



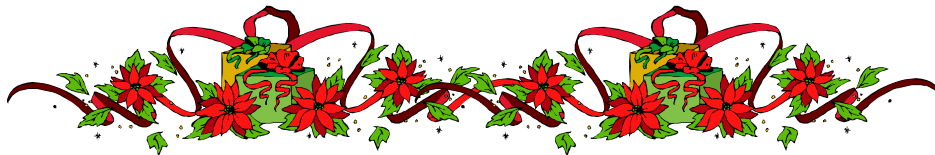
Riviera
 UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
 451 Riviera Drive NE • Palm Bay, FL • 32905
MERRY CHRISTMAS!

**God
 is still
 speaking,**

THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2008

WWW.RIVIERAUC.C.ORG



Riviera
 "God is Love"

*Peace
 On Earth*

**Christmas Eve
 Candlelight Services
 6 PM & 8 PM**

Please join us on Christmas Eve for a musical celebration of Christ's birth! Rev. Scott Elliott has arranged a dramatic sermon story, "A Christmas Truce" that includes not only Luke's version of the Christmas story, but also a stirring account about how the love that is felt at Christmas has the power to bring peace even to a battlefield. The chancel choir will be featured, joined by readers, a brass quintet, organ, piano, and, of course, carols sung by all. I look forward to celebrating with you during this glorious time of worship.

All are invited to a time of fellowship between services on Christmas Eve. Pat Lucas has graciously agreed to be in charge of the festivities including a Wassail Bowl. She is looking for volunteers to help. If you would like to offer refreshments and/or help with set-up and clean-up, please contact Pat Lucas or the church office at 723-3963.



RUCC Holiday Party

Saturday, December 13, 2008
 6:00 PM — 9:00 PM

Hosted by Bonnie & Daryl
 Hankins in their home at

Please bring an hors d'oeuvre
 to share.

Call Bonnie to RSVP, get di-
 rections, or offer your help in
 hosting.

Church Council Members

Moderator: David Cook
 Vice Moderator: Holly Yolles
 Clerk: Lisa Leslie
 Treasurer: Chris List
 Assistant Treasurer: Judy Klug
 Financial Secretary: Nancy Cook
 Asst. Financial Secretary: Kay Martin
 Asst. Financial Secretary: Bonnie Hankins
 Finance Minister: Pat Lawson
 Finance Minister: Paul Lucas
 Finance Minister: Janet Valley
 Teaching Minister: Anita Knapp
 Teaching Minister: Margaret Ann Eisenmenger
 Teaching Minister: Cathy Carnes
 Spiritual Minister: Kenneth Noah
 Spiritual Minister: Wesley Main
 Spiritual Minister: Mary Beth Moseley

Council Meetings are held every second Monday of the month and are open to any member that wishes to attend.



From Our Pastor

The Reverend Scott Elliott



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As this arrives in your mail box Advent, the season of hope and joy and love and peace --and Christ-- will be well upon us. Twinkling Christmas lights, tasty treats and fragrant evergreen now fill our senses bringing back fond memories and generating new ones. The faces of children are beginning to glow with delight at the sight of Santas at the mall, toys on the shelves and the glitter of the season.

Most of us are just beginning to smile a bit more ourselves, the cockles of our heart being warmed not by a toasty fire or the Florida winter sun, but with the hope, joy, love and peace that permeates the season. All of these wondrous things add up to a deep sense of Christ in our midst. Our families, our community, our nation and most of the world turn their focus on the promise of a better way, a better world and we have a great sense of hope. We respond to the hope that the promise of Christ brings with great joy and warm hearts. We not only feel freer to show more love somehow, but we experience a happy call to it, allowing ourselves to be beckoned to open our hearts to others with great outpourings of cheer, hugs, smiles, gifts and blessings. We give, not only to family and friends, but also to neighbors far and wide. And all this hope and joy and love in the weeks of Advent, the season of Christmas, gives us a delicious taste of the peace God has promised us. As a result we acquire more hope and feel additional joy and love more and our experience of peace increases. Christmas is a marvelous perennial miracle that happily arrives without fail in our midst and what a blessing it is. The rest of the year, Christmas remains an indelible mark in our minds of what we should long to experience all year long.

