



The Vision

December 2011

Christmas is not *Your* Birthday

When a birthday comes around, people usually think about what they might do to add a little joy to the birthday celebrant's life. Sometimes they even ask, "What may I do for your birthday?" Or, "How do you want to celebrate your birthday?"

As a rather typical (i.e., uncreative) male, I feel like it is a great blessing when the birthday person tells me specifically what is most desired. I am not skilled at guessing what people want.

In December, there is often a feeling in the air that it is *everybody's* birthday. And, I suppose, in some spiritual sense, there is a grain of truth in that. But, we tend to overstate that part of the equation. We tend to focus on what will bring joy into *our* lives at Christmas (material pleasures), rather than focusing on what would bring joy into *God's* life at Christmas.

We are very fortunate to be spared the struggles of having to guess. God sent Jesus to live among us, and one result of that incarnation is that we now know what God wants of us for Christmas (or for any other day).

It is always appropriate to say the words "Happy Birthday" to someone who is enjoying such a day. But words alone are usually considered a little hollow, especially if it is someone whom we truly love. Likewise, it is always appropriate in prayer to say to God, "Happy Birthday" on Christmas Day. But words alone are a rather meager effort.

One of the things that God desires of us, according to Jesus, is our worship (in Spirit and in Truth). This year, Christmas Day falls on a Sunday. Yes, we will have worship on Sunday morning, December 25, at our usual time. It will be an informal/participatory service designed to say "Happy Birthday" to God. What more important event might one plan for such a day?

Related to worship, Session has recently discussed the phenomenon of applause during worship. Of course, everything in worship is designed to praise the living God. And, the way that we all praise the living God has certainly changed over the years. Musical instruments and musical styles, language conventions and length of sermons, *etc.*, have changed dramatically since Christ's day. But, no matter what style we use, we should never lose sight of the fact that it is God who is the recipient of our praise. There is nothing "illegal" or "wrong" about applauding during worship, but we should always remember that it is God who is the giver of all variety of talents, and it is God whom we adore during worship. "Clapping hands" for God is even advocated in the Bible.

But, maybe we could do more. So, what will you do this year to wish God a "happy birthday?"

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.

Inside this issue:

Worship	2
Church News	3
Sharing Our Gifts	4
Spaghetti Dinner	5
Celebration Sunday	5
Children	6
Youth	8
Adults	9
Upcoming Events	10
Calendar	11

Worship

December Worship Schedule

December 4 ▪ *Mark 1:1-8* "How Jesus Saves Us" What does John the Baptist expect as the result of Christ's incarnation? How will our lives be different? How should we prepare for that change? According to John, Jesus will bring the gift of the Holy Spirit, and we prepare for that gift by confessing our sins. What, then, is the gift of the Holy Spirit? We will have communion today.

December 11 ▪ *Luke 1:26-38* "In God We Trust" Why does Mary decide to trust God? Could she have said *No*? What does she stand to gain by agreeing? What assurance is she given that things will work out for her? As we wait during Advent, why should we trust in God's providence? What alternatives did Mary have? What alternatives do we have?

December 18 ▪ Children's Christmas Pageant - The Children of RPC will lead us in an old-fashioned Christmas Pageant, directed by Jenny Kolinski.

December 24 ▪ Christmas Eve Candlelight Services at 4:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. - Both services will feature traditional scripture lessons and carols. The early service will have more of both, and electric "candles." The late service will have fewer lessons and carols, but also a bit of commentary on the scriptures and wax candles.

December 25 ▪ *John 1:1-14* Church Family Christmas - This will be a very informal service with some traditional carols (more than three). Instead of an ordinary sermon, there will be a bulletin insert with some discussion questions relating to the scripture reading. We will consider those questions as a congregation in order to better understand what Christmas means to each of us.

January 1 ▪ Evaine Stahrr will be our guest preacher today while Scott is away from the office.



