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AUGUST 2020, VOLUME 33.8

# The Messenger

*St. John's United Church of Christ*



## **Message from Dreama Terrill, the Church Council President**

Dear friends,

About 140 days ago we started meeting for Sunday worship and church meetings on Zoom, hoping that we'd soon be back together in person. However, as we are all very much aware, this has still not happened. Despite Virginia being named by the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association in the top five states for Emergency Preparedness, the state is very cautiously moving through Phase 2 towards Phase 3 re-opening. As a result of the state's caution, the Church Council is still very concerned about the safety of all. We are hopeful that by this fall we may be able to start a mixed worship service offering some limited socially-distanced seating in the sanctuary while continuing our digital worship. Daniel Martin recently submitted a plan to Church Council that would allow us to do just that. He has been working closely with Richard Bighinatti and Bud Higgins to identify and obtain all the equipment we need to have both wonderful in-sanctuary and on-line worship experiences.

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## A Message from the Church Council President

So we ARE making progress, which is wonderful.

However, I'm beginning to feel like the Israelites wandering in the desert for 40 years. Like them, I want to go back to the "flesh pots of Egypt". At least I know what it's like back there. It wasn't comfortable or very safe but I knew what tomorrow would look like. I could go meet friends at a restaurant and complain about the way the world was going. I'm tired of daily doses of manna, God. Give me something of more substance.

Recently I read an article by Dr. Walter Brueggemann entitled "Who will lead us out of this wilderness?" In it he pointed out how the Israelites danced when Moses led them out of bondage in Egypt. But sure enough, they soon began to complain about how hard it was to be wandering around in the lands outside Egypt on their way to the land YHWH had said would be flowing with "milk and honey". When would they get there, they murmured?

Then, finally, when they arrived on the border and sent spies to look things over, they heard that the land was "inhabited by giants". Suddenly, faced with another reality, the majority were really scared and wanted to play it safe. They were unable to trust and unwilling to risk. They felt that they had no future, but only confidence in a past that could no longer function effectively for them. The choice between fear and hope was a choice then, even as it is now.

We can want to go back to the way things were, because they were comfortable and well known, but we all know that there is no going back. Life only moves forward. We must step out with faith to see how God will reshape our day to day reality. An often quoted line from the movie "The Fellowship of the Ring" sums it up for me -- "all who wander are not lost."

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## A Message from the Church Council President

We may be wandering in this new reality, trying to find our path and fight our giants, but we are not lost here at St. John's. A wonderful spirit of renewal and co-operation has emerged in this time of our trial. So many of us have offered our time and talents to step into our new world boldly. God's strong spirit is moving with us as we continue to create neighborliness, generosity, hospitality, forgiveness, and justice, witnessing God's love to the world. St. John's is a living witness of the good news that Jesus brought over 2,000 years ago.

Our faith has brought us this far and our faith will lead us on.

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# August Devotion

1 Corinthians 13:12 “12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.” I have been reading through the Chronicles of Narnia with my kids. If you are not familiar with the series, it is C.S. Lewis’s fantasy novels that feature allegories about the Bible and Christianity. In a way, it is Lewis attempting to deal with his conversion to Christianity by examining fantasy elements. The subjects of doubt and not understanding God comes up a lot in Lewis’s work. Paul also speaks to us of dimly looking through a mirror, trying to catch a glimpse of God, desperately trying to understand even a portion of the depths what God is. I think we have all been through that before, unsure of God’s promise for us, unsure if we are following the right religion, unsure if God is even real, unsure.

And yet, Lewis has an interesting answer to that. It comes from a character named Puddleglum. He’s a sober, cynical character who always looks for the worst that could happen. However, when every other character had given up hope in a dark underground lair, he has something to say:

“Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all of those things-trees and grass and sun and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones... That's why I'm going to stand by the play world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live like a Narnian even if there isn't any Narnia.” --Puddleglum, *The Silver Chair*, C. S. Lewis

Lewis essentially says that maybe sometimes Christianity does look like a fantasy made up world where everyone can live in peace and harmony, a place where peace and justice reign, a place where the heroes triumph. Yes, Christianity can look like a fantasy, and you what? That’s a good thing. Why shouldn’t we strive to make what we see dimly in this looking glass and make it a reality?

