

Working together until Metro Richmond is...  
**TRANSFORMED**



**Ministry to the Poor**

God assigned me to serve in Baptist community ministry centers. Over the past 40 years, every Baptist Center where I have had the privilege of serving has dealt primarily with the poor. When I speak of the poor, I mean people with inadequate or barely adequate financial resources. I also mean people who may not have had the same opportunities that many, including me, have had. In many cases, poor persons are less fortunate persons.

Very little has changed in four decades. Every day this ministry involves helping people with their financial and social status. I grew up as one of the people who benefitted from a community ministry center. Then God called me to serve among poor and less fortunate people. Each day I see the various needs that some of our poor or less fortunate neighbors face.

To me, the ministry of Jesus offers the best example of conducting ministry among the poor or less fortunate. Jesus often met people with physical needs. He helped them with their physical needs and then ministered to them on a spiritual level.

Serving Christ as a community missionary, I have seen and served many people in need. It helps me to remember that Jesus said, "The poor will always be with you..." (Mark 14:7 NIV). I accept that as true. Still, I want to change the "always" part of that for the people to whom Christ has sent me.

I serve at the South Richmond Baptist Center, and I do not serve alone. Numerous volunteers, including the South Richmond Support Team members, serve with me. We minister to a continual flow of the poor and less fortunate at the South Richmond Center. We help the people we serve as much as we can.

Many know about and help support our annual Back-to-School celebration and Christmas Store ministries. Yet poor and less fortunate persons face daily needs. Every day, I try to change their situation. The help they receive at SRBC might be as simple as a safe shelter where a young person can grab a snack or do homework. It may also take the form of something that lasts longer or meets a larger need. Each day I hope to help change their situation in some way.



Wesley Garrett, Community Missionary SRBC

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**NOTEWORTHY DATES**

**RCFN Search Committee**  
March 3, 2022  
2 pm RCFN Offices

**CAST Meeting**  
March 8, 2022  
6:30 pm TBD

**Endowment and Stewardship Committees Joint Meeting**  
March 14  
1:30 p.m., RCFN Rm 266

**RCFN Board Meeting**  
March 22  
3:30 p.m., RCFN Rm 265

**RCFN Support Team Summit**  
March 25– *Tentative*  
5-9 p.m., RCFN Rm 265

**MINISTRY OF THE WEEK**

- 3/6 Bethlehem-Penick Road
- 3/13 Carlisle Avenue Baptist
- 3/20 Community Mission
- 3/27 Deaf Mission-FBC

(Continued on Page 2)

**NEW DATE!!!**

Dedication Service at 3 p.m. in the Chapel

**MAY 1, 2022**  
2:30-4 P.M.

**OPEN HOUSE & DEDICATION**  
2828 EMERYWOOD PKWY  
RICHMOND, VA 23294

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Jesus spoke about another kind of poverty. The poor of whom Jesus spoke might have adequate, even abundant, financial resources or social status and live in an even more desperate kind of poverty. We read about it in Matthew 5-7, a passage we refer to as The Sermon on the Mount. In the beginning of that passage Jesus refers to a state of being. Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:3).

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones authored *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. Concerning this first Beatitude, he wrote, "This, of necessity, is the one which must come at the beginning for the good reason that there is no entry into the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God apart from it. There is no one in the kingdom of God who is not poor in spirit" (p. 33).

Neither financial need nor lack of opportunity makes one "poor in spirit." Without Christ, the Living Water and the Bread of Life, one lives in spiritual poverty. Christ is the answer to their need. For anyone who finds and follows Christ, their spiritual poverty will lead them to the Kingdom of Heaven with spiritual blessings beyond measure.

I can appreciate this blessedness as I try to reach people with the Gospel. By relating social standing to spiritual standing, anyone might see all are empty and in need of a spiritual filling. This first Beatitude says how much we need God and His spiritual filling.

Think of a half-glass of water. Is it half-full or half-empty? The glass contains some water and some emptiness.

