

# The Spark

APRIL 2022

Embodying Love | Demanding Justice | Transforming the World

## Where Do You See God In Your Life?

When we think of God, we sometimes envision a white-robed figure hovering above us. Ever observant and yet seemingly far removed. An imposing figure who expects only the best. This was my image of God while I was growing up. During church services, pastors gave impassionate sermons on the importance of pleasing God and giving a long laundry list of do's and don't's. In my young mind, God was a stage director who ran the show which we called life.

As I've gotten older, my views of God have changed significantly. I don't really see him as a far removed and distant figure. More of an entity. An invisible and ever-present force in everyday life.

With all the chaos and hardship the world has been living through, it wouldn't come as any surprise to question if God really knows what he's doing. Admittedly, I had constantly asked why allow the suffering of so many. Patients dying alone in ICU wards of an unrelenting virus. Children mercilessly gunned down at schools. Black civilians targeted without warrant at the hands of the police. Fires and storms ravaging our planet. It's easier to take the cynic's route than being an optimist.

Fred Rogers— everyone's favorite neighbor and ordained minister—was never short of comforting messages and pieces of advice. Arguably his most beloved nugget of wisdom was from his mother: *When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'* This quote is reinforced by the phrase *tikkun olam*, which in Hebrew translates to *repair the world*.

It's easy to overlook the helpers of the world. What's even better is how anyone one of us can become a helper. During these two years, I have had a greater appreciation for small gestures of kindness. Whether it's an offer to help pick up groceries, a phone call, or a simple hug, they carry an even deeper meaning. And it is in these acts—big or small—that God is ever-present and never distant.

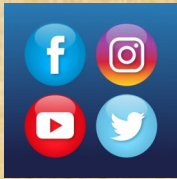
Years ago, a well-known professor at Miami Dade College was battling ALS. I saw him a few times and had never taken any of his courses. One day, I saw him leaving and quickly crossed the street. It hurt having to see him wheelchair-bound with little time left. I said hello, offered my support, and wished him the absolute best. He smiled and replied, "You have the face of an angel." I have never forgotten his kind words. In hindsight, I'd like to think the Holy Spirit had a hand to play in my act of kindness that day. It's what God intended. For us to be his helpers and healers.

—Ruth Gonzalez



# Clerk's Corner...

Riviera Presbyterian Church  
5275 Sunset Drive  
Miami, FL 33143  
(305) 666-8586  
11:00am Sunday Worship Service  
Office Hours M - F 9:00-5:00  
[www.rivierachurch.org](http://www.rivierachurch.org)  
Connect with us on social media



@RivieraChurch

All The People  
Ministers

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Director of Music  
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Anna E. Rosas  
Youth Education and Outreach Assistant  
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Barbara Prieto, CCA  
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Rev. Rosemary Noga Welton  
Rev. Dr. David Welton  
Parish Associates for Visitation

Session Members  
Susan Mazzola  
Clerk of Session

Susan Admire  
Karen Collier  
Laura Fothergill  
Amparo Hernandez  
Elaine Lanaris  
Barbara Overton  
Bryan Page  
Rey Prieto  
Michele Ready  
Alejandra Rondon  
Butch Sorenson  
Mimi Sutherland



April, the month of showers, Earth Day, Lent, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter! Easter – a solemn church holy time on one hand, and a day of bunnies, Easter eggs and candy on the other!

We are all saddened by the tragedy continuing to unfold in Ukraine since February 24. Why can't we do more? The questioning is endless. But, we can and will continue to remember the Ukrainian people in our prayers – especially now during this special Lenten and Easter season for which the Ukrainians have so many wonderful and beautiful traditions. Once such tradition is Pysanky – the art of Ukrainian Easter egg decorating. The egg, call pysanka, pictured above is an example of this tradition. A Ukrainian Easter egg is decorated with Ukrainian folk designs using a wax-resist method. The word *pysanka* comes from the verb *pysaty*, "to write" or "to inscribe," as the designs are not painted on, but written (inscribed) with beeswax.

Many other Central and Eastern European ethnic groups decorate eggs using the wax-resist method for Easter. The traditional folk designs all have meanings so that the final decorated egg loosely holds a message, e.g. of prosperity, good harvests, love, etc. Decorating the egg is a laborious process starting with a plain white egg which is dyed in multiple colors from light yellows, pinks and greens to the darker colors of red, blues and black. After each dye, melted beeswax is applied on the egg with a stylus creating various designs on each color. At the end, the egg is completely covered in beeswax which is then carefully wiped-melted off to reveal the final, decorated egg.

