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Subject: Alumni Newsletter

The header image features a group of diverse young people, likely students, smiling and posing together. The text 'Alumni NEWSLETTER' is overlaid on the image in a serif font. Below the main title, 'RIVENDELL SCHOOL' is written in a smaller, sans-serif font. A red ribbon graphic is on the right side, and a circular seal with 'Rivendell School' is partially visible in the bottom right corner.

Alumni NEWSLETTER

RIVENDELL SCHOOL

"Remember the time..." Alumni Reunion Coming Soon!

**November 23-24,
2018**

Return to Rivendell School and **reconnect** with friends and mentors, **revisit** your old "haunts" in these halls, and be **renewed** by the shared memories, stories, songs, and laughter. We hope you will come with lots of stories and photos to share as we **"Remember the time..."** together and enjoy a trip down memory lane before the building reconstruction begins in earnest in December. We'll also share about what God is doing at Rivendell now and what the next chapter of the school's story may hold.

Volume 2, Issue 1 - Fall
2018

Reunion Schedule

Friday, November 23

7:00-8:00 pm

"Reconnect Reception" in Hobbit Hollow. *Grab a taco and a name tag, take a tour, and find a pic of how you looked back then.*

8:00-9:00 pm

"Remember the time...?" Mirth and Memories in Founders' Hall.

9:00 pm to ??

Alumni Music and Mingling

Saturday, November 24

8:30 am

"The Last Recess" *Games of dodgeball, four square, knockout, tug-of-war and more in Founders' Hall.*

10:30 am

**Purchase
tickets now >>**

**"Coffee, Croissants and
Conversation"** in Hobbit
Hollow.

Alumni Spotlight: Will Shafferman '02



Where did your journey take you after you left Rivendell?

I went to Blue Ridge School for a time, then to Yorktown High School. I then studied political science at Furman University. My intention was to return to DC to work in international relations, but that changed when I met Ashley, who was headed to medical school in Alabama. So I switched gears and found a job as a marketing rep for Alabama's college savings plan, traveling all over the state for 4 years. Midway through that period I began to sense a call toward ordained church leadership. After a long period of discernment, we moved back to DC, where I trained with a local church while going to seminary. God provided a residency program for Ashley in Northern Virginia, and, through a family from the church, also provided housing for us for three years while we were both in training.

Tell us a little bit about what you're doing now.

I am officially the "Pastoral Associate for Community Life" at the Falls Church Anglican. My role is essentially to make a big church feel like a small family, centrally by overseeing and developing smaller forms of missional communities. Ashley is now working as a pediatrician in Vienna.

What do you remember most vividly about your time at Rivendell?

The community is what I remember the most. There was a not-fully-developed atmosphere, similar to a church plant in some ways. I can see, looking back, how that culture is special. It was also a lot of fun. I loved the big events during the year—Fall Festival, acting in plays—and also recess—capture the flag, pickup football games with "Mr. Craft" as quarterback. I've taken Ashley to the Lee Center field to show her: "this is where it all took place."

What are some lessons you learned at Rivendell that have served you well in your life?

C.S. Lewis talks about how we "moderns" have lost something of the wonder of life in our quest for human progress at all costs. Rivendell's emphasis on taking the time to discover and marvel at the grandeur and beauty and richness of God's good creation is one I'll always appreciate. Rivendell, like the plot line in Tolkien's novels, also emphasized the idea of getting caught up in a story bigger than our own, and of entering through the wardrobe (to return to C.S. Lewis!) and discovering there is way more to life than we ever dared to hope.

Is there any advice you have for today's Rivendellians, either students or parents?

If you make a mistake it won't ruin your life - but fear of failure can and will. Enjoy being

a kid. Don't get so caught up getting preparing for the next step that you never actually rejoice in the present. Take advantage of the "pause" available to you at Rivendell. I'm so appreciative of my time at Rivendell. No school is perfect, but it was a great place to experience childhood.

Alumni Spotlight: Maggie Dean '04

Where did your journey take you after you left Rivendell?

I attended Yorktown High School, then Christopher Newport University. I majored in Biology intending to go to grad school for Physical Therapy. I've quickly learned that God has different plans sometimes. After school I started volunteering with Young Life's middle school ministry, WyldLife, in Arlington, where I spent two years in their training program. From there I knew I wanted to be a teacher and started my first year of teacher training at Ambleside teaching third grade.



Tell us a little bit about what you're doing now.

I'm honored to be teaching 3rd form! My brother very lovingly said, "I'm not only shocked that Rivendell had an opening, but I'm shocked you got the job!" My five siblings and I have always seen Rivendell as our favorite educational experience where we felt known and loved. I'm sure he just meant it's surreal and an honor to be an alumna who gets the chance to be back at the "last homely house"...right?!

What do you remember most vividly about your time at Rivendell?

I remember the plays, simulations under stairwells, and pursuits toward being creative in everything we did. The friendships I was able to cultivate with teachers and classmates really changed me. I sometimes wonder if I didn't inherit some of my love for kids and a vision for teaching from my teachers here. Throughout all the times that we rolled up our sleeves to work together, I always felt like there was space for relationships, and that I was more important than how I could perform.

