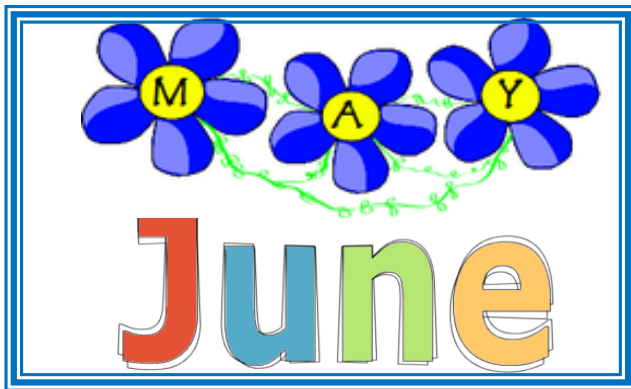


The Vine

News, Information and Inspiration from Royersford Baptist Church

Volume 52/Issue 3

May/June 2021



JESUS CHRIST
*is the same yesterday,
today and forever.*
Hebrews 13:8

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR



Often, people refer to Pentecost as the “birthday of the church.” I’ve been in churches that serve cake and ice cream on Pentecost! Pentecost is 50 days after Easter, and marks the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples and the church’s mission to the world began. This year, Pentecost falls on May 23 (here is your explicit permission to eat birthday cake during worship that day!)

Something I like to practice around birthdays is to look at the year (s) in review and see how I have changed. Sometimes, it is subtle changes- more gray hair or new habits. Sometimes the changes are quite profound- new job, survived a pandemic, and had a baby. Yet

despite these changes, there is still a core piece of me that is the same year after year.

The same can be said for the Church. Year after year on Pentecost, we can look back and see changes- more aging buildings, new ways of worship, new pastors, survived a pandemic, and new life! And yet at the core, the Church is still the same. Still centered on Christ, worshipping together, and serving God in all we do.

As we approach Pentecost this year, we are acutely aware of the many changes in RBC’s life- and the changes yet to come. But what we can absolutely depend on is that our core is still the same. We are still RBC, and we still seek to be a diverse, Christ-centered community where grace is abundant, growth is encouraged, and our love of God leads us to serve wherever we are called. And even better? We know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). I think that is worthy of cake and ice cream!

Pastor Sarah



Well RBC.... It has come to my attention that I am approaching my eight-year mark as the Director of Youth here, and let me tell you, I can not believe it! I have been reflecting on all the experiences, opportunities, adventures and challenges we have been through, and at this point, I could probably write a book about them. From the countless youth group nights to the many Reach Mission trips, along with the fundraiser events that tag along to each one. From the overnight retreats to the important conversations and even to the moments of silence... I find it hard to place value on this time, and often, if I am being honest, overlook it. These memories or marks of accomplishments (or failures) that I survived are much like the important letters and notes that I keep stored in a small box in my closet. Every now and then, I pull it out and I go through them and take time to remember and reflect.

And much like those letters, if you were to look in my office, hanging on the wall on the bulletin board, I have a collection of just about all the concerts, plays, musicals and events that I have attended of our Youth over the years. And after nearly eight years, that collection of papers has become quite large, and is fun to look through and mark all the accomplishments of our students over the years and the many things they have been involved in, and that I was able to be a witness to. And this April I got to add another to that pile when Bobby Fisher performed his Senior Recital at Eastern University. As I sat in St. David's Episcopal Church and listened to Bobby sing beautifully, it really hit me... "wow Ryan... you are getting OLD!" I probably have a handful of bulletins from Bobby's performances since he was a young high school student, and to watch him conclude his senior year at Eastern was powerful. Congrats to Bobby on his accomplishment!

This year has been tough, and it is easy and necessary to lament in the challenges, hurdles, and roadblocks that we have faced. But as I approach my eight-year mark with RBC, I am going to take this time to reflect and celebrate, in not only my experiences, successes and failures but in all the experiences, successes and failures of our Church, and our students that I have had the opportunity to walk along side, if even just for a small part of.

