



RIVERSIDE CHURCH

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023





# MORE THAN WE CAN ASK OR THINK

What an amazing God we serve! Despite a culture that continues to careen to ever-increasing levels of dysfunction and opposition to the Christian faith in many ways and places, what Jesus promised 2,000 years ago is still true today: “Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’), and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it,” (Matthew 16:18, NLT).

And we have witnessed Jesus building His Church in powerful ways here at Riverside the past 12 months. In ways that are more than we can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20, NLT), we have watched our incredible Lord do what only He can do among us and through us.

By God’s amazing grace we continue to stay focused always on Jesus’ mission: to reach people and help them become fully-devoted followers of Jesus Christ. I continue to share this same statement I have made in previous annual reports because it is still so true: 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.***

And now God has opened a door for us that a year ago seemed closed. In early June 2023, we closed on the former Wright County Health and Human Services building in Buffalo. We have already started the demolition work, and a very aggressive construction plan that, God willing, will allow us to open this 3<sup>rd</sup> campus in March 2024...and hopefully, have Easter services there March 31, 2024! To God be the glory!

We praise the Lord for the faithful giving of Riversiders over the past decade which meant when this door reopened, we were able to take next steps immediately to take advantage of this opportunity. We have been able to purchase this property with cash, and God willing, we will be able to remodel this building with cash! That’s no small thing at any time, but especially when economic times are uncertain.

Our challenge now as a church is to give generously and sacrificially to ensure we are able to fully fund the operations/ministries of all 3 campuses in future years, and to rebuild our bank balance so we are ready when God opens the next door for us to pursue. Be sensitive to what God is saying to you about your next step of generosity.

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. And 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...

- **124** people followed the Lord in water baptism
- We welcomed **67** people into membership
- Our average weekly attendance 7/1/22 - 6/25/23 (including our online experience) is **2,287**
- In times of economic uncertainty, the Lord has again worked through His people here to help our church be financially strong and stable, and we received the greatest level of financial generosity through regular giving and almost \$1 million in estate and special gifts ever in Riverside's almost 92 years of existence!
- WE ONCE AGAIN HAD THE JOY TO JOIN THE CELEBRATION IN HEAVEN FOR THE **910** (as of 6/22/23) MEN, WOMEN, STUDENTS, AND CHILDREN WHO TOLD US THEY SAID 'YES!' TO JESUS CHRIST AS THEIR LORD AND SAVIOR!  
This means more than two people every day for the past 12 months said 'YES!' to Jesus as Lord through the people and ministries of Riverside (sounds a lot like the first Church in Jerusalem, where we are told that, "And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved," Acts 2:47)! Praise the Lord for His wonderful love and amazing grace!

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. I am thankful for a godly and mission-focused board of Elders who care so much for our staff and entire church family. Gwen and I are grateful to the Lord for our small group and many others 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 20 years (as of September 1), 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 God does more than we can ask or think,

*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).



Mike Carle



Kyle Goerz



David Hyttsten



Brad Long



Matt Marquette



Brent Scheideman

Dear Riverside Family,

Riverside Church has never had so many people worshipping every Sunday, serving in ministry, being a part of small groups, engaged in the grace of giving, and taking healthy next steps in its 90+ years of existence. Our in-person worship attendance is closing in on our pre-Covid levels at the Big Lake Campus and is already there at the Sauk Rapids campus. The same is true for our online experience as well. To God be the glory!

As we look back, we see God was faithful – 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. Our Riverside Kids and Riverside Student ministries continued to thrive. God graciously led **124** people to follow Him in baptism. We received **67** new members into our fellowship. Small group participation exceeded **1300** people for the first time. And amazingly, God drew even more people to Himself than last year - praise Him for the **910** people who said “YES!”, repenting and trusting Jesus as Lord this past year.

Last year we wrote to you about our disappointment in not getting the Wright County facility in Buffalo. But God opened this door dramatically for us again in November, and in a period of a few months, we had 2 government agencies approve our purchase and use of this building in a fantastic location. And because of your past generosity and careful financial management, we will be able to purchase this building and remodel it without borrowing any money. What a good, powerful, and faithful God we serve!

God accomplished all of this, and to Him *alone* be the glory. But amazingly, He chooses to involve His followers in His work!

