

December is a month of joyful awe and wonder, with endless opportunities for cozy activities and festivities. Especially at the very start of the month, I can't wait to drink cocoa and bake cookies, hang lights, setup nativities, light advent candles...

I LOVE worship during Advent and Christmas Eve, but the honest truth is that the calendar and the rush often get away from me. If I'm not careful, "peace and joy" end up feeling more like additional things to do.

**I am always tempted to rush through the calendar and accomplish all the lists—only to realize that I haven't been truly present through any of it. Which is a shame. Because the whole point of the season is to recognize and be present with God who shows up for the world.** The point is to be present with one another. To be present through the calendar WITH the peace of Christ... Not the other way around.

Countercultural to the RUSH of December, advent slows us down--preparing our hearts so that we can be truly present through each moment of joy and awe and peace. As a spiritual practice, this is called "practicing the presence of God." It means examining our hearts so that we can reject Hallmark's carefully marketed and idealized idea of Christmas, so that—instead—**we can settle into the authentic reality of what Christmas IS: God's presence in the reality of our world. We are invited to gather together and show up for each other through the waiting of the prophets, through the hoping of the annunciation and the long long long (likely uncomfortable) journey to Bethlehem... Because THIS is the reality in which God chooses to show up.**

The phrase "God with us" (Emmanuel) reminds us that Jesus came to earth to be with us, to share in our joys and sorrows, and to show us the way to love and serve one another. As we journey through this Advent season, may we open our hearts to the presence of Jesus in our midst and, as we are ushered into God's presence, find ourselves filled *with* hope, *with* peace, *with* joy, and *with* love. The Lord be with you!

*Rev. Emily Knight*

**Advent 2023...**

**Christmas**  
**PRESENCE**





# FIRST FRIDAY FRIENDS

December 1st at 11:15 a.m.  
Christmas Music with John Larsen  
& Kim Bloomer in the Chapel

followed by lunch in the Fellowship Hall  
RSVP: 904-355-5491



**THE GLIMPSED CITY**  
AN ADVENT WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

**Saturday, Dec 2nd @ 7:30pm in the chapel**

**Begin the advent season with a cozy chapel gathering  
@ 7:30pm on Saturday, Dec 2nd.**

**Worship will be led by David and Brandy Henderson (two of our new members) and  
Bryan and Sheridan Amerling (from neighboring San Marco Church).**

*"We see that things are not as they could be and we are drawn forward by hope of something better, but in the meantime know that things will be ok as long as we are together. As we move toward the realization of the Kingdom of God, we can reflect the with-ness that Jesus modeled."*

*—David Henderson*



## *Women's* CHRISTMAS BRUNCH

hosted by Women in Mission

**Saturday, December 9th  
10:00 a.m.**

**Rhames Fellowship Hall**

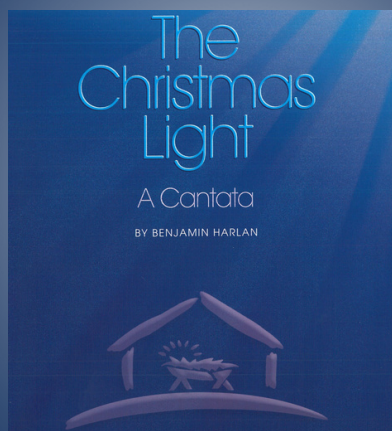
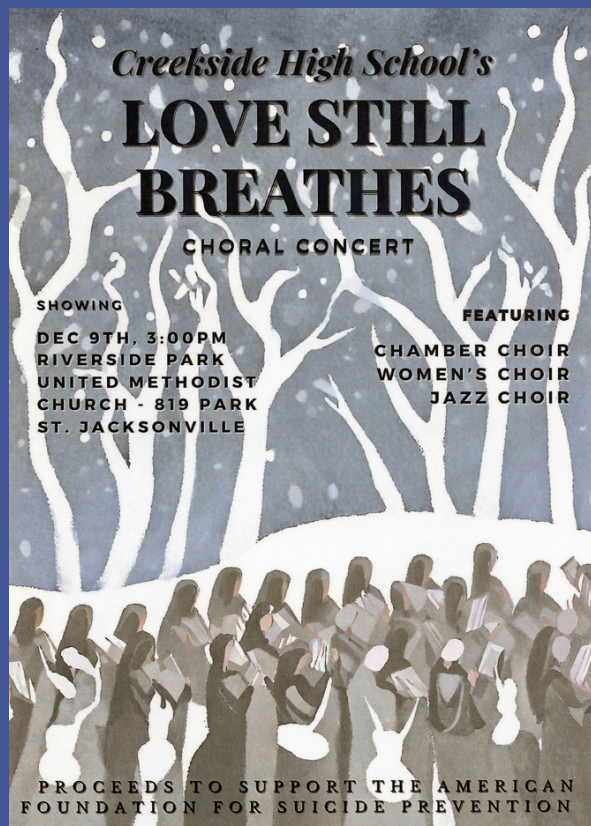
The Women in Mission invite all women and girls of the church to their Annual Christmas Brunch on 12/9 at 10 a.m. The members of the three mission groups or circles will provide the food. All other ladies will be their guests. Circle members RSVP to their leader, all others please call the church office at (904) 355-5491. RSVP by December 7th.

