

# RIVERSIDE REPORTER: SEPTEMBER 2023

**“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”**

*~Matthew 25:40*



**“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink... I needed clothes and you clothed me...” ~Matthew 25:35**

This Matthew 25 passage has become a framework for our Wednesday community dinners because **it's exactly what we do**: We share food. We offer drinks. And we give away basic clothing items to anyone who needs them.

But I also thought about this passage last month as greeters discussed tips for hospitality:

**“I was a stranger and you invited me in.”** And I hear it lived out as we get ready to host and welcome currently-unknown families for Family Promise. For a week this month, our Sunday school rooms become bedrooms for kids and parents who need a safe place to sleep. Jesus' voice echoes there, too: **“I was a stranger and you invited me in.”**

Our congregational care team does a beautiful job of sending cards and calls to anyone who is going through surgery. (**“I was sick and you looked after me.”** ~Matthew 25:36)

But our church hasn't had a ministry to correlate with the line: **“I was in prison and you came to visit me.”** ...until now.

Last month, our trustees unanimously welcomed a new ministry group who needed a place to gather: a planning team for Kairos Prison Ministry. If you're familiar with the “Walk to Emmaus” program, then Kairos is a team of volunteers who coordinates an Emmaus weekend for incarcerated individuals. It's an immersive retreat designed to help people experience Jesus' love. The group using our facility (the planning council for “Kairos Outside”) focuses on the spouses, parents, and relatives of those who are in prison—families who also need to know God's love. So by supporting and welcoming this new ministry group, our church is now living in to ALL of Matthew 25.



**We do church best when we live into this Bible that we believe!  
Thank you, church family, for partnering in this work.**

*Rev. Emily Knight*



**“If you and God were a tree, what kind would you be? Also: what would be under the tree?”**

This was a youth group question back in 2002—an open invitation for students to reflect on their identity and God’s. One student’s answer has now become something of an icon around our church: James Thomas Pickren’s. Strong and steady, James was captain of his football team and a member of the National Honor Society at Stanton College Preparatory School. It made perfect sense when James said that he and God would be oak trees.

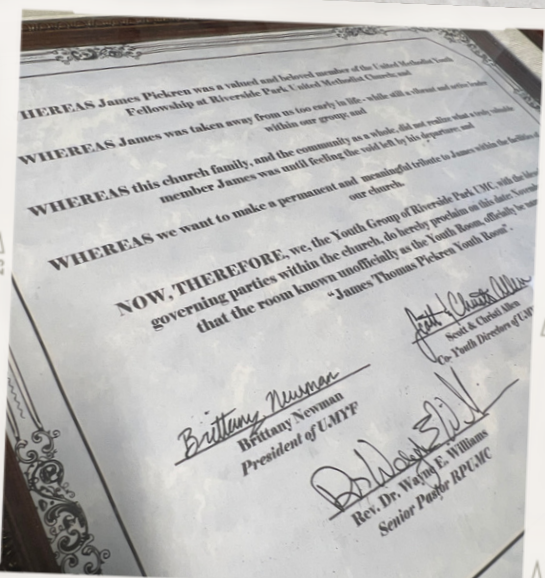
Most of the youth pictured flowers or bunnies under their trees, but James said he saw the temptations and evil of the world as wood-choppers, like lumberjacks trying to cut the oak tree down.

“He was the sweetest, biggest guy with an agile and questioning mind,” remembers Christi Allen (she and her husband Scott were the ones who asked the tree questions) “but even more special was that at such a young age he possessed a wise and spiritual soul.”



In November of that same year, James died in a tragic car crash. Folks who attended the funeral will say that the church has never been so full—ushers had to seat people in the fellowship hall to make room for everyone. As part of the eulogy, Rev. Wayne Williams said that James’ life had shared ‘acorns’ of love, joy, kindness and gentleness with the world. The youth had been collecting acorns and everyone at the funeral was invited to take one home—to continue to remember James and to continue sharing acorns of love and joy and kindness in the world.

