

RIVERSIDECHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

2023





*Flowing in the
Presence of the
Holy Spirit*

*Growing the
Family of God*

*Going into the
Mission of
Jesus Christ*

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SENIOR PASTORS REPORT

Aran & Rachel Richardson | Senior Pastors

There is no doubt that Riverside Church is a busy place, there are so many different things going on that it's easy to get caught up in the busyness and forget to celebrate the good things. Celebration is essential for our well-being and the health of our communities; it uplifts our spirits and strengthens our resilience and brings us closer together.

The sharing of our annual vision report helps us to focus on the positive outcomes of the year and celebrate our victories. This report is an expression of gratitude to all the people who have invested into the life of the church during the last year. It is a celebration of joy that comes as a breath of fresh air in direct contrast to the chaos and challenges we see on the news every day. I am reminded of the goodness in our church which helps us to celebrate and appreciate the beauty that God has chosen to surround us with.

We are reminded in the Bible that "the joy of the Lord is your strength," and so as we read this report let us respond in joy and celebration because of all that he has done in the last 12 months.



The divine assignment we hold to as a church is to FLOW | GROW | GO. Flow in the presence of the Holy Spirit, grow the family of God and go on the mission of Jesus Christ.

We celebrate the opportunity we have had to study and understand the word of God together with our regular weekly preaching series covering the 10 Commandments (TEN Series), a Night & Day Prayer series covering Thanksgiving. Worship, Intercession, Confession, Repentance, Revelation, Glory and Fasting; The Transformation Encounters of the RESURRECTION; Creating an Apostolic ATMOSPHERE (Ephesians 4:11) and the Jesus is GREATER than Series on Colossians. We have had incredible guest speakers such as Rachel & Gordon Hickson (Heartcry Ministries), Ian Williams, Angela Gaeta (Life Church Vienna) and Chris Murry (Pennywell Farm).

We celebrate that we were able to re-initiate our Global mission strategy by sending out 2 teams of over 20 people to Africa (Kenya & Rwanda). We hosted a 'Living & Telling' Evangelism Course, we launched our 'Warm Spaces' Initiative, we held a Day & Night Prayer Conference in January, a Guitar-Aid benefit Gig in April with James Kirby, a family event to Pennywell Farm, the young adults went off to the Big Church Day Out Festival whilst the children and young people went off to Spree (a camping and activity weekend).

We celebrated the lives of Peter Corney & Martyn Cayley who both served Riverside Church faithfully as they were promoted to Glory, where they now are celebrating in eternity.

We celebrated the joyous weddings as Chris & Lyn (Riverside Exmouth), Matt & Amber, Mason & Amanda, Beth & Levi and PJ and Kay got married.

We celebrate our Leadership development programme with Joshua as he began his Ministerial Training with AOG, Rachel will complete her ordination process in May 2024 and Levi is due to start his training next Summer. We also would like to celebrate Dave Sumner and Chris Lonsdale as they were formally invited to join the church leadership team.

So, let's take a moment to savour a cup of coffee, read this report and thank God for all he has done this year. Building a culture of celebration is not just about individual moments of joy; it's about creating a collective mindset and atmosphere of gratitude and joy. As you read this report, choose to celebrate and uplift one another, it will create a ripple effect that spreads positivity and resilience throughout our church and wider community.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chris Lonsdale | Chairman (Riverside Board of Directors)

I'd like to start by honouring John Rogers who, after 12 years of sterling leadership, has recently handed the baton of Chairman over to me. John has left the church in a stable and strong position, and I am absolutely delighted that John will continue serving on the Board as Finance Director. The other Board members are Adrian Bartlett, Helen Buswell and Aran and Rachel Richardson who, together, form a highly skilled, insightful and trustworthy team.

This year has seen society as a whole breaking free from the shackles of enforced lockdown; it has been terrific to see how the church has grown spiritually, and great to get to know many new friends joining us during the last 12 months. Some have even taken the amazing step of being baptised in the sea at Exmouth. Speaking of which, our church plant, Riverside Exmouth, continues to grow and it has been wonderful that so many people are rolling up their sleeves to make it such a success.