So, if 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 loves you, 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 the privilege to lead Riverside Church. 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!

God bless you,

*The Elders of Riverside Church*

## 2022-2023 CHURCH OFFICERS

### AUDIT COMMITTEE:

Woody Glines, Lindsay Marquette, Wayne Watson

### NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

Leanne Goerz, Jeff Johnson

**TREASURER:** Bill Holmgren

**SECRETARY:** Mamie Hyttsten

### BOARD OF ELDERS:

Mike Carle, David Hyttsten, Kyle Goerz, Brad Long, Matt Marquette, 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

**910**  
**'YES!'**  
**DECISIONS!**



### GROW IN LOVE

**124**  
**BAPTISMS**  
**1,363**  
**REGULARLY**  
**ATTENDING**  
**SMALL GROUPS**

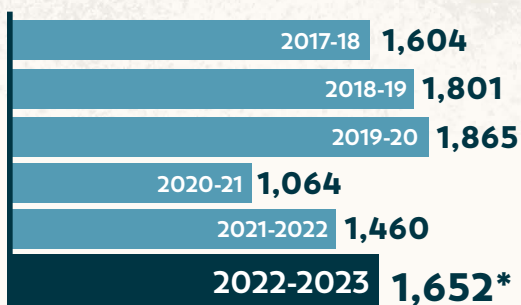


### GIVE OF YOURSELF

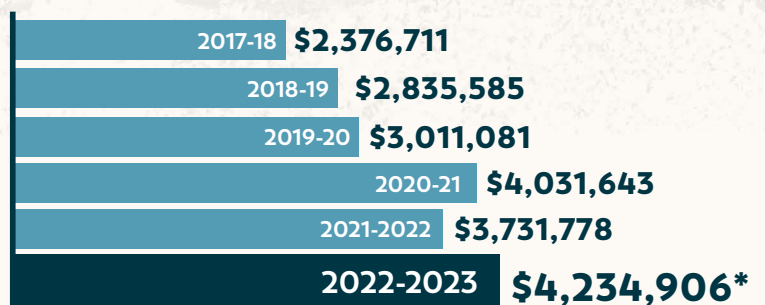
**847**  
**SERVING REGULARLY**  
**AT RIVERSIDE**  
**209**  
**TITHING HOUSEHOLDS**  
**GIVING \$5,000 OR MORE**  
**A YEAR** \*based on a conservative  
average household income of \$50,000



### TOTAL AVERAGE IN-PERSON WEEKLY ATTENDANCE



### FUEL FOR MINISTRY FUND



\*Stats as of 6/29/23



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



**67** new members

**202** first time giving households

**690** households gave digitally

**910** total 'YES!' decisions for Jesus!



**1,954** served at Riverside

**1,150** households who gave to the Fuel for Ministry Fund



**1,652** average in-person attendance

**1,970** participated in a small group



**2,473** kids & students connected with Riverside this year

**5,536** followers on Facebook

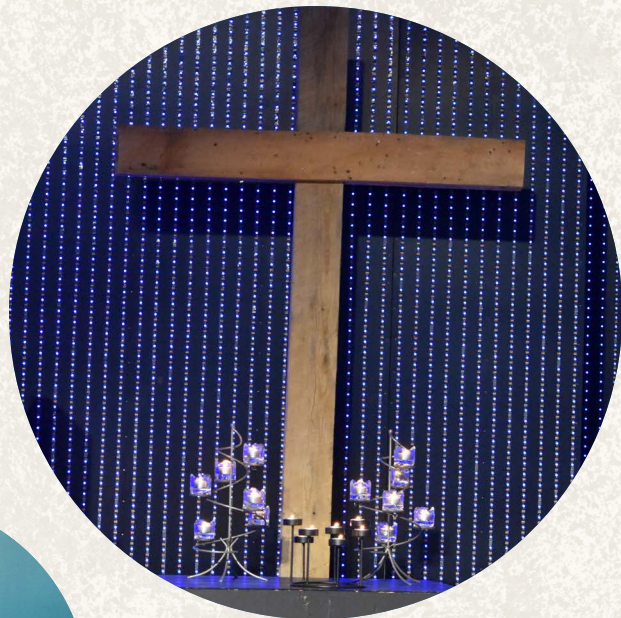


*Stats as of 6/29/23*





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





# MULTIPLY

## START HERE

Almost 92 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



### 1<sup>ST</sup> CHURCH:

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



3



BIG LAKE CAMPUS

### 3<sup>RD</sup> CHURCH 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



### RIVERSIDE ONLINE:

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

## 2<sup>ND</sup> 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 was the former antique store just across the bridge.

