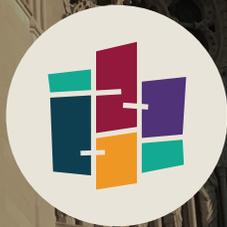


MEMBERSHIP GUIDEBOOK



THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK



The Rev. Dr. Amy K. Butler, Senior Minister
The Riverside Church in the City of New York

A LETTER FROM PASTOR AMY

Dear Friends,

In this letter I am so pleased to officially welcome you to the membership of The Riverside Church in the City of New York, but I hope you have already felt engulfed by the warm welcome of this wonderful congregation! This is a big place with an important history, but it's also, and perhaps most importantly, a beloved community filled with folks who believe in a radical gospel of love and who work to live it out together. Your presence here is a gift to us.

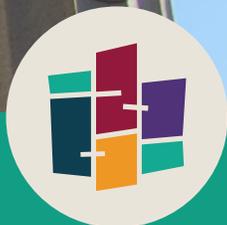
As a Riverside member, you also now stand in a long line of faithful people who have had the courage to speak as a community to important issues facing our society. Historically, The Riverside Church has used its platform to prophetically address issues like racism, homophobia, environmental justice, and peace, and every day we are confronted with new opportunities to raise our voices together.

Your choice to join The Riverside Church is indicative of your commitment to this ongoing call for justice. As such, your presence here is a gift to the world, too.

Here at The Riverside Church we believe that transformation happens from the inside out. That is, as God's Spirit works to transform each of us individually, we then come together as a transformed community modeling health and wholeness, and our shared voice has real and meaningful impact in efforts to change and heal our fractured world.

We're so glad you're joining us on this journey. The Riverside Church needs your presence, your gifts, and your investment as we build #OneRiverside and daily take on the challenge of living in the way of Jesus.

With God's Peace,



THE MISSION OF THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

The Church seeks to be a community of faith. Its members are united in the worship of God known in Jesus, the Christ, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the church is to serve God through word and witness; to treat all human beings as sisters and brothers; and to foster responsible stewardship of all God's creation. The Church commits itself to welcoming all persons, celebrating the diversity found in a Congregation broadly inclusive of persons of different backgrounds and characteristics, including race, economic class, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, family status and physical and mental abilities. Members are called to an individual and collective quality of life that leads to personal, spiritual and social transformation, witnessing to God's saving purposes for all creation. Therefore, the Church pledges itself to education, reflection, and action for peace and justice and the realization of the vision of the heavenly banquet where all are loved and blessed.



MEMBERSHIP

The Riverside Church has approximately 1,900 members. The members come from many different denominational, national, ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

WORSHIP

The Sunday Service of Worship begins at 10:45 a.m. in the Nave with Communion celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. Morning Light, a meditative service, is held on Sundays at 8:30 a.m. in Christ Chapel. Space for Grace, an informal service of worship is held Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. in Assembly Hall, with Communion celebrated every third Wednesday of the month.

GOVERNANCE

The Church Council, comprised of 18 elected members of the congregation, provides governance for the church's programmatic life, fiscal health, and property.

BUILDING

The design of the church was inspired by the 13th century Chartres Cathedral in France. Construction began in 1927 and the first service was held on October 5, 1930. The Nave seats over 2,100 worshippers and the Carillon's 20 ton Bourdon bell is the largest tuned bell in the world.

SENIOR MINISTERS



The Rev. Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick
1925 - 1946



The Rev. Dr. Robert James McCracken
1946 - 1967



The Rev. Dr. Ernest T. Campbell
1968 - 1976



The Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin, Jr.
1977 - 1987



The Rev. Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.
1989 - 2006



The Rev. Dr. Brad R. Braxton
2008 - 2009



The Rev. Dr. Amy K. Butler
2014 - Present



DENOMINATIONAL AFFILIATIONS



The Riverside Church has historically been a church that celebrates its interdenominational heritage, clergy, and members. Just as Jesus welcomed all people into God's family, so do we! The Riverside Church is officially affiliated with two denominations through which it works to serve the greater church and the world. Those denominations are The American Baptist Church and The United Church of Christ. While each denomination has instances in which it emphasizes some things over others, both denominations maintain many similar beliefs and shared values.

