



The Vision

December 2008

God With Us

What makes for a good Christmas season for you?

Most mature folks want some form of strengthened relationships. A good Christmas means quality time with family, or peace in the world, or reconciliation with an enemy, or getting along well with fellow employees at work, or everyone just making an effort to be nice for awhile.



At least, that would be my answer. If I could make each relationship in my life a little deeper, a little more cooperative, a little more open, a little more loving, I'd be a happy camper at Christmas. But how do we do this? Systems theories show that webs of relationships tend to establish certain routines and attitudes, and that one small change in just one point in that web will have a profound effect on the entire web.

It's easier to change your world than you might imagine. You just have to accept one very difficult truth—**you** have to take responsibility for the change. If you sit around and wait for others to change so that your life will become better, it will probably never happen. You have to be the one to make that initial change, and then you can watch and enjoy the ripple effects on those around you.

What does this have to do with Christmas? Shouldn't a pastor be talking about God and Jesus in a column about Christmas? Well, I believe this has EVERYTHING to do with God and Jesus. What did God want for Christmas two thousand years ago? God wanted better relationships with the ones who were most significant in God's world. And what did God do about it? God didn't sit around and wait for us humans to change our ways. God sent Jesus to show us what true reconciliation of relationships looks like. God took the initiative, and changed the world.

This Christmas Season, I encourage you to take some initiative and change the world for the better. It doesn't have to be miraculous. It doesn't have to be an extraordinary feat of power. Just do one humble thing—as humble as laying a child down in a pile of straw that's been bunched up in a donkey's feeding trough. Do one small thing to make your relationships better. And while you are doing it, remember that the Spirit of God lives inside of you. God is calling you to follow God's example, for this truly is what Christmas is all about. Jesus Christ was called "Emmanuel" in Hebrew (meaning "God with us"). If you want your Christmas to be deeply religious, to feel like you are in harmony with God's grand and glorious reign over the universe, then follow God's example and do one small thing to improve the relationships in your world. Do it in the name of Jesus Christ.

What shall you do? I can't say. Jesus improved relationships by finding where others were hurting and seeking to heal those problems. He also sought to increase mutual understanding of different people because better understanding generally leads to better relationships. So you might learn something about those around you, or about God. Or you might serve the needs of others, or of God. Whatever you do, make sure you consciously recognize that it is the Spirit of "God With Us" that is inspiring your action.

Your brother in Christ,
Scott

We are called to celebrate God's presence; Nurture the spiritual life of each individual; Carry the light of Jesus Christ to the world; and Serve God by serving others.

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Church News

Trustees News

A gift of \$200 has been given as a memorial to Liberty Dvorak from the preschool parents for the purchase of a Dogwood tree.

Thank you Krzysztof Gieron for donating time to wash all the second story windows!

Thank you to all who participated in the October All Church Family Work Day: Colleen and Bill Muller, George and Jake Dluhy, and Trustees Andy, Lou, Deb, Jon, Nancy, and Susan.

Our December Work Day has been deferred to Sunday, January 4, from 1:00 to 3:00. Please come—it is always a wonderful church family fellowship opportunity!

We are continuing our “green” initiative. As the Fellowship Committee continues its effort to use our china collection instead of disposable cups, we have responded to their dishwashing needs with a more economical water heating system. The previous system used water heated from a central point in the church, requiring water to run for a long time before hot water was available. This also required circulating heated water throughout the whole church when it was needed only for one area. One water heater failed this fall. Last month a “point of use” instant water heater was installed for the church kitchen. This heats the water for the faucets and the dishwasher instantly, saving water and natural gas!

Find a holiday order form for purchasing your brick pavers for the Rose Window Restoration Fundraiser inserted in this Vision, or online at www.rpcusa.org/files/Brick-Order-Form.pdf.

