



Working together until Metro Richmond is...

TRANSFORMED

Moving with God

Years ago I heard an excellent sermon on the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting that moved with God's people as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The preacher asked, "Why does God live in a tent?" Then preacher answered, "God lives in a tent because God is on the move!"

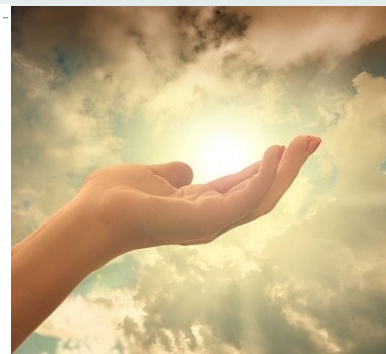
How many ways have you seen God on the move? I have seen God move people to different places and different callings. I have seen churches born, relocate, build, and close their doors. Today I have the privilege and the challenge of serving with you as God moves in River City Faith Network.

Before I arrived as Interim Executive Director, a developer had approached RCFN about the property on Moss Side Avenue. An ad hoc team helped our Board respond to this inquiry about selling the property. This resulted in a contract to sell enough land for three building lots on Montrose Avenue.



When the developer discovered that a special use permit applies to the land, the developer asked RCFN to share the cost of possibly removing the special use permit. The developer also made a new offer to buy the Richmond Baptist Building and the land, the equivalent of six house building lots.

The RCFN Board asked the former ad hoc team to reconvene and help the Board respond to the request and the new offer. The team did its homework. They discovered another developer bought the former Northminster Baptist Church building. That includes the parking lot RCFN has used since Richmond Baptists built the current ministry center in the early 1970s. If RCFN kept our current facility, we would have a building approaching 50 years old. We could anticipate some significant maintenance costs. Perhaps more costly, unless we used on-street parking, we would have to create a parking lot on our property.



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PLEASE TAKE NOTE

RCFN Board Meeting
 May 25, 3:30 p.m.
 Place TBA

MINISTRY OF THE WEEK April 2021

- 4/4 Carlisle Avenue Baptist
- 4/11 Chamberlayne Baptist
- 4/18 Community Mission
- 4/25 FBC– Deaf Mission

*Grant, O Lord, that
 your Kingdom may come
 in Metropolitan Richmond
 as it is in heaven. Help us
 to be a part of it's coming;
 help us to minister to others
 in the Spirit, and to accept
 your ministry for ourselves.
 We pray in Jesus' name.*

—from Richmond Hill

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Carrying Your Cross

by Rev. Wesley Garrett

I serve River City Faith Network as one of three community missionaries. God's call and your gifts and your prayers make it possible for me to serve as the Director of the South Richmond Baptist Center. I also serve as the bi-vocational pastor of Friendship Memorial Baptist Church in RCFN.

During the celebration of Black History Month at our church, I felt challenged to find the African presence in the Scriptures. Each Sunday in February I centered my message with that thought in mind.

One African presence many of us may have taken for granted comes from Luke's Gospel. Luke 23:26 (KJV) says, "And as they led [Jesus] away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus." The Scripture points out his African roots. Cyrene is in North Africa, some distance west of Egypt. Today we refer to that part of Africa as the country of Libya. Simon's name indicates the influences of Jewish culture. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* notes that many Jews lived in Cyrene. That fact helps explain Simon's presence in Jerusalem during the Passover.

Jews came from many different places to celebrate Passover in Jerusalem. Remember how hotels in our area would fill up for big events before COVID-19? Like Bethlehem when Jesus was born, people coming to Jerusalem for Passover had to find area lodging wherever they could. I imagine Simon found somewhere to stay outside the city and was coming into the city. He was likely on his way to the Temple.

Here walked Simon, a passerby among the throng of people in the narrow streets of this ancient city. The soldiers cleared the way as they led Jesus toward Calvary. A stranger in town, Simon may not have recognized that he should get up against the walls as this procession drew near. The Bible says the Romans crucified three that day, Jesus and two thieves. Maybe Jesus was the first in line. Suddenly, as the crowd parted for the procession Simon had to get out of the way. Without sleep, beaten and scourged, physically and spiritually weary, Jesus probably stumbled and fell under the heavy weight of the cross right in front of Simon. Was there something in Simon's appearance that attracted the soldier's attention or was Simon just the first man the soldier could grab? According to Roman law, a soldier could seize anyone to carry the prisoner's cross.

I wonder if a soldier grabbed Simon or just ordered him to pick up the cross Jesus could no longer carry. It was heavy enough that the soldiers probably helped lift it onto Simon.

Was Simon alone or traveling with companions, maybe his sons? What went through Simon's head when the soldier ordered him to carry the cross? It happened without warning. He was shocked to be picked out of the crowd. Did he even have time to think "Why me?" or "How did I get into this mess?" Was he thinking "If I had come at a different time this would not have happened" as he labored under the weight of the cross?



We do not know Simon's age, but Mark 15:21 says Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus (cp. Romans 16:13). He was old enough to be a father and young enough to carry a cross. I think of him as middle age, maybe just a little older than Jesus. His heart pounding, Simon picked up the cross. He may have looked into the face of Jesus when he lifted it. Imagine looking at the blood-streaked face of our Savior on the way to the place where the soldiers would execute Him on that very cross. Jesus probably said nothing. Did Simon see gratitude, compassion, or something else in His eyes?

Now Simon had a place in the procession. He saw the crowds peel back as they continued to the place Jesus and the thieves would die. They passed out of the gateway and reached the Place of the Skull.