Both Denominations...

...believe that the primary task of the church is to proclaim the good news of the gospel- that God's love is revealed with power by Jesus Christ. Proclaiming this good news to the world is the work of the whole people of the church in their worship and their lives.

...accept the local congregation as the basic unit of the church. They understand the local congregation to be a group of persons who covenant together in trust to do the work of Christ more effectively.

...are part of a tradition going back to the Protestant Reformation. This means that they believe that we are saved by faith rather than by good works and that we are called to live in responsible freedom.

...emphasize diversity of gifts and beliefs: "In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, diversity, charity." The unity comes from a sincere belief that we have much to learn from one another's experience and stories.

...believe in the good news of the Bible as the foundation of our faith, but recognize that the Bible tells the story of God over a period of time that must involve looking at context and studying historical situations that frame the writing of Scripture.

...do not believe that adherence to a "fixed creed" is necessary for admittance into Christian community. Our individual consciences and testimonies of faith shape and animate our life of faith together.

...celebrate Baptism and the Lord's Supper as important signs and symbols within the Christian faith. Baptists receive full immersion baptism called, "believer's baptism," at the time they become full church members. Infants in the Baptist tradition are typically "dedicated," rather than baptized. The UCC administers baptism by sprinkling and typically does so for infants, although a person of any age may be baptized.

LAY LEADERSHIP

The Church Council

The Church Council has oversight responsibility for all affairs of the church, temporal and spiritual. The Council has fiduciary responsibility and sets policies. Each Council member is also appointed to at least one of the following standing committees: Audit, Budget and Planning, Building, Finance, Communications, Institutional Relations, Ministerial Relations, Ordination, Personnel and Salary, and Stewardship. Church council terms run for three years with the possibility of election to a second three-year term. Members are eligible to submit their names for Church Council elections after two years of membership and a demonstration of financial support to the church.

Elected Committees

Budget & Planning- This committee reviews and revises the proposed annual operating and capital budgets prepared by Church staff, for presentation to the Church Council and the Congregation for approval. The Committee is also responsible for monitoring spending throughout the year. Members are eligible to submit their name for election to the Budget & Planning Committee after one year of membership and a demonstration of financial support to the church.

Nominating- this committee is responsible for ensuring the integrity of the election process, including fielding a slate of candidates that reflects the diversity of our Church membership. The committee administers the overall process for electing lay-leaders. Members are eligible to submit their name for election to the Nominating Committee after one year of membership and a demonstration of financial support to the church.

Elected Program Commissions

Each commission consists of 12-members elected for staggered three-year terms. Members may serve two consecutive three-year terms. Commissions meet once a month. Members are eligible to submit their name for election to a commission after one year of membership and a demonstration of financial support to the church.

Education- Oversees the development and implementation of a comprehensive Christian Education Ministry at the Church. Programs include: Adult Christian Education Small Groups, Riverside Kids Ministry, Youth and Young Adult Programs, the Scholarship Fund, and English Language Training.

Mission and Social Justice- Seeks to celebrate diversity, build inclusiveness, and promote equity for God's people individually, locally, nationally, and internationally. Programs include: Food Pantry, Barber Training, LGBT Ministry, Prison Ministry, and many others.

Worship- Responsible for supporting our inspiring worship services. Programs include: Sunday Worship Service, Space for Grace, Morning Light, and Meditation Services. Opportunities for individual service include Communion preparation, Choirs, Ushers, and Flower Preparation.

Membership & Parish Life- Accompanies church members on every step of their spiritual journey. Programs include: Pastoral Care, Faith Development and Spiritual Growth, New Members Class, Wellness Programs, Spiritual Life Retreats, and Laity Empowerment.

GETTING INVOLVED

As a member of The Riverside Church, you are invited to participate in a number of programs, classes, and initiatives that seek to model God's peace, love, and justice in the world. From welcoming first-time visitors to participating in a small group, from serving in our food bank to working on our congregation's social justice priorities, your presence can make a difference here. Below you will find just a sample of opportunities that we invite you to consider participating in as a member of The Riverside Church.