—Ryan Seckman

RBC's Contribution to Anti-Slavery Work

Who is my neighbor? Jesus' answer to that question has led our church into both local and global mission since our founding in 1879. Then and now we have recognized that "neighbor" includes people who are enslaved. At least two of our founding members had fought in the war to end slavery in the United States. Because the trafficking in people continues in many forms today, our struggle against it also continues. Locally we support the work of the Montgomery County Anti-Human Trafficking Coalition (MCAT). Globally we support International Ministries (IM) anti-trafficking initiatives. This includes our annual support of Rovaughna Richardson who is based in Ghana and partners with the Ghana Baptist Convention in work to rescue and empower survivors of "trokosi slavery." This is a form of ritual servitude in which girls, some as young as six years old, are taken by fetish priests to work as slaves in shrines for gods. The girl's servitude is said to be necessary to make amends for wrongs committed by someone in the girl's family.

Rovaughna initially located in Frankadua in the Volta Region working with trokosi survivors at the Baptist Vocational Training Center (BVTC). As her ministry developed, she began providing follow-up care, counseling and training to BVTC graduates living in Accra. How has RBC's support of Rovaughana made a difference in the lives of trokosi survivors? Rovaughna reports that four young women have now received full scholarships for Computer Coding and Programming while another nineteen have received eCounseling. These are some of our neighbors for whom we have helped to open more opportunities for a healthy and secure future.



Come Learn From Micah

The RBC Selectives Class is happy to announce that Bucky Sydnor in North Carolina will connect online with us on May 2, 9 and 16 to lead a Bible study in the book of Micah. The three sessions titled "Tough Love: Judgment and Hope in Micah" will start each Sunday at 11:00 a.m. Please join us for this stimulating examination of the prophet Micah's message to us.



The RBC Book Club meets on Zoom on the third Thursday of the month. Here is the list of upcoming selections and dates:

May 20: "The Beekeeper of Aleppo" by Christy Letteri

June 17: "The Bookwoman of Troublesome Creek" by Kim Michele Richardson

July 15: "A Tree Grows in Brooklyn" by Betty Smith

August 19: "The Girl from Jakarta" by Hester Keegan

Please contact Karen Mason for the Zoom link at K26mason@gmail.com

A Word (quite a few, actually) From Your Friendly Local Moderator – “Be Not Afraid”

According to www.openbible.info, there are at least 100 scripture references that use the phrase “be not afraid” or something similar. The word of encouragement is typically coming from God to humans – via dreams, visions, angels, prophets and apostles.

The past year has given us plenty of fear-inducing circumstances. A global pandemic featuring a new, highly contagious viral disease that behaves in a seemingly capricious manner, having no discernable effect on some, killing others quickly, sending others to long ICU stays, afflicting others with long-term debilitating symptoms whose duration no one yet knows. Economic disruption with severe effects on those who can least afford it, laying bare the gross inequities that have built up over decades and decades. Extreme political and philosophical division, fostered by social media phenomena that destroy the mutual trust needed to communicate and live as decent human beings. Social unrest in response to racial injustices that have grown out of stubbornly entrenched systems over centuries, and that have not yet been dislodged from our communal psyches and ways of life. It goes on...

RBC has not been immune to this. We are all seeing and feeling all of the above. Layered on top of that, the disruption of the pandemic has intensified trends, especially financial, that make us wonder how we can continue to exist as a community of faith for the long haul.

It’s enough to make any reasonable person

afraid, but it’s more than that.