Christmas is proof that God's promise of peace on earth is not pie-in-the sky, but an available alternative very much within our grasp. As you read this Advent, the annual beginning of that proof, has just started; all of the promise of Christmas, the hope and joy of the season, the blossoming love so satisfying to our souls, and the precious taste of peace just getting underway. One day, someday, it will last all year long. God's will can be done on earth as it is in heaven and it will be! That is the promise of Christmas.

I love Christmas in general, but I am especially excited about this year's Advent and Christmas events at Riviera UCC. In addition to our Advent sermons relating to the Holy Family, lightings of the Advent candles, and more and more carols. We will also share other special celebrations. On December 7th there will be one service at 10 AM, a Christmas pageant at 11 PM, a church-wide potluck party at 11:30 AM and a visit from Santa who will bring gifts for the children. On December 13th from 6 PM to 9 PM, the Hankins are hosting a church-wide Christmas party at their house (see page 5 for more details). On the Sunday before Christmas, December 21st, we will have a Christmas sermon and extra carols in both the 9 AM and 11 AM services. Then at 6 PM and 8 PM on Christmas Eve, we will have a very special candlelight service that Shelle and I have been working on since July. The service is called, "A Christmas Truce," and features a very moving and powerful message through song and word. If you want to find the Christmas Spirit this year, you will need look no further than events at Riviera United Church of Christ!

Merry Christmas my dearest sisters and brothers!

Your Brother in Christ,

Scott



Note from the Stewardship Team



It's the time of year again where we prayerfully contemplate our giving for next year. Unlike most people in this congregation, I was actually raised in the United Church of Christ, so this is a familiar process for me.

We are always told, "it's not about money, it's about ministry," or "it's not about budget, it's about grace." Of course this is true, but let's face it, it is also about money. One of the most often used Bible verses during this time is, "Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and render unto God that which is God's" which is said after Jesus asks his disciples to show him the money, which at that time had Caesar's image on it. Now look at our money. Oh yes, on the various bills and coins we have pictures of presidents and founding fathers but when you turn it over, there is God's *name* right there!

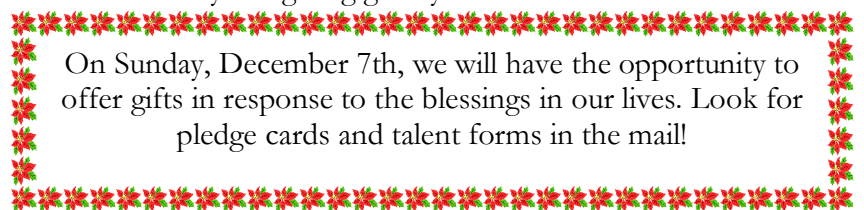
This has always made me think that whoever designed our currency was a Congregationalist who was, quite obviously, on the Stewardship committee at his church!

So yes, as part of our consideration, money does come into it. We must pay the utility bill for lights and air conditioning, we have staff and property maintenance and we have conference dues. But why do we pay for these things? Well, this is God's house, here for our use. We meet here each week to worship and to connect with each other in this loving faith family. We are all called by God to be here. There are as many reasons for this as there are congregants. We come for nurture and support. We come to hear God's word. We come to do ministry in our community, both right here in our neighborhood and also in far-away places. We come to be connected to the Holy Spirit and to find strength. We come to share our love of God with others and give them strength, for by giving, we *always* receive. We meet here each week with each other because something wonderful and awesome has drawn us together.

This year the theme from National is, "The World of the Generous Gets Larger and Larger." I wonder if the folks in Cleveland had any idea when they chose this theme that the world was on the brink of a global financial meltdown? While many might think that this theme is unfortunate at first glance upon reflection, one might well conclude that there is no better time than now to advance this idea.

People are feeling the pinch to be sure, but this is precisely when we, as Christians, must bond together and dig deeper. Recessions hit the neediest among us first and hardest. The government will be unable to help. The churches will need to step up, ours included. We need to be there for each other and for everyone. We need to do more, not less, even if this means doing a little less for ourselves. And we will be rewarded! Answering the call from God makes the world a better place. It makes us better people and it fills our hearts. We must live our lives with open hands, not closed fists so that we may, "Do Justice, Love Kindness and Walk Humbly with God." May our giving glorify God!

