

River News

JULY 2021



From The Pastor's Pen

~ Pastor Sarah Flack

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.
(Ephesians 2:10)

Dear River Church,

Summer is officially here with warmer weather, longer days, and new and familiar faces from near and far. It has been great to have our summer folk back with us, and we certainly look forward to worshipping together with them each week.

In our Summer Sermon Series we have been learning from the letters to the seven churches of Revelation. It has been meaningful for me to study each of these churches in depth each week as I prepare for the sermon; finding out details about what life would have been like for them and the culture they lived in has really made these churches come alive for me. I hope they have for you, too.

What has been especially interesting is seeing how the churches look different in each city. This isn't surprising because, after all, each city is different. The church in Ephesus would have had the opportunity to witness to traveling merchants who followed the trade routes to their city. The church in Pergamum would have known how to talk to pilgrims who had come to be healed at the Temple of Asclepius. The churches in Smyrna and Pergamum, who had both seen their leaders and Christian brothers and sisters martyred for their faith, would have had an intimate knowledge of grief and suffering that would have made them especially sensitive to others who were grieving and suffering. And, through these experiences and the spiritual gifts given to them, each of these churches became a witness for God in that community.

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 teaches that:

4 There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. 5 There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. 6 God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. 7 A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

Just as each church in Revelation was uniquely shaped, so too are we here at The River. We are a diverse group of men and women, gifted by the Holy Spirit, in order to encourage and challenge one another to grow to maturity and to minister to the people around us during the year. God has equipped us with spiritual gifts and shaped us through experience to make us the church we are.

It has been exciting to see the activity in the church building and in the community as we become more confident in being the church God has made us to be. I am thankful for each one of you! May we continue to trust in the LORD God as He works in us and through us.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Pastor Sarah



Elder Ministry ~ Dean Wilkie

With liberty and justice for all!

I am a very patriotic person, I enjoy the celebration of the birth of our nation. As I've been thinking about this month's newsletter, we're right on top of the July 4th festivities. I am moved by the lyrics of the Star-Spangled Banner every time I hear them, or to see Ol' Glory majestically waving in the wind high atop a pole, it's always a photogenic moment, if only in my mind's eye. Now add to that the history of a nation struggling to be a Sovereign, self governing people.

I was recently reading the Star-Spangled Banner, when I came across a line of the lyrics that I just never focused on before. The words are "then conquer we must when our course it is just". Through the course of our young history, many times those words have rung true when we have gone to battle to defend the oppressed, or to set free those that are captive to a tyrant's regime. We've gone to battle to guarantee the liberty of other nationalities and the peoples of the world. Thus taking us to distant shores to defend our freedom and protecting our civil and religious liberties. These lyrics speak powerful truth, and the imagery of our flag has been the hope and salvation, as it was seen coming into many European towns or the Concentration camp's of war.

Now let's add a little NY State history to this reflection. During the revolutionary war, a period of time from 1775-1783, a young fledgling nation fought against a battle hardened England. On May 10, 1775 Rev Jacob Duche', opened the second continental Congress by quoting Ps 80:14 "Return, we beseech thee, oh God of hosts; look down from heaven and behold, and visit this vine and the Vineyard which your right hand has planted". During this second continental Congress they drafted the declaration of independence, the articles of confederation, and adopted the official flag of the colonies soon to be the United States of America. A ragtag, inexperienced continental army upon receiving word of the new flag's design (but not yet receiving a flag) began to create w/scraps of uniforms, what was the first new flag flown in battle. This battle was fought in Rome, NY. This battle and the battles of Saratoga fought during Sept/Oct 1777 were the victories that launched the turning point of the war. These battles broke the British supply route, boosted the American morale, were some of the few times in history, British forces surrendered to battle, and persuaded the Dutch, French, Spanish, to join the American cause! We have such a rich history in our country, and here in NY State, many of the struggles and battles in the birthing of our country, and in the following war of 1812, were right in our own big backyard!

Now let's look back at Ps 80:14, to visit "the vine and the vineyard which Your right hand has planted." The Hebrew word for vineyard carries the meaning of rootstock; the Rev Duche', use of the text was to convey the "vine"(vineyard) was established by the strong hand of God Almighty. The symbolism of these United States, as a productive vineyard overflowing with a rich fruitful production to supply not only for ourselves but also for others in the world is not lost. We are the planting of the Lord, to do his work to reach the lost world, to rescue the oppressed, to set free those in bondage and bring the light of the gospel into a dark and foreign land. Under the banner of our flag, we have become recognized as a place of sanctuary.

