

# The River Church



*History*



5 THE NAMING OF THE CHURCH

6 GEORGE'S PATH TO MINISTRY

9 GLASTONBURY FOUNTAIN

11 PREPARATION AND GROWTH

13 TIME TO GO

15 MEETING THE OWENS FAMILY

17 PLANTING A CHURCH



**LOVE JESUS.**  
**BUILD COMMUNITY.**  
**BRING JOY.**

What's  
inside?

# What's inside?



18 A MEETING PLACE

19 A FULL-TIME PASTOR

21 CHURCH ONLINE

22 THE CHURCH OFFICE

23 THE CHURCH DURING  
COVID

27 EPILOGUE

28 MY STORY



# The Naming of the Church

When George and Janelle Lim first moved to Connecticut to plant the church, they had a name in their minds and thought it would connect back to the church they left in California. However, as they lived that first year in Connecticut prior to planting, God began to speak to them more and more and to make it evident that what they assumed the name would be was not what He wanted.

The first verse the Lord spoke to George on that first trip to Glastonbury was John 7:37-38. “On the last and greatest day of the festival, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.” Looking back, that was the first clue.

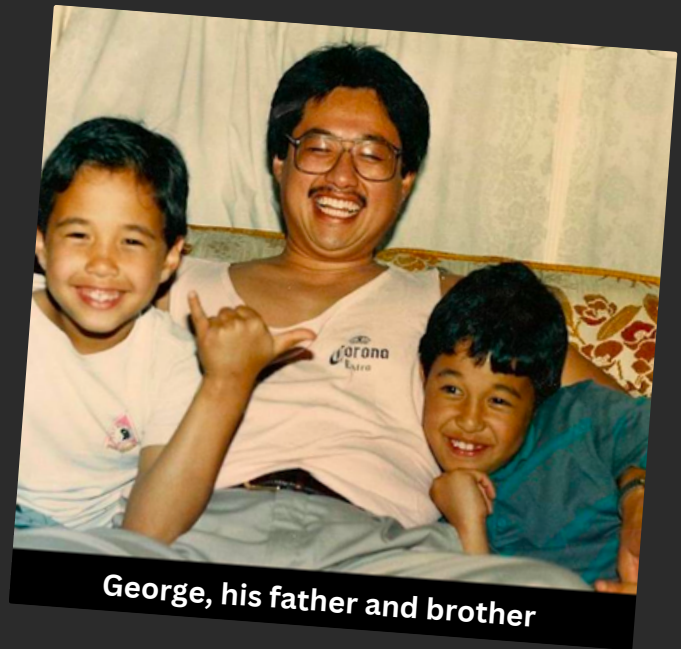
During the spring of 2016, before the church was launched, George and Janelle were talking during a car ride. George said something to the effect of, “Maybe we should call it, ‘The River Church’.” It was really out of nowhere. As he said it, the song, “The River” by Jordan Feliz, came on the radio. They knew then that they needed to really pray over this potential church name.

That prayer was confirmed when George and Janelle visited the first meeting location at Pilgrim Church on Hebron Ave. They were praying as they pulled into the parking lot to look at the site and, saying, “Is this the future site of The River Church?” Again, another song came on the radio station KLOVE that made it evident this was to be the church’s name. It was, “There Is A River,” by Jesus Culture (featuring Kim Walker-Smith).

**“ON THE LAST AND GREATEST DAY OF THE FESTIVAL, JESUS STOOD AND SAID  
IN A LOUD VOICE, “LET ANYONE WHO IS THIRSTY COME TO ME AND DRINK.  
WHOEVER BELIEVES IN ME, AS SCRIPTURE HAS SAID, RIVERS OF LIVING WATER  
WILL FLOW FROM WITHIN THEM.”**

**JOHN 7:37-38**

# George's Path to Ministry



George, his father and brother

George Lim grew up in San Diego, California during the 1980s and 1990s. He wasn't raised in the church but he came to it later in his life.

As a child, he had always been good at school but lost interest in studying during high school. Afterward, he tried community college multiple times but often didn't finish the semester. A college degree did not seem to be in his future, until God said otherwise.

George and Janelle technically grew up around one another. Janelle's best friend was George's cousin. There was an age gap so at the time he was just "Vanessa's older cousin"; however, a few years later while Janelle attended college and shortly after George accepted Christ, they were reintroduced and began dating.

At the age of 24 years old, Jesus changed George's life. Since then, he's served as a worship leader, youth pastor, and now as a lead pastor.

In 2010, at the age of 30 years old, George began serving in both worship and youth ministry in his home church. During that time, God spoke to his heart: "I'm want to use education as part of your preparation." Though the fear of another failed semester was on his mind, something was different. George's passion for the Lord changed things. The thought of studying theology excited him, so he enrolled in Calvary Chapel Bible College in Murrieta, CA.

In November of 2011, George and Janelle had a conversation about their ministry's future. At the time, George was serving as a Youth Pastor and worship leader for a local Calvary Chapel. Things were going well. Yet, Janelle asked him if he'd ever consider starting his own church. George replied, "No way. I love what I'm doing. I could be a youth pastor forever."

