

# THE SPARK

December 2024

Embodying Love - Demanding Justice - Transforming the World

Riviera Presbyterian Church  
Warmly Invites You to

## ADVENT/CHRISTMAS EVENTS

FROM DECEMBER 1 TO JANUARY 5

Event	Date	HOURL
First Sunday of Advent & Communion	December 1	11:00am 12:00pm
Thanksgiving Potluck Luncheon		
Second Sunday of Advent	December 8	11:00 am
Christmas Pageant		
Third Sunday of Advent Christmas Cantata	December 15	11:00 am 12:00 pm
Christmas Potluck Luncheon		
Fourth Sunday of Advent	December 22	11:00 am
Longest Night Worship Service		6:00 pm
Christmas Eve Worship Service	December 24	6:00 pm
Christmas Stories & Carols	December 29	11:00am
Epiphany Sunday & Communion	January 5	11:00am
Potluck Luncheon		12:00 pm

Join us for a series of special events this Advent and Christmas season! Let's come together and share the joy, hope, and love of this wonderful time of year.



# MELANIE'S MESSAGE

December 2024    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](http://www.rivierachurch.org)  
Connect with us on social media  
@RivieraChurch

All The People  
Ministers

Rev. Melanie Marsh  
Pastor  
[Rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com](mailto:Rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com)

Dr. Walter Busse  
Director of Music  
[rivierapresmusic@gmail.com](mailto:rivierapresmusic@gmail.com)

Diana Florez  
Church Bookkeeper  
[rivierapresfinance@gmail.com](mailto:rivierapresfinance@gmail.com)

Barbara Prieto, CCA  
Certified Church Administrator  
[rivierachurch@gmail.com](mailto:rivierachurch@gmail.com)

Session Members  
Susan Mazzola  
Clerk of Session

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

Beloved Community,

Welcome to the Advent Season!

Even in the midst of the festivities in this time of year, we know that there are many of us who are carrying the weight of grief, loss, anxiety, or despair. Each year at Riviera, we acknowledge this reality in worship through our Longest Night service. This service blends the ancient tradition of honoring the Winter Solstice with the modern tradition of making sacred space for the longings of our hearts in this season of joy and gladness.

Contemplative writer Jan Richardson writes:

"This gathering provides a space for those who are having a difficult time during the holidays or simply need to acknowledge some pain or loss they are carrying in the midst of this season of celebration."

We hope you will join us on Sunday evening, December 22nd at 6pm as we honor the longest night together, and may this blessing be a reminder to us all in this season that everything we are feeling is a reflection of God's love within us.

## **Blessing for the Longest Night**

All throughout these months as the shadows have lengthened, this blessing has been gathering itself, making ready, preparing for this night.

It has practiced walking in the dark, traveling with its eyes closed, feeling its way by memory by touch by the pull of the moon even as it wanes.

Continue on page 3

So believe me when I tell you this blessing will reach you even if you have not light enough to read it; it will find you even though you cannot see it coming.

You will know the moment of its arriving by your release of the breath you have held so long; a loosening of the clenching in your hands, of the clutch around your heart; a thinning of the darkness that had drawn itself around you.