But today we have lost our way, our battle emblem the American flag is in trouble, people no longer respect her nor do they want to honor her. So also our nation is in trouble, A nation that has provided opportunity to so many for so long, now has to worry about being torn apart from within. Our Lord God, is still on his throne and he is still in control. His word tells us that -"if my people which are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face; then I will hear from heaven and will heal their land". As we celebrate this Fourth of July and our mind reflects upon the land of our birth and the great nation that she is - Pray for these United States, let us collectively repent for our national sin, seeking God the Father and asking for his grace. Judgment will come and God must be just to be righteous, but a contrite spirit and a heart of repentance carry great weight with our Heavenly Father. I'll close with the lyrics from another song; (envision Kate Smith with her big voice) "God bless America land that I love, stand beside her and guide her through the night with a light from above. . . ."

Blessings brothers and sisters in Christ



Grief Ministry ~ Laura Schafer

Three Things to Remember about Grief

We worship a sovereign and powerful God. We belong to Him and nothing happens to us by chance. That's good news, right!? However, while grieving that thought alone, might make the pain even worse. Let's look at what Mary and Martha said, "Lord, if you had been here my brother wouldn't have died." They knew Jesus could have stopped their brother from dying and didn't and more than likely, like us thought why?? Thoughts like this could leave us angry.

We need to also think about:

Jesus defeated death. That means those who die in Christ are more alive than ever and are experiencing life, joy and glory beyond what we can imagine. Our loved one is in God's very presence. We may think God didn't heal or protect our loved one, but in fact God has healed and protected them in a fuller, deeper more permanent way. When we know our loved one is alive, free and worshipping Jesus face to face it helps to lessen our sadness.

We can have hope while we grieve. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 tells us "Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words." Scripture doesn't say we shouldn't grieve; we are to grieve differently than those with no hope. Even Jesus wept. The sorrow of missing a loved one is incredibly painful, but our separation is only temporary for those who die in Christ, for those who grieve in Christ. We will see them again.

God is Immanuel. In the midst of our grief, we must remember God is Immanuel-God with us. God walks every step of our grief journey with us. What we need most on our journey is God Himself. As our heavenly Father gently holds us in His loving arms, our love for Him will grow, our faith and trust will deepen, and even in the midst of our worse heartache we will praise Him with deep and true joy. This is something the Lord helps us do by the Holy Spirit, through His Word, prayer and fellowship with fellow believers. Grief is brutally hard, the pain and hurt is deep. But the Lord has broken death's power and His children who have died are with Him, AND He is with us. Soon, we will be together with Him AND our loved ones. That removes death's sting. In our deepest grief with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can hang on to Jesus and grieve with the hope that His death and resurrection bought for us.



Womens Ministry *~ Wendy Falzano*

Greetings to my River Community Church Family.

I was asked to share a little about myself for this publication of the newsletter. I love this idea and look forward to the future sharing of the other leaders and members of the RCC family.

I will start off by saying I am here and who I am by the grace of a faithful God to an undeserving and often faithless servant. I am forever grateful I am redeemed because of our Father's love in sending his flawless son Jesus to die for my sins. It is because of what He has done for me that I have the hope of Heaven and spending eternity with my God. He alone is worthy of our praise and glory forever. Amen!

The LORD has brought me through almost 60 years on this earthly journey. Living in the flesh, I have been prone to wander, but he has always brought me back.

He has blessed me with my husband Terry, a God loving Christian man the last 17 years of this journey. Together we have battled cancer and the loss of two children, Amber Haley at 28 years old and Jordan Falzano at 29. We have walked through the hardest times of our lives together and try to be diligent about keeping God as the major cord in the rope we cling to and the third person in our marriage.

My Life Verses if I were to have to choose:

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

We are blessed to have as part of our family another son and daughter and their spouses and five grandchildren. (You have probably seen me with Cecelia at church or at the café serving coffee. She is now living with her family in Cape Vincent, as well.)

Prior to moving to Cape Vincent, we lived south of Albany. I was raised and lived most of my life in the Saugerties, NY area. While growing up I attended a Dutch Reformed church, 3 different Baptist Churches, a Methodist Church and a large non-denominational church. It is not that I church "hop" but God brought me to different churches at different times of my life to be fed and to serve. I have developed long lasting relationships with many I have met and look forward to us all being reunited in the eternal Church. If asked what denomination I am, I respond, I am a Christian and belong to the Church of Jehovah.

