



GRACE NOTES

Rye Presbyterian Church • December 2025 • Vol. 263



Introduction

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Here's a glimpse of our November 6 Staff Meeting!



Staff News

Meet Junior Morales



Please extend a warm RPC welcome to our new Head Sexton and Building Manager, Junior Morales!

My name is Alvaro Morales, though I have been known as “Junior” since childhood. I was born in White Plains and, at the age of 2, moved to Colombia, where I was raised. Juan Velasquez, who just retired from his time at RPC, is my uncle. I hold a degree in Business Administration and spent ten years working for the country’s leading bank. Three years ago, I relocated to Stamford with my wife, Veronica, and in October 2024, we welcomed our daughter, Alegria, whose arrival transformed my life in the most profound way. I am passionate about soccer, music, and spending quality time with my family. I am truly grateful and excited to be part of this community, and I am committed to giving my very best—heart and soul—to serve RPC and each one of you.

We are glad you are here, Junior!

The Opening Word

Franciscan Priest Richard Rohr traces the trajectory of the Christian movement from its earliest days until now:

In 1st century Israel-Palestine, Jesus and the early church offered people an intimate experience of community, service, worship, and prayer. Followers of the Way, as the new Christians were called, gathered in homes by groups known as *ekklesias*—which became house churches for those learning to practice the faith.

From there, the movement moved to Greece, where it became a **philosophy**, taking the place of other ancient systems of thought. Once it moved to Rome and Constantinople, it became organized **religion**—endorsed by the official government regime. Next it spread throughout Europe, where it became the **culture**. And finally, it moved to North America, where it became – wait for it – a **business**.

Is this oversimplification? Overly cynical or pessimistic? Perhaps.

But Rohr makes the case that the original desire or need for a Jesus-experience was all but lost along the way. Experience, philosophy, organized religion, culture, and business—in each of those permutations and iterations, Christianity was seen as being above criticism. It was simply the religion, the philosophy, the culture. We gave our authority, says Rohr, to emperors and kings and presidents instead of the Gospel, pretending Jesus was Lord, but not really meaning it.

However—and here is the grace of God: even inside of each of those iterations, misguided as they often were—and still are—there were humble, loving people who emerged in every one of those eras. There were monks, nuns, mystics, writers, artists, activists, teachers, preachers,

peasants, and nobles, whose lives witnessed to the true spirit of Christ. They pointed to the “upside down kingdom” of God that shines for the poor, the lost, and the least in society. A candle that burns bright for a fairer world and a more expansive table of love.

What does this have to do with December?

Toward the end of November, our Christian calendar marked “Christ the King Sunday,” where we looked at how Jesus’ reign differs from our earthly concepts of power and domination. On that last Sunday of the liturgical year, before the new year of Advent, our scriptures call attention to Christ on the cross and his message of humility, forgiveness, and second chances, his co-suffering with us in everything that brings us to our knees for help.

As we enter the Advent season—historically a time of penitence and self-examination, of almsgiving to the poor and quiet reflection, we prepare our hearts to receive the coming Christ child.

Advent—literally *arrival*—is so much more than shopping and decorating for Christmas. And so much less than the dozens of tasks we stack it with.

May we take a moment to reflect on the 2,000-year trajectory of the movement that bears Christ’s name. May we pause to consider how we might return to the roots of shared meals, collective prayer, care for the poor in spirit and body, and the gifts of scripture and worship. May we listen to God’s leading and open ourselves to a true Jesus experience.

Are you ready?

Cari

Christmas Joy Offering

Through Sunday, December 21

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 2024 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 261 individual recipients, assisting retired church workers and surviving spouses with the means to provide for themselves.

To donate online through either RPC or the PC(USA), please visit



ryepc.com/article/christmas-joy-offering/



- Housing supplements from the BOP helped more than 1,366 individual recipients remain in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.
- Emergency Assistance Grants from the BOP helped more than 199 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 2024 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 21.

