2020 CANDIDATES *for* LAY LEADERSHIP

THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

trcnyc.org/LayLeadership

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Clarence Anderson
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Naomi Jones
Kwesi McDavid
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Richard O'Keefe
David Orcutt
Philip Salmon
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Meghann Vaughn
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THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH
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CLARENCE ANDERSON

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

40 years in banking. Served on the Church Council, Church Treasurer, Budget and Planning Committee, Worship Commission, Senior Minister Committee, Nominating committee, Sustainability Committee and Finance Committee. PTA President, New York City Schools Superintendent advisory committee and NYC board of Education Speaker in the Classroom.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I want people to experience a sense of community where love of God and neighbor is paramount. I always reach out to visitors and try to make them feel welcome. My commitment to Riverside has been strong for the past 36 years and I will continue to work with others to help us achieve the 'beloved community" we talk about.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

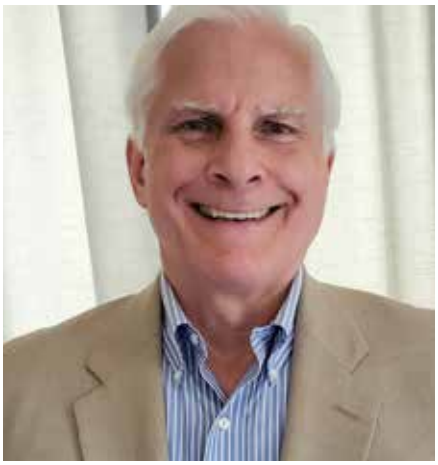
I joined Riverside because I wanted to be a part of a progressive faith based interracial community. For me being engaged means supporting the church with financial giving every year and devoting a lot of time and talent to help Riverside connect with the goals and missions we aspire to achieve. Being engaged means worshiping together regularly and seeking to address social inequalities such as poverty and racism.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

One great challenge now is to address the divisions within Riverside and to reach consensus going forward. We can do this through honest dialogue one-on-one and in groups. We must learn again to listen and trust one another. Another challenge is financial stability. We need to figure out how to maintain the building and develop resources to sustain Riverside in the future. This will require collaboration and thinking outside the box.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

My plan is to be open and available to listen and participate in the many areas of congregational life. We need to develop clarity of roles and responsibilities on the part of members, lay leaders, clergy and staff. I will work diligently to help us continue the work of ministry inside and outside of Riverside.



VIRL ANDRICK

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I was on Church Council twice, was Secretary of the Budget and Planning Committee, was the Vice-Chair of Mission and Social Justice, was the Co-Convener of Maranatha, and was on the Social Services Committee for over 30 years where I coordinated 100 volunteers for the food drives, worked on the clothing sales, volunteered for the shelter.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that congregants find a safe place to grow spiritually, show their commitments to social justice activities, and maintain an inclusive place at the talbe for all God's children. I have tried to do that for the last 36 years at Riverside in all the activities for which I volunteered my time and talents.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I believe in a an inclusive spritual community which tries to practice Matthew 25. Aside from all the volunteer work and committee work I have done, I have attended many concerts, programs, events and annual meetings to demonstrate my commitment to the Mission of the church, as well as, pledging financially for the last 32 years.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The greatest challenges are to maintain transparency financially and maintain a spiritual commitment to the social justice goals that our Mission and by- laws state. Every budget must be easy to understand and defendable, and every action must be based on Biblical teachings.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I will support the life and vitality of the congregation as I have for the last 36 years by volunteering and showing up for meetings. I am a person who fulfills my commitments to be honest, compassionate, loving, hard working and level headed in all my dealings with others.

PATRICE HARRINGTON

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am retired from the hospitality industry, having worked in Front Office with focus on forecasting/ budgeting, Sales/Conference Services. Currently employed for CUNY in the Office of Accessibility working with Deaf and hard of hearing students. I am VP of the NYC chapter of National Alliance of Black Interpreters. I volunteer with National Action Network – Deaf Club. My lay leader service at Riverside has included, The Nominating Committee, Chair of Worship Commission-Representative to the Church Council, Deaf Ministry Team, Wedding Ministry, Flower Guild, Music Committee, and Infant Nursery. I currently serve as an Usher and secretary to the Usher Board. Member of TRC Handbell Choir, 2004 Recipient of The James M. Washington Award for exemplary Lay Leadership.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

People enter The Riverside Church with a sense of awe. I want people to know that we are more than a large stone edifice. This is sacred space. That we strive to do God's work in our community, and see God in all people. For our visitors I always point out the empty cross upon entering the Nave and the statute of Christ in Majesty upon leaving (most visitors don't look up!) For me, it is a sign of sacrifice for all the work that we do. Hope that our work has and will continue to make a difference and doing it all for the love of Christ and our neighbors.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

This has been my home church for almost thirty years. I have met wonderful and interesting people along the way and would not trade the experiences for anything. Engagement is talking to people, letting them express their feelings. Encouraging people to speak up, be it a congregant, clergy, or staff at any level. Being in lay leadership positions in the past people need to know that they can trust their leaders to speak on their behalf in truth, with sincerity and fully committed to the tasks at hand. In the end, the goal should always be for the good of the congregation, and leaving the institution in a better place for future generations.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The great experiment is The Riverside Church. Bringing all faiths and backgrounds under one roof to worship. As we move forward, we need to understand those various faith traditions that make up the congregation. How do faith traditions influence views and meaning of a congregational church and in turn how does that effect programs and policies. The challenge is that our base is constantly changing with new members and as congregants mature in faith and age. Our response, stay focused on the good works we are charged to do through prayer and hard work.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

We are currently a church in transition; therefore, we must strive to be the best we can in all situations.

NAOMI JONES

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

"I love the Lord and want to serve him through Leadership in Church. In addition to being a certified New York State Chaplain, I volunteer with Social Services and several Committees through MSJ; Active within the Harlem Community through Civil Rights & Community Based Organizations.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I pray that people are able to feel safe, respected and loved so much to the point they are ignited to participate , learn, and grow in their individual faith journey. I am dedicated to work through God's vision to build the body of Christ as a strong earthly example of our Father's Kingdom!

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I officially became a member of Riverside in 2016. Nonetheless the Holy Spirit has continually pulled me to this sanctity for over 19 years. New York City can be rough. Sanctuary means everything. A warm, quiet ,safe place to hear from God is a true blessing. Some of the darkest times in my life were softened by the refuge of Riverside. In recent months of turbulence, I have been moved to step up and lead. This time it is my Church in need, and I am ready willing and able. There are levels and various types of engagement. I personally engage or have previously engaged with Riverside virtually, programmatically, financially, civically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Sometimes it my be challenging to remember, but we all are children of our merciful Savior. Each one of us has different experiences, gifts, flaws, and abilities that ultimately connects us in our own way to the Divine. I am committed to helping us focus on that as a Body of Christ.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

Using my talents, time & resources in Worship, Fellowship & Prayers has kept me my entire life. I have faith it will continue to keep me blessed, and pleasing in the sight of the Almighty Creator. I want this for all my brothers & sisters, especially here at Riverside Church.