Now think of yourself as a container. What, if anything, takes up space in your heart and mind and life? God can fill one's heart and mind and life if nothing else has filled it. God prefers that our "glass" is completely empty, so he can fill us with His Spirit. When we realize that we are spiritually empty or poor in spirit, then God can begin to fill us.

Being poor in spirit is truly about recognizing what we are. Matthew 5:3 helps us to see our truly empty state and how much we need filling. Think of being poor in spirit as a basic characteristic of one's citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven. Do we have to run out of gas before we put fuel in the car? No. We know we need fuel (or recharging). In a similar way, every citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven knows they need spiritual fuel.

One's spiritual life requires spiritual fuel just as one's body requires water to live. I want God to fill me with

spiritual fuel, so I want to empty out self-filled thoughts, achievements, and accomplishments. I want the Holy Spirit to fill me with what He wants me to have, so I want to empty myself of anything else. If I am spiritually impoverished and empty, God can fill me.

I have concluded that there must be a kind of emptying first. Conviction must precede conversion. I must recognize I cannot lead myself before I can decide to follow Jesus. The Gospel convicts one of sin before it frees one to live in Christ. When we realize that we are empty, we can choose to follow wherever God leads us. Then we go, not by our own will or efforts, but by God's leading.

Something else stands out to me in Matthew 5:3. When Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit" he does not commend or condemn financial poverty. I work with

poor and less fortunate persons every day. Financial poverty or lack of opportunity does not guarantee spirituality. Having more or less than another does not put one any nearer to God's Kingdom. Just having earthly wealth or lacking it does not make one poor in spirit. Spiritually speaking, a poor person has no merit or advantage over a rich person or vice versa. Either can find things to take God's place in their heart.

Jesus did not say how to measure one's spiritual poverty. Yet one can somehow understand that only God can fill

the spiritual void in a heart full of anything less. Anything less will pass. It can rot or be taken. Jesus said we should store up "treasures in heaven" that will last because we give our hearts to what we treasure in them (Matthew 6:19-24).

Your gifts make it possible for me and others to minister to the poor and less fortunate in the Name of Jesus. I am grateful. Please pray for our neighbors in South Richmond and ask God to guide me and all who minister to the poor, including the poor in spirit.

—Wesley Garrett

*"God can fill one's heart and mind and life if nothing else has filled it.  
.....  
When we realize that we are spiritually empty or poor in spirit, then God can begin to fill us."*



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[jennifer.turner@rbaonline.org](mailto:jennifer.turner@rbaonline.org)

## The RCFN Missions Offering is Coming!

May brings flowers and the annual Week of Prayer for RCFN missions. We ask for your prayers. We also ask for a special RCFN Missions Offering.

Why do we have a Week of Prayer emphasis and the special offering? It comes from our roots.

River City Faith Network has roots in Baptist churches that formed district associations. A district association in England sent the first Baptist preachers to colonial Virginia. Baptist churches started growing, and Baptists started more churches. The leaders of those churches connected to one another and connected the congregations through the district associations they formed. Baptists grew in number, they expanded into new territory, forming more churches and associations. Later, Baptists formed statewide and national bodies.

District or beyond, in almost every case churches that work together do more than they can do alone. Baptists usually do that through voluntary cooperation.

That was true when Baptists in and around Richmond worked together to start ministries. Today we know some of those ministries as Church Hill Christian Wellness Center, Oregon Hill Baptist Center, South Richmond Baptist Center, and Camp Alkulana and its Alkulana RVA ministry.

RCFN's ancestors knew the value of voluntary cooperation. As God led them to expand their mission efforts, they emphasized praying and giving to support those mission efforts.

That is how we came to observe a week of prayer for River City Faith Network and its ministries. Every May we observe a week of prayer that calls attention to the ministries our voluntary cooperation makes possible. We also ask the churches that form RCFN to support RCFN ministries with a special offering.

In past years the annual RCFN Missions Offering supported all of River City Faith Network's ministries. When RCFN faced severe challenges a few years ago, RCFN leaders sought ways to bridge the financial gap those challenges created. RCFN leaders and staff worked together. They made several changes, including changing the week of prayer offering.

