



**Long Range Planning Team  
Final Report  
2011**

## Table of Contents

|             |  |                |
|-------------|--|----------------|
| <b>I.</b>   | <b>Introduction</b>  | <b>Page 3</b>  |
| <b>II.</b>  | <b>Methodology</b>   | <b>Page 3</b>  |
| <b>III.</b> | <b>Riverside Covenant Church</b>   | <b>Page 4</b>  |
| <b>IV.</b>  | <b>Tippecanoe County</b>   | <b>Page 6</b>  |
| <b>V.</b>   | <b>Where We Are Going</b><br><i>Core Theological Values</i><br><i>Mission Statement</i><br><i>Biblical Narrative</i> | <b>Page 7</b>  |
| <b>V.</b>   | <b>How We Will Get There</b><br><i>Objectives</i>  | <b>Page 12</b> |

# I. Introduction

In early 2010 the Riverside Leadership Team assembled a team of people to serve on a Long Range Planning Team. The Team was intended to be diverse in their length of time as a part of Riverside, current Riverside involvement, gender, life experiences, age, and other similar characteristics.

The Long Range Planning Team consisted of Kelly Blanchard, Jan Fisher, Luci Keazer, Everette Mills, Erin Rush, Amber Stanley, Dan Teefey, Dave Timmerman, Jen Tucker, John Umbeck, and Becky Wellner.

The Team prayerfully committed to its mission:

**“To assess the current gifts and growth areas of Riverside, to suggest strategies that will help develop Riverside's God-given individuality and call, and to ultimately articulate a vision and path towards sustainable spiritual momentum that changes lives in Tippecanoe County.”**

The Long Range Planning Team devoted nearly a year of their time to these important tasks. The Team combined its varied experience, talents, perspectives and passions to help Riverside be a church that glorifies God in all that we do. This document is the culmination of the Team’s collective efforts.

# II. Methodology

The Long Range Planning Team used a 3 phase process:

- 1. Determine the current gifts, resources and capabilities of Riverside. Key Questions: Who has God brought together to be Riverside? What is unique about us? What are our current gifts? What types of disciples are we making?**
- 2. Determine the current needs and opportunities in Tippecanoe County. Key Questions: Where has God placed Riverside? What is God doing here? Who are our neighbors? What do our neighbors care about?**
- 3. Determine Riverside’s unique potential or equipping to meet the needs of Riverside and Tippecanoe County. Key Questions: Who does God expect us to be? What does God expect us to do? How do we get there?**

In the first phase the Team examined Riverside’s congregational surveys from 2010 and 2011, noting characteristics people appreciated about Riverside. The Team took a survey of newer attendees and asked them why they became a part of Riverside. The Team also shared their personal testimonies and varied experiences with Riverside. Through multiple conversations the Team developed a list of qualities that make Riverside unique and give our church its character. This list helped to identify the characteristics of God that Riverside most effectively expresses.

During the second phase the Team used several resources to study the composition of Tippecanoe County. The Team conducted driving assessments of Tippecanoe County and the Team’s neighborhoods, intentionally observing

what people were doing. The Team asked their neighbors, coworkers and friends, both Christian and non-Christian, about what they value most. The Team also examined census data and other reports that helped them develop an accurate picture of the characteristics and values of people that live in our area.

Finally, during the third phase the Team began to find points of connection between Riverside's character and the needs of our local community. The Team wanted to determine why Riverside was here and what God was calling us to do. Considering Riverside's gifts, resources and capabilities, the Team set forward objectives that would help us more effectively participate in God's Kingdom work in Tippecanoe County. The Team also identified objectives that will help Riverside address weaknesses that prevent us from fully representing the Gospel.

During this final phase the Team separated into three separate focus groups: Love God, Love One Another, and Love Others. An invitation was given to the congregation to be a part of any of these groups. After several months, the Long Range Planning Team again met together to collaborate on the results of their focus groups.

The primary outputs of these phases were the formulation of a new Riverside Mission Statement and the establishment of specific objectives and action steps that will enable Riverside to honor our Mission Statement.