December Opportunities



If you are able to host Coffee Fellowship, please contact [Carrie Staubus](#)
 For flower contributions, please contact the [RPC Office](#)
 Potential Acolytes, Liturgists & Ushers, please contact [Elizabeth Musick](#)

	Liturgists	Advent Candle	Ushers	Flowers	Coffee Fellowship
December 4	Michael Aieta	Aieta Family	Harvin Family Evaine Stahrr	Will & Susanne Vogel	Girls' Group
December 11	Abby Schwarz	Haugland Family	Hastings Family	OPEN	No Coffee Fellowship Messiah Reception
December 18	Cindy Gustafson	Staubus Family	Lisle Family	Poinsettias/ Shelley Reichle	OPEN
December 24 4:00 p.m.	OPEN	Hastings Family	OPEN	Poinsettias	No Coffee Fellowship
December 24 10:00 p.m.	OPEN	OPEN	OPEN	Poinsettias	No Coffee Fellowship
December 25	Linda Nadkarni	OPEN	Aieta Family	Poinsettias	No Coffee Fellowship

If any usher has a conflict on the date assigned, please find a substitute from the Usher List, or trade with another usher for a different date.

Session News

In November, the Session:

- received Joseph Richards as a new member of RPC;
- called a special Congregational Meeting for December 18, following morning worship, for the election of church officers;
- received, with regret, the request from Doris Hayes to be removed from the RPC roll;
- affirmed the decision by the Deacons to end the relationship between Pro Se Services and RPC for the distribution of food;
- discussed the need to encourage more RPC members to pledge their financial support for the 2012 budget, or cuts in staff and programs may be necessary for next year;
- noted a YTD budget deficit of \$48,000 which needs to be made up by the end of this year;
- recognized the many volunteers who enable RPC to operate efficiently and effectively;
- learned that Rev. Roger Timm of Ascension Lutheran Church will retire this month.

Mary Ann Sadilek
Clerk of Session

Church Officers Needed

The Nominating Committee is recruiting nominees for church officer positions (Elders, Deacons, Trustees) for three-year terms beginning in January 2012. Contact Deb Jansky with any questions at newhorizons002@gmail.com.



December Birthdays

William Carl 12/1	Chancellor Rayfield 12/16	Dennis Sadilek 12/22
Richard Crang 12/2	Margaret Miezio 12/19	Daniel Sanchez 12/23
Christine Canavera 12/3	Joe Ballerine 12/20	Marty Lubeck 12/25
Paul Sterner 12/4	Jacob Buhle 12/20	Catherine Lynch 12/27
Steven Staubus 12/6	Michael Hejna 12/20	Michael Lynch 12/27
Martha Heine 12/7	Wesley Sedlacek 12/20	Jonathan Daniels 12/28
Shirley Misare 12/7	Jimmy Sit 12/20	Jacob Dluhy 12/28
Zack Schiller 12/7	Virginia Wright 12/20	Jacob Jansky 12/28
Olivia Glawe 12/8	Clayton Ballerine 12/21	Samantha Garza 12/29
Carol Sprunger 12/8	Karen Flam 12/21	Ethan Ranft 12/29
Ellen Mitchell 12/9	Christopher Halline 12/21	Cal Friend 12/30
Christine Long 12/13	Connor Halline 12/21	Susan Lynch 12/30
Joshua Ranft 12/16	Katrina Daniels 12/22	Hannah Smith 12/30
	Hannah Ranft 12/22	Jordan Messner 12/31

Trustees for December are Jon Jansky and Dennis Sadilek.

Sharing Our Gifts

Wassail Bowl Reception: Volunteers Needed

We are in need of volunteers to help with our traditional Wassail Bowl following the Messiah performance on Sunday, December 11. If you can bring baked goods, please contact [Carrie Staubus](#). If you will be able to help with set-up, serving or clean-up, please let [Deb Jansky](#) know how you can help.



