

# RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH

DECEMBER 2018

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*At Riverside Community Church, we believe that when God brings a person into a relationship with Himself, He also brings him/her into a family relationship in the local church. There is more than just believing. There is also belonging. This newsletter is intended to help those of us who are part of this church family grow in our relationship with God and each other. We want to stay in touch with one another. We want to share what God is doing in our midst.*

*- Kerry Nenn, Editor*

## Be Fruitful: Faithfulness

By Pastor Paul Sommerfeld

What would it look like to be completely faithful? What would you have to do, or do differently? Have you ever thought about that? Well, faithfulness is next in line as we continue looking at the fruit of the Spirit.

If we're going to understand faithfulness, we have to begin (obviously) with faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Imagine being "sure" and "certain" of something that you cannot yet see. That probably makes us a little uncomfortable because we like the adage, "Seeing is believing." Yet faith is defined as "believing without seeing."

When talking about Christian faith, I'm always careful to note that God doesn't call us to "blind faith." He gives us objective reasons to believe. These reasons are historic and evidential. Acts 1:3 speaks of "many infallible proofs." Yet the core of our faith – forgiveness, resurrection, eternal life, etc., are all things that are (for the time being) still "unseen."

So faith involves believing God's truths, even when they are unseen. Faithfulness, on the other hand, involves living out that faith. Let me give an example. The act of prayer requires faith. One must believe that God listens, that He cares, and that He answers prayer according to His good purposes. But merely believing these things doesn't constitute faithfulness. Praying in all circumstances constitutes faithfulness. That's what it would mean to live out this aspect of faith.

You can look at other areas of Christian life in the same way, whether loving, serving, giving, encouraging, confessing, forgiving, evangelizing, etc. Faithfulness means putting our faith into action. If I could summarize faithfulness in two words, it would be "obedience" and "confidence." It means doing what God tells us to do (not perfectly, but consistently), and doing it without fear, because fear runs contrary to faith.

That's a tall order, and it may seem overwhelming, but take heart – we don't have to produce faithfulness on our own. In fact, we can't. Like the other spiritual fruit, it's produced by the Spirit of God within us. But we have an important role to play. We must walk closely with God and yield to His Spirit. As we do, He will transform us by showing us what we need to do and empower us to do it.

So let's pursue a deep relationship with the Lord, and be fruitful in faithfulness. May we all one day hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

In faith and love, Paul

## Give Thanks in All Circumstances

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thess. 5:16-18*

On November 22, many Riverside families gathered 'round tables spread with turkeys, stuffing, pies, and more calories than most of us want to think about. Many traveled to spend the holiday with loved ones and created memories to treasure for a lifetime. Others spent Thanksgiving coping with illness. Some were missing loved ones no longer with them. Still others might have faced things the rest of us can't even fathom.

Whether our Thanksgiving was filled with feasting or trials, we all have much to be thankful for in Christ. As the verse above states, we can give thanks in all circumstances. Why? Because God is good – all the time. No matter what else is going on, God is still in control, and Jesus has given us ultimate victory in Him.

With this powerful truth in mind, the Riverside family offers the following thoughts of gratitude for God's amazing blessings this year: *(continued on page 3)*

## FAMILY PROFILE

### Meet the Morrow Family

Jim & Cathy



#### **Favorite Hangout**

Home

#### **Favorite Movie**

Jim: *The Hunt for Red October*; Cathy: *Sense & Sensibility*

#### **Favorite Book**

Cathy: That's like asking which of my kids is my favorite! So I will just say the Bible, because I can just never read it enough, and for entertainment, *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak, *The Art of Racing in the Rain* by Garth Stein, and *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford

#### **Favorite Game**

Jim: Free Cell, Sudoku, Mahjong, Spider Solitaire

Cathy: The Settlers of Catan

#### **Favorite Quote**

Jim: "All that is required for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing." ~ Edmund Burke

Cathy: "There's no place like home." ~ Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*

#### **Three words that best describe your family**

Just plain boring!! (Sooo glad our kids broke the mold and are "Lots of fun"!)

