

**UPCOMING SERMONS**

The theme for Lent is Christ giving us an example and the invitation to follow in His steps. Each week we will be looking at different examples that Christ shows us and how we can live into that. Please be reminded starting February 22 through April 2, we will be doing weekly communion, to remember what Christ has done.—Pastor Mario

**February 1** (Pastor Scott)  
God Offers Unity to His People  
Galatians 3:23-29

**February 08** (Pastor Scott)  
God Gives Us Good Gifts  
James 1:1-18

**February 15** (Pastor Scott)  
Following in His Steps  
1 Peter 2: 21-25

**February 18**  
Ash Wednesday Service 6:00 PM

**February 22:** (Pastor Mario)  
Dying to the Self  
Matthew 4:1-11

**March 1:** (Pastor Scott) (Family Sunday)  
Welcoming The Unthinkable  
Matthew 8:1-13

**March 8:** (Pastor Rick)  
The Invitation to Trust  
Matthew 14:22-36

**March 15:** (Pastor Mario)  
The Gift of Life  
Mark 2:21-43



**SECOND OFFERING SCHEDULE**

Every Sunday the offering bags are passed twice. The first offering goes to The River Life (or General) Fund. This is for the normal operation of the church. The second offerings are designated for a special purpose or for one of our Kingdom Partners.

- February 1:** Benevolence
- February 8:** Christian Education Fund
- February 15:** Missions
- February 22:** CarePortal

**SEASON OF LENT  
BEGINS WITH ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 6:00 PM**

The River will begin the observance of Lent with an Ash Wednesday Service, February 18, at 6:00 PM. The season of Lent lasts forty days (excluding Sundays) from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday, April 4, the Saturday before Easter Sunday. Lent is a time of preparation for Easter, a special time for self-reflection and confession. Often it is a period of meditating in a special way on the suffering and death of Jesus. Sundays are excluded because Sunday is always a day of celebrating the resurrection, a contrast to the more somber days of Lent.



The tone of the Ash Wednesday service will be reflective, focusing on confession and repentance. At the close of the service, pastors will invite those who wish, to come forward and have ashes gently applied to their forehead in the form of a cross.

The symbolism of the ashes comes out of the practice of mourning and repentance in the Old Testament. In Esther 4:1, when Mordecai learned of the plans to destroy the Jews he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes and went throughout the city. In Job 42:6, Job repented in dust and ashes. In Daniel 9:3, Daniel pleaded with God, "in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes." In the early church this practice continued. Although it was discontinued during the Reformation by Protestant churches, in recent times it has been reclaimed as a rite that can be significant in our spiritual lives.

The forty days of Lent are reminiscent of Israel's forty years in the wilderness and of Jesus's forty days in the desert. For the Israelites the time in the wilderness was a time of purification before entering into the Holy Land. For Jesus the forty days were a time of testing and temptation preparing him for his earthly ministry and for his ultimate suffering, death, and resurrection.

The forty-day period for Lent was set by the early church in the early seventh century. Again, the practice was rejected in the Reformation but has been resumed in many Christian churches today.



**Men's Ministry Golf Group Outing  
Saturday, February 7**

Men's Ministry Golf Group is having their first outing Saturday, February 7. Call Andrew Simpson at (909) 936-8765 if you are interested. Since tee times can't be booked until seven days before, the location and time will be announced Sunday, Feb 1. It will most likely be near Yucaipa around 12:30 PM. If you can't make it this time but would like to get involved, please contact Andrew so he can get you on the list.



**LOVE REDLANDS  
Saturday, February 21**

Mark your calendars! **Love Redlands** is happening on **February 21** from **8:30am–12:30pm**. This is a special event where The River partners with like-minded churches across Redlands to meet real needs that have been made known by our community.

Love Redlands exists to demonstrate unity among gospel-centered churches by serving alongside one another to demonstrate our love for our city in practical ways. The desire is that by participating in this event people and churches can build bridges of trust that can bear the weight of truth of the Gospel.