Riviera will be distributing pre-decorated papers that you can wrap around your own eggs and bring to decorate (and show off). You'll be able to get the papers at church on Sunday. For those who would like to decorate and/or dye eggs together:

**Egg Decorating Zoom!**  
**Saturday, April 16, 4:00 pm**

and a:

**WELCOME BACK!**  
**'First' Sunday Lunch after worship**  
**on Palm Sunday, April 10**

So, not really a first Sunday lunch, but in celebration of this Easter season, how nice to get everyone back in Fellowship Hall on Palm Sunday. Mark your calendars now. We're looking forward to being together over a Sunday lunch of contributed and various hot and cold and savory and sweet potluck dishes once more.

Are you writing in your mini Gratitude Journal? I opened last year's journal out of curiosity to read that the first entry was thanking Miriam for being such a wonderful leader of an exercise class I attended regularly. I've got to get back to that class! What are you writing about? What would you share with us?

—Susan Mazzola  
Clerk of Session



## Clerk's Corner Continues...



### Transition to an Interim/Transitional Pastor

#### *April Update*

Your Riviera Transition Team is happy and excited to report that the candidate presented to Riviera's Session members at their March 15 meeting was unanimously approved as our Transitional Pastor!

One more step in this process remains: her formal review and approval by Presbytery's Committee on Ministry in early April. Once that happens, we will introduce the candidate to you – Riviera's members and friends – in a special communication. She is excited and enthusiastic about becoming Riviera's Transitional Pastor and is making plans for her family's move to Miami. We look forward to welcoming her!

As always, we appreciate the support and guidance your Transition Team has received from Presbytery and the our liaison on the Committee on Ministry.

You may direct any specific questions you have to [rivierachurch@bellsouth.net](mailto:rivierachurch@bellsouth.net) or contact one of the Transition Team members: Cris Sweeny, Michele Ready, Bryan Page, Susan Mazzola.

## Worship News...



We look forward to seeing you during Lent and for **Holy Week**, starting with **Palm Sunday on April 10**, followed by **Maundy Thursday on April 14 at 7:00 pm** in our sanctuary, **Good Friday at noon** with our friends at Coral Gables United Church of Christ, and returning to our sanctuary for **Easter Sunday at 11:00 am**

## Session News...

**Per Capita**

**2022**

**\$37 per member**

[Click Here to Donate](#)

### ***March Session Meeting Highlights***

- Transitional Pastor Candidate was unanimously approved.
- A statement of support from the church of Tenant Bill of Rights will be draft by Mission Committee Chair Alejandra.
- A motion was approved to follow CDC guidance in terms of masking, making masking optional, stop social distance, and the RSVP requirement. Additionally, if the % goes from low to medium or high we return to masking.
- Potluck lunches to resume. First lunch will be on Palm Sunday.

## Mission News...

# THANK YOU!

## Riviera Presbyterian Church's 2022 Collection

raised:

# \$535

Thanks to your efforts this year, more dollars have been raised, more lives have been changed and the nation has seen the impact of people working together to help those in need. Thank you for working to transform the time around the Super Bowl into the nation's largest celebration of giving and serving.



**February 13, 2022**

Alison Reese  
Executive Director  
Souper Bowl of Caring

Riviera members raised \$535 during for Souper Bowl Sunday.

Our bowls were filled at home with chowders, soups and stews of our own making this year but the call to action remained the same.

Donations were requested based on your interest in the Super Bowl!

The Presbyterian Hunger Fund will receive \$100 of the proceeds and the rest will go to our food pantry.

Over the last three years alone, thousands of groups have come together under the Souper Bowl of Caring banner, collecting over \$25 million in dollars and food donations for hunger-relief charities across the country. Thank you for your contributions!



If you have a bike that you are not using, please consider donating it to LEAP!

Bikes can be dropped off at the Dragonfly Thrift Boutique located at 3141 SW 8th ST



## Congregational Care News...



If we missed your birthday or you do not want your birthday listed, please contact the church office at [rivierachurch@bellsouth.net](mailto:rivierachurch@bellsouth.net)

Jackie F.— 1  
Valerie D.— 2  
Laura F.— 5  
Gavin H.— 7  
Dustin D.— 11  
Claire L.— 15

## Discipleship News...

**Women's Study Group** will meet via Zoom on Wednesday, April 20 @ 7:30pm.

Join us as we conclude Mary's story.