KWESI MCDAVID

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I manage the digital operations for the company I work for and am very active in the local politics of Morningside Heights. I also sit on the board of a Charter School in Brooklyn. I feel that my technical skill with digital technology coupled with my history of community activism good be of great help to the Church during this transition period.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Forgiveness, Faith and Neighborliness are three qualities that if we all embraced as humans would vastly improve the world. To me these are the true teachings of Christ. Through my planning of events, participating in Open Bible Study, and continually advocating for the less fortunate that live near this Church I have tried exemplify these values. I have not always agreed with other congregants but I have tried hard to follow these three values taught by my lord and savior Jesus Christ.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

To be an engaged member is to participate in collective worship via Open Bible Study, develop programming that allows Church members work work together and enjoy each others fellowship.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The greatest challenge is to find a way to disagree with love and find a collective way to seek the truth, and confront the challenges that face us as individuals and as a body of Christ.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If I am elected, I plan to bring clear transparent moral leadership that does not waver to the winds of doctrine, but focused on the Spiritual development of this body of Christ, via transparency, truth and fun. We need to be honest, kind and most importantly we need to enjoy each others company through fellowship.

EUGENE MELINO

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Since 2017, I have served on the Education Commission. Since 2014, I have been a member of the Ordination Committee. Prior to that, I was a member of the Senior Minister Search Committee that called Pastor Amy. I also chaired the Adult Christian Education Committee for five years. I hold a master's in education from NYU and am a published poet.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I see faith as a powerful force politically, personally and spiritually. In Martin Luther King, for example, it inspired historic social justice action. In each of us, the gifts of the spirit manifest through faith, which stands in contradiction to secular ambition. In popular culture, however, faith is often confused with other, negative attitudes and feelings (sanctimoniousness, self-righteousness, guilt, and assorted manias). Thus, spiritually healthy faith formation is the most important experience that Riverside can offer. Faith formation can be experienced in no other institution besides the church, and few churches actually offer it.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

In Riverside, I have found a community of fellow spiritual searchers. They may differ from me in terms of race, culture, gender and sexual orientation, but we are kindred spirits willing to wrestle with God. This courageous wrestling, not fear and trembling, lies at the heart of the faith formation that I have experienced at Riverside as a member for twenty years. I am also drawn to my fellow Riversiders' healthy skepticism of all dogma, even our own progressive dogma. Hard questions rather than easy answers mark Riverside's culture. In a time of toxic partisanship, hard questions are more important than ever, and it may be that Riverside is called to ask them.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Like the mainstream church in general, Riverside is having a very hard time transitioning to the new century. Its siloed ministries and bureaucratic governance structures are anachronistic. They lend themselves to factional subversion and have consistently proven ineffective in supporting both congregational and financial growth. As a result, Riverside shrinks and becomes more self-absorbed while the world passes us by.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I see myself as a reform candidate who will advocate for a new governance structure suited to a 21st century congregation facing unprecedented cultural, political, technological and climactic disruptions. I don't see the current by-laws as sacred, or even very effective. They reflect a time when white businessmen governed the church and white-gloved ushers kept order in the pews. That time has long passed. The future challenges our 20th century notions of church. But Riverside's social justice legacy and worldwide reputation puts it in a unique position to answer God's call in an age of rising globalization and virtualization.

RICHARD O'KEEFE

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Member of multiple non profit boards with yearly budgets ranging from $300,000 to $15,000,000. I worked as member of organizations for my entire life and currently sit on the Church Council, Chair the Personnel and Salary Committee, member of the Senior Minister Committee. Master's Degree of Organizational and Social Psychology , Family Physician

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Values: respect, optimism,courage, open-mindedness,service, compassion. I am committed to creating that experience by showing up! Also by taking responsibility and acknowledging others as well as the simple act of greeting people e.g. passing of the peace during service. I would propose that is one of the most important part of service where congregants have opportunity to greet and welcome not only each other but visitors. This simple act communicates so much about who we value and connect with.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am part of Riverside because I believe in its prophetic progressive Christian voice and it's experiment in leading through it diversity. To me, being an engaged member of community means participating in the life and struggle of that community.... seeking connection, being kind, being surprised, practicing gratitude, and holding each other accountable.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Trust, Boundaries, Financial Management, Transparency

1. Develop a process to develop a strategic plan in which we ground our conversations, decision-making, and budgeting.
2. Develop process which both allows congregants and staff voice and that respects our roles
3. Develop an agreement on the role of congregants in a congregational church
4. Experiment with the assumption that staff, lay leadership, and congregants statements and actions are based in connection and love"

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

1. Keeping grounded through prayer, connection, and meditation
2. Listening
3. Asking questions, being transparent, seeking trust, respecting boundaries, practicing patience, nurturing respect
4. Keeping the long view-> What will Riverside be in 20 years?

DAVID ORCUTT

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I have sung in the Chancel Choir since 1996. I have served on the Nominating Committee in two different periods, the last as Chair in 2017 & 2018. I have served multiple times on the Sharing Fund - many of the years as Chair or Co-Chair. I returned Sharing Fund in Sept, 2019 and am now Co-Chair.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Riverside needs to be a beacon of moral, Christian leadership in these times when others who profess to be Christians are ignoring the immorality of our federal leaders. I hope folks see that we are committed to social justice and finding ways for our country to deal with systemic racism, poverty, militarism and ecological devastation. I hope people feel welcomed at Riverside and see that there is a place for them - as a member, a volunteer or donor. I am most proud of my work on the Sharing Fund which I feel shows Riverside at its best with it commitment to helping organizations outside of ourselves.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I grew up in a UCC church in CT and knew I always wanted to end up at Riverside. When a position in the Chancel Choir became available in 1996, I took it and have been there ever since. I feel that as a member of Riverside, I am called to a leadership position. I am very organized and am willing to take on responsibility joyfully. Being an engaged member means to commit to a variety of tasks and grow in learning new areas of calling. It is also important to have a positive attitude and look for the best in folks while listening to differing opinions. That is a large challenge but I will accept it.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Right now our challenge is to recruit folks to serve on commissions and church council. Although I wholeheartedly supported Pastor Amy and was sorry to see her go, I was more distressed that good, capable young lay leaders, particularly women, felt it was necessary to leave the church completely. We are a Beloved Community and need to work to strengthen each other in the love of Christ. That means being committed to the church - not the leaders. We need to step up and do the hard task of leading a very diverse community. When folks tell me that there is a toxic atmosphere, particularly on Church Council, I say that it is our job to work to change that through a positive attitude/example.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

By supporting transparency but also insisting on confidentiality. By realizing that sometimes the spirit of the law is more important than the letter of the law when dealing with the bylaws. I would propose that a revision of the bylaws is of vital importance although realize that it will be difficult. As Chair of Nom Com, I worked with IT gurus to institute the use of Google Forms to assist in ballot tabulation. This made the process easier and was totally verifiable. I think the Sunday Suppers were a great chance for folks who run in different circles to meet in a relaxed situation. Forums, church-wide bible study, coffee hour - all good ways to connect.