What was your best day at Rivendell?

When my class performed "Much Ado About Nothing," I got to play Beatrice. I was so shocked my teacher thought I could play a lead role! It instilled a lot of confidence in me. And graduation. I will never forget the speeches or the blessings given by the teachers. It reminded me all too well how well-known I was here. It was difficult for me to leave.

Alumni in the News: Rosie Coolidge '14

Alumna Rosie Coolidge '14 was featured in the July/August 2018 issue of *Arlington* magazine as a recipient of their "Extraordinary Teen Awards." The article explains the editors' choice:

"Last year, Rosie Coolidge released an EP of her own songs on Spotify and iTunes. Called *My Musical Mind*, with ballads titled "Stronger Than You Think" and "Together as One," the record



showcases her lyricism and soothing alto voice. Perhaps it's no surprise that Coolidge, a self-taught guitarist, was chosen to be the first student leader of the music ministry at Bishop O'Connell, where she reworked the music at Mass to include praise and worship songs different from the traditional hymns sung in the Catholic Church. 'They say singing is praying twice,' she says."

Rosie is a freshman at Belmont University in Nashville this fall, where she plans to study nursing. Be sure to check out her album on Spotify and iTunes!

Letter from the Headmaster: Holy Ground

God values dirt. Maybe more to my point, God values "place." The Garden of Eden was the first place that God set apart as sacred. In the story of the people of Israel, God consecrated the land of Canaan, and then later, God established the temple within the city of Jerusalem as the place where He would reside among His people. In the Old Testament God told Moses to take his shoes off because he was standing on Holy Ground. God even increased and decreased the land holdings of His people, Israel, as a way of demonstrating his pleasure or displeasure with them. God blessed and cursed various pieces of real estate, and it generally seemed to be the rule that a blessed land that yielded bountiful crops was the result of the people's obedience to God, and disobedience could lead to the land being unfruitful or even cursed.

Almost two decades ago, God increased our land. Rivendell School's first recess field back at Ballston Baptist Church had been a paved parking lot and a postage stamp of grass. The classrooms had been tight, the lunchroom was tiny, and indoor recess in Staunton Hall was downright dangerous. When the new property at 5700 Lee Highway was purchased, parents marveled at the spacious classrooms, the vastness of the room we would soon call "Hobbit Hollow", and the enormous outdoor recess space on the neighboring Lee Center playground. God had indeed blessed Rivendell with land. Not only was our purchasing this property a blessing to Rivendell though. During deliberations over the sale, the congregation that owned the property, Christ United Methodist Church, expressed how deeply grateful they were that God had allowed the building and the land to continue to be used to do the work of God. While others, including Arlington County, had offered more money for the property, the church chose to sell it to Rivendell. The land and the structures on the land had been an expression of the congregation's heart—to serve God by telling of God's faithfulness throughout the church's own story, and to spread the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Passing this property on to a developer to turn it into condos could have been much more lucrative, but it would also have repurposed the land and "changed its calling."

Now perhaps that sounds a little bit silly. People have callings, but really, can land have a calling? I may not be able to definitively substantiate the claim with Scripture, but based solely on my experience, here's what I see: God has blessed the ground where Rivendell School now stands. God allowed the former congregation to prosper, the preschool that was once located on our property to burst at the seams, and the mission and heart of Rivendell School over the past few decades to grow and to thrive. All of this flourishing can only be the result of the work of God's own hand. It is not our brilliance, our dedication, our wealth or our righteousness that has caused anything on this piece of land

to produce fruit. All that has been achieved has been because of the loving hand of God.

And so it is that we head into a new season in which we will see the land at 5700 Lee Highway being transformed. Our current building structures that were erected nearly 70 years ago will, over the next two years, be torn down and replaced. Rivendell School will no longer be a reconfigured church building, but a school building; however, be assured of this, the land at 5700 Lee Highway will retain its calling to be a place where the truth of the Gospel is declared boldly. A few folks have asked about the new building and wondered if the “heart” of our school will change. Others have wondered if a spiffy new school might attract families with very different expectations than our current families—thus changing our community and perhaps even our school’s mission. And a number of current and former Rivendell parents have reflected nostalgically on how our “jalopy” of a building has wonderfully taught us and our children to be content with peeling paint, not enough elbow room, and having to share space. Indeed, our building has helped us learn to be content and joyful in a sweet, quirky and warm-but-imperfect space.

In my mind, the response to each of these concerns along with others like them is simply this: God’s calling on this land has not changed, and our charge to faithfully steward this land to the glory of God has also not changed. Ultimately it is the people of the Rivendell School community (parents, teachers, staff, students, trustees, alumni, friends) who will need to remember God’s faithfulness. It is we who must guard and exhibit the generous “heart” of Rivendell. You and I will need to tell new families the story of God’s goodness, provision and protection for Rivendell. Those of us in the current school community will be responsible to move into the new building space with an “old gratitude.” We will need to teach and correct our children so they will be humble and grateful, brave and kind, not entitled or arrogant, not prone to be lured into the siren-song that can accompany things that are new and beautiful. For all of us, the hard work of faithful stewardship begins now.