Contact Karen Collier at [kc33134@aol.com](mailto:kc33134@aol.com) for the Zoom link.

**Theology Uncorked Resumes**  
Sunday, April 10 @ 5 pm

You are invited to attend Theology Uncorked at Titanic Brewery and Restaurant located at 5813 Ponce de Leon, Coral Gables, FL 33146.

This month's discussion will be led by Carol Thompson.

Please RSVP to [rivierachurch@gmail.com](mailto:rivierachurch@gmail.com)

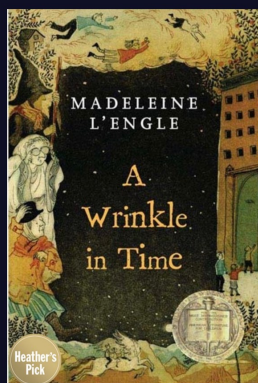
**Zoom Meeting ID 894-7650-2156**

**Passcode 333227**

**Sunday Bible Study Class**

**10:00 am EST**

**Join in person or on Zoom**



**YOUTH READING GROUP**

Sundays at 4:00 pm  
via Zoom  
Contact Anna for link



[rivierapreschristianed@gmail.com](mailto:rivierapreschristianed@gmail.com)

# Discipleship News...

**Egg Decorating Zoom! Saturday, April 16, 4:00 pm**  
Join us on Zoom: Meeting ID# 828-0074-1200 | Passcode: 498095



***Spiritual Practice Class***  
***April 27 at 7:00 pm.***

***RSVP to Anna Rosas at***  
***[rivierapreschristianed@gmail.com](mailto:rivierapreschristianed@gmail.com)***



# One More Thing...



*Fabian Carrera* is performing his first doctoral recital at the Frost School of Music at UM on Saturday, April 2 at 7:30 pm in the Weeks Center

for Recording and Performance Victor E. Clarke Recital Hall.

***Miami Collegium Musicum***

will be performing

***The Judgement of Solomon***

at Riviera Presbyterian Church on  
Saturday, April 2 at 7:30 pm.



Appointments are encouraged, please visit [www.oneblood.org/donate-now](http://www.oneblood.org/donate-now)

And use sponsor code 1738

Bloodmobile will be at Riviera from 11:30 am —3:00 pm

We are \$650 away from reaching our goal of \$1000 for the 2022 One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering. It is not too late to donate. Visit our website at [www.rivierachurch.org/give](http://www.rivierachurch.org/give) and donate. Remember if we all do a little to adds up to a lot. This year's main focus is the help the people of Ukraine.

# Stewardship News...

The Stewardship Committee (SPF) is responsible for three aspects of church life:

- Stewardship - By building a culture of generosity through year-round efforts.
- Property - To ensure the church buildings and grounds are well maintained.
- Finance - To oversee the church's finances and communicate to Session.

This past month the Property portion of the committee was very busy. A list of repairs were identified and the proper persons were hired to accomplish them when the tasks was not able to be accomplished by our wonderful custodian, Mary, who also over saw the repairs with her keen eye for detail.

Here are a few projects that were accomplished in March:

- Acoustic ceiling tiles in the NW Entrance to the sanctuary were replaced.
- New well was made for the sanctuary ac system.
- Well trenches were covered and a protective border was installed to prevent pipe damage by large machinery.
- Gate was repaired in fenced area for Fellowship Hall and Church Library ac units.
- Repaired broken water pipe by mango tree.
- Sliding panels were installed and painted for easy access to future organ tunings and repairs.
- Kitchen light fixtures & cracked light panels were replaced due to age and not working — efficient lights and new lay in ceiling light panels were replaced.
- Broken light fixture in the hallway was replaced.

With the help of your donations to Riviera Presbyterian Church we are able to help maintain our building which provides all who enter a sanctuary that is filled with light and a sense of peace; a renowned child care center that provides families with a place where their child is loved, valued, nurtured and guided and where learning experiences are ones of joy and success; a place for organizations like The Yes Institute, The Greater Miami Youth Symphony and Mindful Kids Miami to fulfill their individual mission statements to our local community, especially the children.

None of this would be possible without your generosity.