Have you noticed something that needs repair? Please fill out a “trouble report” form and return it to the office or report it to any trustee. Please lock all outside doors at 8:00 p.m. Double check that the back door is locked if you are the last to leave; it has been accidentally left unlocked recently.

December Trustees: George Meyer and Jon Jansky

CARERS Committee

Three collections will take place this month:

- ◆ For the residents of Interfaith House, gifts will be brought to the CARERS Giving Christmas Tree in the Social Hall. From November 30 until December 21, the tree will be decorated with paper ornaments, each listing specific clothing items and sizes needed. If you are able to participate, please take an ornament, buy the item specified, and place it under the tree in the Social Hall. These gifts will be given to the people at Interfaith House who are recovering from a recent illness or hospitalization and have nowhere to go. Interfaith House provides a temporary home for up to 60 adults with a 6 weeks duration. The staff provides trips to doctors, nourishing food, contact with social services and counseling. They have an 85 per cent success rate in locating suitable work and housing for these formerly homeless individuals who need help and a means to begin again. Thanks to Wilma Steenland and Monica Wood who will sort and deliver these gifts.
- ◆ First Presbyterian Church of Chicago will receive the gifts of *canned meats* which will be collected during the entire month of December.
- ◆ Stars and Stripes are asking for wrapped hard candy for servicemen for Christmas.

Ministers of Care are very grateful for all the fine support given each month. Thank you one and all.

Session News

At its November meeting, the Session spent extra time discussing two items of special concern, membership and finances.

Membership:

One of the duties of the Session, according to the Presbyterian Book of Order, is to review the rolls of the church at least annually and to counsel with those who have neglected the responsibilities of membership. Accordingly, a committee was appointed to conduct such a review and determine if members should be considered active or placed on the inactive roll. Active members are those who participate in the work and worship of the church and support the work of the church through the giving of money, time, and talents. They are entitled to all of the rights and privileges of the church, and may vote and hold office. Inactive members are those who have failed intentionally to participate in the work and worship of the church for a period of one year. They are entitled to rights and privileges of the church, but may not vote or hold office. After several years, if inactive members do not wish to become active, they may be removed from the rolls by the Session. The Session may consider extenuating circumstances such as age and health in determining whether an inactive member should be removed. Members who live too far from RPC to attend worship are encouraged to find a church home closer to them so that they may regularly benefit from the opportunities of spiritual growth and pastoral care.

Finances:

An on-going concern at RPC has been the high number of members who do not pledge their financial support to the church, and those who do not pay the “per capita” assessment. There are almost more non-pledgers than pledgers at RPC, and the Session is concerned about the implications this has for the future of our church. The per capita amount owed to Presbytery, due in January, 2009, is almost \$13,000, based on our membership as reported in last year’s annual report. This money supports the work of the Presbytery, Synod, and General Assembly. Only 17% of RPC members paid this for the year, which may be done by using the special envelope provided to those who pledge or by simply writing a check to RPC. The current amount is \$28.29 per member. If all members paid their per capita assessment by the end of the year, the RPC budget deficit could be reduced to almost zero!

Other Session actions:

- ◆ approved vacation leave for Rev. Jansen from December 25 to December 31;
- ◆ discussed the first draft of the 2009 budget;
- ◆ authorized the Stewardship Committee to allow the sale of alcoholic beverages (beer & wine) at church fund raisers if deemed appropriate;
- ◆ approved naming the outdoor area behind the church and between the manse and social hall as “The Prayer Garden,” which will feature a dogwood tree planted in memory of Liberty Petru Dvorak.

Mary Ann Sadilek
Clerk of Session

Did you know.... that photographs of recent church events can be viewed on the RPC website? Some of the pictures added recently include the 2008 Mission Trip, Camp Saugatuck, Blessing of the Animals, and the Italian Dinner and Auction. Visit the website at www.rpcusa.org and click on “Photo Gallery” in the left column.