Later that day, George had coffee with the teacher of his Old Testament class at the Bible College. The teacher asked George if he'd ever considered church planting. George had never heard the term before, but the teacher explained it. George told him "No," but said he would pray about it with Janelle. As George drove home, the question resonated differently. The Lord began to stir in George's heart.

"I think we're supposed to plant a church," George said as he came in the door to greet Janelle. Janelle praised God because it was the answer to something she had been praying about, even though for just a short time. God was stirring her and now George toward this. George told her about the conversation he had with the pastor and they began to ask the question, "If we were to start a church, where would we go?"

While there's always room for more churches anywhere, their current location didn't seem like the right spot. "What about Connecticut?" George asked.

George had mentioned a desire to move to Connecticut when he and Janelle first began dating. He couldn't explain why but he always had an affection for the area. When he was in middle school, he could remember waking up on Christmas morning, opening up NCAA Basketball for Super Nintendo and picking the UCONN Huskies. There was something that drew his heart towards anything Connecticut.

To George's surprise at the time, Janelle answered, "Me too!" This began a million mini-conversations and dreams about moving 3,000 miles across the country. So, when George asked about Connecticut, it wasn't a shock to Janelle. It was likely the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

George and Janelle spent the next few months pursuing what they believed was God's call for them to plant a church in Connecticut,

A couple months later, two events helped push this pursuit forward. George received an invitation from a worship leader to attend a conference in Manchester, CT. George wondered if this could be an opportunity to see what Connecticut was all about. Then, one of his friends offered to pay for George's ticket so George booked his first trip to Hartford, CT in May 2012.

**"I HAVE TOLD YOU ALL THIS SO THAT YOU MAY HAVE PEACE IN ME. HERE ON EARTH YOU WILL HAVE MANY TRIALS AND SORROWS. BUT TAKE HEART, BECAUSE I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD."**

**JOHN 16:33**





# Glastonbury Fountain

It was raining as George's plane landed in Connecticut for the worship conference in May of 2012. George deplaned and headed to the rental car facility. He was handed keys to a small Chevy and began driving with no idea where to go. Prior to leaving San Diego, Janelle and he had looked over the area and briefly discussed potential places to visit. Their strategy was, "Drive around the Hartford area, pray, and see what God does."

Over the next few days, George attended the conference and drove to multiple towns. While he was fascinated with the landscape of Connecticut, nothing stood out regarding church planting. God was silent.

At some point, George was driving around lost. He wasn't worried, but he called Janelle.

"How's it going?" Janelle said.

George replied, "Good. I'm lost. I've been driving around and really don't know where I am."

"You should check out this place called Glastonbury," she said.

“I don’t know. I’ve got a couple of towns in mind to check out.” George responded.

Just then, George noticed a white sign in front of a Cumberland gas station that read: “Welcome to Glastonbury.”

“Hey, I think I’m in Glastonbury. I’ll call you back.”

As George continued down Main Street, he sensed God wanted him to pull over and pray. He parked and sat down on some black metal chairs in front of a bicycle shop. He began to pray. He opened his eyes and saw a fountain across the street. All of a sudden, a verse came to mind.

If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scriptures has said, “Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” John 7:37-38

That was the first time anything like this had happened since George arrived in Connecticut. He believed God was telling him, “This is where I’m calling you to.”

**“THIS IS THE MESSAGE FROM THE ONE WHO IS HOLY AND TRUE, THE ONE WHO HAS THE KEY OF DAVID. WHAT HE OPENS, NO ONE CAN CLOSE; AND WHAT HE CLOSES, NO ONE CAN OPEN: I KNOW ALL THINGS YOU DO, AND I HAVE OPENED A DOOR FOR YOU THAT NO ONE CAN CLOSE. YOU HAVE LITTLE STRENGTH, YET YOU OBEYED MY WORD AND DID NOT DENY ME. “**

**REVELATIONS 3:7-8**

# Preparation and Growth



A few months after the experience at the fountain, George flew back to visit Glastonbury again and this time Janelle joined him. They spent a few days walking the streets and praying. And in that time, God confirmed to Janelle that they were being called to Glastonbury, Connecticut.

The next few years were developmental in the spiritual formation of George and Janelle. George transferred from his Bible College into Horizon University to pursue his Bachelor's degree in Biblical Studies. God had told him, "I want to use education as part of your preparation." During his undergraduate program, he attended conferences and training sessions and took church planting courses to help prepare him for the future move. Janelle and George continued to visit Glastonbury as often as they could, planning and praying for the day they would finally move.

During these years of waiting, George met Josh Olson, an Associate Pastor who shared radical stories of faith and acts of faithful obedience. Through Josh's influence, George

learned what he needed to build his character to match God's calling. Over the years, George's and Josh's paths crossed often and they became close friends. Eventually, the Lims began attending the church where Josh was a pastor.

