

THE SPARK

December 2025 Embodying Love - Demanding Justice - Transforming the World

Our Advent Stories begin Sunday, Nov. 30



FROM
GENERATION
TO GENERATION...

There's room for every story





MELANIE'S MESSAGE

November 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

All The People
Ministers

Rev. Melanie Marsh
Pastor

Rev.melanie.marsh@gmail.com

Dr. Walter Busse
Director of Music

rivierapresmusic@gmail.com

Emma Cottrell

Faith Formation & Outreach Director
rivierapresfaithformation@gmail.com

Barbara Prieto, CCA
Certified Church Administrator
rivierachurch@gmail.com

Clerk of Session
Kathy Stults

Session Members
Gerardo Avitia
Karen Collier
Laura Fothergill
Angela Galbreath
Amparo Hernandez
Michele Ready
Cris Sweeny

“...new life starts in the dark. Whether it is a seed in the ground, a baby in the womb, or Jesus in the tomb, it starts in the dark.”

- Barbara Brown Taylor, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*

Beloved Church Family,

We often think of Advent as a season of light.

But the truth is, we use so much light imagery in Advent because it always comes in the darkest season of the year. The darkness is part of the journey into new life that we make every year at this time. It is necessary for growth. It teaches us things about ourselves and the world around us that we cannot learn in the brightness of other days.

This is the last season that I will spend with the family of faith at Riviera. The dark of these weeks feels like it reflects the uncertainty and mystery of this moment for our community of faith. My prayer for all of us in this time is that we find strength and comfort in one another's presence... that we will allow ourselves time to breathe, to look into each other's eyes, to give thanks for the joys and challenges of life together, and above all to remember that we are beloved - as children of God and as siblings in Christ.

May we all learn to walk in the dark, together, through this season and beyond.

Many Blessings,
Rev. Melanie

STEWARDSHIP, PROPERTY & FINANCE

Stewardship, Finance, Property Committee's next meeting is via Zoom on Wednesday, December 3rd, at 5:00 pm.

Members: Kathy S. Butch S. Tania S. John G. Rey P. Barbie P. Carol N.

If you wish to join please speak to Kathy S. – contact church office for her email.

We are in the final stages of the fire alarm system for the sanctuary.

Stewardship Drive for 2026. Please remember to submit your pledge cards in person or [online](#). Knowing your support for next year will help us plan and finalize the 2026 budget.

WORSHIP, MARKETING, MEMBERSHIP



On Sunday, December 7, our worship service will center on a joyful Nativity Pageant, where every child is invited to take part in telling the Christmas story. No rehearsals or preparation needed—costumes will be ready, and there's a place for everyone. After worship, we'll gather for a Christmas Potluck Lunch with crafts and activities for children of all ages. We hope you'll join us for this meaningful and joy-filled start to the season.

On Sunday, December 21, our 11:00 a.m. worship service will feature the Riviera Chancel Choir presenting This Child, This King, a moving Christmas Cantata that reflects the hope and promise of the season. Later that evening at 6:00 p.m., we will hold our Longest Night Service—a gentle, reflective time for anyone who may be carrying heaviness during the holidays.

We will conclude our Advent journey with our Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 6:00 p.m., a peaceful and meaningful gathering for all who wish to take part in the spirit of the season.

We look forward to welcoming you and sharing these meaningful moments together.

WORSHIP, MARKETING, MEMBERSHIP

Hanging of the Greens at Riviera

Sunday's November 23rd worship was a beautiful beginning to the Advent season. As we read, sang, and placed symbols of hope throughout the sanctuary, the space began to reflect the promise we await.

A heartfelt thank-you to everyone who stayed after worship to help with the finishing touches. Your hands and care—whether hanging greenery, placing Chrismons, or sharing in conversation—helped shape a sanctuary ready to welcome this season of expectation.

We're grateful for the gifts each of you bring to our community as we journey into Advent together.



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION-FAITH FORMATION & FELLOWSHIP

Hi friends! We hope you will join us on December 7th for a very special worship service! We will hold our Nativity pageant, followed by a delicious Christmas potluck luncheon and a birthday party for Jesus!

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE

Jesus's Birthday

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH

Join us after worship for a special birthday party for Jesus! We will be celebrating with cake, games, crafts, and by kicking off our toy drive for Francis Tucker K-8!!

RIVIERA PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH



THEOLOGY
uncorked

Sunday, December 14, at 5:30pm
New Location
Berries in The Grove
2884 SW 27th AVE 33133

We're doing something a little different—and a lot of fun. Join us as we play “Being an Intergenerational Church: The Game,” a discussion-based board game created by The Church of Scotland. Through meaningful prompts and thoughtful questions, the game helps us explore our own faith, our community, and the ways different generations experience and participate in church life.

