

explore GOOD™

Jamie Radtke: Explore God program unites a diverse RVA

The following article was posted to the Richmond-Times Dispatch Opinion section on Saturday, October 8, 2016 at 10:30 pm

Americans are deeply divided. Perspectives on gun control, gay marriage, immigration, race, law enforcement, politics, education, welfare, warfare, religious freedoms, and the economy don't so much divide as splinter us into groups that have less and less in common.

And yet, amid the disparity and infighting so rampant in our country today, something unprecedented is happening right here in Richmond: Explore God.

The breadth, diversity, and unity of the Richmond Explore God Community Outreach Initiative is remarkable. Nearly 150 churches across Greater Richmond are defying divisions, instead uniting in an unprecedented city-wide outreach to invite the city's 1.2 million residents to explore the God that transcends our divisions.

Through my own political involvement and through personal family experiences, I've come to see those broken, hurting, and searching for hope up close and in a very personal way. Particularly as I interacted with young adults — those aged 18 to 35 — I have seen and heard clearly that they are looking for answers that go deeper than political soundbites, social media quips and drive-by entertainment. They are hungry for substantive conversations, meaningful truth, and authentic relationships.

Inside...

Mission to Virginia.....	Page 2
Impact Jerusalem News.....	Page 2
Housing Families First	Page 2
New Members.....	Page 4
October 19th Dinner Menu.....	Page 4
Our Church	Page 4

(Continued on page 3)

Feature: Mission to Virginia

Mission to Virginia

By: Bobby Carter

Now that fall is upon us, it's time for Mission to Virginia, that day that falls right between eating too much candy, and eating too much turkey.

Mission to Virginia is a day where we serve God by serving others in our community. Fairmount has been participating in Mission to Virginia since 2007.

This year Mission to Virginia will be on November 12th. Projects normally consist of winterizing houses, raking leaves, cleaning gutters, painting houses and minor home repairs.

Signups are on October 9th and 16th in the front foyer of the church. If you know of a person in our community that needs help, or if you'd like to volunteer to work, please complete a signup form.

Remember, this may be the only opportunity we get to share God's love with these neighbors, so save the date and get your whole family involved! ■



The Impact Jerusalem Mission Team is Fairmount's local ministry that helps others right here in our own community.

Jerusalem ministry partners include:

- Feed His Sheep (formerly Freedom House)
- Housing Families First (Hilliard House)
- CARITAS
- Habitat for Humanity
- MCEF
- Pregnancy Resource Center
- Gospel Jail Ministry
- Mission to Virginia
- Mission to Fairmount
- BLOCK party

Although these partners are each different in nature, they all share the same goal of helping others and introducing them to Christ through community service. ■

Housing Families First

The mission of Housing Families First is to provide families experiencing homelessness the tools to achieve stability. The goal is not only to assist families in finding permanent housing, but also to ensure that each family has access to the supportive services necessary to achieve long term housing stability. **Hilliard House** is an interim home for up to 10 adults and 20 children who are on their way to a permanent home but need a safe and supportive stopover. At the shelter, parents who face hefty housing barriers gain more control over their lives and work toward self-sufficiency. During their shelter stay, many adults gain the academic and vocational training necessary for employment. Parents who have lost custody of their children are able to regain custody. Untreated mental illness is also addressed.



During the month of October, the Jerusalem Impact Team will be collecting new pillows, and new/used blankets and twin sheets for Hilliard House. These items can be dropped off at the church office.

explore God™

Over the past year, I've gotten to know a woman who, along with her young children, stayed with our family while she tried to get on her feet. We spent a lot of time talking about the challenges she faced — homelessness, searching for a decent job with minimal experience, and working enough hours to provide for her family without sacrificing her role as a mother to her children. Motivational memes and political barbs are equally useless to her as she fights her way through every day.

And she is not alone. I realized through these experiences that real and lasting change in people and in our communities doesn't happen through public policy, but through personal investment in relationships immediately around us. Transformation and unity isn't going to come to our cities through politics, but through the church and people in the church.

The outcome of those experiences is a Richmond-based nonprofit called WE Believe, aimed at using technology and intentional relationships to reach young adults with a transforming message of faith.

Explore God is a city-wide initiative that WE Believe is bringing to Richmond that allows young adults to engage in casual conversations with Christians about the big questions they have about faith, God, and spirituality.

As WE Believe began reaching out to area churches to enlist their participation in the Explore God outreach, we were amazed to see the breadth and diversity of churches that signed on all across Richmond. We have over 13 denominations participating

and the diversity doesn't stop at denominations.

We have city churches, suburban churches, and country churches. And we are a genuine reflection of our city, with African American churches, Latino churches, white churches, Arabic Christian churches, college students, internationals, and business employees all participating.