We have been blessed to have two interns join us for the last year, Marlene from Austria and Mateus from Brazil. Both have worked tirelessly within the church and with school and youth ministries. As an organisation, we are moving away from the PAIS model of internship and investing in a structured, Riverside-driven internship programme led by Josh Richardson. This is a hugely exciting development and it's fantastic that Mateus will be staying with us for another year and will be one of the first to experience the new, focused training programme, with others joining him shortly thereafter. Marlene meanwhile has felt called back to her home church and we want to thank and honour her for the amazing work that she has been a part of.

The last year has seen a step-change in prayer, led by Levi and Beth Sarmiento Rodrigues. There has been prayer within the building at some point during most days, with pre-service prayer rising up to another level entirely. We have been so blessed to experience greater freedom in the gifts of the Spirit, with so many more people making first time commitments.

The global missions team continues to grow and develop relationships with Missions Partners around the world. It was a particular delight to commission short term mission trips to Kenya and Rwanda, with more being planned for the coming year.

The Board are pleased to have started remunerating Rachel Richardson for 1 day a week, in recognition of her role as Senior Pastor, alongside Aran. The balance of Rachel's time will continue to be voluntary. Meanwhile, Josh's hours have been increased to enable the new internship programme to start well.



Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank and honour all of the leaders, staff and volunteers, every one of whom go above and beyond the call to help make Riverside an inviting place where we welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit, build the family of God and share together in the mission of Jesus Christ! Thank you!

'I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it' Matt 16:18

FINANCE REPORT

John Rogers | Financial Director

Jesus says in Mat 6:21 *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"*. The truth of God's tithes and offerings is that we bring ourselves closer to him when we give. Giving puts our love for God before our worldly wealth and shows that our heart is always with him.

Our accounts run from April22 to March23 so the figures that follow relate to that period. A full set of accounts can be found at Companies House at www.gov.uk.

Thank you to everyone who has given so generously over the last year. Our income for the year from offerings alone was an amazing £151,600. This was topped up by gift aid of £25,300. We are blessed with a wonderful building and have received £31,700 in rental / conference income. Alongside the café and other income, we have achieved a total income of £223,900.