It's a playful way to spark real conversation. Hope you'll join in!

PASTOR NOMINATING COMMITTEE @ RIVIERA

Pastor Nominating Committee (PNC) at Riviera

The PNC was approved at the RPC Congregational Meeting on October 5, 2025, consisting of 3 Session Elders and 2 members at large. The members of this congregational committee include Cris Sweeney, Laura Fothergill, Kathy Stults (current session members), Cindy Hershey (Elder), Rosy Gonzalez Speers.

Since the creation and approval of this group, we have met several times to begin the work of finding the next installed pastor for Riviera Presbyterian Church. We have met with leaders of the Presbytery to assist us on this journey. Our initial work will be to create the MDP, the Ministry Discernment Profile. This is generally a job description and information about Riviera that is posted in a national electronic system. We work alongside the church session for information that also helps inform the MDP. The PNC is a congregational group whose work is confidential; with this said we will continually update the congregation on our work. Through the holiday season and new year we continue to work through this process.

We covet your prayers and support as we engage in this challenging and beautiful work. Feel free to reach out for questions or concerns.

On behalf of our committee,

Laura Fothergill
Chair of the PNC

MISSION

Angel Tree Project

We launched our annual Angel Tree project for first graders at Frances Tucker Elementary. Each child will have an “About Me” sheet to help guide you in choosing a meaningful gift. We suggest keeping gifts around \$20 per child. There is still time to pickup an “About Me” sheet in the Welcome Area/Narthex. Please return all gifts to the church by Sunday, December 15. The following morning, Monday, December 16, we will gather to distribute the gifts—and everyone is welcome to join us. It’s always a heartwarming experience to see the joy these gifts bring. For many of these children, this may be the only present they receive during the holiday season. Your generosity truly makes a difference.



CCC News



It’s been a full and meaningful season at the CCC. The Trunk or Treat and Movie Night was a joy—children and their families moved from trunk to trunk, gathered treats, and settled in together for the film. Thank you to the teachers, staff, and families who helped create such a warm and welcoming evening.

Earlier in November, the Friendsgiving Dinner brought that same spirit of connection to the table as families shared a meal, spent time together, and celebrated the community that surrounds our children.

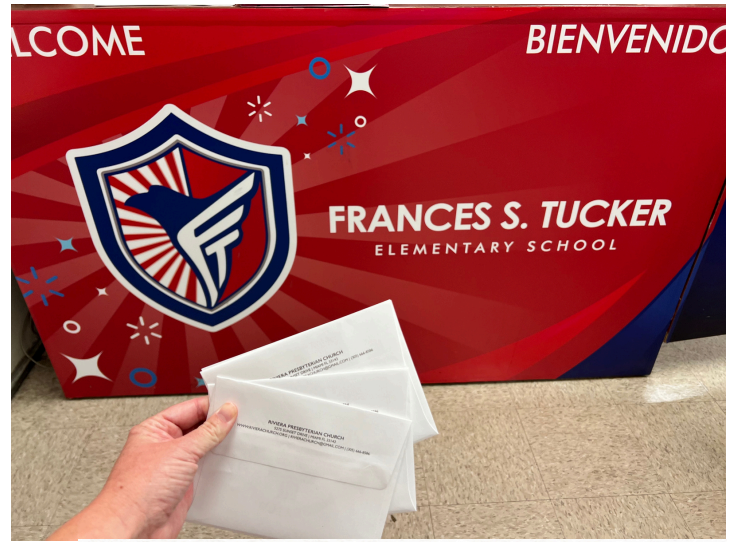
We are grateful for every family and staff member who helps make the CCC a place where children can grow, learn, and experience the joy of being part of a caring community.

MISSION ...

We are grateful to share that, thanks to the 2025 mission budget, Riviera was able to provide twenty \$25 grocery gift cards for students from food-insecure households at Frances Tucker Elementary. These families were identified by the school, and this support offers a bit of relief as we move toward the holiday season.

Thank you to everyone whose generosity and commitment to our mission makes this possible.

Thank you to Mission Chair, Michele Ready and Director of Faith Formation & Outreach Emma Cottrell for representing Riviera during the distribution of the gift cards.



Invitation from Kathy & Karen

Mark your calendars for a relaxed afternoon together. On Saturday, December 27, from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m., we're hosting an Open House for our Riviera family. Drop in when you can, stay as long as you'd like, and enjoy good company as we unwind after a full Advent and Christmas season.

If you're able, bring a snack or beverage to share. We look forward to gathering, catching up, and ending the year in community.