The tie that binds everyone together is the Apostle's Creed, one of the earliest and most basic declarations of Christian doctrine. In other words, all participants agree on how salvation, redemption, and relationship are achieved in Jesus.

Differences are set aside in favor of exploring the larger truths of God. And in this way, Explore God is achieving something that politicians, lobbyists, and special interest groups have failed to do in years: stand together upon our common ground — no matter how small — for the sake of offering hope to young people.

So what is Explore God? It is a way to engage people in real, meaningful discussions about some of life's "big questions" — the meaning of life, the existence of God, why God allows pain and suffering, and the major tenets of Christianity.

Because of the very nature of the questions being asked, people are often rightfully wary of cliches and non-answers. In today's world, authentic interactions can seem hard to come by. Explore God is designed to provide safe places where people can participate in meaningful conversations and where varied opinions are always valued and encouraged.

Churches are participating in a seven-week sermon series, hosting casual discussion groups, or, in many cases, both.

Pastors who choose to preach on the seven Explore God topics are free to preach on those topics according to their own unique gifts and training, and in accordance with the particular DNA of their church.

More than 300 small-group discussions are being held all over the Richmond Metro area in locations as diverse as the groups that will host them — restaurants, coffee shops, bars, libraries, college campuses, jails, business offices, hospitals, homes, and neighborhood clubhouses.

The magnitude of change that our cities need to bring healing, wholeness, and community is not going to happen through political solutions. Our very own Richmond chief of police, Alfred Durham, knows this to be true. It is why he embraces the Richmond Police Department Faith Leaders Partnership and attended a recent Explore God prayer event. He joins community leaders, business leaders, church leaders, parents, teachers, friends, and dozens of others who are stepping forward to spark change through a deeper understanding of faith, truth, meaning, and purpose in God.

RVA churches are leading by example by bridging denominational, racial, and geographical boundaries to bring a message of hope to our city. They are showing they can work together without forsaking the important doctrine of their individual churches. They are representing true community to us. They are showing us how to engage with people at the most personal level, meet their needs, and listen to their questions and heartaches.

And that's what this outreach is all about, at the end of the day: churches demonstrating unity and cooperation amid the brokenness all around us and inviting the city to explore the God that can transform lives and unite communities.

Jamie Radtke is president of WE Believe and a former candidate for the U.S. Senate. To learn more or to search for an Explore God church or small-group meeting near you, go to exploregod.com/finder and type "Richmond" in the search field. To learn more about the Richmond-based nonprofit WE Believe that brought Explore God to Richmond, go to webelieve.me. ■



NONPROFIT
AUTO
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
RICHMOND, VA
PERMIT #1479

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

P.O. Box 788
MECHANICSVILLE, VA 23111
PHONE: (804) 559-8070
FAX: (804) 559-8072
EMAIL:
INFO@FAIRMOUNTCHRISTIAN.ORG

The mission of Fairmount Christian Church:

To develop followers of Jesus who:

Love God,
Love People and
Introduce the world
to Christ



The Forecaster is
best viewed online @
fairmountchristian.org

Our Church: October 9, 2016

Welcome to our Newest Members...

Ann Perry transferred her membership on October 9th.

Wednesday Night Suppers Menu for October 19th

Roast Pork, mashed potatoes, peas, rolls, assorted desserts;
*Children's alternative: pizza

Serve & Clean Up:

Living Water & Salt & Light

Sign up for dinner using the yellow supper cards in the pew or chair backs or call the church office no later than noon on Monday.

Attendance & Giving

8:15 Worship Service: 131
Children's Worship: 1
9:30 Worship Service: 337
Children's Worship: 32
11:00 Traditional Worship: 184
Contemporary Worship: 219
Children's Worship: 77

Total: 981

Bible School: 573

Budget Requirements: \$41,653

Budget Receipts: \$34,086



Sermon Series Continues Sunday!

Your Church Staff:

Rick Raines - Senior Minister
Chris Santasiere - Associate Minister
Mike Langley - Associate Minister
Tracy Thomas - Worship/Music Minister
Kevin Tucker - Associate Worship Minister
Ashley Sears - Children's Director
Rose Williams - Early Childhood Director
Bob Massey - Business Administrator
Veronica Brewster - Office Manager
Jef Powell - Facilities & Grounds Manager
Barry Will - Technology Director
Chris Branch - Administrative Assistant
Carolyn Holmes - Administrative Assistant
Lauren McCormick - Administrative Assistant
Morgan McMullin - Administrative Assistant
Krista Barnes - Youth Min. Administrative Assistant
Crystal Griffin - Children's Administrative Assistant
Amber Grubbs - Children's Administrative Assistant
Kasey Ogden - Children's Administrative Assistant