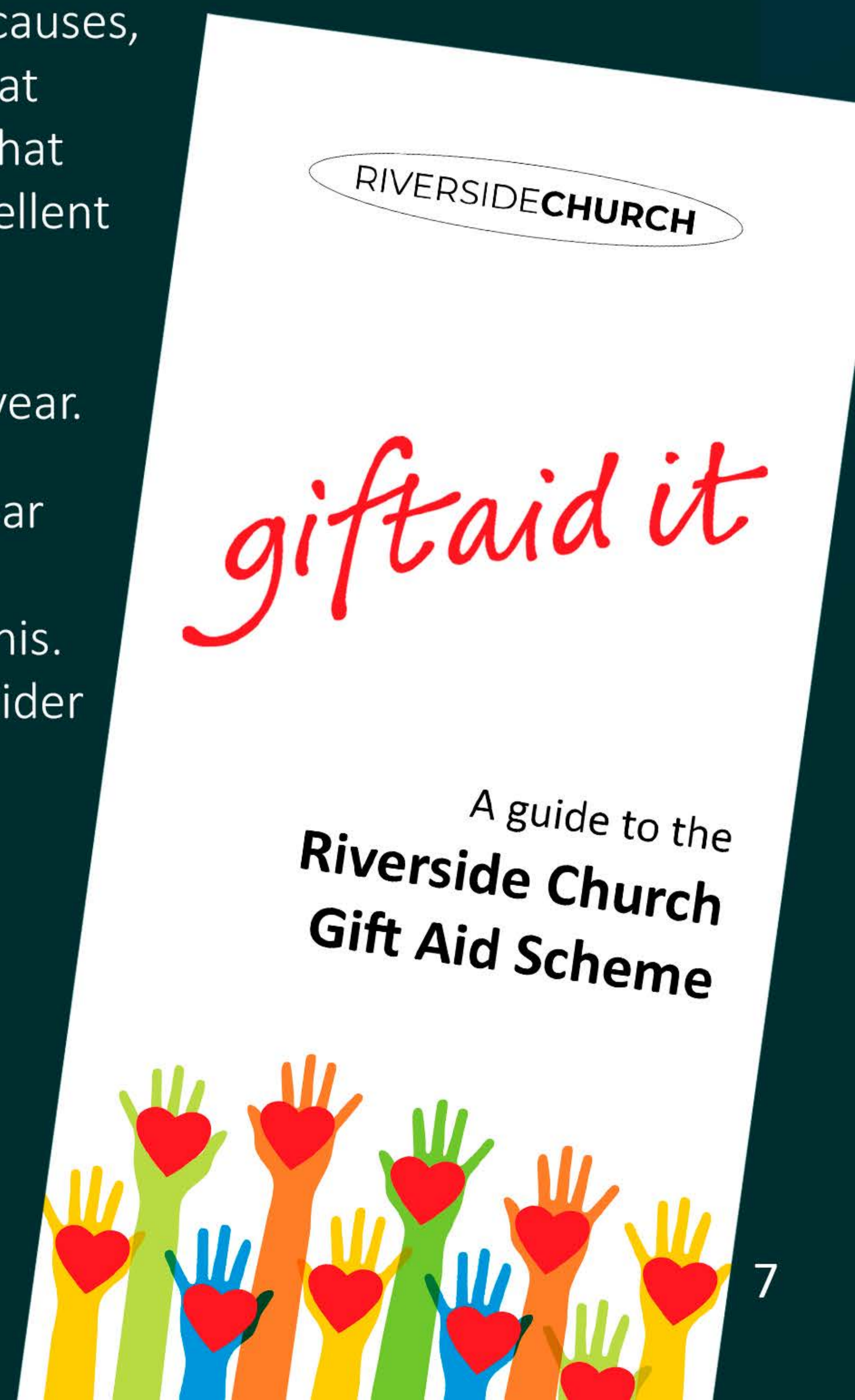
We aim to distribute at least 10% of our income to worthy causes, including missions, and I am pleased to say we exceeded that amount for the first time in many years to just over 11.5% that is nearly £26,000. Another major expense is paying our excellent team members which accounts for just over 40% of our expenditure. Our total expenditure was £215,133.

As a result we transferred £8,787 into our reserves for the year.

We have just completed 5 months into our new financial year (Apr-Aug). I realise that the cost of living is having a severe impact on everyone, and the Church is not excluded from this. If you are not giving via gift aid and pay tax, would you consider this as it's totally free and raises your giving by 25%?

There is a leaflet explaining how this works so please speak to me and I can help you out. If you have not had a chance to review your regular giving, could I ask that you prayerfully do so?

I am happy to answer any questions that you may have concerning the finances of the church. Please email me at finance@loveexeter.com or just ask!



RIVERSIDE KIDS

Marc & Emily Bond

It's been a fun few months in kids service on Sunday, and we have seen God move in incredible ways. Our numbers have grown over recent months, which has been a great blessing.

For our Sunday meetings, we have been using the Energize Urban Saints curriculum (www.energize.uk.net) to structure the sessions, and we have been following a template of:

1. Meet up all together with one of the children saying a prayer.
2. Separating into two groups (younger and older).
3. Having Bible study in the form of reading and discussion (older group) and interactive story and questions (younger group).
4. Art and craft session.
5. Team games.
6. Group gathering, snack and video related to the topic[s] studied.

The focus this season has been to unpack a 'year one syllabus' on Energize. For the children, this has opened up the Christian calendar in a more visible way and linked the key Biblical people into the celebrated events.

Following a team lunch at Church we have come up with a few changes to the Sunday Kids Service. Due to numbers, we are dividing the groups into ages 3–8 and 9-11; this will help with dividing up numbers more equally. We've also moved onto more ambitious subject matter on Energize to challenge the older age group.

We are praying for God to build opportunities for deeper study. We are hoping that the children can bring their situations / experiences / problems to Church, read Scripture, identify truth and see the relevance of how this links to their lives. We want the children to see that the Bible is relevant and life fulfilling, rather than something disjointed and confusing.

We look forward to another season of seeing God move.





