

CHANGE... IS HERE.



A year ago in this space, I wrote a note entitled *Change is Gonna Come*. From where I sat then in blissful ignorance, it was a lighthearted musing on the inherent irony of the Christmas season – that we celebrate the arrival of the One who comes to change us and all the world, with traditions that remain firmly unchanged, year after year. “We welcome the One who calls us to new life – to change and to grow into our God-given purpose. And we do so with traditions that we hold with the tightest of grips.”

The symbol a year ago was our vertically challenged Christmas tree out on the lawn in front of the sanctuary around which we gather and sing every year at the start of Advent – our beloved and longstanding tree-lighting and dessert tradition that ushers in the Christmas season.

But as I noted last year, the day is coming when it will no longer be feasible to light that particular tree. The tree is too oddly shaped, having lost its top in a storm, and the lights are giving out. Soon we will need to light only the new smaller tree. Change is coming, and when it comes to Christmas traditions, I’m not sure any of us are fond of too much change.

Here we are, just one year later. And change is here. Some of it arrived during the pandemic, with people moving in and out of town, with new habits established

and old habits altered. In the last few months, John Miller announced his retirement, and I now face a chronic health condition. Not to mention all that troubles our hearts and minds and relationships from the news around the world.

Change...is here. Sometimes we welcome it. Sometimes we don’t.

So perhaps this year we view this month and the Advent/Christmas season with different eyes and from a different angle. Instead of the Christ child coming to disrupt and rearrange the world, this year may we all sense in a deeper way the presence of the One who comes to bring “comfort and joy.” One who like the steady, quiet flame that we will hold in our hand at the tree lighting on December 3, brings us a reminder of God’s faithful presence with us amid the tumult of change, and amid the shadows that creep in. May we know the One who promises to meet both our hopes and our fears.

To know this truth all the more, I invite you this month to come hear and see and know afresh – Emmanuel, God with us, who promises to fill the world with peace. Come hear of the hope of God’s presence in the wonderful music of Cantata Sunday on December 10. Come to worship at the Longest Night Service on December 20, a service specifically designed for those in this holiday season who need an extra dose of comfort. Come see and smile with joy as the miraculous story of God’s love is told once again in the Christmas pageant on December 17. Come receive and share with one another the light of Christ at the Christmas Eve services on December 24.

Amid all the change that is upon us, together may we know and celebrate the truth: God is faithful. God is good. And God is right here with us.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never put it out.

With faith and hope,

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Christmas Joy Offering



The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s. The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families. Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

By supporting the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions (“BOP”), the Christmas Joy Offering honors the faithfulness of current and retired church workers and their families in need. Thanks in part to support from this Offering, church workers can receive critical financial assistance to support them through life’s challenging circumstances. These generous actions bear witness to our faithful response to God’s charge to love one another as Christ commanded.

- * \$1.1 million of gifts from the 2022 Offering are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.
- * Income supplements from the BOP helped nearly 272 individual recipients, assisting retired church workers and surviving spouses with the means to provide for themselves.
- * Housing supplements from the BOP helped more than 223 individual recipients remain in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.
- * Emergency Assistance Grants from the BOP helped

more than 621 individual recipients facing times of great financial need or uncertainty due to unforeseen circumstances.

The PC(USA), with its historic commitment to higher learning, has long promoted education and leadership development through the establishment and support of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Our future church leaders of color can receive much-needed assistance while they discover and pursue their professional goals at these schools and colleges. Your gifts allow these ministries to continue — sustaining a tradition Presbyterians have carried out for nearly 140 years.

- * \$1.1 million of gifts from 2022 are being used to provide education and leadership development skills at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- * Many of the students attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color are the first in their families to enroll in higher education.
- * This annual special offering of the PC(USA) will be received through Sunday, December 24th. To donate online, click [here](#).



Events of the Christmas Season

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CHRISTMAS FLOWERS & MUSIC

You are warmly invited to join us for our Christmas Eve services this year, where we will celebrate the birth of Jesus with beautiful flowers and music. To make this celebration even more special, we kindly request that you donate to help us cover the cost of decorations and music.