### III. Riverside Covenant Church

In 2011 Riverside celebrates our 10<sup>th</sup> year as a body of believers. Riverside has 129 members and an average Sunday worship attendance of 225, including children. Riverside's average attendance has increased 60% since 2008. The total number of people that consider Riverside their home church is around 400.

Riverside currently has a large population of children, but is multi-generational as demonstrated by our current age distribution below.

| <b>Ages:</b> | <b>Percentage of total regular attendees:</b> |
|--------------|---|
| 0-10         | 32%   |
| 11-20        | 16%   |
| 21-40        | 25%   |
| 41-60        | 21%   |
| 61-100       | 6%  |

Although Riverside's facilities are located in West Lafayette, attendees travel from all parts of Tippecanoe County to be a part of Riverside. The following map shows the diverse geographic distribution of Riverside attendees.



In the Long Range Planning Team’s survey of new attendees they repeatedly mentioned the staff and people as the most significant factors that attracted them to Riverside. New attendees find Riverside’s “family” atmosphere, “intelligent faith,” “combination of grace and truth,” and “kids church programs” most unique.

In Riverside’s 2011 Congregational Survey, attendees listed the following as their primary reasons for being a part of Riverside:

- |       |                      |
|-------|----------------------|
| 81.0% | Sunday sermons       |
| 77.2% | Community/people     |
| 60.8% | Spiritual atmosphere |

In the 2011 survey Riverside attendees positively described Riverside as “warm and fuzzy,” “grace,” “connection,” “warm,” “friendly,” “full of kids,” and “casual.” The congregation also gave particular affirmation to Riverside’s biblical focus.

The survey revealed Riverside’s growth areas to be avoiding “cliques,” improving communication, developing outreach, evangelism and mission, and increasing spiritual growth opportunities. The congregation named the following as its highest priorities:

- |       |                                 |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 64.6% | Outreach to the local community |
| 42.7% | Fellowship opportunities        |
| 39.0% | Adult faith formation           |

Ultimately, the Long Range Planning Team described Riverside as an authentic community of warm, personal and laughing people, which fosters a sense of belonging. Riverside values transformative relationships, safe discussions where people can share what they really think and believe, and processes that help people learn about and grow in their faith. Riverside cares deeply about people in all stages of life, with a particular emphasis on children's spiritual formation, and desires to be a community that embraces new involvement, teamwork, cooperation, and transformation driven by the Bible and mission.

The Team determined that Riverside's primary spiritual struggles stem from people experiencing distracted, busy, scattered, and too often, worldly lives. This manifests itself in perpetual hurriedness that is the opposite of the peace and joy that Jesus offers. This also leads to an understanding of faith as Sunday attendance and participation in events as opposed to a genuine relationship with the living God. Additionally, the Team found that Riverside's strong relationships with one another often contribute to our struggles to reach beyond our Christian relationships in evangelism and outreach.

## IV. Tippecanoe County

Tippecanoe County has a population of 172,780 people, which is a 16% population increase from 2000. 21% of the population is under the age of 18, while 10% of the population is older than 65. Tippecanoe County is unique amongst other Indiana communities for its higher rate of population transiency, a higher average level of education, and a higher rate of foreign born and foreign language speaking populations. (<http://www.quickfacts.census.gov>)

West Lafayette has a population of around 29,000, not including the Purdue population (39,000 students). West Lafayette is the most densely populated city in Indiana. The age distribution is spread out with 10.4% under the age of 18, 54.6% from 18 to 24, 16.9% from 25 to 44, 10.3% from 45 to 64, and 7.7% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 22 years. This age distribution reflects the high percentage of Purdue University students living in West Lafayette. (<http://www.stats.indiana.edu>)

West Lafayette is unique amongst other Indiana cities for its higher rate of population transiency, higher average level of education, and a higher rate of foreign born and foreign language speaking populations. The presence of Purdue University heavily influences the economy of Tippecanoe County. The university employs 15,338 people, most of whom live in either West Lafayette or Lafayette.