PHILIP SALMON

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

My Riverside resume is extensive. I joyfully serve as a volunteer greeter on Sunday morning's and have served on the Church Council and various committees since 2016. I actively live out the gifts of the spirit in every meeting, service activity, scripture reading or budget forum. Professionally, I am a CFO and I have an MBA and CPA.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Our God gave us the gifts of the spirit. Among these are love, peace, patience, and kindness. It is my hope that anyone who encounters a Riversider (virtually or physically) will have a friendly, compassionate, Christ-centered experience in an open, welcoming and loving environment for ALL. I am seeking to serve on the Church Council to ensure that our policies, procedures, and precious resources are aligned with these core values.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a member of the Riverside family and continue to be an active member because of the diverse, socially conscious, Christ-centered community. We do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God. Justice is core to who we are called to be in the body of Christ. Being an engaged member means giving your time, talent, wallet and witness to this body of Christ. But really, so much of my contribution to Riverside is done privately, in my quiet and still space. This is where real service is carried out.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge today is to heal as a community, unify according to common purpose, remember who we are and whose we are and love thy neighbor as thyself. Healing is a process which will require all the love our Creator endowed us with. We will need to show up to this moment in our history without anger, ego, or an agenda but rather, with open hearts, ears and minds. Once we have made measurable progress toward healing, a disciplined search and selection process of a new Senior Minister should commence.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

As a Church Council member, I will continue to support the Riverside community through fiscal transparency, financial sustainability and overall governance of the institution through a Christ-centered, balanced approach. Servant leadership is both an art and a science. But ensuring that every voice is heard, that all are our gifts and talents are discovered, and that every penny is accounted for will require so much more than mere art and science. I will lean on my extraordinary faith for the execution of this role. It will be a privilege to serve my community.

HOWARD SANDERS

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Education: BS, Wharton School University of Pennsylvania; MBA, Harvard
Work: Institutional investor for the Pension of Citigroup Employees. Also, Founder Mng Prtner of institutional private equity firm.
Volunteer: The Partnership for NYC-Board/Audit Cmt; Toigo Foundation-Board
Expertise: Investments, Finance, Accounting

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Lay Leadership should be primarily concerned with how people interact with Riverside "the Church." A Church can mean different things to different people and I believe there is room for these differences. My hope would be that people first and foremost experience kindness as an expression of the love that powers true Christianity. I am committed to creating this experience for our visitors, members, staff and clergy through my interaction with them as well as through my support of the various ministries, commissions and community outreach of the Church.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am part of Riverside because it reflects my view of how a Christian community should look and feel. Being an engaged member of this community means being involved at a personal level with people who are different from me and my personal experiences and circumstances. The Church has touched me in many ways over years. Particularly through the support I received following the death of my mother in 2019. I have also been touched by the care and teaching of my children in Sunday School and the welcoming environment that my fraternity received when we visited the Church for our annual ""divine service." All of this has led to a connection I can only describe as "home."

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I believe the greatest challenge we face as a community is navigating the balance between how we pursue financial sustainability and how we expand our ministries to touch as many people as possible. We should respond to this challenge first with prayer and then with creativity and hard work. In order for Riverside to remain impactful in our broader community, we will need to find new ways to address poverty and suffering while at the same time preserving the long-term resources of the congregation. The Church has made great strides towards this end through improved financial management but there is more to be done.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I plan on working closely with other members of the Church Council, Budget and Planning, Staff, Clergy and congregational members to find the important balance I mentioned above between our ministries and financial sustainability. I have a strong relationships with each body, and I am invested in their collective success. I also plan on actively engaging in the development of our campus. This, of course, is a very important undertaking that will impact the Church for decades to come. We currently have the benefit a competent group leading the efforts of the Riverside Development Corporation and I believe my skill set can be additive in the next phases of development.

CHRISTEN WALKER - JAMES

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I hold a BA in Religious Studies, an MA in Theology, and I am an accomplished social impact and non-profit executive - skilled in finance, organizational management, diversity & Inclusion, strategic partnerships and business development. In addition to serving on 4 non-profit boards, I've been a non-profit COO, consultant, and Fortune 75 leader.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My hope is that people experience faith in action at Riverside. This is a special place, and our hallowed halls hold so much history that is centered around actionable faith. At TRC, we fight for those who cannot fight for themselves. We love one another in the way that Christ loved us. We are committed to social justice. We are actively using our faith to change our community and the world. I have always admired these things about Riverside, and I believe that this represents the absolute best in our church. My hope is that people will experience our commitment to faith in action within every interaction they have here.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a 4th generation Riversider, and TRC has shaped every facet of who I am. It started when Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin baptized me as a screaming infant in the Nave. It continued through my youth and adolescence as a lay leader and volunteer. And now as a young adult, my experiences at Riverside continue to serve and guide me daily. I am the product of this church, and no matter how far I may roam, Riverside cannot be replaced in my life. I am a part of this church because it is my lighthouse. My constant. My home. And being an engaged member of this community means that I am a part of a family who will care for me, pray for me, and love me unconditionally.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge will be to overcome the division we're experiencing right now - and we should respond to this challenge by leaning into it. We all came here for a reason - and we all stay here for a reason. The love we collectively have for our church and our community remains - no matter what. We need to draw upon that love and unify with one another through our shared values. Our community (myself included) needs to be revitalized and refocused on our future. Riverside is not finished working, serving, and helping those in need - so, let's bring our faith to this mountain and meet this challenge by being unified in the roles we are all uniquely and divinely destined to fulfill.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I will support my church through inclusive and collaborative leadership. I will serve our congregation by listening to the concerns within our community, and taking steps to make sure that everyone's voice is heard. I will support our clergy and staff by affirming their vision and advocating for the resources they need . I will give to Riverside through my time, talent, and treasure to ensure we hit key metrics with operations, finance, staff retention, membership, and stewardship by leveraging my 24 years as a TRC member, past service on committees and commissions, and everlasting love for this community. I will use my unique gifts to help shape our plan for the future.

HILLARY PUCKETT
Membership Care and Parish Life Commission

VICTORIA ANDERSON
Mission and Social Justice Commission

JESSE WILKINS
Worship Commission

ANDRE NAKASHIAN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am an accountant and I used to work in the accounting department of Riverside for 6.5 years. I have 20 years of experience in the accounting industry and also worked at another non-profit (City Harvest) for 4.5 years. When I was in high school, I was part of a student-led environmental group in the early 90s.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I would hope members would be open-minded, forgiving, seek truth, and equality. I hope when people come to service, they will immediately be welcomed and have someone to talk to. I hope that when I come to Church, I am being open to meeting new people and making them feel welcome.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I grew to enjoy Riverside during the course of my years of employment with the Church. Both the causes and the congregants made me want to join. To me, Being engaged means to help in anyway you can for any of the numerous programs as a volunteer of both time and skills.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Disunity is the obvious challenge, but I actually think it stems from a lack of focus and trying to do too many different things. I believe we need to define our core beliefs & goals, prioritize them, and then focus only on those things that help us get closer to those goals. Distractions need to be minimized.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

In financial matters, I hope I can provide clarity, context, and best practices going forward. For social causes, I hope to highlight what our main goals are, and try to focus our energies towards those goals only.