Submitted by Judy Cannon



On Sunday, December 7th, we will have the opportunity to offer gifts in response to the blessings in our lives. Look for pledge cards and talent forms in the mail!

Electronic Giving Is Available

If you wish to have your pledge or offering automatically transferred from your checking account to Riviera UCC's Space Coast Credit Union account, please see me to attain the form needed. You can choose to have your money transferred on the 1st or the 15th of the month, or both if you wish to divide the transfers. The church covers the charge for the transfer and the entire process is handled by Vanco Services of Minnesota, the United Church of Christ recommended intermediary. January 2009 would be an excellent time to begin electronic giving.

This service has proven to be a very convenient and reliable method for fulfilling pledges for several of our church members. I know that I especially appreciate the availability of automatic transfer for many of my obligations and bills. It saves me time and materials and keeps many of my commitments on track. It is especially reassuring to know that my pledge to RUCC's ministry is always on schedule. I encourage you to use the electronic giving opportunities the council has made available.

Submitted by Nancy Cook



Bible Study Offered Twice on Wednesdays

You are invited to take a closer look at the Sunday morning scripture selections by joining one, or both, of the Bible study groups on Wednesdays. Rev. Scott leads the lively discussion at both noon and 6:00 PM. We question a lot, we learn a lot, and most importantly, we laugh a lot as we share our own thoughts and life experiences on a variety of topics. This is also the perfect opportunity to get to know some of your fellow RUCC members in an informal and friendly setting.

So, choose the time most convenient for you, and come join the fun for an hour each week. You won't be disappointed!



Next Adult Sunday School Class

From January 11 to February 22 Tony Misco, Lexi Wright and Rev. Scott Elliott will be leading an Adult Sunday School class on Homosexuality, God and the Bible from 10 AM to 10:45 AM.

There is much debate among theologians and in the churches (and in the culture in general) on the matter of homosexuality. In six Sunday School classes we could not even begin to adequately consider the topic of homosexuality in our culture, or even all of the religious and theological ideas, concepts or arguments on the issue. What we hope to do in this short time together is to discuss some of the concerns and questions that face us at Riviera United Church of Christ and to offer class members approaches to better examine and discuss biblical texts that are commonly used to oppose homosexuality.

We assume that class members are at least aware that the Bible has been used by many Christian leaders and churches as a source of opposition to homosexuality and discrimination as well as condemnation of homosexuals. We also assume that many Christians think that the Bible does indeed provide prohibitions against homosexuality that are applicable in our day and age.

This class is not intended to stifle opinions or force ideas or beliefs upon class members. It is not meant to deny any one the right to follow their conscience and beliefs on this or any other matter. During the course all members of the class who wish to present an idea or concern or question are encouraged to do so, provided the matters are raised in a respectful manner. While homosexuality is an understandably "hot button" issue for many folks, it is paramount during this course that we remain respectful of each person even in the face of disagreement. All are welcome to attend the class and participate in the discussions. Please sign-up on the enrollment sheet found in the narthex.



Scott's Note: As a class leader and pastor of the church, I feel that it is important to disclose the following regarding this topic: As clergy, I feel called to follow my conscience and beliefs, and this class is taught based on conscious conclusions and heartfelt beliefs that homosexuality is a part of God's creation and that homosexuality as a part of creation is a very good thing. Genesis 1:31 declares that, "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good." I also strongly believe that the Gospels and teachings of Jesus are about loving one another, and seeking for everyone (including our homosexual brothers and sisters) justice, righteousness and inclusion into community as equal children of God, just as God created them. Course co-leaders Lexi and Tony are in accord with my views on these matters, however, many Christians (and others) in our culture maintain that homosexuality is not good pointing to biblical verses as a means of supporting this conclusion. They often quote one or more of the following texts to prove their point: Genesis 19:1-29 (the story of Sodom and Gomorrah); Judges 19:1-30 (the story of the Levite's Concubine); Leviticus 18(1-5, 22) and 20 (1-2, 13) (on the ancient laws of Israel); the Pauline texts in Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 or the pseudo-Pauline text in 1 Timothy 1:10. The class hopes to equip members of the Riviera UCC community for discussion of these texts by asking questions and considering the contexts and other meanings the text might have.