On the morning of Love Redlands, everyone will meet in Pathway's church parking lot on the corner of Redlands Blvd and Cypress Ave. After some time to pray together, teams will head out to assigned site locations around Redlands.

This year eleven churches are participating. Groups will work at over sixteen different locations. For those who have participated before, please wear your green Love Redlands shirts.



**Legacy Nights Continue February 11 & 25**

Legacy Nights continue in February with two options for adults: Chatty Crafts with Teri Heemstra and The Ray VanderLaan Discipleship Series led by David Oliver and Don Bueermann.

Chatty Crafts is an opportunity for participants to work on a craft Teri provides or to bring their own crafts and work on them while enjoying pleasant conversation with others.

The Ray VanderLaan Discipleship Series helps participants to learn to interpret the Bible through its Mideastern cultural context, exploring God's design for family, community, and our place in creation.

As always, dinner is served at 5:15 PM and Jeff Mercer and the kids lead a time of worship at 6:00 PM. Adult classes start at 6:15 PM.



**Legacy Nights Annual Souper Bowl Dinner  
Wednesday, February 11, 5:15 PM**

Legacy Nights Annual Souper Bowl Dinner is always a hit. If you are able and willing to bring a soup to share, please contact Debbie Bueermann at [Debbie@therivercrc.com](mailto:Debbie@therivercrc.com) or contact the church office at 909.798.2221.

**The River**  
*financial update*  
January 2026

*Financial Summary*

Fund	December, 2025			Fiscal Year to Date		
	Income	Expenses	Difference	Income	Expenses	Difference
River Life Fund	\$61,512	\$65,537	\$(4,025)	\$259,289	\$280,402	\$(21,113)
Mission Fund	\$3,166	\$2,700	\$466	\$11,619	\$10,800	\$819
CEF	\$2,547	\$3,100	\$(553)	\$12,400	\$12,400	\$-
Total	\$67,225	\$71,337	\$(4,112)	\$283,308	\$303,602	\$(20,294)

**COMMUNITY OF CARE LUNCHEON**  
**Sunday, February 15, 11:30**

The Community of Care Visitation Team will be gathering for a working lunch on Sunday, February 15, 11:30 AM. This luncheon is not to be confused with the Care Group Luncheons which will begin the following week.

If you think you might be interested in visiting people, or even making regular phone calls, you are invited to join us to find out more. Please let Pastor Rick know so that there is enough food.

The Community of Care Team exists to work with the pastors, office bearers, and staff to foster deeper levels of care and community as we support all members and regular attenders of the River Church. The team trains people to provide appropriate spiritual, emotional, and relational care. They create and support activities and events that can either train members to care well for each other or provide a sense of belonging where care is shared.

Thus far, the work of the Community of Care has focused on making sure senior adults feel connected and cared about as well as providing deeper care during times of special need. Over time, this will be extended to all members and regular attenders.

**ROSS AND SANDY COOPER  
RELOCATE TO NEW YORK CITY**

Ross and Sandy Cooper are moving to New York City to help provide childcare for their grandchildren there. Sandy left on Saturday, January 31. Ross will be joining her in the next couple of weeks after settling things here and getting an apartment there.



The move happened suddenly, but Ross and Sandy sensed a clear call from God. Coming back from visiting their kids a few weeks ago, Sandy asked Ross, "What would it take for us to move to NY?" Ross said, "The first thing is they would have to ask us." They committed it to prayer. Shortly thereafter, they received a message from their kids saying, "We know it would be a big ask, but is there any way that you would consider coming to NY and helping us out with the kids?" Ross and Sandy prayed again and said yes.

The Lunch Bunch and other ministries at the Coopers will end, but Raymond Morehouse will be starting a Sunday Service at 4:00 PM at the Rescue Shop on Texas St. with a potluck meal following. Ross and Sandy are not selling their home. They are hanging on to it and have worked out an agreement with Raymond Morehouse and his ministry, Inherit the Earth, to start a Men's Discipleship Home there.

