



THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

CANDIDATES FOR LAY LEADERSHIP

2024

trcnyc.org/layleadership



Lay Leadership is the heartbeat of The Riverside Church.
As a congregational church the various commissions and committees lead the way as we aspire to embody the love and justice of God in our neighborhood, across the nation, and around the world.

Lay Leadership Candidate Forum
Sunday, April 28 | 1:00 PM ET | South Hall & Online

2024 Annual Meeting
Sunday, May 19 | 1:00 PM ET | South Hall & Online



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Jean Schmidt

Biography:

I am an attorney with Littler Mendelson, specializing in employment law and litigation. Since 1992, I have been a dedicated member of Riverside. Over the years, I have contributed my leadership skills to various roles within the community, including:

- Church Council – 2014 - 2019:

Treasurer- 2018-2019; Chair of Budget & Planning 2015-2107

- Church Council – 2006 - 2012:

Chair – 2009-2012; Vice Chair – 2008-2009; Chair of Budget & Planning 2007-2008; Chair of Bylaws Committee – 2006-2008

- Budget and Planning Committee – 2023 to present; 2013-2014
- Bylaws Committee – 2022 to present
- Riverside Development Committee – Co-Chair – 2019-2023
- Personnel & Salary – 2013-2014

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I have held numerous leadership positions within the Church. Additionally, I have served on the governing boards of my law firm, my sorority, my sorority's foundation, a childcare services agency, and a community organization on the Upper West Side of New York. Therefore, I bring to the Council a deep understanding of the Church and its governance and history over the past 20-plus years, as well as experience and expertise in serving on governing boards.

Moreover, we are privileged to be part of a community that believes in the dignity of all and social justice. Especially now, we must make our voices heard and our actions speak loudly to demonstrate what it truly means to be followers of Jesus Christ. As a member of Council, I am eager to collaborate with our clergy and fellow members to make that vision a reality.



Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome

Biography:

Mojúbàolú Olufúnké Okome was educated at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, Long Island University, New York, and Columbia University, New York. She is a Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, CUNY, and has served as the past Women's Studies Program Director and past Deputy Chair for Graduate Studies in the Department of Political Science at Brooklyn College. She specializes in International Political Economy with a regional focus on the African continent, particularly Nigeria.

She formally joined Riverside Church in 2022 and is an active member of the African Fellowship, Antiracism Taskforce, and Morning Prayer. Additionally, she participates actively in the Book Club, OBS, and Coffee Hour, and occasionally joins the Writing Group. She has led the planning and delivery of programs sponsored by the African Fellowship and Education Commission.

- Budget and Planning Committee – 2023 to present; 2013-2014
- Bylaws Committee – 2022 to present
- Riverside Development Committee – Co-Chair – 2019-2023
- Personnel & Salary – 2013-2014

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

Born in Nigeria, I have worked on international development issues as a consultant for clients including the United Nations and Commonwealth. I have taught full-time at the university level for over three decades. My interests lie in exploring the meanings of inclusive and equitable citizenship in the interplay between globalization, democratization, and economic development.

My research interests encompass the effects of globalization, post-colonialism, and post-modernity on economic and political transformation, as well as gender, democracy, and citizenship in Africa and African Diaspora Studies. I have taught, published extensively, and conducted public speaking engagements on these topics. Additionally, I have mentored younger academic and professional colleagues, particularly women, both formally and informally. I am eager to bring these skills and experiences to Riverside.



Tawanna Huguley

Biography:

Tawanna Huguley's professional background encompasses domestic and international work as an Executive Leader in Risk Management and Human Resources across multiple industries. Introduced to The Riverside Church in 2004 by a dear friend, Ms. Huguley immediately felt familiarity with Sisters Chapel at Spelman College and comfort in the diversity welcoming all of God's children. Through many years of traveling and moving to various states and countries, Ms. Huguley would stop into Riverside when in NY. When outside of NY, Riverside's virtual sermons provided solace and spiritual grounding.

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

Her calling to serve extends from her professional and volunteer work to her training in End-of-Life Care and Crisis Incident Stress Management. She brings to Riverside her passion for inspiring humanity, creativity, collaboration, and forward thinking. Her volunteer work exemplifies her passions for advocating and empowering the unhoused, youth, older adult, and disability populations. Her openness and interest in listening to others' journeys without bias to understand people of all backgrounds is one of the many gifts she will bring to lay leadership at Riverside.



Arthur C. Doyle

Biography:

I have been a member of Riverside Church since 1993. During my tenure, I have actively supported the Riverside Food Pantry through financial contributions and assistance with monthly food pantry collection drives and neighborhood food drives. As a younger adult, I participated in the Young Adult Ministry under the leadership of both Rev. Mariah Britton and Bruce Lamb. I have cultivated a strong commitment to supporting Riverside Church financially through my participation in the Stewardship Committee (2021-present). My work has included spearheading outreach initiatives to current and former members of the Riverside Church community, and devising and devising strategies to stimulate church members' provision of meaningful financial support to Riverside Church.

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I feel my gifts have been honed through my participation in the Riverside Food Pantry, Young Adult Ministry, and Stewardship Committee. My participation has challenged me to reach out to Riversiders, to ask for support of the Church and community. I also have a deep belief in the right of Riversiders and the greater community to have access to provisions that are requisite for healthy living in the community, including nutritious, quality food, clothing, and a sense of community. My prior participation in the Young Adult Ministry has instilled within me a deep appreciation for fellowship. I believe I can gain a tremendous amount of personal growth from exposure to, and understanding of, the wide range of community members' perspectives and desires.