I have attended and facilitated various bible studies and served in whatever capacity God placed me. I love fellowshiping with women and promoting women's ministry. I have served as Treasurer and Financial Secretary, Sunday School teacher and Trustee at past churches. I am currently serving as Treasurer and Trustee at RCC and co-chair to the Women's Ministry. I love most outdoor activities and love to keep busy but also enjoy some down time reading, knitting or crocheting. I love playing games and try not to be competitive or serious as life itself is serious enough most times. I think we need to learn from our mistakes and laugh whenever we can.

I believe God has given us all a calling and purpose in life but he also wants us to find the joy in Him and all He has created. So my continued goal in life is to be still long enough to hear his voice and be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, grabbing glimpses of His Sovereignty and faithfulness, look to experience Him daily and enjoy this journey He brings me through.



Breaking The Chains Biblical Recovery Ministry

~ Ken & Michelle Kavanagh

Sweeping Up The Hidden Pieces

*17 For nothing is secret that will not be revealed,
nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light.*
(Luke 8:17)

Several years ago we had broken some glass on the porch. My husband had cleaned it up and was sure he had swept up all of the pieces. A couple of weeks later as I was moving furniture around on the porch, I found a couple of pieces of glass hidden underneath a small dresser. As I looked around, I found a few smaller pieces as well. If these were stepped on with bare feet it would have cut one of us and cause some major pain. As I swept up the few pieces of glass, some thoughts came to mind.

When we go through life, we can easily become broken and shattered by different situations and problems. Some things we are able to shake off, but others we are not. When we come to Jesus, He cleans up much of the shattered pieces that we give to Him. Yet, there are those pieces we may not see that remain hidden. Sometimes we may find a few pieces in the smallest corners of our heart and only become aware of them from the cut they give us when touched. Other times we may step on the bigger pieces, cutting ourselves and hindering our spiritual walk from the cut. This could be a situation or someone from the past we thought we had dealt with and forgave. However when a similar situation happens again, we feel the cut and find ourselves sifting through painful or irritated emotions. Sometimes we may even see someone who had hurt us in the past and though we don't think about the situation any longer, this person triggers certain emotions within us such as anger, rejection, jealousy, fear etc.

When we come across these hidden pieces of broken glass within us, we must surrender it to the Lord immediately so we don't continue stepping on them and cutting ourselves, causing unnecessary pain. There is always the risk of an infection from the cuts which can cause us to become even sicker with the emotions it brings up. Matthew 6:14-15 states the following:

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Forgiveness is a must when we are trying to heal or we risk reinfecting ourselves and becoming worse off than before. Sometimes we may think we've forgiven and gotten over a certain situation or how others have treated us in the past, but it isn't until we step on that piece of glass that was hidden (or shoved down) that we realize we truly aren't fully healed. Maybe pride rises up when we feel we can do something better alone as opposed to asking for help when it's needed. Irritation might rise up when others disagree with us. Or rejection might come to the surface when our ideas aren't accepted and used. If not taken care of, it can cause more harm to us and be a stumbling block in our spiritual walk.

Have you come across some "hidden" pieces of glass within yourself that you thought were swept up and removed long ago? Don't be discouraged! The work the Lord did within you back then was a mighty work. This new occurrence just means you have found some hidden pieces that need to be swept up and removed.

Get with the Lord today and ask Him to expose any hidden sin that needs to be removed. If you have stepped on a hidden piece, it is now exposed to you so you must surrender it to Him to be removed. Sometimes, when it's stepped on just right, those hidden pieces can cause major damage and pain. So when they are discovered, surrender it quickly so the Lord can remove it and save you from more severe damage that could occur.

7 Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.
(1 Peter 5:7)

Missions

~ *Pat Dennis*

From Seth and Kaitlyn Sanford upon their return to Konomala:

Settling in went fine. But our minds felt like oatmeal when it came to language ability. We knew it would take time to get back to where we were before leaving ... but wow.

Our initial weeks were all over the place. We had a bunch of community events happening one after another. It became normal to head out the door in the morning, then an hour later find out that there is an all day event that we needed be at. Actually, it's surprisingly fun to walk for a while in the sun, then sit on the same piece of bamboo for 9 hours, then walk back ... oh wait, did I say "fun"?

The idea of having any rhythm in life felt like a distant hope. We looked under most of the pieces of bamboo we were sitting on ... but no rhythm.

That is until the last number of weeks. Even with a couple all day bamboo-sitting events on the weekends, a collapsed septic tank, and some other random fun stuff ... God graciously granted us a stretch of time where things seem to have settled down and we can keep chipping away at learning a language and culture.

