



Dear Third Family,

I'll never forget a conversation I had with a teenager years ago. He lived next door to Sarah and me with his mom and sister, and he and his family were church attenders. But he bore all the marks of a depressed, angry teenager. As someone who was once a depressed angry teenager myself, I would often try to counsel him. On one occasion, as I tried to explain to him the hope of the gospel, he responded dismissively, "Yeah, yeah, Jesus died for me so I can go to heaven when I die. Big deal!"

As I reflected on that conversation, it occurred to me that along the way this young man had picked up a very reduced and incomplete version of the Christian gospel. His version of the gospel was basically about Life After Death. While this is true, it was obvious that Jesus had no relevance to his Life Before Death. He had never experienced the good news that Jesus Christ died and rose not just to give him a ticket to heaven when he died, but to usher him into a new life of hope and meaning in the here and now.

When you are reading this we are likely just celebrating Easter. Easter is the amazing good news that something has happened in the course of human history that has forever altered life for the here and now and forever. It is the good news that Jesus Christ literally rose from the dead, defeating death and now has begun his work of restoring all of creation. For those who trust in Jesus, we don't just get a ticket to heaven when we die; we begin to experience the reality of heaven and Jesus' Kingdom in the here and now. We become those who are living a life of hope and abundance Before Death, and are called to point others to the hope that is available to them now through Jesus. The Apostle Peter says it like this: "According to his great mercy, God has caused us to be born again into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead!" (1 Peter 1:3). That is a promise for the present.

After Easter we are beginning a new sermon series on 1 Peter called "Living in Hope." We'll be exploring how the resurrection of Jesus ushers us into a life of hope for the here and now, and how Jesus calls us to be a community of hope for the world. Rabbi Hugo Green recounts in his autobiography that his father encouraged him in a concentration camp with these words: "You and I have had to go once a whole week without food, but you cannot live three minutes without hope." Will you pray that we will experience more and more of the hope of Jesus' resurrection, and that God would use us to make known this hope to others?

Much love and hope in the resurrection of Jesus,

Corey

*Third —
training disciples to
love and transform
the world through
Jesus Christ.*

Rev. Corey Widmer
Lead Pastor

Rev. Ed Satterfield
Associate Pastor for
Congregational Care &
Administration

Rev. Rick Hutton
Associate Pastor for Students
(grades 6 - 12)

Tom Barila
Director of Christian Education

Lynn Hardwicke
Associate Dir. of Family Ministry

Tracie Meadows
Associate Dir. of Family Ministry

Kathy White
Associate Dir. of Family Ministry

Dr. John White
Director of Music

Kim Taulbee
Associate Music Director

Beth Nichols
Director of Lay Ministries

Arielle Swarr
Director of Communications

Tim Latham
Director of Young Adult Ministries

Rev. Richard Haney
Parish Associate

Rev. Nan Clarke
Parish Associate for
Care Ministries

Rev. Jack Schilthuis
Parish Associate & Counselor

Editor's Note
Email submissions
(<300 words/half a page)
with suggested photos
for the May newsletter to
Vickie O'Dell
(vodell@comcast.net)
before the 2nd Friday
of the month, April 10.

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

March 28

Easter Egg Hunt

Easter Egg Hunt for families of kindergartners and younger. Saturday, March 28 at 10:00am at the farm of Christina and James Olmsted, 1633 Devon Way, Manakin-Sabot, VA 23103.

Included, in the activities will be stations you can visit with your child to share the events leading up to the Resurrection. Invite a friend or neighbor. Bring a picnic lunch and Easter basket. Drinks and dessert will be provided. This is a free event, but registration is required so we can plan accordingly. You can register at any time through our website at www.thirdrva.org.

March 29

Palm Sunday Services

Pastor Corey will preach on "Seven: From Wrath to Peace."

Special Sunday School Service for Kids

Children ages 4 through fourth grade will participate in a special Palm Sunday School worship service from 10:15am-11:05am. Third member, Lori Welander, will share the message of Jesus' death and resurrection and children will be led in worship by Jimey Ames! We invite parents to attend this Sunday School service with their children.



April 1

Lenten Prayer

Come to the final Lenten prayer time in Third's Sanctuary on Wednesday from 11:15am-12:45pm. Journal, reflect, and listen. A short prayer liturgy will take place at noon.

April 2

Maundy Thursday Worship Service

Pastor Corey will preach on "Seven: From Lust to Love" at 7:00pm in the Sanctuary. This message will not be appropriate for children, but we will have nursery and childcare available for all ages.

April 3

Good Friday Worship

A short worship service with a message by Nan Clarke will be held at noon in the Sanctuary. A Lenten luncheon (\$5) will follow in the Fellowship Hall at 12:30.

Journey to the Cross

A personal experience of Jesus' final hours, from betrayal to burial. Come any time from 1:00-8:00pm starting in the steeple corridor. Indoor and outdoor artistic presentations will provide multi-sensory experiences and guide your reflections. Suitable for children and adults.

