

GLORY TO GOD (IN ALL THINGS 2024)



Jake Epley  
Worship & Discipleship

Wow, what a year! Working closer to full-time at Riverwood kept me busy, but it's been incredible to see God at work.

WORSHIP

1: Team Growth

We welcomed Bastian Ericson as a drummer! Using Worship Artistry (WA), he has quickly learned our setlists and even exceeded my demo videos. We also upgraded our WA subscription to ten profiles, helping more team members further improve their skills.

2: Worship Space Updates

- New chairs (Thanks, Design Team! They are both cozy and inviting!)
- A fresh stage backdrop (painted by Anna Johnson, Bridget Pavelec, and me) and reclaimed curtains have made the stage feel bigger and tidier!
- A beautiful new sound booth, built by Tim Corcoran (with assistance from Mike Devine), has elevated our tech game and secured all of our cables from the clutches of your children.

3: Tech Enhancements

New wireless mics and personal wireless systems have improved safety and stage aesthetics.

4: Team Building

We hosted two Worship Team Schticks: one in March on gospel hospitality & another in October on "Going Deeper in the Gospel." These gatherings recharged our team and realigned us with Riverwood's mission.

5: Christmas Single

*Silent Night (Acoustic Version)* was released November 1<sup>st</sup> and hit 45,000+ Spotify streams before Christmas! Huge thanks to Michelle Chavez, Anna Post, and our amazing collaborators from Arkansas.

DISCIPLESHIP

1: Youth Group

Weekly attendance grew from 9 to 13. We continued diving into *The New City Catechism*. Students are engaging deeply with Scripture and theology, supported by some great leaders.

2: Growth Groups

A new every-other Sunday Growth Group launched in November. Our

other Groups have stayed steady or grown in numbers, while still focusing on the Word, Prayer, and Care.

3: Spiritual Growth Resources

It was fun getting to work with the Elders this summer to roll out the Spiritual Growth Resource suggestions (located near the office) in September.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2025, my goal is simple: Equip and Empower Volunteers to Thrive! With a steadily growing Worship Team and Youth Group, I want to pour more into our volunteers so that they can disciple others more effectively. This includes:

- Developing resilient leaders for future church plants.
- Deepening our understanding of the gospel to strengthen our witness.
- Improving our Worship Gathering Space (acoustic panels, sound system upgrades, backdrop additions, and more)

Glory to God in all things in 2024, and I believe 2025 is going to be amazing! ☺

BATTLING A HARD HEART? TRY OUR



Struggling with anger, malice, disobedience & more? Simply apply our Holy Lotion directly to your heart and find instant softening relief!

Not FDA nor Scripture approved. Heart surgeon not included.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MAY BE SENT TO

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The Riverwood Report

MATURE IN CHRIST



Pastor Erin Bird baptizes M Feyer at Riverwood's annual Thanksgiving Service, November 24, 2024 (Photo: Dan Ericson)

Waverly, Iowa - The year



Erin Bird

Teaching & Vision

2024 was significant in many ways. Most notably, Riverwood turned ten

We also added Julie Christensen to the Sunday Team as our Café Coordinator at the end of May, got "real" chairs in March, a new exterior paint job in September, a drinking fountain in October, a new sign just before the end of the year, and much more. But far more importantly were the steps we took to help people grow spiritually.

In September, we engaged in a short sermon series entitled *Mature in Christ*. The inspiration for this series was Colossians 1:28, where Paul says the goal for which he toiled was to present everyone "mature in Christ."

That is the heartbeat of Riverwood! We deeply and desperately want to help people find Jesus (salvation). But we equally want to see people follow Jesus (sanctification) and become "mature" in Him.

This is why we:

- spent the first 21 Days of the year surrendering ourselves to Jesus in multiple areas

- encouraged people on Vision Sunday to get their "roots" deep into the Gospel of Jesus so they might produce "fruit" which reflects the character of Jesus

- strongly encouraged people at a Growth Group Fair in September to get into a Group to accelerate their spiritual growth

- provided resources (now located outside the Riverwood Office) to help people grow spiritually no matter which spiritual "depth" they are at currently

- celebrated the

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2024 BY THE NUMBERS

SUNDAYS (AVERAGES)

- 74 in Worship Gathering  
Up from 70 in 2023
- 29 in Kids Creek  
Down from 32 in 2023
- 6 5/6 graders every other Sunday  
Down from 7 in 2023
- 4 "Viewers" connected online  
Same as 2023
- 109 in the Building  
Up from 102 in 2023

GROWTH GROUPS (AVERAGES)

