

RIVERSIDE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1966 - 1976



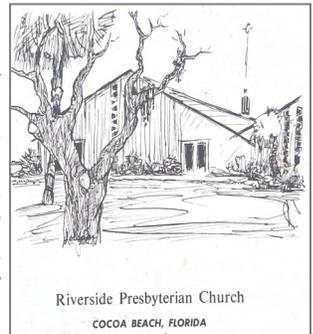
OUR COMMUNITY

Cocoa Beach grew rapidly as the “race to the moon” continued. In January 1967, astronauts Gus Grissom, Ed White, and Roger Chaffe became the first fatalities of the Space Program. This solemn time for the entire community slowed the project but did not stop it. Two years later, Mike Collins, Buzz Aldrin, and Neil Armstrong blasted off for the moon, and the world watched as Neil Armstrong took his first steps on the lunar surface. But within a few weeks, the area experienced an economical downturn as thousands of space workers were laid off or transferred. The Apollo Program ended in 1972, and Cocoa Beach fell into a deep recession. Revival came when people from South Florida discovered the area, and the community transitioned from Space Age to Tourist Town. Ron Jon’s and Quiet Flight surf shops helped foster the new reputation of East Coast surfing capital. In the mid 70s, Sydney Fischer Park became a fully functional facility with playground, picnic tables, rest rooms, and beach access.



OUR CHURCH

During its second decade, Riverside grew in structure and staffing. The **Rev. Nicholas B. Bosworth** served as pastor until 1968 as **Glenn Arnold** became Organist and Choirmaster, a Wedding Coordinator position was created, and plans were approved for a Christian Education building — The building now known as Calvin Hall was dedicated in 1968 to serve Riverside’s 517 members. That same year, the Women’s Association created a wedding reception committee and published the first Riverside Cookbook. The **Rev. Dr. Robert L. Lowry** served as pastor from 1969 to 1976, with the help of assistant pastor **Rev. Earl B. Stewart** during the last year, bringing a special emphasis on Christian education. The first annual Winter Visitors Luncheon was held in January 1971. After publishing a second pictorial directory, the church created the position of Historian.



OUR PEOPLE

Gunter Wendt served as Clerk of Session and President of the Board of Trustees of Riverside Presbyterian Church as he became one of the most trusted figures in U.S. human spaceflight. Wendt was a German-born American mechanical engineer who immigrated to the United States in 1949. He arrived in Cape Canaveral in 1959 with his wife and two daughters as one of the first three families attached to Project Mercury, America’s manned spaceflight program. Wendt worked at the launch pads at Cape Canaveral and Kennedy Space Center for 34 years, during Mercury, Gemini, Apollo (crewed phases), Skylab, and Apollo-Soyuz Test Project. He served as “pad leader,” in charge of the spacecraft close-out crew responsible for preparing the capsule, securing the astronauts, and sealing the hatch before launch. Astronauts jokingly called him the “Pad Fuhrer” — they meant it affectionately: he was the last person they saw before the hatch closed, and they trusted him with their lives.