Close to a year after James’ death, our church dedicated the youth room in his honor. We still have the wall plaque that reads: “Whereas James Pickren was a valued and beloved member of the United Methodist Youth... whereas we want to make a permanent and meaningful tribute to James within the facilities of our church... we do hereby proclaim that the room unofficially known as ‘the youth room’ officially be named the James Thomas Pickren Youth Room.”



**Derrick Hittell also volunteered to paint a mural in the room—a mural of oak trees amid the sidewalks of Riverside park (read Derrick’s story below). This original mural stretched into the ceiling and pushed out of the edges of the room. It also featured hooks for youth members to hang acorns with their own names written on them.**

**Over time, the acorns and hooks faded from the wall, but the mural remained a point of conversation for the youth room—a way for those who knew James to tell his story.**



It is strange how things can feel like forever, while at the same time feeling like yesterday. There is much to say about James Pickren, but that is not the intent of this letter. I was the Youth Director when James and his classmates moved into the youth group. I knew him from around the church but having him in the youth group gave me a chance to get to know him all the better. After I left the position, I remained involved as my son Alex entered the group. During those years, I got to know him better and grew very fond of him; he was the “big” brother to everyone in the youth group.

James’ death came as an enormous shock to all of us, and the community. Like so many of us, the grief seemed unending as we had lost not only a young member of our church but simply an all-around great kid. A brief time later, I felt the nagging urge to paint something on the youth room wall in his honor. I’ve never claimed to be an artist and believe me, the final product sealed that for anyone who may have thought otherwise. Never-the-less, I choose to paint a scene from the park across the street with the prominent image being that of an oak tree.

With Trustee approval, I bought the needed supplies and started on the mural. Halfway through painting the oak tree, I stepped back to get a better look. The tree was sparse to say the least, but I was putting in a good effort. I will never forget the sensation of my right shoulder getting warm and what sounded like James whispering in my inner ear, “you call that an oak tree”?



After letting the tears flow for a bit, I realized James was right; the tree just simply didn’t do him justice. I grabbed the ladder and paint and spread those tree branches and leaves all up over the ceiling and side wall. This couldn’t just be a tree, it was the strength, the loss, the hope, and the life of James. It could have filled the room and it wouldn’t have been big enough. At last, I stopped and sat down. My heart felt that this was a tree James wouldn’t tease me about. As a final addition, I painted a vine growing from the trunk that spelled JAMES as it gripped and weaved its way around the bottom of the tree.

—Derrick Hittell



A few years ago, the youth group brought a proposal to trustees. They wanted to repaint the whole room and have students re-imagine the oak tree motif. Trustees approved the project (as did James' parents and Derrick) but a pandemic hit and the oak tree remained missing... until now.

Especially with the re-launch of weekly youth group this summer and fall, we knew we needed a mural again. Ron Richardson asked our "Grace Gallery" team if they knew someone who could paint a mural and Carrie SantaLucia stepped forward.

When Carrie said yes to painting a mural, she had no idea that it was for James. Carrie, who has only been a member of our church for about a year, is also teacher at Stanton College Preparatory School. When we asked her about painting, we had no idea that Carrie's first time in our sanctuary was for James' funeral. We had no idea that she has kept acorns in her car ever since. And also: Carrie's parents, Yvonne and Albert Sloan, were co-workers with Chuck Pickren (James' dad) at the time of the accident.