Please pray for all involved as Ross and Sandy leave as well as for all who remain here as they adjust and adapt to life without the Coopers.



**CARE GROUP LUNCHEONS**  
**Meet Sundays, Feb. 22-March 29**

The Care Groups will begin the Spring round of lunch gatherings on Sunday, February 22. The congregation is divided up into six care groups, each led by one of the six elders and deacons on the Council (Church Board). The Care Groups gather for lunch twice a year, once in the Spring and once in the Fall. These lunches are a wonderful opportunity to share a meal, build meaningful connections, and grow in community with your Care Group.

The schedule for the Care Groups is as follows.

February 22	Care Group 1
March 1	Care Group 3
March 8	Care Group 6
March 15	Care Group 2
March 22	Care Group 5
March 29	Care Group 4

Watch the announcements and your email in case there are any changes to the day your group will meet.

If you do not know if you are part of one of the Care Groups, if you have not received an email to RSVP, or if you need any help with registering, please contact the church office (909.798.2221)

**HAVING TROUBLE ACCESSING CHURCH  
MATERIAL ONLINE? CONTACT THE OFFICE.**

Technology can be daunting! From time to time we all need a little help. If you need assistance with getting church services online, accessing the daily devotionals or Bible Study Plans, downloading the new church app, or something else related to the River, please contact the front office at 909.798.2221. Karla Whitman and/or Don Morris will do their very best to help you with what you need. We want to make sure all of our people who want to can be connected.

**Download Our App!**

- Connect
- Easily Access Bible Study Plans
- Find Sermons
- Easily Access Giving



**Download Now!**

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Apple Store or Google Play



**BARB HIRZEL PART OF SMALL GROUP THINKING ABOUT UPDATES FOR BUILDING**

Barb Hirzel is part of a small group thinking about updates needed around church. The church building was expanded about 27 years ago so this group is considering what might need to be done or could be done to enhance our ministry.



At the Quarterly Senior Luncheon, the seniors were asked to submit ideas. There were a few including things like improving the electricity in the kitchen, higher toilets in the restrooms, sturdier chairs in the fellowship hall, etc. The acoustics in the fellowship hall was assumed to be on the list. If any ideas come to mind over the next weeks, you can let Barb know.

**RIVER STUDENTS, LEADERS EMBARK ON ACA INTERSESSION MISSION TRIPS TO IRELAND, NEW MEXICO, AND ECUADOR (Looking for prayer partners for the participants)**

“Every year Arrowhead Christian Academy, the high school at Redlands Christian School, sets aside a week in the Spring for learning outside the classroom. They call it InterSession. During this week students have the opportunity to explore God’s unique design for them through travel, exploration, life skill development, and serving others.” (quoted from an Instagram Post in 2024)

This year students and leaders from the River will be going on short term mission projects to Ireland, Rehobeth NM, Ecuador, and Nicaragua. It would be great if we could get prayer partners for each of these young people and leaders who will pray for them up to the time of their trips and then daily during their experience.

Megan Kouwe will be leading a group to work with Tim and Courtney Banks, our missionaries with Operation Mobilization in Ireland. Jonathon Odenbaugh and Lyla Antillon will be on this trip.

Jonathon Odenbaugh writes, “I have the awesome opportunity to visit and work alongside our church’s missionaries (The Banks Family) in Ireland. During the trip we will have the chance to practice evangelism in an area that desperately needs the gospel, work alongside missionaries in helping the community practically, and possibly help with a youth event. If you feel led to help support us financially we would greatly appreciate it, if not your support through prayer would be awesome!



Courtney Banks provided an update. “The group will be staying at the OM base in Rosecrans and going out to various locations getting different experiences. One possibility is a church in Donegal that has a thrift store and coffee shop that the kids might help out in. There is a church in Ennis that might use their help for a youth night. There is a new church start in Gort that the pastor would love some help going door to door. For cultural and religious education, Tim and Courtney are looking at a day at a castle and another day at a major Roman Catholic shrine and Pilgrimage site. Tim will also be training the students and giving them an opportunity to do street outreach.”

