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GOD AT WORK
IN OUR MIDST



FALL 2018

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REJOICE WITH ME

DR. TODD M. SMEDLEY, Senior Pastor

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:8-10).

In this edition of Fourth Press, as we reflect on ways God is moving in our midst, we need to be clear we are rejoicing in God's accomplishments, not ours.

As we celebrate the many good things God is doing among us, nothing is more deserving of celebration than the new birth of a Christian believer. When a lost soul is found, the angels in heaven rejoice and call us, as the embassy of heaven here on earth, to rejoice with them.

By God's amazing grace, we have been privileged to welcome new believers into the life of Fourth Church over the past several months. It is a privilege to behold in someone's life the thrilling experience of new birth in Christ. The newfound joy they possess spills over to all who witness this life-transforming change.

When people come to saving faith while here at Fourth, I am struck that God's irresistible work of grace began in them long before they ever

came through our doors. Their stories bear witness to this reality and should always keep us mindful of the One who does the saving.

God will always “find” those chosen as his own. Sometimes we get to witness the blossoming of God's work in their lives when they come to Christ while a part of the fellowship of Fourth. However, we also trust that others in our midst are chosen of the Lord but are still on their journey to saving faith. We can be confident that every gospel seed we plant in the soil of their hearts is useful in God's vineyard. It is an immense honor to play a part in their journey of faith. I think it is safe to assume that many seeds Fourth has planted over the years have flowered in other churches. Another Body of Christ may have the joy of watching the seeds you and I planted along the way bear eternal fruit. Regardless of the results we see, as a church it is a profound privilege to be used by God to plant, water, and watch seeds bloom.

As brothers and sisters in Christ, and like the woman who found her lost coin, the Lord is calling us to rejoice with him over those who were lost, but whom he has found at Fourth. May he find many more in the months and years to come!



“Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

Luke 15:10

Cover Picture: College Overnight in June 2018, with speaker Rev. Tom Wenger.

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CHURCH PICNIC FUN AND FELLOWSHIP

REV. RON MEYER, Pastor of Congregational Care



Fourth hosted this year's annual picnic on Labor Day at Rocklands Farm in Poolsville, MD. We had 450 registered to attend. The Lord gave us a very hot, but dry, day to enjoy food, fellowship, music, games for youth and children, farm tours, and fun. The entire planning and execution of the picnic was led by a wonderful lay team including: Robert Labutta, Don Zinger, Elaine Hauschildt, Romi Kobayshi, Peggy LeReche, Janis Glenn, Shauna Kreider, Mike Prather, and Charlotte FitzGerald. Their time and commitment served the entire congregation. No picnic could be successful without scores of volunteers serving throughout the day. This year we were blessed by a large number of young adults and young married couples who made setup, cleanup, and everything in between go smoothly.

Ministry leaders of International Students, Inc., Tim and Julie Sigman, used the picnic to invite international students into our church life. We had 31 international students with us.

Many of these attendees had been in the US less than two weeks. Here is an email Tim received from one of them the following day.

"Hi, I'm Zoe from China, and I hope you still remember me. Today is such a lovely day, giving me so much beautiful and unforgettable memories. I really want to say thank you, to you and Julie, as well as to all of the international friends club members. I do appreciate your efforts, friendliness and enthusiasms, and thank you so much for making me feel like home. Thank you!"

Many of these students worshiped with us the following Sunday.

A special thanks to our hosts at Rocklands Farm for their warm hospitality and excellent facilities. What a great day in the life of our church with longtime members and attenders, youth, children, and new international friends.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

PAIGE MALKUS, Director of Children's Ministry

"Jesus rescues!" These two words were shouted loud and clear by preschool and elementary children participating in Vacation Bible School (VBS) this summer. It was a joy to welcome 200 smiling faces each day to a fun-filled week of Bible adventures, songs, games, snacks, videos, and activities. The week was made possible by the help of more than 100 volunteers and the tireless dedication of Claire Hearle and Kimberly Nugent King, VBS co-coordinators. Volunteers served in many ways including as station leaders, snack preparers, and crew leaders, and included many of our summer staff and middle and high school students. Children gathered each morning for songs and skits led by Stefan Wiltz, Family Ministries Senior Director, and Josh Heiser, dedicated VBS volunteer.