MESSY CHURCH

Lesley Smith

Messy Church has been a great success for Riverside, reaching out to families in the community who have never been to a Sunday service, here or at other churches. The atmosphere is always wonderful, with children and adults actively engaging in the whole experience of Messy Church.

We pray with the families at the start of each Messy Church, through the whole session and at the end, ensuring Jesus remains at the centre of all we do.

The team of volunteers are amazing and it is a wonderful team to be part of. It couldn't possibly work without everyone involved and a few hours given up once every 7 weeks to serve the church and community.

In order for us to continue to grow, we always need more people to join our team, whether it be for the Welcome, Food, Activities or Worship.



RIVERSIDE YOUTH

Josh & Chloe Richardson

Encounter Youth (Sunday Morning)

Wow!! What a brilliant year we have had with our Encounter Youth. The highlight was going to SPREE, it was such a great time of being together, of experiencing the presence of God and worshipping him. We also saw one of our amazing Youth making the decision to be baptised in September. As we go into 2024 we are believing for growth in this group and greater levels of encounters with God's presence.



Friday Night Youth

In the academic year, 2022/2023 we've seen 139 different Young people from the local area come through the doors of our church through the means of our Youth Club.

This means 139 young people have heard the gospel, many if not all have been encouraged, lots prayed for, some have prayed prayers for themselves. We've even had stories of young people telling other young people about how they have been prayed for at Youth before and been healed which is amazing!! We are looking forward to seeing more fruit from this ministry, please pray we see Young people getting saved and entering into relationships with Jesus.

Schools work

We really do have a reason to celebrate from the growth we've seen in our schools work in the last year. In September 2022 we launched a Christian 'Explore Club' in our local high school. This is the first time ever that there has been a club like this in the school. We're seeing young people from our Friday Night Youth Club go to the after school club in school and vice versa.

YOUNG ADULTS

Josh & Chloe Richardson

We are so pleased to see the Young Adults group at Riverside continue to grow in both numbers and spirituality. We are seeing upwards of 25 gathering together every Monday evening and a group full of people who love Jesus and each other deeply. The group continues to be welcoming and kind, richly blessing the church with their service in many ministries in the church.

Some reasons to celebrate...

- We had the privilege of baptising 4 more of our Young Adults this year.
- We have celebrated weddings as couples in the group have got married.
- We also took a group of 21 of our Young Adults to Big Church Day Out, which was an amazing time of being together and worshipping Jesus.

We really believe that our Young Adults are the leaders of the next generation and so please pray for us as they continue to grow in their relationship with Jesus and the call of God on their lives!



Internship Programme

We were so blessed by our church interns, Marlene and Mateus who served so faithfully in so many different ways in 2022/23. They were such an addition to the church serving in almost every ministry in the church at some point. We are so pleased that Mateus has made the decision to stay on with us and serve Riverside for another year in 2023/24.

We are enjoying the new Internship training sessions, happening each week on a Friday morning for Young Adults. This is an amazing opportunity for those who can commit to it, to be intentionally invested into, encouraged and challenged in their faith!

We are also really excited to receive the new interns who are looking to join us from Jan 24.

CAFÉ HEROES

Angela Rogers

Listen and Share | Pray and Praise
Support and Encourage | Laugh and Learn

Café Heroes continues to meet fortnightly throughout the year and has welcomed new members in the past year both from Riverside and the community.

It has been great to see smaller friendship groups develop meeting beyond a Café Heroes afternoon and the daytime Connect group now gathering on the alternate Thursday to Café Heroes has given the opportunity for weekly fellowship.

Many of the group volunteer within Riverside in various roles for example on the stewarding and hospitality teams and most significantly in the past year supporting outreach in the café.

During the past year we have had quiz and craft afternoons, listened to music, shared poems and much more. The group has discussed a variety of topics and always pray and worship together. We are grateful to those who have come along and led a session for us. Café Heroes are a generous group who have supported Force and Guitar Aid in the past year.

We are looking forward to welcoming more speakers in the coming year and would welcome new members into our friendly and supportive group.