David Odenbaugh and Taylor Nydam will be going to Rehoboth, New Mexico. David writes, “My name is David and my trip will take me to Rehoboth, New Mexico. During my time there we will be partnering with a local Christian school and going to different sites for the day to help. Two of the chaperones are members of our River community, Mario Perez and Nathan Triemstra.”



Isaac DeWeerd is going to Ecuador. This is his first mission trip. He is excited about doing a construction project and helping out with a local church. He said he saw the impact a mission trip had on his brother’s life and thinks it may be the same for him. His family has been doing an interesting fundraiser selling his family’s home roasted coffee beans (now branded as Dewey’s Coffee Roasting). They posted on Patty DeWeerd’s Facebook page, “We would appreciate your prayers as this group of teens gets out of their comfort zone to go share the love of Jesus.”

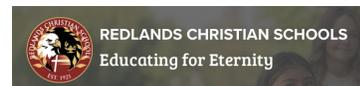


Amelia Rodriguez and Leah and Micha Slaughter will be going to Masaya in Western Nicaragua. Their work will focus on community development and ministry, including building houses/playgrounds, running VBS, and partnering with local churches.



If you would like to be a prayer partner for one or more of these young people and/or their leaders, praying for them over the next six weeks and daily as they are on their trips, please contact Pastor Rick at church. You can also text or call him at 909.576.5214.

(If there are others going that we missed, please let Pastor Rick know so we can put an update in the March newsletter.)



**MCCA Update  
(From Paul Vela's Presidential Address)**

MCCA stands for Mexican Christian Children's Aid. On the first Saturday of each month a convoy of pickups heads out in the predawn hours for the Mexican border. After crossing, they stop at a Mexican store like Costco to load up with provisions. Following prayer together, the trucks fan out across the northwestern Baja area to deliver their goods to various orphanages and ministries. They generally get back home in the late afternoon after stopping for lunch before they come back across the border.



The Whitman/Vela Family headed for Mexico

Here is Paul Vela's presidential address:

My name is Paul Vela and I am entering my 4th year as President of this incredible group. It's both a joy and a humbling privilege especially knowing that I'm credited for the work that several people do... work that only our God could have orchestrated the way it turns out month after month, year after year.

First, to our donors: thank you for your generosity, a statement of faith and trust. Because of you, compassion is not just something we talk about—it's something we \*do\*. You have chosen to invest in the lives of those we serve in Mexico. Through your generous contributions, these children can have hope; that they can know and feel the love of Christ. Your choice to donate echoes far beyond any balance sheet.

To our volunteers: thank you for answering the call—again and again—to serve those Jesus called “the least of these.” In Matthew 25:40, Jesus tells us, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” You live that verse. You show up at the crack of dawn, you serve when no one is watching, and you remind us that love looks best when it's put into action. Our mission has hands and feet because you answer the call.

And finally, to our Board of Directors: thank you for your leadership, your wisdom, and your courage. It takes real faith to look at a 60+ year-old organization with a rich legacy and say, “Yes, let's let this kid run it.” Your confidence, guidance, and occasional gentle course-correction have been a gift. I am deeply grateful for your trust and your partnership.

This organization has endured for decades because of people like you—people who believe that faith should be lived boldly, generously, and joyfully. Thank you for being part of this story, and for helping ensure that the next chapter is one filled with hope.

God bless you, and thank you.

**Ryan Tolsma to Speak at Next Men's Breakfast  
Saturday, February 21, 7-9 AM**

Dr. Ryan Tolsma will be sharing his testimony/life story at the next Men's Breakfast, Saturday, February 21. Ryan and his wife, Miriam, have been members of The River for over seventy years. They were members at First Christian Reformed Church before it merged with the Highland Church in 1994. Dr. Tolsma served for many years as an OB-GYN in the Redlands community. He was also a Redlands Christian School board member and in 2025 was awarded the RCS Founders' Award. This award is given to an individual who has contributed greatly to the legacy of Redlands Christian Schools, including Arrowhead Christian Academy. Dr. Tolsma is widely traveled and has a wealth of life experiences to share.