Giving at RPC Partner Events

End-of-Year Giving

Due by Wednesday, December 31, at 12:00 p.m.

Your Charitable Deduction

As 2025 comes to an end, please keep in mind the church financial records will close on Wednesday, December 31, at noon. All checks must be received by December 31 to qualify for a charitable deduction in the 2025 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, call the church office at 914-967-0842, or visit our website: ryepc.com/about-ryepc/member-login/

Donating Stock

If you're interested in donating stock to RPC, please visit our giving page: ryepc.com/give

Stewardship 2026

Again this year, our annual stewardship campaign and financial pledge drive for 2026 will take place in January.

If you have been a household that for tax purposes has been in the habit of giving at the end of the year for the year ahead, you are most welcome to do so. If so, please let us know that your gift is for the 2026 operating budget.

In the meantime, thank you for remembering RPC in your year-end giving!

Your Stewardship Committee

Interfaith Prison Charity

Sunday, December 7, 11:00 p.m., Assembly Room

The Christian Education Committee invites you to help pack activity bags used by children visiting their incarcerated mothers. The bags help create a positive and meaningful visit for both mother and child, and these bags will be just in time for holiday visits! We will be packing bags following worship during coffee hour in the Assembly Room. All ages are welcome to attend! In addition to packing the bags, you can contribute to this initiative by purchasing items off of this Amazon wishlist or by giving a \$25 donation (the cost of one activity bag) online or during coffee hour.



[Amazon Wishlist](#) [\\$25 Donation](#)



Helping Hands Rye

Thank you to all who gathered again to roll socks for Helping Hands' Winter Warmth event. We rolled 2000 pairs of socks for 1000 bags!



Book & Bible Studies



Old Books, Catherine M. Wood

Men's Sunday Evening Bible Study

Sunday, December 14, at 8:00 p.m., in the Library with a Zoom option

With the end of Genesis in sight, together we will decide the new direction for our study and conversation. Contact Dan Love at dlove@ryepc.com if you'd like to be on the email reminder list and a part of the group.

Monday Morning Bible Discussion

Mondays, December 1, 8, and 15, at 9:00 a.m., via Zoom

Our work in the Gospel of Matthew has us deep in Jesus' word to his disciples – the Sermon on the Mount! Contact Dan Love at dlove@ryepc.com to learn more or if you would like to be on the email reminder list.

RPC Women's Discipleship Group

Tuesdays, December 9 and 16, at 1:00-2:25 p.m., in the Library

Please join us in the RPC library on Tuesdays from 1:00-2:25 for book study and discipleship. In December we will be meeting on Tuesday, December 9 and 16, then we will look forward to reconvening in the New Year. Feel free to jump in anytime! We're reading *Life Lessons from John: When God Became Man*, by Max Lucado.

All are welcome! Please let Courtney Bennett or Alicia Baldwin know if they can add you to the email list (at courtneybennett910@gmail.com and alicia.baldwin@verizon.net respectively.)

Moms' Bible Study

Sundays, December 7 and 14, 8:45-9:45 a.m., in the Conference Room

This group is for moms with young children who are looking for support, encouragement, and fellowship with other moms. Childcare is available! If you'd like to be on the email list, or to learn more, please contact Madison Walsh at madisonlichliterwalsh@gmail.com.

Children & Youth

Middle School Connection

Meetings on Wednesdays, December 3 and 14,
at 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., in the Youth Rooms

High School Youth Group

Youth Dinner & Christmas Caroling
Saturday, December 14, from 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.,
in the Assembly Room

We'll convene for a quick dinner to which all youth
are welcome, including Confirmation, High School
Youth Group, and friends! Afterwards, we'll be
spreading Christmas cheer to RPC homebound
congregants throughout the city.