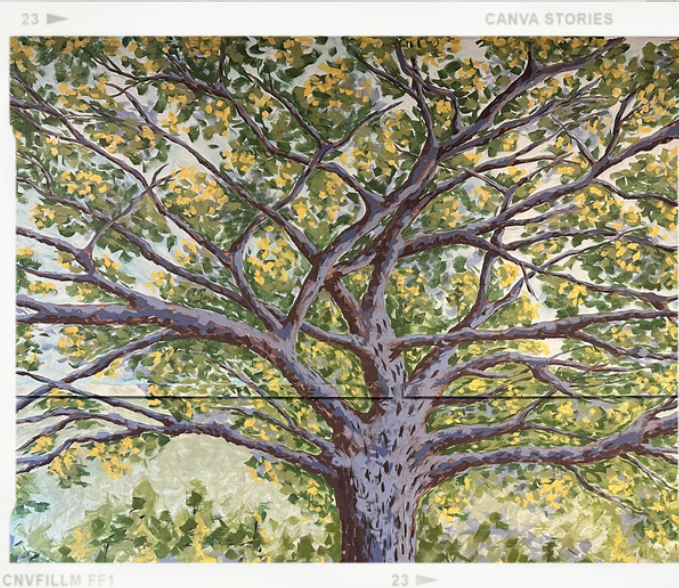
For Carrie, these factors felt like a 'God moment'—an affirmation that God was, indeed, working in her life and through this church. It was enough to affirm Carrie's call to baptism this past spring alongside her daughter, Eden (who just finished confirmation and also helped paint some of the James Pickren oak tree mural).



The new mural features a single tree: strong, steady, large in presence and large in heart: just like James.

"It's clear that God had a plan. And it's also fitting that the new image is a mature oak. James would be 39 this September." —Julie Pickren (James' mom)

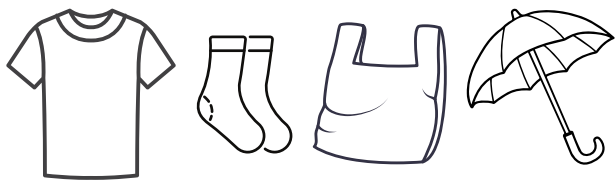
We will bless the new mural and re-dedicate the James Thomas Pickren youth room on Sunday, September 10th at noon. In lieu of a signature, Carrie will add James' name as a finishing touch and we will restore the plaque to its place on the wall. The Pickrens will also host a light reception.



# WEDNESDAY NIGHT MINISTRY

What an amazing summer for WNM. A few weeks there were few volunteer sign ups but God provided enough sometimes, more than enough other times. I thank each and every one of you who volunteered; new members, long time Wednesday night volunteers, visitors, community bank in Five Points, and even RPUMC's Daisy Girl Scout Troop. Thank you for your support, love, and prayers.

To sign-up, scan the QR code to the right or call the church (904) 355-5491



Daisy Scouts deliver meals to the apartments

*Items Needed:*  
Socks, Shirts,  
Rain Gear



**Dr. Samuel Shingles**

## CHANCEL CHOIR RETREAT - SEPT. 8-9

Our wonderful chancel choir will participate in our first working clinic/retreat this month. During the event, they will work with a music specialist in the areas of tone production, breath control, phrasing, and singing with appropriate style. New music will be presented as part of this event.

Dr. Samuel Shingles will be our guest conductor. Dr. Shingles has degrees from Stetson University, Bowling Green State University, and the University of Mississippi. He has also done post-Doctoral work at Jackson State University and is the Director of Choral Activities at Paxon School for Advanced Studies. Sam is also a pastor.

Did you realize that the music you hear presented in worship each week has been rehearsed for 6-7 weeks in advance? Our Chancel Choir is truly dedicated to excellence and looks forward to this wonderful time of education, food, and fun.

## SEPTEMBER KIDS MINISTRY

We have exciting news for September!

- **Sunday, September 10th @10am: Kids choir will begin.** Rehearsals will happen in the education building (the third room from the nursery).
- **Sunday, September 10th @10:30am: "Kids club" will begin** with a kick-off welcome party! (think of it as supercharged Sunday school)
- **Sunday, September 17th during both services:** We will present 3rd Grade Bibles (10:30am "Kids Club" will feature Bible games that morning)



# BACK TO SCHOOL BLOCK PARTY

Our annual back to school event was a great success. We continue to partner with St. Vincent's to provide necessary medical screenings and other vendors for haircuts, food and fun to our community. This year we prepared school supplies for 200 students and gave away 187. The remaining supplies were donated to a local elementary school in need.

Many thanks to all our volunteers who chose to be the "hands and feet of Jesus" to our community on a hot August day.



