

THE SPARK

December 2023 Embodying Love – Demanding Justice – Transforming the World

Riviera Presbyterian Church Join the Advent Festivities

- **Sunday, December 3rd - Hope**
 - 11:00 am Worship and Butterfly Choir
 - After service:
 - Blood Drive,
 - Sunday Lunch,
 - Holiday Kids Crafts
- **Sunday, December 10th - Peace**
 - 11:00 am Worship Service with Choral Cantata - This Child, This King
- **Sunday, December 17th - Joy**
 - 11:00 am Worship & Christmas Pageant
- **Thursday, December 21 - Longest Night Service**
 - 6:30 pm Soup Dinner
 - 7:00 pm Worship Service
 -
- **Sunday, December 24, Christmas Eve**
 - 11:00 am Storytime & Carols
 - 6:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service Communion.

www.rivierachurch.org



This Advent, we will hold space for our weariness and our joy. We will seek a “thrill of hope” in our hurting world. We will welcome joy—even if, like the prophet Isaiah, we cry out for comfort (Isaiah 40:1). In this weary world, may we find many ways to rejoice. You are invited to experience it in this community of faith.



MELANIE'S MESSAGE

December 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

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Clerk of Session

Karen Collier
Laura Fothergill
Amparo Hernandez
Rey Prieto
Alejandra Rondon
Butch Sorenson
Kathy Stults
Cris Sweeny
Lisa Torchut

"Beloved Friends,

This year, we will celebrate the Advent season with the wonderful worship creators at A Sanctified Art, exploring the theme, "How Does a Weary World Rejoice?"

This worship series will take us on a journey through the Gospel of Luke, focused most closely on Jesus birth and the events leading up to it. In this gospel account, we encounter the full scope of human emotions: Fear ~ Isolation ~ Trust ~ Joy ~ Disbelief, and so much more...

The Christmas season is filled with all of these feelings for us, too. Through the Gospel story and beautiful art, music, and liturgy, we will discover ways to exist in the dissonant space within us and around us through this season.

What is the message we need to hear in the midst of all this?

Maybe it's that whatever we might be feeling, it's ok.
Maybe it's that however we might show up for our church, for our families, and for ourselves, it is enough.
Maybe it's that in between the chaos and quiet of this season, there is a holiness that cannot be denied.

"How Does a Weary World Rejoice"
by Rev. Sarah A. Speed

I think delayed Christmas cards count –
the ones with the haphazard stamps,
mailed three weeks late.
I think the way you get down on all fours
to be close to your dog
and your cousin's baby counts;
it's a holy routine
I think the way you stretch you body away
and breathe deeply when you rise counts;
that's Yahweh in your lungs
I think the extra second you spent
looking at the sky last night,
and not being afraid to dance counts

So does giving up your seat on the subway
for someone's grandfather,
helping her carry the stroller up the stairs,
and running to catch the man who
dropped his bag in the crosswalk.
Lighting candles when the sun disappears,
laughing so hard others begin to stare,
and pausing to look at trees every once in a
while to say, "Good job with that one, God"
all definitely counts;
as so mumbled prayers
and children's prayers
and every measure of music.

How does a weary world rejoice?
I would guess
soul by soul
and day by day.
But if you ask me,
I bet most all of it counts.

Peace,
Rev. Melanie

CONGREGATION CARE

December 2023

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December Birthdays

Kathy S - Dec. 10
Sandy B - Dec. 15
Bonnie H - Dec. 18
Walter B - Dec. 22
Ampy H - Dec. 22

If we missed your birthday this year, please let us know by emailing the church office at rivierachurch@gmail.com



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-ADULTS

December 2023

Embodying Love

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Demanding Justice

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Transforming the World

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

There will be no Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study on December 24 and 31

Women's Study Group

"The group is taking a break for the month of December and will resume in January.

Theology Uncorked

"This group is also taking a break for the month of December and will resume in January.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-KIDS

November 2023

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Dear Church,

On the back of our bulletin, it says that all people are ministers, and on this past Communion Sunday, one of our very one kiddos lived that out. I was sick this last Communion Sunday and didn't want to touch the elements with my hands. I didn't really tell anyone anything until the last minute when I asked Carol Thompson to grab a piece of bread for me. Having received the bread I headed to the back of the sanctuary to pray to God for the mystery and miracle of communion. When I finished praying and opened my eyes, I saw a kiddo running towards me with a piece of bread in their hand. They said, "I know you're sick, so I brought you some bread". As I made sense of what was happening, my tears welled up; I received the bread of Life from a child, from a minister.

No one prompted this kiddo or coaxed them to do it; they just got it. This kiddo made the connection that I was sick and that I wouldn't want to touch the bread. This kiddo realized that communion is important and that everyone should be able to partake in this holy meal. This kiddo went out of their way to minister and to be the hands of Christ. When we, the church, let the little ones come to Jesus, they too, become ministers. Our church kiddos are amazing people and amazing ministers. Thanks be to God.

Anna



Upcoming Family Events!

December 3rd Butterfly choir during the service and Holiday Kiddo craft after.

December 17th All ages Christmas pageant during the service.

December 24th 11:00 A.M. Storytime and Carols.

December 24th 6:00 P.M. Christmas Eve candlelight service with communion.