In March, Pastor Will VerHoef will be back talking about his family's part in the Dutch Resistance during World War II.

The Men's Breakfast is held the third Saturday of every month. After a hearty breakfast of scrambled eggs, sausage, and pancakes, a keynote speaker shares about his life and faith. The breakfast is held in the Fellowship Hall at The River. Contribution to help cover the cost of the food is \$5. One of the best values in the Inland Empire!

**Annual Rummage Market  
Set for Saturday, March 7, 8:00 AM—12:00 PM  
By Teri Heemstra**

I just wanted to remind everyone that our Rummage Market (formerly Junk in Your Trunk) will be happening again this spring on March 7. We want to extend an invitation to members of The River and their friends and family to sign up and rent a spot. Remember, all proceeds from the rental goes to support CarePortal and whatever you make from your sales is for you to do with as you please.



You can sign up online at the link below or call the church office (909.798.2221) if you do not have internet access:

<http://www.therivercrc.com/rummage-sale>

The Rummage Market is sponsored by The River's Hospitality and Events Leadership Team.

## SENIOR LUNCHEON CELEBRATED NATIONAL PIE DAY FRIDAY, JANUARY 23

About sixty-five people gathered for the Quarterly Senior Fellowship Luncheon, Friday, January 23. After a welcome from Pastor Rick and devotion from Gladys DeBruyne, the group enjoyed a meal of chicken pot pie, mixed vegetables, and kale salad, with apple or cherry pie for dessert. After lunch the group played a pie trivia game and Pastor Rick and Bertsy Seim led a short hymn sing. Everyone seemed to enjoy the meal and time together. About ten people came early at 10:00 AM to play Mexican Train.

Thank you to Gladys DeBruyne, Marlene Hekman, Pat Gopperton, Marcia VanMouwerik, and Joanne Winefer for baking pies and bringing them from home. Also to Joanne Winefer for bringing her wonderful macaroon cookies. Thank you to Patty Turley for working with Gladys to get the fruit pies from Sam's Club and the pot pies from Costco. Also thank you to all who helped prepare or clean up alongside the planning team: Gordon Barents, Glen and Claire Huibregtse, Patty Turley, Ruth VerHoef and others who just pitched in. Thanks to Don Morris and Jeff Mercer for setting up and taking down the sound equipment and keyboard and Jim and Denise Kouwe for taking care of the money. And special thanks to our planning team: Darlene Barents, David Caminiti, Gladys DeBruyne, Marcia Hekman, and Marcia VanMouwerik who not only plan but work hard to pull off these luncheons. And finally, thank you to all of you who come and enjoy the luncheons and contribute so well to cover the costs each time.

The next luncheon will be Friday, April 24. The theme will be Mexican Fiesta. The room will be open at 10:00 AM for those who may want to play games or just enjoy some coffee and conversation. Lunch will be at 11:30 AM. We will open with a mixer, a couple of hymns, and devotions. After lunch there will be an activity. Mark your calendars now so you don't forget. Signups will be in the church lobby the two Sundays before the luncheon.



Planning Team  
Minus Dave Caminiti





Jean	Wagner	February 01
Jody	Duncan	February 02
Carol	Kreuter	February 03
Charles	Callahan	February 09
Marvin	Shaw	February 09
Marie	Wiersma	February 13
Fred	Jacobs	February 14
Glenda	Vander Tuig	February 14
Norma	Greenfield	February 15
Marcia	Van Mouwerik	February 22
Bertsy	Seim	February 23
Lynda	Terhorst	February 24
Claire	Fik	February 25
Mark	Vander Wal	February 25
William	Bierling	February 26
Karen	Jarvis	March 01
Pete	Vander Kooy	March 01
Philip	Terhorst	March 08

**PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAISES**

**Jody Duncan's Sister, Pamela:** Pamela underwent what was supposed to be a relatively routine hernia surgery almost three months ago. Since then, things have gone from bad to worse. The surgeon had to do a full bariatric bypass once he got in there, and she has been unable to keep down any food in all these weeks. She has had a feeding tube for many weeks now, just to keep her hydrated and give her some nutrition. Now, she is having symptoms of Parkinson's, brought on by the anti-nausea medication. Those symptoms may be temporary, or they may be permanent. Time will tell.

**Dave Caminiti:** Dave had knee replacement surgery. He is doing well but pray as he continues to recover and do physical therapy.

**Greg and Wanda Bachman:** Please pray for Wanda and Greg Bachman as Wanda's health has worsened from Alzheimer's and Lung Disease. She is now on hospice in order for Greg to get the extra help he needs. When a room becomes available, she will be transferred to a care home to help address her advancing needs. This is a difficult time for them. Pray especially for Greg as he cares for Wanda who is increasingly less present.

**Bill Bierling:** Bill has been busy with family and traveling, but he is grieving the loss of his dear wife, Harriet. Please continue to pray for Bill over the days, weeks, and months ahead.

**Gene and Lucy DeFouw:** Gene spent a couple of days in the hospital with some issues with his blood pressure and fluid buildup. He is doing well now, but please pray as he regains strength.

**Debbie Clinton and Family:** Deb's daughter Christy spent a couple of days in Redlands Community Hospital. She has been diagnosed with Rheumatoid Lungs and has blood clots in her lungs causing breathing issues. She is home now, but please continue to pray for her health and strength. Debbie continues to do well following her liver transplant. She is able to get out and about but is still avoiding crowds because of her compromised immune system. Please pray also for her son, Kevin, who is in the process of changing jobs.

**Sandy McWilliams:** Sandy suffered a stroke this month. After a stay in Redlands Community Hospital and at Brookside Health Center, she has moved to Holiday Garden Oaks, 33398 Oak Glen Rd, Room 122, Yucaipa CA 92399. She has recovered her mobility and is happy as always but still has difficulty communicating. Pray too for the people at the Village as Sandy was a vibrant member of their community and they are feeling the loss of her move.

**Chris and Jim Nydam:** Chris is doing well and regaining strength following chemotherapy. She has started immunotherapy as a prevention. She is doing well, but a problem with a disc in her back is slowing her down a bit.

**Rachel Keast's Niece Ailey:** Ailey is improving after being hospitalized with kidney problems but still has a way to go. Her kidney function is at about 73%. Continue praying for a complete recovery and for patience for Ailey as well as her mom and dad. Ailey is ten years old.

**Heemstra, Antillon and McGee families:** Please continue to pray for these families in the passing of their brother/uncle Rick Heemstra. He passed shortly after they lost their uncle/brother Bob. Rick's service will be February 21 in Tonopah, NV.

**Norma Greenfield:** Norma spent a couple of days in the hospital again and another trip to ER with chest pressure. Praise be to God, the doctors said it was not her heart, but pray for Norma as she has had repeated trips to the hospital and doctors recently.

**Chuck and Joy Griffin:** Chuck is experiencing more decline in his health. They have gotten some additional help but it is still difficult. Please continue to pray for Chuck and Judy as they continue to navigate Chuck's needs.

**Pray for those in Physical Therapy** including Karen Jarvis, Karen Grip, and Trudy Barton. PT is hard work and the process can seem slow.

**Those who are homebound or limited in their activities:** Claire Fik, Marie Wiersma, Grace Florence, Jack and Mae Bailey, Dick Dirksen, Chuck and Joy Griffin, and Jake and Shari DeHoog

**THE NEXT NEWSLETTER WILL COME OUT MARCH 1  
RATHER THAN THE LAST SUNDAY IN FEBRUARY.**