CARERS Corner

The CARERS will have the annual Christmas Tree in the Social Hall with paper ornaments indicating gifts to be bought and given to mothers and their children at the Constance Morris Home. Please take an ornament (or two) and place your purchase, unwrapped, under the tree. These gifts are so appreciated. Thank you!

Deacon Doings

The RPC Deacons have been busy with many projects this autumn. Of major concern has been the closing of the RPC food pantry, which has been managed by Pro Se Services. Our arrangement with that organization has essentially been terminated and currently we are looking for a means of future stable operations to serve the Riverside (and nearby) communities in need. Any suggestions you may have that can be sent through your Deacon will be greatly appreciated.

In other news, the Deacons held a bake sale in conjunction with the Harvest Potluck Dinner on November 20. The Deacons have been delivering flowers to the home-bound members, and ask your input on those who may best be served by receiving a Sunday bouquet of flowers during the holiday season. Please inform [Kate Chard](#) of any requests.

Deacons are also preparing to send holiday greetings and tokens of support to our youth members in college, and have sent the recent CentsAbility offerings to the Presbyterian Hunger Relief Fund. The “Share the Harvest” program has grown significantly this year, but is now closed for the winter. Thanks to all who participated!

Our Youth Deacon, Molly Chaney, is coordinating the ministry of *Caring Christmas* this year. The traditional event will be held on Saturday, December 10, at 4:00 p.m. in the Social Hall. Christmas joy will be abundant with a potluck dinner following at 5:30 p.m. All are welcome to attend to prepare small gifts for our shut-ins, as well as decorating cookies and baked goods for them. The food and gifts will be distributed on December 11. Please let your contact Deacon know of anyone who may be interested in attending but would need a ride or assistance.

The Deacons are supporting the distribution of College Care Packages (known as *RPC Connections*) for RPC youths at college to mark support for the end-of-semester exams and to bring holiday cheer to our students. Funds for this function are being provided by the Deacons to Tara Gregus, RPC Youth Advisor, for the packages and the cost of shipping. We appreciate her work in this activity, and know that students have been most thankful for the packages in the past.

Please contact [Deb Jansky](#) if you, or someone you know, would like to serve as a Deacon for a three-year term starting in January, 2012. The Nominating Committee is also recruiting officers for Elder and Trustee positions.

Finance Update

Year-to-date financial status at end of October:

Receipts	\$ 229,505 (63.1% of budget)
Disbursements	\$ 277,680 (76.4% of budget)
Deficit	\$ 48,175



Spaghetti Dinner



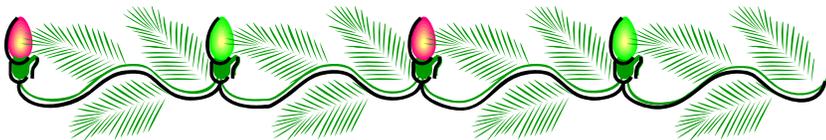
Celebration Sunday



Children

Christmas Pageant

On December 18 there will be a very special worship service led by our wonderful Sunday School children. They will perform a Christmas play and you'll hear plenty of traditional Christmas music too! It's sure to be a memorable and meaningful worship experience for all ages. **Dress rehearsal for all children participating** is on Saturday, December 17, in varying shifts throughout the day, and on December 18 during the Sunday School hour. If you haven't done so already, please contact Jenny Kolinski **ASAP** at kolinski426@comcast.net to let her know how your child would like to participate.



December Memory Verse

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. John 3:16

Test of Faith: Christmas Dreams

December will begin with a short but eventful two-week mini-rotation focusing on Christmas dreams. As kids explore the dreams and visions of people in the Bible, they'll discover that the true dream of the season is that Christmas is not just a yearly celebration but a way of life--a life lived with loving generosity and compassion, a life lived open to the possibility that God's will can be made known to us in many ways.