GERMAN SOTO

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

My experience as an entrepreneur that has started and grown multiple companies positions me well to contribute to the Budget and Planning Committee. Specifically, I have had exposure to the budget and planning process in prior capacities as the CFO and COO of varies companies along with the experience of having to manage against stated budgets.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Riverside is a family committed to faith and social justice. As a member of the Riverside church, I am committed to supporting and ensuring the continuation of Riverside's rich history of active engagement.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I joined Riverside because it was the best church home for my family. As the father of two teens, it was critical for me and my wife to find a church home that catered and nourished the spiritual needs of our entire family. The multitude of programs, activities and opportunities to get engaged across the various groups (e.g. youth, young adult, adult) are amazing and to be celebrated. As a member of Riverside, I feel an obligation to contribute to the advancement and success of these programs. This is a vital part of our faith journey.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The greatest challenge facing the Riverside community is transition - specifically, how do we transition as a community through the change that has taken place over the last year. For many, the change was painful and/or elicited a range of mixed emotions. To move forward, we must (i) respect the feelings of our Riverside family - both those we agree with and those we disagree with and (ii) focus on re-establishing a dialogue that is open and transparent with the congregation.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I see my role as an opportunity to support the broader Riverside Church family and community - not just the Budget and Planning Committee. With an overall goal of promoting and moving forward the mission of Riverside, I see the activities of all committees as inter-related, each capable of having significant impact on the life and vitality of our entire community.

HYLDA CLARKE

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I have been on the Education Commission in prior years as well as many and intermittent years elected to Mission & Social Justice. Further, I have been a participant in Bible and book studies at Riverside and I am a graduate from Teachers College with a Master's Degree in Psychology and Teaching. I have been employed as an Educator.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope people who visit Riverside sense a congregation that is sincerely engaged in the work of discerning the will of God in its programs , leadership, music, programs, services, art, commitment and action for justice, treatment and care of others. Further, I hope people not only feel welcomed but also valued and invited into participation. As a "people person," friendliness compels me to sensitivity and outreach to others.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a part of Riverside primarily because it glorifies God, and the life of Jesus , in respect for the earth and all of its inhabitants. Further, Riverside feeds my spirit in the Church's myriad ways of service: the prayers, sermons, music , study, fellowship, action for justice and more. Being an engaged member of the Riverside Community provides continual opportunities for learning and growth in spirit, engagement in critical thought , getting to know others, caring for others and sensing being cared for and about.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I think our greatest challenge is in the area of communication in as much as communication involves both speaking and listening. It seems the greater problem (on occasion) is failure or inability to listen both in interpersonal and group settings. Perhaps there are unmet needs that require sensitive and loving concern.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I have always been and plan to continue to be actively engaged in the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff and at this point, see no other way to be a member. I will participate in decision making (when asked) and support agreed upon decisions, in every way. If I should arrive at a worthy idea, I will share it; giving of time energy and resources. I will also be a truth teller.

DAVID JENSEN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

MS, columbia; BA, Illinois. Taught courses, member of education commission for 2 years. Long term interest in and respect for education

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I am interested in many projects which help the church function.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I admire the church. Interested in helping it run.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Helping others, working for causes

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I will do my best to engage in activities that will bring people to Riverside.

JOHN SLORANCE

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am an executive assistant at work and I can help with clerical and secretarial tasks. I am a college graduate and I can understand spreadsheets and professional documents. I have lived in New York City for 27 years and I know the Riverside Church neighborhood and I can help with work in the community. I am a member of a political club.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that the people of the Riverside Church experience the love of Jesus Christ. I will tell everyone I meet that Jesus loves them. I will perform intentional acts of love at the church. I will perform my chosen activities at the church in a thoughtful and considerate way. I will be inspired by the love of Jesus Christ in everything I do at the church. I will be respectful to everyone at all times.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am part of the Riverside Church congregation because I am part of the body of Christ. I go to the Riverside Church to worship God and fellowship with other people who believe in Jesus Christ. Being an engaged member of the Riverside Church means that I will attend worship services and help at worship services. I am running for the Education Commission so I can help with church governance. I hope to inspire other people to attend church and to join the Riverside Church. I am a part of the Riverside Church so I can do good works to help other people and to experience the joy of giving.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge is to pastor such a big, diverse and important church with so many resources. We should be prayerful and devout in everything we do at the church. We should be careful to make the best use of our time and resources. We should be respectful and thoughtful and considerate at all times and in everything we do. Pastoring such a big church with so many activities requires patience and dedication. We should love God, love ourselves and love each other.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I am currently the secretary of the Education Commission and I would like to continue to be the secretary of the Education Commission. I am an usher and I sing in the Inspirational Choir and I will continue in those activities. I am on the Music Committee and the Social Services Committee and I volunteer on food drives. I will attend meetings of the congregation and vote on the budgets and all important motions. I will support the activities of the church by volunteering. I will support the activities of the Education Commission.

MARTHA L. WIGGINS

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I'm on the Riverside Community Assessment & Partnership Sub-Committee, Education Commission, and Ordination Committee. Leadership roles: Christian education, social policy and community development, health care, labor unions and community boards. I chaired a senior pastor nominating committee and oversaw the work of several.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

The church's ethnic and cultural diversity; kind, caring, and loving members; children and family ministries that meet their needs; adult ministries that promote personal/group learning, maturity and service; the church's strong commitment to social justice advocacy; and the church's great preaching and amazing music. Our very successful six-session Wrestling With God course emphasized the importance of the Holy Spirit in the planning and implementation of a church-wide ministry of worship, study, contemplation, healing, renewal and fun. A 2020 goal of the Education Commission is to strengthen and expand our collaborations with commissions and committees to ensure our values.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

Rev. William S. Coffin's sermons and commitment to nuclear disarmament and civil rights brought me to Riverside Church. It was Rev. James Forbes' pastoral ministry that led me to join. I was impressed by the rich conversations of participants in Open Bible Study. In that safe space were members and guests that were searching for the meaning of Christian fellowship and discipleship. We also discussed ways by which God might call our gifts into use. My work in the Men's Homeless Shelter, the Riverside After School Program, and the Wellness Center continue to nurture the paths of service I am on. An "engaged member" is someone who is faithfully involved in the church's ministry.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

As a church, we assemble to worship God in a spirit of obedience, humility, fellowship, love and hope. Sadly, the messiness of human life also resides there in forms of racism, classism, gender bias, privilege and abuse of power. If not addressed, we risk being marred by a culture of distrust. Our clergy, commissions, and committees have been addressing these issues from the pulpit, the classroom, and the theatre. The goal is to instill a life of spiritual discipline devoted to prayer, Bible study, and transformative listening and sharing that leads to cycles of mutual forgiveness, transformation and reconciliation.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

We are a church in transition! Many of our activities are driven by assessments of where we have been, who we have become, and what God is calling us to do. My support will be guided by the needs of the individuals I am assigned to and by the church's broad objectives. Our purchase of McGiffert Hall presents wide-ranging opportunities for the church to reimagine its mission and vision along the Northern Manhattan corridor, to develop a strategic plan that leverages our resources, and that aligns our resources to ensure financial sustainability. As a team member, I will build on the exciting collaborative practices we are putting in place to ensure the success of this ministry.

