



RIVERSIDE CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



WHY IT MATTERS

For much of the past 24 months, we have all been navigating a sideways world. A world-wide pandemic which now appears to be more of an endemic is still impacting us in a variety of ways: economic struggles, still-increasing violent crime around the nation, deep political divisions, raging cancel culture, disputes and disagreements about government restrictions and masks, strong opinions about vaccines, and the first war in Europe since World War 2. Just listing these things makes me weary.

These months have also impacted a considerable number of churches who continue to struggle in a variety of ways. We recently read an account of a very well-known American megachurch experiencing their 3rd year in a row of significant budget and staffing cuts, and after 2 years their in-person attendance is still only 50% of what it was just a couple of years ago. According to their “informal network of other megachurches,” their in-person attendance is similar to what other megachurches are experiencing.

But because of God’s amazing grace, none of this has been our experience at Riverside Church! Despite whatever strong opinions people here have on all the divisive issues dominating our world today, we continue to stay focused always on Jesus’ mission: to reach people and help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. As I have repeatedly stated in previous annual reports, “While we are a community of people who have spiritually defective DNA, we also have been and are being transformed, and we are empowered by Jesus to engage in His mission. He has a special delight when we as individuals and as a church embrace and participate in that which is the passion of His great heart: lost people matter to God, and He wants them found.”

Staying
focused on
Jesus’ mission
matters.
It matters
more than
anything
else.

Staying focused on Jesus’ mission diminishes all these other things that have consumed so many other people’s and churches’ minds, time, and energy. Staying focused on Jesus’ mission matters. It matters more than anything else.

As you read the through the summaries of what has happened the past 12 months, be sure to take a moment to thank and praise God for what He has done through you as part of Riverside. What you have done matters. For the lives changed because you invited, prayed, served, gave, and cared. Remember, every one of those numbers has a name, every name has a story, and every story matters to God...and to us! Celebrate with our ministry leaders as you discover success stories; thank them for their service and continue to pray for them as the new fiscal year begins. Pray for our Elders and leaders as we continue to lead and seek God’s will for Riverside.



IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS AT RIVERSIDE...

Despite having to navigate many capacity and other restrictions:

- **167** people followed the Lord in water baptism (almost double from last fiscal year)
- We welcomed **89** people into membership! (more than 40% higher than last fiscal year)!
- Our average weekly attendance 7/1/21 - 6/26/22 (including our online experience) is **2,157**
- In times of economic uncertainty, the Lord has worked through His people here to help our church be financially strong and stable.
- WE ONCE AGAIN HAD THE JOY TO JOIN THE CELEBRATION IN HEAVEN FOR THE **778** (as of 6/26/22) MEN, WOMEN, STUDENTS, AND CHILDREN WHO TOLD US THEY SAID 'YES!' TO JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR LORD AND SAVIOR! This means through the people and ministries of Riverside about two persons every day for the past 12 months said 'YES!' to Jesus as Lord!

This is why it all matters!

Thanks to everyone at Riverside who in these past 12 months has prayed for me and my family, encouraged me with a note, an email, a pat on the back, or even a hug. I know I say this every year, but you need to know these things mean more to me than you will ever realize. We are grateful to the Lord for our small group and all of you who care about us, pray for us, and demonstrate real love to us.

It has been my privilege to serve as your Senior Pastor for almost 19 years and I look forward to the next 12 months with joy and great anticipation! Together let's continue to be an outward focused church that makes and multiplies passionate followers of Jesus.

I love you, Riverside family.

Because it all matters,

Pastor Tom
Tom Lundeen, Senior Pastor



WHAT IS A BOARD OF ELDERS?

The word translated 'elder' is used nearly 20 times in Acts and the Epistles in reference to the group of leaders who have responsibility for overseeing God's people. Several passages in the New Testament indicate that the words *elder*, *overseer*, and *pastor* all refer to the same role of biblically qualified men who jointly oversee a local body of believers (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9).



