

HOPE FOR EXILES



Dear Third Family,

Nearly every day I pass by the original Third Presbyterian Church building on E. Broad Street in Church Hill. A lovely red brick structure, it speaks of a different time and context. Built in the late 19th Century, for many decades it stood at the heart of neighborhood life. On Sunday mornings, the doors of the sanctuary would open and people would flood in. Church programs, church picnics, church outings—these activities were at the center of life for many in the East End.

Things could not be more different now. Sunday mornings are the time for people to sleep in and make their way to one of the neighborhood bakeries for a late morning coffee and croissant. The name of Christ is more often heard as a curse word than as a declaration of spiritual allegiance. The church building was sold to developers years ago and chopped up into condominiums. It is a part of the neighborhood's past but not its present.

As I pass the old Third building now, I often contemplate this history as a parable for our place as Christians in the broader society. Christians today increasingly find themselves on the margins of culture in a post-Christian society. The church is no longer at the center of things as it once was. The values and concerns of the culture around us increasingly make us feel alienated and out of place. How should we respond to this increasing reality of marginalization? Some folks respond with fear and want to withdraw from the culture into isolated enclaves. Other folks respond with anger and rally to "take back" the culture and somehow make it Christian again. Other folks respond by adapting to the culture and modifying the Christian faith to make it more acceptable to current cultural norms. How we should respond? Should we withdraw, or attack, or compromise?

I believe the much wiser and faithful approach is to follow the lead of the apostle Peter, who clarifies our identity at the start of his letter, "To those who are elect exiles" (1 Peter 1:1). This wonderful letter was written to Christians who were living on the margins of their culture. They faced slander and abuse, marginalization and misunderstanding. Yet they did not withdraw, they did not attack, they did not compromise. Instead, "as strangers and aliens," they sought to "live such good lives among the pagans that though they speak against you, they may see your works of love and glorify God" (1 Peter 2:11-12). In other words, they embraced their identity as "strangers and aliens" in the world, and also sought to embody the hope of the gospel in the way they lived as they loved their neighbors and shared the hope of Christ.

As we move into a new future of our church community, we face a very different context than our forebears. But what an amazing missionary opportunity lies before us! It will no longer work to just have good services on Sunday and hope that people will show up to our attractive programs. Instead, may God help us to become an *attractive community*, as we seek to live out the hope of the gospel in our neighborhoods, workplaces, and all around our metro region. May God give us grace to live as faithful exiles!

With love in Christ,

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.

NEW MEMBERS— *Joined March 29, 2015*

Join us in praying for these New Members as part of our covenant family. Take time to meet them, welcome them into your homes, invite them into your small groups, serving teams and classes.



Rick & Anna
DeJarnette



George P. Amemo



Diane & Frank
Atkinson



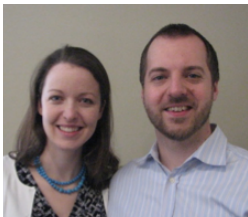
Juliana Comer



Natalie & Mark
Roush



Craig & Beverly
Schuping



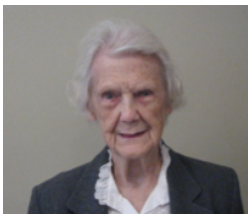
Katie & Roman Dusil



Merle James



Beth & Harman
Saunders



Ann Bryant



Wendy & Chuck
Rogers



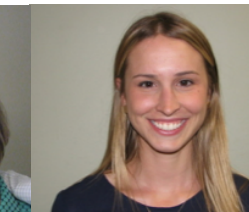
Peyton Cox



John & Lou Hanscom



Dennis & Pam
McWaters



Alicia McCarty



Alan Petersen



Scott Copeland



John & Jill Ireland

FAMILY MATTERS

Book Group

The Christian Book Group will meet on May 26 at noon in the Bonhoeffer Room at 500 Forest Avenue. We will be discussing *Start Here: Beginning a Relationship with Jesus* by David P. Dwight and Nicole Unice. Dr. Dwight is a founding pastor of Hope Church and Nicole Unice is a ministry director there. Bring your lunch and join in the discussion.