*Listen and Share
Pray and Praise
Support and Encourage
Laugh and Learn*

PASTORAL CARE

Rachel Richardson | Senior Pastor

Pastoral Care in Riverside incorporates so many facets, and we feel incredibly blessed to have such an amazing team of people, serving our various programs. Our Connect Group leaders, our pastoral and prayer team, and the leaders of the various programs we have running throughout the church, work alongside each other simply sharing the love of Jesus to everyone who comes through our doors.

One of the things I love most about our team, is the support they offer throughout all of life's eventualities, whether that is celebrating the joy of a marriage, birth, baptism, or birthday, to walking through the storms of disappointment, sickness, job loss and grief, there is always someone available to talk to.

The team is committed to growing and learning so we can support everyone to the best of our ability, and we have recently been through further training run by the ACC (The association of Christian counselling) to ensure best practice and safeguarding is always adhered to.

We are very fortunate to have Claire Hardwick, who is a counsellor by profession, working alongside us, and on site to help support our training and offer more specialised support when necessary.



So a huge thank you to everyone who serves the vision, reflects our culture, and loves unconditionally, you truly show what the family of God should look like.

If you are new to Riverside or feel you need some extra support at this time, please let us know, and we will ensure that we get you connected as soon as possible.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

Levi & Beth Sarmiento Rodrigues

Since January 2023 we have had a total of 240 hours of prayer here in the building. This means we have had 40 hours of prayer every month and 10 hours per week. We would like to say a massive thank you to all the faithful prayer warriors who have been there praying behind the scenes.

Our goal for the next year is to expand on this and get more people involved in praying as a church. Therefore, we are branching our prayer slots outside of the building, meaning that if you can't attend the church to pray for 1 hour regularly, you can still join from home.

Furthermore, before every Sunday Service, we have a prayer meeting from 8:30 am to 10 am. Since we launched this, we've seen an increase in the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in our gatherings. Thank you, Jesus!

We are so blessed to have hosted a number of different prayer & worship events last year. These include the New Year's Eve Celebration, the Prayer Walk in February, the Ephesians Night, and the Prayer Meeting in Ocean/Exmouth (among others). Our biggest event of the year was the '12 Hours of Unstoppable Worship' which was held in April. A big thank you to everyone who came to serve or to participate on that day. Spending 12 hours as a church ministering to the heart of God was an honour.

We love worship and believe that prayer and worship go hand in hand in bringing glory to God. We are hoping to host more worship events over the next year (like the 12 hours of worship), which we will keep you posted about when we have the dates in the diary!

As a church, God has placed a desire in our hearts to create a regular lifestyle of worship in Riverside. Therefore, every Friday from 5 pm to 6:30 pm we have a Prayer and Worship set in the main auditorium. These worship nights will switch between having a full band and having acoustic sets. The whole church will be welcome to come at any point within the set; to bring a Bible or a notebook, to sit in God's presence listening to Him and ministering back to His heart.



Church Plant



RIVERSIDE EXMOUTH

Keith Tipple

Our desire is to see a church established in Exmouth, we have been meeting the first Sunday evening of each month over this past year in the venue called 'Ocean', situated on the seafront in Exmouth. This is a wonderful venue and of course well known to all the local people. We have around thirty local people meeting regularly along with approximately the same number that support from Riverside Exeter; they help us with the setting up of the musical equipment and leading in worship etc.

Along with this we have a weekly 'Connect Group' which gives people the opportunity of fellowship together on Tuesday evenings. We also meet together for times of prayer, and through street witnessing we have seen numbers of people coming to our gatherings. Our next steps are to increase from Monthly meetings to more regular Sunday gatherings, and also to increase the numbers in our 'Connect Group'. We give a warm welcome to all age groups.



ALPHA COURSE

Mike & Jo McMillan

Once again we have completed two Alpha courses over the last year. In both courses we have watched guests becoming closer to Jesus and to the church family. Quite simply, Alpha works: looking around in church on Sunday mornings, there are a number of people who have completed Alpha and I'm sure would acknowledge it has been a significant part of their spiritual growth. It would be wrong to say that Alpha alone ever converts anyone to Christianity but without doubt it has contributed to that journey for many of those who have taken part.