Brent Scheideman



Brad Long



Mike Carle



David Hyttsten



Kyle Goerz



Mark Gerber

Dear Riverside Family,

What a historic two years we have just navigated; each of us most likely have stories of both personal trial and triumph as we walked through some hard days and difficult circumstances. Many of us would admit to days of uncertainty, concern, or maybe even fear. We were reminded to focus on the truth of God's goodness and His enduring Word. By doing so, God graciously sustained us through these challenges that spanned days and then years.

As Elders it was a challenging time to lead; many decisions had to be made on how to navigate what was legally advisable and how to best care for our Riverside family. But it was also paramount we continue to advance God's direction for our church: to reach people and help them become fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. As this past year unfolded our prayer was that Riversiders would remain connected to one another and keep growing in Christ even as we explored ways to keep reaching those not yet following.

As we look back, we see God was faithful to us—how exciting it has been to witness the NextSTEPS people have taken! We saw new families join us for the first time almost every week. The No Limits discipleship class for 4th & 5th graders had one of its biggest enrollments since the program began. Riverside Student ministry flourished and led the way in resuming in-person ministry. Our online engagement remained strong even as people returned to a physical campus. God exceeded our expectations on how many would take the step of baptism (167). Small group participation was well over 1100. And despite what seemed like a lofty goal when it was set last July, God drew even more people to Himself than we dreamed! Praise Him for the 778 people who said 'YES!'; repenting and believing in Jesus as Lord and Savior over the past year.

As you know we also attempted to purchase a property for a new physical campus this past year, but the Lord ultimately removed that option. We continue to pray for God to open a door of His choosing for another physical campus – please keep praying for His provision.

God accomplished all of this, and to Him alone be the glory. But amazingly, He chooses to involve His children in His work! So, when you are in Jesus, your prayers for the people around you matter. Your invitations to "come and sit with me." matter. Your steadfast acts of service and support for the ministries of Riverside matter. And your commitment to become like Jesus—loving others like He loved us, matters most! "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." - John 13:34-35

As your Elder board we are passionate about our privilege to lead Riverside Church. We so appreciate your prayers for us. It is our prayer that God would grant us wisdom and humility in following Him. We pray He will use the people and ministries of Riverside Church to draw many to Himself. Lost people matter to God and He wants them found. And so do we!

2021-2022 CHURCH OFFICERS

AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Woody Glines, Lindsay Marquette,
Wayne Watson

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Audrey Kile, Matt Marquette

TREASURER: Bill Holmgren

SECRETARY: Dianne Hyttsten

BOARD OF ELDERS:

Mike Carle, David Hyttsten,
Kyle Goerz, Mark Gerber, Brad Long,
Brent Scheideman

RIVERSIDE CHURCH EXISTS...

for the purpose of reaching people and helping them to become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ. This is accomplished by bringing people into a relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and drawing them into the Christ-centered community of the church.



EXPERIENCE GRACE

778
'YES!'
DECISIONS!



GROW IN LOVE

167
BAPTISMS
1,192
REGULARY
ATTENDING
SMALL GROUPS



GIVE OF YOURSELF

780
SERVING REGULARLY
AT RIVERSIDE
213
TITHING HOUSEHOLDS
GIVING \$5,000 OR MORE
A YEAR *based on a conservative
average ousehold income of \$50,000



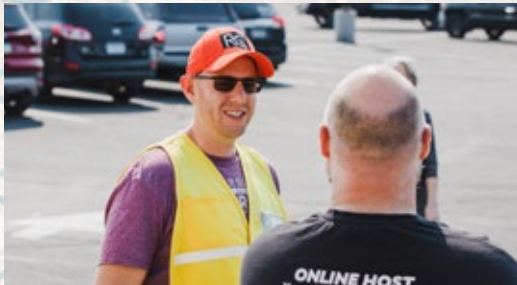
TOTAL AVERAGE IN PERSON WEEKLY ATTENDANCE