Confirmation 2026

Meetings on Sundays, December 7 and 14,
at 5:00 p.m., in the Westminster Room

Since we began this fall, we have explored
several important questions:

*Can the Creation story we read in Genesis
be reconciled with a scientific understanding
of the world? Are we “holy accidents?”*

*If the world was created “good,”
why does it so often look otherwise?*

*In the Jewish tradition, what steps
has God taken to mend the world?*

*At a personal level, how do we connect
with God in a meaningful way?*

This month we will start our look at Jesus and
his role in God's story. Keep up the good work!

Childcare

For Children 3 Months Old — 3 Years Old

Our team of dedicated staff and volunteers is
available to care for your young children while
parents attend worship services. Childcare can be
found on the first floor of the Education Wing.

ryepc.com/ministries/children/

Sunday School

For Children Age 4 — 5th Grade

Sunday School is held Sunday mornings during
worship. To register your child, please visit the
registration page on our website.

ryepc.com/ministries/sunday-school-registration/

Advent & Christmas

Read page 11 to learn about our upcoming events:

Gingerbread House Decorating Party
Sunday, December 7, 5:00 p.m., Assembly Room
Families are encouraged to sign up!

Christmas Tree Lighting
Sunday, December 7, 7:00 p.m.
All are welcome!

Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 21, 4:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary,
Children are encouraged to participate!

Live Nativity
Sunday, December 24, 3:30 p.m., in the Sanctuary,
Youth are encouraged to participate!

Stephen Ministry

Music Notes

by Jason Charneski



Cantata Sunday

December 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Plan to be in worship on Sunday, December 14, as the custom of “Cantata Sunday” continues! The Chancel Choir, with soloists from its ranks, and orchestra will offer the exuberant *Gloria* by Antonio Vivaldi. Running about 25 minutes, it is a setting of one of the liturgical canticles, the *Gloria* in excelsis. Its opening lines come from Luke 2:14: the angel’s announcement to the shepherds.

In addition, the orchestra will offer the first movement of the *Oboe Concerto in D Minor* (op. 9, no. 2), by Tomaso Albinoni (a contemporary of Vivaldi, also living in Venice), and the “Rondeau” by Henry Purcell, made famous as the opening music in *The Young Person’s Guide to the Orchestra*, by Benjamin Britten.

Following the service, a festive reception will take place in the Assembly Room. Cantata Sunday is made possible through the generosity of four families: Marian and Richard Bott, Susan and Dod Fraser, Amber Nee, and Mary and David Versfelt. Thank you!

All Saints’ Sunday



On November 2, 2025, the Chancel Choir offered the Requiem, by Maurice Duruflé.

Thirteen dedicated and compassionate members of our congregation have just completed the Caring Connections Training, equipping them to become Stephen Ministers and Friendly Visitors in our faith community. They can provide distinctively Christian one-to-one caring to those experiencing all kinds of life challenges.

The holiday season can be a stressful time, especially for those experiencing recent losses, significant life changes, or feelings of loneliness and isolation. Stephen Ministers are available as a wonderful resource to provide compassionate, confidential, and nonjudgmental support—offering care, understanding, and the reassurance that no one has to face their struggles alone.

Feel free to reach out to a pastor (914-967-0842) or to Becky Ruegger (rhuegger@aol.com) if you would like to inquire about this program for yourself or a loved one.



ryepc.com/ministries/stephen-ministry/



CANTATA SUNDAY

Glory to God in the Highest!



DECEMBER 14, 2025, at 10:00 a.m.

Festive Reception to Follow

Music for Choir, Soloists, and Orchestra

Vivaldi: Gloria



Albinoni: "Allegro non molto"

from *Oboe Concerto in D Minor* (op. 9, no. 2)



Purcell: Rondeau

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

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eve

Family Service with Live Nativity and Candle Lighting

3:30 p.m. – In-Person only

Candlelight Service of Lessons & Congregational Carols

5:00 p.m. – In-Person & Live-Streamed, with Rev. Pattison preaching

Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols
with string quartet and choir

9:45 p.m. – Prelude

10:00 p.m. – In-Person & Live-Streamed
with Rev. Pattison preaching

Christmas Flowers and Music

ryepc.com/worship/christmas-flowers-and-music/

We invite you to join in celebrating the Christmas season by making a donation toward our Christmas flowers and music.