Substantial private industry and commerce also exist in Tippecanoe County. The top 10 employers in Tippecanoe County (<http://www.gipi.org/home/top-employers-tippecanoe-county>) are:

|                                  |        |
|----------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Purdue University             | 15,338 |
| 2. Subaru of Indiana Automotive  | 3,273  |
| 3. St. Elizabeth Regional Health | 2,100  |
| 4. Wabash National               | 1,900  |
| 5. Clarian Arnett Health         | 1,783  |
| 6. Caterpillar                   | 1,633  |
| 7. Lafayette School Corp.        | 1,250  |
| 8. Wal-Mart                      | 1,202  |
| 9. Tippecanoe School Corp.       | 1,015  |
| 10. Fairfield Manufacturing      | 903    |

Only 37% of Tippecanoe County residents are affiliated with a religious congregation. The Indiana county average is 50%. 36% of Tippecanoe County religious adherents are Roman Catholic. The Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Lutheran protestant denominations have the next largest number of adherents. (<http://www.city-data.com>)

A 2010 community survey conducted by the Community Foundation of Greater Lafayette found six areas of priority for Tippecanoe County Residents. The priority areas, in order of importance, were Children and Youth, Education, Health, Environment, Arts and Culture, and Diversity. ([http://www.cfglaf.org/newsevents/2010\\_Needs\\_narrative\\_public.pdf](http://www.cfglaf.org/newsevents/2010_Needs_narrative_public.pdf))

The Long Range Planning Team identified several other things that Tippecanoe County residents are passionate about. These included family, sports, fitness, food, community, and all things Purdue.

The Team also identified several areas of need within Tippecanoe County. These areas included parental involvement in kids' lives, basic life skills, debt/financial training, dependable childcare, children's playgrounds (particularly in West Lafayette), care and treatment for those suffering from mental illness, child and teen mentorship (including after-school programs), and parenting and marriage skills.

## V. Where We Are Going

### *Core Theological Values*

While the Long Range Planning Team considered formulating specific value statements for Riverside, the Team concluded that Riverside ultimately affirms the theological values of our network of churches, the Evangelical Covenant Church. These affirmations are fundamental truths that are lived out uniquely within Riverside, but also unite us with the universal Church throughout history.

**We affirm the centrality of the word of God.** We believe the Bible is the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct. The dynamic, transforming power of the word of God directs Riverside and the life of each Christian. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

**We affirm the necessity of the new birth.** New birth in Christ means committing ourselves to him and receiving forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life. It means being alive in Christ, and this life has the qualities of love and righteousness, joy and peace. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

**We affirm a commitment to the whole mission of the Church.** Riverside follows Christ's two central calls. The Great Commission sends us out into the entire world to make disciples. The Great Commandment calls us to love the Lord our God and our neighbors as ourselves. (Matthew 22:37-39; Matthew 28:19-20)

**We affirm the Church as a fellowship of believers.** Riverside is not an institution, organization, or building. We are a grace-filled community of believers who participate in the life and mission of Jesus Christ. We are a united family of equals. (Galatians 3:28)

**We affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit.** It is the Holy Spirit who enables our obedience to Christ and conforms us to his image, and it is the Spirit in us that enables us to continue Christ's mission in the world. (Acts 1:8)

**We affirm the reality of freedom in Christ.** United in Christ, we offer freedom to one another to differ on issues of belief or practice where the biblical and historical record seems to allow for a variety of interpretations of the will and purposes of God. Riverside seeks to focus on what unites us as followers of Christ, rather than on what divides us. (Galatians 5:1)

A more thorough explanation of these Affirmations can be found at  
<http://www.covchurch.org/resources/files/2010/04/CovenantAffirmationsBooklet.pdf>.

## *Mission Statement*

The Long Range Planning Team formulated a mission statement to specifically identify what Riverside wants to do. Riverside's mission is:

**“To glorify God by becoming disciples of Jesus Christ who share life in authentic community and transform the world through God’s love, truth and power.”**

The rightful purpose of human existence is to give glory to God. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.”

The question for us then becomes, how do we glorify God?

**We glorify God through our relationships.**

The Bible describes three relationships that glorify God: a relationship with God, a relationship with believers, and a relationship with others. Sometimes these relationships are illustrated through the movements up, in, and out. Up towards God. In towards Christian community. Out towards others.