CAROLYN BLAND

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I'm currently the Vice chair of MCPL. I've served as a volunteer within the Church working with The Riverside Theatre, Ecclesia, Safe Haven, and Community Suppers. Outside the Church I've worked as a volunteer with New York Cares and Literacy Partners.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My hope for those who interact with Riverside is that they experience and come to appreciate that we are truly "One Body With Many Members", paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 12:12. We may come from diverse backgrounds and share diverse opinions but we are all sharing in a journey of faith.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a part of Riverside because Riverside is a church that has, and still makes a difference in the community and in the world. To be an engaged member of the community does not simply mean attending weekly and mid week services. It means being an integral part of the Church experience. Giving of yourself, or as we like to say-your time, talent, or your treasure.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

We must challenge ourselves to take the next step in our journey of faith. To take take a leap of faith; step out of our comfort zone and become more involved in the work of the church. We can do this by informing, really speaking about our numerous ministries and highlighting their work and their missions. Homecoming should not be the only time we hear about and read about the numerous ministries that are a part of this church.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected I plan to step out of my comfort zone and become active in other ministries outside of those under the MCPL umbrella. This will enhance my overall church experience and also allow me to share information from a personal level with our new members.

ELIZABETH FIGUEROA

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am a licensed clinical social work who has been a practitioner in poor communities for over 20 years. I am also adjunct and a trainer at Fordham university for over 15 years. And most recently received my Supervision in Field Instruction which allows me to train and supervise Graduate SW interns.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My hope is always the that others view Riverside as I have, as a community that is inviting, warm, friendly where visitors feel welcome to share with us their love of God.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I have been a member for a while. As a professional social worker I have worked in nonprofits in very challenging times, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, then worked in Alzheimer's care and developed programs (both my parents succumbed to this illness) and now I have been involved in work with children, adolescents and their families and COVID19. I am at a different place in my life today and will have the opportunity to be more engaged and more involved. I want to make a meaningful contribution to Riverside for all it has done for me. I hope that I get the opportunity.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

At this time and as we face a world crisis, both a public health and economic catastrophe we must lead with hope and the conviction that we stand with all who suffer. More than ever we need to instill hope, and faith that this too shall pass. God will lead the way.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected I am committed to support Riverside, its staff, its clergy, its members and all who visit looking for a house of worship.

MILLICENT JAMES

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Registered nurse worked in many areas of nursing for 32 years in last position at a New York hospital.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Religious education, social and artistic programs , music programs.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a part of the riverside church as i like thr religious programs music programs and the wonderful friendships that i have made.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The changing of pastors causing some upset and some members cause negativity when this change occurs.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

By being a faithful member maintain rules and deal with problems up front.

HILLARY PUCKETT

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am currently serving as the chair of Membership, Care, and Parish Life and it has been a richly rewarding experience. I am also involved in the Inspirational Choir and Young Adult Ministry. I work as an administrative assistant for Media Development Investment Fund and hold a degree in Communication Studies from Christopher Newport University.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope when people come to Riverside, whether they are visiting for the first time or have been members for 40 years or more, that they experience radical welcome and feel that they are part of a beloved community. One of my favorite parts of Membership, Care, and Parish Life is helping facilitate the New Member Orientations and Joining Sundays. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet so many interesting people of different ages, races, sexual orientations, abilities, and life experiences and walk with them on their journey in making Riverside their church home and embracing them as part of our faith community. It is especially great to see them become active in our many ministries.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I joined Riverside because I felt embraced by the church community, particularly the Young Adult Ministry but just as much by our intergenerational congregation and pastoral staff. When I first ran for lay leadership, I was experiencing the personal trauma of leaving a toxic job situation where I was verbally abused on a daily basis and overworked and underpaid, and not even paid on time at that. My fellow congregants and pastors all encouraged me, prayed for me, and affirmed that I was being taken advantage of, and they ultimately empowered me to walk away from this untenable situation. I give and serve now because I want to show up for people in the same way this community did for me.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I believe our greatest challenge is, as Rev. Livingston recently put it, that we focus too much attention on things that don't matter. Yes, the bylaws are important, and the budget is important as we need these guidelines to do our ministry work effectively, but I am convinced that if we spent as much time thinking and talking about how we can better treat each other, congregation and pastors, and see the dignity in every person whether we agree with them or not, particularly when it comes to race, gender, class, and ability, as we do about our bylaws and our finances, we would be much closer to the beloved community that God intended us to be and that we say we are.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If I am reelected, I hope to continue to serve through our New Members Program and grow our beloved community. I also hope to continue facilitating beloved community through our Sunday Suppers and work with my fellow commission members in finding more creative ways to engage our new members in the life of our community. Additionally, I hope to work more closely with our staff liaisons Rev. Debra Northern and Rev. Lynn Casteel Harper and become more active in our vibrant Parish Care ministries. This pandemic has further exposed the disparities in our city and even our church community, so I hope to be a part of addressing the potential increased needs for the most vulnerable in our community.

ROSALYN WITTER

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am retired; an RN, BSN and a certificate in epidemiology. I am a member of the Business & Professional Women and Tower League. I served two years as a member of Membership Care & Parish Life. My term expired one year ago. I also volunteered on Career Day for many years.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My vision for people visiting Riverside is that our love and caring for each other would be very visible. As a member of Riverside Church, I am committed to being friendly , courteous , and informative to everyone.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am at Riverside because I love its music, programs and involvements with current events.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I see the greatest challenge as a community is, How do we attract and keep members? We can respond to this by answering questions and telling the truth when asked.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I would be an active member, by participating in the various policies of MCPL and in so doing support the life and vitality of all congregational members.

MICHAEL D. BARNES

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I feel that I have alot to offere. This is the first time I have volunteered for anything at Riverside in a while. However I am eager to give it my best

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

It is my hope to bring a sense of belonging to church members To give them a sense of teamwork and support. I am solr commited to this.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I joined the Riverside Church when I moved here from Dayton Ohio in 2004. My sister recommended that I do Volunteer work with Riverside,. i volunteered to work for the Thrift store, the food pantry and the library. i joined the Riverside Church in 2005. Iam alspo na member of the Riverside Inspirational Chior.. Being a member of the Riverside Community gives me the oppourtunity to give back to the community.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I feel that one of the greatest challenges in the community is to reach out to the community, I feel that through Spiritual and Physical outreach programs that offer positive alternatives to the community as a whole.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I will try to bring and enhance the church community through my positive input and enthusiasm

DERRICK BINEY-AMISSAH

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I have a solid technology and facility management-oriented background, and have worked in the the visual arts philanthropic sector for the last twenty years.
I have served on the Church Council, Budget and Planning Committee, chaired the Audit Committee, mentored in the Coming Home Program and taught Sunday school in the Education Ministry.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

When people interact with Riverside, I hope they experience openness, acceptance and an unambiguous commitment to live and grow in a Christian life. I believe my approach to being a member and representative of this community and the ministries in which I have chosen to participate reflect these values.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

My wife and I became members of Riverside in the era of Rev. Dr. Forbes, and two things occurred to us immediately at our first service: this was a place where there was an intersection and balance between what one heard at the sermon and what one was challenged to do in the world beyond the church. I always understood this balance as both a exciting challenge and a compelling invitation to deepen my relationship with God. Being an engaged member of this community is about more than service; it is about making a contribution inside and outside the church. It is about allowing God to show up in the relationships I share with other congregants, our clergy, and ultimately with everyone.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Cultivating trust between all the moving parts of this spiritual institution. Develop a really strong communications structure, which the church is already in the process of doing, create more occasions for gathering, tell the stories of work being done by various ministries in compelling and engaging ways, and keep acknowledging our growth as a spiritual community.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

Participate constructively in the critical conversations that help establish what qualifies as the best efforts of the Church and its ministries. Facilitate the fulfillment of those efforts with my skills, talents, and knowledge. My strengths are in the areas of innovation, project design and management, and critical assessment. I believe these qualities could greatly support the live and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff in developing our shared goals into actual outcomes.