4

## 2<sup>ND</sup> CAMPUS

### SAUK RAPIDS CAMPUS:



SAUK RAPIDS CAMPUS

We are excited to celebrate five 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.



6

## 3<sup>RD</sup> CAMPUS

### BUFFALO CAMPUS:

**COMING IN 2024!**



*Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. But he replied, "I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent."*

**LUKE 4:42-43, NLT**





# RIVERSIDE KIDS

As kids come to Riverside, we want to help them **MEET JESUS** (Experience Grace) through care they experience, knowing there is a safe place for them to learn about Jesus' love. From a volunteer rocking a baby in the Nursery, to helping an anxious toddler feel safe enough to leave mom's side in the Early Childhood area, or coming to understand the forgiveness of a Savior who loves them as they say their own 'YES!' to a relationship with Jesus in the Elementary area. This past year we welcomed **1,720 kids** who had a chance to **MEET JESUS** through the love and care of over **250 volunteers** who serve on the lower level. God moved in the hearts of **286 kids** who said their own 'YES!' to Jesus.

Kids can grow in their ability to **LOVE JESUS AND OTHERS** (Grow in Love) as they discover talking to God, hear or read His Word, repeat and memorize verses, and see how to show others kindness. Kids are introduced to small groups of kids the same age, making friends and getting a taste of what it's like to be in relationship with others, seeing how they can each play a part. Through Child Dedications, No Limits, 1<sup>st</sup> graders and new older kids who've never owned a Bible, over 250 Bibles were given out. Many elementary-aged kids have been using the reading calendar daily, and as one parent stated, it's been a "game changer" sparking great conversations at their house as they read the verse together each night before bed.

As kids are learning, we want them to experience the joy of what it's like to **SHARE JESUS** (Give of Yourself) with others. Kids are great inviters so we give them opportunities to invite friends each month to Game Shows as well as Summer Camp, Playdates in the Park, or any Sunday at Riverside Kids. The joy and excitement Worship Crew kids have serving others by leading their peers in worship is contagious. Even though they are young, kids are building foundational truths that will stay with them for a lifetime.

As 1 Timothy 4:12 says,

**"DON'T LET ANYONE THINK LESS OF YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE YOUNG. BE AN EXAMPLE TO ALL BELIEVERS IN WHAT YOU SAY, IN THE WAY YOU LIVE, IN YOUR LOVE, YOUR FAITH, AND YOUR PURITY."**



## 286

'YES!' decisions  
from BL & SR

## 250+

Bibles  
given out

## 1,720

kids participated  
in Riverside Kids

## 250+

volunteers  
serving with RK





**714**

Middle School  
& High School  
students participated

You may not naturally remember this in a few minutes, but if God speaks to you through it I know you'll remember it for life: ***We're just getting started.***

So many of us who serve in Riverside Students can't believe that we get to do what we get to do. We're making a difference today in the lives of students because others in our past made a difference at some point in our lives.

Deuteronomy 6 tells us about this when Moses spoke to the entire community of God's people and charged them to impress a faith in God on the emerging generation. That's always meant to be done in community, where young and old come together, investing ahead just as others invested into us before. Imagine what would happen if our students today had multiple adults in their lives to help them discover who God has invited them to be?

You're already a part of that story...through prayers, your financial support of Riverside and a welcoming spirit to students. We hope in everything we do you feel the tremendous gratitude we feel to do it with you. We're taking part in an amazing story that is bigger than us, yet also involves us.

Ask God what He wants you to pay attention to most here. Perhaps it's time for someone like you who "gets it" to become willing to "give it" on the frontlines with us. We'll equip you to step into your larger story, too.

Because what's true for all of us is that *we're just getting started*. Pray for us. Roll up your sleeves to serve with us. These students are worth time from us.