Jesus also emphasizes these relationships.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:37-39)

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20)



“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Riverside’s Mission Statement intentionally incorporates each of these relationships.

**Glorify God by:**

**. . . becoming disciples** (relationship with God)

**. . . who share life** (relationship with believers)

**. . . and transform the world** (relationship with others)

**1. We are becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, which deepens our relationship with God.**

In John 8:31, Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.” At some point in our lives we start to love and follow God, but this is just the beginning. Disciples learn everything they can about Jesus through the bible and prayer and seek to follow him more and more. Our earthly journeys to become like Jesus never end. We are all works in progress that are continually “becoming.” We passionately pursue God to grow in our understanding and experience of him. James assures us if we “come near to God and he will come near to you.” (James 4:8)

**Are we becoming more like Jesus in our thoughts and actions?**  
(Romans 8:29)

**2. We share life in authentic community, which deepens our relationship with believers.**

Disciples of Jesus were never intended to follow Jesus alone. We need other believers to encourage us to grow in our faith. (Hebrews 10:24-25; Proverbs 27:17) We need to share our joys and concerns with other people and to experience their love for us. In this community God calls us to be authentic and not to act like we are someone that we are not. (Matthew 6:1) Christian community is not a place to pretend that we are perfect, but a place to admit that we are all broken and in need of God and each other. We are called to be a unified, joyful, and forgiving body of believers that demonstrate our commitment to one another through love. (Philippians 2:2; 1 Peter 1:8; Matthew 6:12; 1 John 4:7-12; Acts 2:44-47)

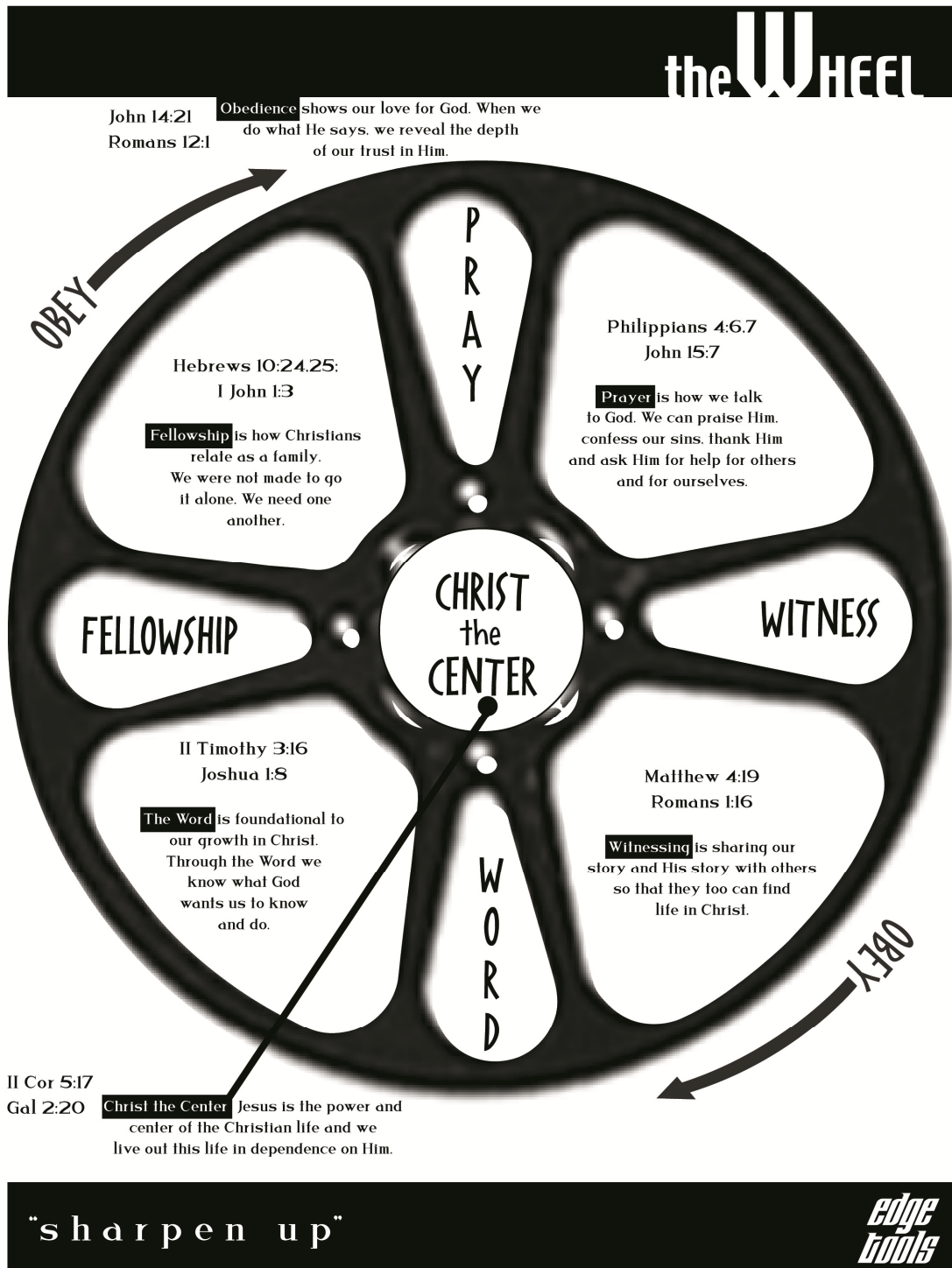
**Do we share our joys and sins with believers?**  
(Philippians 2:17-18; James 5:16)

