RIVERSIDE REPORTER
SEPTEMBER 2026

This summer, I had the gift of a renewal leave—a season to step away, breathe deeply, rest, reflect, and be renewed. I loved the time away, and I'm deeply grateful for it. And I'm also grateful to be coming back: to this church, to this work, and especially to the people I have missed and love.

And yet, one of the things I've noticed since coming home is how quickly life fills back up. The calendar gets crowded. The pace picks up. We move from one responsibility to the next, often pulled in a dozen directions and carrying more than we realize. It doesn't take long to feel scattered again.
That experience has me thinking about how much we need places and practices that help us return to center.

People need space. People need time to breathe, reflect, listen, and remember what matters most. And this is something the church does beautifully.

Every Sunday, for an hour, we offer a kind of spiritual retreat. We gather in a beautiful space. We sing and listen to music. We pray. We reflect. We hear stories and ancient words that remind us who we are. We make room for God—and for one another. We step out of the noise and busyness of the week and allow ourselves to be re-centered.
So this September, we're inviting you to pause.

Our worship series, Center, will take us through Colossians 1:15–20 and its beautiful vision of Christ as the one in whom all things hold together. Christ is not simply one more thing competing for our attention. Christ is the center—the place where our lives can find grounding, meaning, and wholeness.

My hope is that each Sunday in September will feel a little like a mini spiritual retreat: a chance to slow down, breathe, listen, worship, and remember what holds us together.

Pause. Breathe. Re-center. Begin again.

And I hope you'll do more than come yourself. I hope you'll invite someone.
There are people all around us who are tired, scattered, overwhelmed, lonely, or simply longing for a place to breathe. Invite the friend whose August was a little—or a lot—too much. Invite the person who has been carrying too much for too long. Invite someone who is searching for meaning or connection. Invite someone who is spiritual but not sure about church. Invite someone who hasn't been in a church for years.

You don't have to have all the answers for them. You can simply say, "Come with me. I think you might need this."

Because maybe we all need this.
Where do we return when life pulls us apart?
This September, we'll return to the center—to Christ, and to one another.
Come center your heart with us. And bring someone with you.

Rev. Emily Knight

MUSIC MINISTRY NEWS

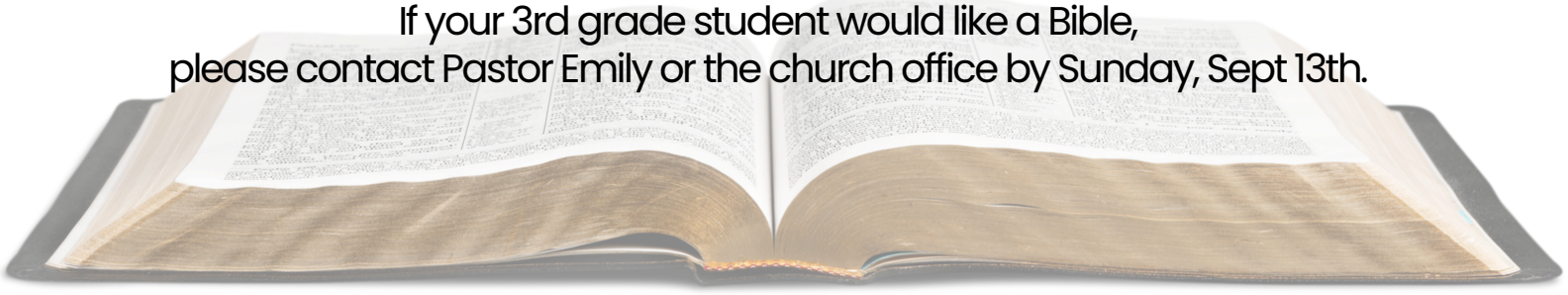
Riverside Park United Methodist Church is pleased to welcome the local chapter of American Guild of Organists as they bring world renowned organist, Paul Fey, to our sanctuary for an organ concert on Friday, September 18 at 7:00 p.m. This concert is free and open to the public, followed by a reception in the Rhames Fellowship Hall.