#### **Where are you on a typical Saturday night?**

Home, watching a movie or a favorite TV series

#### **How did you hear about RCC? How long have you been attending?**

Through a good friend, Carol Masin. We've been attending 5 ½ years.

#### **In your opinion, what is the best thing about RCC?**

The first thing that drew us to RCC was Pastor Paul. The first day we visited, he recognized us from a previous church and gave us both a big hug, which made us feel so welcome. What keeps us @ RCC is the excellent teaching of God's Word from the pulpit, Bible studies, and small groups, as well as the loving and caring fellowship of believers.

#### **Kids:**

Shelley, 44 & David, 41

## BACK TO THE MANGER

It's easy to get caught up in the commercialism of Christmas. How we can get caught up in Christ this season?

It takes intentionality. We have to make an effort not to get wrapped up in tinsel and lights and instead look to The Light. Here are a few thoughts from the Riverside family to help us all bring our focus back where it should be this Christmas.

Chris Bolliger says, "We have friends who practiced putting Christ in the center of Christmas practically. As a family they looked for a family in need, either in their neighborhood, in their schools, or through their jobs. Then they researched/prayed for that family so they could give meaningful gifts, which they then anonymously left on their door step in the middle of the night. This whole family understood the true meaning of giving and was 'all in.'"

"We try to limit the secular aspect of Christmas - Santa and secular holiday songs not focused on Jesus," explains Kelly Jaros. "Even our Christmas ornaments are focused on Christ instead of general Christmas stuff. We also change what we read and study at advent. In the past, we have studied all the prophecies about the birth of Christ. We have done the traditional nativity story. This year we are studying the names and characteristics of Christ. We feel this helps keep the kids excited and engaged throughout the season."

I try to have the perfect Christmas every single year.  
I set myself up to fail and ruin my own holiday cheer.  
What didn't work out last year I finally will let go,  
But then I set up new things to accomplish as this year's goal.  
The plans I make aren't working & there's a very good reason why.  
I forget about the reason, I forget about Jesus' first cry.  
I look too much to finding that perfect Christmas tree,  
To baking those special cookies, some for them and some for me.  
I focus on finding that perfect gift for each and every one.  
I focus on trying to give my family overwhelming amounts of fun.  
At times I look for my perfect present  
to be specially wrapped and under the tree.  
I forget I already have it Lord, it's the gift you gave to me.  
Why do I let a specific date dictate my very mood?  
Why don't I let giving all year round be my attitude?  
This year I pray that you will change my heart,  
for I have the perfect gift.  
Change my heart, change my life,  
help me to give someone else a lift.  
For nothing in this whole wide world, can ever, ever replace  
The knowing that one day soon I will see your wonderful face.  
The face of the one who saved my soul from all my sinful ways.  
The face of the one that brings me peace  
and I'll be with all the rest of my days.  
Lord Jesus, you did this for all and for me.  
How much more perfect can the day of Christmas be?  
Oh yes, there is one more perfect day to come, as I greatly yearn.  
For it is when you Lord Jesus, come back in your glorious return.

By Denise Sommer

# Friends—Loving God and One Another

## GIVING THANKS

*(continued from page 1)*

I'm forever grateful for our God of salvation who pursued me with LOVINGKINDNESS and MERCY through my darkness... until I accepted His call, then walked with Him into LIGHT, FAITH, LOVE, JOY, and HOPE for eternity! ~ Susan Zimmer

I am thankful for my mother-in-law, Nellie Phillips. At 95, Nellie not only models that "the joy of the Lord is her strength," she also finds real joy in the most ordinary events of everyday life. You're a blessing, Nellie! ~ Maureen Hughes-Phillips

I am thankful for our Sunday morning prayer meetings. They are very fulfilling and it is good to know that our church is lifted up each week. ~ Tom Vislisel

We are thankful for the healing God has provided for our son Adam. ~ Dave and Suzy Francis

Rick and I would like to include along with many things, Paul, Debra, and all of the wonderful elders who are all such wonderful godly men. In situations that occurred this year, they all showed nothing short of godliness and integrity. We are truly blessed as a church body. ~ Rick and Maribeth Bown