## **Blue Christmas Service December 20th - 6:30 p.m. Chapel (3rd Floor McCord Bldg.)**

Holidays can be hard. If you're feeling the weight of the season or grieving a loved one, consider coming to our *Blue Christmas Service* on Wednesday, Dec. 20th at 6:30 p.m. We will gather in the chapel (on the 3rd floor of the McCord bldg.) to hear scripture, name burdens, and remember God's presence in the midst of loss. We will also light candles and hang ornaments in honor of those who have died -- giving thanks to God for the gift of their presence in this world.



# Holiday Concerts at Riverside Park



## The Christmas Light

presented by the Chancel Choir, Praise Team, Kids' Choir

A retelling of the birth of Jesus with song, scripture, chamber orchestra, timpani, and narration.

Sunday, December 17th at 10:30 a.m.  
One Service



## Christmas Eve Services

**December 24th: 4:30pm & 7pm**

**4:30 p.m.** - Contemporary with the Praise Team, communion, and candlelight.

**7:00 p.m.** with the Chancel Choir, Chancel Ringers, communion and candlelight. (childcare available)

# New Members



Nancy & Mike Darragh



Brenda Chapman

Correction to last month's newsletter:  
Our new member is  
Keith *Hall*  
(not Keith Miller)



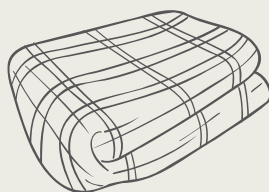
Molly Miller

# Wednesday Night Ministry

As most of us go from everything pumpkin spice to everything peppermint, our neighbors just want a hot meal and a warm welcome along with warm clothing and blankets/throws.

As we are entering the holy season of Christmas, my prayer is for your continued support and prayers of our Wednesday Night Ministry. Also consider working alongside our dedicated volunteers serving the meals, offering encouragement and prayers to our neighbors. Love and Peace to you all at this glorious time of celebrating the birth of our Christ Jesus.

## Items needed for WNM



# Poinsettias for Christmas

Every year we decorate our altar area with poinsettias at Christmas. The flowers are purchased by members and friends to remember special people in their lives. The poinsettias will be displayed on Christmas Eve and can be picked up after the 7:30 service or the following week during business hours. The office will be closed on Christmas Day. If you would like to purchase one or more poinsettia, please use this form below and return to the church office with your payment no later than Monday, December 11th. Poinsettias are \$17 each



| Name | Phone # |
|------|---------|
|------|---------|

If you will not be in worship on Christmas Eve and would like a booklet mailed to you, please provide your address here:

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

# of Poinsettias      Total \$      ☐ Check #      ☐ Cash

☐ In memory of or ☐ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In memory of or ☐ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

☐ In memory of or ☐ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

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# Grace Gallery

Although I have lived more than fifteen years in Jacksonville, the natural beauty of Northeast Florida can still take my breath away. The variety of ecosystems in this region is precious and rare. I "paint my love" for both well-known scenes like Jacksonville Beach and quirky spots most people pass without noticing like views of Little Pottsborg Creek from local two-lane roads.