## Youth Ministry

I would first like to thank Bobby Brazell, Andrew Carrigg, Gealean Roeters, and Brittany Scott for running the youth lock in on August 11th. **If you wish to help with youth group in any capacity, please contact [youth@riversideparkumc.com](mailto:youth@riversideparkumc.com)** Come check out the Sunday morning youth group at 10am in room 301. The shift to every Sunday helps provide fun and spiritual growth.

- On September 10th, we will be rededicating the youth room.
- On Sunday, September 24th, our youth will lead both Sunday worship services

Please pray for our youth during the upcoming school year.

~Ty L. Strong, Youth Leader

Join us for Youth Group  
Sundays at 10 a.m.  
James Pickren Youth Room  
Room #302



# TRUSTEES UPDATE

## 7 RESTROOMS RECEIVED A "REFRESH"



As part of our ongoing renovations, the Trustees have spent over \$65,000.00 on upgrades to the restrooms in the McCord building and sanctuary. Changes include solid surface countertops with integrated sinks, touchless water and soap units, new partitions, new paper towel/trash receptacles, paint, and additional lighting. It was very rewarding to hear compliments from the project foreman about our great choices

for fixtures and colors. Accessorizing with pops of colors will continue this month. We are thankful for these beautiful and clean updates to our wonderful ministry facility.

## RENOVATION AND REPAIR PROJECT UPDATE



The church's renovation and repair project continues to progress. The power washing and sealing phase is complete; the roofing phase is 95% complete (see photos); and we anticipate the HVAC phase to start mid-September. So far the trustees are pleased with the work and will continue to maintain a close relationship with the contractor (Johnson Controls) and remain active in the quality control aspects. Additionally the trustees approved a new grease trap for the kitchen which is being installed as this update is written.

# MARGARET'S MEMORIES UPDATE...



Here is what has been going on:

Sorry for the lack of updates. Life has been busy!

In the Spring the Schubert family collected items that are used in our memory boxes or used to craft items in honor and memory of their daughter Aubrey's second birthday in Heaven. In addition decorated journals from Aubrey's Wings were provided. You can check out Aubrey's Wings on Instagram at aubreys.wings.journals In addition, Blankets have been donated by several very skilled crafters over the summer.

Memory boxes have been donated to UF Health North & Downtown; Baptist Medical Center South, Clay, Jacksonville, and Nassau; and St. Vincent's Southside.

Volunteers have been scheduling time to help with quality controlling, crafting, and other projects that make Margert's Memories possible. We are prepping for the fall box making. If you would like to prep things at home, please contact me.

If you quilt, knit, or crochet we are in a need of large blankets for boys and girls.

Several Memorial Donations have been made over the last few months. Murray Hill UMC Women's Group made a monetary donation over the summer. We continue to receive thank you notes and emails from families/friends to thank Margaret's Memories for giving the gift on memories. We are continually told all the handmade items are very touching.

**Save the Date!**

**September 10, 2023 Bracelet Making in the Fellowship Hall 10 am till?**

**October 7, 2023: Box Making in the Fellowship Hall 10 AM till Noon**

For more information email Nicole at margaretsmemories@hotmail.com or call the church office at 904-355-5491. You can also visit us on the web at [www.margaretsmemories.org](http://www.margaretsmemories.org) and "like" us on Facebook!

Thank you to everyone that makes this mission possible through your service, time, talents, and PRAYERS. **Together we are Saving Memories One Footprint AT A Time...**

Nicole Remo



At RPUMC, we are expecting a family on September 24- October 1, 2023. As of print we do not have any information except we are a GO. Scan the QR code to sign up to volunteer. I encourage you all to sign up. No job is too small. As it gets closer, more information will be available. Any questions please contact me:

Colleen Strong  
904- 903-0566  
Ty\_colleen@hotmail.com



Supporting Families, Changing Futures,  
Changing Homelessness



**Come Learn with US!**  
**Tour the Children's Home**

Learn more about how the Children's Home honors the UMC traditions and pours the love of Jesus into the children in their care.