Our own Chancel Choir has been invited to Orlando on October 23 at 5pm to participate in the opening concert and keynote address of the American Choral Directors Association State Convention. Congratulations to John Larsen and the Chancel Choir for receiving this honor.



September 27th: Bible Blessing Sunday (and presentation of Bibles for 3rd graders)

We want all ages to bring a Bible to worship on September 27th.
If your 3rd grade student would like a Bible,
please contact Pastor Emily or the church office by Sunday, Sept 13th.



CAMPUS TOUR & NEW MEMBER CLASSES



Have you been attending Riverside Park UMC and wondering if God might be calling you to make a deeper commitment? Or are you simply curious to learn more about who we are and what it means to be United Methodist?

Our next New Member Class begins with a church campus tour on Sunday, September 27 at 10 a.m., led by Marc Julia. The campus tour is open to everyone! Pastor Emily will then lead three Sunday morning classes on October 4, 11, and 18, culminating in the reception of new members on Sunday, October 25.

Classes will cover:

- The history of the United Methodist Church and Riverside Park UMC
- The structure and teachings of the United Methodist Church
- What it means to make Riverside Park UMC your church home

The classes are also a wonderful opportunity to meet others who have been attending RPUMC alongside you! If you're interested in participating—or simply have questions—please contact the church office at 904-355-5491 or membership@riversideparkumc.com.

We'd love to have you join us!

WOMEN IN MINISTRY

Sisters of Service
7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, Sept. 8th
Parlor

Circle of Joy & Peace
11:00 a.m
Wednesday Sept. 9th, 2026
Parlor

Circle of Hope
11:00 a.m
Thursday Sept. 10th, 2026
Fellowship Hall





In August, the Sisters of Service visited Baby Luv at Community Health Outreach for a flower arranging class.



WEDNESDAY NIGHT MINISTRIES

Wednesday Night Ministries is building an exciting partnership with UCOM (UrbanServ/United Community Outreach Ministry), a local nonprofit serving people facing hunger and crisis. UCOM is providing protein for WNM, and in return, WNM is preparing food that UCOM can distribute to those in need. We are also grateful to share that George Ridge secured a $5,000 Foodies Care grant to support Wednesday Night Ministries.

WNM is blessed to have one of our neighbors as a dependable and trustworthy volunteer on Wednesday afternoons. Rowdy at first but with the love and acceptance from our "outside" volunteers Thomas has taken on many of the early setup work, tents and tables. Most importantly he has become the love in action that he saw in our volunteers week after week serving his friends and neighbors. You may even see Thomas in church Sunday morning! To quote the Call to Worship this past Sunday "There is work to do on the road ahead" for him and "There are neighbors who need the grace of God". Praise God for Thomas and please pray for him.

--Your WNM team of volunteers



Bonnie Dudley, Wednesday Night Ministry Team Leader

Note: Just before printing we became aware that our friend Thomas was in a fatal accident on Monday night. We are shocked and heartbroken by the news. During Wednesday Night Dinner this week, we will light a candle for Thomas and Pastor Emily will pray with our neighbors and volunteers as they grieve the loss together.

Lord, our hearts are so heavy. And also: we are grateful for the chance to love and meet Thomas Michael Everett. We thank you for the gift of his life—for his faith in you, his servant's heart and the many ways he was always ready to help. You knew his struggles and loved him through them all. Hold him close in your mercy, receive him into your arms of eternal life and care, comfort all who will miss him and give us the hope and peace of Jesus Christ. Amen.

5 POINTS ASSOCIATION

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The 5 Points Merchants Association has invited our church to help keep the 5 Points area clean and welcoming. Volunteers will be needed one day each month (preferably during the first or second weekend) to walk through the area and pick up trash. Church council is interested in helping with this, and if you're willing to help and/or help organize, please let the church office know.