### **3. We transform the world through God's love, truth and power, which deepens our relationship with others.**

Ultimately, we do not believe that the Good News of Jesus is just for us. We believe it is the "the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes." (Romans 1:16) We believe that God has given us the earthly task of partnering with him in the transformation of the world. (1 Corinthians 3:9; Matthew 5:13; Matthew 5:16; Matthew 28:19) We transform the world by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and by serving those in need with our time, talents and resources. We join in God's Kingdom coming and his will being done on earth, as it is in heaven. (Matthew 5:10) We cannot transform anything of value on our own, but rely on the love of God, the truth of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit to do works of transformation through us.

**Do we transform the lives of others through our personal relationships?**  
**(Acts 1:8; Matthew 9:37-38)**

The Long Range Planning Team utilized The Navigators Wheel Illustration (below) to conceptualize how the various elements of Riverside's Mission Statement work together to form the Christian life. Each element is essential in creating structure for the wheel. Many people add a fifth spoke to the wheel, which is service. When each element is functioning correctly with Christ as the center, the wheel moves forward smoothly and in accord with God's designs.



## *Biblical Narrative*

Riverside's biblical narrative is a story or image from the Bible that helps to illustrate what Riverside will look like when we are living our core theological values and accomplishing our mission.

"They are like a tree planted by streams of water,  
which yields its fruit in season  
and whose leaf does not wither—  
whatever they do prospers." (Psalm 1:3)

This imagery not only captures the fruitfulness that we desire in our lives and in our ministry, but it grounds our name and geography. We are not only river-side to the Wabash River; we seek to be river-side to the presence and movement of God. We want to be planted by God's nourishment, to be healthy and spiritually productive, and to be deeply rooted to endure difficulty and hardship. We want to be prosperous not in the ways of our world, but in accomplishing our God-given mission.

## **VI. How We Will Get There**

### *Objectives*

Over the time that the Long Range Planning Team met, the Team literally discussed hundreds of ideas. The Team recorded each of these ideas and has made them available to the Riverside Staff and Leadership Team to consider on an on-going basis. Through these ideas the Team formulated specific objectives that they believe Riverside should begin focusing on now. These objectives are intended to help Riverside bridge the gap between what we are currently doing and what we want to do in order to more fully express our mission. Some of the Team's objectives are long-term and others have already begun to be implemented. The objectives are categorized based upon Riverside's goal of deepening our relationship with God, our relationship with believers, and our relationship with others. There is significant overlap as many objectives should deepen all of these relationships.