Daniel Martin

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# August Mission of the Month: ACTS

ACTS works in cooperation with more than 60 area congregations and other partner organizations throughout Richmond and the surrounding counties that refer families and hard-working individuals who for one reason or another find themselves unable to make ends meet. They are people who need financial and other assistance to get through their financial crisis and in many cases are not eligible for other financial resources. Often, they face the threat of eviction because of the situation they find themselves in.

Trained case managers on the ACTS staff contact each referral and after an initial phone conversation will arrange a meeting with eligible clients during which their needs and solutions are discussed in depth. In 2019, ACTS received more than 1400 referrals and financially assisted 350 households comprising more than 800 people.

Billy Poarch is the Chief Executive Officer for ACTS.



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# Congregational Life & Care

We enter a new month with hope and blessings to everyone that is part of our community of faith and to all of the families and friends who we continue to long to have connection. The threat of the pandemic remains and yet we continue to be with each other in ways that keep us all as safe as possible. We continue to meet with each other in a virtual sense and my hope is that we continue to be bound together in a spiritual sense as we continue to live, act, and be the body of Christ.

As we look to the fall we are still not able to do so with any certainty. Some of our favorite events of the season like the Women's Retreat and the German Dinner are being postponed until we can meet safely. The Congregational Life Committee will be having a meeting on August 16th in order to assess what events we may be able to hold while ensuring that we are acting in a caring and responsible manner. We will be actively planning our 2021 schedule and it looks like we will begin to host weddings next year. We are blessed to have Jeff Jacobs not only as an important member of this committee and in so many other capacities but also in taking the lead in scheduling these joyous events in our space.

Christine and I have made the decision to move to St Paul, MN to be closer to family and for me to continue my pathway to ordination. The committee will need new leadership and we always need help. Please consider joining the committee and if you feel called to take a leadership role that would be wonderful. We have a committed committee and it is vital to the church that we have those that help to make our sense of community strong and we are there for each other in times of joy and in times of sorrow. Please contact me if you would like to join or if you are considering taking a leadership role.

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# Congregational Life & Care

We have been lucky to have the Reverend Beverly Lindsey is available for Pastoral Care. You can reach her by using her home telephone number (804) 275-7165 or email her at [revbevlindsey@gmail.com](mailto:revbevlindsey@gmail.com). Please reach out to her, myself or any member of the committee, or the church office if you are in need of support whether it is spiritual, emotional, or physical.

Blessings, grace, and peace,

Scott Siefert  
Chair of Congregational Life and Care  
[sesiefert@gmail.com](mailto:sesiefert@gmail.com);  
804.350.0826.

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# Wednesday Bible Study

All are invited to attend our Wednesday Night Bible Study sessions from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Zoom. We are exhibiting a powerful spirit and energy as our beloved community is coming together to study the Word. Just like our worship all our invited and affirmed (even if you weren't able to attend previous sessions).

Our focus on the Gospel of Matthew. It is the featured Gospel this year in the Revised Common Lectionary and is considered one of the most important and influential books in the Bible. It tells the story of Jesus' birth, life, and death, and resurrection. It is the "teaching" gospel as it addresses some of the most foundational Christian themes including righteousness, justice, and forgiveness.

If you have any questions please contact Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, or email him at [sesiefert@gmail.com](mailto:sesiefert@gmail.com).

Join Zoom Meeting: UPDATE

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?pwd=L0UxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkL0doU0t5dz09)

[pwd=L0UxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkL0doU0t5dz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84267837476?pwd=L0UxWjN5cHVjandOYXdkL0doU0t5dz09)

Or telephone +1 301 715 8592

Meeting ID: 842 6783 7476

Password: 690409

We welcome anyone dialing in on the phone who wants to be recognized to introduce themselves since we can only see phone numbers on the screen.