Each painting is based on an actual place and time of day in a particular season. I take numerous reference photos to record everything from the larger context surrounding the intended scene down to the small details of tree bark or reflections in water. On-site sketches and notes about color variations, light quality, and other details supplement the photos.

Back in the studio, I sketch possible compositions, plan the placement of lights and darks, and experiment with possible palettes. I prefer using a limited palette of about 5 to 7 basic tube colors plus white and sometimes black to achieve harmony and unity in each piece. An amazing range of blends can result. The palette varies from one work to another to fit the season, place, and mood.

The paintings reflect my delight in our stunning variety of ecosystems and waterways. From the late winter salt marsh, to the lush summer foliage by a languid creek, to the inspiring vistas along the St. Johns River and ocean beaches—I treasure it all and hope we have the wisdom to preserve it all. I hope you enjoy the paintings and say of a scene, "I want to be there!"



Mary Lemmenes

## Circle of Joy & Peace

The Circle of Joy and Peace assembled and distributed 20 boxes to Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child as one of its autumn projects. To God goes the glory!



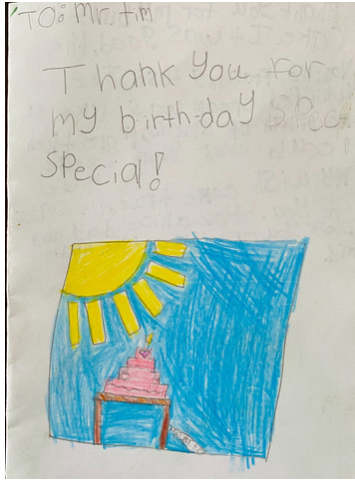
## Trustees Update



The trustees are pleased to announce our church's renovation & repair project is complete. From April 3 to October 31 we contracted Johnson Controls to a) pressure wash & seal our buildings exterior; b) replace & repair roof gutters, downspouts, coping metal, and silicone seal roofs; c) replace & install 7 new HVACs on our education center building and get HVAC pedestals mounts, wiring, and fuses all within code; and d) renovate 7 bathrooms. The total cost came to \$881K. The completed renovation & repairs put our church's infrastructure on a solid foundation for the next 15 years.

# Thank you!

Every First Sunday and during the entire month of November, we collect non-perishable food items to donate to our community's food pantry at Trinity Lutheran Church. We have received a lovely thank you note from Mark B. who is the Food Bank Coordinator. Several of our church members volunteer at the food bank and have shared the following messages:

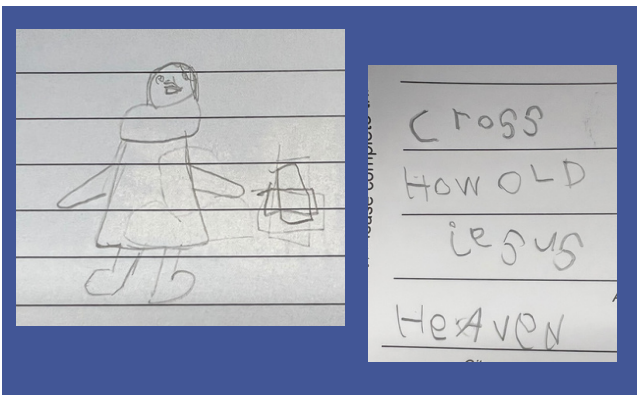


The week of thanksgiving, we reflected on giving gratitude to God and I am thankful we can help show the community God's Love ❤️ Last week when I volunteered at the Trinity Lutheran food bank, a Grandmother brought her 3 grandchildren to the food bank and we were able to supply them with groceries. We were also able to supply a birthday cake for one of the girls that she had wished for. We even sang "Happy Birthday." It was a blessing to see her so happy and humbling to see she wanted to have her grandmother bring us a thank you card. I am feeling very thankful that we get to bring joy the community! --Tim Bush

Ed and I took the food donations to Trinity this morning. The director, Mark, was there and brought out a grocery cart so we could load it up. The donations filled the cart! The director was very appreciative. He said he was scheduled to speak to the Friday Friends' group at our church on Groundhog Day. --Karen Fleming

## The Little Children and Jesus Luke 18:15-16

*...let the children come to me...*



In Kids Club, the kids are encouraged to ask their questions as they learn about Jesus. Blake decided to write her questions on a Prayer Card in church. Thank you, Blake, the kingdom of God shines through you.