I am very thankful this year for answered prayers. Ryan and I have been praying for my unsaved family back in MA for many years, and this year God provided many opportunities to share the gospel with them in both words and actions. As you know, my mom was baptized earlier this year, but God also opened the door to have some really great and meaningful conversations about Christ with other family members. ~ Kelly Jaros

I am so thankful to God for the way He's worked in our lives individually and as a couple - through the adversity of losing my first husband to a drug overdose, which brought my nephew into my life, who introduced me to Keith. Ah, but that is only clear looking back, because we didn't know Him yet. We didn't know He was drawing us to Him. By systematically taking away our money and the things we thought we couldn't live without, the Lord revealed Himself to us, and in many ways it's been (and still is) an uphill struggle. But we don't question His faithfulness, and now, as His children, we can truly be thankful for the trials because of where they've taken us and how they've changed us. We are grateful that He chose us and that He promises not to give up on us.

1 Corinthians 10:13 says it all. ~ Peg Orland



From Abraham Lincoln's Thanksgiving Day Proclamation: The year that is drawing towards its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the source from which they come, others have been added, which are of so extraordinary a nature, that they cannot fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever watchful providence of Almighty God. ~ Joe Masin

I am thankful I have a few of my grandmother's and mother's things around my house, bringing good memories every time I glimpse these much-loved objects. Whether it be a cookie jar, a gravy ladle, or a painting, they fill my heart with warmth and remind me of the love they inspired. ~ Angela Cameron

I am most thankful for His positive answer to prayer for my niece Jenny. To have her give up on plans for divorce, to see her daughter Haley get saved, and then see them both get baptized (all in one year) makes this one of the most thankful years I can remember. ~ Jon Christensen

We are so thankful for how God has sustained us through Scott's job loss and job search these past 4+ years, and to our RCC family praying for us and walking with us through that whole situation. ~ Donna Netzley

I am thankful for God's faithfulness in difficult times. He provides and protects, and I experience His presence every day. He really fulfills His promises. Every time I am pouring my heart out, He shows me in some way He is there or gives me an answer or a picture to be able to rest in Him - many times in Scripture, devotionals, songs or from other people. He is so amazing! ~ Denise Sommer



## Upcoming Events

### December

- 15 All-Church Christmas Caroling 1 pm @ church
- 16 Family Christmas Worship Service
- 24 Christmas Eve Service 7 pm @ church

### January

- 5 Men's Breakfast Study 7-9 am @ church
- 11-12 LATTE Craft Event @ church
- 13 SSS 2-4 pm @ Chris Bolliger's home
- 16 LOL 10-11:30 am @ Jen Schuldt's home



# No Fear!



It was dark, cloudy, and misty. No moon. No stars. Glow sticks alone illuminated a 40-foot telephone pole and trapeze bar. It was the Fusion Fall Retreat 2018 No Fear Pamper Pole Challenge. One by one, climbers donned harness and helmet and climbed the pole, encouraged by shouts from those on the ground. Most managed to precariously stand on top of the pole; a few were able to jump out in the blackness and successfully catch the trapeze bar about eight feet away.

The normal human response to fear can be paralyzing physically and mentally, and fear can lead us into sin. Fear itself is not sin, but it can easily lead us there. To be effective in one's faith, one must learn how to deal with fear. Fear is normal, but faith puts fear in its proper place. The foundation of faith is the Gospel – trust in Jesus Christ as one's personal Lord and Savior. When we exercise faith that our God is trustworthy, that He is carefully watching over every detail of our lives, and that He has given all we need for life and godliness, fear is put in correct perspective.



Over the weekend of the Fusion Fall Retreat, the students of Riverside set aside the busyness of life (and electronics) and were immersed in God's word. The No Fear Pamper Pole Challenge was a great opportunity to apply lessons learned. Thirty-four out of forty-three students and leaders boldly made the attempt. We pray the lessons learned at the retreat transfer well to all the real-life situations the students will face. Find a student and ask about the Fusion Fall Retreat!

– Mrs. Sommerfeld

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