As a token of our appreciation for your generous contribution, we offer two options:

Please provide your name as you would like it displayed, or dedicate your donation to a loved one by providing the following details: 'From', 'In Loving Memory of', 'In Gratitude for'. To donate, send a check payable to RPC (with "Flowers & Music" in the memo line) to the address below:

Rye Presbyterian Church
882 Boston Post Road
Rye, NY 10580



Donate online by visiting <https://ryepc.com/article/christmas-flowers-music/>

If you choose to send a check, please include a note with your information. If you prefer to donate online, you can enter your details in the notes section of the PayPal form. Alternatively, you can email the information to Tangy Linzy at (tlinzy@ryepc.com).

Christmas Eve

Family Services with Live Nativity and Candle Lighting

3:30 p.m. – In-Person only

5:00 p.m. – In-Person & Live-Streamed

Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols with string quartet, harp, and choir

10:00 p.m.- In-Person & Live-Streamed



TREE LIGHTING

December 3, at 7:00 p.m.

Carols around the tree on the front lawn to welcome the Christmas season, followed by desserts next door at the Miller manse.

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Stewardship 2024 & Giving to RPC

Stewardship 2024 Let The Light Shine! (Soon!)

Just a reminder that our annual stewardship campaign and financial pledge drive for the coming year will be starting in January.

If you have been a household that for tax purposes has been in the habit of giving in the fall for the coming year, you are still most welcome to do so. If so, please let us know that your gift is for the 2024 operating budget.

In the meantime, let your light shine nonetheless!

Your Stewardship Committee

Dick Bott, Young Kim, Paul Knight, Christina Mohraz, Scot Stevens, Dan Love and John Miller



DONATING STOCK TO RPC

Gifts of stock to RPC are cleared through Janney Montgomery Scott LLC DTC #0374. For further credit to Rye Presbyterian Church Acct. #8926-9870. It is helpful as well to note that the church's legal name is the Presbyterian Church in the Town of Rye, and our tax ID is 13-1740299. If you have questions or a problem, contact Geoff Beringer at: Janney Montgomery Scott The Beringer Weinstock Group 800 Post Rd., Darien, CT 06820 Tel: 203-662-6360 To insure that your donation is accurately recorded at RPC, please also forward a copy of your letter of instruction to: Maida Robinson mrobinson@ryepc.com.

What's Your Legacy?

Learn more about Planned Giving to benefit Rye Presbyterian Church at www.ryepc.com under Giving tab.

We are delighted that these families have chosen to include Rye Presbyterian Church in their wills or estate plans.

To learn more about Planned Giving at our church, please contact Dr. Miller or Rev. Love, or [click here](#):

Marian and Richard Bott

Leslie and Tuck Bradford

Marty and Rick Bradt

Jason Charneski and Richard Coffey

Meg & Demie Duckworth III

Dolores Eyler and Van Siler

Janet and Campbell Gerrish



Gloria and Jeff Holtman

Cindy and Jim Kuster

Carol and Dan Love

Mary Anne Massey

Zofia and Pat McGunagle

Becky and Pete Ruegger

Mary and David Versfelt

Sunday School & Youth

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This December we continue to make our way through our Celebrate Wonder curriculum, which seeks to engage our children's natural sense of wonder and curiosity to help them know and understand God's love! Through the story of Jesus' birth, we will focus this month on the joy God brings into the world. Below are the stories we are engaging this month:

Dec 3: Children's Chapel (Advent)

Dec 10: Luke 1:26-38, 46-56 (Mary's Joy)

Dec 17: Matthew 1:18-24 (Joseph's Joy)

Dec 24: No Sunday School (Christmas Eve)

Dec 31: No Sunday School (New Year's Eve)

We invite families to engage these stories together at home! This curriculum comes with its own Take-Home pages that invite families to read, wonder, and pray together. These pages will be sent home with your children every Sunday morning. We will also include these pages in our weekly Christian Ed newsletter. If you would like to receive our weekly newsletter, please contact Rev. JP (jmarshall@ryepc.com).