When we were searching for a new pastor, part of the process involved searching our souls. We observed that for many of us RBC is a lifeline – I’ve often said that wild horses couldn’t drag me away from my beloved church community. We love being together, we love worshiping together, we love learning together, and we love caring for each other. People should be flocking to this! Instead, we are slowly but unmistakably shrinking in membership. What’s up with that?? We realized that all of those things we love tend to be “inward-facing” and if we want to be more relevant to our surrounding community (and who knows, maybe in the process welcome some additional kindred spirits), we need to add more outward-facing characteristics to our life together.

In some very important ways the current pandemic and all of its effects may be helping us to kick-start that outward-facing change. How? By stripping away the option of continuing to do things as we have been.

We’ve seen a financial crisis coming down the pike. We’ve undertaken a step-by-step, prayerful, logical program to examine the options available to us to deal with it. It’s become clear that due to a combination of long-term trends (losing membership and financial base faster than we are adding new) and the pandemic, our financial resources aren’t sufficient to maintain our previous spending patterns over the long haul. We’ve looked at other income options. Cell towers – null set. Large-scale renters – null set. Selling the vacant land behind the buildings – null set. Event venue business – there’s potential for income, but not enough to close the gap. Draconian staff cuts would rob us of crucial leadership and worship resources – we don’t view that as a life-sustaining option.

What about the physical plant? We spend ~\$120,000 per year to occupy the current buildings. Is it crucial to our existence and ministry to continue to occupy the space we are in?

In exploring options we’ve found that it appears (Con’t on page 5)

(Con't from page 4)

likely we could sell the current property, pay off the mortgage and have a tidy sum left over to help us get into more manageable and less expensive premises. But, given the current real estate market, the most likely buyer is a residential developer. So, although this option presents a potential path away from financial crisis, some of us would feel queasy at the prospect of contributing to more suburban sprawl.

But something much more interesting may be taking shape! Pastor Sarah has brought us into contact with a consulting group, Sympara, who specializes in helping churches just like us to “re-purpose” our property for ministry to the community. Sympara (which, by the way, has deep American Baptist connections) is working with HumanGood, a local developer of affordable housing. Sympara and HumanGood bring ideas, experience, and financial resources to the table. We are about to embark on an exploratory process with Sympara to see what kind of options may be feasible with our property. It may or may not involve selling the building; it may or may not involve moving to other premises. There’s a wide range of possibilities, and the process will help us to hone in on what would make the most sense for RBC and our community in terms of both finances and ministry.

The folks at Sympara are very optimistic, even as they are fully aware of our financial and time challenges. While the exploratory process is expected to take about 3 months, Sympara has assured us that if at any point it becomes clear that there’s not a feasible scenario, they will give us a “quick no” so we can move on with other options. Leadership Council is forming a group of 8 folks who will spearhead the work with Sympara and keep the congregation informed. In addition to members from Leadership Council, we will be looking for a couple of folks from the congregation at large to help with this – if you are feeling called to participate, let me know.

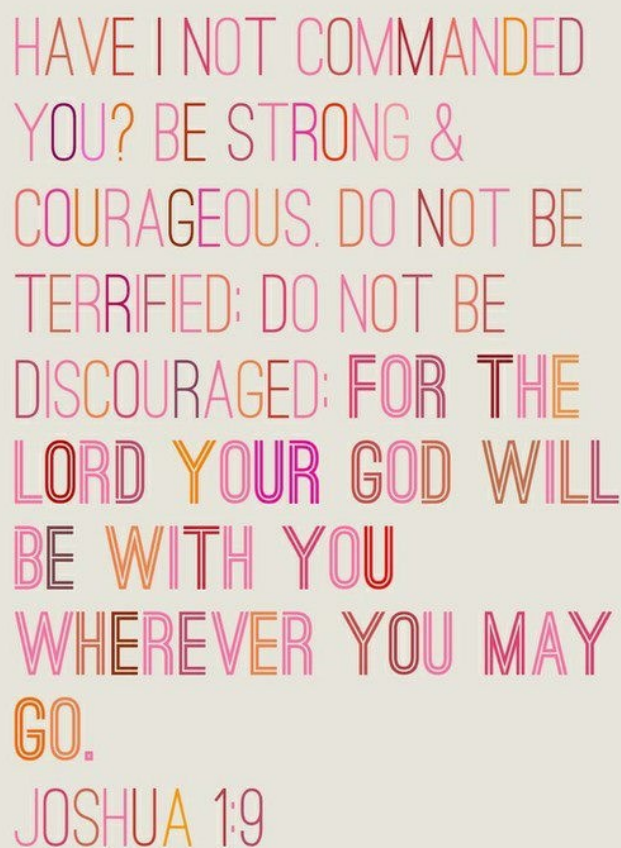
While it’s too soon to say exactly what this might look like, it holds out the prospect of *both* a path out of financial crisis *and* a path toward being a more outward-facing congregation. How wonderful would that be? As one of our beloved former staffers would have said: “That’s a spooky God thing!”