After the morning opening, the children were off to the races. They enjoyed cool science experiments, played fun games, and made crafts to take home. Most of all, they were taught Bible stories and watched videos that helped them to understand they are never alone because Jesus knows their hearts and holds them close. During the week, all the activities reinforced the messages from the Bible stories they learned. In addition, the children learned about the work of Romanian Christian Enterprises and brought donations to help children through this organization. The week ended with a special Sunday night service during which the children led us in worship by singing the VBS songs. VBS is a wonderful way to invite friends not attending Fourth to experience a fun-filled week based on the gospel. Almost half of the children participating this year were from outside of Fourth.

We hope to see many of the same faces next year and more of their friends. When you're lonely, when you worry, when you struggle, when you do wrong, and when you're powerless, Jesus rescues!





SUMMER AT THE SUNSHINE SCHOOL

MARK MORAN, High School Senior

My summer of 2018 was one of my greatest experiences in growing with the Lord. I was blessed with the opportunity to go on not one, but two mission trips in two different continents in the span of less than a month. My trips to Romania and Ecuador led to the most awe-inspiring moments of my life during which I really could feel the presence of the Holy Spirit working through me and others.

The Romania trip on July 20-28 was without a doubt the highlight of my summer. Not only was it the first time I left the country, but I got to experience the other side of the world in a completely different culture. The moment I stepped foot in the Sunshine School located in Arad, Romania—after a long car ride from Budapest, Hungary—I could smell the difference between Romania and the United States. The air was much cooler and more refreshing because we were miles into the countryside with nothing much surrounding us but a little village and farmland.

Our high school team came to the Sunshine School

summer camp to serve the children with disabilities sponsored by Romanian Christian Enterprises (RCE).

The first person I met was Ovi Martin, Director of RCE and head of the Sunshine School. He was very glad to receive us and treated us with great hospitality the entire time. When we arrived at the camp where we were serving the next five days, I was nervous. I didn't know if I could fit in with the kids that well, since I was a newcomer and I couldn't speak one word of their language. I was happily proved wrong, however, when I met some of the most loving and heartwarming children I have ever encountered. For five days, I was blessed to spend time with those children whom I will never forget for the rest of my life. Precious time was spent playing sports and most importantly praising God for the blessings he provides us. I will never forget the relationships I made with those children in Romania and look forward to meeting them again!

HIGH IN THE ANDES

MARK MORAN, High School Senior

The mission trip to Ecuador in early August 2018 can be described as nothing less than a true blessing from God. I don't believe I will ever forget what I saw and experienced for the rest of my life. To be more specific, it was the Quichua culture we encountered that led to a culture shock experience for the missions team, consisting of my father, John Moran, Dr. Matilda Palmer, high school senior Caitlyn Muteru, myself, and Fourth's Director of Missions and Outreach, Melody Istrati. I am thankful to Melody for creating an inspiring trip granted to us by the full grace of God.

As our team leader, Melody's depth of experience was extremely beneficial to create the impact it had for the rural, indigenous communities we served. Matilda's medical training and experience, as well as being from the Dominican Republic, allowed her to give presentations on healthcare in fluent Spanish. Our team presented different aspects of health to four different churches in different communities in the Andes Mountains. Matilda provided insight on how we are to physically care for our bodies. Melody and my father gave insight on how to take care of our spiritual health and our faith and relationship with God, as well as how to maintain a healthy marriage. Caitlyn and I helped with the children by playing games with them. My ability to speak Spanish, thanks to my mom, who is from Bolivia, helped me develop close relationships with some of the kids whom I am still in contact with via social media.