## from the Anti-Racism Team

Contact Linda Labell for more information: [Lsabell@yahoo.com](mailto:Lsabell@yahoo.com)



- **Center for Thriving Communities:** Come and be part of a day dedicated to connection, learning, and activation at the inaugural gathering of the Center for Thriving Communities. Join us for a light meal and celebration immediately following the program. This event is free and open to the public.

Monday, December 4th, 1:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m.  
UF Health Jacksonville, LRC Auditorium  
653 W. 8th Street, 32209

Reserve your space:  
<https://uha.ufhealthjax.org/policy/center-for-thriving-communities/>





## acolytes

Thank you to our acolytes who serve in worship and to Colleen Strong who coordinates them each Sunday! In mid-November, some of our 'senior Acolytes' led a training to get some newer kids ready for the advent season. The following acolytes received medallions in honor of their continued service: Diana Laforty, Jake Manalo, Lilah Manalo, Malcolm Remo, Quinton Scott, Anthony Strong, Andrew Strong, Olivia Take, and Rhys Weisman. Welcome to our new acolytes Caden Bridges, Mason Bridges, Thomas Carrigg, Ava Manalo, Kara Manning, and Eden Santa Lucia.



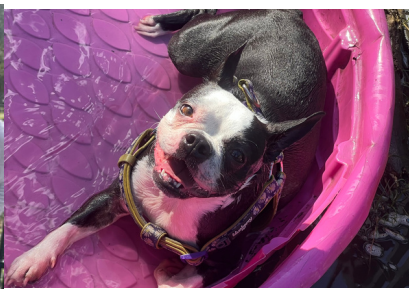
## trunk or treat

Thank you to Kaitlyn Fuller for organizing a fantastic event and to all the participants and volunteers



## blessing of the animals

Thank you to Pastor Emily for loving our furry friends.







# Youth Ministry

Please thank Bobby Brazell, Andrew Carrigg, and Chandra Manning for volunteering for the last lock-in; we all had a great time, Pastor Emily and Matt even made an appearance. (She even won the game in heels). The Youth, for Thanksgiving, gave away one Thanksgiving meal basket and provided baskets for those unable to attend church physically. The youth are looking for ways to give back and be involved in the church and the community, and we are open to suggestions. With the Christmas season upon us, the youth wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

“Youths need to be invited, included, involved, before they can be influenced and impacted.” -Tan Seow How

Contact Ty Strong: [youth@riversideparkumc.com](mailto:youth@riversideparkumc.com)

## KIDS CHOIR & KIDS CLUB

Thank you to Winn Hampton, Gealean Roeters, Nicholle Griffith, and Sharry Bible who led kids club in November! We prayed that our kids would “know the love of Christ that is beyond understanding” (Ephesians 3:19)—encouraging questions and also teaching kids that Scripture is where we go to know more about God (yay for Bible relay races!). For December, our blessing of the month is from Ephesians 3:19 “May you be filled with the fullness of God.” This month, our kiddos will be celebrating Advent and talking about filling our hearts with Jesus.



