

THE SPARK

November 2023

Embodying Love - Demanding Justice - Transforming the World



For many Christians, the word “stewardship” has become primarily associated with a fall campaign designed to encourage the submission of a pledge card to aid The Session in finalizing a budget for the coming year. While this is important, to relegate stewardship merely to a particular timeframe or to only a financial commitment takes away from the more significant impact that embracing the concept of stewardship can have for a follower of Christ.

When we embrace the idea of stewardship, that all that we have and are belong to God, we will find both freedom and purpose. Freedom comes by releasing control and, therefore, anxiety, and purpose comes when we invite God to direct how we use what we have for his kingdom. We get to see how God often multiplies our contributions in unexpected ways. Growing in our trust in God to take care of us is an aspect of our spiritual development, allowing us to affirm with confidence, “And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

At RPC, we are blessed as a congregation. The evidence of your faithful tithes and generous gifts is all around, in the study and fellowship that we share, in the ways we show up for each other in moments of crisis and need, in the upkeep of our building and various equipment, and also in your support for staff to help organize our ministry activities for our community and beyond. The best days of our community at Riviera are still ahead of us!

Pledge card is available via this link: <https://rivierachurch.org/2024-pledge/>



MELANIE'S MESSAGE

November 2023 Embodying Love - Demanding Justice - Transforming the World

Riviera Presbyterian Church
5275 Sunset Drive
Miami, FL 33143
(305) 666-8586

11:00am Sunday Worship Service

Office Hours M - R 9:30-6:30

www.rivierachurch.org

Connect with us on social media
[@RivieraChurch](#)

All The People
Ministers

Rev. Melanie Marsh
Pastor

Rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com

Dr. Walter Busse

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Youth Education and Outreach Assistant

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Certified Church Administrator

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Session Members

Susan Mazzola

Clerk of Session

Karen Collier

Laura Fothergill

Amparo Hernandez

Rey Prieto

Alejandra Rondon

Butch Sorenson

Kathy Stults

Cris Sweeny

Lisa Torchut

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"Why I Love This Church" by Rev. Melanie Marsh

Beloved Friends,

In this season, we are asking members of our community to answer the question, "Why do you love this Church?" So I thought, for this month's newsletter, I'd share my own answer to the question of 'Why I love Riviera.'

My love of this community began long before I was your Transitional Pastor or even a candidate for this ministry position.

In early 2018, when I was pregnant with my third child and serving a church in Cleveland, Ohio, I began to feel a strong call pulling me back to my home state of Florida. It was a season of turmoil - in the church and in the wider culture - socially, politically, racially, and culturally. Our worshipping community in Ohio was deep into exploring these conflicts and wrestling with what they meant for the church in our time. I began wondering to myself: "Is there anywhere in Florida where I might find a community like this one - one that the Spirit leads toward openness, inclusion, and social justice? One that does not shy away from uncomfortable questions or hard conversations?"

In the Spring of that year, while I was visiting family in Florida, again, the still, small voice of the Spirit spoke to me, and I found myself doing a Google search from the porch of my in-law's beach house: PCUSA Church Social Justice Florida.

The first listing that came up was Riviera Presbyterian in Miami, Florida.

The first thing I saw when I went to the website was this statement:

"Riviera Church is an unapologetically progressive community in the Presbyterian Church (USA). We are a family church where families come in all compositions. We are a thinking church that wrestles with faith issues confronting our society today and strives to make our faith personally relevant and meaningful. We are a mission-driven church that, since the civil rights movement, has worked for justice and peace for all God's children. In our worship, our education, and our mission, we strive that all will know they are loved unconditionally."

"Yes, YES", I thought. It does exist. They do exist!

It was a few years later, in the depths of the pandemic, when I happened upon Riviera again. I was living in Jacksonville, in Miami, taking a break from the challenges of ministry in a difficult context. My uncle Paul was showing me around his neighborhood, Coral Gables.

As we drove down Sunset, we saw a huge banner along the side of the road,

"Riviera Church believes that Black Lives Matter."

"That's a church??" he said.

"That is a church," I said.

And right then and there, I knew this community had my heart.

In a world where the church is often too afraid of offending their biggest donors to take a stand, in a world where the church is often too afraid of losing members to make challenging statements to the systems of power, Riviera boldly lives into the call to say more, to do more, to love more, and to welcome more. That is why I love this church.