Middle School Connection

All 6th-8th graders are welcome at Connection!

Saturday, December 2 @ 10:00 a.m., Carver Center

Join us as we help out at Dinner at Noon at the Carver Center in Port

Chester! We will set the tables, plate food, serve meals to the guests, bag meals to go, and help clean up. We will meet at the church at 10:00am, and we should be back at the church around 1:15pm. Please let Rev. JP (jmarshall@ryepc.com) know if your youth will be joining us.

Sunday, December 10 @ 6:00 p.m., Assembly Room

All middle school and high school youth are invited to come to our all-youth Christmas party! There will be games, delicious treats, and hot cocoa. We will also decorate ornaments! Everyone is encouraged to bring a favorite holiday side dish/dessert. Please let Rev. JP (jmarshall@ryepc.com) know if your youth will be joining us.

Wednesday, December 20 @ 5:30 p.m., Youth Rooms

We'll take time to catch up over pizza, play some games, and decorate Christmas cookies.

Let Rev. JP (jmarshall@ryepc.com) know if you'd like to be on the parent email list. All updates about Connection gatherings will also be put up on the website each month.

Updates through Remind!

Text @rpcecon to 81010 or sign up at <https://www.remind.com/join/rpcecon>.

YOUTH GROUP

All 9th-12th graders are welcome at High School Youth Group!

Sunday, December 3 @ 11:30 a.m., Bread of Life

Join us at Bread of Life as we help make pantry bags for local families! We should be done around 1:00pm. Please let Rev. JP know if you are

able to join us that morning.

Sunday, December 10 @ 6:00 p.m., Assembly Room

All middle school and high school youth are invited to come to our all-youth Christmas party! There will be games, delicious treats, and hot cocoa. We will also decorate cookies and ornaments. Everyone is encouraged to bring a favorite holiday side dish/dessert. Please let Rev. JP know if your youth will be joining us.

Saturday, December 16 @ 2:00 p.m., Grand Prix

Join us as we go to Grand Prix in Mt. Kisco for indoor go-kart racing and arcade games! We'll meet at 2:00pm in the church parking lot and will be back by 4:30 p.m. *Cost: \$30 per youth.*

We are on Instagram! User name: ryepresyouth Updates through Remind!

Text @ryepre to 81010 or sign up at <https://www.remind.com/join/ryepre>.

All Saints Celebration with the Middle School Youth



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Seasonal Events & Confirmation

Gingerbread House Event

Sunday, December 3, 5:30-7:00 p.m., Assembly Room

All are welcome to join us for our annual gingerbread house decorating event on Sunday, December 3! Pizza, snacks, and hot cocoa will be provided. Families are welcome to leave their gingerbread houses in the Assembly Room to dry as they join in the tree lighting on the Front Lawn at 7:00 p.m. If you have not already signed up, please contact Rev. JP (jmarshall@ryepc.com) to see if we have a gingerbread house available for you.

Confirmation 2024

Sunday, December 3 & 10, 5:00p.m., Westminster Room

There may be far more questions than answers, but here are some of the things that have been on the minds of the Confirmation Class members since we began our study and conversations in September. How did we get here? By the hand of God, or through a long series of very fortunate mutations, with a dose of natural selection to guide things along? Or both? Can it be both? No matter how we hold those ideas, still we have to ask, why are we here? If God made the world and declared it good, how did it get so far off track? How is God at work trying to mend all this? And in the middle of all that life is, how do we better connect with God?

This month we will start our look at Jesus and his role in God's story during our meetings on Sunday afternoons, December 3 and 10 at 5 PM in the Westminster Room. Keep up the good work!

December Playgroup is Musical!

Saturday, December 16, 11:00- 12:15p.m .

We'll be doing things a little differently this month! Please join us on Saturday, December 16 from 11am - 12:15pm for Music and Pizza. Our very own Director of Music and Organist, Jason Charneski, will be joining us as we host our first ever musical playgroup!