Generosity is also the Rivendell way, because generosity demonstrates ownership, gratitude, and affirmation. Giving is also a way to intentionally place ourselves in a state of depending, and it allows us to recognize our need...particularly our need for God. Giving is a position of humility that God invites us into because He loves us and He wants us to allow Him to bless and provide for us. So as we begin our Capital Campaign and as we reach out to each of you and invite you to join in the blessing of giving, I hope you will ask God to stretch you to give. And we know that God has promised that He will grow and bless us through our generosity! God has given all of us so much, and making a financial investment in Rivendell’s new building is an affirmation of what God has done through Rivendell School as well as a blessing of “paying it forward” to the many generations of Rivendell children who are not yet enrolled. I hope you will consider generously joining others who have been “Blessed to be a blessing.”

Rivendell School continues to be a plot of Holy Ground. God walks among us every day, and we continually pray that the Spirit of God will be always at work in the hearts and minds of those who enter our classrooms. In Second Chronicles at the dedication of the temple, the Lord speaks this phrase to Solomon, the King of Israel: “I have chosen and consecrated this temple that my Name may be there forever.” In a similar fashion, as this new school building is constructed, our intent will be that the Name of the Lord will remain forever upon this land, and reflected in the story of our students, our families, and our buildings...old and new.

Looking forward to hearing from you,

Building Project Q&A

Make plans now to attend the Alumni Reunion on November 23-24 to see the drawings and hear more details about the building plans!

What will the new building include?

Much prayer, listening, debate, and creative brainstorming has gone into the process of developing plans over the last eighteen months with the expert assistance of architects and engineers. We are thrilled that our new building will include a beautiful auditorium/chapel, a wonderful gymnasium, larger and more functional classrooms, spaces for music and art classes, a lunchroom, larger office spaces, a kitchen, and a conference room. We have also asked that our new building, and particularly our new auditorium/chapel, be designed with sacred beauty and practicality that will allow our community to gather for Assembly, town meetings, dramatic productions, and other large Rivendell events. While this space will be different from the current chapel, its usefulness will be multiplied, and our intent is that the sense of sanctity will be retained.

Additionally, a new, small prayer chapel has been included on the administrative side of the building. This space will accommodate small groups and Intercessors' weekly gathering for prayer.

What is the timeline for the building project?

All of this is very exciting, but, as we all know, construction can't happen overnight. Our plan is to start work on the building in December 2018 during the Christmas break by erecting a construction barrier between our current academic and administrative wing and everything on the northern side of our property out to Lee Highway (including Hobbit Hollow, the chapel, and the gym). The latest drawings propose to keep the academic side of the building intact as an entirely new building is constructed. Then, once all of the new construction is complete, the current classroom section of our old building will be transformed into a courtyard and green space. We initially thought the project would take nearly three years to complete; however, our prayer is that the project will be completed in 2020 and only one and a half school years will be affected.

What is happening with the chapel?

As we prepare to embark on a building project, a good number of us will undoubtedly be sad to say goodbye to parts of our existing building. In particular, some of us have deep emotional attachment and nostalgic connections to the chapel. In considering the function and footprint of our new building, the Building Committee and Board prayed and thought long and hard about whether the existing chapel could be saved. First, it became clear that our chapel and the grounds around it occupied almost one-third of our school's property. Early-stage architectural drawings of our building that prioritized saving the chapel established that such a design would afford the school little green space and no courtyard. Second, there are many structural problems: leaky window wells, swollen flooring, broken water pipes, roof leaks, air conditioner problems, sagging ceiling panels, drafty windows, clogged toilets, and dozens of other building ailments over the last few years. Our need for a chapel intervention reached its climax last spring when we discovered rainwater pouring through the crumbling shingles on the roof into the upper level near the piano on the same day that water oozed from the water heater pipes and caused the

downstairs flooring to buckle! Finally, as we worked with Arlington County, we discovered that the existing school building does not meet the county setback requirements, which limited how we could use our space while fulfilling the county's requirements. As a result, after much prayer, debate, and a commitment that sacred spaces would be a priority, our architects, the Rivendell Building Committee, and the Board of Trustees agreed that the existing chapel could not be saved.

How can I be a part of the future of Rivendell School?

My hope is that you will soon be able to join me by stepping into the Next Chapter of Rivendell's story with joy and gratitude, knowing that the building we will erect will serve Rivendell School students by continuing the mission of our school long after our generation is gone. The lasting significance of Rivendell is that the hearts and minds of our children and our community may be transformed in this place by the Spirit of God to be His excellent ambassadors to the world. What is eternal is not Ballston Baptist, not Christ United Methodist Church, not even the land on which all of these buildings rest. We seek a treasure that is eternal, and as I Corinthians 13:13 says, "Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love. And the greatest of these is love." By God's grace, our love for Jesus and Jesus' love for all of humanity will remain at the heart of Rivendell School as we construct a building that is even more effective in executing our mission of "helping children explore God's world and discover their place in it."

Give to "The Next Chapter" building campaign »

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