FRANCES CONNELL

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I'm coordinator of Sojourners, member of Beloved Earth and eager participant in Riverside programs. Academically and professionally and as a lay leader at my previous church for 20 years, I have led and advocated for social justice.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Individuals should feel.part of a faith- based community dedicated to being the hands of Christ in our troubled world. I am committed to educating and engaging folks in opportunities to share with the most vulnerable, the sojourner, the disenfranchised, through workshops, films, and hands- on volunteer opportunities.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I came to Riverside because of its long history of leadership on social justice issues and to engage with a community whose resources and faith work to make our world a more loving place.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

People are discouraged by toxic politics, in church and in the nation, and weary of the need to tirelessly reaffirm the most basic principles of compassion and decency. I would support more truth and reconciliation efforts to heal internal hurts and bridge distances of opinion and priorities.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I hope to share my experience, faith, talents and time to teach and work with staff, clergy and congregants , especially to broaden our leadership and involvement in addressing issues affecting immigrants, and asylum- seekers, and the challenge of climate crisis.

PAM DAVIS

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Ed.D. Instructional Media and Technology from Columbia University with professional experience that meets at the intersection of technology and teaching.
Former Elected School Board member, Veteran Public School teacher, with experience diagnosing and disrupting systemic inequalities using the tools of teaching at the micro and macro levels.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that people experience Christian Activism when they interact with Riverside. By Christian Activism I mean work toward political or social change motivated by Christ's teachings of radical love. In my mind, Christian Activism serves as our mission as engaged members at Riverside Church NYC.
My commitment to creating the experience of Christian Activism at Riverside is directly aligned with my life's work as an educator, an elected official and in sharing my time talents and treasures to help heal trauma survivors via the Wellbotics ministry at Riverside.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I became an engaged member of Riverside after decades of visiting on random Sundays and attending community programs. In 2017 I attended on the Sunday of my one year "cancerversary" with the intention to say a prayer of gratitude and was stirred to engage more actively than I expected. I started coming every Sunday, then more than once a week and I joined 6months later. Being an engaged member of Riverside means fellowship in Christian worship. I've joined in the work of ministries like the Freedom School and attended member based and community based programming. As a member I also engaged my passion when Wellbotics became a MSJ ministry. I have also made friends beyond worship.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

The biggest challenge we face is also our biggest asset, moral integrity. Moral integrity has become a double edged sword because it comes without compromise leading to being "morally right" as a source of power and eventually being right as a zero sum game. I believe our response should be guided by God's grace in the unique times that we are living through. Disruption due to the pandemic offers our congregation the opportunity to reimagine both compromise and communication. Increased activism brings with it new ways to establish and discuss what is "right" especially through the lens of antiracism which in a self named "multiracial" community may create a new morality reality.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I am a technology educator, former elected official and wellness entrepreneur. As such I have skills in those disciplines that I would be happy to offer to Riversiders who can benefit. I am also very deliberate in that before I share a plan that makes use of my talents I prefer to establish myself as a team member with the hope of working with other lay leaders in establishing a plan that builds upon the strengths of the existing vision, mission, climate and culture. Therefore my plan is to begin with the role of team player and support the life of our congregation through teamwork.

LINDA FENTIMAN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I've been a lawyer for 45 years and a law professor for 36 years. My work has focused on criminal law, environmental law, and health care law. My writing focuses on the impact of class, gender, and racial bias in criminal law and health care law. As a professor and a board member of a non-profit guardianship agency, I am a consensus builder.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that when people interact with Riverside they experience genuine welcome and caring, a respite from the impersonal life of New York City, as well as worship services that enrich us spiritually and challenge us morally. I am committed to making that possible by in-person and virtual outreach. My goal is to expand our human connections and build a shared purpose of doing God's will on earth.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I joined Riverside seeking spiritual nourishment, active conversation about important social issues, and a diverse community. Being engaged means doing God's work in whatever way we can, contributing our time and talents to expand the Church's service to our local, national, and global community. I believe that the best way for me to use my talents is to contribute to the Church's social justice mission, to be more fully present in worship, and to strive for deeper fellowship with other members.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge is to build a cohesive community at a time of anxiety, isolation, anger, and frustration. Our virtual Sunday worship services provide inspiration and comfort. Yet, to nourish our community and expand our impact we need to build on that foundation of faith and hope. We must reach out to those in need, in- and out-side Riverside, offering more clergy and lay outreach to those who are ill or bereaved, and volunteering for initiatives that make a difference in people's lives. For maximum impact, we must enlist each member's talents so that we can enrich our community as we serve our neighbors.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I propose to support our members, clergy, and staff by careful and respectful listening, by being open to innovative approaches to resolve complex and long-standing problems, and to try to build consensus whenever possible. The best way to ensure that our congregation will continue to grow and thrive is to think creatively about ways to encourage new members to join and long-standing members to become more involved. By doing so, we can create a more engaged community, demonstrating by our own example that each of us can make a difference at Riverside and in the world.

KAREN SAWYER BARRO

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am a Social Worker and I have spent my professional career teaching, training, a professional facilitator, helping others deal with trauma, I was a bereavement counselor (I provided support for parents whose children had died).

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that people experience a sense of inclusion, a sense of love a sense that they matter. I want them to know that here at Riverside that when you a new member that you are loved. I remember what it was like when I first joined Riverside, I felt alone, lonely and a bit adrift. I know that everyone has their own path to walk with Jesus however experiencing the isolation that I initially felt I believe was a huge factor in me leaving Riverside when I intiallly joined so many years ago. I wouldn't want anyone to experience that sense of loneliness sitting in a pew, and therefore as a result I am committed to help create that experience.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

It means everything. My return to Riverside came at a time in my life when I had lost everything and everyone that I loved. Returning to Riverside finding the Beloved Community with Phillip and Addy Lynn was the lifeline that I needed to even validate that I mattered. The love I felt from that group coupled with the love of Jesus has become life altering and extremely fulfilling. Being an engaged member of the community means that I feel that I am valued and loved.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Learning that like a biological family church families sometimes have disagreements. That seems like the million dollar question. I am not quite certain except for one thing the congregation must be reminded to love one another and that just because you have a disagreement with one or several family members you just don't uproot yourself and leave you must stay, stick it out fight if you must but commit to yourself, this church and to God and come back home.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected I expect to show my heart, my love of Jesus, my love of this church by doing my very best to bring my whole self to my role.