	K /1st grade	Grades 2/3/4	Grades 5/6/7/8
11/27	<i>Celebration Sunday: All ages meet in the Social Hall for a special Christmas Project!</i>		
12/4	Manse Kitchen	Gym	Creation Station
12/11	Gym	Creation Station	Manse Kitchen
12/18	<i>Kids Christmas Worship Service: practice in the Sanctuary 9:00 a.m. (all ages)</i>		

There will be no Godly Play or Sunday School on December 25 or January 1.

All classes will resume on January 8. Childcare will not be available on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

Sunday School Teachers: A Gift to our Children

Many thanks to all of our wonderful Sunday School teachers who shared their time and talents since the beginning of this Sunday School year: Allie Burke, Patti Friend, Connie Kelly, Susan Lynch, Annie Mitchell, Fred Mitchell, Vince Pecis, Kathi Rocanova, Noemi Sanchez, and Carrie Staubus. If you're interested in working with the wonderful kids of RPC, please contact Jenny Kolinski at kolinski426@comcast.net.

Bible Presentation Sunday on February 19

February 19 is a very special day just for our 2nd & 3rd grade students! It's *Bible Presentation Sunday*, a long-standing tradition at RPC. During the preceding Sundays in February, the 2nd & 3rd grade class will be participating in a special rotation designed to prepare them for their big day and to help them better understand the various aspects of worship and what it means to be part of a church family. More information to come.





The holiday season has arrived and the children of the Preschool are busier than ever. We are decorating bulletin boards, making gifts for our families, and learning new songs for our holiday show. Plus, if you haven't had a chance to see the Christmas trees adorning Riverside, stop by and check out our *Hoot'iful* Tree filled to the brim with our *Albert the Owl* ornaments made by everyone at school.

Registrations for the 2012-2013 school year are now being taken. Applications are available in the rack outside the Church Office, and are due on or before January 4.

As the year comes to a close, each of us at the Preschool extend a special *thank you* to Scott Jansen, Linda Hutcheson, Donna Jones, Joel Hastings, Fred Kitch and the entire Church community for the endless support and efforts for the Preschool. It is truly a gift to be in such good company.

Have a heavenly holiday season!

Youth

Girls' Group

Every Tuesday evening the Girls' Group gathers in the Oasis Place for discussions and activities about topics that affect the youth. If you are in the 5th- 12th grade, feel free to stop by and participate with us. The Girls' Group is also open to non-members of RPC.



Girls Group has been busy making caramel apples and preparations for a fundraiser to benefit the charity *Compassion: Water for Life*. During the December 11 Coffee Fellowship, the girls will have a table displaying items that church members may purchase to help the girls raise money for their charity. The items included will be a representation of all their unique skills, from artwork and crafts to special service offerings. We hope that you all will stop by our table and see for yourself how creative and talented these girls are!

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Sarah Stukas at sarahstukas@comcast.net or Noemi Sanchez at nsanchez79@comcast.net.

Youth Group News

Sunday, December 4: Caring Christmas--we will join the deacons in making crafts and plates of cookies for shut-ins and friends of RPC.

Sunday, December 11: Come hear The Messiah at 4:00 p.m. and we will have Movie Night at 6:00 p.m.. We will watch "Elf" in the Celestial Cinema.

Friday, December 16: Annual Senior High Christmas Dinner at Tara's house. Come dressed in your Christmas finery!

Sunday, December 18: Annual Junior High Train Trip Downtown--Ice Skating, Sightseeing and more!

Sunday, December 25 to January 1: **YOUTH GROUPS IN RECESS. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!**

Junior High Youth Group is for 6th-8th grade. Senior High Youth Group is for 9th-12th grade. Friends are always welcome. If you have any questions, please contact Tara Gregus at taragregus@yahoo.com



Senior High Mission Trip

Believe it or not, we are already planning our 2012 Senior High Mission Trip! Next year's trip will take us to Mobile, Alabama, to spend the week of June 8-15 in the Urban Mission Camp of Government Street Presbyterian Church. This is a repeat of the wonderful trip we took in 2008.