### **. . . becoming disciples (relationship with God)**

#### **1. Increase opportunities for faith formation.**

**Description:** Riverside is a diverse people at various stages in our spiritual journeys. Thus, it is vital that we provide spiritual growth opportunities for people at multiple places on the spiritual maturity spectrum. Non-believers need opportunities to explore their questions in safe environments. New believers need opportunities to learn the basics of the Christian life. Mature believers need to be challenged and instructed to lead. Riverside should not settle for the "middle of the road," but seek to provide diverse spiritual growth opportunities.

**Action:** Courses in Christian theology and Bible fundamentals should be offered. Based upon results from the 2011 congregational survey Riverside should focus on Sunday as the most effective time for faith formation courses. Riverside should regularly consider the time of the Sunday worship services and altering the Sunday schedule to accommodate the most participation in faith formation opportunities. Riverside should establish a Christian Formation Ministry Team responsible for selecting courses to offer, instructors, and times for meeting. Riverside should consider creative options for helping congregants integrate their faith with their daily lives.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Leadership Team and congregation should establish a Christian Formation Ministry Team that can work towards this objective.

## **2. Intentional evangelism training.**

**Description:** Riverside has grown numerically over the past few years, but most of this growth has come from the addition of believers rather than by the conversions of non-believers. This is not bad. We are grateful that Christians find community and spiritual growth with Riverside, but we also want to be a church that successfully shares the Gospel with non-believers. Learning to share our faith effectively is one of Riverside's greatest needs.

**Action:** Riverside should help people develop their personal testimonies in a manner that will facilitate quick and easy sharing with non-believers. Riverside's language and actions should communicate our belief that evangelism is most effectively done through personal relationships rather than through church events or programs. Additionally, Sunday testimonies and sermons should include the topic of evangelism. Riverside should periodically offer a course, "How to Share Your Faith," helping people to develop their personal testimonies. Riverside should have a sermon series helping congregants develop a passion for evangelism and outreach (e.g. the Book of Acts).

**Responsibility:** The Christian Formation Ministry Team should create or find evangelism courses to offer on Sundays or within Small Group discussions. The Riverside Pastor should organize a sermon series on the book of Acts or other texts that share our call to reach the lost.

## **3. Develop a culture of prayer.**

**Description:** Riverside has taken steps to improve our communication with God through prayer, but should continue to stretch us in this way. Given Riverside's higher than average education level and other tendencies towards an intellectual-only faith, Riverside must continue to encourage growth in understanding and experiencing the work and power of the Holy Spirit. Riverside does not have a charismatic identity, but desires to be more open to and aware of the movement of the Holy Spirit amongst us. Regular prayer together is a vital element of a healthy missional church.

**Action:** Riverside should more intentionally demonstrate our "conscience dependence on the Holy Spirit" through prayer. Everything we do as a church should be covered in prayer. Riverside should include in our Sunday worship services opportunities for people to share personal stories of spirit-empowered transformation, answered prayers and unexplainable God moments. Corporate prayer should be a regular part of the Sunday worship services in a variety of forms. Prayer should be offered for congregants at least at the end of worship services on the first Sunday of every month and the congregation should be encouraged to pray immediately for people as there is need. Special events for corporate prayer should also be organized throughout the year.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Prayer Team, in conversation with the Riverside Staff, will provide ideas, support and organization for this objective.

#### **4. Offer a smorgasbord of spiritual growth opportunities.**

**Description:** Rather than prescribe a particular set of things that all of Riverside should do, we recognize that each of us are unique and need different things at different times in our lives. Thus, Riverside should not offer one spiritual growth path that everyone must follow, but provide many opportunities at different times to encourage participation.

**Action:** Riverside should communicate that our desire is for people to be involved in at least “Sunday +1.” Sunday +1 is involvement in our Sunday worship service and one other regular spiritual growth opportunity that might include the Men’s and Women’s Bible studies, Prayer Team, Adult Sunday School, a discipleship relationship, or Small Group.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Staff and Leadership Team will work with Riverside Ministry Teams to accomplish this objective.