GLENESSA GORDON

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

As a former member of the worship commission, I am familiar with the requirements and needs of the church to function and meet the needs of our members and community. As a leader in the diversity and inclusion community, I am adept at removing biases as I consider others for areas to contribute.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that people feel welcome most of all when they interact with Riversiders and that Riverside meets their spiritual needs. I am very committed to creating this experience. As an usher, I am one of the first people that visitors interact with and I am someone whom they see most Sundays when they attend Riverside. I have experienced churches where the ushers and members were not welcoming and detracted from my worship experience. Therefore, I understand that the elements in the service and the interaction with the members affect whether attendees feel welcome and their spiritual and emotional needs will be met.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I am a part of Riverside because I believe in the principles and mission of the church. I feel that a spiritual, socially conscious and diverse. I understand that there are different levels of engagement based on where a person is in their life. I have personally experienced different levels of engagement during my nearly 30 years of attending Riverside. Being engaged means that a person can fit into the area that works for them and that there are different opportunities for participation. Although most of us may expect that engaged members will participate in activities such as committees and volunteer in various activities a member may feel perfectly connected by only Sunday services.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge is not understanding and accepting that we all have different needs and points of view. Although we are all Christians, we have different experiences that have shaped us. I think that our passion can be detrimental when we feel that there is only one way of doing things. We have to be careful that we don't become what we are fighting against - discrimination and being uncaring. We must respond by being open to hear when we are wrong and remembering that we have to really love each other. Loving each other does not mean agreeing with everyone, but we have to be respectful of each other.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I will continue to support Riverside and our members. As a usher, I will continue to be a beacon for members and visitors that I come in contact with. I think that it will be important to become aware of where there are vacancies in roles in our commissions and what the skills are to support these areas. I will also ensure that I support those who are elected to those positions.

ELIZABETH WYNNE-ST. LOUIS

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I've been a member of Riverside for over 20 yrs, served on the Education Commission for 2 years, and was active in the young adult ministry with both Rev. Britton and Rev. Hill. I've also been an active parent in the Children, Youth, and Family Ministry, working closely with Rev. Lawson, Rev. Singletary, and Min. Meisenhimer.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope everyone coming to Riverside always feels welcomed and included. I also hope that they are able to experience different traditions and learn that people have different ways of celebrating The Life of Christ. I'm committed to demonstrating this through interactions with others and through my own inclusive behaviors. This can be accomplished with simple things such as listening to other's ideas, not disregarding people because they may have different faith traditions, and building relationships where the goal is consensus, not just being right.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I was drawn to Riverside after hearing Dr. Forbes preach. Then, after researching the history and mission of the church, I had to join! Being an engaged member of the community means living a life committed to Christ as well as demonstrating the true meaning of social justice and my daily interactions. It's not enough to say you're Christian, you have to act as one as well.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our current greatest challenge is unity in the church. We all have a commitment to social justice and to being a Christian. However, there are different ways to get to that path, and we have to get be careful not to be caught up in the dogma and traditions instead of the commitment to actions in the message.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I hope to support the values and mission in the nominating committee by recruiting and selecting other members that will fully represent support of the Church's mission.

DESIREE BAXTER

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I am an actor and member of Hedgepig Theatre Ensemble, a company dedicated to elevating womxn's voices through the classics. I am a conservatory trained mezzo-soprano (BMEd/MM) singing professionally in churches and synagogues for over 35 years. I have served as co-chair of the MSJ commission and volunteered with numerous MSJ and MCPL programs.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope souls are welcomed, challenged and nurtured in every interaction with our church and its members. To that end I am willing to prayerfully engage in the work of Riverside especially in opening our ministries to all of God's children; to offer support and care to our members, clergy and visitors; and to challenge myself and my siblings in Christ to live more deeply into our faith and the work of the Church.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I came to Riverside seeking a community of believers striving to live into the Gospel and make our world more just and loving. But I remain a Riversider because I love Riversiders! You have inspired me, taught me, challenged me, frustrated me, guided me and loved me. An engaged member gives freely of their time, talent and treasure. They lovingly challenge, encourage and support their fellow members, putting the best construction on their words and deeds.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greatest challenge is being truly in community, especially in our current circumstances. Even in the best of times we are not a neighborhood church, our membership is geographically diverse. But diversity has always been Riverside's strength and its challenge. We need to look across our racial, cultural, sexual, economic and technological differences to find our shared mission. We must become the Church of the 21st century and be prepared to lay some of our 20th century traditions aside to remain relevant and continue our progressive Christian social justice mission.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

My intention is to worship and study with my Riverside family, listening and reflecting on our collective wisdom; to offer my best ideas and volunteer physical support to our communal life; and to be honest and open in expressing my concerns and misgivings.

ALEXA DONAPHIN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

As an active lay leader at Riverside for about 20 years, I have served on MSJ, the Church Council (including terms as Vice Chair and Chair), the Building Committee both as a member and as Chair, various other church committees, and as a Church School teacher. I am a longtime Harlem resident and community activist, and a licensed architect.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

I hope that people experience a sense of belonging and acceptance at Riverside. As followers of Christ, we should always strive to support and encourage each other's spiritual growth and participation in this faith community. I am personally committed to the creation of a church experience wherein we welcome and value everyone as our Savior taught and modeled.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

Until I began regularly worshiping at Riverside, I had never really connected church with the outside world. Worship at church had always been a separate experience from daily life for me, and I had never been part of a church that "took it to the streets", so to speak, I saw social justice in action at Riverside for the first time, and I was inspired by that. I also love the inclusiveness of this church. For me, being an engaged member of Riverside means being committed to contributing to its welfare and sustainability through giving and serving, James 2:26 tells us that faith without works is dead. I believe that membership without engagement is dead too.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

In my opinion, our greatest challenge as a community has been divisiveness. The diversity of our congregation is a great strength, but it is challenging to sustain unity between dissimilar individuals and groups. Division has been a struggle for the church ever since the earliest days of Christianity, and Riverside is no exception. The night before His crucifixion, Jesus prayed for the unity of those who would believe in Him (John 17:20-21). We need to recognize that in spite of our differences our unity is very important to God. We must therefore intentionally and selflessly work together toward building bridges rather than walls between one another.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected, I will continue supporting Riverside's members, clergy, and staff to the best of my ability in whatever ways I can, with the help of God.

ARELIS FIGUEROA

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

Study Theology & Popular Education in Brazil. Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary. Worship Coordinator at James Chapel (UTS). Associate Pastor at Christ-St John Lutheran Church,NJ. Start up Latino Ministry: at Chatterton Hill UCC . Member Theomusicology Team NYC Poor's People Campaign and Coordinator Latino Ministry at Riverside.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My hope is that people experience Christian values , that ""they will know we are Christian by our love"" That everyone who interact with Riverside feel respected and valued, regardless of their race, class, economic status, ethnicity, sexual orientation or physical abilities. That on our worship services people experience our church commitment to justice, liberation and peace. By serving in the worship commission I am committed to create this experience first by recognizing that as member of this body, which is the church, I have an important role to play; I have rights and also responsibilities and the community will live up to our values jus if each one of us do our part.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I joined this church in 1992, a very vulnerable and difficult period of my life-a new immigrant with very limited supports and resources. I continue to be part of Riverside because just as this community opened up it arms and hearts to me more than twenty years ago and walked with me until by the grace of God, I find a way out of not way, this community continue walking with me today, in good times and bad times. Being engaged in the life of this church beside participating in its ministries and supporting its mission.for me its means being engaged with the community outside the church's walls and brings to them in words and deeds our message of love, justice and peace.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Our greater challenge is unity in our diversity & being able to be accountable and transparent with each other. In my opinion the whole church Bible study, "Wrestling with God", was a first step to respond to the challenges ahead. Our greater challenge is to continue to be a congregation committed to social justice and change. Our continue support & engagement with the Poor People's Campaign and Community Voices Heard (CVH) offers us the opportunity to regain our place as a church called to embody Christ mission of bring good news to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives & the opening of the prison for those who are boud. (Isa 61)

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I will support by fulfilling my responsibilities as lay leader to the best of my abilities. I will bring to the position my life experience as an afro-latina woman in the field of worship and the arts I will bring connections and resources that could support and inform our worship experience. I will support by building and straighten healthy relationship with my fellow members, clergy and staff relationship base on mutual respect, transparency and accountability and by active participation and commitment in the life of the community in worship, education, advocacy and service. I will also offer my monetary gifts and talents to support the grow and enrichment of our community.