Arriving in Quito, we were greeted by Fourth missionaries, Alan and Fabi Gordon, and coworker Luis, who assists them in Riobamba. Alan planned where we went and led our presentations. He was the key communicator at churches we attended. His exceptionally strong faith in God was visible not only through how he lives but also in how he serves others. His gifts in language and music enhanced our private devotions along with our worship in front of the churches.

I'm thankful Fourth organized this trip. We were all blessed to see how our missionaries minister to the Quichua people.



THE BLESSING OF EVENING WORSHIP

MELISSA VOORHEES, Member

The first time I worshiped at Fourth was at an evening service. The church had been generously allowing me, an outsider, to use its library, and my husband and I wanted to learn more. As the service ended and we walked to our car, Ted asked, “Where have we been all of our lives?” Soon we became members of Fourth Church, and as the years have gone by we have become regular attendees of both morning and evening services.

So what continues to draw us to the evening service? Many things, but chief among them is a thirst for grace. God’s assuring grace reminds me at the end of the day how good it is to have a place at the communion table of my faithful Savior. I go to reconsecrate my life to him and to remember that he upholds and sustains me. I go to listen, to learn, to sing, to pray. I go to hear from my pastors what God desires me to understand from his Word. I go to be reminded that God is real and life is serious and my days are numbered. I go to show gratitude, to draw near, to be brought down to size, to be strengthened, to be redirected.

It’s a quiet gathering with familiar faces. It’s simple and has the feel of a small village church. I am welcomed to the Lord’s table and invited to commune with him so that he can bless me and equip me for what is ahead. I go to lift my voice to the Lord with others who press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ. I go to remember that I am not my own. I am Christ’s and am being knit together with others in the body that is growing by the grace of God.

I am drawn to the evening service. The lights are on, the music is familiar, and the doors are always open, welcoming me. I am so thankful for this quiet service at the end of the day, where the Lord’s Supper is served to all who hunger and thirst for him and come to his table for refreshment, needing strength and longing for wisdom and a tangible reminder of God’s good plans.



This year, our Special Blessings students have grown by leaps and bounds. Our young adult and adult class, Explorers, usually performs with handchimes a couple times a year. This year for the first time, our students were led by their peer, Jenni Noll. With guidance, but little assistance, from our music teacher, Shari Fast, Jenni conducted her peers. She had the opportunity to rehearse with her fellow students before they presented their song to the congregation in the spring. Praise God!

We have new teachers in our classes, and our students are demonstrating independence by assisting in the writing of notes on the blackboard as their peers answer questions or fill in the blanks when directed by their teachers. This is a new and more vibrant class that is emerging with years of training by Leesa Donner and now assisted by Marget Reneberg and Solomon Thorat. This is a great reminder of what the Lord says in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

Additionally, we continue to support our families of children with special needs by praying for them, while connecting them with other families within the church. To this end, our meet-up groups for moms and dads are now active, meeting offsite in homes. We fellowship, pray, and break bread together. This offers a time of respite, which is the biggest thing our families have requested and for which they’ve prayed.

As we grow together, the families, teachers, and volunteers are reminded to hold on to Ephesians 2:10, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”



WOMEN’S SUMMER BOOK CLUBS

DIANE JONES, Book Club Leader

Women of Fourth love to read. For the sixth year the Women of Fourth have met on Tuesday nights in late June and July to read and study good books together. Women of every age and season of life now come and participate, and enjoy rich fellowship while loving the Lord our God with all our minds.

This year, about 40 women registered for one of three outstanding books: *Katharina and Martin Luther: The Radical Marriage of a Runaway Nun and a Renegade Monk*, by Michelle de Rusha and Karen Prior, led by Esther Steele; *No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God*, by Aimee Byrd, led by Susan Scola; and *Sense and Sensibility*, by Jane Austen, which I led.