April 5

Sunrise Service

A special service with East End Fellowship and other East End Churches. 7:00am, Chimborazo Park Gazebo.

Resurrection Sunday Services

Celebrate the risen Lord with two concurrent worship services at 9:00am and two at 11:15am in the Sanctuary and Fellowship Hall. Pastor Corey will preach on "From Death to Life." Easter music will be provided by the Sanctuary Choir and Alleluia during both Sanctuary services. We will have nursery and classes for children from birth to Grade 6. Refreshments will be available in the courtyard in between the services from 10:15-11:00am. No adult classes this day.

Bring bells or bell-like instruments to Sunday worship to celebrate the resurrection with jubilation!



GROUPS & CLASSES

Life Changing Small Groups

"Randall and I came to Third in 1991, and one of the first decisions we made was to become part of a couples' small group. In the past 24 years we have been in two such groups...both of which have made such a difference in our walks with the Lord, our understanding of community and love for Third!

It has been life-changing for us is to be surrounded with these friends who are committed to God and to one another. Both groups have given us a place where we can be honest and vulnerable. The precious couples in these groups are the couples we feel closest to at Third. We have celebrated life events and also prayed through the many challenges of seeing our children become teens, young adults, leave home, get married and begin having children. I have been most surprised at the effect these Christ-minded adults have had in my children's lives. They truly care about, reach out to and love our children as family. We are continuing to "do life" together, and our experience at Third has been made all the richer by these priceless relationships." – Kathy White, Couples Small Group



Each Sunday afternoon we are posting questions on Third's website based on that Sunday morning's sermon. Use this opportunity to go deeper in applying scripture to your lives as you discuss the key points from the sermon in your small group. You will find these at www.thirdrva.org under Worship/Sermons.

If you are interested in starting or joining a small group, contact Beth Nichols at bethn@thirdrva.org or 282-4645 Ext. 124.

Sunday Fellowship Groups – 10:15-11:05 AM

Fusion

How do we fuse our faith with our actions?
Teacher: Luke Swygard; Room 217.

Good News

A study of Deuteronomy.
Teachers: Dr. Charles Welander and Dave Carroll;
Room 101.

Marriage Fellowship

Exploring unrealistic expectations and learning how to live in the day-to-day realities of married life.
Teachers: Keith and Connie Byers; Room 209.

Metamorphosis

"Divine Therapy and Addiction" –
If you've ever wondered about Jesus being left (or locked) out of 12-step recovery programs like Alcoholics Anonymous, this study is a must.
Teacher: Mary Damon; 500 Forest Conference Room.

Praxis

"Encounters With Jesus." Examining the encounters different people and groups had with Jesus and their implications for today's disciples.
Teacher: Kenney Grigg; Room 215.

Reveal

"Did Not Our Hearts Burn Within Us?"
A study of the gospel of Luke.
Teachers: Andrew Fuller, Jennifer Parham,
and Grant Holbrook; Room 213.

Young Adults

We will attend the 9:00am service in the Sanctuary and have brunch together after to reflect over the sermon, share stresses and celebrations.
Call (434-426-7713) or e-mail TimL@thirdrva.org for details.

FAMILIES

Congrats to Lauren!

She completed 10 stamps in her Passport for Kids' Jam. 1st-4th graders who are attending KIDS' JAM on Wednesday nights during Connect3 are learning about missionaries, along with the books of the Bible and the 10 commandments. As a project, they are encouraged to reach out to others in the church, local community and the world. Each child receives a sticker on their Passport when they do so, and as a result are learning to be missionaries right where they live! We are proud of you, LAUREN...continue to look for ways to serve others!



Sports Skills Camp

On July 13-17 at the Community West Church land on Pump Road we are co-hosting a basketball and soccer skills camp (plus an epic kickball tournament) with help from our mission partner Sports Outreach Institute. This camp offers a time for your children to build sports skills and learn about Christian character building from skilled college athletes. Like VBS, the Sports Skills Camp is a great opportunity to invite friends and neighbors into community. For details and registration, go to www.thirdrva.org/sports-skills-camp/

Final Parent's Gathering

You are invited to a social to get to know other parents in your same stage of life, parents of kids ages 2-4. Check out the dates and places below. Just bring something sweet or savory to share and enjoy a night out! Friday, April 17th, 7:00pm at Caroline & Rick Hutton's: 1004 Normandy Drive*Richmond, VA 23229– just 5-10 minutes away from Third. Babysitting will be available in our nurseries for those who request it ahead of time. To make a reservation and to request babysitting, contact Kathy White kathyw@thirdrva.org by April 14th.

Vacation Bible School, June 22-26

Come learn more about Jesus and His miracles at Vacation Bible School. This one week adventure is full of amazing Bible lessons, music, crafts, fun recreation activities, and more! Children will learn about Jesus and grow in their faith in a fun and creative environment. Registration is required and open in April.



