely) to attend both the 4:00 Family Service and the 8:00 Candlelight and Holy Communion Service which, for me, created a set of bookends to the story.

In the 4:00 service I witnessed the loud, rambunctiousness of children in the pews and constant movement across the chancel. Constant motion and even confusion among people in a setting that may have felt different for them—much like I imagine Bethlehem on the night of Christ’s birth. Chaos with so many different people crowding around in a space that was likely uncomfortable and unfamiliar, but which held the majesty and wonder of the miracle of Christ’s birth.

And then there was the later service: a time for quieter reflection and robust music and readings that allowed me to pause from the busyness of the season, take a deep breath and “be” in the moment. It was a moment that surely Mary and Joseph shared after their son was born and the excitement of the day had worn away; a time to gaze into the face of God and be amazed at what had happened and what was yet to come. Everything about that evening spoke into this new life of Christ. The words of scripture, music, meditations, and the passing of the candlelight quietly, yet powerfully, opened the door to the contemplative Christ.



These two worship experiences provided for me a more complete picture of that moment in time so many years ago when God became flesh and chose to dwell among us. Earthly and heavenly; coming together to form a beautiful picture of the season.



children's MINISTRY

BY KATE KNERR & BETSY LOWERY

ADVENTure Luncheon

The RRCB annual ADVENTure Luncheon took place on December 1, 2019. The Fellowship Hall was full of vibrant conversation after worship as families gathered together to celebrate the start of the season of Advent. There were about thirty families in attendance that included a mix of children, youth, parents, grandparents, and friends. Everyone enjoyed a lunch of hoagie sandwiches, chips, kale salad, grapes, yogurt, and cookies. Many thanks to Betsy and Steve Lowery, Karen and Carl Collier, Kim Fehrs, Tara Savedge, Katie Merritt, and Amy Thurston for helping make the lunch a success. These volunteers shopped for the food, prepared sandwiches, set up food tables, and helped with cleaning up.

After lunch, each family made their Advent wreathes. Many thanks to Carol Cruickshanks and Betsy Lowery for getting the greens, candles, oasis, and trays ready for wreath making. It is always a pleasure to watch how involved the children become as they design their wreathes with their parents. Everyone left that afternoon with their wreath to help them celebrate the coming of Jesus. Pastor Marnie and Mrs. Sandy provided a take home Advent packet for all families with crafts and readings as resources for families to refer to during the season.

The ADVENTure Luncheon is always a special time for our church family. We are thankful for the opportunity to celebrate Advent together both at church and at home.



TFC-Kids

Missions education on Wednesday nights this past fall focused on missionaries serving others in need. Missionaries Lynn and Mike Hutchinson serve in Lomé, Togo, West Africa. As part of their ministry, they lead a kids club that meets every Saturday. The children there hear Bible stories and color a coloring page they can share with others in the community. It costs 3 cents a page for the coloring sheets. As a way for us to help this ministry, we made coin jars and collected money. In December, we collected all of the jars and were able as preschool- and elementary-age children at River Road to donate \$30 to CBF designated towards coloring sheets for the Lomé Kids Club.

During November and December missions education, children learned about homelessness. Referencing Matthew 25:31-46, they were reminded how Jesus talks about offering food to the hungry,

drink to the thirsty, clothing for the naked, and caring for the sick. The children made a mural about ways that they can show God's love. They also brought in food for the churchwide Thanksgiving meal collection for the Oregon Hill Baptist Center. In addition, the children were introduced to what a clothes closet is for those in need. It is hard to understand as young children that there are people without homes, little food, and adequate clothing especially in winter. CBF missionary Lesley-Ann Hix Tommey and the Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries in New York was one example of a ministry to help people who might not have homes or enough to eat. Lesley-Ann and her mission helps remind those in this situation that they are good, worthy, and loved. As children of RRCB who do have these needs met, we can pray for the CBF missionaries and the amazing work they are doing in Jesus' name.

BY SARAH COLLIER,
CAROLINE KOSKINEN, & BRYN TAYLOR

youth MINISTRY



BY MARNIE FISHER-INGRAM

Youth & College Christmas Parties

In December, youth and college students both gathered for Christmas Parties at my house. The youth had a city-wide photo scavenger hunt, followed by a silly gift exchange. It was a night of friendly competition, much laughter, and good food. I look forward to the Christmas Party as a way to be together and celebrate the season. I am so grateful for the many parent volunteers who joined in for the evening to help drive youth around town and help make the party a success.