2017-18	1,604
2018-19	1,801
2019-20	1,865
2020-2021	1,064
2021-2022	1,460

FUEL FOR MINISTRY FUND

2017-18	\$2,376,711
2018-19	\$2,835,585
2019-20	\$3,011,081
2020-2021	\$4,031,643
2021-2022	\$3,731,778

**EVERY NUMBER HAS A NAME,
EVERY NAME HAS A STORY, AND
EVERY STORY MATTERS TO GOD!**



89 new members

222 first time giving households



768 households gave digitally

778 total 'YES!' decisions for Jesus!



1,053 served at Riverside

1,124 households who gave to the Fuel for Ministry Fund



1,460 average in-person attendance

1,725 participated in a small group



2,284 kids & students connected with Riverside this year

5,254 followers on Facebook



RIVERSIDE isn't just a
CHURCH where you go;
it's a **FAMILY** where
you can **BELONG.**



THIS IS WHY

MARK 1:38 "Let's go on to the neighboring villages so that I may preach there too. **THIS IS WHY I HAVE COME.**"

START HERE

More than 90 years ago, a person was willing to step down into a dad's sorrow, help him dig a grave for his infant child, and share with that man the hope of eternal life in Jesus. From that act of mercy, the man and his family accepted Christ as their Savior. This is how Riverside Church began. This is our spiritual heritage. Our church exists because those who came before us prayed, gave and sacrificed. They understood that it was their time to follow the Lord. Now it's our turn.

1



1ST CHURCH:

Riverside's first home in 1931 was located on Broadway Street in Monticello.



3



BIG LAKE CAMPUS

BIG LAKE CAMPUS:

Our current Big Lake campus was the dream of a few leaders at Riverside who saw God's vision for a larger community requiring more space. Services were first held in 1973.



5



ONLINE EXPERIENCE:

While Riverside has had an online presence for many years, the pandemic accelerated our plans to improve this experience, many use this when they are not able to make it in person or are not geographically close to one of our campuses.



This is our spiritual heritage... Now it's our turn.



2

2ND CHURCH:



Our second building's basement was built in 1951 & the building was finished in 1962. This provided more room for worship & also created ministry space. This building is the former antique store just across the bridge.



4

2ND CAMPUS

SAUK RAPIDS CAMPUS:



We are excited to celebrate four years at our first multisite campus which opened in March 2018. We are trusting God to continue to use this facility to reach people in the area around Sauk Rapids.



WHERE NEXT?

LET'S JOIN TOGETHER & CONTINUE TO PRAY FOR GOD
TO OPEN A DOOR FOR US TO LAUNCH A 3RD CAMPUS IN WRIGHT COUNTY!



RIVERSIDE KIDS

One-third of the hustle and bustle on Sundays at Riverside is happening on the lower level and if you listen carefully, you might hear kids worshiping, playing a verse activity to help them hide God's Word in their hearts, or joyfully proclaiming a truth about God together. We hope that makes you smile and warms your heart to know this next generation is developing a foundation of biblical truths to build their lives on.

Picture a toddler carefully folding their hands, squeezing their eyes shut (and maybe peeking a bit) as they join in a prayer for the first time. Listen as a group of 3- to 5-year-olds enthusiastically sing about how they love Jesus or say a verse as they march around the room. See the excitement as a 1st grader receives their very own "grown up" Bible ("with all the verses in it!"). Feel the joy of a kid who masters the skill of finding a verse in their Bible on their own. Or the pride when they memorize a verse "all by themselves!" See the eagerness of a kid who took 12 invites to the next Game Show so all their friends can come to church with them. Imagine the joy in heaven when a kid recognizes their sin and turns to a Savior who will change their life in the most amazing way.