December

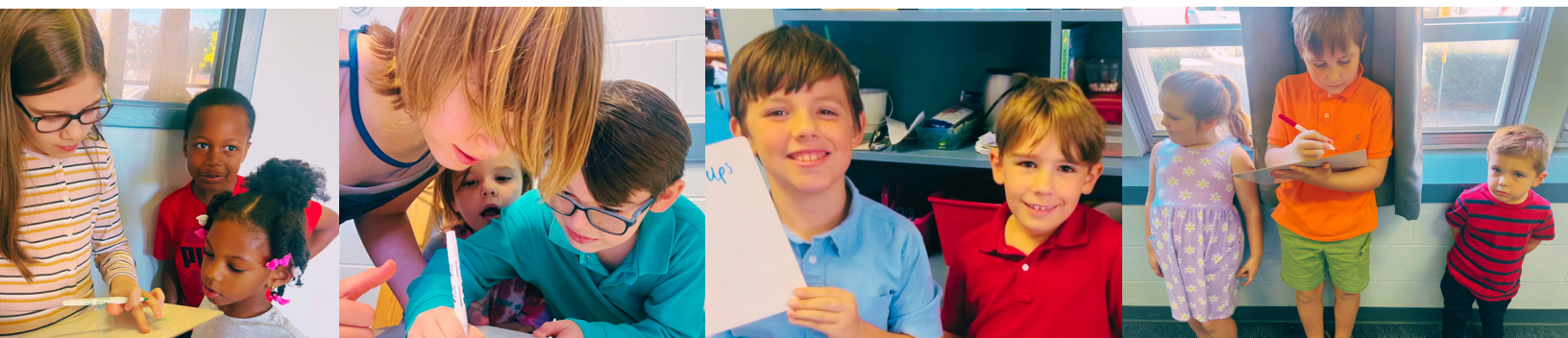
May you be filled entirely  
with the fullness of God  
(from Ephesians 3:19)



**Kids choir will sing in the cantata on December 17th, so there will be rehearsal on Saturday, December 16th at 10-10:30am in the Sanctuary.**

**No Kids Club on combined worship Sundays, which are December 17th and December 31st.**

**Sunday, Dec 24th @ 10:30am:  
Annual Nativity Scene Photo  
and birthday party for Jesus**







# Margaret's Memories Update

Here is what has been going on:

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

Parents of infant loss are invited to attend the Annual Remembrance Ornament Night on December 6th at 6:30 PM in Rhames Fellowship Hall. All materials are provided. Please RSVP to Jenny Marrow at [jlowe22gmail.com](mailto:jlowe22gmail.com) or 916-662-1332. RSVP appreciated so adequate supplies will be provided. This is a combined event by *Margaret's Memories* and *You are not Alone Support Group*.

To honor their daughter, Stella Mae, for her 5th birthday the Streeter family is raising funds for Mera's Mission Inc. and Margaret's Memories. We were honored to be one of the local charities chosen that assist in infant loss remembrance. Stella's legacy will be helping other families on the First Coast navigating grief with tangible memories. The funds were designated for bracelet making supplies and the outer box used to contain memories.

In February, a fundraiser meal will be held at The Blue Bamboo. The funds from this meal will be designated to pay for my travel and attendance to the Pregnancy Loss and Infant Death Alliance conference in May 15-18, 2024. The conference will be held Chicago! You can find more information on the conference at <https://plida.memberclicks.net/ipbc-2024>

Memory boxes have been donated to UF Health North & Downtown and Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, South, Clay, and Nassau.

Volunteers have been scheduling time to help with quality controlling, crafting, and other projects that make Margaret'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 need of large blankets for boys.

Several Memorial Donations have been made over the last few months. We continue to receive thank you notes and emails from families/friends to thank Margaret's Memories for giving the gift of memories. We are continually told all the handmade items are very touching.

## Save the Date!

**December 4, 2023: Infant Loss Annual Remembrance Ornament Night 6:30 PM**

**January 21, 2024: Bracelet Making - 10 AM till 1 PM**

**February 24, 2024: Fundraiser Meal at The Blue Bamboo**

**March 9, 2024: Box Making - 10 AM to Noon.**

If you need more information on the events please contact me (Nicole Remo) at [margaretsmemories@hotmail.com](mailto: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*



**Thank you to Jim Lewis, Tim Bush, and Clark Burner for cooking a thanksgiving feast for our neighbors at the Riverside Park Apartments!**



On behalf of the Finance Committee and the Stewardship Subcommittee, we want to express our gratitude for the congregation's response to our call for pledges. We are grateful to so many who are professing their faith in God and desire to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. You are showing your commitment to participate in the ministries of Riverside Park United Methodist Church through your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. Your faithful pledges are the backbone of our ministries as they fund all of the ministries and programs of our church. Your Finance Committee is committed to responsibly and faithfully using your pledges to plan and budget to maximize our positive work and impact to advancing Gods Kingdom in the world.

