



Riverwood Church 2025
Annual Report

Stirring the Waters of the River

Long before Riverwood ever launched, I deeply desired to see people of any and every generation, but especially the **college/young adult age group**, give their lives completely to Jesus. During my journey of trying to figure out my calling to plant a church and where to plant it, I learned Iowa was growing older, as were its churches, and the young adult generation (ages 18-30) was being left behind.

So, LeAnn and I decided to look for a community with a college in which to start this unseen new church with a dream to reach these overlooked young adults. As you know, that prayerful search led us to Waverly, home to **Wartburg College**. In Riverwood's first four years of public ministry, only two to four Wartburg students made Riverwood their home church. During the next few years, that increased to six to eight students. But in 2025, during our eleventh year of ministry, by God's grace, we saw dozens of Knights not only choose to make Sundays at Riverwood part of their lives, but we saw several find (or re-find) Jesus! We saw this evidenced with a **record number of baptisms** in 2025, primarily because of God's move among Wartburg students.

However, seeing people simply "*find*" Jesus was never the only goal. The dream was to **see people wholeheartedly follow Him**. We've never called people to a shallow faith; we've labored to see people go deeper in the river of Christ (Ezekiel 47:1-12, Colossians 1:28-29). This was the reason behind our new 8-week *New Believers Curriculum* to help new Christ-followers begin their spiritual walk. It was also why we did a two-part sermon series from 1 & 2 Timothy on spiritual health, a series about honoring God with your finances, a 5-week series on spiritual disciplines, and a topic-by-topic walk through 1 Corinthians on following Jesus in a culture similar to that of ancient Corinth.

But sermons and information alone don't make people more like Jesus. This is why we regularly encourage people to grow spiritually through relationships and spiritual disciplines. And the people of Riverwood responded! We saw **record numbers in discipleship groups** (and not just among young adults), seeing people across the generations connecting with Christ through Growth Groups, Scripture intake, prayer, serving, and more. You have no idea how wonderfully

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Riverwood by the Numbers

🌊 Sunday Averages

84 people in Worship Gatherings (*up from 74 in 2024*)

4 people joining online (*same as 2024*)

26 kids in Kids Creek (*down from 29 in 2024*)

4 kids in 5/6 Class (*down from 6 in 2024*)

= 114 people in the building
(*up from 109 in 2024*)

🌊 Other Totals

30 first-time guest cards (*up from 20 in 2024*)

9 baptisms (*up from 2 in 2024*)

9 Growth Groups (*up from 6 in 2024*)

100+ youth & adults in Growth Groups (*up from 60+ in 2024*)

1 Parent/Child Dedication

9 graduates honored (*up from 2 in 2024*)

🌊 Just for Fun

73 different volunteers scheduled

1 new baptism tank (*up from 0 in 2024*) 😊

6 new songs

3,645 communion cups used

110,217 ugly sweaters worn on Dec 12*



Steadily Growing and Improving

This year at Riverwood was marked by steady growth, real challenges, and tangible reminders of God's faithfulness across our ministries.

In **Worship**, we experienced some transition as several college students on our Tech Team returned to school or moved away, leaving us a bit short-handed. Even so, God provided in encouraging ways, particularly through improvements to our Worship Gathering Space. Jim and Joy Guhl created beautiful "stained-glass" inspired backdrop pieces that have added warmth and visual depth to our stage, while Nate Laun built and installed acoustic panels that have noticeably improved our sound environment. In October, I attended the Worship Innovators Conference in Oak Brook, IL, where I received practical training and encouragement alongside worship and production leaders from across the country. That same month, Michelle Chavez, Michelle Wheeler, and I attended the Table Songs Songwriting Camp in Clear Lake, IA, collaborating with worship songwriters nationwide and growing in our craft for the sake of the local church.

Our **Youth Group** saw significant fruit this year. Average weekly attendance grew from 13 students to roughly 23, with our Christmas Party drawing close to 30 teens. We continued working through *The New City Catechism*, helping students engage Scripture, theology, and life questions with curiosity and depth. Leadership development was a major highlight as Reese Osborne stepped into a co-leading role, assisting with planning and teaching nearly every other week. Cheryl Badura also joined the team, alternating weeks with LeAnn Bird, and together these leaders have invested faithfully in our students. I am deeply grateful for the time, energy, and care they pour into the next generation.