God has blessed us with the stories of many kids including 207 who said 'YES!' this past year. At the end of the No Limits year, we celebrated 44 baptisms as these kids took a big next step in their faith. From the youngest ones in Nursery to the oldest kids in Elementary, over 1,600 kids have been a part of RK this past year, including 540 new kids from 192 families. These families are finding Riverside a place to call home as over 65% of them have not just visited, but returned! We are grateful to see God moving in kids' lives at Riverside!



We are grateful to see God moving in kids' lives at Riverside!

208

'YES!' decisions
from BL & SR

64

kids in
No Limits

44

kids were
baptized

1,625

kids participated
in Riverside Kids

540

new kids from
192 new
families in RK

Why does investing into students matter?



For the last 2 years since Covid became a major disruption, we've been blessed at Riverside Students with some incredible turnaround and momentum at both our physical campuses and online. To God be the glory... "unless the Lord builds the house, it's builders labor in vain."

We can't misinterpret momentum for movement, though. "Many youth attending" doesn't inherently mean "many youth growing" – if we aren't helping them own their faith, then we're just creating a program... and that kind of investing into students can absolutely not matter. The same can be true for families who see each other around the house, but don't dig deeper with each other. This is why we've been continually challenging our middle school and high school students to choose their next "Break/Through" – to not just come on Wednesdays, but to through what we do come to Jesus for transformation... the kind that stretches, is contagious and leads them to go home and own their faith.

If you're following what I'm saying, then get ready... because you're a part of the solution. I believe you speak into the value of this next generation every day. I believe in the good that we're doing at Riverside and its mission. I believe that reaching students and investing into them matters and the young adults they're becoming will change the world. **Do you?** Don't regret letting God stir you on this. There is no better mission on earth than the mission of the church to reach all generations. There's never been a better time than now for us to have the courage to make a difference. This is why I asked **some of our amazing volunteers – everyday people like you – to share what God has put on their hearts.** Join us now in making the best kind of investment into students (and everyone in their lives).

Together, Pastor Tony and the RS Team

Why this next year matters...

"I look forward to helping students say 'YES!' to Jesus Christ as Lord, also helping them find their way through their young life."

"I hope more adults will find the courage to take a step of faith to come help with the youth. Whatever barrier there may be (real or perceived) is not too much to overcome. For my part- I will continue to show up for the nursery/hangout so other parents can trust that their little kids are cared for while they invest in students."

"I want to see our 'inner circle' grow not only in depth, but also in numbers. That they can personalize their faith, but also foster it in fellowship. To be real. To have fun. Basically, the whole 'shebang,' but in a way that's 'us'"

661

Middle School & High School students participated

190

Average weekly attendance in Big Lake

23

Average weekly attendance in Sauk Rapids

89

Adult volunteers each week

122

'YES!' decisions from BL & SR

353

attended Summer Kick Off from BL & SR



RIVERSIDE STUDENTS

GUEST SERVICES

Why does it matter to have a Guest Services ministry at Riverside Church?



We claim that *Riverside is a family where you can belong...you know that saying. When you're with family, you're at home. When you are somewhere that you are loved and appreciated, you're at home. These experiences are ones we want to repeat. However...there are times when our own personal family experiences fall short of this desire to repeat. That's where Guest Services comes in.*

God's family is forever! When our Guests arrive in either Big Lake or Sauk Rapids, we want their experience to be one they want to repeat over and over again! Each and every week, our teams do their best to ensure both our Riverside family and brand new guests feel loved, appreciated and know without a doubt that they matter to God and to us!

You never know when someone's first step towards Jesus will be. *That's why having a Guest Services ministry matters at Riverside Church.*



340

Guest Service volunteers who served at least once on a Sunday



273

Guests became regular attendees

Responses from some of our recent guests...

WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICED ABOUT RC?