Alpha works because so many are involved: table hosts guiding conversations, hospitality team preparing and serving meals, people cooking cakes and others praying from their homes- a big thank-you to all involved. It works because we have a supportive church that prays and funds the meals, publicity etc. Most importantly it works when we all invite others, so please don't stop!

We have just started the latest Alpha. At the time of writing we are looking forward to an exciting group of guests and volunteers, but it isn't too late to invite others and please keep praying!



*Alpha
Summer
2023*

RIVERSIDE ACADEMY

Lynette Tapp

We meet once a month to explore a book or theme in depth. 2022 was the year of Revelation- looking at the rhythms and patterns found in this challenging book. The group felt understanding grow as we worked our way from start to finish. Jesus is coming back to his church!

Since September we have changed direction somewhat. We have focused on Colossians, combining learning new tools and methods of Bible study with looking deeper into this book, its background, and how it applies to us today. We have also created an online study platform, and are encouraging those who attend to continue their Bible study independently and in small groups. We are excited to see how this grows and develops, alongside passion for engaging with the Bible in a deep and meaningful way.



Riverside Academy is open to anyone who is wanting to go deeper into God's word. We meet on a Sunday at 5pm, and the format of the study is a mixture of presentation and group discussion- a chance to explore topics and concepts interactively. We hope to grow Bible knowledge and understanding in our church, and a love for the Word of God.

FOUR COFFEES

Keith Tipple



Our desire through what we have called 'Four Coffees' is simply to help new believers or people who have recently joined the church to understand a few of the important truths that are vital to our spiritual growth. We provide you with four simple studies, and also introduce you to a 'mentor' who has kindly volunteered to buy you 'four coffees' over a period of approximately four weeks. In a relaxed atmosphere over coffee you will be able to discuss with your mentor that particular week's study. We want everyone to feel welcomed and to build relationships and this is an ideal opportunity for that to take place. The studies cover topics like salvation and assurance, water baptism, how to share your story with others, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the importance of meeting together as a church. Please consider this and let us know if you would like to take up this opportunity. We are here to help you to grow in your Christian life. May God bless you richly.

GLOBAL MISSION

Chris Lonsdale

After what seems like such a long time waiting, 2023 has at last been the year when we've been able to go abroad on Mission Trips. After several years of planning and refining the mandate and model of Global Mission within Riverside, it has been so amazing to be able to send teams out to Kenya and Rwanda on short term missions.

February's trip to Kenya involved working with Riverside Church Kisumu, which was originally planted by Rose Lillie. Activities involved a mixture of practical help with building a toilet block, to preaching to thousands of people. Incredibly, approximately 1,000 people were saved during the 8 day trip.



June's mission to Rwanda linked up with our host Raphael Mushumba of Community Action for Mercy. The trip was centred around Kigali and the team were involved in such diverse activities as visiting a pre-school education centre, college education centre, co-operative savings and investment scheme, and culminating in an evangelistic open-air outreach event. Nearly 300 people were saved during this trip.