Volunteers needed to help keep our neighborhood clean.

RACIAL JUSTICE

Riverside Presbyterian has invited members of RPUMC to participate in a trip to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, November 10–12. If you are interested in learning more or joining the trip, please contact Linda LaBell by contacting the church office for Linda's email address and/or telephone number.

BIBLE SEARCHERS SUNDAY SCHOOL

During September, the Bible Searchers Sunday School Class will study the New Testament book of 1 Peter. The class meets in room 202 and is led by David Holladay.

NURSERY NEWS

Our church genuinely loves kids! We invite little ones to join us in worship—and we know that when they get a little squirmy, you may want a safe and welcoming place for them to play.
From 9-12 on Sunday mornings, our nursery is open for children four years old and younger. Here, play is one of the ways we experience and share God's love. Kids can gather for a Bible story, sing songs, pray, and enjoy a snack together—all while learning to love, share, and care for one another.

Interested in volunteering in the nursery?
Please contact April Joos in the nursery or call the church office.



L to R: Marc Julia, Sharry Bible, April Joos, Sharon Joos, Kristen Griffith, and Nicholle Griffith

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for the precious children You entrust to our care each Sunday. As we anticipate new familes walking through our doors today, we ask that You perpare our hearts to welcome them with Your love and grace. Please grant us watchful eyes, gentle hands, and comforting words to put both the children and their parents at ease.

Give the parents a deep sense of peace as they leave their little ones, trusting that this room is a safe, joyful haven. Soften the hearts of our littlest one so they feel secure in this new environment. Lord, use our smiles, our patience, and our play to be a bright reflection of Your hospitality. May this nursery be a place where familes first experience the warmth of our church community. In Jesus' name, Amen.

FINANCE UPDATE

She heard the Pastor say it was time for the collection plate to be passed. She could see the ushers getting closer. She eagerly waved her offering to make sure they saw her. Here it comes. It's getting closer. Now the usher was here, and she was able to put her gift in the plate. She turned and she smiled from ear to ear as she looked at no one in particular.

Inside the activity pack she had picked up at the front of the church was a dime. A single coin taped to a card. This simple dime allowed her to participate in one of the most fulfilling things a person can do; giving back to God. The amount doesn't matter. It's the giving that is important. Giving can make you feel good. Giving can make you feel that you are in communion with God.

"Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7. That "cheerful giver" part was witnessed when I saw her smile after giving the dime from the activity pack.



When was the last time you felt this way when the plate was coming? I hope every Sunday.

Thank You for all you do! Joe Springer, Finance Chair

PLEASE NOTE: The church office and Finance office is implementating new financial software. This update will help strengthen and streamline our financial processes, but the transition will be a lot of work. Please pray for the staff and volunteers who are working this update.

FIRST FRIDAY FRIENDS

September 4th. 11:00 a.m. Rhames Fellowship Hall

September is almost here. We are looking forward to our event with River City Dulcimers. If you have heard them before you know how good they are. If this is your first time, you will enjoy them. We plan to start at 11:00 a.m. We will have a light lunch as usual but with a new cook. Invite a Friend.

We have had a variety of programs . There are some changes coming in October.
We want your input for Senior Programs - Watch for the time and date where we can get together and plan for new Senior events.

Pastor Emily will meet with us in October as we decide the direction to go .
Look for the time and date to gather for new plans.

UNITED METHODIST MEN

The United Methodist Men will meet in the Church parlor at 9:00 a.m. on September 19. We will plan for the upcoming year.

ACTS OF GENEROSITY

Judy and Danny Marks

I have been thinking about writing this email for a while and then when you said you wanted letters/ examples of generosity in our church, I knew this was definitely the time to acknowledge this couple. While there are so many people that are involved and give back and contribute at our church, Danny and Judy Marks are extraordinary examples of generosity. They have given in so many way for so many years.