DECEMBER 2008

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 Financial Ministry Meeting 7:30 PM	2	3 Bible Study- Noon & 6 PM Youth Group- 4:00 to 7:00 PM Choir 7:00 PM	4 Counseling by Appointment	5 <i>Nancy Ackley Visits</i>	6 Capital Campaign Meeting 10 AM Teaching Minister's Mtg. 1 PM
7 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i> One Service 10:00 AM Pledge Consecration. Pageant & Potluck to follow	8 Council Meeting 7:00 PM PFLAG Dinner 6:30 PM	9	10 Justice Ministry 10 AM – Bible Study- Noon & 6 PM – Youth 4PM Choir 7PM	11 Fellowship Luncheon 11:45 at Apollo Counseling by Appointment	12 Match Chaim Visits 7:00 PM	13 Holiday Party at the Hankin's 6PM
14 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i> *Sunday Schedule* (See Side Box)	15 Annual Report Deadline Ladies of the Evening 6 PM	16	17 Bible Study- Noon & 6 PM Youth Group 4PM Choir 7:00 PM	18 Counseling by Appointment	19 Match Chaim Visits 7:00 PM	20
21 <i>Fourth Sunday of Advent</i> *Sunday Schedule* (See Side Box)	22	23 Christmas Eve Rehearsal 7PM Riviera Key Homeowners Mtg. 7PM	24 Two Services 6PM & 8PM Christmas Eve	25 OFFICE CLOSED Christmas Day	26 OFFICE CLOSED	27 Rev. Scott ...
28 *Sunday Schedule* (See Side Box)	29	30	31 New Year's Eve	*Sunday Schedule* Traditional Service: 9:00 AM Adult Seminar: 10:10 AM Contemporary Service: 11:00 AM Children's Sunday School: 11:10 AM		
... Elliott's Vacation						

Justice Ministry Group Meeting

Wednesday, December 10, 2008
10:00 to 11:30 AM
Agenda: Water program projects, Cold Night Shelter soup, an issues-interest survey.

Water: God's Gift, Our Challenge
Saturday, January 24, 2009
9:00 AM - 2:30 PM
Movies, games, creative arts and projects for the whole family. Bring a sandwich, we'll provide beverages and cookies. Add a bowl of hot soup for \$1.00.
Sign up after the first of the new year.

Submitted by Carol Robinson

Poinsettia Orders

For a donation of \$10.00, you can help beautify our worship space for Christmas with a poinsettia plant. Deadline for plant orders: December 16th. Please see insert.

Fellowship Luncheons

Open forums held on the second Thursday of the month at Apollo Diner in Melbourne. Next meeting: December 11, 2008 at 11:45 PM.

Picture Day is coming up!

Mark your calendars now for RUCC's picture day, courtesy of Olan Mills, Feb. 12-14 2009. More information to come!

You're Invited!!

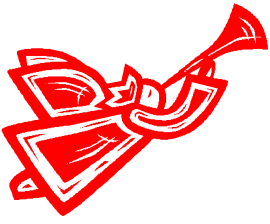
Sunday, January 4, 2009 * 10:00 AM

Help us celebrate the upcoming births within our church family! Kelly Arner, a member of the church and choir, and Amy Aumick, our office administrator, are both expecting and are due on the SAME date – January 25, 2009. Both are first time mothers! Kelly attends first service regularly and sings in the chancel choir. You may have heard her play clarinet or flute during our special music offering as well. Amy attends second service regularly and participates in reading story time and has just joined the RUCC Praise Band, **Covenant**. If you would like to help set up or provide items for fellowship hour on January 4th, please contact Phyllis Yanis.

Submitted by Shelle Waller



“COVENANT”



The RUCC contemporary service praise band has adopted a new band name! The new name is “Covenant.” According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, “**covenant** in theology is the agreement or engagement of God with man as revealed in the Scriptures.” The band feels this name conveys that we are in a relationship with God and that we are called to represent the church in relationship with God.

Please welcome our newest Covenant members, Amy Aumick and Karissa Tolliver on vocals and Robby Lewis on bass guitar. We are glad to have your joyful presence as part of our rockin’ group!

