



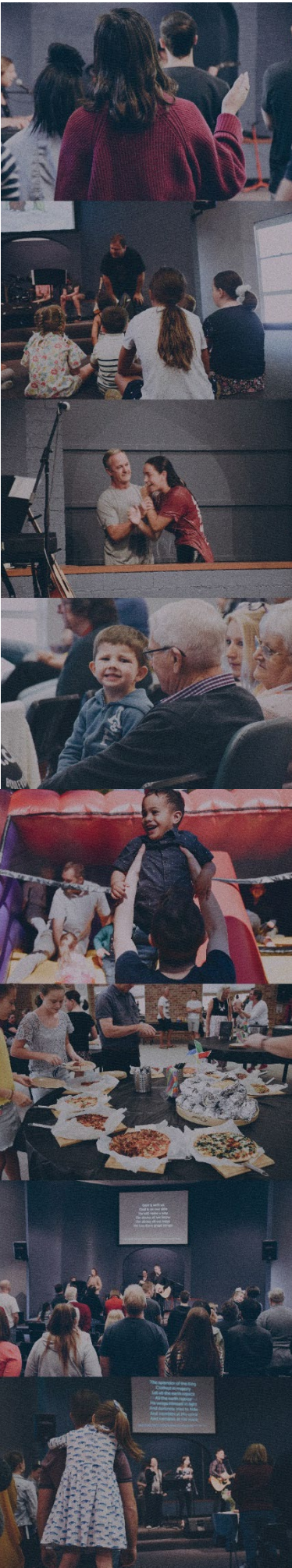
WELCOME

to RIVERSTONE
COMMUNITY
CHURCH

God is with us
God is on our side
He with us is a victory
For above all we know
For above all we know
He has done great things

The splendor of the King
Clothed in majesty
Sat all the earth rejoice
All the earth rejoice
He sweeps himself in light
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
And trembles at His voice

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Welcome to Riverstone Community Church!

We are glad that you have decided to join us.

You may be wondering, "*what is Riverstone Community Church all about?*" Well in one word, "*Jesus.*" We exist to worship Him, to tell others about Him, to build a closer relationship with Him, and to serve Him by serving others. **In short, we are disciples of Jesus who multiply disciples of Jesus.**

Since it is Jesus' desire that His disciples will be "one" (John 17:20-21) by having "one mind and purpose" (Phil. 2:2) we believe that it is important that as a local church we have alignment, or unity, in four basic areas.

- #1. *Missional Alignment* – "Where are we going and how will we get there?"
- #2. *Relational Alignment* – "Who are we and how do we relate to one another?"
- #3. *Doctrinal Alignment* – "What do we believe and practice?"
- #4. *Organisational Alignment* – "How are we similar, yet different, to other churches?"



The Great Commission is the operating principle that Riverstone Community Church follows.

Purpose: **What do we want to see happen in the future?**

We are **disciples of Jesus** who are compelled by God's love to **multiply disciples of Jesus** in Riverstone, Northwest Sydney and across the world.

Product: **What type of disciples do we make?**

Our goal is to make "4D disciples," that is, disciples who are **depending** on Jesus, **devoted** to Jesus, **developing** to become more and more like Jesus, and **deployed** on Jesus' mission to multiply disciples by living a disciple making lifestyle.

Priorities: **What do we prioritise?**

Our priority is to increasingly **believe** in Christ, **belong** to Christ, and **become** like Christ.

Pathway: **How do we make multiplying disciples of Jesus?**

We help an unbeliever become a multiplying disciple of Jesus by leading them through a **5-step disciple making pathway**.

Step #1. *Get to Know ...*

- *Me* by being **B.L.E.S.S.ed** (see pg. 7),
- *My Community* through attending Church organised **Connect Events & Ministries**, and
- *Jesus* by attending an **Evangelistic Bible Study**.

Step #2. *Gather* together with Jesus and other believers in a **"First Steps Group"** using "First Steps" Booklets.

Step #3. *Grow* by joining a **"Home Group."**

Step #4. *Give* yourself in service by joining a **church and/or community ministry.**

Step #5. *Go* and multiply disciples of Jesus by joining a **"Next Steps Group"** that uses simple, biblical, and reproducible Disciple Making Tools.



The Great Commandment is the relational glue that keeps Riverstone Community Church together.

Who are we and what do we want to be?

As disciples who love Jesus Christ, we want to be a:

- # *Biblical Church*, because Jesus is *Truth* (John 14:6), the church is to be a *pillar and foundation of the truth* (1 Tim. 3:15), and God's Word is *truth* (John 17:17).
- # *Relational Church*, because *God is Love* (1 Joh. 4:16) and Christ *loves the church* (Eph. 5:25).
- # *Pastoral Church*, because Jesus is the *Chief Shepherd* (1 Pet. 5:4) who has appointed *under-shepherds to care for His flock* (Act. 20:28).
- # *Prayerful Church*, because Jesus as the Great High Priest *lives to intercede for us* (Heb. 7:25) and calls us to *pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests* (Eph. 6:18).
- # *Spiritual Church*, because *Jesus is Holy and calls His church to be holy* (1 Pet. 1:15).