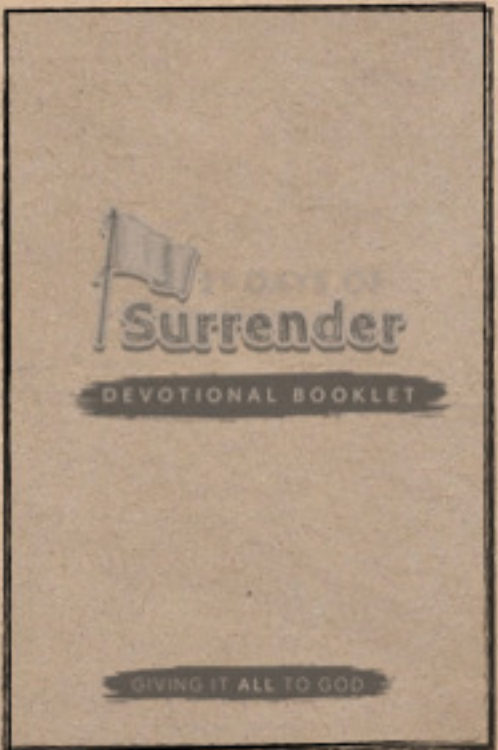
- 38 Adults in 4 Growth Groups  
(59 if you include kids!)  
Up from 35 in 2023
- 13 at Wednesday Youth Group  
Up from 9 in 2023
- 15 at Wartburg Wrestler Bible Study  
Up from 11 in 2023
- 66 Teens & Adults meeting to discuss God's Word, pray for one another, & grow spiritually

MILESTONES

- 20 Self-Declared First-time Guests  
Up from 18 in 2023
- 2 Baptisms (Down from 6 in 2023)
- 2 Graduates Honored  
Down from 3 in 2023
- 0 Known Salvations  
Down from 3 in 2023



The Riverwood Family was infected by an Ugly Christmas Sweater virus, December 15, 2024 (Photo: Sarah Pavelec)





# MONEY MATTERS\$

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS & NOTES FOR 2024



## GENERAL FUND

Finances were tighter in 2024 than the previous year. Even though we did not meet our budgeted total for the year, we were able to keep our general expenses below our giving.

## BUILDING FUND

**Minette Ericson**  
*Administrator* Our building fund, on the other hand, grew and was used well.

Riverwood was able to complete many projects that have been on our "to-do" list for years: new chairs, exterior painted, sound booth built, and a water fountain (found & installed) to name a few!

## THANK YOU...

...to all who gave in 2024 to the mission God has given us. For those of you who give online, if you give via your bank's ACH (rather than credit/debit), you can save us an extra 3% on card fees. ☺

## OUR GIVING

**\$13,931.49** in "Global" giving\*

**\$1500** in "Local" giving

**\$100** to Compassion International for 20 first-time guest units

## YOUR GIVING

January 1 – December 31, 2024

**GENERAL: \$186,036.02**

*Budgeted Expenses: \$190,126.84*

**BUILDING: \$18,766.52**

## TOTAL SPENT:

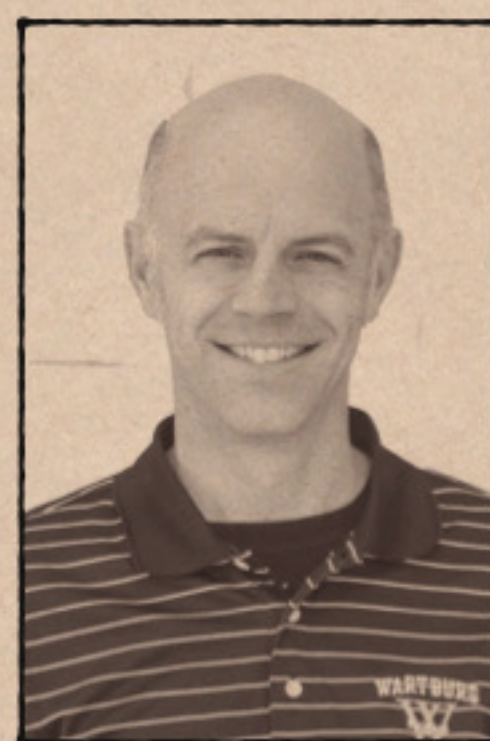
\$198,605.08 Total Expenditures

– \$15,759.52 from Building Fund

= \$182,845.56 General Expenses

\*Combines budgeted giving for overseas missionaries, extra gift for a missionary, & Christmas Impact Gift

# ELDER REPORT



**Matt Townsley**  
*Elder Chairman*

Almost every Wednesday morning, the Elder Team (Ed, Erin, and myself) joyfully prays over your requests. Prayer is not only a way of connecting with God personally, it is also part of how we seek to "shepherd" the Riverwood family. So please continue sharing your praises and requests, whether in written or digital form.

Looking back to 2024, the Elder Team made several prayerful decisions affecting Riverwood. One key decision was the launch of a formal pathway to help each person in the Riverwood family discern helpful resources and next steps to become a disciple or disciplemaker. In addition, we ordered new chairs using funds from the building fund; and near the end of 2024, we saw a new sign go up! As parents drop off their children at Prairie West Elementary School, citizens stop by the Recycling Center, or individuals drive by at night, we believe this more-noticeable sign has the potential to draw more people into our building and ministries to find and follow Jesus.