Many Blessings,
Rev. Melanie

CONGREGATION CARE

November 2023

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Gift of Empathy Class



November Birthdays

Sarah G - Nov 6

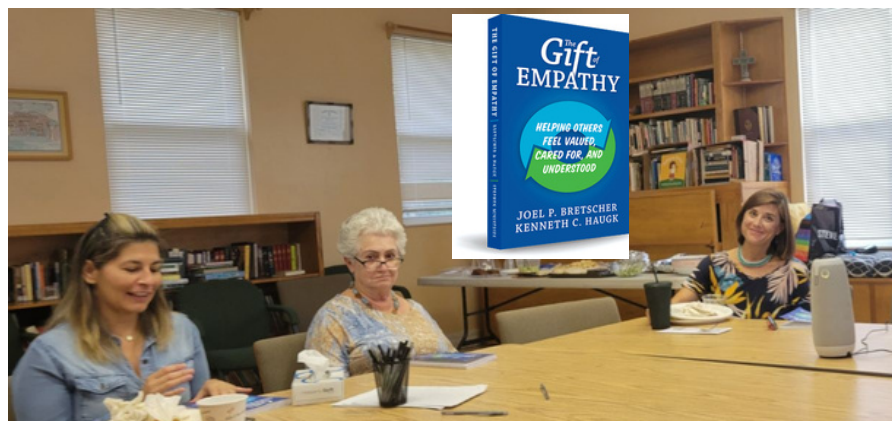
Ellen A - Nov 8

Graham G - Nov 16

Barbie P - Nov 28



Who has not experienced a time when a sympathetic voice would brighten the day? In our empathy class, we learned that sympathy by itself is not enough. We learned to show that we understand and acknowledge the difficulty another is experiencing. To do this, we show empathy by listening, affirming how someone is feeling, reflecting feelings back to the individual, refraining from being judgmental, or offering solutions. -Bonnie H.





CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-ADULTS

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SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY @ 10 AM

Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study is the best way to explore the day's scripture, ask questions, and connect with new and old friends. You do not have to be a member of the church to join this small group class. We offer the class in person and via Zoom. Child care is also available.

Meeting ID: 894-7650-2156 Passcode: 333227

WOMEN'S STUDY GROUP

"The Women's Small Group is a fruitful, vibrant, Christ-centered community working in deepening relationships through bible study.

If you are interested in joining us, please email Karen Collier at kc33134@aol.com

THEOLOGY
uncorked

WE WILL RETURN
ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12
5:30 PM - 7:30 PM



Join us at:
4178 SW 74th Ct, Miami,



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-KIDS

November 2023

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Dear Church,

This past month in Sunday School, our kids learned a lot! They learned about welcoming others into the church and about thankfulness for the church. We read the Parable of the Great Banquet and a section from Thessalonians. You can see a few of their crafts on the snack table at the front of the church!

Looking forward, in November, the kiddos will be learning about the Parable of the Bags of Gold and about the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats! Also in November, we will have a game night on November 4th, from 5-7 pm. I invite you to come and play with our kids at the game night! It will be a fun night full of games and fellowship!

Lastly, we need some supplies for Sunday School this year. Check your storage closet, garage, and desk drawers and see if you can find some poster board, craft foam, rulers, and air-dry clay!

Grace and Peace,
Anna





FELLOWSHIP

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Saturday,
Nov. 4
5-7pm

Riviera
Game Night

Join us for an evening of fun and fellowship. All are invited. We will play board games in the Fellowship Hall and enjoy time with each other.

Feel free to bring your favorite board game and a snack to share. Pizza and beverages will be provided.

RSVP is encouraged to rivierapreschristianed@gmail.com

Holiday Open House – Join Rev. Melanie and family for a Holiday Open House at their home on Friday December 8th, from 6-9pm. Bring your favorite holiday treat or drink to share and enjoy some laughter, light, and cheer with us! All are welcome. Come when you can, leave when you have to.

MISSION

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Pentecost Confirmands Mission Project



Eleven families of chickens were sent to farmers and families around the world, thanks to our Confirmands chosen project via the Presbyterian Giving Catalog. With your contributions to the Pentecost Offering this past May, 40% of the offering was used to purchase the chickens. These chickens will provide eggs for food, feathers for pillows, and fertilizer for crops. By giving these families of chickens, we helped to improve the food security and livelihoods of farmers and families around the world.

Friends, we need volunteers to staff the food pantry on Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon.

All you have to do is get the person's name, give them a bag of food, and assemble another bag according to the list in the pantry to replace it.

Please check your calendars and sign up on the clipboard in the Welcome Area/Narthex for one or more shifts or email the church office rivierachurch@gmail.com



Food Pantry



S.P.F. STEWARDSHIP, FINANCE & PROPERTY

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PER CAPITA 2023

Reminder: Per Capita for 2023 is \$37 per active adult member. To donate, please go to our website www.rivierachurch.org/give or use the blue Per Capita Envelopes located on the Welcome Area/Nathex table.