All gifts received by Monday, December 8, will be acknowledged in the Christmas Eve bulletin. If you have any questions, please contact Max Crawley at mcrawley@ryepc.com.

Donate Online:

Visit our website page above or scan the QR Code below for PayPal instructions and an online dedication form.

Donate by Cash/Check:

Within the sanctuary, you will find Christmas Flowers and Music envelopes available. Envelopes are labeled with instructions and dedication forms.



Advent & Christmas

Greening of the Kirk

Wednesday, December 3, at 8:30 a.m.

It's almost that time when RPC's elves gather together to decorate the Sanctuary for the holidays. You can look forward to food and drink, music, and lots of merriment. Please contact Ashley Ginnings if we can count on you this year! (ashleytginnings@gmail.com)

Christmas Tree Lighting

Sunday, December 7, at 7:00 p.m.

Join us for carols around the tree to welcome the Christmas season! We'll begin our festivities on the front lawn, followed by desserts and hot chocolate at the 890 Manse. Please bring a dessert to share! Desserts can be dropped off in the church kitchen before 6:45 p.m. on Sunday, December 7, or they can be carried over with you after the tree lighting. Thank you! We welcome members, friends, and visitors of all ages.

Gingerbread Houses

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

Join us for a festive evening of creativity, community, and Christmas cheer! All ages are invited! We'll provide the gingerbread houses, icing, and plenty of sweet treats—just bring your holiday spirit! Dinner will also be served. Please sign up online to ensure that we can have enough gingerbread houses on hand. Families should note that RPC's Christmas Tree Lighting begins at 7:00 p.m. on that same day, so stick around afterwards to continue the festivities!

[Gingerbread House Sign-Up](#)



Christmas Pageant



Sunday, December 21, 4:00 p.m., in the Sanctuary, Reception following in the Assembly Room

Rehearsals – Wednesdays, December 3, 10, and 17, 4:00–5:00 p.m., gathering in the Westminster Room

Dress Rehearsal & Pizza Party – Saturday, Dec. 20, from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Costuming – Sunday, December 21, at 3:00 p.m., in the Westminster Room, leading into the pageant

The Christmas Pageant is for the youngest members of our community to learn the gospel lessons of Jesus' birth. Through carols and costumes, we will be sharing the Christmas story with our congregation. All children who can attend rehearsals are guaranteed a part. No need to audition!

[Christmas Pageant Sign-Up](#)



Live Nativity

Wednesday, December 24, 3:30 p.m., Sanctuary

The Live Nativity is a way for our youth to participate in the afternoon Christmas Eve Family Service by performing the gospel story through costumes and readings. We're looking for volunteers to play Mary, Joseph, Angels, Shepherds, and Magi, along with narrators to read selections from the gospels.

Rehearsal – Tuesday, December 23, 3:30–5:30 p.m., in the Sanctuary & Westminster Room.

Costuming & Touch-Up Rehearsal – Wednesday, December 24, 2:30 p.m., Sanctuary & Westminster Room.

[Live Nativity Sign-Up](#)



SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP

CRAWFORD CHAPEL ✦ WINTER

RPC's Crawford Chapel is adjacent to the Sanctuary



DECEMBER 21, 2025, AT 7:00 P.M.
Hope and Healing on the Longest Night of the Year



JANUARY 11, 2026, AT 7:00 P.M.
Evening Prayer and Baptism Renewal

These monthly services, each approximately 40 minutes in duration, provide an opportunity to worship at the close of the day.

The intimacy of the chapel, coupled with its warm acoustics and decorative flexibility, enables clarity and resonance in the sung and spoken word.

