

THE SPARK

April 2025 Embodying Love - Demanding Justice - Transforming the World

Holy Week at Riviera

 everything
[in] between
shouting & silence



Palm Sunday - April 13, 2025 at 11:00am

On a borrowed donkey from a gracious neighbor, on crowd-sourced paths accompanied by loud rejoicing, Jesus wept on arrival, knowing full well what we humans are capable of doing to each other. He rode right into what stones have seen: criminalization and death-dealing decisions, dehumanization and denial of dignity, disregard for expansive beauty. What would stones shout? What do you shout? What do you silence?"

 everything
[in] between
power & humility



Maundy Thursday - April 17, 2025 at 7:00pm

After all that Jesus had done and said and taught, after a myriad of miracles, healings, parables, and teachings, Jesus' friends still couldn't help themselves. Worldly temptations, lust for power, and desire for prestige crowded around the table as uninvited guests. There was Judas, cutting backroom deals with the authorities. And Jesus had hardly finished telling the apostles what they were to do in remembrance of him when bickering broke out about who among them was the greatest.

 everything
[in] between
grief & hope

Easter Sunday - April 20, 2025

Then they remembered his words, Luke says of the women who had brought burial spices to Jesus' tomb. It took outside help, in the form of two angels, and it wasn't instantaneous. First there was terror, because it's not every day that otherworldly visitors come calling. But then they received a gentle word: Remember.



MELANIE'S MESSAGE

April 2025 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 pm
Sunday 9:00 - 1:00 pm
www.rivierachurch.org
Connect with us on social media
[@RivieraChurch](https://www.instagram.com/RivieraChurch)

All The People
Ministers

Rev. Melanie Marsh
Pastor
Rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com

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rivierapresmusic@gmail.com

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Barbara Prieto, CCA
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Session Members
Susan Mazzola
Clerk of Session

Gerardo Avitia
Karen Collier
Laura Fothergill
Angela Galbreath
Amparo Hernandez
Michele Ready
Kathy Stults
Cris Sweeny

Greetings Beloved Community,

As we move into April, we are rounding the corner toward our final few weeks of the Lenten season. This week, our scripture focus is on the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and our theme is "In Between Righteousness & Mercy." Here's a brief poetic reflection from our 2025 Everything In Between Lenten Devotional by Rev. Sarah Are Speed:

Righteousness & Mercy

As children, we were taught to tell the teacher.
(Justice was dealt when we spoke up.)
As children, we were taught to always be kind.
(Friends were made when we spoke with love.)
As children, we were taught that Zacchaeus climbed a tree.
(But we cut that tree down a long time ago.)
So what are the rules for this day and age?
Can we turn black and white into shades of gray?
Do we call each other out, for righteousness' sake?
Do we call each other in? Do we grab something to eat?
As always,
love is somewhere in between.

May you find love, resilience, hope, and healing in all the in-between places of your life this season.

Many Blessings,
Rev. Melanie Marsh

PS. Did you know that this Summer is our church's 80th Anniversary?! It's true.

Not only that, but it's also the 45th anniversary of our Child Care Center preschool! Which will be celebrated on April 25th

If you want to help us plan the celebration for these two milestone events in the church's life, join us for a Zoom meeting on Wednesday, April 9th, at noon. Contact the church office for more info.

CONGREGATIONAL CARE

The Congregational Care Committee is dedicated to providing care, support, and prayer for individuals and families in all stages and circumstances of life. Rooted in a spirit of community and service, this ministry fosters meaningful connections and ensures that no one walks alone. Through thoughtful systems of support, we seek to nurture, encourage, and care for every generation of our church family—coming together as siblings in Christ to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Don't hesitate to contact Karen C at kc33134@aol.com if care is needed.

FELLOWSHIP

A vibrant, colorful graphic for a Spring Potluck event. The background is light gray, decorated with various stylized flowers in shades of pink, red, yellow, blue, and green. The text is arranged in a central, eye-catching layout. At the top, it says "YOU ARE INVITED TO" in orange. Below that, "SPRING" is written in large, multi-colored letters (S: orange, P: pink, R: green, I: yellow, N: red, G: pink), and "POTLUCK" is in large, multi-colored letters (P: orange, O: pink, T: green, L: yellow, U: red, C: pink, K: orange). The event details are in pink and orange: "RELAX AND ENJOY THE FELLOWSHIP" and "6 April | 12 p.m.". A green instruction says "Bring your favorite Spring Meal to share". The location is "in Fellowship Hall" in orange. The website "www.rivierachurch.org" is at the bottom in pink. The entire graphic is framed by a brown border.

YOU ARE INVITED TO

**SPRING
POTLUCK**

**RELAX AND ENJOY
THE FELLOWSHIP**

6 April | 12 p.m.

Bring your favorite Spring
Meal to share

in Fellowship Hall

www.rivierachurch.org

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-ADULTS

Throughout April, we will continue our Sunday morning adult Bible study, exploring the *Everything in Between* Lenten devotional and reflecting on the scriptures. Our study will conclude on Easter Sunday.

The study is held in the Church Library from 10 – 10:30 am. Child care is provided.

Join us as we journey through these scriptures and prepare our hearts for the hope and renewal of Easter.



The Women's Study Group will not meet in April. All are encouraged to attend the Maundy Thursday service on April 17 starting at 6:30pm for Soup Supper and 7:00 pm worship

"Living in Such Times" - What JRR Tolkein and Lord of the Rings can teach us about resisting forces of evil in our modern context.