Jason will lead the children in carols and Christmas songs from 11am - 11:20 and then we'll have a pizza lunch together. If you plan to join, please do arrive at 11am sharp and please reach out to Cally Bruce (Callybruce19@gmail.com) and Amanda Askew Kearney (Amanda.f.askew@gmail.com) with any questions.





Cantata Sunday – December 10

Do everything in your power to be in worship on Sunday, December 10, as the custom of “Cantata Sunday” continues! The Chancel Choir (with soloists from its ranks) and orchestra will offer Part 3 of the *Christmas Oratorio* by J. S. Bach. Running about 25 minutes, Part 3 is one of six cantatas that comprise the oratorio. Its focus is Luke 2:15-20, which tells of the shepherds’ travel to Bethlehem to see the newborn King, Mary’s “pondering in heart” their visit and the larger miracle of God’s grace, and the shepherds’ return to their flocks and subsequent imparting to others what they had witnessed.

In addition, the orchestra will offer selected movements from the *Orchestral Suite in D*, also by Bach, for the prelude, offertory music, and postlude. Following the service, a festive reception will take place in the Assembly Room. Cantata Sunday is made possible by the generosity of three families: Susan and Dod Fraser, Marian and Richard Bott, and Pamela Kindler. Thank you!

Enhanced Music for Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve

The beauty and awe of the Candlelight Service of Lessons and Carols on Christmas Eve (10:00 p.m.; prelude to begin at 9:45) always is enhanced by spirited singing of carols, multiple anthems offered by the Chancel Choir, and the sounds of a string quartet (made possible by a gift from the Mahoney family). This year, we will add a harp to the sonic experience, enabling more combinations and possibilities. Come to worship the Christ Child with open ears, eyes, and hearts...and voices raised!

Children’s Music Update

It was good to be with the Sunday School children on November 19 for a session of “Singing Our Faith.” We learned three of the carols that will be offered within the Christmas Pageant. My next time with them will be December 3, as we will sing in the Children’s Chapel segment led by Rev. Marshall.

Now, as we look ahead, I’m excited about a time of carols and songs on December 16 for the Saturday Playgroup, and to develop plans (I’m cautious of the word *curriculum* for the time being) for a series of 20-minute sessions on Thursdays, rotating through the morning and afternoon classes in the nursery school (the first unit will run from January 4 through February 15).

Cantata Sunday

J. S. Bach

Christmas Oratorio, Part 3

and selected movements from the

Orchestral Suite in D

presented by the Chancel Choir, Soloists, & Orchestra



December 10, 2023, in 10:00 a.m. Worship

Festive Reception to Follow

Cantata Sunday is made possible
through generous gifts to the Music Fund.

Feeding Westchester Event



LONGEST NIGHT SERVICE
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 7:30 P.M.
CHAPEL



There's an Advent tradition within Western Christianity of inviting people to come together for the Longest Night, a night around the time of the winter solstice when there are more hours of darkness than light. Known also as "Blue Christmas," a Longest Night gathering is a safe and sacred space to mourn the losses and griefs of the year, to let the tears flow for the hurting places in our lives, as well as for our country and our world. Let us come together and hope through our tears and fears, that "God will set things right all over the earth."

This special service, held in the Chapel, will include scripture readings, prayers, silence, the lighting of candles, and music.



**ANNUAL CHRISTMAS
 PAGEANT**

**Sunday, December 17,
 4:00 p.m. Sanctuary**

Join us for our annual Christmas pageant as we hear the wonderful and joyful story of Jesus' birth together! This year we are putting on a pageant adapted from Illustrated Ministry's **Do Not Be Afraid: A Christmas Pageant** with a cast made up of children, youth, and adults from our church community.



**SUNDAY CHANCEL
 FLOWERS**

Each week beautiful flowers adorn our sanctuary and provide an uplifting reminder of the goodness of God. Please consider honoring the memory of a loved one or recognizing a special occasion for a \$80 donation.