*We're just getting started.*

***Together, Pastor Tony and the RS Team***

**38**

Average weekly  
attendance  
in Sauk Rapids

**216**

Average weekly  
attendance  
in Big Lake

**89**

Adult  
volunteers  
each week

**65**

'YES!' decisions  
from BL & SR

**386**

attended  
Summer Kick Off  
from BL & SR



**RIVERSIDE  
STUDENTS**



# GUEST SERVICES

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



Our Guest Services teams often hear the phrase, “think B.L.U.E.” in our email and text encouragements. What does B.L.U.E. mean for our GS teams? I’m glad you asked!

<b>B</b>	<b>Be Ready.</b>	Today could be someone’s first steps toward Jesus.
<b>L</b>	<b>Listen.</b>	What are guests communicating through words and actions?
<b>U</b>	<b>Understand Why.</b>	It’s not about <i>what</i> and <i>how</i> , it’s about <i>why</i> we serve.
<b>E</b>	<b>Every story matters.</b>	Every number has a name, every name has a story, and every story matters to God.

Every week, the driving principles of B.L.U.E. fuel our desire to ensure a positive, memorable, and potentially life-changing experience for both Riversiders and our guests alike!

***“The way you feel about guests before they arrive will be the way they feel about themselves after they leave.”*** ~ Jason Young, *The Comeback Effect*



**318**

Guest Service volunteers who served at least once on a Sunday



**247**

Guests became regular attendees

*Responses from some of our recent guests...*

## WHAT WAS THE FIRST THING YOU NOTICED ABOUT RC?

- I noticed the love. A lady helped me into the church. She was very friendly and welcoming.
- Was greeted by all ages from child to adult and everyone at church was nice.
- Parking lot attendants and greeters opening the door, lots of smiles!
- How welcoming everyone was. Almost like walking into a family gathering.
- How everyone made us feel like we were genuinely wanted to be there with the congregation and learning right alongside them. Sometimes churches can feel a little “stuffy” or that there are specific expectations, and our family felt absolutely none of that here.
- How friendly everyone was! Even while I parked the patrol helpers were smiling and made coming for the first time out a smile on my face instantly. :)



# PRAYER TEAM

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

*"How can you tell if someone needs encouragement? 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.*

## 6,112

Incoming texts!

*Thank You sooo much!! If feels good to know others are praying for us. Bless your heart! Thanking God for you 'n your team there!!*

*Thank you for continuing to pray for myself and my son. I know it's working I'm seeing the difference.*

*THANK YOU!! A solution came to me soon after I admitted I was depressed.. I feel so much better 😊*

*Thank you for your kind words & prayers.*

*Thank you so much! God bless each of you!*

*Thank you so much! I know the Lord will provide. 🙏🙏🙏*

*What a beautiful prayer for our son. Thank you so much. 😊🙏😊*

*Amen!!!! Thank you for your kind prayers. Glory to God forever!!*

*Thank you so much!! I love your prayers! We are still waiting for news so it's nice to have your uplifting prayer today. 🙏*

## 2,925

Hand-written notes of encouragement and prayer

## 44

Volunteers currently serving on the text team or note teams!

*"So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing."*

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**



# CREATIVE ARTS

*We worship the God Who is, Who was and Who evermore will be!*

What a gift music, song and the technical arts are! It's a blessing we enjoy and give back to Him in worship! We are grateful that each individual has been uniquely designed to praise God in so many ways, and when we all come together, God creates a masterpiece.

- Whatever season of life we are living in, God's family lives it with us; and worshipping together on Sunday mornings reminds us that we are not alone.
- From kids to teens to adults to retirees, thank you to everyone who serves with great joy!
- Our **180 volunteers** - instrumentalists, vocalists, camera operators, audio and video teams, song writers, actors, and background creators - serve to make Sundays and special events happen. This includes everyone who participated in Christmas Production and Easter Experience at both campuses.
- **THANK YOU CREATIVE ARTS VOLUNTEERS** for sharing your God-given talents to create a place for all of us to connect each week, both in person and online.