Worship

Worship Preview ♦ December 2008

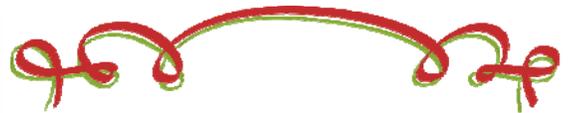
7 Isaiah 40:1-11 “Hoping for Messiah” How does God’s faithfulness to the ancient Hebrews form a basis for comforting us in our very difficult time? We will have communion today.

14 Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 “Touched by an Angel” How do we discern God’s activity in the world?

21 Luke 1:26-55 “Here I Am Lord” How did Mary find her calling in life?

24 Christmas Eve Play at 4:00 p.m. and Christmas Eve Candlelight Meditation at 11:00 p.m. The first service will feature a play/drama written by Scott with lots of small parts. There will be lots of upbeat traditional music sung by all the various choirs and the “candles” will be electric flashlights. The late service (with real candles) will have lessons and carols and a few brief commentaries on the lessons.

28 Recognizing the Christ, Luke 2:25-40. Mary Koon will be our guest preacher today as we celebrate the First Sunday of the Christmas Season.



The performance of Handel’s Messiah is an annual tradition at Riverside Presbyterian Church. Please join RPC members and guest musicians for this performance on Sunday, December 14, at 4:00 p.m. If you’ve never attended, please consider making this a part of your family’s holiday tradition!

Annual Wassail Bowl Celebration

The Wassail Bowl Celebration following the performance of Handel’s “Messiah” by the Riverside Festival Chorus and orchestra has become an annual tradition. Graciously hosted year after year by the family of Deb and Jon Jansky, the Wassail Bowl Celebration is a wonderful way to get into the holiday mood with your RPC family. You are invited to come enjoy coffee, wassail, and special holiday treats as you visit with your friends after the spirit-filled concert. If you’re willing to help Deb and Jon with set-up, baking, serving, or clean-up, please contact Lisa Aulerich-Marciniak, the Fellowship Committee chair. This event draws not only our RPC family, but many family members of our musicians and community members who have discovered what a wonderful concert it is. Help us to show all these people how welcoming and hospitable our congregation is. Spread some holiday cheer!

Worship Committee has a Sewing Project

The Worship Committee needs help. We are looking for someone who would be interested in helping us out with a sewing project—making a pall for funeral services held in the Sanctuary. Sewing would be done mostly by machine. If you are interested, please contact Martha Heine for details.





Fellowship Tree

A church family fellowship tree is located in the parlor outside the sanctuary. You are encouraged to add a Christmas card from your family to the ornaments adorning the tree. Instead of mailing your greetings to church members, this card serves to share your holiday sentiments, and the printing and postage you save may be contributed to the Christmas Joy Offering.

Our Church is a Home

Imagine you are hosting a dinner party at your home. You clean, arrange your furniture to accommodate your guests, and then leave for a few minutes to run to the store. When you return, your home is no longer straightened... someone has changed the furniture around, the garbage is full and there are reading glasses and a sweatshirt on the couch! Boy are you frustrated with your family!

This scenario is a common occurrence in our church home. We have such a wonderful, active congregation that people are in and out of spaces all day, every day. Unfortunately, we sometimes forget that this is a home and we are a family.

To keep harmony in our family please:

- ◆ Remember to contact the church office to reserve space. This will ensure you have the area you need available when you need it.
- ◆ Return the space to its “typical” set-up. Not sure what that is? Ask the office.
- ◆ Take out the trash!
- ◆ Do a “once-over” before leaving.

Thank you for helping to maintain an active, utilized, harmonious church home.

Fellowship Goes Green

One of the goals of the Fellowship Committee for 2008 was to help RPC become “greener” – to lessen our negative impact on the environment and thus be better stewards of the earth God has given to us. Our first step toward this goal was to cut down on the amount of waste that was generated during fellowship events, especially the non-biodegradable styrofoam. We encouraged coffee hour hosts to use the church china and run the dishwasher. We thank all of the hosts who were willing to give this a try, and especially some of our youth who were willing to help run the dishwasher for hosts on any given Sunday.



