

**Riverbend Joins the CMBA Family of Churches**

Riverbend Community Church was formally welcomed into the CMBA family of churches as a full Church Member by the Visionary Leadership Community during its March meeting. Since it was founded in 1984, Riverbend has established a strong church DNA of mission giving and sending. The church has been affiliated with the South Carolina Baptist Convention for several years and its leadership spent time exploring ways that it could align and partner with the CMBA.

“We want to be a part of CMBA because we know we are better together. We need other churches and when we work together as a body of Christ for God’s glory and not our own, we can see some amazing things. I’m excited and looking forward to what God will do through the friendships and partnerships that we’ll make,” says Lead Pastor Jason Williams.

CMBA One Priority Mobilizer Robbie McAlister, who is also Riverbend’s planting pastor, says the church “just wants to serve and contribute within the life of the association. We want to be a part of a team, joining with others with a similar value to share the gospel through the state, nation and around the world. CMBA feels like the community that we can best do that with.”

Riverbend is situated on a residential and wooded stretch of Corley Mill Road in Lexington, just off the banks of the Saluda River. Its website explains what makes the community church distinct, including that its leadership structure is elder-led, ministry is structured through home groups and that it is focused on multiplication locally, regionally and internationally. From its inception, McAlister explains that the church’s vision has been to “multiply congregations and have healthy churches. We have been aggressively missional throughout our history. I can see Riverbend participating and contributing to this through CMBA as well.”

CMBA Executive Director George Bullard indicates that “Riverbend has participated in several events and projects with our association in the past few years. They approached us about becoming a member to further solidify their identity as a Baptist congregation on mission from the base of the Midlands of South Carolina. We are glad to welcome them as a full Church Member.”

During his three years as Riverbend’s former executive pastor and disciplemaking coordinator, Wayne Terry says he saw first-hand the church’s commitment to discipleship, multiplication and international ministry.

“It’s not just talk, they live it. Riverbend is a strong sending church, and now I’m a product of it,” says Terry who, along with his wife Donna, will soon be serving abroad.

Riverbend is ready to link arms with the CMBA family of churches to reach the lost across all ethnic lines throughout the Midlands. One of the unique hallmarks Terry sees in the church is that the list of church ministries is member-driven, instead of church-driven. He mentions CMBA’s pursuit of planting churches and strengthening existing churches as key components of Riverbend’s interest in affiliating with the association and identifies the potential for mutual benefits moving forward.

“CMBA is getting a partner that already has strong missional DNA. It will have a church in the mix that doesn’t have to be convinced to get on board with missions, our people just get it,” says Terry.

Riverbend has a defined vision that links its purpose and mission with a clear strategy, that includes seeker event opportunities, relationship-building and discipleship through home groups, and intentional outreach. Williams describes this vision as a “circle that keeps going,” as members are on mission, invite people to enter the disciple making process, train and love them, then send them out to bring others in. This is Riverbend’s culture.

“We want to live and breathe and exist to Love God, Love People and Make Disciples. It’s who we are. We are praying for new disciples, new home groups, new churches, pastors and missionaries. If we stick to making disciples through relationship and training them, then we can be the best disciple making church that we can be. This is what we are planning and running after,” Williams explains.

Riverbend’s leadership expresses excitement to partner with other CMBA churches to meet local needs, reach the lost with the gospel, strengthen existing congregations and plant new ones. Williams looks forward to being around other local like-minded leaders and for the opportunity to “sharpen each other with ideas,” but it is the opportunity for multiplication that excites him the most.

“We have been dreaming and praying for God to allow us to plant churches. There are opportunities for church planting through CMBA and we want to be a part of that. We are excited to operate as a team with other churches to see how God can use this new relationship. I am really excited about where God has called us. We would love to do whatever we can to help other pastors and churches as well,” Williams says.