ROBBIE PATTERSON

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

My career experience was in human resources and my vision for that work was to improve the quality of the work environment for all employees. I have volunteered for several years now in the food pantry, and for the clothing ministry sales. The past few years I have also served as a greeter at our worship services.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

My hope is that people experience Riverside as a progressive Christian community with a prophetic voice to share with all humanity and is always committed to social justice. Currently, I'm volunteering with a group engaged in writing post cards and letters, as well as phone banking to turn out the vote in southern states. We are trying to reach people of color who have been subjected to voter suppression. I intend to continue that work through the general election because I believe the right to vote is critical to creating social justice.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

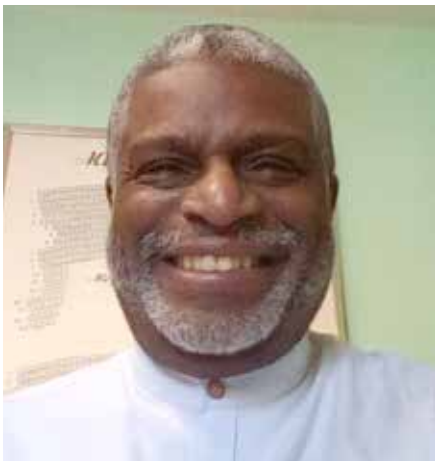
I came to Riverside to learn from prophetic sermons, to worship and serve with a diverse and inclusive congregation, and to grow in faith together. Being engaged requires time, patience, and love.. To successfully engage, we must be willing to listen to differing opinions, appreciate that we will not always agree, and work collaboratively to identify and reach common goals. Finally, a good dose of humor is always welcome.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Right now our greatest challenge is to keep moving forward in spite of the calamity that surrounds us and the world. I think the clergy and staff have shown great leadership, patience and love through this difficult time.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

I am prepared to assist the clergy and staff and work with colleagues on the worship commission in continuing to provide innovative and inspiring worship services. Our congregation is fortunate to hear the excellent preaching of our Interim Senior Minister, Michael Livingston. We are also fortunate all our clergy have strong preaching skills. If I were elected to the Worship Commission, I would seek the clergy and staff's advice as to how best to support them. I would also speak with congregational members and ask for their feedback to ensure that our worship experience meets the needs of all congregants and remains fresh and relevant to the times.



DAVID VAUGHN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I served on the Worship Commission during the 90's and ended my time as chair. I currently serve as chair of the Music Committee, a member of the Ordination Committee, the Inspirational Choir, and a Greeter. I worked in theatre management on Broadway for over 30 years and early NYC years as an actor/singer.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

One Church under God where ALL are welcomed. The Riverside Church truly is a place where ALL are welcomed and we MUST do all we can to be a welcoming church where all of God's children know they have a family. To Love and Care for their spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing. I hope to continue to be a welcoming voice at the church and allow all people to feel free to share their feelings and opinions without judgment. God speaks through us ALL.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

I love this congregation because we are a congregation who feel that the banquet of Heaven can be found right here and now. Although we struggle, we are committed to be a place where all are free to serve God regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, etc. ALL are welcomed to build a relationship with God and with God's community. We engage in conversation with others who may not share the same views as I do, but we share the Love of God which binds us together.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Fighting the evils of divisiveness. Focusing on our differences instead of what unites us. We respond by remembering who called us and why we were called to Riverside. We are call to be one with our creator. When were are unified in thought we can live in unity.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

Jesus went where he was needed. That is my goal. To see where the need is and act! We are a diverse community. We must learn to listen to each other's stories with compassion and act accordingly. We cannot make this journey alone. We need each other. When we support each other we are supporting the work of the church in the world today.

MEGHANN VAUGHN

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

I have extensive work experience and expertise in administration, events, human resources, volunteer management, operations, and the performing arts. More specific information on my education and work experience can be found on my LinkedIn profile, so I'm including that for reference : www.linkedin.com/in/meghann-vaughn.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Responsible stewardship should be present in every action and initiative that takes place at Riverside, so I hope that those who interact with us experience this. Society seeks out safety and a sense of belonging in their religious institutions and it is imperative we provide those now even more so than ever before. By taking on a leadership role, particularly one associated with worship, I accept and moreover consider the responsibilities of leadership to be a gift that I intend to return to my Riverside family and to God with increase.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

Initially, I wanted to be a part of Riverside for their exceptional music program because music has always been my gateway to God. The Riverside Choir has been my family and Riverside Church my home for the past twelve years. I officially became a member last year because I felt called to be of greater service to my spiritual community and participate more fully in the guidance and leadership of the organization.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

I think our greatest challenge as a community is to decide what we stand for and really do the work of a mission driven organization. Riverside has been called to be on the forefront of social justice initiatives for decades, so we should be one of the loudest voices in the conversations that are currently pervasive in American society, like racial injustices, health disparities, and environmental conservation, to name a few. There are many organizations that support by narrative. Let's continue to strive to be an organization that supports by word and deed.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

If elected to the worship commission, I plan to join my colleagues already engaged in this commission, the clergy, and the staff in shaping the worship service to be one that invites those who participate to be a part of something collectively greater than the sum of our parts. I am excited and energized by the possibility of the work we could do together and look forward to being of greater service to this commission and to Riverside as a whole.

MICHAEL WINGER

What experience do you have that can contribute to the life of the church and community (e.g. education, work experience, expertise, or volunteer work)?

M.Div. degree; service on Worship Commission 2015-19, Church Council 1992-95, 1999-2006, Bylaws Committee 2006-08. I also have a Ph.D. in religion, specializing in the New Testament, and have written articles on the subject.

What values or qualities do you hope people experience when they interact with Riverside? How are you committed to creating that experience?

Sharing in the ministry of the church. Helping to design and participate in worship that encourages this sharing.

Why are you a part of Riverside? What does being an engaged member of this community mean to you?

Because of its ministry, and the fellowship I have shared with other Riverside members over the last forty years.

What is our greatest challenge as a community? How should we respond to it?

Developing and strengthening our sense of community. A focus on worship is key, but every part of our ministry is part of the community.

If you are elected, how do you plan to support the life and vitality of congregational members, clergy, and staff through your role?

By conscientiously working with other commission members and church staff to develop our worship, and draw not only members but visitors and everyone possible into our worship and ministry.