One day, Josh told George, "You know, I've been pastoring for a long time. I've heard a lot of people talk about discipleship. I've never seen anyone actually do it. I was wondering if you'd let me disciple you. I'm not sure what that looks like but I'd like to meet with you regularly, spend time with you, and pour my life into you." George had been waiting for an opportunity like this all his life. He grew significantly. More importantly, this model of discipleship became the foundation for DGroups at The River Church, which would one day become Life Groups.

From 2012 to 2015, George and Janelle tried to move to Connecticut multiple times. Each time, God's answer was, "Not yet." There came a point when it seemed as if God was telling them, "You will move when it's time. Until then, put it on the shelf and serve faithfully where you are." So, that's what they did.

**"GREATER LOVE HAS NO ONE THAN THIS, THAT SOMEONE  
LAY DOWN HIS LIFE FOR HIS FRIENDS."**

**JOHN 15:13**

# Time to Go



On June 7, 2015, George stepped off the stage after leading worship. As was his habit, he took his seat in the front row. The church had multiple services and he liked to sit in the first service to see if he might modify the worship set for the following services to better match the pastor's message.

That morning, the pastor was preaching on Philippians 3. He read the following verse

Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

George was stopped in his spirit. He knew God was speaking to him. He knew it was time. That week, George met with the pastor and told him he believed God was moving him on from the church. He wasn't sure where. The pastor replied, "What if it's time to move to Connecticut?" The pastor was right.

When George got home, he turned to Janelle and asked, "I believe God is saying it is time. Are you ready?"

Janelle said with excitement, "I've been ready!"

Around the same time, a friend from their church called George and Janelle and said, "God's put a verse on my heart for you guys. I believe I'm supposed to remind you of Revelation 3:7-8.

“This is the message from the one who is holy and true, the one who has the key of David. What he opens, no one can close; and what he closes, no one can open: I know all things you do, and I have opened a door for you that no one can close. You have little strength, yet you obeyed my word and did not deny me.”

This friend knew nothing of the recent events, yet God was using her to confirm the Lims' call to go. Additionally, God confirmed the call in other ways. George started applying for jobs in CT and instantly got offers. Furthermore, a friend urged the Lims to send out a specific list of needs for the move. George sensed this was from the Lord and itemized everything he thought they needed. The financial need totaled \$10,509. He emailed this list on July 4th. By July 19th, God had not only met every need, He did “far more abundantly than we could ask or think!” (Eph 3:20). There was a sense that God wanted this cross-country trip to also be a once-in-a-lifetime summer vacation. Something the entire family could enjoy! He blessed them just because He wanted to!

Something else happened on Sunday, July 19th, when the church brought the Lims before the congregation to pray them out. After service, one of the elders of the church received a phone call from an old friend from college. The friend shared, “We’re moving back to San Diego.” Additionally, the friend mentioned, “It’s been really difficult to find a church out here.” The elder asked, “Remind me where you are moving from?”

“Glastonbury, Connecticut.”

The elder couldn’t believe it! He said enthusiastically, “Our church literally just prayed to send a couple to plant a church in that town! They leave next week!” The friend confirmed the great need for new churches and said they’d be happy to help the Lims get settled while they were still in Connecticut. Once again, God confirmed His call of the Lims to Glastonbury. There was truly an open door before them!

During that last week, the Lims whittled all their belongings down to four duffle bags and one iMac computer. On Sunday, July 26th, George, Janelle, Georgie, Kade, Nole, and Grandma (who decided to go along for the trip there) hopped into their small 2013 Mazda 5, and began the 3000+ mile journey. Over the next 10 days, the Lims traveled across the United States towards Glastonbury, CT. On August 4th, they passed by the “Welcome to Connecticut” sign on I-84. Not long after that, all five Lims stood in front of the fountain in Glastonbury for the first time.

**“BEING CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO HAS BEGUN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL COMPLETE IT UNTIL THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST.”**

**PHILIPPIANS. 1:6**



# Meeting the Owens Family

When George transferred to Horizon University to finish his bachelor's degree in biblical studies in 2014, he met an important friend, Brandon Basse, who was instrumental in the formation of The River Church because he introduced the Lim family to the Owens family.

The Owens family – Jon, Jackie, Jordan, Jonathan and Jude – was already living in Glastonbury, CT when the Lim Family arrived in 2015. They were going through their own difficult transition.

They had moved to Connecticut in 2013, when Jon's company transferred his job from an overseas assignment in Singapore to a position in East Hartford, CT. After arriving in October 2013, the Owens family was not able to find a church closer to their home in South Glastonbury, CT but they had found a church family in Middletown - about 30 minutes away. While they enjoyed the services at their church, the distance was making it challenging for them to get involved and to connect on a deeper level with people at the church.

Additionally, Jon and Jackie felt like God was telling them that He wanted them to be part of a church close to home. God seemed to be saying, “I sent you and your children to Glastonbury to minister to your neighbors, the people you see and interact with in your community.”