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# Voting This November

Tuesday November 3rd is Election Day. In addition to the Presidential race, Virginia is electing a Senator and Congressional representatives from all the Virginia Congressional Districts, so it is a big, important election.

Polling places will be open from 6 am to 7 pm that day. Anyone in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote. Some form of ID is required, though as of this election it does not have to be a photo ID and can be a bank statement or utility bill that shows your name and address.

Because of the Coronavirus, many voters may be concerned about going to the polls on the actual voting day. People who are concerned can vote absentee. In the past you have needed a reason to vote absentee but starting in November Virginia has no excuse absentee voting.

There are two ways to vote absentee.

## **Early Voting in Person:**

You can vote early at your local County registrar's office beginning 45 days before Election Day and ending the Saturday before Election Day. You can find your registrar's location by going to <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/>. This has a link to the Registrar's information. To vote early in-person do the following:

- Starting 45 days before Election Day, visit your local registrar's office or a satellite voting location in your county or city to vote early. The Saturday before Election Day is the last day to vote early.
- You do not have to have a reason or fill out an application to vote early.
- At the registrar's office or satellite voting location, you must provide your name and address and show an acceptable form of ID or sign an ID Confirmation Statement.
- Accessible equipment and/or curbside voting is available upon request.

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# Voting This November

## **Absentee Voting by Mail**

The same link: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/absentee-voting/> has information on requesting an absentee ballot to be mailed in. There is a link on the page to request one. To do this you will need your driver's license number. Once you apply for an absentee ballot, please be aware that what you receive back in the mail from the Registrar's Office IS YOUR BALLOT. That means, you cannot lose it and get another one. If you do not mail your ballot in and decide to vote in person on Election Day, you must bring your absentee ballot together with the absentee envelope with you. **One way or another, the ballot and accompanying envelope you get in the mail must be accounted for.** In addition, once you vote absentee, you cannot ask to change your vote.

If anyone reading this is unable to access the website to request an absentee ballot, please contact Kathy Freise at 804-512-8559. She can get you an application to request one.

The deadline to request an absentee ballot for the November election is October 23rd, but it is good to request it as early as possible. The ballots must be postmarked by November 3rd to count, but again it is safest to return them as early as possible.

## **Voter Registration**

The last day to register to vote in the November election is Tuesday October 13th. If you have not voted in a recent election you should check your registration to make sure that you have not been purged from the voter rolls. You can register, or check your registration status at <https://www.vote.virginia.gov>.

There will be a Voter Registration drive at the church on Sunday afternoon September 20th, as part of the UCC Faith and Democracy Sunday observance. Social distancing will be observed, and masks will be required.

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# August Announcements

## **Installation and Affirmation of Lay Leaders**

During the July 12th worship service, Erin Burnette led an installation of those members of Church Council, Endowment Board, Trustees and other positions who had been elected at the Annual Congregational Meeting on May 31st. The litany also included an affirmation of the many volunteers who support the operation and ministries of St. John's through their participation in various church committees, Altar Guild, Sunday School, Choir, Welcome Teams, Tellers, and Sound Board operators, among others. Our church couldn't operate or help those in need in our community without the support of these dedicated volunteers, whom we thank and appreciate. A listing of those installed and recognized follows:

<http://www.stjohnsrichmond.org/Our-Lay-Leaders>

## **Finance Update**

With our fiscal year at its mid-point, donation statements have been mailed to all those for whom we have records. If you did not receive a statement, or if there are any discrepancies between the statement you received and your records, please contact the church office at [office@stjohnsrichmond.org](mailto:office@stjohnsrichmond.org) or (804) 358-9291. Thank you to all who have continued to donate for the works and ministries of St. John's while we have been worshipping online and by telephone. Remember that checks can be sent to the church at 503 Stuart Circle, Richmond, VA 23220, and donations can be made online at <https://bit.ly/stjohnsdonations> for church operations and missions. The August Mission of the Month is Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS), a local organization headed by St. John's former Council President Billy Poarch, that assists those in need with short-term help for rent, mortgage and utility payments to keep families intact and stably housed, a need that has increased dramatically during the current pandemic. If you have any questions about church finances or online donations, please feel free to contact Stewardship Chair Jeff Jacobs at [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com) or (202) 361-9887.