Unfortunately, part way through the year our water heaters started having problems and became unreliable enough that it was no longer feasible to ask people to run the dishwasher and we went back to using styrofoam, paper, and plastic. The Fellowship Committee would like to thank the trustees for thinking green and keeping an eye on the future. Instead of simply fixing or replacing the existing water heaters, they looked toward the more cutting edge technology of an on-demand water heater. This is not only a more energy efficient water heater for the kitchen, but it allows us to go back to using the dishes and cutting back on the garbage produced during fellowship events like coffee hour and WNL! dinners.

We’ll be taking further steps toward our green goals in 2009. We’d like RPC to be better recyclers of those disposable products that we are still using, and we’ll be looking into how to best go about that. Interested in helping us further this goal? Sign up to host a coffee hour and agree to use the dishwasher. Not sure how? We give free lessons, provide help, and guarantee that it’s actually pretty easy! Have more ideas on how we can improve our stewardship of the earth? Join the Fellowship Committee, or contact one of us with your suggestions.

Church News

Thank You

To our RPC Family:

Our heartfelt thanks for all of your prayers, cards, comforting words, and beautiful flowers.

Thanks to all of you who attended my father's service. And a special thank you to Mary Koon. I can't possibly express how much your kindness has meant to use during this difficult time.

With love and gratitude,
The Kolinski Pecis Family

Thanks so much to the Church, and especially Mary Lou Schwarz, for the beautiful flowers. Following my ignominious fall down the basement stairs, I may not have looked very pretty--but the flowers were gorgeous! You have no idea how much they brightened my spirits.

Gratefully,
Roberta Gates

December Sign-up

Ushers

12/7	Lisle Family
12/14	Miezio Family
12/21	Buttimer Family
	Dennis Sadilek
12/24-4:00 p.m.	Vogel Family
12/24-11:00 p.m.	Scuff & Sue Gross
	Lou & Martha Heine
12/28	Aieta Family

Liturgists

12/7	Joyce VanCura
12/14	Youth
12/21	Matt Lisle
12/24	Youth
12/28	Dennis Sadilek

Coffee Fellowship

12/7	Kemp Clarke
12/14-5:00 p.m.	Wassail Reception
12/21	
12/28	

Flowers

12/7	Gangware Family
12/14 & 12/21	Poinsettias
12/28	Halline Family

Christmas Memorials

Express your love in memory or in honor of family and friends through a holiday memorial. See the form enclosed with the Vision, or available at the church or on the website at www.rpcusa.org to designate a memorial. You can choose to order a poinsettia plant to be displayed in the sanctuary from December 16 through December 21, or to make a donation to RPC's Endowment Fund, Memorial Fund, or Music Ministry Fund.



Vision goes "Green"

Due to the high cost of mailing the Vision each month, and the unreliability of the Post Office's bulk mailing service, beginning with the January 2009 issue, the Vision will be distributed *electronically*. You will receive an e-mail when the Vision is online with a link to view the electronic version. If you do not have an e-mail address, please contact the church office to let us know you still need to receive a paper copy.

Preschool



Preschool Turns Trash to Cash to Help the Homeless

\$500 was sent to BEDS in November! Thanks to the preschool parents for recycling and to our Church Family for saving aluminum cans! We are grateful to the Riverside Bank for matching our funds. Don't forget—we recycle cans all year long and have donated all our profits for this worthwhile cause for over 20 years.

Look for the Preschool's Christmas tree in Centennial Park. Since we've adopted Rocky the penguin from the Brookfield Zoo, the tree will be covered with creatively decorated penguins.

We're very busy preparing for our Holiday Show! Of course, it's all about penguins so it should be VERY COOL! And may your Christmas be freezin' and pleasin' too!