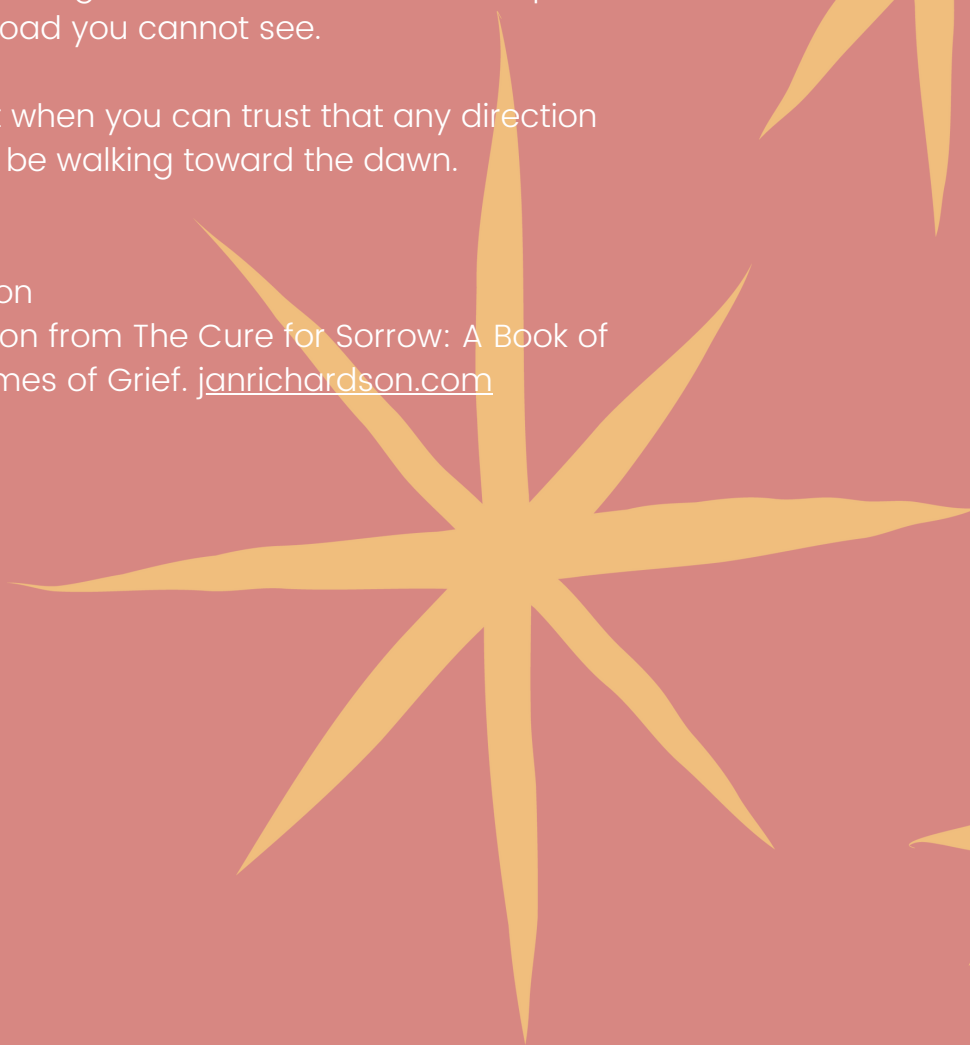
This blessing does not mean to take the night away but it knows its hidden roads, knows the resting spots along the path, knows what it means to travel in the company of a friend.

So when this blessing comes, take its hand. Get up. Set out on the road you cannot see.

This is the night when you can trust that any direction you go, you will be walking toward the dawn.

—Jan Richardson

© Jan Richardson from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*. [janrichardson.com](http://janrichardson.com)



# CONGREGATIONAL CARE



Wishing you a joyful and blessed birthday this December! May God's love, grace, and abundant blessings surround you in the year ahead. We're so grateful for the light and warmth you bring to our church family.

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

If we missed your December Birthday please send an email to the church office [rivierachurch@gmail.com](mailto:rivierachurch@gmail.com)  
Subject: December Birthday



# FELLOWSHIP

## Celebrate the Holiday Season!

### Sunday, December 15th

Let's enjoy the Christmas Potluck lunch with good friends, new friends, carols, great food & holiday cheer!

Sign up sheet for dishes is available on the back table



# UNITY IN COMMUNITY: PRIDE & ALLIES MINDFULNESS AND SOUND BOWL EXPERIENCE



- ✓ Breathwork
  - ✓ Mindfulness Practices
  - ✓ Sound Bath Experience
  - ✓ Community Empowerment
- \*\*Please bring a  
Yoga Mat/Towel + Water with you

Presented by ACUMEN Squad



SUN, DEC 15



1 PM - 3 PM



YES INSTITUTE



ADMISSION/RSVP ONLINE

<https://shorturl.at/1Ec7y>

YES INSTITUTE

5275 Sunset Dr, Miami, FL 33143

More Information

[info@yesinstitute.org](mailto:info@yesinstitute.org)



[yesinstitute](https://www.instagram.com/yesinstitute)

305-663-7195

Amid the holiday hustle and bustle, take a moment to pause and breathe. Our ministry partners at the YES Institute invite RPC members and friends to a soothing Mindfulness and Sound Bowl Experience. This is the perfect opportunity to refresh your spirit during this busy season. Admission & RSVP can be found in the flyer. Don't miss this chance for reflection and renewal!

# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-ADULTS

## Bible study @ 10 am

I have attended Sunday School in one form or another most of my life, but our class is something truly unique and lovely. We don't just listen to someone recite a lesson, or even respond to questions as we go. We discuss together, ask and answer questions, share, laugh, and learn about the day's scripture. I look forward to this time with my family every week! --Carol T.

10:00 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 Study group is going strong! We meet on the third Thursday of every month at 7:30 on Zoom, December 19 . New members are welcome.

Meeting ID: 886-2278-6373 Passcode: 757192. Contact Karen C [kc33134@aol.com](mailto:kc33134@aol.com) for details



## Theology Uncorked

**Join us for the final Theology Uncorked of 2024!**

Engage in a thoughtful discussion about today's world and discover how we can navigate it through the lens of progressive theology. Don't miss this opportunity to reflect, connect, and grow together. Hosted at Unseen Creatures Brewery, Sunday, October 13 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm 4178 SW 74th Ct, Miami, 33155.

# MISSION



**Socktober 2024 is in the books!**

**You Did It!**

Thank you for helping us reach and surpass our goal!

When we all do a little, it adds to a lot!



Christmas 2023

## **Frances Tucker Elementary School**

November 18th Riviera distributed grocery gift cards to children from food insecure families at the school. Several of these children were homeless. We are continuing to collect donations to cover the cost of these cards. Please donate to Frances Tucker elementary or Food Pantry on our website, [www.rivierachurch.org/give](http://www.rivierachurch.org/give) or mark your donation as "Food Pantry" in the offering plate.

Before we know it, Christmas will be here. As we have done in previous years, Riviera will buy and distribute holiday presents to the first graders at Frances Tucker. There is a sign-up sheet in the back of the church as well as the "All About Me" sheets that the students filled out. Please take one or more pages, buy a toy as suggested by their wishes, wrap it, tape the "All About Me" sheet on the front and bring to church no later than December 15th. We ask for a \$20 limit per child. You can also donate to the Frances Tucker Elementary line on our website, [www.rivierachurch.org/give](http://www.rivierachurch.org/give) or mark your donation as "Frances Tucker" in the offering plate. I am happy to shop for toys! We will give out the toys at 9:00AM on Monday, December 16th in the Frances Tucker Cafetorium. It is a noisy, happy, warm fuzzy time for all. Remember, for some of these children, it may be the only present they get.

## LEAP for Ladies

The Dragonfly Thrift Boutique is open and thriving in South Miami. The Boutique is located at 5815 SW 68th St, South Miami, FL 33143 (305)397-8743 info@dragonflythrift.org. Hours Mon-Fri: 11:00 AM - 7:00 PM Sat: 11:00 AM - 6:00 PM, Sun: 11:00 AM - 5:00 PM

There is a wonderful selection of gently used upscale clothing, jewelry, household items, artwork and much more available.

Donations are also gladly accepted. You can drop donations off at the boutique during their regular hours, or there is a collection box in the back of the church.

The ladies in the program start their classes while still incarcerated. When they come out, they are provided with housing and job training.

Riviera gives each graduate a \$50 Target gift card to get necessities to start their new journey. There are currently nine ladies living in interim housing. Riviera will give them a Target gift card for the holidays.

## Food Pantry

Please remember to sign out a bag of food and necessities for the unhoused we meet on the street.

Shalom,  
Ellen Anderson



**TOGETHER TO CARE FOR HUMANITY**

Blood donation is a form of our concern for others

**Dec. 1**

**Blood Drive**  
Sunday, December 1 from 12:00 pm - 2:30pm

The poster features a red background with white and black text. At the bottom, there is an illustration of a person lying in a hospital bed being attended to by a nurse, with a blood donation machine nearby. The background is decorated with white starburst patterns.



BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS, FOR THEY WILL BE CALLED THE CHILDREN OF GOD. MATTHEW 5:9

PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
PEACEMAKING AND RECONCILIATION  
SEPTEMBER 8-OCTOBER 6, 2024

WORLD COMMUNION SUNDAY  
OCTOBER 6, 2024

The poster features a watercolor-style illustration of a diverse group of people standing in a field of flowers under a large orange sun. The text is in a clean, sans-serif font. A circular logo for World Communion Sunday is in the bottom right corner.

Thank you to all who donated to the Peace & Global Witness Offering we raised \$418.13. 25% of that offering goes towards our ministry with LEAP.

# SPF: STEWARDSHIP/FINANCE/PROPERTY

## December SPF Meeting Update

Please note the SPF meeting has been rescheduled for this month only. It will now take place on Monday, December 4, at 5:00 PM via Zoom.

## Thank You for Your Pledges!

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who has completed their pledges for the 2025 budget! If pledging is still on your "to-do" list, there's still time.

### Easy Ways to Give:

- Online at the RPC website, where you may set up recurring hassle free donations from your checking or your credit card. While credit card donations give miles and cash back. Please keep in mind 2% of your donation is kept for processing fees unless you select to Give additional 2% to help offset the processing fee.
- Venmo and Cashapps @rivierachurch5275. This option does not have recurring payments, but Riviera benefits 100% of your donations. Every penny counts to help our beloved church operate and continue working on our mission and serving our community.

## Contribution Letters Sent

End-of-quarter contribution letters have been mailed to your home addresses. If you have any questions or did not receive your letter, please reach out to us.

Wishing you all a joyful holiday season and looking forward to seeing your smiling faces in 2025!

Warm regards,

Kathy Stults

Chair, SPF Committee



## December 1 - December 29, 2024

### Christmas Joy

Join us in celebrating the spirit of giving this season through the Christmas Joy Offering. This special offering honors God's gift of Jesus Christ by:

- Providing critical assistance to current and retired church workers in their time of need.
- Investing in future leaders through Presbyterian-related schools and colleges that serve communities of color.

Our 2024 goal is \$650. Together, we can make a meaningful impact.



# WORSHIP COMMITTEE

## **RPC December music happenings...**

There's a lot of great music happening this month of December at RPC.

Beginning Sunday, December 1, we celebrate the new liturgical year with specially prepared Advent music led by our illustrious choir.

After the service the children will be doing a full dress rehearsal run-thru of our Christmas Pageant "A Very Special Child" which they will help lead during our 11 am service on the following Sunday December 8. During the pageant, the adults (and children of all ages) can also participate by donning a costume or taking up a prop to become part of the program as well, by participating in one of the groups and singing the songs found in the hymnal.

Then, on Sunday, December 15, as a special treat during the 11 am service, our RPC choir will present the annual Christmas cantata "Wise Men Still Seek Him". Following the 12/15 service, as part of our Christmas Luncheon, Walter will lead us in a sing-a-long where you can request your favorite holiday classics - a wonderful experience you do not want to miss.

On December 22, we will have two services. The morning 11 am service will celebrate the 4th and final Sunday of Advent as we await the birth of Jesus, and at 6:00 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.

On December 24, we invite everyone to celebrate our Lord's birthday on Christmas Eve with extra special music beginning at 6 pm.

Finally, on Sunday December 29, we continue rejoicing with a traditional Lessons and Carols service.

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](mailto:rivierapresmusic@gmail.com).

Advent and Christmas blessings to all.  
Walter



Place Your Order



POINSETTIAS

You are invited to help enhance our sanctuary for the Christmas Eve service by purchasing a traditional poinsettia. Each plant costs \$10.

After the service, you may take your poinsettia home or leave it to be shared with members and friends who are ill or homebound.

Donors, along with the names of those being remembered or honored, will be listed in the Christmas Eve bulletin. Thank you for your generosity!

**I/We wish to purchase a plant(s) please circle one:**

**In Memory of**

**In Celebration of**

**In Honor of**

Name of Loved Ones(s)

---

---

Name of Donor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check:

I will take plant(s) home

Please give my plant(s) away

# of Poinsettia(s) desired: \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10 Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please place this order form with payment in the offering plate, or you may pay online under Members/Friends Giving – memo Poinsettias and email the form to [rivierachurch@gmail.com](mailto:rivierachurch@gmail.com). The Deadline for orders is Sunday, December 15.