Esther chose an excellent book to read to mark the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther’s birthday! She said that she and others in her group enjoyed how well written the book was and how in depth and detailed the descriptions were of both the time period as well as the characters of Katherina and Martin.

Susan’s group delved into a book by Aimee Byrd, who was the keynote speaker at the last women’s retreat. She writes, “This was not a light summer read, but we benefited from working through it. Aimee’s message is that women should not be weak or gullible when it comes to theology. Women need to know God’s word,

grow in it, follow it, and mature in their faith (so as not to become ‘little women’).”

In the Jane Austen group, we looked at Austen’s life as the daughter of a country rector, as well as the role her faith played and how it influenced her writing. We looked at God’s fingerprints in a novel most would consider to be secular. Austen is never didactic or preachy, thank goodness, but her characters and plot affirm biblical truth. In addition to literary study, we enjoyed the story!

The annual summer book clubs are certainly worth the time and work spent reading and thinking and studying. I love making new friends every year, and I look forward to next summer’s clubs. Susan Scola said it best, “We all agreed that we have been blessed at Fourth Church because the initiative to include women under the ministry of God’s Word has been part of our experience for generations. Summer book club continues to be a vibrant part of that initiative.”

OUR GREATEST NEED

JOHN KIMBROUGH, Deacon

When my wife and I first attended Fourth a few years ago, we wondered if the church had any needs. The community seemed flush with resources, and the people we met were successful in all areas of life. Although the church and its people were very welcoming, it didn't seem like Fourth really needed us.

After a few months serving as a deacon, I have learned Fourth is a desperately needy church.

Many people who are “doing fine” over coffee in Halverson Hall are worried about paying the bills or are in a short-term cash crunch. The Deacon Board has been able to assist with grocery gift cards and funding for car repairs, medical bills, mortgage payments, and many other payments. Some members came to us with specific requests; others simply wanted to explore options in case of future need. The deacons make appointments, listen, and pray with each person seeking help.

Others in our church family are sick or suffering. Although some people are mentioned by name at each worship service or printed in the bulletin, this is a small fraction of the members of our church family struggling with short- or long-term health issues, facing upcoming surgery, or caring for ailing family or friends. Sometimes the only indication of suffering is an empty (or emptier) pew on Sunday. The deacons write care notes, make phone calls, and pray regularly for our family members with health needs.

However, our greatest need—individually and as a church family—is for Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. As a deacon, I am constantly reminded of my own daily (sometimes hourly) need for Christ to dwell in my heart and of our church family's need of Christ, who promises, “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:10).

If you are in need, or you know someone in need, I encourage you to speak to a deacon personally or call the Deacon Line at 301-320-3600, x223. We would be happy to speak with you and pray with you.

MY RECENT PRAYER JOURNEY

LAURA MORGAN, Young Adult

Recently, I went through a trying experience that left me mentally and emotionally worn yet encouraged by how God works through prayer. To give some context, about five and a half years ago, I was halfway through my clinical fellowship in Speech Pathology when I was a passenger in a near-fatal car accident. My family was blessed by thousands of prayers offered on our behalf from around the globe, including many from our family at Fourth Presbyterian Church. God answered those prayers by allowing remarkable recoveries in both of my parents and me. Yet, as is the case for all of us at times, the journey on this side of heaven has not always been easy.

This brings me to the recent experience reminding me how God is at work in the prayers of his people: needing to retake the cumulative exam in Speech-Language Pathology. I had easily passed this exam when I finished graduate school. However, the accident prevented me from completing my clinical fellowship within the allotted time, so my scores expired. To be fully licensed, I had to retake and pass this massive and challenging exam, which contained topics I had not actively studied for years. I reached out to many people for their prayers and received wonderful prayer support. I still needed to live with the tension of knowing that while God was fully able to intervene, he was in no way required to give me the outcome I wanted. Yet I was encouraged by the response Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego gave King Nebuchadnezzar when thrown in the fiery furnace. Those men stated that, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18). Our God is able to deliver us, but even if he doesn't, our following him will not be compromised.