Passport to the Promised Land - How the Bible Came to Be

We're traveling through the greatest book of all...the Bible.



The Greatest Book continues with a gospel comparison of Christmas. Continuing the session we began in November, children will be comparing the stories of Christ's birth as told by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Date	Grades K-1	Grades 2-3	Grades 4-5	Jr. High
12/7	Creation Station	Celestial Cinema	Living Waters	Oasis Place
12/14	Living Waters	Kitchen	Creation Station	Celestial Cinema

Reminder: No Sunday School for adults or children on December 28. All classes resume on January 4!

Coming in January...

The Greatest Book – Psalm Study

What and where are the Psalms? How are they different than other books of the Bible? Children will explore these questions and more from January 4 to February 8 with teachers Jill Glawe, Jeanine Buttimer, and Susan Deems-Dluhy. Two additional teachers are needed. No experience necessary! Apply with Lynda Nadkarni at lmn@floros.org.



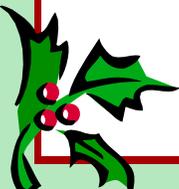
Family Worship **Christmas Eve**

Our 4:00 p.m. Christmas Eve family worship service is taking a new twist this year! Full of the wonderful music of years past and the addition of a play with parts for all children and youth interested. (Most of them are non-speaking roles.)

There will be two rehearsals for all participants – one at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 21 (instead of Sunday School), and another on December 23 (time to be announced later).

If you haven't returned the participation card, mailed to your home in November, please do so today! We hope you are a "YES!". If you are unable to participate, please indicate so as well so we can be sure you received the invitation and information.

If you have any questions, please contact Lynda Nadkarni at lmn@floros.org.




Youth

Youth Group News

In November we raked leaves for senior citizens, learned about and practiced some yoga and made care packages for college students. Check out what's happening in December—come join us!

Sunday, December 7 Caring Christmas at RPC—Junior and Senior High Youth

Join us for an annual tradition at the church! We will make a craft and assemble plates of cookies to be delivered to shut-ins at Christmastime. Time TBA

Sunday, December 14 Messiah! Junior and Senior High 4:00 p.m.

Join your friends from Youth Group as we enjoy the beautiful music of Handel's Messiah. We will help clean up after the Wassail Bowl reception and then meet up in the gym for some games.

Friday, December 19 Senior High Progressive Dinner 7:00 p.m.

Wear your holiday finery and meet at the Hayes home for appetizers, the Cains for dinner, and the Buttimers for dessert and games. Everyone should bring an appetizer or dessert and a white elephant for a fun gift exchange. More details to follow. Don't miss it!

Saturday, December 20 Junior High Trip Downtown Noon

We will meet at the Riverside train station and take the train downtown. We will ice skate at Millenium Park, see the tree at the Daley Center Plaza and the State Street windows, and get something to eat. Grab your skates and your friends and be there!

No Youth Group December 21 and 28 — Merry Christmas! See you in January. Questions? Contact Tara Gregus at taragregus@yahoo.com