The problem - or what seemed to be a problem at that time - was that Jon and Jackie had not been able to find a church in Glastonbury that fit what they were looking for. They started to feel stuck so they began to pray and ask God for clarification.

Then, on July 16, 2015, Jon received a Facebook message from an old friend - Brandon Basse, who Jon and Jackie had met in San Diego in 2000, when the Basse family joined a church plant where the Owens family was serving. Jon and Brandon hadn't interacted much over the years, just an occasional social media post. So when Jon received this message from Brandon in July of 2015 - their first correspondence in nearly eight years - it grabbed Jon's attention:

“Hey Jon, I have a friend moving out to the Hartford/Glastonbury area on the 26th with his family to plant a church. God has miraculously provided everything so far...they are still looking for a place to live. They are a family of five...wondering if you might know of a place or know someone who could help them. Oh yeah, and maybe friends too. 😊 Oh and furniture haha. They sold all theirs to make the move.”

This was the first of several messages that ultimately connected the Owens family with the Lim family. George and Jon met for the first time at Daybreak Coffee in Glastonbury on September 4th, and their families met the following day at Sweet Frog. As George and Janelle began to share their story and their vision for the church that God was calling them to plant in Glastonbury, Jon and Jackie started to wonder if this “divine encounter” was the answer to their prayer for a church close to home and if God was wanting them to be part of this new thing that He was doing in their community.

**“NO MAN HATH SEEN GOD AT ANY TIME. IF WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER, GOD DWELLETH IN US AND HIS LOVE IS PERFECTED IN US. “**

**1 JOHN 4:12**



# Planting a church



By June 2016, George, Janelle, Jon and Jackie were busy planning for the launch of The River Church. On June 26th, a group of eleven people gathered in the basement of the Owens' home for the first unofficial worship service. There was a time of praise and worship with Jon on the piano and George on the acoustic guitar. George preached the Word and they spent time in prayer.

On that same day, the team had several discussions about what God could (and would) do in Glastonbury. Eventually, it was decided that Jon would be the Worship Leader and Jackie would be the River Kids Leader.

Before the first public service, George, Janelle, Jon and Jackie decided to set up some "pre-launch" activities like a booth at a car show and an outdoor movie night to generate some "buzz" around the community.

**"NOW ALL GLORY TO GOD, WHO IS ABLE TO KEEP YOU FROM FALLING AWAY  
AND WILL BRING YOU WITH GREAT JOY INTO HIS GLORIOUS PRESENCE  
WITHOUT A SINGLE FAULT."**

JUDE 1:24



# A Meeting Place

In 2016, George began looking around for a place for the church plant to meet. Through his conversations with other Glastonbury pastors, he learned about an old church on Hebron Avenue that wasn't very active. Maybe the pastor there would be willing to share the space.

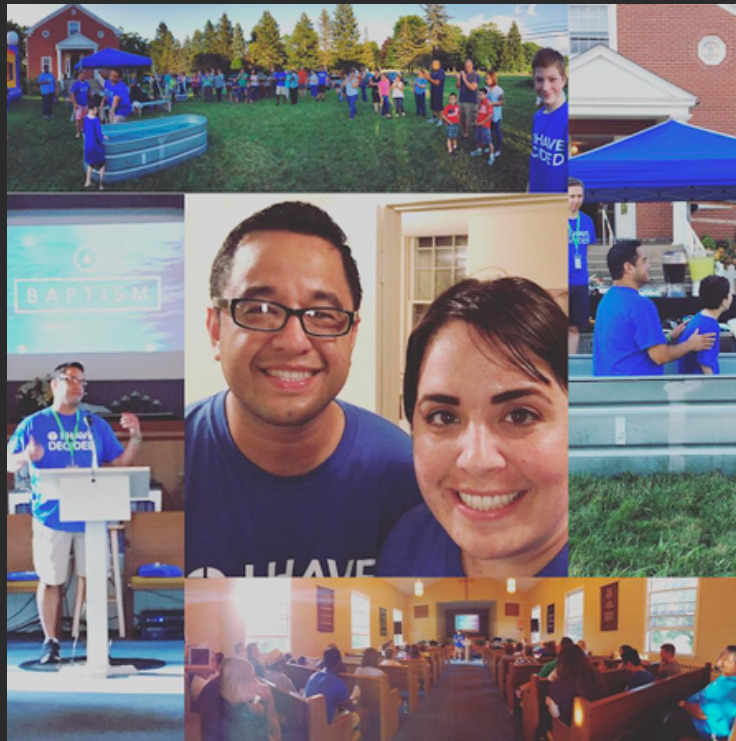
The Pilgrim Christian Church was located on one of Glastonbury's main streets - Hebron Avenue - about 2.5 miles due east from the town center, situated directly across from the seasonal Rose's Berry Farm Stand. There was always a fair amount of traffic heading both east and west along Hebron Ave. The pastor of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship welcomed the River Church to use the space on Saturday nights for free, which was a blessing considering the church's limited finances.