In the meantime, we have obtained a forgivable Payroll Protection Plan loan of \$32,000 which will extend the time period before we begin to experience financial crisis. As long as giving continues as current and we don’t have huge unexpected expenses foisted on us, we should be OK until late spring of 2022.

We serve a God who calls us to participate in building the Beloved Community among and around us. In the face of all of the daunting circumstances in our world and in our lives, God’s encouragement calls to us through scripture: “Be not afraid!”

Blessings!

Mark Hite



HAVE I NOT COMMANDED
YOU? BE STRONG &
COURAGEOUS. DO NOT BE
TERRIFIED; DO NOT BE
DISCOURAGED; FOR THE
LORD YOUR GOD WILL
BE WITH YOU
WHEREVER YOU MAY
GO.
JOSHUA 1:9

SUPPORTING FREE RURAL MEDICAL CAMPS IN NEPAL

During the pandemic we have learned a lot about the need for access to hospitals and the value of medical equipment and supplies. Recently, we have been blessed with numerous locations where we can be vaccinated. But what if you had to WALK to a medical clinic? How far would you be able to walk?

In Nepal, there are people in remote villages who would have to walk for days to get medical help. Long-time RBC members, Bucky and Carole Sydnor, were missionaries in Nepal where they worked with HDCS – Human Development & Community Services. HDCS’s mobile medical camps go to Nepal’s remote villages providing free medical services in rural areas where many patients have never seen a doctor.

These mobile medical camps assess the health of a village including its levels of sanitation and hygiene, they do pre-natal check-ups that help reduce mother and child mortality rates and offer health education. The medical personnel share the message of the Gospel and make God’s love known in tangible ways. They address preventable conditions like malnutrition, pneumonia, worms and anemia. Long term, these camps will reduce the spread of communicable life-threatening diseases like tuberculosis, typhoid and diarrhea.

Annually, this project costs \$17,675, but your gift of \$25, \$50 or \$100 helps to provide valuable immunizations for children, life-saving medications, lab tests and critical medical supplies for a mobile medical camp. To give to this mission project go to: <https://www.internationalministries.org/white-cross-nepal-hospital-and-medical-camp-supplies/>



How sick people are taken to the hospital or a nearer free health clinic.



Waiting in line at a free medical clinic.



Seeing a doctor at a free medical clinic.

Plan to Resume In-Person Worship

At RBC, we have been making our COVID-19 safety decisions guided by scripture, data, and science. We are repeatedly instructed by scripture to love our neighbor; right now, that means keeping our neighbors safe, slowing the spread of the virus, and making informed decisions on how and when to gather in person again. Data tells us that the virus and its variants is still spreading at dangerous rates and that our hospital capacities are limited. Science tells us that we can carry the virus without showing symptoms and can unknowingly spread it to other people, but we can also slow the spread and keep one another safer by limiting our in-person contact with others, maintaining physical distancing and wearing masks when in public, and not gathering in large groups.