- *How happy everyone was to be there.*
- *The acceptance and joy of the people here.*
- *Welcoming. Lots of volunteers made it helpful to find our way around.*
- *How friendly everyone is! From the smiles in the parking lot, to the greetings from everyone once you pass them inside - it was so lovely and welcoming!*
- *The immense feeling of community and passion - it was so accepting.*
- *I love how laidback it was; everybody was very welcoming, but not suffocating.*
- *How friendly the parking crew is - literally the first and last contact.*
- *All the smiling and words of welcome!*

PRAYER TEAM

Why does it matter to have a Prayer Team ministry at Riverside Church?

"How can you tell if someone is discouraged? They are breathing."

Truitt Cathy, Chick-Fil-A



Thank you so much for praying for me. I could feel your prayers!

Good morning! Hope your month is off to a great start. How can we be praying for you?

If you have been around RC this past year for any length of time, you have been asked the question...

"How can we be praying for you?"

In difficult times, and in times of contentment and praise, this question has landed in the hearts of thousands offering encouragement and care. Nothing is too small, and nothing is too large to offer up to God in prayer...even through a text.

That's why having a prayer team at Riverside Church matters.

9,036

Prayer request texts received

3,884

notes sent out by our prayer team

61

volunteers serving regularly on our prayer team

"I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart. This is so special and means so much to me in my continued recovery. Your prayers are a blessing and inspiration to me. Thanks so much and have a blessed day!"

"Thank you! I'm going to read this prayer whenever I feel like reaching out for a drink. I pray that God will help me change my ways. God bless you all!"

"Oh my, someone actually reads these? Thank you, I'm going to save this & read it often. I am speechless for how grateful I am to you all. Thank you. Truly."

"With tears flowing, I am grateful beyond words to all who have lifted us up in prayer. We feel blessed to be here to enjoy our family and friends!! We will be strong for each other as the devil tried to bring us down. God has made us a miracle to testify our faith in Jesus!! I felt God told me one day, 'Don't worry I've got this!!' I sooo appreciate your encouraging words and prayers they lift me up! God Bless You All!"

"I have good news! My neighbor went to the doctor for an update on his PSA and he is cancer free!! The Lord has been raining his love down!! Thank you Lord! You're So good and gracious. We give you all the Praise and glory!! Let's do a happy dance in the middle of our living room. Thanks for interceding. He hears the needs of His children. Thanks to your prayer team!!"

CREATIVE ARTS

It matters that we use the creative talents God gives to worship, praise, thank and honor Him.

He has wired us to be creators, just as He is The Creator, and to give what we create back to Him...for His glory. God tells us in His story how His people have used their artistic talent to honor and worship Him; in the building and furnishing of the tabernacle, the temple, and today in the spaces we gather to worship.

We are thankful for all 85 people on our team that use their God-given talents to provide a place for Riversiders to worship each week. The instrumentalists, vocalists, camera operators, audio and video teams, song writers, actors, and background creators - everyone who participates in creating environments for us all to Experience Grace from God and others... we thank you!

We gather together as a church family to thank God that we can live life with other people. After a hard week, an unexpected tragedy, or when our souls are weary, we offer our worship. We worship God because He is good.

This is why coming every week matters. This is why the Creative Arts team matters. This is why, "Riverside is not just a church where you go, it's a family where you can belong."

85

volunteers served
in Creative Arts
over
52 weeks &
270 services

*God created human beings
in his own image,
in the image of God he
created them; male and
female he created them.*

Genesis 1:28 (NLT)

SMALL GROUPS

131

Small Groups



196

Small Group
leaders & coaches
for adult groups



Groups have continued to make a practical difference this year in the lives of many Riversiders, both local and physically distant. We have mostly transitioned back to in-person this year, but we have added some intentionally online groups for those who aren't close enough to participate in person as well. We had a great fall journey around the book, *Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets*. Alpha continued on with in person sessions...and we could add a meal!

God is at work as we spend time in circles processing, learning, growing and taking next steps in our walk with Jesus. We are grateful for the many who have lead and engaged with a small group, and encourage you to continue doing life with your group as we head into a new year.