The church held its first service on Oct 15, 2016. Over the course of the 22 months at the Pilgrim building, numerous people visited the church after seeing the signs. Even later, after TRC moved to other locations, first time guests would sometimes comment that they used to see the sign up on Hebron Avenue and wondered about the church.

The front yard of Pilgrim church was also a great spot for helping TRC families build connections too. Adults and kids alike enjoyed fellowship hour outside, watching the sunset and playing games like badminton and frisbee. Often, new families would see the fun and come check out this unique new church.

**AND WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD FROM ME IN THE PRESENCE OF MANY WITNESSES  
ENTRUST TO FAITHFUL MEN, WHO WILL BE ABLE TO TEACH OTHERS ALSO.**

**2 TIMOTHY 2:2**



# A Full-Time Pastor

George is always willing to work; it is one of his strengths. When he first arrived in Glastonbury, he took a job at Boston Market to support his family as they started The River Church. However, George longed to give all his attention to the work of the ministry. And during his first two years in Connecticut, he pursued every option to do so, but God closed every door and kept him at Boston Market.

By late 2017, the Lims had already crafted the art of living on a very limited budget. During this time, the church grew and giving increased. George and the church leaders started to see how George could begin to focus on pastoring full-time. Then, their church network offered church planters an incentive of \$500 extra a month if the pastors completed a certain amount of training. George started this training right away.

George began to pray with Janelle about this leap of faith. At the time, he had already begun to slowly step away from full-time employment at Boston Market. With the current church planting support from the network, George started working as an hourly shift manager, which afforded him more flexibility to pastor. Once he completed



all the necessary training, the monthly stipend would be enough for George to quit Boston Market. His final training was in November of 2017. Then, George began to worry. As the date of the training approached, no communications came from the regional network. Finally, the Church Planting Director notified him that the program was canceled due to low enrollment. George asked him directly, “So... that means there is no longer going to be the additional \$500 for 6 months?”

“Correct.” the director responded.

“Okay, thanks... was kinda counting on that but hey, the Lord knows!” George had actually already submitted his resignation to Boston Market.

“Yes, He knows. You will not be forgotten...”

Those words from the Church Planter Director were prophetic though George did not realize it at the time.

George asked himself and Janelle, “Should I cancel my resignation? I know Boston Market will take me back.” But both of them fully believed this was one of those moments when God was asking them to “trust Him with all their hearts and not lean on their own understanding.” So, Thanksgiving 2017 was the last day George worked as a regularly scheduled employee for Boston Market. And God did not forget their faith. From that moment on, even when the checkbook didn’t make logical sense, God supernaturally stretched their funds and provided for their every need.

**“MY OLD SELF HAS BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST. IT IS NO LONGER I WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME. SO I LIVE IN THIS EARTHLY BODY BY TRUSTING IN THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME.”**

**GALATIANS 2:20**



Pastor George can be a little stubborn. While he didn't grow up in the church and often does things outside of normal church tradition, there have been times when he was resistant to new changes. One of those things was Church Online (a weekly streaming of TRC's worship services).

George has always put a high value on relationships. He often preaches that God is triune, meaning He is relationship. And if humans are made in His image, that means we are made for relationship. In his mind, it's difficult to have relationship without presence and proximity. And when it came to live-streaming church services, George had viewed it as a low priority.

That all changed after a conversation with a church planter who connected the topic of streaming church services to the current culture. Today, most people have a hybrid life, meaning a blend of digital and in-person. For example, though many still shop in physical stores, people also shop online. Additionally, even if a purchase is eventually made in-person, most visit an online site to compare prices and research quality. It's only natural for people to do the same when they look for a place to worship.

The church planter specifically mentioned they had begun getting many first time visitors with the same story, "We've been watching online for a while and finally decided to come in-person." Upon hearing this, George saw the power of Church Online to be the new "front door." So, that week, he bought an entry level streaming system and began taking steps towards offering The River Church's worship services online.

Our weekly sermon still airs online on YouTube, Facebook and website. A weekly podcast is now available too. Our online presence has reached people with the Gospel and has brought many to church in-person as a result of seeing our online service.

**"I PRAY THAT GOD, THE SOURCE OF HOPE, WILL FILL YOU COMPLETELY WITH JOY AND PEACE BECAUSE YOU TRUST IN HIM. THEN YOU WILL OVERFLOW WITH CONFIDENT HOPE THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT."**

**ROMANS 15:13**

MARCH 2020



# The Church Office

The church was really beginning to grow in deeper ways and some exciting developments were beginning to take shape. After a few failed attempts at securing a building, TRC really settled into the routine of set up and breakdown, developing a team and allowing that ministry to form. However, the leadership team wanted the church to become a permanent fixture in town, instead of the “we’re here on Sunday and then disappear again,” so they teamed up with a realtor to find some office space.

The realtor found an office space in the heart of Glastonbury that was reasonably priced and available. It had lots of parking, easy access to the building, separate meeting rooms to allow for flexibility and a price tag that was significantly lower than anything else they’d seen. The best part about this office is that it would allow for small gatherings and meetings and really create some boundaries for the Lims between work and family.