Growth Groups continue to be a vital expression of community at Riverwood. With nine active groups—including Men's Group, The Table (Women), and Wartburg Wrestler Bible Study—we now have roughly 102 participants involved, adults and children included. Our Growth Group Fair in September connected several families to new and existing groups, strengthening relational and spiritual bonds within our church family.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will have a new sound system installed, along with the beginning of a multi-year process to replace stage lighting. We will continue partnering with Table Songs through songwriting camps and leadership development. Several of us will attend the Worship Innovators Conference in the (continued on page 8) →



2025 Financial Report

Generosity in Action

- \$150 to **Compassion, Intl.** for first-time guests
- \$2,500.00 to Converge North Central **Church Planting** Escrow Fund
- \$2,000.00 to **Converge North Central (CNC)** General Fund
- \$2,000 to **Local** Efforts (Waverly Caring Assistance Network (CAN), Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), Revibe)
- \$9,300.00 to **Global** Efforts (Ray family (N Minneapolis), Smith family (SE Asia), Azlyn McCarthy (Togo) *pictured*)

2025 Year-End Highlights

- **Total income** for 2025 was \$217,449.71
- **General Fund income** totaled \$196,525.17, making it the second-highest year since we've been keeping the books and representing a 7.14% increase from 2024
- General Fund income came in at **98.18% of budgeted need**
- **Budgeted expenses** were 99.99% of budget

Reasons to Celebrate

- 15.24% of total expenses **given to outside ministries**
- Total **bank balances** increased by \$16,492.12 from January 1 to December 31, a 19.25% increase
- The **mortgage balance** was reduced by 2.57%

Fund Balances (as of Dec 31, 2025)

- **Impact Fund:** \$4,199.74
- **Building Fund:** \$12,834.23
- **Sound System Fund:** \$25,391.08

This truly was a fantastic financial year for Riverwood, and I (David) pray it was an even more impactful year spiritually in the lives of the people of Riverwood. 🌊

Respectfully submitted,

David George (Bookkeeper & President, *Ministry Bookkeeping Partners*) & **Minette Ericson** (Riverwood Treasurer)

A Year of Connecting Kids to Christ

This past year at Riverwood was one of growth, joy, fun, and deepening faith within our Kids Creek ministry. We are grateful for what God has done in and through our children, families, and volunteers.

At the heart of Kids Creek is **our mission**: “To create a fun, welcoming, and safe environment for kids, families, and volunteers to experience Jesus and grow in their faith.” We strive to ensure that every child who walks through our doors feels known, valued, and loved.

For the past three years, Kids Creek has used *The Gospel Project* curriculum. This Christ-centered, chronological study of the Bible has helped our kids see the bigger story of Scripture—how every story points to Jesus. Each week, children engage with age-appropriate Bible lessons that emphasize God’s redemptive plan, helping them understand not just individual Bible stories, but how those stories connect to the gospel as a whole.

On a weekly basis, Kids Creek is a place full of **energy and purpose**. Children participate in hands-on activities, crafts, games, and interactive learning experiences, helping to reinforce biblical truths in fun and memorable ways. Each week we are opening our Bibles, having open-ended discussions and learning truths including: 1) Jesus perfectly rules over the universe as the King of kings, 2) the Holy Spirit comforts us, shows us our sin, and guides us as we live for God’s glory, and 3) we can know that God loves us because He gave us Jesus to forgive the sins of the world.

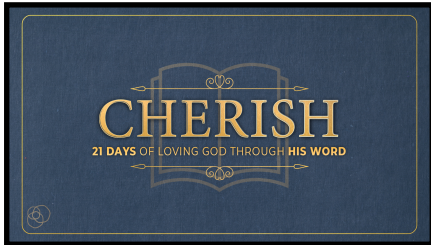
In June, we partnered with two other churches to put on a “**True North**” VBS. Over 100 children journeyed through the Book of Matthew to discover how Jesus is their “true north.” Each day focused on a different Bible story, reinforcing the message that Jesus is always present and dependable in every situation.

