

Working together until Metro Richmond is...

TRANSFORMED



CAMP ALKULANA



Camp Alkulana is rolling out plans to operate safely this summer! While we are proud of the innovative programs we ran last summer in Richmond, we all hunger to return to our campgrounds in Bath County and our typical overnight summer camp program. A team of dedicated summer camp staff and volunteers is working diligently to create an operations plan that is congruent with CDC and American Camp Association protocols.



CAMP ALKULANA 2021 Summer Camp Dates

Older Boys Session: June 23-30

Younger Boys Session: July 3-10

Older Girls Session: July 17-24

Younger Girls Session: July 27-August 3

All sessions are 8 days this summer. There will be no High Adventure camping trips during the Older Sessions in order to maintain our COVID-19 safety practices.

great antidote for this stress. Camp Alkulana has been providing this kind of get-away-from-it-all ministry for our campers for over 100 years, and we are eager to do so again.

So here's to another summer of running, laughing, and playing by the creek in that little hollow we love. Here's to counselors spending their summer ministering to campers and learning about their own callings too. Wherever we get to go, here's to another summer of God moving in all of our lives.

—Beth Wright, Director, Camp Alkulana



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PLEASE TAKE NOTE

RCFN Board Meeting
 March 23, 2021
 3:30 p.m.

MINISTRY OF THE WEEK March 2021

- 3/7 Oregon Hill Center
- 3/14 South Richmond Baptist Center
- 3/21 Bethlehem–Fairmount
- 3/28 Bethlehem–Penick

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

A Bittersweet Day

I found much to celebrate at Leigh Street Baptist Church on Sunday, January 10, and I felt its sadness too. I describe it as a bittersweet day.

Leigh Street Baptist Church held its closing service that day. I have attended other closing services. Each one has a sad side and a glad side. The Body of Christ has local churches across the globe, and losing one feels like a death in the family. Like immediate family members, its members feel the loss mostly keenly, but all in the Body of Christ all feel the loss to some degree.

I think a good memorial service celebrates God's work in the life of the one remembered. The immediate family, the Baptist family, and the whole Body of Christ had much to celebrate at Leigh Street Baptist Church.

We could celebrate Leigh Street's founding. Baptists who lived on Church Hill in 1853 had to cross Shockoe Valley to worship at First Baptist Church in its meetinghouse near the state capitol. Rain, flooding, and snow made that difficult, and Richmond's population had grown. Baptists who lived on Church Hill felt led to start a new church. They worshiped together on Christmas Day in 1853. Leigh Street Baptist Church took form and soon began construction of its only church home. The people worshiped in the finished basement and kept on building. The church saw the Civil War, Reconstruction, the 20th century with everything it held, and served until now.

In its 167 years the leaders and members of Leigh Street Baptist Church led thousands to Christ. The "Church of the Helping Hand" started seven churches. One of its pastors left to serve the Baptist Sunday School Board and helped shaped the denomination's Sunday School program. Mike Robinson, now retired from River City Faith Network, started out on their staff. Their members prayed and shared their time and money to minister on Church Hill, across metro Richmond, and around the world.

In 1982 Leigh Street Baptist Church had a pastoral vacancy. Leigh Street had supported James and Martha Colvin as missionaries to Japan. They had a furlough (stateside assignment) in 1982. Christ reassigned James and Martha to serve at Leigh Street, and they served there for almost four decades. That by itself would be something to celebrate!

A long pastorate usually builds trust between the leader and the congregation. God used that trust to help James lead Leigh Street in its final years. The church had a guiding vision. Like DNA, from its beginning the members of Leigh Street Baptist Church believed God wants a church on that corner. How could that continue with a diminished congregation? They formed a Legacy



Committee and prayed for another church, one that would be "the right fit," to partner with.

Church leaders first thought a smaller congregation might be their partner, but that did not work out. They looked at one of their daughter churches, but that church already had its own church home nearby. It took four years, but God eventually answered their prayers in an unexpected way.

All Saints Presbyterian Church started a new work in that part of the city. James met its pastor. Part of the core team had come from Immanuel Baptist Church where Martha had grown up. The new church had outgrown Leigh Street. Even though the new church was not another Baptist Church, church leaders kept talking and discovered they had a similar vision.

James felt God leading in this. He said, "The building would be in the right hands, and the ministry on that corner would continue." Leigh Street's Legacy Committee voted to proceed, 13-0.

When they presented the choice of partnering with Church Hill Presbyterian Church, the members who attended that meeting discussed that option. They believed God had brought them together and expressed that belief by a unanimous vote. Leigh Street gave the home God had entrusted to them to be the home for Church Hill Presbyterian Church. What faithful obedience! Such obedience honors Christ and serves as a model for all believers.

The day seemed bittersweet for another reason. The service celebrated God's work in Leigh Street Baptist Church's history and the promise of God's work in Church Hill Presbyterian Church. The celebration overshadowed the fact that James and Martha crossed the finish line of their faithful service at Leigh Street. Such faithful, distinguished service deserves a celebration all its own.

Thank God for such faithful, true stories! God has blessed many through them, including us. —sa

Download This Free Tax Guide

Whether preparing a tax return, reporting income, or creating a pay package, ministers and church finance leaders will find helpful information in GuideStone's tax guide. Visit www.guidestone.org to download this free resource.