Marion Conteh

Biography:

My name is Dr. Marion Conteh, DNP, MSN, ANP-BC, and I am proud to be a member of Riverside Church. I am married to Alpha Conteh and have two children, Adia and Alpha Conteh. I am a dedicated and compassionate clinician trained at New York University, devoted to delivering high-quality healthcare and improving patient outcomes. Besides practicing as a clinician, I am involved in professional organizations and community outreach initiatives. I serve as an adjunct professor at Mercy University and advocate for nursing, fostering education programs and encouraging the latest advancements in healthcare. Outside of work, I enjoy making new friendships, maintaining old relationships, reading, and playing board games with my family.

What does being an engaged member of the Riverside church community mean to you?

As an engaged member of the Riverside Church community, I believe it's crucial to support our church in expanding, growing, maintaining our family, and welcoming new members and friends. An engaged member should help support the church's mission for both incremental and exponential growth. I continue my engagement in the church by leading health discussions with the Tower League, working locally with the teens in our community, and recently delivering over 250 cans of goods to our food pantry. Behind the scenes, I volunteer for Thanksgiving luncheons in South Hall and food delivery, and participate in committee meetings for our annual fund or church involvement. An engaged member should use innovative measures to maintain a passion for theology, love, and worship.



Sally Riddles

Biography:

I have been attending Riverside Church on and off since 2012 and regularly since 2019 with my husband, Mark. Our twin grandchildren, Eli and Ruth, are enthusiastic participants in both the Music and Children's Ministry programs. Mark and I regularly attend worship and Open Bible Study.

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I joined Riverside as part of the first new member class after Rev. Thorne's call. Being a part of this congregation challenges, comforts, and inspires me. Before Riverside, I expressed my faith through music. My service to the church was defined by singing in the choir and serving on various music and arts ministry teams. Since losing my hearing, and with it my musical ability, I have been seeking to redefine my participation and find a new way to make a meaningful contribution to our church.



Sandra (Chap) Chapman

Biography:

Sandra K. Chapman is known by all as Chap (she/her/hers). She is a Nuyorican (a native-born New York Afro-Latina). After venturing into other NYC boroughs, she resettled in Manhattan in the early 2000s. When it was time to find a spiritual home and a place to baptize her two children, she chose Riverside Church. Chap became a member in 2001, yet it was in 2023 when she chose to attend with a commitment to serve the Church and build community.

Chap is the CEO of her own company, Chap Equity Inc., where she is rooted in collaboration, research, and dialogue. She is the co-author of 'Bias Starts Early. Let's Start Now: Developing an Anti-Racist, Anti-Bias Book Collection for Infants & Toddlers,' and 'Turning Thinking into Action: The Power of Equity-based Pedagogical Frameworks to Support Practice.'

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I believe my gifts come from many sources: God, nature, my family, community, hard work, my inquisitive mind, and my thirst for justice have brought a host of gifts to my altar, and I am so grateful. I consider some of my skills to include listening in order to discover more about others' lives. Storytelling and story-listening are crucial aspects of my anti-bias work and social world. Through rich dialogue, I believe we can illuminate the collective wisdom in the room, which can serve us well when we are working together to address challenges or engage in needed activism. I am comfortable in groups where disagreement occurs and have learned to use the gift of harvesting the most essential element of the conflict in order to build needed healing conversations.



Mark Riddles

Biography:

I have attended Riverside Church for four years and joined the congregation in 2023. I am a graduate of The Catholic University of America (BM in Voice), Northwestern University (MM in Conducting), and studied at Wesley Theological Seminary (Washington, DC). As a singer, conductor, and music/worship administrator, I have served churches in Washington, DC, Indianapolis, IN, and Flint, MI. Additionally, I have served as a church musician at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in NYC.

I held offices at local, regional, and national levels of the Presbyterian Association of Musicians, as well as serving as the Music and Worship Chair for the American Choral Directors Association. I also served as a Music in Worship Instructor at Christian Theological Seminary (UCC) in Indianapolis, IN. Since attending Riverside, Mark has been active in Open Bible Study and greatly enjoys sitting next to his wife, Sally, in worship.

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I will bring musical gifts and worship leadership experience to Riverside Church. These assets will be directed towards encouraging and supporting our gifted and dedicated worship and music leaders. I will bring to my efforts an active curiosity, openness to others, and strong communication skills. These qualities will be shaped by my deep appreciation for the centrality of worship and music in the life of the church.



Charles Semowich

Biography:

I have an MFA in Art and a PhD in Art History, and I am a graduate of the New Seminary for Interfaith Studies. I have been a member of Riverside since 2021. I have played the carillon at Riverside as a guest since 2006 and as the Carillonneur since 2019. I have served in other churches as a librarian, committee member, and organist. Additionally, I have worked at the New York State Department of Social Services and as a private art dealer, organist, city historian, curator, artist, and in various other roles. I have been included in Who's Who in America and am the author of six books.

What do you consider your gifts and how will you use them as a lay leader at Riverside?

I have experience in worship as an organist, carillonneur, and service leader. I have given sermons and organized worship services. I plan to use these experiences as part of the Worship Commission.

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