Small Groups

Our small groups offer folks a chance to study the Bible and various faith-focused topics together. Groups are open to all and provide a fantastic way to meet other people in church while developing a deeper faith.

Children & Youth Ministries

Have a passion for working with children and youth? Consider volunteering in the nursery, serving as an adult youth sponsor or teaching a children's Sunday School teacher. You can make a difference in the life of a young person!

New Members Ministries

Walk alongside of folks who are interested in becoming a member of The Riverside Church by providing helpful information, answering questions, and helping them sign up for New Member Orientation Classes.

Community Care Ministries

Join a ministry that helps provide emotional and spiritual support for members of the congregation. Our Stephen Ministers are trained lay-people who help provide a circle of support for church members who need it.

Food Pantry

Work with our dedicated team who provides hope for the hungry! Individuals are invited to help organize the food pantry as well as provide refreshments and hospitality for the pantry's clients when the pantry is open.

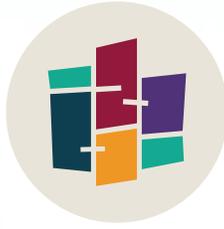
English Conversation Program

Help individuals learn English by acting as a friendly conversation partner. Meet one-on-one with an individual and provide them with an opportunity to practice their language skills.

Greeters Ministry

Become one of the first faces that people see when they visit The Riverside Church. Our greeters are stationed at strategic locations on Sunday mornings to help guests find their way around the building and answer any questions that arise.

Please note that some service opportunities, especially ones involving working with children and youth, may require a background check.



A CHURCH FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Infants and Toddlers

We make room for all of God's children and create safe spaces where our youngest ones are loved and cared for.

Our church nursery is located on the Cloister level and is open on Sundays for infants and toddlers up to two years of age from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The Pillar Society is a group of mothers of young children who meet together for fellowship and serving other mothers in the church.

Contact our Associate Minister for Children and Families, Mandy Meisenheimer at mmeisenheimer@trcnyc.org.

Children and Families

We offer a full year of programs and fun events to help children and their families grow in their faith and experience God together.

Our Rising Voices children's choir provides kids with an opportunity to praise God through music.

Riverside Kids Worship meets Sunday at 10:30 a.m. on MLK 4th floor for kids in kindergarten through 6th grade and involves singing, crafts, and interactive Bible lessons.

Contact our Associate Minister for Children and Families, Mandy Meisenheimer at mmeisenheimer@trcnyc.org.

Youth

Our youth are active and involved in the whole life of the church and the larger community.

Our Youth Group meets on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in MLK 425. We have lots of educational events, fun trips, and justice and service opportunities throughout the year. Teens who have completed 8th grade are also eligible for Faith Passage, our confirmation program.

Contact our Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults, Rev. Kevin Vandiver at kvandiver@trcnyc.org

MEET THE PASTORAL STAFF

The Riverside Church has a myriad of programs taking place both within its walls and in the community throughout the week. These programs operate through the collaboration of both staff and church members like yourself. The following is a pictorial guide to help you identify and contact key pastoral staff in the church. If you have a question or just want to say “hi,” please don’t hesitate to reach out. We’d love to hear from you!



Rev. Dr. Amy Butler
Senior Minister
abutler@trcnyc.org

Pastor Amy is head of the staff and provides leadership and pastoral guidance for The Riverside Church.



Rev. Michael Livingston
Executive Minister
mlivingston@trcnyc.org

Rev. Livingston manages the staff and assists Pastor Amy with leading the congregation in their mission and ministry.



Rev. Kevin Wright
Minister of Education
kwright@trcnyc.org

Kevin directs the educational and spiritual formation opportunities in the church. He also provides guidance for the membership ministry.



Rev. Ellen Robison
Minister of Worship
erobison@trcnyc.org

Ellen guides the worship life of the church as it occurs in various forms, styles, and formats.