After the meeting with the realtor, the leadership prayed to be fiscally responsible as they agreed to move forward and secured the space. The lease was signed a short time later and the keys were received on a Tuesday.

They didn’t know it at the time, but receiving keys three days before the COVID shutdown on Friday, March 13th was an obvious sign of God’s provision!

**AND NO ONE POURS NEW WINE INTO OLD WINESKINS. OTHERWISE, THE NEW WINE WILL BURST THE SKINS; THE WINE WILL RUN OUT AND THE WINESKINS WILL BE RUINED. NO, NEW WINE MUST BE Poured INTO NEW WINESKINS. AND NO ONE AFTER DRINKING OLD WINE WANTS THE NEW, FOR THEY SAY,**

**‘THE OLD IS BETTER.’”**

**LUKE 5:37-39**

# The Church During COVID

A day after signing the office lease, the team decided to cancel in-person service and only do church online because of COVID 19.

On March 15th, Pastor George set up worship and a podium for Pastor Jon, slides (in those first few online services) were projected on the big white wall. A year of live online services at Smith Middle School and the Riverfront Community Center had taught them the basics of church online, but this was an entirely new venture. Not only were they conducting services online, but it was the only church people had access to in the shutdown. They felt the pressure to provide a thoughtful, impactful live service and God was definitely with them.

The original families that had worshiped in the Owens' basement in 2016 became a small Covid-shutdown community that descended on the office Sunday mornings and pulled together to provide a good online experience. Jude Owens nestled in the conference room corner, helping project the correct lyrics and slides on the wall (and later directly to screen), Pastor Jon led worship which, from an office view, sounded acapella



as the instruments were plugged in and filtered through sound, Pastor George shuffled between balancing sound and preaching, and Janelle worked to connect the live stream to the website. In the smallness of that office space, church was happening, worship and praise were pouring out and the Gospel was going forward.

Little did they know, this was a step into a new phase of the church, both the Big C church and The River Church. This experience reaffirmed that God is perfect and makes a way - even if the path is foreign and unknown.

After that first online only service, the leadership team fully comprehended God's timing with that space. The thought of having to run an online service from the Lims' home was hard to fathom and it was a huge blessing to have this new neutral space, with great internet, to host a service.

New ideas and opportunities to serve during the shutdown started to present themselves. Janelle stepped up the church's online presence and the attendees of the early online church services helped the team realize their reach was beyond Glastonbury and the surrounding area. This was a huge missional opportunity; it provoked conversations among the leadership on how to still be the church, the hands and feet of Jesus, when limited to a primarily digital presence.

Being restricted to online forced the church to come up with creative ways to be hospitable. Luckily, Janelle loves hospitality, and so began the era of doorstep drops and fun mailings. One such mailing consisted of s'more kits with a little note saying, "We miss you s'more than you know." The flexibility of being online and the need to work remotely brought about fun endeavors like "Coffee with Jon and G-Money." Church members contributed welcome videos, prayers on the river, and short devotionals. New people started tuning in and connecting, even some past attendees came back around.

Church online didn't stop communion either, which provided a sense of connection amidst the social distancing. This process continued until 2022 as a small constituent of online viewers received letters and communion supplies and children received coloring pages and craft supplies in the mail.



Early in the shutdown, the Zoom craze started up. People wanted to see each other, talk live and discuss the Word. Life Groups and D-Groups (Discipleship) transferred onto Zoom in order to provide people with a sense of connection and dialogue. As some church members were forced to master new technology to stay connected, the season of IT support started too – helping people through the process of finding and clicking links, registering, signing on, unmuting their microphone and enabling their video. This process helped everyone relax and grow relationships. The last live online service happened September 13, 2020 and the church moved to a format where George pre-recorded his Gospel message.

Returning to church in-person became a possibility over the summer of 2020. After reviewing all the new CDC, state and town requirements for in-person meetings, the leadership decided to relaunch church in-person using town facilities. The town offered the Glastonbury Boathouse to the church. It is a beautiful facility with a 180-degree view of the Connecticut River. The leadership team practiced the new Covid safety measures twice before opening the services to the community.

Because of Covid contact tracing, members had to register for church and the first official service was on September 20th. The benefits of the return to in-person worship included seeing each others' eyes and hearing others' voices in worship, even if slightly muted behind masks, standing six feet apart.

Going back in-person, in tandem with stepping up our online presence, was great; however, a lot of procedures had to be changed to allow for social distancing. Even the instruments had to be separated. All of this changed the sound and vibe of the church. It was definitely a pruning and a recalibration to what is most-important when worshipping as the body.

During October of 2020, the church celebrated its fourth anniversary service and offered a photographer for family portraits. During this period, many new faces came through the door. Families with little ones seemed surprisingly comfortable with children in service, an idea and concept always welcomed and embraced at TRC. Hospitality also got creative, arranging prepackaged bags for people to take with them. The church figured if they all couldn't convene on one spot for fellowship, they could send members away with a snack to fellowship with their family and friends. Many people met outside of the building in the warmer months too.