#### **5. Include personal testimonies as a regular part of the Sunday worship services.**

**Description:** God has created us to be in relationship with one another. We need to see and hear stories of others seeking to follow Jesus so that our own faith can be encouraged. Riverside should publicly share examples of the work that God is doing in each others’ lives. This should not just include how we committed our lives to Christ, but also things that God is doing in our lives currently. These stories of God’s work will provide practical examples of what God is doing amongst us.

**Action:** Riverside should regularly include personal testimonies of the work that God is doing in attendee’s lives. People should share about God’s work in their lives not less than once per month.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Staff will work with the Riverside Ministry Team leaders and congregation to coordinate this effort.

### **. . . who share life (relationship with believers)**

#### **6. Increase emphasis on Small Groups.**

**Description:** Riverside Small Groups are a pivotal connection point for authentic relational contact. As Riverside has grown numerically and transitioned into two Sunday worship services, it has become increasingly difficult for people to connect with other believers on a personal level. It is unrealistic that relational depth can be developed on Sunday mornings alone. Thus, Small Groups should become a primary way that Riverside connects with each other deeply.

**Action:** Small Groups should be regularly discussed and encouraged. Small Groups should be given freedom to make their groups unique to meet the spiritual needs of the participants, but should be centered on God and God's work in the participants' lives. This will take many organizational forms. Training should be offered regularly to equip Small Group leaders with the skills necessary to properly guide and care for Small Group members.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Staff and Leadership Team will coordinate this effort.

## **7. Encourage personal relationships in all ministries.**

**Description:** Relationships are vital to our identity at all levels. The Sunday worship service should exhibit our emphasis on relationships not just with God, but also with each other. Additionally, Riverside desires for our fellowship events to be more than simply spending time together in the same space. We want them to be places where people meet for the first time or strengthen existing relationships through conversation. Riverside's fellowship events will then function as bridges for deeper interactions at different times.

**Action:** Riverside should have all-church community opportunities at least quarterly and should consider a monthly or even weekly meal together. Riverside community events should include creative elements such as discussion starters on tables, creative seating charts, or other methods to increase interaction. Ministry Team leaders and persons directly involved in various events should make the Sunday announcements relevant to the events when possible. The worship service should regularly include a "meet and greet" during the service. This not only connects people to one another, but reminds us that we do not worship God alone, but literally alongside other believers. Additionally, Riverside should have Name Tag Months in March, September and December. This relieves the tension of not knowing someone's name over long periods of time and encourages conversation. Finally, "Getting to Know" biographies of families should be included in the e-newsletter or other regular publication.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Staff and Leadership Team will coordinate this effort.

## **8. Create clear paths for new involvement in the life of Riverside.**

**Description:** We want people to know what our church offers and how to get involved in our various opportunities. Riverside does not want to become a community of cliques, but a community where new involvement is encouraged and easy.

**Action:** Riverside should create and maintain a database of congregant skills and interests. We currently have a computer database of contact information, birthdays, anniversaries, etc., but would benefit from knowing more about our attendees. Riverside should review our current methods of communication and develop new communication methods where needed. Additionally, Riverside should review its current website and social media use to determine whether those tools could be used to effectively encourage new involvement. Riverside should have a clear path of involvement and follow-up from the moment a new attendee walks into our Sunday worship service.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Staff should review our current communication methods in conversation with the congregation and determine changes that should be made. The Riverside Staff and Leadership Team should select people from the congregation gifted in these areas to review our website and social media options.

## **9. Ensure that Riverside is actively cared for spiritually.**

**Description:** Riverside should ensure that every regular attendee and member feels connected to Riverside and that they are cared for as needed and desired. We do not want anyone to “fall through the cracks” of our spiritual care. We want to take advantage of our belief in the “priesthood of all believers” and encourage congregants to take responsibility for each others’ spiritual care.

**Action:** Riverside should broaden the responsibility for spiritual care beyond the Riverside Staff and consider options for Riverside families being cared for by lay “shepherds” or their Small Group leaders with consultation with the Riverside staff when needed. The purpose of a Shepherding Team is to compliment the Staff’s spiritual care not to replace it or interfere with it.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Leadership Team should consider various options for increasing the involvement of lay people in the spiritual care of the congregation.