[Contact Tara Gregus](#) if you would like more information. She is now collecting \$100 deposits to secure your spot on the trip. All students currently in 8-12 grade are eligible to attend. Don't miss out on this once-in-a-lifetime experience!

In October, the Youth Group went to the Jonamac Orchards in Malta



Presbyterian Women Bible Study

The ladies are taking a December holiday break, and will meet again on Wednesday, January 25, at 10:00 a.m. RPC Social Hall for Lesson Four, "Greatly Honored are Those who are Famished and Parched for Justice!" All women are invited.

Lesson leaders are Elizabeth Musick, Sylvia Schade, and Joyce Van Cura.

Pecan Sale

Thanks to all who supported the sale of 72 one-pound bags of delicious Georgia pecans to benefit the Team Tutoring program for college-bound high school students at Erie House in Chicago.

December Human Scene

December 4 - Join Ron Smith for *A good five cent cigar!* The social-political-economic problems of contemporary life seem to be overwhelming, but an analysis of various historical periods may provide us with some "food for thought."

December 11 & 18 - Pastor Scott will present a Human Scene class on Sharon Baker's book, *Razing Hell*, which challenges Christians to rethink their traditional views of hell and/or eternal punishment and invites them to consider an alternative that is more consistent with the revelation of God in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Baker believes eternal hell – the belief that God would punish without end those who have rejected him in time – is one of the most disturbing notions in Christianity. Therefore, she asks us to join her on a quest for a new view of hell that permits us to affirm with Scripture that, while nothing impure will enter the gates of God's holy kingdom (*Rev. 21:27*), there still will be a day when "at the name of Jesus every knee will bow... and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord (*Phil. 2:10-11; see also Rom. 14:11*)."

December 25 - *No Human Scene*



Scouts

The Pack 24 Cub Scouts had a successful popcorn sales campaign for 2011. Collectively we sold over \$15,000 of popcorn. Special thanks to our new Popcorn Kernel, Mike Winkler, for organizing this fund-raiser.

In early November, the Pack welcomed 14 new scouts. On November 8, we held our Bobcat Ceremony for them: 8 Tigers, 4 Wolves, a Bear, and a Wolf. On November 18, 30 scouts headed out for an overnight outing at the First Division Museum at Cantigny Park in Wheaton Illinois for fun with crafts, tank tours and a tour of the museum by flashlight.

During November, Troop 24 Boy Scouts went on several outings. On November 6, eight scouts and five adults went for a tour of the Chicago Portage historic site. Also in November, 25 scouts went to Waterfall Glen to hike and complete an orienteering course. They were joined by Webelos scouts from Pack 24. Over Thanksgiving weekend, 16 scouts and three leaders camped at Herrick Lake Forest Preserve in Wheaton.

Upcoming Events

Caring Christmas

The Deacons' annual "Caring Christmas" will be held on **Saturday**, December 10, at 4:00 p.m. in the Social Hall. Food and Christmas joy will be abundant, followed by a light dinner provided by the Deacons at 5:30 p.m.. This is an annual family event, and all members are welcome to attend to prepare small gifts for our shut-ins, as well as decorating cookies and baked goods for them. The food and gifts will be distributed on December 11. Contact Molly Chaney at chaney.molly@yahoo.com for further information.



Messiah



On **December 11**, at 4:00 p.m., the Sanctuary will be filled with the beautiful music of Handel's *Messiah*. Picture George Frederick Handel's words, "*I did think I did see all Heaven before me, and the great God Himself.*" We want to keep the inspiration going, but we need your help. This year's Messiah will serve as a memorial to those we have loved and lost. Please send your memorial announcements with a donation of \$40 to the RPC office marked "Messiah 2011." The memorials will be listed in the Messiah program.