The college students also gathered at our house. Together we shared a meal, memories, and life updates. I am so grateful for this group of young adults who are wanting to connect with each other and their church family.



Winter Summit

Over Martin Luther King Jr. weekend, 45 RRCB youth and adults traveled to Charlottesville for a weekend centered around justice and advocacy. We heard from CBF Field Personnel Joshua Hearne and Greg and Sue Smith about the work they are doing to resource and help others in their community. We spent the weekend surrounded by almost 300 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship youth and adults from around the state of Virginia worshiping and learning. Saturday was spent in worship, workshops, some free time to experience a "breakout room," and capped off by an 80s prom on Saturday night. It was a tremendous weekend and am always so grateful for time away with these students and adults. Thank you to Daniel Ingram, Meg Rooney, and Beth Rooney for their leadership with the retreat and to Lani Gilliam, Susan Halloran, Seth Roberts, and Scott Rooney for chaperoning.

Missions MINISTRY

BY LAURA LEE CHANDLER

Generous Holiday Spirit

Our River Road family experiences the beauty of holidays at Thanksgiving and Christmas. We treasure family time together, share bounteous meals, open gifts Christmas morning, enjoy the services at church, and fill our hearts with happiness. Many in our area do not have the joys we take for granted, and the holidays are times of stress and hunger.

We are a giving, caring, and generous congregation. This is evident in the donations we received with our Thanksgiving food and gift card drive. Donations and help included non-perishable food, gift cards, members to oversee the collections in Sunday School, youth who gathered the boxes, sorted the food into bags, and members who delivered the food to Oregon Hill Baptist Church.

The River Road Thanksgiving offering this year was donated to the Welborne United Methodist Church Food Pantry. Their pantry helps many people in our immediate community, including clients at CrossOver Healthcare Ministry, our friends in the *Circulo de Costura* (sewing circle), as well as immigrants and refugees who live along the Patterson and Quioccasin corridors.

The Church Hill Wellness Center Christmas Store collection was so successful, our congregation's donations filled half of a Sunday School classroom! For a second time in the span of a few weeks, our generous church members made purchases and assisted to help those in need in our community at Christmas. Gifts and clothing for the young were purchased, the items were sorted and stored, and three carloads of toys, games, clothes and bikes were delivered to the Center. Several church members, including fourteen youth, went to the Center to help parents with their selections. Can you imagine the joy on the faces of parents who, for the small fee, were able to purchase gifts and provide their children with the excitement we all feel on Christmas morning? The \$5.00 fee is charged for each child, enabling parents to select toys and several pieces of clothing. The money collected is used in a neighborhood fuel assistance fund for the winter months. Parents retain their dignity as they carefully shop for gifts which they paid to obtain.

A youth Sunday School Class, for several years, has shopped for families of an incarcerated parent. This year they shopped for three families whose names were supplied by an organization called Assisting Families of Inmates. With money designated in our church's mission budget, the youth shopped with lists of desired gifts for the children. Together with their teacher, on a Saturday in early December on a church bus, they delivered the gifts and read a story of the nativity to the family.

River Road, thank you for your generosity, for your support to our partners who are helping to make the lives of those in need just a little bit better.



faith in action

MLK DAY

BY DANIELLE SIMONE

A Day on, Not a Day off

On January 20, thousands of volunteers across America came together to serve their community for the National Day of Service. Fifty of those folks were right here at River Road Church! Children, students, parents, grandparents, and friends came together to participate in community service projects for our community to mark the birthday of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On this day, individuals are charged with having “day on, not a day off,” to support their communities.

The morning began with the a service for all, reminding us that we could see the love of Jesus when we share love and support for others. Participants gathered sustenance from doughnuts before beginning their tasks! Three families headed to the Reinhart Guest

House, where they made cards for residents, baked cookies, and cleaned.

Here at church and school, many projects were underway. Going room by room, our middle school boys cleaned chairs and baby buggies. Families worked together to help create goodie bags for the upcoming RAD conference and prepped folders for participants. Teacher

mailbox treats were made, and cards were created for students to receive during SOL testing week at Oak Grove-Bellmeade Elementary School. Several friends even braved the cold to “fluff the turf” on the playground!

Dr. King recognized the power of service. He famously said, “Everyone can be great because everybody can serve.” From the very young children here to the grandparents who accompanied them, this rang true here at River Road!



Mystery Dinner Night

On January 11, 2020, 40 RRCB members and friends split into small groups and headed out to dinner for a night of fun and fellowship!



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