- # *Worshipful Church*, because *Jesus is Lord* (Phi. 2:11) and *seeks worshippers who worship Him in spirit and truth* (Joh. 4:23-24).
- # *Missional Church*, because Jesus came to *seek and save the lost* (Luk. 19:10) and calls us to *make disciples of all nations* (Mat. 19:28).

How do we relate to one another?"

Compelled by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14) we want to B.L.E.S.S. everyone that we come in contact with. B.L.E.S.S. stands for:

- B. Begin with Prayer** – Start by praying for a short list of people, both church members and non-church members, whom you long to see trust in Christ and grow up into Him.
- L. Listen with Care** – Ask lots of questions, listen to people's stories and struggles, paying particular attention to their needs and how Jesus is the answer to what they are seeking.
- E. Eat Together** – Sharing a meal with someone not only deepens the relationship, it opens up the opportunity to share issues of the heart, as well as discuss spiritual matters.
- S. Serve in Love** – Often it is random act of kindness, expressed through a simple act of service, that opens the door to showing the difference that Jesus makes in our lives.
- S. Story, or more precisely, "Share your Story."**
Fostering a relationship, asking questions, and actively listening to others naturally earns you the opportunity to share your story about how Jesus has changed your life.



God's Word has the final say at Riverstone Community Church in all matters of faith and practice.

Doctrinal alignment, or agreeing on what the Bible says, is essential for unity within a local church. For this reason, Riverstone Community Church finds it helpful to assign biblical issues to one of three buckets, *fundamental doctrines*, *important teachings* and *non-essential matters*. Let's explore each of these buckets one-by-one.

Bucket no. 1. **Fundamental Doctrines demand complete uniformity within a local church**

Fundamental doctrines are the teachings of Scripture which are of first importance and cannot be overlooked since they form the foundation of our belief in Christ and the basis of our salvation. They are limited in number and to deviate from them would be considered heresy. They include teaching regarding:

- **The Bible:** *The Bible is the Word of God.*
- **God:** *There is one God, existing eternally in three Persons.*
- **Jesus Christ:** *The deity and humanity of Jesus Christ.*
- **Man:** *Man is sinful and in need of salvation.*
- **Christ's death, burial and resurrection:** *Jesus died a substitutionary atoning death for our sins; was buried; and rose bodily from the dead.*

- **Salvation:** *Salvation is by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ, and apart from works.*
- **Second Coming:** Jesus Christ is coming again.

There must be complete uniformity in the local church regarding fundamental doctrines and the church cannot fellowship with those who deny these fundamentals doctrines (cf. 2 Jo. 1:7-11).

Bucket no. 2. **Important Teachings require public conformity in the local church**

Important teachings are the second category of doctrinal issues which, while not fundamental, are nonetheless important. They are considered as being *important* for two primary reasons. Firstly, we can be quite certain about God's view regarding these topics as it is directly expressed through a number of Bible passages which clearly discuss these topics in some detail. Secondly, our understanding and application of these teachings is very similar to that which is found in the pages of Scripture because these teachings are primarily based upon *theological principles*, and not *cultural preferences*.

These important issues are large in number, but the total is limited by Scripture. **They include topics such as the eternal security of the believer, Baptism, Lord's Supper, Marriage and Divorce, Sexuality, Prophecy, Women's Public Ministry in the church, etc.**

Riverstone Community Church, under the guidance of the leaders, has studied the Scriptures and formulated an 'official position' concerning the *important teachings* of Scripture. The official position of the local church should be respected by each individual member (Heb. 13:17). Whilst an individual church member may hold a different position to that of the leadership, they should make a commitment not to make their difference of opinion an issue in the

local church. If a church member strongly opposes the official position of the local church on an *important teaching*, they should prayerfully consider withdrawing graciously and seeking a local church that is more in keeping with their beliefs.

Bucket no. 3. **Non-essential Matters allow for individual liberty & diversity within a local church**

This third category of subjects can be classified as "debateable" and thus there can be diversity of opinion concerning these *non-essential matters*. These topics are not addressed directly or specifically from Scripture and thus in order to formulate a conclusion about these topics we must depend upon more "general" biblical principles. *Non-essential matters* are large in number and are not limited by Scripture. **They include preferences regarding the use of musical instruments in church services, Bible translations, how to discipline children, and a great number of other issues.**

Riverstone Community Church, under the guidance of the leaders, allows for a variety of opinion and diversity of practice regarding *non-essential matters*. When we are discussing non-essential issues with others, we must accept other believers (Rom. 14:1) and refrain from judging them (Rom. 14:4). Whilst every believer must be "fully convinced in their own mind" (Rom. 14:5) regarding *non-essential matters*, they must be careful not to be forceful in their attempts to convince others. When differences of opinion arise concerning *non-essential issues* it is important that we do not allow an atmosphere of "love" to be lost (1 Cor. 16:14).