RBC continues to monitor COVID-19 in our area to determine when we can safely resume our in-person worship services. Leadership Council has identified protocols for us to follow at that time. When those services resume, we will offer worship both in person and online assuring that those who feel uncomfortable attending, who are unable to pass the health screening, or who live in other areas can continue to participate online.

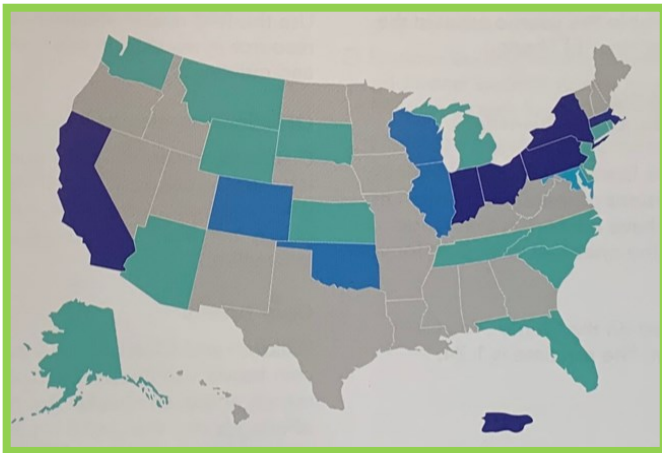
The CDC states that limited indoor gatherings with persons outside one's own household may be relatively safe if all three of the following conditions can be met:

1. Fewer than 5% of the people who are tested in the county test positive. [**MONTCO's current positivity rate is 7.74% and does not meet that metric.**]
2. The 7-day average of new daily cases in the county is less than 10 in 100,000. [**MONTCO's 7-day average is 28.1 and does not meet that metric.**]
3. ICU beds in the region are filled to less than 70% of capacity. [**MONTCO's ICU capacity is now filled 82% and does not meet that metric.**] This data is on April 26.

The Council will keep the congregation informed as it monitors the data. Once MONTCO meets the three metrics for two consecutive weeks, RBC will resume in-person worship in phases. In Weeks 1, 2 and 3 RBC staff will be in the church building to lead the worship that the rest of us will access at home online. In Weeks 4, 5 and 6 we will all be able to sign-up to worship in person in the church building. At present, our indoor gatherings are limited to 50 people. We will be asked to register our intent to be present and indicate if we will be bringing children. The nursery and RBC Kids programming will be available for infants and children. Council will conduct a comprehensive review at the end of Week 6.



RBC has been bringing emergency relief and development aid to individuals, families and communities through One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) since the end of World War II. Last year alone, our American Baptist combined gifts to OGHS provided \$1,541,293 for emergency relief responses to COVID-19, hurricanes, wildfires, landslides, typhoons, tornadoes, earthquakes, civil unrest and fires in the 28 states and 41 countries shown on these maps. Our gifts also funded development grants to address chronic needs related to water, food, shelter, refugees, migrants, survivors of human trafficking and civil conflict.



Our gifts are not wasted or misused. The American Baptist World Relief Committee and Relief Officer review all aid and project requests. The approved grants reach the recipients directly through a network of partners with oversight provided by the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, American Baptist International Ministries, Baptist World Aid and Church World Service.

Let love flow. Thank you for making love visible through a generous gift to the One Great Hour of Sharing. We can give online, by text or by check payable to Royersford Baptist Church with the memo "OGHS."

"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty, shade from the sun, shelter from the wind, For the Compassionate One guides them, takes them to the best springs."

Isaiah 49:10

FROM THE GREEN TEAM: Why Go Vegan?