None of this would be possible without our dedicated **Kids Creek volunteers**. Like previous years, we have seen volunteers faithfully show up, build relationships with kids, and model what it looks like to follow Jesus. Their commitment helps create the setting that allows children to grow spiritually and emotionally. If you would love to make an eternal impact on the children of the Riverwood family, please contact me!

As we **look ahead**, we are excited about what God will continue to do through Kids Creek. We remain committed to our mission, to teaching the gospel clearly, and to creating a ministry where kids love coming on Sundays and discovering who Jesus is. This year has been a reminder that God is at work in the hearts of our children, and we are grateful to partner with parents to help their young ones know Jesus more.

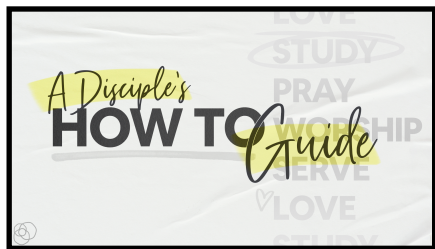
What We Learned

Sundays



*21 Days of Prayer
through Psalm 119*

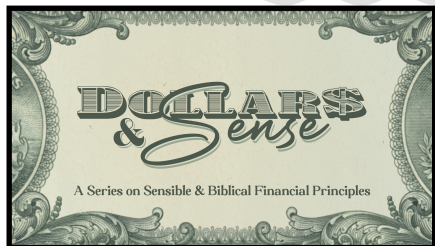
*How to study, pray,
worship, serve, & love*



*A study of
1 & 2 Timothy*



*A series on sensible
and biblical
financial principles*



*A study of
various psalms*



*A study of
1 Corinthians*



Blog/Email

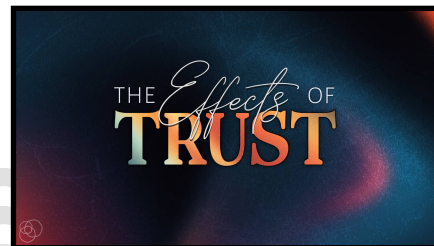


*The Blessings
of Fasting*

*The Lord's
Prayer*



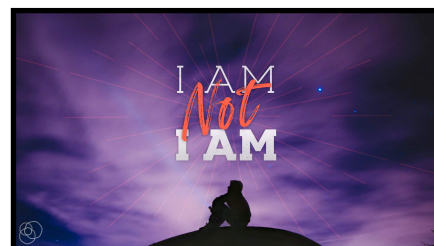
Trusting God



*Attributes
of Jesus*



*The "Omni"s
of "I Am"*



*Various Bible
Study Methods*



Stirring the Waters of the River (continued from page 2)

humbling and overwhelming it is to see God making the dream come true that He put in my heart over fifteen years ago.



Looking Ahead

But we are far from done! As we see God working in our midst, calling people into the life-giving river of Jesus and going deeper in Him, we also want to be a church that sends people out like Jesus sent His disciples. We already send you to your workplace, school, neighborhood, the grocery store, and more. But I am praying God will send some of you on short-term mission trips as we also pray to support more missionaries (like our newest missionary, Val Feyen, a recent Wartburg grad!) at deeper levels. Along with this, deep in my heart is the desire to see Riverwood help plant another church, preferably in another small college town in Iowa. But whether we are able or unable to send you on a short-term trip or to go help plant a church in 2026, we will still strive to help you fall more and more in love with Jesus.



Thank you for any support you have given to further the ministry God has given us at Riverwood. Whether through volunteering, praying, financial giving, or loving one another, I pray you will get a front row seat to watch God continue to stir the waters of baptism as we see people step into the river of Christ and begin to follow Him!



Steadily Growing & Improving

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fall to keep sharpening our skills. The Youth Group will complete their walkthrough of the New City Catechism and begin a new Q&A-style series addressing students' cultural questions from a biblical perspective, while continuing to seek additional female volunteers to invest in our teen girls.



Finally, after nearly seven years on staff, the Elder Team is giving me an **eight-week sabbatical** in June & July. During that time, Michelle Chavez will serve as Interim Worship Leader with support from Sam Shaffer. This season will allow my family and me to rest, worship, and return refreshed, ready to serve again.

Glory to God in all things—we are grateful for His work among us and excited for what lies ahead!



If you'd like to get involved with the Worship and/or Tech Team, shoot me an email at jake@weareriverwood.org!