**Date: September 16, 2023**  
**Time: Meet at 8:00 AM in**  
**the small parking lot @ church**  
**Tour Time: 10:30 AM**



## Tai Chi Open House



September 5th at 10:30 am or 7 pm

Stop in for some refreshments, learn more about Tai Chi and try a few moves.

Fall sessions begin on September 12th (Tuesday) at 10:30 am and 7 pm in the Fellowship Hall.

Come and experience the peace and calmness that our practice brings. Learn to relax, let go of worry, and be more mindful.

## Memorial Gifts

**In memory of Jim Allen:**

Bonnie & Tom Dudley

Jane & Mark Riechmann

Alan McCord

## First Friday Friends Returns!

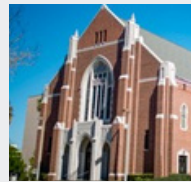
We have great programs and delicious free lunches on the first Friday of each month. We gather for coffee and visiting with everyone at 11:00 am and begin our program at 11:30 am. We usually serve lunch at 12:00 noon. **All Senior Friends are welcome to come.** If you live in one of our close apartments and have a neighbor who might enjoy these programs please invite them.

In **October**, we plan to have a variety of board games, etc. We all played them growing up and we have people to help us remember the rules etc. We plan to have dominoes, Cards, Scrabble, and others. If you have a favorite game feel free to bring it.

For **November** we are asking that you bring one of your baby pictures for a fun event. We do need it brought before November - September or October - would help us organize it. Your picture will go home with you - we just need to borrow it for a short time. Pastor Emily will share a devotion with us - we are looking forward to that.

**December** is the perfect time for some special Christmas Music so watch this spot for details coming soon.

If you have any questions please call me at 904-234-5823. Susan Russell



## Are You New to RPUMC?

RPUMC campus tour will be Sunday, September 10th. Meet Tim Bush at 10 a.m. in front of the sanctuary for a tour and learn some history of our 135+ year old church.

## New Member Classes

Starting Sunday, September 17, join Pastor Emily in the parlor (1st floor, McCord building--off of the fellowship hall), to learn more about our Methodist roots, our core values, and our missions here at RPUMC. The classes run for three weeks (9/17, 9/24, 10/1) and new members will join shortly thereafter.

**10:10am-10:50am in the Parlor**

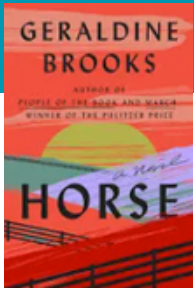
## OUR WESLEYAN ROOTS SEPTEMBER SERIES



Our September sermons will focus on Wesleyan holiness and Christian living. These topics will spill over into two 'Holy Conferencing' Bible studies.

During these gatherings, participants will discuss Scripture and a biblical approach to questions like "Can we disagree about things and remain faithful?"

**Join us for Bible study on  
Thursday, Sept 14th & 21st  
@1pm in the Fellowship Hall**



# BOOK CLUB

Are you reading our book for September - Horse by Geraldine Brooks ? Reading a book is a great way to use these very hot days of summer.

We hope to see you in the library at Riverside UMC at 1:00 PM on Sept 21st.

We will be reading The Four Winds by Kristen Hannah for our October 19th meeting. She is a favorite author of many people. There are 27 copies in our Jacksonville Library so everybody should find it easy to get a copy. Next month's Reporter will share more information about this book so be sure to look for it.

For our November meeting, we will read Driving with Miss Norma by Tim Bauersch ( not at all like Driving Miss Daisy).

Watch for details for our upcoming books.

## WOMEN IN MISSION

Summer is starting to wind down and that means things are picking back up. The three Small Groups, or Circles as we refer to them, of WIM (Women In Mission) will be meeting in September. We have one evening group and two daytime circles. All meet at the church. The Sisters of Service will meet on Tuesday, Sept. 12th at 7:00 p.m. They serve refreshments at their meeting. The Circle of Joy and Peace will meet on Wednesday, Sept. 20th, at 11:00 a.m. and the Circle of Hope will meet on Thurs. Sept. 21st at 11:00 a.m. Both of these groups have lunch. Each woman brings her sandwich and drinks and dessert are furnished. All of these groups focus on doing ongoing projects for women and children in need, in our community.