I believe almost everyone knows that I am vegan. It is a calling for me, and goes beyond any “reasons”, although they form the backbone of my decision. I have never shared why I am vegan, and thought it might be informative to do so. My journey began decades ago as I read the information about animal products. My first step was to have “Meatless Mondays”. I did this for 25 years. So, in those years I was able to collect and experiment with a number of recipes. But there came a point that my awareness about eating animal products didn’t set well with me anymore. At a Peace Rally in Cleveland, I came across a table run by Mercy for Animals. There were about 50 brochures with detailed information. I asked them to guide me to one brochure that would lay out the reasoning from their point of view, which they did. I read it all the way home on the train, and at the end of the train ride, I decided that I did not want to be a part of this anymore. I was done with meat. Mind you, I loved meat. I would rather eat meat than dessert (no kidding). But it was very clear to me. So, what were my reasons? In a nutshell? Why did I go vegan?

1) For the Animals.

Preventing the exploitation of animals was key in my decision. Most animals are raised in CAFO’s (Confined Animal Feeding Operations). There are approximately 17,000 of these around the country, but no one actually knows how many. There are more than 9 billion animals, 99% of the animals in the US, confined in these horrific conditions. Take for example the chickens: they live a gruesome life covered with feces, overcrowded and unable to walk due to being bred for large breasts, broken bones protruding. Cattle live in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, with substandard feed contributing to health problems. I have CD’s of videos taken inside these facilities. They are very hard to watch. I could go on, but you get the idea.

2) For the Environment.

There are so many ways that animal farming hurts the environment. First of all, those CAFO’s mentioned in point #1 each produce as much feces as the entire city of Philadelphia. (Not to mention methane gas from the cow farts.) But it is handled poorly, contaminating the water, the air, the workers and the people who live nearby. Another detriment is that in order to produce one pound of beef, it takes 2,000 gallons of water and a gallon of gasoline, and destroys 35 pounds of topsoil due to erosion. That’s only one pound! Also, many tropical forests are leveled to clear land for either grazing cattle, or to produce crops to feed them. The newly cleared land cannot absorb water easily, increasing runoff and erosion. The loss of these tropical forests is also a loss of habitat for many species of birds, insects, and animals. I haven’t even touched on the transportation, packaging, refrigeration, and storage it takes to keep up with animal products.

3) For the People

I have already mentioned one way that people are harmed – especially those living near the CAFO’s. The air, water, land, and their very living conditions are all contaminated with the effects of the farming facility. Another aspect is that animal farming disproportionately and negatively affects the poorest people of the world. For example – their farmland is now being developed for animals or animal food, forcing the already impoverished populations to grow cash crops for animal feed, rather than food for themselves. This causes more malnutrition in an already difficult situation.

4) For our Health.

Many studies have been independently conducted worldwide, showing that a vegan diet has enough protein and nutrients to sustain a healthy lifestyle. Even more, it helps to reduce blood pressure, promote weight loss, reduce cholesterol, have lower rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer. When I was choosing to go vegan, I did not even think about the health benefits, but within a day or 2, I noticed that I felt “lighter” in general, and had more energy. For me, that was a side benefit, but I know that for many, that is the main motivation for going vegan. Of course, a person going vegan needs to make sure they are eating the healthy vegan foods to make these changes occur.

So, what is the point of all this? I am certainly not expecting that anyone would go vegan, just from this article. My point is to help you be informed about the impact of your choice of food, so you can choose your diet with a clearer understanding. If I had any suggestion, it would be to maybe try one meal a week, without animal products. Or even just try one dish. Before the pandemic, we had a group that gathered every once in a while to celebrate a different culture, and their music, their traditions, and of course their food, vegan style. We never lacked for deliciousness, or laughter, or good conversation. When it’s time, if you would like to be a part of that, to experience vegan food in a fun setting, watch for a notice in our newsletter. If you would like more information in any of these areas, please let me know. Together, we can explore how eating a plant based diet can help the animals, the people of the world, our own health, and, especially, the environment. — Kay RolfsMassaglia

What's happening at RBCNS?

