



Watch: *On a Saturday in May, joining hands for a good cause*

The divides in Rappahannock tend to play out in public — angry exchanges at county or school board meetings, insults on social media or yard signs against plans for a bike trail or a boundary adjustment to accommodate the Rush River Commons project.

That will be addressed in the “This Place” series. But so will the moments when divides diminish, when different parts of the community come together to work or play or celebrate a special occasion. Those can be times of harmony that live up to this idyllic setting.

One such event occurred recently on Eldon Farms. “Cancer is Messy” was organized to honor cancer survivors and their families, including two young students at the county’s elementary school, Anne Genho and Farrah Gates.



▶ To get a feel for that Saturday in May, watch our first “This Place” video. Go to rappnews.link/11f or point your smartphone camera at the QR code to the right and tap the link.

“Let’s challenge ourselves by practicing civility. God willing, it may be habit-forming.”

— Reverend Jon Heddleston, recently retired pastor of Reynolds Memorial Baptist Church

➔ persuasions,” said Keeler. “You’re probably going to have something in common. Talk to get outside the degree of separation. In the fullness of our humanity, we actually share things.”

• **Listen to and respect other people’s opinions, even if you disagree with them.** “If we can respect each other, listen to each other. Allow differences, but look for the common ground,” said Rev. Walt Childress, pastor at Washington Baptist Church. “That’s what civility brings us. Everybody is apt to win more things than they lose.”

• **Recognize and acknowledge common goals.** “The only success I’ve had — which I admit has been limited — has resulted from being able to demonstrate that both sides have something to gain by working together,” said Gary Aichele, a deacon at Washington Baptist. “This usually involves getting folks to understand that their interests in making Rappahannock a decent place in which to live and work may outweigh their commitment to some political slogan, or even some personally held belief or value.”

• **Be clear-eyed about the impact of social media and other divisive**

messaging. “We need to wake up and recognize when we’re hearing some kind of delusion of what reality is, whether it’s from social media or the national media or whatever it is,” said Rev. Jeffrey Light, pastor of Novum Baptist Church in Reva, but a Woodville resident. “We need to recognize that we are better than it is, that we’re stronger than that as a people.”

Overall, the pastors generally agreed that it’s most important that people work to follow the principles central to their faith, that they don’t put up walls, but try to be in harmony with one another.

“That’s how we were made,” said Keeler. “When we fight, and we are estranged from one another, we are going against the grain of our very nature. Even though it can be difficult at times, we need each other.”

“Few people are so blessed to live here, or anywhere like Rappahannock,” added Heddleston. “So don’t ruin Rappahannock. Stop bickering. Quit hiding behind the anonymity of the internet. So far as possible, live at peace with everyone. Let’s challenge ourselves by practicing civility. God willing, it may be habit-forming.”

— Randy Rieland for Foothills Forum

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