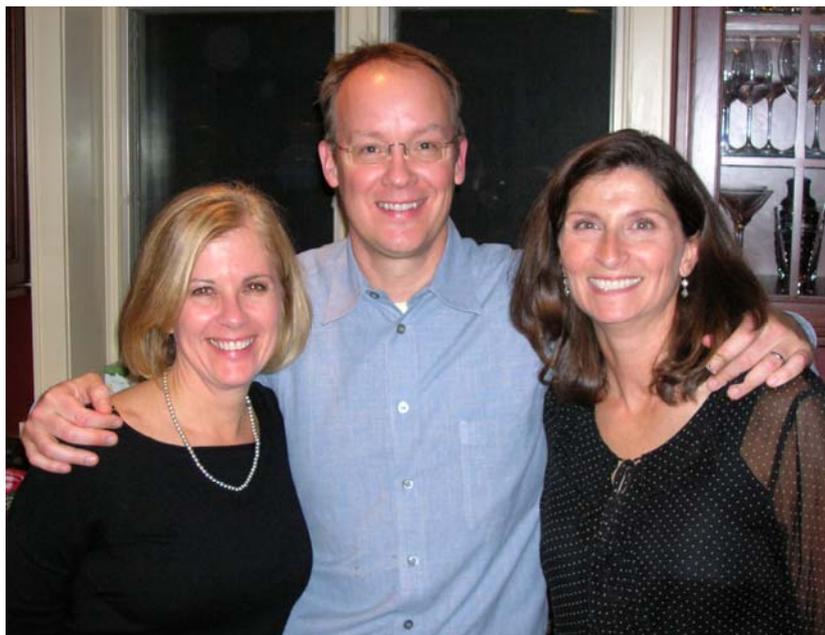
RPC youth groups relax during leaf raking on November 9. The junior and senior high groups cleared 6 lawns and received many notes of thanks and some unsolicited donations to the youth group funds for their efforts.

Girls Group

WNL! Girls Group will resume on Wednesday, January 21, at 6:45 p.m. in the Celestial Cinema. If you were unable to attend this fall, we encourage you to join us in January. Feel free to come as often as you can, weekly attendance is not required. For more information, e-mail Mary Koon at maryinwi@hotmail.com.

Balance the Budget Dinner

Thirty people enjoyed a delicious “Balance the Budget” dinner on Saturday, November 8, at the home of Len and Stephanie Messner. The fabulous repast was prepared by RPC chefs Tara Gregus and John Cain. Thanks to all who participated, \$3,000 was raised for the 2008 RPC budget.



\$3000

Adults

Human Scene

December 7 **"Handel with Care"**

Mary Ann Sadilek will present a fascinating overview of the life and works of George F. Handel, with special emphasis on his enduring masterpiece, the "Messiah," to be performed at our church on Sunday, December 14 at 4:00 p.m.

December 14 **Presbyterian Leadership**

Presbyterians make decisions using a different method than most other churches. If you've ever wondered who is in charge of a program or who you should talk to about a church concern or a suggestion you have, this class will answer all your questions. Our pastor, Scott Jansen, will facilitate this program.

December 21 **'Twas the Week Before Christmas....**

Mary Koon will lead a program on how the Christmas story in the Bible intersects our stories today. This will be a relaxed discussion in preparation for the holiday week.

December 28 **No Human Scene Class**

January 4, **Christmas in Russia**

Religion student Anastasia Knasiak just completed a year of studying religion in Russia. She will lead us in a discussion of the Russian Orthodox celebration of the Advent and Christmas season. What is an Advent fast? Why are there different Christian calendars? How do Russian Christians celebrate Christmas and Epiphany?



PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

Presbyterian Women

Bible Study

There is no December Bible Study. Our January Bible Study will be on Wednesday, January 28, at 10:00 a.m. at the Scottish Home. All ladies are invited. For those who would like to stay for the buffet luncheon (\$12) following Bible Study, reservations are required by Sunday, January 25. Please contact [Elizabeth Musick](#) for reservations. The Bible Study theme for the year is JUBILEE! Luke's Gospel for the Poor, which highlights some of the unique aspects of Jesus' life and teachings found in the Gospel of Luke.

Thanks!

Thanks to all the nutty people who purchased all 48 one-pound bags of pecan halves. We sold out on November 16. The profits from the sale of the pecans will go to the Erie Neighborhood House.