Christmas 2020 was exciting. The traditional Christmas Eve service (or Christmas Adam as it is lovingly called) was a packed house. Because the service was so full and attendance remained high for the subsequent weeks, there were two services for Easter, one at 8:15 and one at 10 am, with a cleaning period between services. Instead of the normal egg hunt, pre-filled baskets complete with coloring books were offered, Easter stories, eggs and fun crafts. There were over 140 people in attendance at the two services.

In the coming months, the church moved back to the Riverfront Community Center - home prior to Covid. The set up and breakdown crews were energized. Now, double the space is needed for services and there's been a move to using the entire hall. The size of the current space shows the minimum amount of space needed for when God provides a building...and God has continued to faithfully build His church.



**“AND MY GOD WILL MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY IN CHRIST JESUS.”**

**PHILIPPIANS 4:19**

## EPILOGUE

It's been an incredible 7 years and it's amazing to see all God has done...and He's not done yet!

Now that **you** are here and part of the River Church family, the story is continuing to be written.



## My Story...

I left my small church for no particular reason and was looking for another with more activities for youth. I tried another church in town but did not like it. One day I saw Pastor George and Janelle's story in the Citizen and said, "Wow, that's cool how they got called by God to come here from San Diego." I knew I wanted to be a part of what God would accomplish through them here in Glastonbury.

Aurora



# My Story...

My River Church story took awhile to get to the beginning. After some disheartening experiences at another church, I was at a fork in the road and choose to write-off going to church. Years drifted by, and while I still clung to my faith, I began to realize that my life had slowly nestled into a state of comfortable apathy - where life was going well, but had found myself lulled into the false notion that I am in control and had tucked God away on the back burner. While not actively seeking God, thankfully I eventually began to feel the tug of God pursuing me through one my favorite things to do - riding my bike! On Sunday mornings, my bike rides kept leading me by Riverfront Community Center and these signs for The River Church. After weeks of procrastinating, I felt prompted to check out the church's website to see what TRC was all about. I soon discovered a link on the site to watch a recent message. God was at work here too as Pastor George's message spoke to me right where I was. After watching, I excitedly told my wife about the church. My youngest daughter was nearby and happened to overhear our conversation. She laughed and told us she has lots of friends at The River Church and we should definitely check it out as everyone is so nice! Several weeks went by, but we eventually attended our first service. After the service, my wife and I both felt like this was where we belong. I am thankful God led us to The River Church, where God's presence is felt and the focus is on Jesus and the Bible and loving our church family and the community as God loves us.

Bob



# My Story...

My River Church story is how God pursued me. The isolation of the 2020 COVID pandemic and shutdowns facilitated a family change I never expected and I was at the lowest point of my life when I moved to Glastonbury in January 2021. I was alone, adjusting to the fallout and searching for meaning. I attended a service in early 2021, but didn't come back. Summer of 2021, a neighbor invited me to a party and when I walked in, I saw Pastor George. I said "Hey, aren't you the pastor at that church in town?" We chatted briefly but when I left, I had no intention of returning to TRC. Then, Dec 23, 2021, that same neighbor invited me to TRC's Christmas Eve service. My parents were in town and we decided to go. It was a beautiful service. I continued to struggle and during a heated conversation with my Dad a couple months later, he said "Joe, I know you don't want to hear this, but you need Jesus. Why don't you call that pastor from the church we went to on Christmas Eve and see if he can help?" In March of 2022, I did. I started coming to The River Church. I began to experience how God works through people. I made friends simply sitting in service each week. I joined a hike, went to Men's Breakfast and joined a Life Group. God thawed my heart. Last fall, I picked up my guitar after 5 years and joined the Worship Team. I fought God so hard, but He still pursued me and opened my heart. In the short time I've been at TRC, God turned my world upside down and showed me how good He is by blessing me through the people at The River Church.

Joe



# My Story...

When Clif, my husband, told me he was looking at a job in CT, I didn't believe him. I laughed. It snows there Mr. ALabama Man (born & raised). When he told me he got the job, I was in denial. I was working at our church in AL & had no desire to move so far away, into the COLD. Clif immediately started looking for a church and, due to Covid, lots of churches were now sharing online. He asked me to watch one of the services but I said, "No." Stubborn, I still had a church home. In April of '21, I shared on Facebook that we were moving to CT. A college friend that I hadn't talked to in years messaged me to find out where in CT & told me about her friends, the Lims, who have a church. I couldn't believe it was in the same town as Clif's job! So Katie introduced me & Janelle via Facebook. I was thrilled & told Clif he has to check out TRC & why. It was the same church he had been asking me to watch.....thank you, God! We had a church home before even getting up here! Praise God! The Lims were such a blessing to us as we made our transition to New England!