- Bell Choir
- Youth group
- Wednesday night dinners (before AND after COVID)
- Greeting during service
- AV/Slide Tech Team
- Chrismon Tree set up/Hanging of the Greens
- Fall Festivals
- Trunk or Treat
- Hospitality Team
- Easter Picnics
- Board of Trustees



If you need something done or you have a question about the past - they usually know the history or were a BIG part of it. I'm going to keep working hard so someday, I can be like them :)

Working for the glory of God, helping to make a better church, community, neighborhood, city, world.

Sincerely,
Tami Crowell

Kairos Outside

Kairos Outside (KO) is a program that ministers to women who have loved ones in prison or have been incarcerated themselves. This spring, KO hosted a 2 ½ day weekend for 15 women at Marywood Retreat Center. It was filled with music, talks, meditations, food, and more food! One of the highlights of the weekend was the Walk In Love on Saturday evening. This was a candlelight service where volunteers and people from the community serenade the Guests. Our Sisters of Service took the time to come out and prepare the snack supper for those who came to participate. They not only shared their time, but they also shared their culinary talents!
Prior to the Walk In Love, a service took place where each Guest was prayed for by name. Our Pastor Emily lead this special time with a meditation and prayer.
All of this takes place on a Saturday evening at 9:00 PM with church the next morning! Our RPUMC women certainly exhibited their generosity through these acts of service and sacrifice.

FAMILY PROMISE



Riverside Park UMC's rotation for Family Promise is coming up – September 13 -19. RPUMC has the honor of providing evening meals for the families in residence at the Family Promise facility that week. While meals are often cooked and delivered by one person, I'd like to encourage "teams" – Classes, small groups, friend-groups, etc – to get involved! Teams have to be church-affiliated! Do you have friends that you'd like to introduce to RPUMC? What a great way to get your bridge club, walking buddies or golfing foursome active in something that serves the community in such a practical mission.

This year alone, Family Promise has served 8 families in the shelter, kept 70 families in their homes, and teamed with the Salvation Army to help another 12 families. Family Promise keeps families together while also helping them to stay out of overcrowded shelters. The list of other services they've provided for struggling families is long!

Please prayerfully consider providing a meal for this hands-on practical ministry. One meal a year can make a huge difference to homeless families. You can sign-up by using the QR code or contact me for more information.

Brenda Chapman
(Please contact the church office for Brenda's email and/or phone number.)

SAFETY & SECURITY TEAM



Hi, everyone! The Safety/Security Committee has been hard at work behind the scenes since it was created in May of 2025 as a breakout team. Since then, we have been hard at work with efforts including applying for relevant grants, updating/teaching various policies, and meeting to discuss evolving safety topics. Now we want you all to get to know us better. We want you to know that we are here and excited to serve this church. We acknowledge that safety and security are dynamic topics that affect every member/visitor/staff member of this church. Be a part of the conversation! Please don't hesitate to reach out to Team Lead Nicholle Griffith for concerns, thoughts or feedback you want to share or find any member of the team on campus. [Please contact the church office for Nichole's email address and/or phone number.











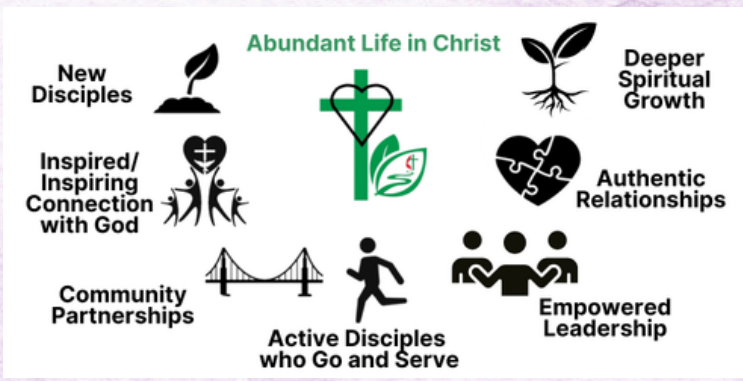



Generosity@ riversideparkumc.com



Fuel the Mission

Give Online:

RPUMC.mywell.org

(Please select ACH transfers for lower processing fees.)