Thanks to our established members of Covenant for your continued service to our contemporary service music. Rafael Olivera, drums; Lisa Leslie, vocals; and Stuart Nicholson, guitar.

Submitted by Shelle Waller



Treasurer’s Report

Hello everyone, this month’s information will be light. The year is almost over and the council is currently working next year’s budget. Here are the numbers through October. Sincerely, Chris List, RUCC Treasurer

October Income: \$22,291

October Budgeted Income: \$17,569

October Expenses: \$18,794

October Budgeted Expenses:
\$20,625

Year-to-Date through October
Income: \$182,816

Year-to-Date through October

Budgeted Income: \$177,622

Year-to-Date through October

Expenses: \$202,543

Year-to-Date through October

Budgeted Expenses: \$238,556

Year-to-Date Net: \$19,726.80 deficit

Pastor's note: The treasurer's report at the November Council meeting indicated that he expects we will end the year "in the black." The newsletter report in January will reflect this great news but we wanted to bring you this great news now!

Need Giving Envelopes?

If you wish to have a year’s worth of weekly giving envelopes for 2009, let Nancy Cook or Bonnie Hankins know or fill in your name on the sign-up sheet in the narthex.

You may recall that last year we asked those who wished to do so to opt out of the year’s supply of giving envelopes as a cost-savings move. This has worked well for those who contribute monthly instead of weekly and those who give electronically. Having said this, we want to get a handle on how many of you really want the year’s worth of envelopes so we will know how many to order for 2009. Thanks for your input.

Submitted by Nancy Cook, RUCC Financial Secretary



A Giving Tree for Guardian ad Litem Children

Give your heart to a child who needs some extra loving. On the Christmas tree in the entryway, you will find the opportunity to say "I care." **Take a card** with the name of a child from a family in need and who is being represented in the court system by a Guardian ad Litem volunteer. On the card you will find the child’s name, sex, age,

suggested gifts and clothing sizes along with the name of the Guardian. Each card will have a number. Please enter your name and number on the list near by. **Bring your wrapped gift** tagged with the child’s name back to the tree by Sunday, December 21. **A thank you Christmas card** for the Guardian ad Litem volunteer would also be appreciated.

Submitted by Carol Robinson

♥
Care
Take a card
Shop with love
Wrap and tag the gift
Bring it back to the tree.
We'll see that it is delivered in
time
For
a
Child who needs your love.



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

451 Riviera Drive NE • Palm Bay, FL • 32905



The Shepherd's Fund is used primarily to help those in our church and surrounding community. There continues to be a steady stream of folks in need, so offerings to this fund continue to be encouraged. In addition to accepting checks, there is a loose change offering box in the back of the sanctuary. NO POCKET CHANGE IS TOO SMALL! Also, canned goods for the pantry are always appreciated. Please help with what you are able if you can.

The Messenger is a monthly publication of Riviera United Church of Christ in Palm Bay, Florida, and is also available online: www.rivieraucc.org/Newsletter.

Staff Members:

Amy Aumick: editing, layout, production
Shelle Waller: editing
Joan & Bob Ebaugh: circulation, mailing

DEADLINE for material to be published is the **third Monday** of each month. All items are subject to approval and editorial changes.

Any copy not received by the deadline will not be published until the following month's issue.

Articles or information may be dropped off, mailed, or e-mailed to aaumick@rivieraucc.org.

NEED A RIDE?

Do you need a ride to Sunday worship or any other group? There is probably someone living nearby who would be glad to give you a ride! To make arrangements, call the church office at (321) 723-3963.

OUR VISION

Thinking Openly

Believing Passionately

Serving Boldly

Church Office: 451 Riviera Drive NE
Palm Bay, FL 32905

Website: rivieraucc.org

Phone: (321) 723-3963

Fax: (321) 723-1281

Email: rivieraucc@rivieraucc.org

Hours: 9 AM to 1 PM, Monday—Thursday
9 AM to 12 PM, Friday

(Emergency Hours coincide with Brevard School District.)

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

Traditional Worship: 9:00 AM

Adult Seminar: 10:10 AM

Contemporary Worship: 11:00 AM

Children's Sunday School: 11:10 AM