*God is at work
as we spend time
in circles
processing,
learning, growing
and taking next
steps in our walk
with Jesus.*



1,192

adults & students
attended a small
group 4+ times



1,725

tried a small
group this year



We are so grateful to Pastor Nate Sickler and the leadership he brought to the Small Groups team for 8½ years. We pray and anticipate that God will continue to accomplish great things through him in his new role in Pennsylvania!

SG
Your group matters.

CARE MINISTRY



God continued to give us ample opportunities to care for our church and community this year. We were able to offer Car Care at our Big Lake campus both fall and spring, all of our care groups continued with good participation at both campuses and 25 couples were encouraged through 4 offerings of The Marriage Course this year.

While much of Care Ministry may seem small and inconsequential in the moment, God uses just such things to bring light and hope into the lives of those who may have lost sight of His presence in their circumstances.



We are so grateful for all of our group leaders and volunteers who have made such a great difference in the lives of so many this year.

We celebrate the stats below because each one of those numbers represent a story that matters to God and to us!



4,030
socks & underclothing
donated to local centers
during "Socktober"

2,197+
people impacted from
financial assistance &
Christmas Offering
gift cards

1,825
people served through
various care ministries
and initiatives



66
units of blood
donated through
Red Cross blood drives

150,000+
meals made possible by area
food shelves through July
matching program & Special
Christmas Offering

RIVERSIDE MISSIONS



This year our partners around the world have felt the impact of the pandemic just as we have locally at Riverside. Travel shutdowns and quarantines have affected us all...but God is still at work on a global level!

MEXICO: Our newest partners in Guadalajara are reaching others through their Bible Academy classes & prayer, marriage encounter events as well as their outreach to the Purepecha people. Two different campuses will launch through Bible studies in fall of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022.

WEST AFRICA: Burkina Faso has seen much turmoil between the pandemic and terrorist activity. The national church has been at work helping those displaced by terrorism, offering food and shelter to thousands. Many displaced Muslims have been responding to the gospel as lives are changed! Local teams continue to dig wells and build hangars for churches to reach the Dogose people. Some of the Burkina team have transitioned to Guinea and we look forward to seeing how God shapes their ministry in the coming year and how we might join them in it.

SENEGAL: Darren & Naomi Lieser have been able to go to language school digitally as they await their visas to France where they will complete their language studies and prepare for their well-drilling ministry in Senegal.

TAIWAN: Our partners in Taiwan have seen recent spikes in COVID cases and have had to move to digital connection, yet people are being reached and the mission is moving forward.

JULY 2020-APRIL 2021

GCF	\$132,933
BURKINA	\$135,599
TAIWAN	\$42,500
MEXICO	\$62,697
SENEGAL (LIESER'S)	\$23,516
TOTAL	\$397,245

\$397,245

Fuel for Missions Giving

4

wells dug for
clean water in
Burkina Faso

4

hangars (frames
for churches) built
in Burkina Faso

77

first time givers
to the Fuel for
Global Missions
Fund



RIVERSIDE
isn't just a **CHURCH**
where you **GO**;
it's a **FAMILY** where
you can **BELONG.**



- 1 Come every Sunday
- 2 Be part of a group
- 3 Serve on a team

WHAT'S YOUR NEXT STEP?



RIVERSIDE
CHURCH

Your story matters.

BIG LAKE CAMPUS

20314 County Road 14 NW, Big Lake MN 55309
[Facebook.com/MyRiversideChurch](https://www.facebook.com/MyRiversideChurch)

SAUK RAPIDS CAMPUS

1702 W Highview Dr, Sauk Rapids MN 56379
[Facebook.com/MyRiversideChurchSR](https://www.facebook.com/MyRiversideChurchSR)

ONLINE EXPERIENCE

MYRC.ONLINE.CHURCH

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