STOPPING HUNGER NOW IN HAITI

On March 2, I and a team returned from a 4 day vision trip to Haiti put together by The Outreach Foundation. We spent time with Pastor Leon Deorleans and his wife Jacky, and explored all that God is mightily doing through them and Haiti Outreach Ministries over the past 25 years. We visited their 4 compounds, consisting of 3 churches (4000 total attendees every Sunday), 3 Christian elementary schools (over 1000 total students), 2 vocational/job training facilities, 2 medical/dental clinics, and a soon to be new high school. We also attended a micro loan meeting, and 2 new home dedications.

Despite the poverty in Haiti, the people showed joy and happiness. Children in the poor neighborhood we walked through, our instant new family in the churches, and everyone in the elementary school all gave us nothing but smiles, greetings, and friendliness at every turn. Pastor Leon and Jacky are doing so much for God's Kingdom, and they send to all of us at Third their love and thanks for our support over the years, and for the Stop Hunger Now meals that we've packed and sent down.

Perhaps the saddest thing we saw during the trip were mud cookies baking in the sun. As you may have heard, the poorest Haitian families make these things called mud cookies. They gather dirt, mix it with water, filter it several times through a cloth, add a little butter and salt, form the mixture into cookies, and set them out in the sun to dry. The nutritional value is absolutely zero, but eating these "cookies" helps relieve their hunger pains.

The good news is that Stop Hunger Now (SHN) is working to solve this very problem. Through your donations of time and money, Third and other organizations are able to partner with SHN and pack and send 100,000 meals down to Haiti, and all across the globe, as Third has done the past 4 Januarys. As we toured the elementary school, we walked through the lunch room and saw the children eating the very meals that Stop Hunger Now had provided. What an amazing blessing to witness! The meal consisted of a plate of a rice mixture and beans, and for some students it would be the only hot and nutritious meal they would have that day.

Thank you Third Church for your love and support for the poor and unchurched of Haiti. Let's see if we can do even more for Pastor Leon and Jacky in the years ahead, to spread far and wide the message of Jesus' love and salvation!! And please visit their website for lots more photos and information:

<http://www.haitioutreachministries.org/>

– Robin Ore



GET READY TO SAVE MORE LIVES



Beth Sprinkle at last year's Blood Drive

Thank you to the amazing blood donors at Third Church!

Your support and excitement to give back to the community has been noticed! The blood drive on January 24th resulted in 55 blood donations, results that can save 165 lives! Also exciting is the 44 new blood donors! We will be partnering with the American Red Cross again this year to help sustain a safe and reliable blood supply.

**The next blood drive is scheduled for Saturday May 2nd, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM.
Are you willing and able to donate again or for the first time?**

"When I was a student at James Madison University, the American Red Cross would visit campus regularly, which made it very easy to donate blood. After many years of not donating, because of raising small children, not having a convenient place to donate, I was able to give blood in January when the Red Cross set up a blood drive at Third. Giving blood is an easy way to help another person. In fact, a friend of mine received several units of blood while in the hospital last fall. Knowing that my simple donation could potentially save a life just makes it even sweeter to give. I encourage you to donate. It usually takes less than an hour of your time and you could make a big difference in the life of another person." – Tracie Meadows

Thank you again and again for your commitment to the community and attitude of service.

Come and give to help save lives together.

Third Church
500 Forest Avenue
Richmond, Virginia 23229
804.282.4645

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Richmond, VA
Permit No. 49

EXPLORATION IN MISSIONS



Dear Friends at Third,

This winter I've been traveling with Richard and Pam Haney to explore and deepen our mission relationships with believers from Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and the Caucasus region of the Russian Federation. It has been a great privilege to meet many wonderful brothers and sisters in Christ and to hear their stories of faith and witness to Jesus in places where freedom to preach the gospel is severely restricted.

Returning home, we have opportunity to bring first-hand reports from the field and become advocates for the important work. Perhaps most critically, we learn to pray for them with greater clarity and focus. Sometimes such trips become the catalyst for deeper involvement in the work of God's mission. For example, Richard Haney began leading groups from Third on mission trips to Belize, Brazil and Croatia in the early 1980s and continued to help congregations engage seriously and wisely in mission through more than 35 years in seven pastorates. Third sent me on a three-week exploratory trip to Russia in 1993, and as a result, four groups travelled with me to conduct Vacation Bible Schools in Russia from 1994-1997. Our family was then called to live and serve in Russia for eleven years from 1997-2008. You never know how God is going to use you when you get involved!

You may not realize, but many local and international missionaries surround you each Sunday as you join in worship. Invite one of them to lunch and hear about it. Third also organizes a number of trips each year to allow participants to serve and use special skills in medicine, education, the arts and sports and to catch the vision of what God is doing to make the gospel known among all the nations of the world. If you have not become a part of one of these teams, please join. You will be amazed at what God is doing in the world, and your life will be changed by what you see and hear.

Donald Marsden
Associate Director, Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship and Former Associate Pastor at Third Church