**"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."  
Matthew 6:21**





# Coming in January

Saturday, January 6th

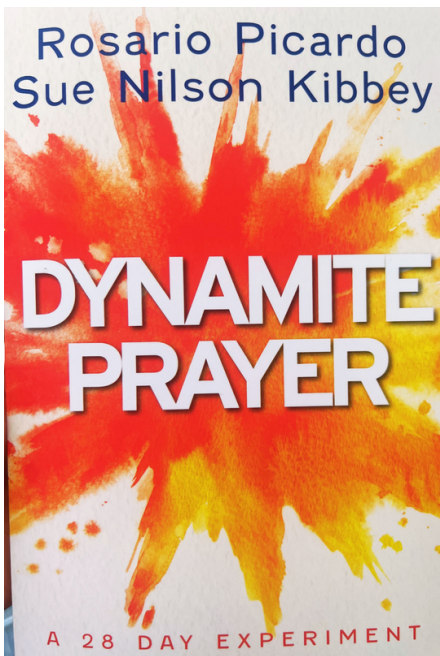
## Family Ministry Mini-Retreat

Gather for lunch, devotions and some outdoors games (like frisbee or croquet). Options available for crafts or a short hike. Kids, youth and adults are all welcome! Come connect with community and creation!

Sunday, January 28th

## RPUMC Ministry Fair

Stop by the Rhames Fellowship Hall between 9:45 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. to learn about the missions and ministries of RPUMC. Find ways to plug in and live life abundantly in Christ.



Scan here  
to sign-up



We are organizing a 28-day prayer experiment to kick-off 2024. Join with Andy Scully (our nominee for Lay Leader) and Pastor Emily and at least 12 others in the church. Participants will receive a free copy of Dynamite Prayer, which provides a scripture, a brief reading, and a daily prayer challenge for four weeks. **From Jan 1st to January 28th,** Participants will be expected to engage **daily** with the reflections and prayers, **check weekly** with assigned prayer partners (groups of three—via text, zoom, or in-person), **and meet twice** with the larger group to share insights.

Says Andy, "My hope and prayer is that participants (whoever they may be—I'm already praying for them) will start the year with a fire to really see what God is doing in their lives. It feels like a clarion call for all of us to invite the Holy Spirit into our prayer lives and see what happens. You will be transformed."



# 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**

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

**www.riversideparkumc.com**

**Church Office Hours:**

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

**Friday 9-1**

Rev. Emily Knight, Pastor  
pastoremily@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  
j.barnard@riversideparkumc.com

Britt Scott, Tech Team Leader  
tech@riversideparkumc.com

Nancy Schubiger, Membership Secretary  
membership@riversideparkumc.com

Tre Devine, Custodian  
t.devine@riversideparkumc.com

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UNITED METHODIST CHURCH





All worship services will be in-person and streamed live on Facebook and YouTube. Please check the website or the RPUMC Family group on Facebook for any updates. Worship service videos will be posted on the church website the following business day.