As we look forward to 2025, I believe God will continue to present opportunities in front of us to extend a warm invitation to those who may feel spiritually disconnected, encouraging them to discover the path of following Jesus. If you are not yet in a Growth Group, consider this your invitation to join an existing Group or start a new one. If you have a friend, neighbor, or coworker who does not yet have a church home, why not make 2025 the year to invite him or her? As both an invitational and disciple-making church, there's a place for you and those in your circle of influence to grow closer to Jesus!

Finally, we would like to thank you for your generosity in 2024. Many of you gave generously of your time and talents to Riverwood, while others stepped up in new capacities. Because of your generosity, we are able to show others in our community what it means to live like Jesus lived and love like Jesus loved through Kids Creek, snacks after the Sunday Worship Gathering, and inviting music on the stage. (Please let Jake or Bridget know if you would like to serve in a new way in 2025.)

As we enter a new year, our aim will continue to be to Gather (Sunday Worship Gatherings), Grow (spiritual disciplines and Growth Groups), Give (finances, influences, skills, and time) and Go (share the Gospel and be a blessing to the world). We look forward to a new year and seeing more baptisms and people we know trusting in Jesus for the first time! ☺

# MATURE IN CHRIST

*Continued from page 1*

**baptisms** of Val Feyen and Lucy Ericson at our Thanksgiving Service

• and so much more.

Basically, most of the decisions the leaders of Riverwood made in

2024 was with this goal in mind: helping the Riverwood family grow spiritually into Christ-likeness. (Not sure how Ugly Christmas Sweaters accomplish that, but that was a really fun day!)

I'm sure there will be other significant changes

in 2025, but no matter how much Riverwood grows and changes, our focus will remain: helping people understand the implications of the Gospel, so they might grow spiritually and become "Mature in Christ." ☺

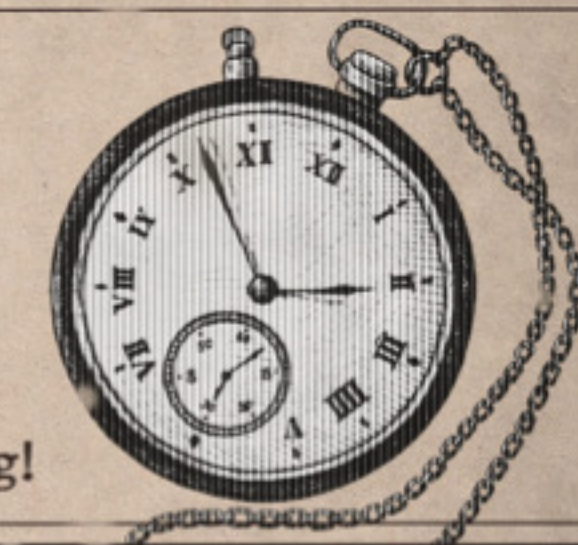


*Doctors Hannah Steffens & Dave Lindley (Painting Surgeons) give the Riverwood building a facelift, Sept 14, 2024 (Photo: Erin Bird)*

## TODD LERKIDD FOBS

*The New Standard in Timepieces!*

No longer let your children tell you when the sermon is too long!



## WANT TO BE Baptized? LET US KNOW!

# Kids Korner ~ A KIDS CREEK Update



**Bridget Pavelec**  
*Kids Creek*

*What is grace? What did Jesus do to save us? Where is God? How can we be saved?*

These are some of the questions our kids are learning to answer during Kids Creek on Sunday mornings. We have continued the *The Gospel Project* curriculum in 5/6, elementary and preschool. It has been so fruitful, full of fun and engaging activities.

Most Sundays, we have over 20 kids joining us in the K-4th classroom. This year in Elementary, we have been working on Bible awareness: how to look up the

book, chapter, and verse. It is delightful to hear their voices reading Scripture aloud!

In Preschool, they are small in numbers but mighty in excitement. They have learned of Jesus' birth, the beginning of His ministry and the many miracles He performed. They have caught on to the Scripture verse songs and enjoy showing off their artwork.

Nursery is full of babies and toddlers. We see a few tears at times, but mostly the kids are happy to see friends, toys, and books. They are learning how to share, play cooperatively, and trust the volunteers who care for them.

For VBS this past summer, we again partnered with two other

local churches. The theme was *Scuba: Diving into Friendship with God*. We had over 100 kids attend and almost as many volunteers. We are hoping to reach more of Waverly and surrounding towns with the Gospel through this community event.

We cannot say thank you enough to our volunteers who give of their time and energy each month to make Kids Creek a Christ-Centered, loving, and fun environment. We always have room for more kids and more volunteers. Please pray the knowledge of Christ our kids are receiving would cause them to put their faith and trust in Jesus. We look forward to even more kids joining us in Kids Creek in 2025. ☺