



river west church

Building a Culture of Encouragement

Pastor Guy Gray

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Dear River West Family,

I am writing this message for the bulletin one day before our leadership team heads off for our annual retreat. By the time you pick this bulletin up on Sunday, there are two things that will have happened. First, you will have been prayed for! We have learned that the most important thing we can do as leaders is pray. That's why we asked you for those prayer cards last Sunday. Thank you for giving us the privilege of praying for your needs. We take this very seriously. We have you in our hearts and we will continue to lift up your prayer requests in intercession in the weeks to come!

There is something else that always happens on the leadership retreat. We seek God for His blessing and direction for the future of our church. We recognize our calling as a church is not just to look inwardly, at the needs of the members, but to look outwardly, at the needs of the world around us. We know that Christ has called us to, "Go and make disciples... baptizing... and teaching." This means that Christ calls us to have a growing impact for the Gospel in our world. We take this very seriously too!

Christ has blessed River West Church in so many ways! I am so grateful to hear people talk about what a healthy and vibrant church community we have – a Gospel centered, loving, active community of Christ for the world! Because of all that Christ has built into our church community, River West has so much potential for Gospel impact in our world, both near and far. That leads to some really important questions. Will we live up to our calling? Will we live up to our full potential as a community of Christ for the world? How will we do that? How can we work together to keep moving forward; growing, not just in numbers, but in maturity and impact?

These are the questions we wrestled with on our leadership retreat. But these aren't just questions for pastors, elders and deacons. These are questions we all should be asking and praying about!

It's obvious that we have a challenge with our church facility being too small. Please keep this in your prayers and ask God to open a door for us in this area. Nevertheless, we have always believed that the key to our impact as a church is not primarily tied to the size of our church facility. The key is in the hearts of our members. As each member determines to grow in their understanding of the Gospel, their faith and their active fellowship and service for Christ, amazing things will happen in and through our church.

So, what kind of church do we want to be? What kind of a church do you want to be a part of? In today's message I want to share one of the main ideas I will have shared with our leaders at the retreat. It's about BUILDING A CULTURE OF ENCOURAGEMENT in our church. It's what I call, "Becoming a church of 'come-alongside' Christians." It sounds pretty tame, but it's not. If we live this out, I promise you, wonderful things are going to continue to happen in and through River West Church. And that is Christ's good goal. It's our goal too!

Pastor Guy