**Office Hours**  
Monday-Thursday 9 am—3:30 pm  
Friday 9 am—1 pm

| SUN   | MON  | TUE  | WED  | THU                                  | FRI  | SAT   |
|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|
|   |  |  |  |                                      | 1<br>11 am First Friday Friends<br>1 pm Yoga | 2<br>7:30 pm Advent Worship Experience                        |
| 3 <b>COMMUNION</b><br>9 am Contemporary Worship<br>10 am Sunday School/Groups<br>11 am Traditional Worship<br>5 pm Chancel Ringers  | 4<br>6:30 pm Margaret's Memories Ornament Making Event | 5<br>10:30 am Tai Chi<br>5:30 pm Girl Scouts<br>7 pm Tai Chi                         | 6<br>2:30 pm Yoga<br>5:30 pm Free Dinners<br>7:30 pm Chancel Choir   | 7<br>Women's Brunch<br>RSVP Deadline | 8<br>1 pm Yoga                               | 9<br>10 am Women's Brunch<br>3 pm Creekside HS Chorus Concert |
| 10<br>9 am Contemporary Worship<br>10 am Sunday School/Groups<br>11 am Traditional Worship<br>4:30 pm Navy Band Southeast Concert<br>Luminaria Night: Dusk                                | 11<br>Poinsettia Order Deadline                        | 12<br>10:30 am Tai Chi<br>6 pm SPR/Finance<br>7 pm Tai Chi                           | 13<br>2:30 pm Yoga<br>5:30 pm Free Dinners<br>7:30 pm Chancel Choir  | 14                                   | 15<br>1 pm Yoga                              | 16<br>10 am Cantata Rehearsal                                 |
| 17<br>9:30 am Sunday School/Groups<br>10:30 am Christmas Cantata—One Worship Service<br>5 pm Chancel Ringers  | 18<br>6 pm Board of Trustees                           | 19<br>10:30 am Tai Chi<br>5:30 pm Girl Scouts<br>6 pm Church Council<br>7 pm Tai Chi | 20<br>2:30 pm Yoga<br>5:30 pm Free Dinners<br>6:30 pm Blue Christmas | 21                                   | 22<br>1 pm Yoga                              | 23  |
| 24 <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b><br>9 am Contemporary Worship<br>10 am Sunday School/Groups<br>11 am Traditional Worship<br>4:30 pm Contemporary Worship<br>7 pm Traditional Christmas Eve Worship | 25 <b>CHRISTMAS</b><br>Office Closed                   | 26<br>10:30 am Tai Chi<br>7 pm Tai Chi   | 27<br>2:30 pm Yoga<br>5:30 pm Free Dinners<br>7:30 pm Chancel Choir  | 28                                   | 29<br>1 pm Yoga                              | 30  |
| 31 <b>NEW YEAR'S EVE</b><br>10:30 a.m. One Worship Service  |  |  |  |                                      |  |   |



- 1st Bryan Davis
- 2nd Tennison Drewry
- 4th Elizabeth Coley
- 5th Louise Julia  
Lilah Manalo
- 6th Quinn Mathis  
Bob Pope
- 8th Rich Lewis
- 9th Byron Alvarado  
Nancy Newman  
Eden Santa Lucia
- 10th Rick Devine
- 11th Bobby Brazell  
Tom Cashman
- 12th Joe DiSalvo  
Julianne Kirchain
- 13th Mark Mathews
- 14th Brian Doran  
Kim Renne
- 22nd Julie Garmendia
- 24th Ian Charleton
- 26th Susan Russell  
Page Thomas
- 27th Gordon Middleton
- 29th April Laflash

## Committee Meetings:

Finance/SPR Committee  
Tuesday, December 12th at 6:00 p.m.

Board of Trustees  
Monday, December 18th

Church Council  
Tuesday, December 19th at 6:00 p.m.

If we miss your birthday,  
please let us know.

If you move, please let us know.

Do you get our newsletter in the  
mail? How about the weekly RPUMC  
Updates sent by email on Fridays?

Call the church office at  
(904) 355-5491  
to update your information.

## May God's love surround...

### Home

- † Emory Cook
- † Ted DiSalvo
- † Joe Dorsie
- † Shirley Early
- † Jo Herron
- † Steven Jarvis
- † Carol Stelly
- † Jim Todd
- † Gordon Rehberg
- † Mary Lou Roberts

### College Students

- Cooper Crowell
- Frankie Crowell
- Tre Devine
- Brenna DuPries
- Isabella Laffy
- Hogan Litwin
- Emily Matthews
- Kaden Neufeld
- Kyle Neufeld
- Emily Popp
- Matthew Popp
- Dallas Renne