As our year comes to a close, we can look back and be proud of all that we have done this year. We created a virtual program with a social meetup in the back parking lot and have had some good laughs! Our recorded crafts for the kids to create at home along with our live Zooms have been a hit! During the month of April, our Pre-K talked about the weather, Earth Day, and Dinosaurs and our 2s and 3s learned about Earth Day and Unicorns. At our social meetups we bring your bike to school, eat lunch with the teacher and making bird feeders. As May approaches, we will be grateful for all our Moms and Mother figures in our lives! We will practice for graduation and say good-bye to a crazy but a fun year!

RBCNS would like to thank all of the members of the church for supporting us during this turbulent year. We would also like to recognize Elle Crist for keeping our school clean, Charlie Denning and his crew for all their technology expertise, Terry Myers support of anything we needed, George Reitnour with making sure our school is operating the correct way, Pastor Sarah for being an ear to bounce things off of, Leadership Council for their support in the extra programs we are running and of course Millie Collins for her love and support of the school! Without all of you, RBCNS wouldn't be what it is today! So, "Thank you, RBC Community!"

Below are some pictures over the last few weeks of some exciting times at RBCNS! We are looking forward to our last month of the 2021-2022 School Year! We still have a few spots left in our classrooms for the Fall of 2021. Our 3-yr old program is full and we are starting a waiting list. If you or someone you know would be interested in our school, please have them contact Melissa Moffa at 610-948-4584 or director@rbcms.org.



Dinosaur Fossils



Earth Day Pollution
Science Experiment



Bikes & Scooters
Social Meetup



Bird Feeder
Social Meetup



Easter Egg Hunt
Social Meetup



U for Unicorn Day



MAY BIRTHDAYS:

Cynthia Strosahl	1
Isabelle Crist	4
Ginny Dearolf	10
Brendan MacCoy	13
Allison Fisher	20
Jack Parker	21
Lorri Engstrom	24
Norah Turley	24
Carina Cifelli	27
Philip Covelli	28
Janelle Trulson	30

JUNE BIRTHDAYS:

Jose Ortiz	1
Josh Kagi	5
Sharon Smart	5
Samuel Savage	8
Maxwell Theusch	10
Janelle Miller	15
Ron O'Neil	21
Elliott Cifelli	23
Maggie Hite	23
Tommy MacCoy	27
Amy Smith	28



Curt and Emily Parker	May 1	Stan and Cathy Slade	June 16
Grace Herstine and Phillip Covelli	May 17	Ralph and Dolly Eichelberger	June 18
Bob and Ginny Dearolf	May 17	Paul and Sandi Rosenberry	June 27
Charlie and Judy Denning	May 22	Alex and Lara Cifelli	June 30

If there are any additions/changes that need to be made to the birthday and anniversary list, please contact the church office.

Royersford Baptist Church
452 S. Lewis Road
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**Royersford Baptist Church
(RBC)**

Office - 610-948-4170

Email - rbcabc@rbcabc.org

Website - www.rbcabc.org

OFFICE HOURS:

**Monday through Friday,
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**



*RBC is affiliated
with American
Baptist Churches
USA*

STAFF:

Pastor -
Sarah Strosahl-Kagi

Youth Director-
Ryan Seckman

Worship Coordinator-
Lara Cifelli

Accompanist-
Alex Cifelli

Administrative Assistant-
Terry Myers

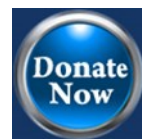
Custodian-
Danielle Crist

Nursery School Director-
Melissa Moffa

NOTE:

*Pastor and Youth Director hours
will vary during the COVID-19
pandemic. Please call the office
at 610-948-4170 to schedule an
appointment.*

If you have been touched by the ministry of RBC, you can be part of continuing our ministry together through your financial gifts. Our website has online giving options that make it possible for you to be a part of supporting the work of Royersford Baptist Church. Your gifts and your prayers make a vital difference in the Kingdom of God.



For the latest in news and information about Royersford Baptist Church, visit our website at:

www.rbcabc.org