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# August Announcements

## **New Zoom Password**

As many of you know, one of our recent worship services was "Zoom-bombed" by someone who posted racist and hateful messages on the Zoom chat link. Fortunately our Zoom platform manager, Daniel Martin, was able to quickly shut down those messages, but they were extremely hurtful and disturbing to those who saw them. In order to improve security and help guard against similar incidents, it will be necessary to enter a password to participate in the Sunday Zoom service instead of simply clicking on the link. Those on the telephone will also need to enter a password in addition to the meeting ID. The password will be sent out with the weekly eBlast. If you need further information, please contact Daniel Martin at [info@stjohnsrichmond.org](mailto:info@stjohnsrichmond.org).

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# Virtual CROP Walk

**Save the Date: Sunday, November 8, 2020 - Virtual CROP Walk**  
**The Walk is virtual, but the need could not be more real!**

CROP Hunger Walks are happening in a new way!

To keep everyone safe and healthy, this fall's RVA CROP Walk for Hunger will be a virtual event – with walkers either walking alone, with immediate family or in small groups staying a safe distance apart. It will be a “CROP Walk Week” that begins on Sunday November 8th, 2020 with an online kickoff event, and runs through Sunday, November 15th.

During that week, walkers can participate as individuals or do “micro walks” in teams of 4-5 people, masked and socially distanced. Individual teams can decide how they want to handle this. Walkers will be encouraged to share their walks via social media platforms.

As part of our 50th Anniversary observation, every walker will be encouraged to raise at least \$50. As in prior years, donations to support walkers may be made online directly to CWS for the RVA CROP walk.

The work of Church World Service and our local hunger agencies continues – and with the possibility of a global famine on the horizon, raising money for vulnerable people is more needed than ever.

We hope that you will join and/or support the St. John's UCC team of walkers – virtually - as we continue our shared commitment to stand up for the poor, the forgotten, and those left behind. The CWS Spring CROP Hunger Walks were down nearly \$1 million this year. It is urgent that this fall we continue to raise funds to provide permanent solutions to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

More information will follow in subsequent newsletters. If you have questions or want to help with this year's “walk,” please contact Beverly Lindsey at [revbevlinsey@gmail.com](mailto:revbevlinsey@gmail.com) or 804-275-7165.

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# August 2020 Calendar

**Sunday, August 2nd, 10:00 a.m. - Worship**

Wednesday, August 5th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, August 5th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, August 6th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

**Sunday, August 9th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship**

Monday, August 10th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council Meeting

Wednesday, August 12th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, August 12th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, August 13th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

**Sunday, August 16th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship**

Wednesday, August 19th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, August 19th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, August 20th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

**Sunday, August 23rd, 10:00 a.m. - Worship**

Wednesday, August 26th, 2:00 p.m. - Music & Worship Meeting

Wednesday, August 26th, 7:00 p.m. - Bible Study

Thursday, August 27th, 12:30 p.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting

**Sunday, August 30th, 10:00 a.m. - Worship**

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# August Birthdays

August 6th - Ella L. Roberson

August 9th - Deniz Michel

August 16th - Dreama Terrill

August 20th - Ray Pollard

August 20th - Lindsey Franklin

August 22nd - James Cook

August 22nd - Don Warren

August 23rd - Josh Lyle

August 23rd - Jennifer Martin

August 26th - Jeff Michel

**August birthdays will be celebrated on Sunday, August 9th.**



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## **St. John's United Church of Christ**

St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!

### **An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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