

RIVER CITY CHURCH

LIFTING UP JESUS IN THE INNER CITY

Dear friends, we remain deeply appreciative of all your support, prayer, and encouragement. We decided to do something different for this month's report as we approach the end of 2022. We will share some of our personal and ministry highlights from this year. We pray thanks for each of you and your partnership with us in the Kingdom work.

Keith's Personal and Family Reflections

Family is the foundation from which we function in the daily grind of our demanding ministry context. Maintaining the health and well-being of family is essential to maximum ministry impact.

This year, our family has had more than our share of experiences traveling, time with loved ones, momentous events, and glorious sites. We had fun in the snow with our grandchildren last winter. Witnessing Katelyn defend her thesis, then her graduation from college, our family celebrated this milestone by spending several days at the shore. Katelyn moved in with us to work down school debt and to job hunt—spending the remainder of the summer working with our youth at church, after which she secured a full-time teaching position with fifth and sixth graders at a Classical Christian Academy.

Sarah, and her husband, Brandon, moved from Memphis to Denver, where they are loving life as she teaches in a charter school, and he is an engineer for Amazon. We had the joy of spending Thanksgiving with them and seeing some glorious sites in Colorado. Laura's 89-year-old mother, who continues to live with us, even braved the 900-mile trip with us.

Having noted some pretty big family deals, the one that takes the cake as the biggest for 2022 is the adoption of four-year-old Thomas into our family. Kaleb and Mandy finalized this blessed event in September.

After years of deliberation, I finally bit the bullet and made an excursion by myself up to the Northeastern US to visit with some dear family and friends, many of whom I've not seen in years, some for decades. This was a meaningful venture.

Two traditions we held fast to this year are our weekly family meals on Thursday nights when Kaleb, Mandy, and kiddos join us for supper, and our monthly overnight visits with the grandkids at our house.

Keith's Ministry Reflections

With a profound debt of gratitude, I recognized the privilege of working with talented, dedicated, and compassionate ministry partners. We enjoyed and were edified by a meaningful two-day staff refresh retreat in April. Speaking of events, I've had the opportunity to experience a handful of conferences and seminars that bolstered my faith and equipped my functioning.

Within the confines of our little church family, we have suffered three deaths this year. This has brought me great sorrow. I am thankful for the comfort and support we have in our community of faith.

Don and I have had significant opportunities this year to share the work and wonders of our alliance of four inner-city ministries. It is always a joy to witness the look on people's faces as they see this picture of God's handiwork more clearly.

While we treasure the "gold" of our long-timers, we esteem the inestimable value of the "silver" of newcomers. We've had a few of those among us this year. We've spent a sizable amount of time with a young Harding School of Theology graduate, Benji. He is now on staff with our sister ministry, River City Ministry. Don and I get to spend a couple of hours with him in hands-on ministry coaching and mentoring each week. This time is a highlight of the week.

One issue we continue to struggle with is the continuous onslaught of requests and demands, along with the corresponding endeavor to healthfully help people on their path of progress without enabling unhealthy behaviors. This is one of the topics that regularly surfaces in our coaching times with Benji.

To bring this to a close on a high note, there are several people with whom I'm having salvation conversations. Let us pray for seeking souls and open hearts in the cultivation of saving faith.

Prayers for our Staff for 2023

- ◆ Keith: Dear Father, as your instrument of worship, please fill me with your Spirit—making me useful for cultivating saving faith in Christ, making disciples of Jesus, shepherding our flock, caring for hurting souls, and wisely serving those in need.
- ◆ Laura: I pray that the Lord will help me to grow in wisdom and in love and that His fruits of the Spirit will flow out of my life.
- ◆ Don: I pray that the Lord would give us strength and wisdom as we transition into a new phase of ministry this year.
- ◆ Deanne: Come, lord, Jesus come.
- ◆ Cristina: I pray that I will always give myself fully to the work of the Lord, trusting God that he will make our paths straight.
- ◆ Kyndra: I pray that I will glorify God in all that I do, being joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.



Reflections from Don

As we wind down 2022, we see how God has provided many opportunities to invest in our members and their families. One of the areas we've spent a lot of time is meeting members basic needs, by transporting them to their doctors' visits, picking up prescriptions, taking them to the bank, and other errands due to members not having transportation. We are continually reminded not to take things like our houses and vehicles for granted, which so many don't have.

Another opportunity I enjoyed was preaching. I believe the church has grown spiritually through the series on the Life of Christ. Nothing is more rewarding than to hear from our members that they are being challenged in their faith walk each week, as they apply what they are learning about Jesus.

On a personal note, our oldest daughter Angel and family are flourishing. They have five children, two of whom were added to our family through adoption. Their oldest is 28, and their youngest is three. Anela, our middle daughter, and her husband are also doing well. Both of them work full-time and are very involved in the church they attend. Anela's favorite time of the year is Christmas, so she is a collector of Christmas trees in all shapes and sizes. She has 80+ trees she displays, and she continues to receive new ones every year. Our youngest daughter Alisha is a high school teacher in Heber Springs. This year has been exceptionally challenging due to the two previous years of shutdowns because of Covid. The children appear to be at least two years behind in social behavior and some cognitive capabilities for their grade level.

One of our recent highlights is we kept our two youngest grandchildren, ages 3 and 8, for a week while their mom and dad went on a mission trip to Honduras. Deanne always makes staying at Meme and Papa's house fun. Each day is filled with a variety of crafts, baking, coloring, and unique places to visit. This year we turned one of our bedrooms into a campsite by setting it up with a tent to sleep in and camping chairs to sit in. The kids loved it!

Deanne and I are blessed! We experienced good health this year and are grateful that the Lord has given us another year to serve with River City Church.



Reflections from Cristina

This year our youth ministry has brought many challenges and learning experiences. As I transition from apprentice to youth minister, I can look back and see how God has worked through our church family. The ministry at River City Church has challenged me to grow spiritually and I have come to love God more fiercely than ever. Likewise, my love for the youth has grown deeply and the hopes I have for them in Christ are much greater than I ever anticipated. My apprenticeship has taught me to listen for God's voice and to put faith in His plans rather than my own. In this new journey as youth minister, I am most looking forward to discovering greater ways to help our youth grow in love for God through every interaction. Along with our volunteers and teachers I am excited to put into practice all the goals and visions I and Kyndra have worked together to plan. Our youth group has changed immensely since I arrived, with many graduating and going their own way. At the same time, I can see how the younger kids are growing physically and spiritually. Each day they inspire me to trust in God's plans for their lives and to live as an instrument for His Kingdom.



Reflections from Kyndra

Reflecting on my role as the office manager this year, I can see many blessings. One of the greatest blessings is having the opportunity to mentor Cristina. It has allowed me to be part of the youth behind the scenes, planning, praying, and helping walk Cristina through youth issues. We also spent this year reading through the Bible and praying regularly together for RCC and each other. We are looking forward to doing it again next year. Through this mentorship, we have become great friends and grown in our relationship with Christ. Also, as the office manager, I am able to spend much more time with my three kids (Zola, 7, Mia, 5, and Leon, 4). This year we have had many adventures, created new traditions, and made many memories. As much as we miss our house being full of RCC youth, we can see the benefits of not having a house full all the time. I am thankful for the people of RCC and the opportunity to still be apart from behind the scenes. I am thankful for each of you and the many ways you all support our staff and church family.