COVID-19 VACCINE INFORMATION!

The VDH has now posted a link to pre-register for the COVID-19 vaccine. Please see their site for more information.

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>

"Thank you!" to the volunteers who served at the mass vaccination event at Richmond Raceway!

David and the PlayStation by Wesley Garrett

A while ago, I added this personal story at the end of a sermon, that I thought I would share with the Richmond Baptist Association. (The people are real, but I have changed their names.)

Each year immediately following, our August Back to School event, I would load my vehicle with about thirty leftover backpacks. One year, I was successful, as I visited to the local barber shop and passed them out. This past year, I distributed some of the school supplies and backpacks out at my apartment complex, for the children and families there. I included in each backpack, a child size mask, to protect against the *Covid-19* virus. It is at this time that I met this particular family.

Cheryl is a single mother raising two boys. David is 12 and Darrell is 13 years old. While speaking with Cheryl, she expressed that the boys' father was tragically killed a year earlier in a train accident, so the school supplies was much needed. Hearing their situation, made my heart sink. The accident was only a short distance from our apartment complex, and whenever the youth went to the nearest corner store, they would cross over the railroad crossing where their father was struck.

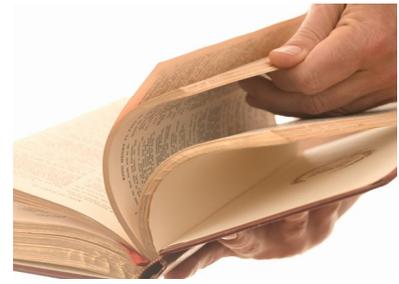
In October, when the Christmas Store applications was distributed out in the community, I made sure to put an application in their mailbox, but to no avail. I only assumed that they did not want to participate for whatever reason. Later, at one point, I did not notice the family in the community, and assumed they had moved away.

One day in December, David knocked at my door, and asked if I needed my trash taken to the dumpster. Although the dumpster in not a far distance away, and I could continue to remove my trash, I knew he was trying to do odd jobs for some money. I told him that I had thought they had moved away. After some light conversation, I paid him a few dollars and he took my trash away. I noticed that he also knocked on a few more doors of my neighbors that evening. Weeks later he was back, but this time, I had already taken out the trash. I told him to come back once a week, and I would have some work. That went on throughout the Christmas season.

The week leading up to the New Year, David came back to take out the trash. Since Christmas had just passed, I asked about Christmas and his gifts. He told me they went over to a relatives house, because they did not have anything for Christmas. Another blow to my heart. I told him to come back before New Year's Day, because I think I might have more work for him. He smiled and thanked me.

Earlier in 2020, I was given a donation of electronic TV games and an old *Nintendo* gaming system for the ministry at the Satellite building. It was given because either the donor's son had gone off to college or the system was outdated, or both. I had intended to set it up at the center, but never got around to it. The Lord led me to offer this system to David and his family. So, when David came for the trash as usual, I told him I would pay him after he threw out my trash. When he returned, I paid him and then asked if he could use the *PlayStation 2*. I had guessed that they had one of the many of the newer units on the market. His eyes lit up as he informed me that they did not have one. I said, "Merry late Christmas, and you can have it if you want." The look on his face was indescribable. He was smiling ear to ear as he left. After he got home his mother called back and thanked me "for being so kind." She indicated that anything I did would be appreciated.

(continued page 4)



NEW RCFN WEBSITE

River City Faith Network is launching a new website.

The new website will provide a central site for information on our ministries and the resources River City Faith Network provides for our community and churches.

Our new website will make it easier for you to connect with our staff, find ministry information, and connect with our affiliated churches.

On our end, the new design makes it easier for us to provide more up-to-date information, and that will help you too.

We invite you to view the new website at:

www.richmondbaptist.org

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Please share your ideas about how we can make this an even better resource for you.

This is one more service we can provide because of your support for River City Faith Network. Thank you!

This year is a great time to remind our churches and their members that South Richmond Baptist Center welcomes used, working gaming systems like Nintendo PlayStation and X-box systems and other electronic games that their children and youth have outgrown.

They make great gifts for the people we serve. We are ever grateful for your generosity.

—Wesley Garrett

David and the PlayStation (continued from Page 3)

A few weeks later, I was coming home, and David was walking with his brother, and we waved at each other as I passed. He told me later that his brother had asked who I was, but he did not remember my name. "That's the Christian," he said. I chuckled within my soul.

The second week in January, I knew his birthday was coming up, so I was going to make sure to have a birthday card ready for him on his special day. He came by a few days before and mentioned his birthday again to me, and I replied, "Don't worry, I'll remember." Well, that Friday came, and again he was at my door, and reminded me it was his birthday. I jokingly said, "You sure it is today?" pretending to have forgotten. He looked surprised, but I then said, "I guess you are going to need a birthday cake, like that one there," and I pointed to the cake, and presents I had for him. A member of my church insisted I buy a cake for him. I had a gift bag for him, of more electronic games along with thirteen candles for the cake. Once again, David smiled as he carried his cake home.

The scripture makes it clear of our obligations. James 1:27 says, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and keep himself unspotted from the world."

—wg

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