Mitzi



## My Story...

I was living a life of sin, misery, depression, anxiety and anger. I had been trying to reconcile myself with the Lord Jesus Christ, but was struggling. I tried multiple churches to find a community that would guide me through scripture and struggled. One night, after being hurt by someone close to me, I decided to spend time looking for a church instead of spending the time with that person. After looking at many churches/services, The River Church stood out to me with their message of scripture based worship and discipleship through life groups and ministry. The Holy Spirit guided me to this church knowing this was the faith community I had been searching/praying for. Since then, my wife and I have been embraced with open arms and my life has changed forever. We have found the power of Christ through song and scripture and secondly we have found our home, our people and our purpose. Thank you Lord for guiding us to this church and our new family!!

Nick





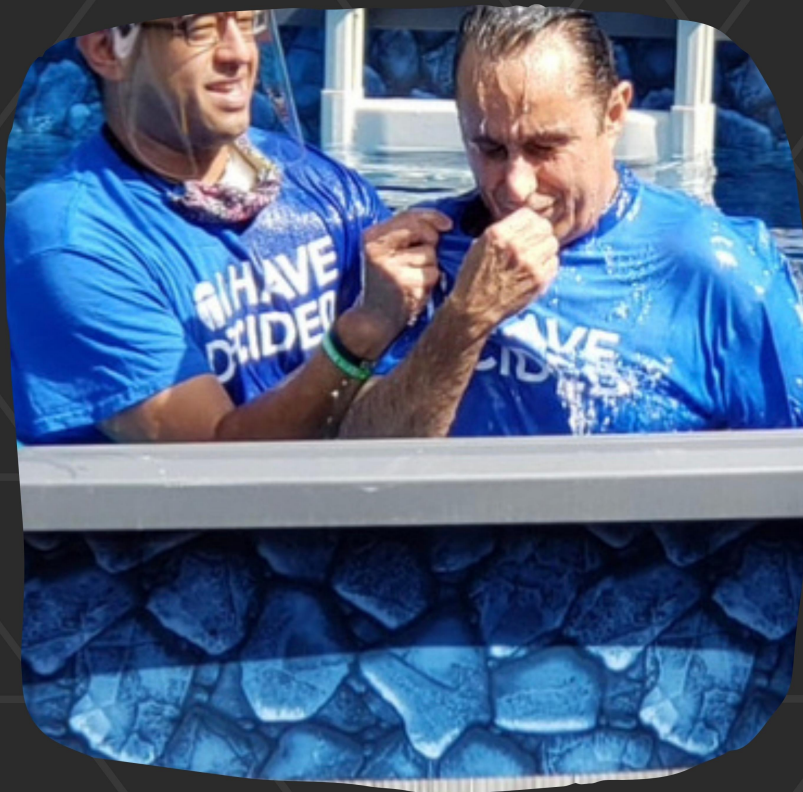
# My Story...

Life before Jesus, I was broken and a sinner. During this time in my life, I was so lost and wanted to give up, but God was putting people and events in my life as he was doing His miracle work. He knew He could save me. Before I found Jesus, my life was a roller coaster ride that was out of control. I just had quit my job that at the time I thought was the best, my son was having behavioral issues and I felt helpless. Little did I know during this time, God had a plan for my life that was greater than I could imagine.

I joined the running group Glastonbury River runners and this is where I was introduced to George. "Wait, George is a pastor? No way." During this time my son C.J. joined a get ready to run program and he became close friends with Jude. One Sunday while making dinner, the Holy Spirit came to me and said, "Go to George's church."

We went to The River Church and never stopped. CJ joined youth group and we joined the Lim's life group that happened one a month on Thursdays at their home. During this time, we started to pray and people started to pray for us and our family was slowly starting to have peace. God was doing His good work and this is during the time that Jesus saved me and made me unbroken. My life is a lot different now because I know that God loves me and He chose me to be His daughter. I have been brought to such a peaceful time in my life. Our father is such a good Father and I'm so thankful for our church family.

Shannon



## My Story...

I joined the River Church in 2019. Before joining, I met Pastor George and Pastor John and Jackie through the running group in Glastonbury. My learning lessons about Jesus came from watching Joel Osteen on TV and reading many of his books. At the end of his shows, he asks us to join a bible-based church. When I run by myself, I talk to Jesus and ask for his guidance. One day Pastor John and Jackie and their children came to attend our office barbecue event; we talked a lot about Jesus and the River Church. Next day, I went on-line and googled Glastonbury River Church.

For months and months, I forgot about the church. But every time I was running by myself and talking to Jesus the name of the River Church kept coming into my mind. Finally, I said I need to go to River Church to see for myself. In 2020, I was baptized by Pastor George. I love the prayers that we do and have been so blessed with those prayers.

Sia



## My Story...

I came to TRC because I was going to this church in town but wasn't growing. I had almost no personal connections anymore there. Also, I was deep into sin. God has used Pastor George first to encourage me, second to expose my problem, third to understand the process of healing and how to get "reconciliation" with my God. It was very painful in the beginning; it was a fierce war every day. But, now I have hope and I'm getting to know my God.

Walter