If you attended the brunch and painting experience we had in July, which was sponsored by the WIM, you've already seen the warm and friendly women involved in this organization.

If you want more information on which small group would best suit you, please feel free to call me at (904) 891-6731.

--Bonnie Allen, Chair of WIM

**Sisters of Service**  
**Tues., Sept. 12 @ 7pm**

**Circle of Joy & Peace**  
**Wed., Sept. 20 @ 11am**

**Circle of Hope**  
**Thurs. Sept. 21 @ 11am**

## UNITED METHODIST MEN

The United Methodist Men will meet on Sunday, September 17th following the traditional service. On October 29th, the UMM will be hosting a 5th Sunday pancake breakfast in the fellowship hall. For more information, please contact RPUMC UMM president, Clark Burner at GCBURNER@att.net



# RACIAL JUSTICE



Together Against Hate Speaker Series - 904Ward + The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services  
Thursday, September 14, 2023 07:00 PM - 08:30 PM EST  
The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services  
8540 Baycenter Rd, Jacksonville, FL 32256, USA

## The General Commission on Religion and Race

The GCORR invites you to join in this September for 30 days of antiracism. With the calendar provided at <https://www.r2hub.org/library/30-days-of-anti-racism>, each day we will engage in an activity that helps us to become more antiracist in the ways we think and act. Share your progress with a picture or a reflection using #30DaysAntiRacism.



Our friends at Grace UMC in St. Augustine have alerted us to a conference at Flagler College that is free and open to the public on September 28-October 1 called: THE FREEDOM TO TEACH: CONFRONTING COMPLEX THEMES IN CONTESTED SPACES. For more information: [mbutler1@flagler.edu](mailto:mbutler1@flagler.edu)



Yellow House Art Gallery  
Visit the new "Freedom Ride"

exhibit at the Yellow House Art Gallery. You will be inspired and awed by the creativity and passion of these young adults. <https://www.yellowhouseart.org/projects/exhibit>

## Looking Forward to October

Save the Date

**CHARGE CONFERENCE: SATURDAY, OCT 7TH**  
**TRUNK-OR-TREAT: SUNDAY, OCT 29TH**

**Missions Fair: October 8th from 9:30-11:30**  
in the Fellowship Hall. RPUMC has a huge number of opportunities to serve our church, our community and nourish our souls. These range from being on a committee, Sunday School classes, office support, event planning and helping with worship. Stop in for refreshments before, between or after services and see all we have to offer.



## PIPE ORGAN SPOOK-TACULAR

**Sunday, October 29th**  
**7:30 p.m.**

Featuring Rich Lewis and Special Guest Mary Holladay. Creepy music by J.S. Bach, Gounod, Saint-Saens, and more



# RIVERSIDE PARK

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

"Empowering others to live life abundantly in Christ."



Worship with Us!



**Sunday Mornings  
in the Sanctuary:  
@9am Contemporary  
@11am Traditional**

**Nursery care available.  
Sunday school @10am**

**Worship Online:  
Facebook live Sundays  
@9am Contemporary  
@11am Traditional**

**facebook.com/RiversideParkUMC**  
*(services are also uploaded  
later to YouTube)*

**Church Office: (904) 355-5491**

**www.riversideparkumc.com**

**Church Office Hours:**

**Monday - Thursday 9-3:30**

**Friday 9-1**

Rev. Emily Knight, Pastor  
pastoreml@riversideparkumc.com

Joye Hampton, Office Manager  
j.hampton@riversideparkumc.com

John Larsen, Director of Traditional Worship  
j.larsen@riversideparkumc.com

Millie Hudson, Director of Contemporary Worship  
m.hudson@riversideparkumc.com

Ty Strong, Youth Leader  
youth@riversideparkumc.com

Rich Lewis, Organist  
r.lewis@riversideparkumc.com

Jack Barnard, Bookkeeper  
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Britt Scott, Tech Team Leader  
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Nancy Schubiger, Membership Secretary  
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Tre Devine, Custodian  
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