I would like to say I was completely and faithfully at ease beginning the exam. However, I felt less and less sure of myself as the minutes ticked on. Eventually, I stopped

“Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace”

Daniel 3:17

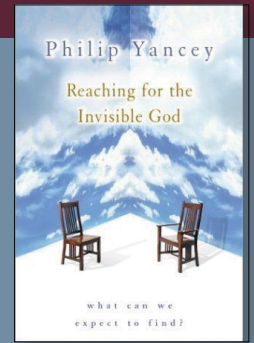
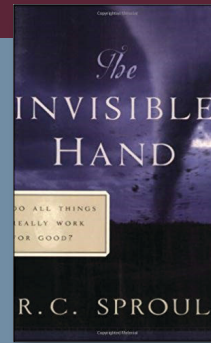
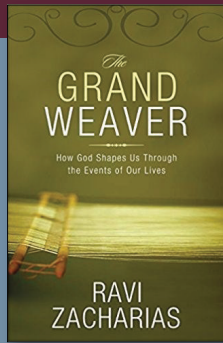
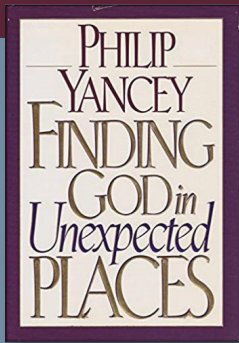


and prayed, “God, you know the circumstances that have brought me here. I'm just determinedly moving forward unless you make me aware of a different thing to pursue. I give this test to you, please guide me to interpret the questions correctly...and to choose the right answers!” Weeks went by until I finally received the official “passed” notification, bringing with it relief as well as some observations on prayer.

During my recovery, God has answered many requests with outcomes amazing to professionals in the brain injury field. Yet despite my prayerful, hard work and determination, some goals have yet to be actualized. There have been innumerable moments of humble gratitude and joy, but others of acknowledged disappointment and loss. We don't know how God will respond to our requests, but we can trust the sovereignty of our ever-attentive God.

BOOK LIST

MEDIA CENTER



The Media Center has various materials on God at work in our midst. The list below highlights a few books that discuss how God works in our everyday lives.

In *Finding God in Unexpected Places*, Philip Yancey examines how we can see the eternal in places all around us. He does so by taking readers on a journey to places around the globe from Ground Zero to the Horn of Africa to discover God's truth and grace.

Call Number: 248.4 Y21

Bestselling author and internationally known speaker, Dr. Ravi Zacharias explores the understanding that every event in our lives is part of a purposeful design orchestrated by God in *The Grand Weaver*.

Call Number: 248.4 Z16

Michael Milton is a longtime pastor in the Presbyterian Church. In his book, *Small Things, Big Things*, he

shares inspiring stories of how individuals found God in everyday life.

Call Number: 234 M662

In his book *The Invisible Hand: Do All Things Really Work for Good?*, R.C. Sproul addresses the question of "Why?" in difficult situations when there is often wonder as to where God is.

Call Number: 231.5 S771

In another of Philip Yancey's books, *Reaching for the Invisible God: What Can We Expect to Find?*, he addresses the questions that arise when reality of life does not meet expectations.

Call Number: 231.7 Y21

GREETINGS FROM TEXAS

As we undertake a "retirement adventure," moving to Texas to be closer to family, it is sad to leave our Fourth family. We came to the DC area in 1985 expecting to move again in 18 months...which obviously never happened! We have grown in the Lord and as a family through these three decades and have many cherished memories. Our new address in Crawford, Texas, is in the church directory (we welcome visitors!) and our phones and email will remain the same.

We are grateful that we have been able to experience our Lord's overflowing love, care, and joy (even when singing obscure Welsh hymns) through our years at Fourth.

In Christ's love,

Mike and Kay Strauss

