



# Joshua Stafford

## Director of Music Ministries and Organist



Dear Riversiders,

Following an extensive nationwide search, it is with immense joy that we announce the appointment of internationally renowned and award-winning organist, Joshua Stafford, as the full-time Director of Music Ministries and Organist at Riverside Presbyterian Church.

Mr. Stafford is a familiar face to music lovers at Riverside, having first visited our congregation in March of 2020 to play a dazzling organ recital. A versatile musician, with concert repertoire ranging from Bach to Bohemian Rhapsody, an enthusiasm for programming living and diverse composers for worship services, and plans for everything from a reimagined children's music program to the screening of silent movies accompanied by an improvised soundtrack, there will be something for everyone at Riverside under Joshua's musical

leadership. "Josh brings the gifts of both excellence and hospitality to our church's ministries," said the Rev. Dr. Brian Lays. "He will be able to draw a wider circle within our music program without sacrificing the quality we have enjoyed for years. His creativity, passion, and team spirit will make him a valuable asset to our ministries for years to come. I'm thrilled to have him on board!" We look forward to Joshua joining us in April. His first Sunday will be April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

A native of Jamestown, New York, Joshua received a Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance from the Curtis Institute of Music in 2010 as a scholarship student of Alan Morrison. In 2012 he received his Master of Music degree in Organ Performance and a Certificate in Sacred Music from the Yale School of Music as a student of Thomas Murray (organ performance) and Jeffrey Brillhart (organ improvisation). While at Yale, Joshua was the recipient of both a full-tuition scholarship and the Robert Baker Award, which is awarded to students "deemed to be among the top 1 or 2 percent of the young organists in the country." His meticulous technique, innate yet highly mature musicality, and constant musical engagement compelled the jury of the 2016 Longwood Gardens International Organ Competition to name him, out of 12 stellar competitors, the Pierre S. du Pont First Prize Winner of this illustrious event, earning him the largest prize of any organ competition in the world. In 2017 The Diapason Magazine named Joshua as one of the top 20 emerging leaders and innovators in organ and church music. Joshua has performed at many notable venues, including the Wanamaker Organ in Philadelphia, the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., Philadelphia's Kimmel Center, Ocean Grove Auditorium in New Jersey, and Spivey Hall in Georgia. His recital at the 2015 Conference of the

Association of Anglican Musicians was hailed as “technically flawless yet exceptionally nuanced and spontaneous.” He has appeared with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and National Symphony Orchestra, and recordings of his performances have been aired on MPR’s Pipedreams and WRTT’s Wanamaker Organ Hour. In 2020 Joshua was named Director of Sacred Music and the Jared Jacobsen Chair Organist of the Chautauqua Institution in western New York, which offers a rich and varied program of learning and worship every summer. We look forward to the opportunities Riversiders may come to enjoy as a result of Joshua’s prestigious role at Chautauqua.

“The Holy Spirit often moves in surprising ways. Shortly after my first visit to Riverside, our lives were changed forever by the outbreak of COVID-19. What a surprise to visit again a year later, finding my life once again changed by a clear call to RPC as Director of Music Ministries and Organist,” Stafford said. “I have been impressed by your commitment to meaningful outreach in the surrounding community, to spirit-filled worship, and to education for all ages. I look forward to working with all of you to build on a long-standing tradition of excellence in music in a way that will support and grow the ministries of RPC and connect with the wider Jacksonville community. I can’t wait to join you!”

Joshua will be coming to us from St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Morristown, New Jersey, where he has served as Director of Music since 2013 and conducts an RSCM-based program with choirs of boys, girls, and adults.

While Joshua’s musical talents are obvious and undeniable, it is his heart for ministry through music that will undoubtedly and quickly endear him to the RPC congregation. He is passionate about his calling to music as a ministry through which we glorify God, follow Christ, and are guided by the Holy Spirit. Please join us in warmly welcoming Joshua as a partner in our journey of searching thoughtfully, serving passionately, living joyfully, and following Christ.

Together in Christ,

*RPC Music Search Committee*

Chris Wrenn (co-chair)

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Ryan Ashley

Sarah Cotchaleovitch

Joe Eberly

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Judy Wingate

The Rev. Dr. Brian Lays, Pastor

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Carl Zacheis, Advisor