We are beyond thankful for the friendships that God has given us out here. We have great friends as teammates, and we have great friends within our community. It would be a lot harder to endure on the daily without the people that God has around us.

All that being said ... we are experiencing the hardest days that we've ever had here in Konomala. We've had stressful times, sickness, troubles with our houses etc. etc. But none of that compares with the last few days.

On Thursday morning we were startled to hear someone yelling out our names in panic. We rushed to see what had happened. With no explainable cause, one of our best friends, Token, had woken up that morning at 5:30 a.m., became nauseous, and collapsed at 6 a.m. Ten minutes later we found him laying on the ground without a pulse.

We had just been with him the night before joking and laughing like normal. We, along with all of our friends here, are really struggling with the loss of Token. We're struggling with the reality that our dear and close friend is gone. We're struggling with knowing that he probably died trusting in his religious tradition to save him. We're struggling to rest in our Father's goodness ... wondering how He could have allowed this to happen. We're struggling to see the bigger picture with the dread of Token's eternity in the back of our minds.

We aren't just on some tropical adventure in the Pacific. This is our home where we have deep friendships with amazing people. We have huge dreams about what God could do in all of our lives together. It feels devastating to lose Token.

We are in a war. We have an enemy who will use any and all strategies to destroy the work that God is doing. We don't know the reasons. We're heart broken. But we know that God is good. He never designed things to work this way. One day it will all be good again. We have hope. We have purpose. We have Him. We always knew that something like this could happen. But to Token ... this suddenly.

Pray for us and our friends here as we all grieve together.

Pray that we get chances to talk about truth and keep pointing people to real hope.

Pray that people in our community become more hungry to know God because of this.

Pray that we can show love like Jesus did; and that we can offer truth on a heart level like He did.



Weekly Ministry Schedule

Sunday:

Youth Group - 6:00pm in the Sanctuary

Tuesday:

Adult Bible Study - 12:30pm in the fellowship hall
Breaking The Chains Biblical Recovery Ministry - 6:30pm in the fellowship hall

Wednesday:

Walking Group - 9:00am and 6:00pm under the carport

Thursday:

Young Adult Bible Study - 6:00pm on Zoom.
Men's Bible Study - 7:00pm at the home of Sunny Mitchell.

Farmer's Market

Fridays - Farmer's Market from 4 - 7pm - Volunteers are needed!
Sign up with Wanda Collins.

Upcoming Ministry Fellowship

Men's Breakfast - The next Men's Ministry breakfast will be held Saturday, July 10th at 9:00am.

Women's Ministry - The next gathering for The Circle will be held Saturday, July 24th at 10:00am

Upcoming Events For August

Ice Cream Social
Raingutter Regatta

"Life At The River" Photo Board

Check out our "Life at The River" photo board in the hall outside of the fellowship hall!

If you have photos of church events and activities you would like to share, bring them to the office or email them to lschafer@riverchurchnny.com

RCC Rummage and Bake Sale

RCC RUMMAGE & BAKE SALE
FRIDAY, 7/16 9-5
SATURDAY, 7/17 9-2

Don't forget your reusable bag

THINGS TO KNOW
Donations will be accepted:
Mon. 7/12- Wed. 7/14 from 10-2
Wed. 7/14 from 5:30-7 PM
Thurs. 7/15 from 9:30-2:30

All items need to be clean and in working condition.

NO electronics will be accepted.

NAME:
CONTACT NUMBER:
PUT COMPLETED FORM IN THE LOBBY BOX

Volunteers get first picks of merchandise

WE NEED YOUR HELP

- I can help set up tables Wed. 7/14 @ 7
- I can set up Thurs. 7/15
- I can bake for the sale
- I can Cashier Friday
- I can Cashier Saturday
- I can clean up Saturday

Congratulations Graduates!



Jacob Burns

Noah Flack

Danny Moore

Dominic Questel



American Red Cross Blood Drive

Blood Drive
River Community
Church of Clayton
Fellowship Hall

Wednesday, July 14, 2021
10:00am - 3:00pm

Please call 1-800-RED-CROSS or go online to redcrossblood.org to schedule your appointment to donate.
Use sponsor code: RiverCommunityChurch

Appointments are encouraged and appreciated. Walk-ins welcome!

Can You Guess Who These Elders Are?




What I love about RCC
by Lauren Whitney

At the top of the list of things I love about this church is Pastor Sarah's preaching. Close behind is the freshness of atmosphere and refreshing attitude of believers who care about each other.



- 07/04 Tom Augliano
- 07/07 Jaqualynn Collins
- 07/10 Thomas Collins
- 07/21 Sandy Walts