Famed English writer JRR Tolkien was one of the pioneers of the pub theology movement. Along with friend and fellow writer CS Lewis, he would gather with friends (they called themselves The Inklings) in their local Oxford pub to discuss God, literature, science, and current events, all washed down with a pint or two.

In his Lord of the Rings series, Tolkien writes,

"While we cannot choose the times we live in, we can choose how to respond to the time we are given."

How are we choosing to respond to the times we live in, here and now?

Join us at Unseen Creatures Palm Sunday for friends and conversation!



THEOLOGY
uncorked

Sunday, April 13, at 5:30pm

[Unseen Creatures Brewing & Blending 4178 SW 74CT 33155](https://www.unseencreatures.com/)

MISSION



PRESBYTERIAN HUNGER PROGRAM

certifies

*Riviera Presbyterian Church
Miami, FL*

as an

EARTH CARE CONGREGATION

on this

15th+ year of certification

*for its outstanding environmental stewardship achievements in worship, education,
facilities and outreach in the life of the church.*

Through February, 2026

Signature Jessica Mandolin Date 3/3/2025
Associate for Sustainable Living and Earth Care Concerns

Riviera Presbyterian Church was certified as an Earth Care Congregation by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Presbyterian Hunger Program through February 2026. The Earth Care Congregation certification is designed to recognize churches that commit to take seriously God's charge to "till and keep" the garden.

This PC (USA) national program is celebrating 15 years of certifying churches and celebrating environmental ministry across 4 major areas of a congregation's life: worship, education, facilities, and outreach in the community.

Earth Care Congregations exist as strong community partners in their own areas as well as models for Presbyterian congregations across the country. One of the goals of this program is to inspire churches to care for God's earth in a holistic way by integrating earth care into all aspects of their church life. By the time a church has recertified for several years, the earth care ethic becomes ingrained in a congregation's culture, spreads to the surrounding community, and impacts the personal lives of individual church members.

Obtaining this status speaks to the serious commitment that RPC has made to care for God's earth.

SPF: STEWARDSHIP/FINANCE/PROPERTY

We Did It!

Thanks to your incredible generosity, we've reached our Per Capita goal of \$2,615! This is a true testament to the strength and commitment of our Riviera family.

Now, it's time to celebrate! Join us for a Helados Unidos ice cream social on Palm Sunday as a sweet reward for reaching 100% participation.

Thank you for making this possible—your support means so much!

Property Update:

- Currently working on updating the required fire alarm system for our upcoming inspection in April.
- Fixing a significant roof leak and structural issue over the CCC building,
- Treating termites in the YES office areas
- Watch for new planters and plants outside the east sanctuary entrance
- Other repairs pending a new Handiman.

WORSHIP

Our New Parament

Church paraments are the cloths that adorn the altar, pulpit, communion table, and other parts of a church sanctuary.

I'd like to tell you a story about a former member of Riviera.

Elenore "Ellie" Cole was a clergywoman credited with creating healing prayer services at Riviera Presbyterian Church. She died June 1, 2003 in her Miami home after a long battle with breast cancer. She was 59. A life of helping other people, especially those who were sick, culminated with Cole's becoming an ordained minister in June 2002. Her personal struggle with cancer led Cole to begin working as a chaplain for VITAS Hospice in Miami-Dade and Broward counties.



Ellie was born and raised in New Jersey in 1943. She attended Lycoming College and the University of Pennsylvania and earned a master's degree in library science and a doctorate in Germanic languages. She could speak 15 languages.

Ellie married in 1967 and divorced nine years later. Ellie was a single mother, working as a librarian at city libraries in New Jersey, when she started volunteering to reorganize church libraries. She moved to Philadelphia and started a 25-year career in the international shipping business. She began taking night classes at a seminary in Philadelphia and a year later received the diagnosis that she had cancer.

Then her employer of 10 years announced it was closing its Pennsylvania office, and Cole had a choice of relocating to Belgium or Miami. During a visit to South Florida, she fell in love with the beaches and warm weather and made her decision.

As Ellie's cancer worsened, she was forced to stop working. But, with more time on her hands, she was able to attend the South Florida Center for Theological Studies in downtown Miami, where she obtained her Master of Divinity degree. After her ordination, Ellie officially started as a parish associate at Riviera Presbyterian. There, she did community outreach, visiting fellow worshipers at home, preaching during services and initiating healing services that focused on anointing.

Ellie also loved to do needlework. She would do cross-stitch ornaments to welcome each new member. Many of us have cross-stitch pictures she did. When the paraments of Riviera began to show their age, she started a project to replace them. We have all seen the pink paraments she did that we use twice a year. She also had the materials to make the purple paraments for Advent and Lent. Unfortunately, she passed away in 2002 before she could complete the project. The materials made their way to Riviera and eventually made their way to me. In love and memory, I am completing her project. You can see the completed Lent parament hanging from the communion table. It took many hours and many, many stitches.



I hope you all feel the love and care that Ellie Cole passed down to Riviera.

Shalom,
Ellen Anderson

WORSHIP Continues

Exciting Choir Performance Sunday, April 6

Join us for a special time of worship this Sunday as our church choir presents Christus by Felix Mendelssohn. This beautiful and powerful choral work reflects on the life and message of Christ, offering a deeply moving experience through music.

Maundy Thursday, April 17

Join us for Soup Supper at 6:30 pm, followed by worship at 7:00 pm. Child care will be provided.

Easter Sunday, April 20 Event