Instead of using that offering to help all of RCFN's ministries, RCFN devoted the entire offering to Camp Alkulana. That option helped RCFN through a very

challenging time. Thank God that the prayers and financial support of RCFN's churches, donors, grants, legacy gifts, and camper fees combined to make it possible for RCFN to keep the centers and camp open.

Beginning in 2020, COVID brought more challenges. RCFN churches have faced some hard decisions since then, including hard financial choices, and several RCFN churches have closed.

RCFN relies on its member churches for most of its funding, so their challenges turn into challenges for RCFN. We need to replace some of the gifts RCFN has lost. We hope to replace some of those gifts by returning to a week of prayer offering that helps the camp and the community ministry centers too.

Our camp and each community ministry center has a support team. Some members from each support team will serve on a special committee. Working with RCFN staff, the special committee will recommend a 2022 offering goal that will likely include the community ministry centers and the camp.

Through the committee, it will recommend the offering goal for the Board will consider. The committee will also recommend what the offering will support. It will keep the focus on RCFN missions and ministries.

I want you to know about the special committee and its task. Please pray for its members. Pray God will help them know the goal to set and how the offering will support the camp and the community ministry centers.

The team will recommend the 2022 goal and its use to RCFN's Board on March 22. The Board has the task of adopting the missions offering goal and what it will support. RCFN will publicize the goal the Board adopts.

Please help us get the word to your church leaders and others. Ask them to observe the annual Week of Prayer and RCFN Missions Offering. We suggest May 15-22, but your church may emphasize a time of prayer and offering for RCFN missions at a different time. As soon as we can, we will share the 2022 offering goal and what it will support.

Acts 1:8 says Jesus sends us to people everywhere. Jesus sends us to tell every people group about Him, starting with people nearby. Each of us can tell others about Jesus. Working together, we make RCFN ministries possible. RCFN ministries provide another way to help our neighbors learn about Jesus.

Thank you for your prayers and financial support for RCFN. In God's hands, all your gifts to RCFN turn into Kingdom resources God may use here.

—Steve Allsbrook

**NOW  
HIRING**

PLEASE SEE CURRENT JOB  
OPENINGS LISTED ON THE WEBSITE.  
[WWW.RICHMONDBAPTIST.ORG](http://WWW.RICHMONDBAPTIST.ORG)  
CONTACT US TO SHARE YOUR  
OPENINGS WITH RCFN!



**CAMP ALKULANA  
WORK DAYS**  
MAY 21 & JUNE 4



River City Faith Network  
Richmond Baptist Association  
2828 Emerywood Parkway  
Richmond, VA 23294  
Phone: 804-329-1701  
office@rbaonline.org  
www.richmondbaptist.org

Electronic Service Requested

*Working together until  
Metro Richmond is...*

**TRANSFORMED**

**March 2022**



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**City** FAITH  
NETWORK  
Richmond Baptist Association

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# Silent Auction & Dinner

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**QUESTIONS?**

**EMAIL [CAMPALKULANA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:CAMPALKULANA@GMAIL.COM) OR CALL 804-329-1701**

*Silent Auction & Dinner  
to benefit Camp Alkulana*



## **DONATIONS NEEDED!**

***Can you contribute or recruit donations for any of these items?***

***All items must be in hand by April 15.***

- Handmade Goods: original artwork, wooden crafts, hand-sown creations
- Restaurants: gift cards for local restaurants and dessert bars
- Vacation Rentals: rentals at the beach, Wintergreen, resorts, etc.
- Family Experiences: tickets to theme parks, museums, movie theaters, arcades, go-karts, etc.
- Local Services: house cleaning, meal preparation, hair salons, photography, yardwork, technical supports
- Art Experiences: tickets to the symphony, theater, or ballet
- Recreation: tickets to sports games, golf passes, or rafting trips
- High-End Goods: 31 bags, Norwex, Young Living, furniture, etc.

**Contact Beth at [campalkulana@gmail.com](mailto:campalkulana@gmail.com)**