The flowers are a blessing to worshippers attending the service live in the sanctuary as well as those attending via zoom

Your donation will be noted in the church bulletin.

To make arrangements, contact Tangy Linzy
 (tlinzy@ryepc.com).

A Word Of Gratitude

The Session, Deacons, and Trustees collectively offer Dan, John and JP our support, love and gratitude in the coming year. 2023 was a year of pastoral celebration, and we are certain that the coming year will show our congregation's resilience and faith as we all face challenges and transitions together.

Katy Ridley, Clerk of Session
 Sue Parish, Deacon President
 Katherine Olsen, Trustee President

Worship in the Sanctuary

In Person

Or

Online via Live Stream!

*Bulletin and instructions
 on joining via Zoom or YouTube
 are on the church website:*

ryepc.com/worship/worship-at-rpc/

Adult Education, Stephen Ministry, & Coming Home

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Men's Bible Study

Sundays, December 10 and 17 at 8:00 p.m. in the church library with a Zoom option. Together we continue our reading and discussion of Paul's letters. Contact **Dan Love** at dlove@ryepc.com if you'd like to be on the email reminder list and a part of our study.

Monday Morning Bible Discussion

Mondays, December 4, 11 and 18 at 9:15 a.m. on Zoom. We have just started in on the Acts of the Apostles, and all are welcome to join in! Contact **Dan Love** at dlove@ryepc.com to learn more or if you would like to be on the email reminder

Women's Association: Thrift Shop

Merchandise is rolling in and out. Come see for yourself and pick up a treasure or two. We are opened every Thursday 10-1:00 PM. We are also having a night opening on Wednesday December 13th, 5 - 7:00 PM for extra Christmas shopping, etc. Our next Business meeting will take place in the church library on Friday January 5th at 9:30 AM. All women of the congregation are welcome.

Stephen Ministry at RPC

RPC's Stephen Ministry program is alive and well. We have dedicated, interested Stephen Ministers who have had extensive training to provide distinctively Christian one-to-one confidential caring to those experiencing all kinds of life needs and circumstances. The holiday season can be a stressful time, especially for those who have had recent losses or transitions. Sometimes learning about a serious medical diagnosis for oneself or a loved one can bring to the surface many complicated feelings. Stephen Ministers are a wonderful resource available to listen non-judgmentally and to assure care receivers that they are not alone. Feel free to reach out to a pastor (914-967-0842) or to Becky Ruegger (rhuegger@aol.com).

Coming Home

In 2023 we were able to successfully relaunch our Coming Home after three years off due to Covid. If you aren't familiar with COMING HOME, it is an extension of our long-standing Prison Ministry at Rye Presbyterian Church. The program seeks to empower those who are returning to the community from incarceration. The 18-week program pairs RPC congregants with the formerly incarcerated to help them transition back into the community. Teaching sessions and a shared meal are on Thursday evenings. In 2024 we plan to begin on February 1 and conclude with graduation on Sunday, June 2.



This ministry offers several volunteer opportunities, including serving as mentors, who are paired with participants, supporting and encouraging them during the course of the program; as well as cooks who prepare and serve a meal enjoyed by the participants and RPC congregants who share table fellowship together. As always, we need a committed group of volunteers who will once again serve to make Rye Presbyterian Church a place of welcome to those who are returning home from prison. If you'd like more information, have questions, or are interest in serving as a mentor (for which we will offer training) or to cook a meal, please contact John Miller at 914-967-0842, ext. 14 or by email, jmiller@ryepc.com.