I think Simon lowered his burden and stayed close by, observing everything. Did he watch as the soldiers nailed Jesus to the cross, or did Simon just hear the hammering and pain-filled cries? He looked at the crowd gathered round, and he looked up at the terrible sight. Simon heard the crowd mocking Jesus. He heard Jesus speak from the cross.

I think Simon was transfixed and transformed that day. Was the one on the cross between two thieves a man worthy of death or the Son of God? I think Simon stayed in the area long enough to hear the stories about Jesus and about the empty tomb. That day or soon after, Simon decided he would follow the One whose cross Simon had carried. Simon said, "I have decided to follow Jesus."

Simon's sons Alexander and Rufus may have learned about Jesus from Simon or with Simon. We do not know if they accompanied Simon that day, but we know they followed Jesus and became part of the Body of Christ. Like many others in the Bible, we do not know much more about Simon, but this African from Cyrene will forever be recorded as the cross-bearer of the Savior.

What shall we do when seized by something unexpected or find ourselves in a messy situation? Remember the example of this African named Simon. Jesus said, "Whosoever that will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34). Every follower of Jesus has a cross to carry. Stay close to the Savior and follow his footsteps.

- wg

Moving with God (cont.) by Steve Allsbrook

At the ad hoc team's recommendation, the Board made an offer to sell the RCFN property at 3111 Moss Side Avenue. The developer responded with an offer to buy the building and land for a price the Board considered adequate. We now have a contract to sell the Richmond Baptist Building.

Pastor Louis Jones serves on the RCFN Board. Louis said, "When people pray, God works!"

God is moving, and so is the RCFN ministry center. I invite you to help. I have limited knowledge about the history we want to preserve. Fred Anderson, who has served Virginia Baptists and us, has agreed to help us identify some treasured to take with us.

You may have knowledge about some things of historic significance to River City Faith Network. Of course, we will take the historic ministry mural with us, but we have more things than we will move. The tent of meeting had some furnishings, yet it moved with the people. Wherever God provides our next ministry center, we have more furniture than we will need there. We will replace a few old things and upgrade some equipment. We will keep the files we need to keep and shred the rest. Perhaps we could sell some things we will not take with us. Other things might be donated to another ministry. Anything else would likely be thrown away. Feel free to make suggestions and inquiries.

I remember how my adult children expressed their disappointment when my wife and I moved out of the house where they had grown up. They have come to appreciate the house we moved into. I have already heard some sadness from people who have thought of the Richmond Baptist Building like their home for ministry. I pray God will lead us to a new place that we can appreciate in years to come.

The building at 3111 Moss Side Avenue has certainly been a home for ministries. At one time it housed the offices of Richmond, Dover, and Middle District Baptist Associations. In days past Richmond Baptists had a much larger staff. They needed more office and meeting space than we use now.

God is moving, and RCFN is moving too. The RCFN Board has initiated an effort to discern how God will work in River City Faith Network in coming years. The Board will ask for help with that effort as that effort takes shape.

What Board members learn will inform the search for the next leader(s) of RCFN. When Mike Robinson retired he was not the first executive director to leave. As before, God has already started preparing your next leader(s). In God's time, God will reveal the person(s) God will send RCFN next.

God is moving, and God is moving RCFN to find new leadership and a new home for ministry. All the while, we will keep on serving Christ through our ministry centers and our camp. We will keep on responding to requests for help from our churches, and that will expand as we move beyond the distance associated with COVID-19. I ask you to keep on praying, giving, and volunteering to help RCFN do what God calls us to do.



God stays on the move. He moved among the Baptists in and around Richmond who have served God faithfully since the city on the James got its English name. The Bible says God honors faithful stewards with greater responsibilities in God's Kingdom.

Remember what Pastor Louis Jones said, "When people pray, God works!" Pray while we pack! God is at work, and we will have more to do.

—sa



Return to Worship

We are happy to report that some of the churches in the network have started or are planning to resume in-person services. We will try to keep this information updated as it becomes available for the community at large.

Churches Currently Offering In-person Worship

Stockton Memorial Baptist
First Baptist Church
Hatcher Memorial Baptist
Second Baptist
Westover Baptist

Churches Planning Return on March 14, 2021

Carlisle Avenue Baptist
Pine Street Baptist
River Road Church

Churches Planning Return On April 5, 2021

Woodland Heights Baptist

Please be sure to check the church websites for specific information about attending



COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION!

The VDH has now posted a new link to pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Please see their site for more information.

<https://vaccinate.virginia.gov>

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Electronic Service Requested

*Working together until
Metro Richmond is...*

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NETWORK
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CHURCH HILL WELLNESS CENTER

Our Clothes Closet will
return on March 15!

We are in great need of men's clothes.

- * Men's pants, sizes 36 to 40 (especially jeans and khakis)
- * Men's long-sleeved shirts (not dress shirts or tees at this time)
- * Men's shoes sizes 9 to 11
- * Work boots

Call Glinda Ford at
804-780-0053
with questions.

OREGON HILL BAPTIST CENTER

"Thank you!" to all who have contributed winter items for the people served by the Oregon Hill Baptist Center! The coats, gloves, hats, hand warmers, and other items have blessed many! Our needs change with the changing seasons. The list below has items we need for spring. If you help provide these items or assist our ministry in any way, please contact Jennifer Turner at 804-648-1353.

- Rain ponchos
- Men's athletic shoes (especially size 10-10 ½)
- Pocket-sized bottles of hand sanitizer
- Quarters to go towards our Laundry Ministry (\$3.75 washes and dries 1 load)
- Ink for the office printer (contact Jennifer for details)
- Packed snack bags for the homeless (contact Jennifer for items to include)



THANK YOU WMU Groups!

We are grateful for your renewed assistance for our centers and communities supported by them!