Activities will be available for children up through 3rd Grade in the Library

Worship and Giving



Call for Sunday Helpers

We welcome those who would like to assist in worship on Sunday mornings by joining the team of people who read scripture, usher, or serve communion. If you are interested in doing so on an occasional basis, please contact our chair of the Worship and Music Committee, Carl Friedrich: carlrfriedrich@gmail.com.

Sunday Chancel Flowers

Each week flowers adorn our sanctuary and provide an uplifting reminder of the goodness of God and the beauty of God's creation. Please consider honoring the memory of a loved one or recognizing a special occasion for a \$100 donation. The flowers are a blessing to all attending the service, in the sanctuary as well as online. We will acknowledge your donation in the church bulletin. To make arrangements, please visit our website: ryepc.com/worship/flowers.

Giving at RPC



Online donation options are available on our giving page, at ryepc.com/give/ and through the QR Code. If you have any questions, please contact Maida Robinson at mrobinson@ryepc.com.

Your generosity makes all that you see here in Grace Notes possible!

Sunday Worship

Join us each week for Sunday Worship at 10:00 a.m. Instructions for online worship via Zoom or YouTube are on the church website: ryepc.com/worship/worship-at-rpc

Previous sermons, bulletins, and livestreams can be found online on our sermons page: ryepc.com/worship/sermons/

Email Updates

RPC Weekly Updates – Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.
Worship Reminders – Saturdays at 10:00 a.m.
Contact mcrawley@ryepc.com to subscribe.

Children & Youth Ministries Monthly Newsletter
Contact ahalloin@ryepc.com to subscribe.

Website Updates

RPC Website – Latest News
ryepc.com/about-rpc/latest-news/

RPC Website – Ongoing Events
ryepc.com/about-rpc/ongoing-events/

Social Media

RPC Facebook – [Rye Presbyterian Church](https://www.facebook.com/RyePresbyterianChurch)
RPC Instagram – [@ryepres10580](https://www.instagram.com/ryepres10580)

Farewell to Juan Velasquez



Farewell to Juan Velasquez



The RPC Woman's Association and Thrift Shop say farewell to Juan and wish him the best on his next chapter. We'll miss him!



We thank Juan for being such an invaluable and beloved member of our RPC Staff for these last 16 years. We wish him all the best!



Celebrating the Rye Community Interfaith Thanksgiving Service



The Rev. Cari Pattison, Cantor Melanie Cooperman, The Rev. Matt Stone, and The Rev. Daniel Love



Thank you to everyone who participated in our joint choir!

Rye Presbyterian Nursery School

Greetings to the Rye Presbyterian Church Community
from Kristin Bassett Kumar

On Election Day, RPNS hosted our annual 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 Finding Nemo 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.





GRACE NOTES

Church Staff

<u>The Rev. Daniel Love</u>	Co-Pastor
<u>The Rev. Cari Pattison</u>	Co-Pastor
<u>Anne A. Halloin</u>	Director of Children and Youth Ministries
<u>Jason Charneski</u>	Director of Music and Organist
<u>Maida Robinson</u>	Chief Administrative Officer
<u>Peggy Berretta</u>	Administrative Assistant
<u>Max Crawley</u>	Administrative Assistant for Communications
<u>Aileen Lynch</u>	Office Assistant
<u>Junior Morales</u>	Head Sexton/Building Manager
<u>Alonso Osorio</u>	Sunday Sexton
<u>Haniel Neves</u>	Knock Intern in Sacred Music

Rye Presbyterian Church

882 Boston Post Road, Rye, New York 10580

914.967.0842 / www.ryepc.com

We are a Stephen Ministry church that offers one-on-one caring ministry to those in need. If you need assistance from your pastors, deacons, or a Stephen Minister, please call at (914) 967-0842.

If you are experiencing an acute crisis, you can call or text 988 and you'll connect with a mental health professional through the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.