—or—

Text "RPUMC" to 40101

Thank you!



September BIRTHDAYS

2nd	Robert Moseley
4th	Nick MacQueen
5th	Warren Jones Carol Stelly
7th	Emily Hodges Cory Lek
8th	April Joos Sharon Prescott Cathy Salzer Tiffany Wascom
9th	Max Cogburn Linda Rooks Miranda Snipes
10th	Linda Robbins
12th	Jane Burner Kevin Crowell Albert Sloan
13th	Xavier Diao
14th	Ed Fleming Kate Levitz
15th	Emily Matthews
16th	James Wilson
17th	Bill Graessle
18th	Kimberly Julia
20th	Misty Laforty Shep Riechmann
21st	Debbie Colbert
22nd	Sandra Campbell
23rd	Krissy Nettles Charlie Schubiger
24th	Mark DeRolf Jo Herron Kit Thomas
25th	Micheal Bone
26th	Kaden Neufeld
28th	Amber Brockel

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 usually on Fridays?

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

Committee Meetings in September

SPR Committee
September 1 at 6:00 p.m.

Finance Committee
September 15 at 4:00 p.m.

Church Council
September 15 at 6:00 p.m.

Board of Trustees
September 21 at 6:00 p.m.

May God's love surround our members on the home care list:

† Jennie Bibb
† Emory Cook
† Jo Herron
† Sandy Murphy
† Carole Rooks
† Wanda Smith
† Carol Stelly



SEPTEMBER 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1 10:30: am Tai Chi **6 pm: SPR Meeting**	2 3:15 pm: Wednesday Night Ministries 7:15 pm: Chancel Choir	3 7 pm: Tai Chi	4 **11 am: First Friday Friends**	5
6 **Communion** 9 am: Worship (Contemporary) 10 am: Sunday School 11 am: Worship (Traditional)	7 **Labor Day** **Office Closed**	8 10:30: am Tai Chi **7 pm: Sisters of Service**	9 **11 am Circle of Joy & Peace** 3:15 pm: Wednesday Night Ministries 7:15 pm: Chancel Choir	10 **11 am Circle of Hope** 7 pm: Tai Chi	11 **12 pm: Mental Health & Wholeness**	12
13 9 am: Worship (Contemporary) 10 am: Sunday School 11 am: Worship (Traditional) 5 pm: Bell Choir	14	15 10:30: am Tai Chi **4 pm: Finance Meeting** **6 pm: Church Council**	16 3:15 pm: Wednesday Night Ministries 7:15 pm: Chancel Choir	17 7pm: Tai Chi	18 **7 pm: Organ Concert**	19 **9 am: United Methodist Men**
20 9 am: Worship (Contemporary) 10 am: Sunday School 11 am: Worship (Traditional) 5 pm: Bell Choir	21 **6 pm: Trustees Meeting**	22 10:30: am Tai Chi	23 3:15 pm: Wednesday Night Ministries 7:15 pm: Chancel Choir	24 7 pm: Tai Chi	25	26 **10 am: Leadership Retreat**
27 **Bible Blessing** 9 am: Worship (Contemporary) 10 am: Sunday School 11 am: Worship (Traditional) 5 pm: Bell Choir	28	29 10:30: am Tai Chi	30 3:15 pm: Wednesday Night Ministries 7:15 pm: Chancel Choir			

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 and YouTube Live on Sundays
@9am Contemporary @11am Traditional
facebook.com/RiversideParkUMC
youtube.com/@riversideparkumc2015

Church Office: (904) 355-5491 www.riversideparkumc.com
Church Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday 9-3:30, Friday 9-1

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