**90**

Sunday volunteers  
served in  
Creative Arts

(10 volunteers have dual roles)

40 BAND MEMBERS

20 VOCALISTS

40 TECH VOLUNTEERS



*...when we all come  
together, God creates  
a masterpiece.*





# SMALL GROUPS

**154**

Small Groups



**235**

Small Group  
leaders & coaches  
for adult groups



Small Groups have continued making practical spiritual differences this year in the lives of over 1,800 Riversiders, both locally and physically distant. Groups continue meeting primarily in person, but we still have several intentionally online groups connecting physically separate small group members. The Fall Journey (*Unoffendable*) was a great start to our ministry year and challenged all of our thinking and acting in practical ways. Alpha continued with 2 in-person courses which included dinner before each weekly session!

God is still working as we spend time in circles processing, learning, growing and taking next steps in growing in relationship with Him and with others!

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 fiscal year.

*God is still working  
as we spend time in  
circles processing,  
learning, growing and  
taking next steps in  
growing in relationship  
with Him and with  
others!*



**1,367**

adults & students  
attended a small  
group 4+ times



**1,970**

tried a small  
group this year



**SG**  
Your group matters.



# CARE MINISTRY

**27**

cars at 2 Car Care Days  
at Big Lake Campus

**44**

units of blood  
donated through  
Red Cross blood drives

**50+**

groups went through  
Financial Peace  
University (FPU)

**5,148**

people served through  
various care ministries  
and initiatives

**8,090**

socks & underclothing  
donated to local centers  
during "Socktober"

God gave the Care Team many opportunities to connect with and care for our church and community this year.

- ***We held Car Care events at our Big Lake Campus both fall and spring***
- ***All of our care groups continued with good participation at both campuses***
- ***12 couples were encouraged in their relationships through 2 in-person offerings of The Marriage Course this year.***

While much of Care Ministry can seem small and inconsequential in the moment, God uses just such moments 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 Care group leaders and volunteers who have made such a great difference in the lives of so many this year.



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



# RC GLOBAL

We continue to have a lot to celebrate in missions, including a new partnership and sending teams to multiple partner locations to encourage, support and assist in ministry. God is on the move around the world, and it's awesome to be a part of that work, whether by giving, praying, sending or going. Thank you so much for your faithful giving that enables us to be engaged in these places!

**MEXICO:** We sent one work team in August, another team to serve at their Marriage Encounter weekend in March, as well as another work team in June to help get their new San Sebastian campus more ministry effective. God is working in Mexico and it's been very encouraging to have been a small part of that this year. Our teams have been well received and effective in serving our Project SouthPointe partners in Guadalajara, Mexico.

**GUINEA:** We sent our first team to Guinea this year, and established an official partnership with them that begins July of 2023. This Envision site, even though newly established, is seeing God do some amazing things among the hard soil of the majority religion landscape. Personal relationships drive their ministry, so it's a bit slower moving, but effective. Prayer for the current team and their ministry, as well as for another couple to add in the future would be greatly appreciated.

**BURKINA FASO:** The Arnolds continued their work in reaching the Dogose people as they were able despite security issues which are very much a reality of life in Burkina Faso. God opened doors for effective ministry despite these difficulties with 6 more wells being drilled and 4 more hangars being built. They have been "commuting" back and forth from the US to take on selected hands-on opportunities while engaging long distance through the abilities of modern tech. The Dogose people continue to come to faith, with hundreds more who were lost last year becoming a part of God's family this year! Keep praying for the Good News to spread, even among very difficult circumstances.

**SENEGAL:** Darren and Naomi Lieser made the transition from language school in France to their new home in Senegal in July 2022. Then began all of the figuring out life in a new place with new neighbors who spoke different tribal dialects, meeting new teammates, finding doctors, dentists and grocery stores. They have made good strides on their team base of operations as well as hosting their first drill team which had quite the interesting experience. International travel is full of opportunities to be flexible! God has been faithful in all of these things and many more for the Liesers. We're excited to see what they've been able to do and all of the ways it can expand in the future.

6

wells dug  
for clean  
water in  
Burkina Faso

4

hangars  
(frames for  
churches)  
built in  
Burkina Faso

21

people sent  
(4 teams)

183

gave over \$500  
to Fuel for Global  
Missions Fund

71

first time  
givers to  
the Fuel for  
Global  
Missions  
Fund

GCF (GREAT COMMISSION FUND)	\$187,662
MEXICO	\$41,700
GUINEA	\$37,525
BURKINA	\$136,600
SENEGAL (LIESER'S)	\$27,240
TOTAL	\$430,727





**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**

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