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN – WHY WE GIVE

Our annual budget supports many missions and ministries while also providing staff leadership and a physical place to worship, gather, and serve.

As a church, we respond to the needs around us – food, early childhood education, a safe space for the LGBTQI community, equity, justice, wholeness, meaning, and a chance for all to flourish in this world.

Soon, you will receive a narrative budget explaining the financial needs for 2024

To send you pledge now click this link: <https://rivierachurch.org/2024-pledge/>



WORSHIP RPC MUSIC NEWS

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This month of November, there's a whole lot going on with RPC's music ministry!

Starting off with November 5, not only do we have daylight savings time ending (be sure to "fall back" your clocks!), but we will be celebrating All Saint's Day with a special musical treat. During the 11 a.m. worship service, we are so excited to have an amazing guest blues band perform led by our very own Max Torchut.

On the following Sunday, November 12, we will be hosting a special world peace service where we are inviting our brothers and sisters of all faiths to join us in praying for peace in our world.

On Wednesday, November 15, at 7 p.m., we gather at Temple Beth Am for our annual Interfaith Thanksgiving collaboration. Those who wish to participate by reading, singing, or playing an instrument will meet at 5:30 to rehearse the songs and readings prepared by our dear friend and cantor, Rachelle Nelson.

Then, on the Sunday immediately following Thanksgiving, on November 26 at 2 p.m., we are combining forces in another collaboration with our friends at St. Thomas Episcopal to perform choral selections from Handel's Messiah with authentic Baroque orchestra in the St. Thomas sanctuary just about a mile down the road from us.

For our little ones (most of whom are from the Child Care Center), we will once again have our Butterfly Choir sing several holiday songs during our Sunday, December 3rd, 11 a.m. service. In preparation, we will have two Butterfly choir rehearsals after school at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, November 15, and Wednesday, November 29; if you would like to have your children participate (or know anyone else who might), please contact and sign up with Walter Busse or the Child Care Center.

Of course, we cannot forget our Ukulele group, who will also be meeting on the 2nd Sunday of the month, November 12, right after service to go over music for Advent and Christmas. Please know that we ALWAYS welcome both beginners and seasoned musicians and singers alike to become part of our music ministry family. Every Thursday evening, we meet at 6:30 for wine, hors-d'oeuvres, and dinner prior to the weekly 7:30 rehearsal. ANYONE interested in serving God and Riviera by sharing their musical talents, please reach out to Dr. Walter Busse at rivierpresmusic@gmail.com.

THANKSGIVING INTERFAITH SERVICE

A PRE-THANKSGIVING SERVICE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

**WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 15**

7:00 PM
SANCTUARY, TEMPLE BETH AM

Temple Beth Am is honored to host this year's annual Thanksgiving Interfaith Service in partnership with synagogues and churches across Miami.

Bring the whole family as we gather together under one roof in unity and friendship as we celebrate our different faiths and beliefs.

This year, we welcome our biggest choir yet to lead us in song and worship to help remind us of all that we have to be grateful for, even in the darkest of times.

(you can still sign-up by emailing Cantor Nelson at rnelson@tbam.org)

**DIRECTED BY
CANTOR EMERITA RACHELLE NELSON**

JOINED BY
Cantor Tifani Coyot
Jackie Berney

Dessert reception to follow

ALL OUT FOR ¡QUE CALOR!

Tuesday, November 7
BCC Hearing: 9:00AM

Government Center
111 NW 1st Street
Miami, FL 33128



Stand with outdoor workers at the final Miami-Dade County Commission vote to win the first-ever heat standard in Florida!

- Join Pastor Melanie on Tuesday, November 7th at 9 AM in Downtown Miami's Stephen P. Clark Government Center as agricultural workers and construction workers with WeCount! are joined by dozens of community groups, church leaders, and students to demand WATER, SHADE, AND REST for Miami Dade's Outdoor Workers!
- In Miami-Dade County, more than 320,000 of our residents are outdoor workers, including more than 100,000 in the essential industries of agriculture and construction. As temperatures rise, these workers are at heightened risk of heat-related illnesses (HRI), hospitalizations, and even death. In Miami-Dade, extreme heat contributes to approximately 34 deaths every year. Nationally, extreme heat contributes to up to 170,000 occupational injuries across the United States, including 2,000 fatalities. Outdoor workers are over-represented in these fatalities, being 35 times more likely to die from extreme heat than the general population.
- For this reason, Miami-Dade's Outdoor Workers are calling on our County Commissioners to do the right thing and vote YES! to pass a Miami-Dade Heat Standard! Outdoor workers are human beings, and their health and lives should not be up for debate. Outdoor workers deserve an enforceable right to water, shade, and rest!

For further details, please contact Pastor Melanie at rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com