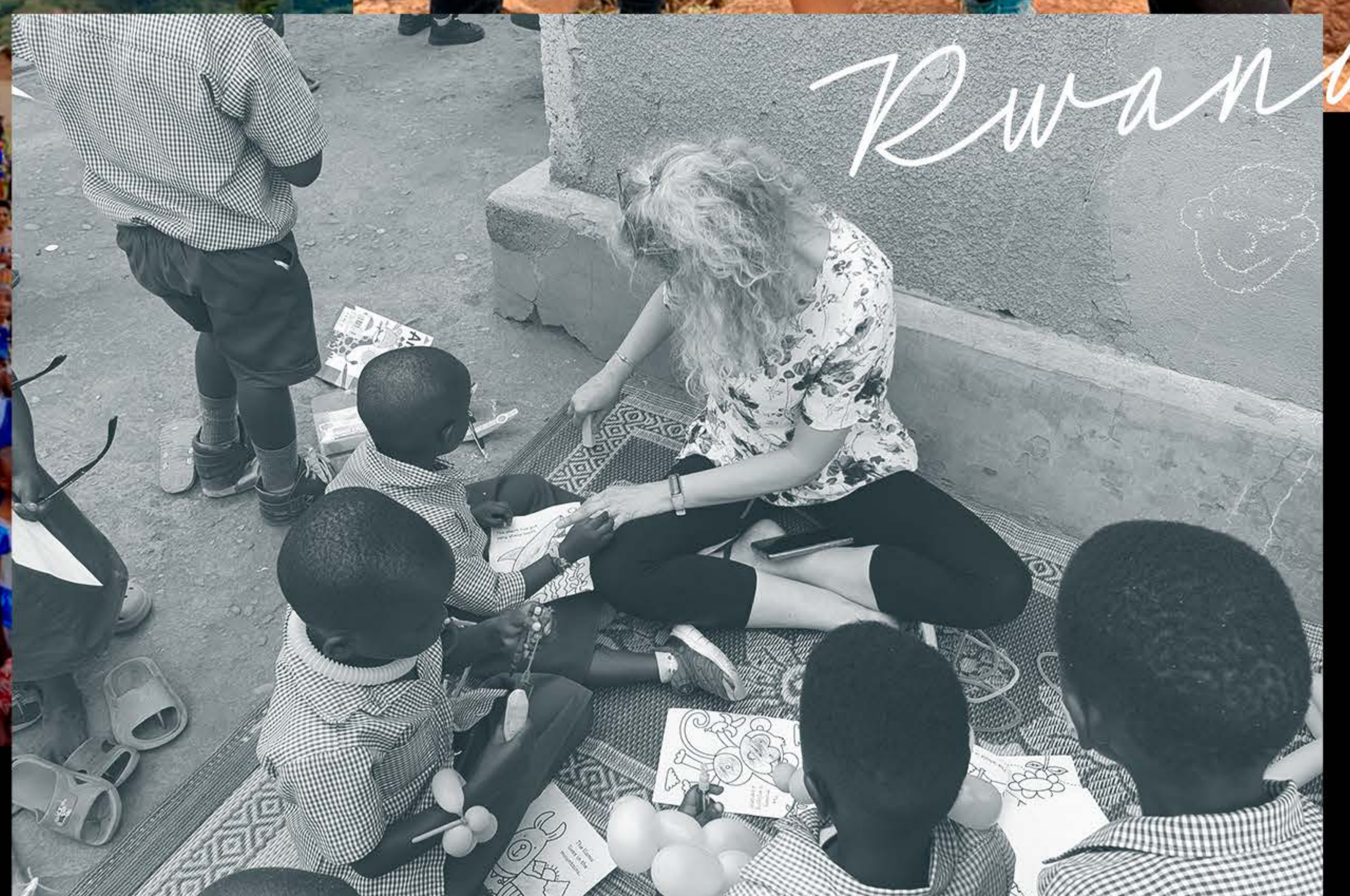
We would like to honour the team members from both trips, who consistently displayed the integrity, love and heart of God in such a humble yet profound way to those we met. The teams were stretched a lot but rose to overcome each challenge with grace and faith.

We have also been blessed with Mission-focused ministry in Riverside from Dave Sumner (Guitar Aid), Janet Wheeler (Ghana), Clare Mulrooney (International Justice Mission), Andy Hutchinson (Compassion UK) and others. We also want to thank Janet Wheeler and members of her home group for catering for the many Mission Lunches that we have had through the year, where we hear about some of the amazing things that God is doing overseas.

Looking ahead to 2024, we are in the very early stages of planning short term trips to Africa, south-east Asia and Europe. More exciting details to follow soon!



Liaising with our overseas Mission Partners, prayerfully strategizing with them and planning our trips is quite a complicated process, and I would like to honour and thank the members of the Global Mission Team who make it happen... Aran and Rachel Richardson, Janet Wheeler, Beth Rodrigues, Kate Matthews, Paul Shoemsmith, Dave Sumner, Paul Clace and Amy Lonsdale. We would also like to thank past members of the team who have done such an amazing job: Bethany Fison, Chie Min Teng and David Rust.



So please keep your eyes open for exciting mission opportunities happening during the next year, and prayerfully consider whether you would like to apply for a place on one of the trips! We want to give everyone within the Riverside family the opportunity to be involved with mission at some level, whether in prayer, financial support, or engagement on a trip.



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