Gathering

A special invitation to all church members, families, and friends: Join the Presbyterian Women in welcoming our Artist in Residence, **Karena Mendoza**, at a very special Gathering on Wednesday, December 10, at the Scottish Home. Karena will present a musical Christmas program. Buffet luncheon at 12:30 p.m., \$12 per person. Reservations are requested. Please call [Elizabeth Musick](#) by Sunday, December 7. Valerie Kunz, in her March 12, 2008 column, wrote "I wanna sing! I wanna sing!" With these words 4 1/2 year-old Karena Mendoza took to the stage. She hasn't left it yet." Karena Mendoza has expressed her love for music on three continents. "My singing is an expression of my gratitude to the Divine for the life I have been given and my appreciation for everything around me."





December 2008

Please check the Website for the most recent calendar updates!

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 5:15p Volleyball	2 6:30a Men's Forum 9a Companions in Christ 11:15a Staff Mtg 7p Personnel Com. 7p Pledge Drive Com.	3 OFFICE CLOSED 12p Covenant Prayers for Peace 4:15p Singers 4:45p Ringers 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Chancel Choir	4 6:30a Women's Forum	5	6 10a Messiah Rehearsal
7 9a Sunday School 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 1:30p Worship at the British Home 4:00p Caring Christmas	8 5:15p Volleyball 7p Finance Com. 7:30p Trustees Mtg	9 6:30a Men's Forum 9a Companions in Christ 11:15a Staff Mtg 1p Presbytery of Chicago Assembly Mtg 7p Pledge Drive Com.	10 OFFICE CLOSED 12:30p RPC Women's Gathering 4:15p Singers 4:45p Ringers 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Chancel Choir	11 6:30a Women's Forum	12 Night Ministry	13 10a Messiah Rehearsal
14 9a Sunday School 10a Worship 11:15a CARERS Com. 11:15a Endowment Com. 1:30p Messiah rehearsal 4p Messiah 5p Wassail reception	15 5:15p Volleyball	16 6:30a Men's Forum 9a Companions in Christ 11:15a Staff Mtg 7p Deacons Mtg	17 OFFICE CLOSED 4:15p Singers 4:45p Ringers 6:30p Bell Choir 7:30p Chancel Choir 7:30p Session Mtg	18 6:30a Women's Forum	19 9a Genesis Covenant Mtg 6p Crafting 7:30p Sr.High Youth Group progressive dinner	20 12p Jr High Ice Skating
21 9a Sunday School 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 2p Worship at Scottish Home	22 5:15p Volleyball	23 6:30a Men's Forum 9a Companions in Christ 11:15a Staff Mtg	24 OFFICE CLOSED 4p Family Christmas Program 11p Candlelight Service	25 CHRISTMAS 6:30a Women's Forum 	26	27
28 NO SUNDAY SCHOOL 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 6p Jr. High Youth Group 7:30p Sr. High Youth Group	29 5:15p Volleyball	30 6:30a Men's Forum 9a Companions in Christ 11:15a Staff Mtg	31 OFFICE CLOSED			

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." — Proverbs 29:18

**RIVERSIDE
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

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Wedding Coordinator: Donna Ulrich

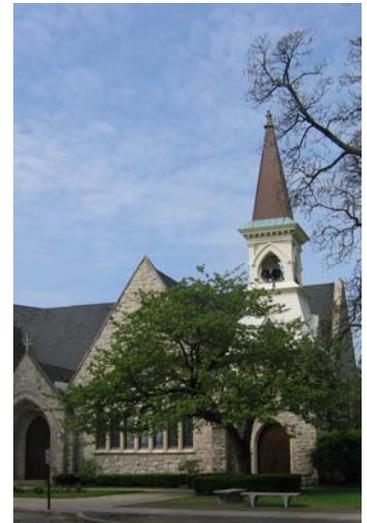
Artist in Residence: Karena Mendoza

Director of Music Emerita: Mary Ann Sadilek

Organist Emerita: Arline Robbins



Riverside Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Presbytery of Chicago (312) 243-8300. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A)



More information about the ministry and mission of Riverside Presbyterian Church is available by contacting any member of our church staff and by visiting our website: www.rpcusa.org.

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