## **. . . and transform the world (relationship with others)**

### **10. Create an Outreach Ministry Team.**

**Description:** Although Riverside currently has a Missions Ministry Team that facilitates our communication with Riverside supported missionaries around the world, Riverside does not have a team dedicated to helping us connect with and serve Tippecanoe County. This team should have two interconnected goals: evangelism and outreach. We should assemble a group of people passionate about serving those in need in our community and encourage them to create relationships and projects that will help Riverside to be Jesus’ hands and feet. Riverside has repeatedly proven our ability to raise funds for various causes, but we want to continue to stretch our willingness to dedicate time and ourselves to outreach, missions, and evangelism.

**Action:** The Outreach Ministry Team should work with the Christian Formation Ministry Team to design evangelism training and conversations to encourage sharing the Gospel. The Outreach Ministry Team should also organize local missions opportunities centered on God’s care for orphans, widows, poor and foreigners. Their efforts should be in conversation with the Missions Team and coordinated together when helpful. Riverside should have a supportive presence in Tippecanoe County at community events and other gathering places for Tippecanoe County. The Outreach Ministry Team should also collect Riverside and Tippecanoe County needs and work with the Riverside Staff to discern the best use of the Riverside Benevolence Fund on a case-by-case basis. Additionally, Riverside should organize a long-distance mission trip.

**Specific Emphasis:** Rather than suggest specific outreach ideas for Riverside, the Long Range Planning Team designed an Outreach Development Tool intended to ensure that outreach opportunities are consistent with Riverside’s mission. As the Outreach Ministry Team is formed, this framework will function to provide broad parameters, but also allow freedom for the Ministry Team to pursue and develop congregational passions as they encounter them.



The following four priorities should guide the Outreach Ministry Team:

1. Christ-centered, God-directed, scriptural, and evangelistic.  
(1 Corinthians 1:18; Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 1:16)

Riverside outreach is done in response to the work that God has already done through Jesus Christ. Initiatives, no matter how great, that do not arise from our desire and call to serve God will be worthless. We do not want to do things because they are good, but because God has called us to them. We will go anywhere and do anything for God that does not contradict the Bible. Although Riverside's outreach efforts will not always involve an overt Gospel presentation, our efforts will be grounded in our desire for all to come to know Jesus Christ as Lord.

2. Personal, relational, organic.  
(Micah 6:8; Matthew 4:19; Matthew 25:35-36, 40; 1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 6:7)

Riverside's outreach will be most effective when it facilitates interactions that foster the development of personal relationships. We believe that outreach is increasingly effective as relationships grow deeper. We will give priority to missions and outreach opportunities that involve personal contact with those we are supporting or ministering to. We believe that relationships are the most fertile ground for God's work through us. We cannot force God's work, but can help to create environments where it is more likely to take place organically.

3. Sustainable, long-term, fruitful.  
(Malachi 3:10; James 2:12-13; Matthew 25:21; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Matthew 6:21)

Riverside realizes that transformation nearly always takes time and is rarely easy. We will give priority to outreach opportunities that do not simply provide aid, but encourage sustainable solutions that will lessen the likelihood of reoccurring issues. We want to commit to people for the long-term and build trust. We want to be workers of compassion, mercy and justice in all that we do. We expect our partnership with God to produce fruit in the lives of those we work with. Sometimes our steps will be small and seem insignificant, but we expect to participate in transformation that is immeasurably more than we could hope or imagine.

4. Prayer and discernment.  
(Psalm 37:7; James 4:8; Luke 11:9-11; Deuteronomy 4:7)

Riverside seeks to listen to God before acting. Outreach can sometimes raise difficult issues about methods and the line between being in the world and being of the world. Riverside will not simply use human wisdom to determine how we should act at various times and in various places. We commit to seeking God and seeking godly discernment in choosing which outreach and evangelism opportunities that God is calling us to pursue. In our boldness we will take risks for the Gospel and trust that the Spirit is empowering us.

**Responsibility:** The Riverside Leadership Team and congregation should establish an Outreach Ministry Team that will address this objective. The Riverside Staff should organize the long-distance mission trip.