FELLOWSHIP

December 2023

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CHRISTMAS POTLUCK LUNCH DEC. 3



You are invited to join us in celebrating the joyous spirit of Christmas on Sunday, December 3rd, at our monthly First Sunday Potluck Lunch.


This event is a special occasion for our church community to come together and celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. It is a time to reflect on the blessings we have received throughout the year and express gratitude for the love and unity that binds us. As we gather in fellowship, let us embrace the spirit of giving and share in this festive season's joy.

Bring your favorite Christmas dish to share with your Riviera church family. There will also be Christmas craft activities for the children.

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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DONATE BLOOD

Riviera Presbyterian Church
Sunday, December 3
11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

All donors will receive*:


- **\$20 eGift Card**
- **OneBlood Blanket**
- **Wellness Checkup** including blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count, and cholesterol screening.

Fact: A+, B+, O+, AB+ & AB- are blood types recommended for platelet donation.

Appointments are encouraged, please visit oneblood.org/donate-now and use sponsor code 1738

ID REQUIRED

*One offer per donor, per donation. No cash value. Not-transferable. Gifts may vary. For more information please visit oneblood.org/details.

oneblood 
Share your passion.

RPC Ministries

1. Volunteers are needed for Monday and Wednesday mornings from 9:00 AM to 12:00 noon. Duties include getting signatures from clients, giving them a bag of food, and filling a replacement bag according to the list in the pantry.
 2. Bags are needed for the individual bags. Drawstring backpacks or small reusable shopping bags work very well. 10" by 12" bags with handles we get from stores and restaurants are also good.
 3. Please remember that we need donations for the food pantry. A one-pound bag of rice or pasta, 12-ounce bags of dried beans, and any non-expired canned goods are always welcome.
 4. We are only halfway to our goal of 500 pairs of white men's socks for Socktober. Socks can be purchased at Amazon and shipped to the church. Dollar Tree has socks for \$1.25 for 2 pairs.
 5. We are partners with Frances Tucker Elementary School on Douglas Road. Everyone is invited to go to the school to meet the students and teachers during our Mission visits. Currently, we are getting ready for gift distribution to the students from the first graders. It is heartwarming to see the looks on the faces of these young students. You may pick up an About Me sheet in the sanctuary, or you may \$20 and we will shop for you. Visit our website to donate www.rivierachurch.org/give.
 6. We also partner with LEAP for Ladies. LEAP is dedicated to helping incarcerated women transcend their past. Riviera provides the ladies in the Transitional Housing with a food gift certificate every week to help them buy fresh produce, milk, and eggs. When a lady leaves the prison and joins the program, we give her a \$50 Target gift certificate to help her get the necessities to start her journey. They frequently need shoes, toiletries, and even reading glasses. We will also be giving the ladies in transitional housing Target gift certificates for Christmas.
- We can also help by donating to and/or shopping at The Dragonfly Thrift Boutique at 3141 SW 8th Street. They also have an office in South Miami (5815 SW 68th Street) where we can drop off our donations of upscale items.
7. Please visit the Riviera Presbyterian Church Giving page if you wish to contribute to any of these missions. You will see lines for the Food Pantry, Frances Tucker Elementary School, or the Members/Friends Giving where you can designate where you want your donation to go in the notes section.

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

As this year's Stewardship Drive comes to an end, The pledge-giving goal was \$140,000. Currently, the pledges are \$53,600. Thanks to all who participated in this year's drive!!

If you have not sent in your pledge, you may do so by filling out the online form on our website www.rivierachurch.org/give.

We also have provided more ways that you are able to donate to fit your giving style.



DIGITAL PAYMENT



Cash App



venmo

@rivierachurch5275

305-666-8586

How You Can Give



ACH

You may set up online payment via your bank bill pay program.



VANCO MOBILE

You may download the free Vanco app (IOS & Android)



MAIL CHECK TO US

Riviera Presbyterian
Church 5275 Sunset
Drive, Miami, FL
33143

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WORSHIP RPC MUSIC NEWS

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RPC December music happenings...

There's lots of great music happening this month at RPC. On Sunday, December 3, our CCC Butterfly Choir returns to sing and bring holiday spirit at the 11 am service.

On Saturday evening, December 9, at 7:30 pm, we will be hosting the Colonial Consort, Cuban Baroque Holiday concert, where Walter will be playing the harpsichord continuo part. Come on out and support this amazing group of singers and musicians.

On Sunday, December 10, as a special treat during the 11 am service, our RPC choir will sing the challenging cantata "This Child, This King" by composer Daniel E. Gawthrop.

Then on Friday, December 15, at 7:30 pm, the holiday festivities continue with a concert in our sanctuary presented by the incredible Collegium Musicum Choir under the new direction of UM professor Mathew Brady. FYI – both Bryan and Walter will be singing in the group, so it is definitely a "not to miss" event.

On Thursday, Dec 21, at 6:30 pm, we will once again be offering a somber but beautiful, "Longest Night" service where we reflect and pray for all those suffering during the season.

Finally, we invite everyone to celebrate our Lord's birthday on Christmas Eve with extra special music. In preparation, we will be having separate practices for the Uke ensemble, handbell choir, and chamber choir throughout the month. If you would like to participate in any of these events, as a singer or instrumentalist, or have any questions, please contact Walter Busse at rivierapresmusic@gmail.com.

Advent and Christmas blessings to all.
Walter