Messiah soloists will be:

Theresa Ludden-Wold, soprano;

Erika Morrison, mezzo;

Wain Parham, tenor; and

Pete Pohlhammer, bass,

with conductor Sally Sloane. Contact musikhse@comcast.net for more information.

Weightlifters

In the gym, a person lifting weights has a spotter. The spotter pushes them to succeed and watches out for their safety. In the RPC library on Tuesday nights at 7:00 p.m., the same concepts apply. We're helping each other through weight loss, maintenance, nutrition and the related mental side of good health. Therefore, we've dubbed ourselves *The Weightlifters* and members are spotters. Collectively, the group has lost 21 lbs. in our first five weeks of getting together. We welcome anyone, any week, who wants to participate as or needs a spiritual supportive spotter. Contact Connie Kelly at consueloak@sbcglobal.net or Lynda Nadkarni at lmn@floros.org for more information.



Please check the Website for the most recent calendar updates!



December 2011

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 6:30a Women's Forum	2 7p Bell Ringing Holiday Straoll	3 10a Messiah Rehearsal
4 9am Sunday School 10a Worship 11a Open Gym for kids 11a Coffee Fellowship 1:30p Deacons' British Home Service	5 5:15p Volleyball 7p Stewardship Committee 7p Finance Committee Budget Mtg	6 6:30a Men's Forum 9:30a Staff Mtg 6p Girls' Group 7p Personnel Committee 7p Weight Loss	7 Office Closed 12 Covenant Prayers for Peace 4:15p Ringers 4:45p Singers 6:30p Handbells 7:30p Chancel Choir	8 6:30a Women's Forum	9 Night Ministry	10 10a Messiah Rehearsal
11 9am Sunday School 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 11:30a Endowment Committee Mtg 1:30p Messiah Rehearsal 4p Messiah 5p Wassail Reception	12 5:15p Volleyball 7p Finance Comm. 7:30p Trustees Mtg	13 6:30a Men's Forum 9:30a Staff Mtg 6p Girls' Group 7p Weight Loss	14 4:15p Ringers 4:45p Singers 6:30p Handbells 7:30p Chancel Choir	15 6:30a Women's Forum	16	17
18 9am Sunday School 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 2p Scottish Home Worship	19 5:15p Volleyball	20 6:30a Men's Forum 9:30a Staff Mtg 6p Girls' Group 7p Deacons Mtg 7p Weight Loss	21 4:15p Ringers 4:45p Singers 6:30p Handbells 7:30p Chancel Choir 7:30p Session	22 6:30a Women's Forum	23	24 4p Christmas Eve Family Service 10p Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
25 10a Worship 11a Coffee Fellowship 	26 5:15p Volleyball	27 6:30a Men's Forum 9:30a Staff Mtg 7p Weight Loss	28	29 6:30a Women's Forum	30	31

Luke 6:38 . . . for if you give, you will get. Your gift will return to you in full and overflowing measure pressed down shaken together to make room for more and running over. Whatever measure you use to give - large or small will be used to measure what is given back to you.

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

**RIVERSIDE
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH**

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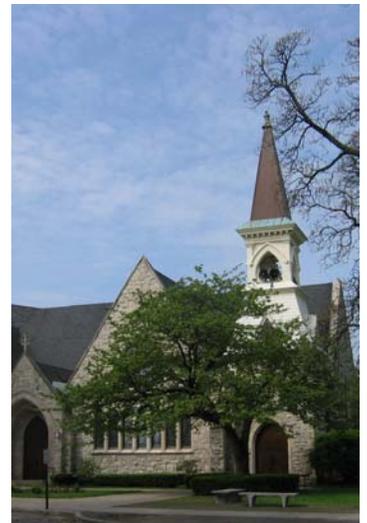
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Director of Music Emerita: Mary Ann Sadilek

Organist Emerita: Arline Robbins



Riverside Presbyterian
Church is a congregation of
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More information about the
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Riverside Presbyterian Church is
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