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Calendar, Meetings & Giving

Board Meetings

Deacons: Tuesday, Dec. 5, 7:00 p.m., Miller Manse

Trustees: Tuesday, Dec. 12, 7:30 p.m., Library & Zoom

Bible Studies

Women's Bible Study: Saturday, Dec. 9, 10:00 a.m., Library

Men's Bible Study: Sundays, Dec. 10 & 17, 8:00 p.m.,
Library with Zoom option

Monday Morning Bible Discussion: Every Monday, 9:15
a.m. on Zoom

Women's Bible Study: Saturday, Dec. 9, 10:00 a.m., Library

Women's Discipleship: Tuesdays, Dec. 5, 12, & 19, 1:00
p.m., Library

Youth

Dinner At Noon, Dec. 2, 10:00-1:15

Confirmation: Sundays, Dec. 3 & 10, 5:00 p.m.,
Westminster Room

Christmas Pageant Rehearsal, Thursdays, Dec. 7 & 14
3:30 p.m., Assembly Room

All Youth Christmas Party: Sunday, Dec 10, 6:00 p.m.
Assembly Room

Connection: Wednesday, Dec. 20, 5:30 p.m., Youth Rooms

Music

Chancel Choir Rehearsal: Sundays, Dec. 3 & 17, 11:15-
1:00 p.m.

Cantata Rehearsal, Saturday, Dec. 9, 9:00 - 11:30 a.m.
Sanctuary

Other Church Meetings

Tree Lighting, Sunday, Dec. 3, 7:00 p.m., Front Lawn

Gingerbread House Decorating, Sunday, Dec. 3, 5:30 -7:00
p.m., Assembly Room

Mission & Outreach: Wednesday, Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m., Library

Stephen Ministry Leaders: Tuesday Dec. 12, 11:00 a.m.

Supervision: Tuesday Dec. 12, 7 p.m., Westminster Room

Thrift Shop: Thursdays, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Assembly
Room

Thrift Holiday Sale: Wednesday Dec. 13, 5:00-7:00 p.m.

3Ts: Thursday, Dec. 21, 10:00 a.m., via Zoom



Online donation options are available on the RPC Website Giving page. Go to ryepc.com/give or scan the QR Code. Please contact Maida Robinson: mrob-inson@ryepc.com if you have any questions or need assistance.



YOUR CHARITABLE DEDUCTION

As 2023 comes to an end, please keep in mind the church financial records will close on Friday, Dec. 30, 2023, at noon. All checks must be received by December 30 to qualify for a charitable deduction in the 2023 tax year.

As you make your year-end gifts to the church, please note the purpose in the memo line or on the envelope—Annual Giving or Christmas Joy Offering. Separate checks for gifts are appreciated.

PLEDGE BALANCE

If you would like to check your annual giving balance online through Access ACS, here:

<https://ryepc.com/about-rpc/member-login/>

<http://ryepc.com/resources/database-login-for-members/>

DECEMBER HOLIDAY

The church office will be closed on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 25 & 26, in observance of Christmas.

WILLING TO HELP ON SUNDAY?

We welcome all who would be willing to help out on Sunday morning by joining those who read scripture, usher, or serve communion.

If you are interested, please contact one of the pastors or Gary Gibson, chair of the Worship & Music Committee at ggibson@med.cornell.edu.

In Memoriam

The Rev. Dr. Donald Gordon Howland

Father of Jim Howland

November 22, 2023

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Movie Night on The Great Lawn

Greetings to the Rye Presbyterian Church Community from Kristin Bassett Kumar.

Last month, RPNS hosted Family Movie Night on the Great Lawn! Families enjoyed delicious dinner from two food trucks and children participated in a dance party with glow sticks before the movie began. Once it was dark, we watched the movie *Curious George* on the big screen! Movie snacks and donuts with warm apple cider were an added treat! Movie Night has become a special tradition at RPNS that families look forward to each fall. The event raises money for the Flood Family Scholarship Fund.



The Rev. Daniel Love, Co-Pastor

The Rev. Dr. John Miller, Co-Pastor

The Rev. Jean-Paul Marshall, Associate Pastor

Jason Charneski, Director of Music and Organist

Collin Miller, Knock Intern in Sacred Music

Maida Robinson, Chief Administrative Officer

Peggy Berretta, Administrative Assistant

Juan Velasquez, Head Sexton/Building Manager

Tangy Linzy, Intern Pastoral Assistant

Alonso Osorio, Sunday Sexton