



*The River flows with hope and healing bringing new life in Jesus.*

## How's it flowing...?

The River is in full flow this fall. After the Allegan County Fair concluded the second weekend of September, we launched into fall ministry. On Sundays, this has included a series of messages on Jesus' Beatitudes... 8 weeks of focusing on a specific attitude that Jesus is looking for in people, the ones he wants to follow him. The subplot of this series focuses on emotional and spiritual development.

On Wednesday evenings, at Community Café, we have launched LIFE Groups. The entire congregation was invited to engage in self reflection and contemplative spirituality based on the curriculum by Peter Scazzero, 'Emotionally Healthy Spirituality'. We were pleasantly surprised when 75% of our regular attendees signed up, and have been participating in this exciting small group ministry. In addition, there have been several first time guests, who have been eager to find out about what we're doing, and have readily joined these LIFE groups. God is definitely at work!

We are also excited to have had the congregation nominate three new elders, all of whom have made significant spiritual progress in their few years at The River. God is actively developing new leadership in our young followers of Christ. In addition, we are likely to make some adjustments in our organizational structure to reflect how God will be using these servants to grow the Kingdom at The River. We are also prayerfully considering whether God wants us to establish the office of Deacon. Currently we have a team of 15-20 people who have the gift of compassion, and who are actively engaged in ministering to the community of Allegan in various ways. We have not 'called' them deacons, because they are simply serving in the way God has designed and gifted them. We are trying to balance whether the 'office' will interfere or further facilitate their ministries.

Earlier this month, marked the 5 year anniversary of The River. During that time, we have seen God do so much, and have been so blessed to have been afforded the opportunity to be God's change agents in Allegan. There have been struggles, yes; but God's grace has carried us along, and we have been overjoyed at those who have found faith (it's likely we'll baptize our 100<sup>th</sup> new follower of Christ by 2010). God is awesome!

## Financial Partnership Update

God continues to supply our every need. We get by, week to week, and have been greatly blessed by many who have financially supported The River. We face the future knowing that God will provide, even when we need to repair the roof, and just generally make ends meet. We are cutting costs in any way we can. We will not be using our portables this fall and winter, in order to cut utilities costs. We will just squeeze our youth groups and adult classes, into our main building.

Still, we are extremely thankful, and hopeful that God will even use these trials to grow our faith and ministry. Of course, if you have financially supported The River in 2009, we are deeply thankful to you as well. And we pray that God will bless you and multiply your blessing by gifting and leading you into fruitful and fulfilling life opportunities.

Special thanks as well, to the various congregations in the area that have taken offerings for The River, or have invited The River to lead an evening worship service during the last year. We probably have that opportunity about once a month and have both appreciated the opportunity to be blessed by worshipping with you, and the opportunity to bless you with stories of how God is at work amongst us. If you would like to have The River, including the Little River Praise Band come and lead a service, please let me know (you can email me from the right panel of this email).

Grace and Peace, Jon Vugteveen

## prayer petitions praise

Thank God for his provision and ask that he will continue that.

Ask God for protection; the enemy is not happy with The River.

Ask God with us for guidance, as we continue to make adjustments to what He is doing among and around us. We suspect that the year 2010 will include a specific focus on community development and interacting. We are currently trying to discern what shape that might take and how to prepare and pursue God's vision for us.

Pray with us for your own blessing; you know he wants to.

## options

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