Rev. Rachel Johnson
Director of Communications
rjohnson@trcnyc.org

Rachel spearheads the church’s external communications and works to enable the church’s witness in the public sphere.



Ms. Christian Peele, M.Div.
Director of Stewardship & Development
cpeelee@trcnyc.org

Christian helps the church live out its call to discipleship through giving and stewardship of its resources.



Rev. Bertram Johnson
Minister of Justice, Advocacy, & Change
bjohnson@trcnyc.org

Bertram directs our church’s efforts to live out the gospel through acts of justice, service, and advocacy.



Rev. Debra Northern
Minister of Parish Care
dnorthern@trcnyc.org

Debra leads the church in its mission to provide pastoral and physical care for its members and neighbors.



Rev. Kevin Vandiver,
Associate Minister for Youth and Young Adults
kvandiver@trcnyc.org

Kevin is responsible for leading our programs for the youth (grades 7th- 12th) and young adults (ages 18-35)



Ms. Mandy Meisenheimer
Associate Minister for Children and Families
mmeisenheimer@trcnyc.org

Mandy directs our Riverside Kids Ministry and works with their families as they grow in faith together.

Architectural Terms

Nave (Latin: ship) The Nave is the “body” of the church building and where worship is held on Sunday Mornings.

Chancel (Latin: balustrade) The Chancel is the part of the Nave whose beginning is marked by the steps leading up to the choir.

Narthex (Greek: Portico) The Narthex is the area where people gather before going into the Nave.

Cloister (Latin: Bounds) The Cloister is the entrance hall in Riverside from Claremont Avenue.

The Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial Carillon

The carillon was a gift to The Riverside Church by John D. Rockefeller Jr. in memory of his mother.

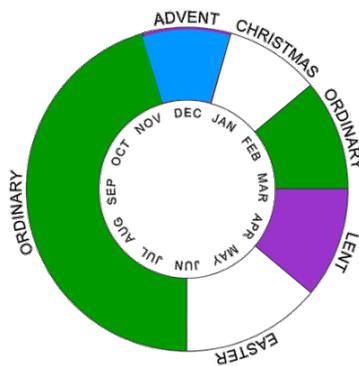
It contains 74 bronze bells ranging in weight from the 20 ton Bourdon bell to the smallest treble bell of 10 pounds. The Bourdon bell is the largest and heaviest carillon bell ever cast. The total weight of all the bells is over 100 tons.

The carillon rises 392 feet above the street and is operated by the carillon keyboard located nearby.

WORSHIP LIFE

The Liturgical Calendar

The liturgical calendar divides the year into a series of seasons, each with their own mood, theological emphases, and modes of prayer, which can be signified by different ways of decorating churches, colors used in worship, scriptural readings, and themes for preaching. The liturgical calendar helps Christians to orient their lives to the cycle of God’s story told through the life of Jesus Christ and his first followers.



Seasons of the liturgical calendar include Advent, Lent, and Pentecost. The colors of the Liturgical seasons of western Christianity. These seasons are Advent, Christmas, Ordinary Time (Time After Epiphany), Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and Ordinary Time (Time After Pentecost). The liturgical year begins with Advent.

Each season is represented by a color:

- Advent – Blue
- Christmas – White
- Ordinary Time – Green
- Lent – Violet
- Easter – White
- Pentecost – Red

The Lectionary

The lectionary is a pre-selected collection of scriptural readings from the Bible that can be used for worship, study or other theological uses. The Riverside Church uses the Revised Common Lectionary which follows the liturgical year in a 3-year cycle and provides scriptural recommendations that compliment the current season of the liturgical year. You will hear texts from the lectionary read or sung each week in worship.

ONE BODY WITH MANY MEMBERS

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

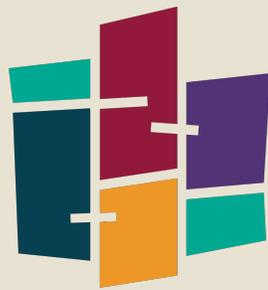
For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you."

On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

What does this passage tell us about the type of church we should strive to be?





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