

# Shady Grove United Methodist Church

October 25, 2021

## Dear Church family,

### First, a big thank you!

#### The Difference You Made through Discipleship

You made 16 baptisms and 35 confirmations possible. You enabled 45 children to enjoy “Discovery Through Adventure Island” hybrid VBS and 64 preschoolers to join Camp Pray and Play. You reminded kids how much their church loves them through several rounds of delivering 175 care packages, which included bendable Jesus and backpack tags. You got the band back together for 33 seniors through the relaunch of “**Just Older Youth**” activities, starting with the Richmond Trolley Tour. You enabled walking and biking groups to take shape through Adult Ministries. You are helping people find their place and discover ways to grow in faith through tools like “The Real Discipleship Survey” and “Finding Your Joy,” and through newly trained mentors.

Because of what you have done together, your church has an outdoor, mini-pavilion worship space--in the shady grove. *This is a terrific space for children, youth, and musical events, too!*

#### The Difference You Made in Our Community

You are the reason that Shady Grove and Christ Church Episcopal could offer “The Light of the World,” a drive-thru Christmas musical and drama presentation for our community. Carload by carload, our neighbors said what a difference this made for their families in an anxious Christmas season last year. You made it possible to offer relief for those who are long-term, at-home caregivers through our partnership with Naborforce, which provides insured care-givers for driving, chores, or company. You opened doors to our neighbors in the senior communities of Everleigh and The Westmont. You supported a summer-long, weekly youth bible study at MOD pizza!

You enabled luminaries, at back-to-school time, and a Gratitude Tree, at Thanksgiving, along Pouncey Tract Road to offer hope and joy in our community. You provide pastoral presence every Wednesday morning at 8 a.m. at the Nuckols/Twin Hickory Starbucks. So, there is always a cost-free, Christ-centered support for you, your friends, and your neighbors. You sent 19 youth out on mission once more through the Tri-Cities work camp in Petersburg, even as you’ve continued to support Operation Christmas Child, Sewing Seeds of Hope, and Shalom Farms. Through the Covid-fund, you financially helped a family of hourly-workers through sickness and quarantine.

Because of you, families in our community who are time-starved but focused on the spiritual development of their children have worship and formation opportunities to fit their schedules. The two hours between 9 and 11 a.m. are the most popular worship times. So, worship and Sunday School are offered at 9 a.m. and worship and **Children’s Own Worship** are offered at 10:30 a.m. Having young people head to Sunday School or COW after the Children’s Message in each service ensures they experience a warm welcome in our worship spaces.

#### The Difference You Made through Technology

Technology in the Fellowship Hall and Sanctuary are now integrated. Either space can act as overflow for the other. We are able to record worship from either space, edit, and broadcast on the web. In our on-the-move community, worship is a weekly touchstone which can be accessed anytime, anywhere. Technology has also been a key way in which you have supported the rich gift of music ministries.

## So, thank you!

Thank you for your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Thank you for generously coming together through September 30, 2021 to give \$660,000 to the General Fund and \$150,000 to the Caring for Our House Fund (which provides for the church mortgage and property care).

Last year, our focus was “Digging Deeper” through attention to discipleship, the needs of our surrounding community, and technology. Not only did God allow us to do a tremendous amount with last year’s focus, God enabled us to *learn* a tremendous amount. We learned about the depth and impact *disconnection* has had on our community. Frustration with *upheaval and uncertainty* has been, and is, palpable. We hear people saying, “I feel like I put my *intentions on hold*, and that’s been draining. *I long to make a difference.*” So, friends, God’s invitation to us at this time is to *Rise up!*

Where there is disconnection, we can offer *belonging*; where there is upheaval and uncertainty, we can offer a clear path to *become* who God calls us to be; where intentions have been put on hold, we can open the doors to *bless*. *Belong, Become, Bless. Rise up!*

In order to *Rise up!* our pledge commitment goals for 2022 are \$825,000 for the General Operating Fund and \$200,000 for the Caring for Our House Fund. Our Stewardship Campaign runs October 10 through November 14, 2021.

We envision *belonging* with God and each other through lives of *worship and hospitality* through

- Worship that is Blended at 9 a.m. and Traditional at 10:30 a.m.
- Contemporary Worship at 10:30 a.m. focusing on praise music and preaching
- Fellowship time to connect our church family between services and one shared, weekly message on the church campus each week
- Growing our skills of invitation and hospitality, on and off campus
- Newcomer classes which teach the foundations of worship, prayer, service, and fellowship
- Gifts of welcome to all newcomers at **Children’s Own Worship**
- Growing adult Sunday School classes in 2022 to enable families to meet both worship and learning/fellowship needs in the same morning.

We envision *becoming* with God and each other by *opening our lives to Jesus and lives of obeying Jesus* by

- Emphasizing that we cannot be spiritually mature without being emotionally mature<sup>1</sup>
- Helping our community to love neighbors through easy to understand relationship skills
- Year-round, drop-in weekly Bible study, available online after class each week
- Becoming at every age by
  - Welcoming and supporting our new Youth Director Rebecca King
  - Offering a faith-family focus to support faith development at home
- Becoming at every stage by
  - Training mature Christians for one on one discipleship with new Christians
  - Faith formation groups for learning, prayer, fellowship, interests, and music and arts

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Discipleship*

We envision *blessing* with God and each other through *generosity and service* by

- Making it clear that service to others and learning to follow Jesus go hand in hand
- Ensuring our members easily find ways to grow through service
- Emphasizing the importance of building relationships as we serve
- Supporting persons in getting financially free so they can pursue God's call to share joyfully

### See, it's already taking shape!

On October 10, we began a sermon series together called, "6 Commitments to Live Love and Love Life." That's what it's all about: Discovering and living the love of God by sharing, serving and connecting with all peoples. **Live Love, Love Life.** These commitments<sup>2</sup> will change your life, and you will love your life. That's God's promise! (If you've missed any, check online.) Here are the 6:

- Belonging through a Life of Worship
- Belonging through a Life of Hospitality
- Becoming through a Life of Opening to Jesus
- Becoming through a Life of Obeying Jesus
- Blessing through a Life of Generosity
- Blessing through a Life of Service

Thank you for your ministry of generosity through 2021. Now, we all are invited to hear God's call to "Rise Up!" There is exciting work to be done in 2022. In a time of recovery from disconnect, upheaval, and intentions put on pause, *what commitment will you make to God to Rise Up! through the belonging, becoming, and blessing that our community and world need now?*

*"But those who wait for the LORD's help find renewed strength; they rise up as if they had eagles' wings, they run without growing weary, they walk without getting tired." Isaiah 40:31*

Christ's love to you all,



Pastor Chris McLain



Pastor Beanie Kelly

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<sup>2</sup> Phil Maynard, *Disciple Like Jesus*