Congratulations Camille, Lydia and Emily!

Our final three Passport completers for Kids' Jam: Camille, Lydia and Emily! They served others in our community and the world through earning Passport stickers for each outreach effort. Congratulations, girls! Ten stickers in 20 weeks is an accomplishment. Continue to reach out to others, girls... and remember what Paul told the Colossians: "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ." Colossians 3:23-24



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

3rd Annual Father and Daughter Dance,

Saturday, May 16 from 4:30-6pm in the Fellowship Hall at Third. Spend some quality time with your daughter and make precious memories together. Barefoot Living Ministries will provide dance instruction and mentoring during the evening. This event is for 1st grade girls and older. Please bring a sweet or salty snack to share and make plans to take your daughter to dinner after the dance. The cost is \$20/family and proceeds raised will benefit Gertrude's Orphanage, a special needs orphanage in Haiti. Please register at www.thirdrva.org and contact Tracie Meadows at TracieM@ThirdRVA.org with any questions.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL– MISSION POSSIBLE



The past 3 summers, our Vacation Bible School participants have journeyed into Scripture to meet and learn more about Daniel, Moses, and Paul. A team of former VBS directors and volunteers met in January to pray about the summer and brainstorm about ways to make VBS even better. We asked the Holy Spirit to guide us and to make this year's VBS a week that would give Him glory and honor. We felt a deep desire to introduce our children to Jesus, and to place the focus on His miracles. We felt the Spirit moving as we narrowed our focus and began to write our own curriculum. Out of complete trust in Jesus and a desire to honor Him, we crafted *Mission Possible: Nothing is Impossible with God*.

June 22-26, our "special agents" will dive into Scripture, exploring Jesus and 5 of His miracles, including His miraculous birth, the healing of the paralytic man, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the beginning of the church. We are so excited to see this curriculum birthed out of a desire to share the Good News of Jesus with children this summer and can't wait to see how God uses this week to grow His kingdom.

Registration is now open for volunteers and participants at www.thirdrva.org/vbs



During VBS we select a mission project and the children bring money in each day, trying to see which grade level will “win” with the most money, but also as a way to learn about missions. This year we will support Aleppo Presbyterian Church, a church in Syria that was bombed. This is a highly dangerous area, but these Christians have decided to stay and rebuild their church, choosing to love their neighbors and be a witness, instead of fleeing. We hope to raise \$5000-\$7000 to support their rebuilding efforts. We will also teach our children about the persecuted church and help them discover ways they can pray for and support men, women, and children who are struggling because of their faith.

All monies raised will be distributed by The Outreach Foundation. You can support this mission project by sending in a check (mark VBS Mission) in the memo, purchasing a Mission Possible t-shirt to wear during VBS week (www.booster.com/vbsmission2015), or by encouraging your children to start saving their money and bring it during the week of June 22-26.

Below are two photos, one before the bombing and other after, of the Presbyterian Church in Aleppo, Syria. Aleppo is the Syrian town up near the Turkey border that has had more fighting than any other town in Syria. Things are beginning to settle down, but it's still quite dangerous.



How Do You Create Community?

Parents dropping off their children at church and enjoying time together with other parents on a Saturday night, moms gathering on a Friday morning while their children play, 30+ families gathering at a farm in Goochland for an Easter Egg Hunt, dads organizing a Saturday play group...what do all of these have in common? They are ways our parents of young children are developing community. Showing up on Sunday morning will enrich your worship life but doesn't allow the time necessary to build relationships. Developing community requires intentional action. Next time you see an opportunity to get to know others who are traveling with you on this faith journey through life, take advantage. Turn Third Church into your Third Family...that's what church is supposed to be!