How to Learn More

If you have questions, or would like to learn more about the beliefs of Riverstone Community Church, please consider one of the following:

- # Study the **Statement of Faith**, which can be found on the church website.
- # Read the various **Church Position Papers** on topics such as the *Main Practices of the Church*, *Baptism*, *Elders and Deacons*, and *Divorce and Remarriage*.
- # Listen to **past sermons** on a wide range of topics and Bible passages by visiting the church website.
- # **Contact an elder** and arrange a meeting to discuss things further.

In fundamental doctrines, complete uniformity.

In important teachings, public conformity.

In non-essential matters, individual liberty.

In all things, Christian charity (love).



New Testament principles and practices form the basic organisational approach that Riverstone Community Church follows. This means that some of our practices may differ from other churches. Among these are the following:

- #1. We believe that **Jesus is the Head of the church** and therefore Riverstone Community Church is directly accountable to Christ and to no one else (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18).
- #2. **We baptise people by immersion** upon personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Act. 8:29-39; Mat. 28:19-20).
- #3. **We celebrate the Lord's Supper each Sunday** (Act. 20:7) and welcome believing Christians, who have examined themselves according to 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, to share with us in worship and in partaking of the bread and wine.
- #4. **We have a time of open worship during the Sunday Service** whereby any Spirit led male may extemporaneously pray, read the Bible, or share a brief worship thought, that focuses on Christ and causes others to esteem Him more.
- #5. **The Church is led by a group of Elders** (Phi. 1:1; Act. 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 3:5-9) assisted by Deacons and Ministry Leaders.
- #6. **Whilst we believe that ministry is for all Christians, we also believe that some ministry is only for men.** Within our church women can expect to serve in a vast range of ministries such as teaching, encouraging, evangelism, praying, welcoming, administration, hospitality and music. However, the Bible teaches that some ministry is for men only. These ministries

include the teaching of the Bible to men and ministries that involve being in authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-15). In practice this means that at Riverstone Community Church there are five ministries that are only for men because they involve significant teaching and authority over other men – these include serving as an elder; preaching to mixed congregations; leading a mixed small group; chairing Sunday Worship, and sharing in Open Worship.

- #7. While we have some workers supported financially by the Church in full or part time ministry work, **we encourage the honorary use and development of God-given abilities by all church members** (1 Pet. 2:5-9) and thus do not practice a division between clergy (i.e. ordained ministers) and laity (i.e. common church members).
- #8. Everyone is encouraged to love and serve the Lord and live a life that is honouring to God and edifying to one another in order to keep the church body holy and pleasing to the Lord. **It may be necessary, at times, for the church eldership to exhort, rebuke and correct in line with Scriptural principles of church discipline.**

If you want to understand more about the similarities and differences between Riverstone Community Church and other church families, please contact one of the elders.



Now that you have been introduced to Riverstone Community Church what should you do next?

Step 1. *Confirm* that you are in alignment with the Church

Before making a commitment to become a member of Riverstone Community Church make sure that you are ready to join the church by answering the following questions.

- a. Are you ready to actively help Riverstone Community Church fulfil its' vision to multiply disciples of Jesus in Riverstone, Northwest Sydney and across the world?
- b. Are you willing to follow the direction and leading of the leaders of Riverstone Community Church and to love the members of the church by practicing B.L.E.S.S.?
- c. Are you in strong agreement with Riverstone Community Church's Statement of Faith?
- d. Are you at peace with the Church practices that Riverstone Community Church follow?

If you answered "yes" to each of the questions above you have confirmed that you are in *missional, relational, doctrinal* and *organisational* alignment with Riverstone Community Church.

STEP 2. *Commit* to join the Church

Once you have confirmed that you are in alignment with the direction and beliefs of Riverstone Community Church now is the time to contact an elder and inform them that you are ready to make the commitment to join Riverstone Community Church.

Remember, such a commitment brings with responsibilities and privileges. By committing to join Riverstone Community Church you are responsible for submitting to the shepherding of the elders and to join in on the full life of the church. Doing this, however, brings with it many benefits as you journey through life with a church family who pray for one another (Eph. 6:18), spur one another toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24), and encourage one another (Heb. 10:25).

STEP 3. *Connect* in with the Disciple Making Pathway

Since disciple making is Riverstone Community Church's operating principle, we desire every new member to join the disciple making pathway. To start this process please contact a church leader, request the "First Steps" booklets, and arrange to be followed up by a fellow church member.

As you join Riverstone Community Church, we look forward with eager anticipation to see you increasingly grow in your passion for Jesus as you join us on the mission of multiplying disciples of Jesus in Riverstone, North West Sydney, and across the world!



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