

LIVING RIVER UPDATES IN DIFFERENT FORMATS

52 LIVING RIVER FACTS/UPDATES FOR WEEKLY CHURCH BULLETINS

1. The mission of **Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba** is to share Christ-like hospitality, foster the stewardship of creation and nourish faith for the transformation of the world. How can Living River's mission help your congregation accomplish their mission?
2. The idea of **Living River** was conceived in 1999 when a Camp-Visioning task force was formed by the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. The vision was to have a camp/retreat/environmental ministry in Central Alabama. How can you be a part of this vision?
3. The Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley sold two former camp properties in the early 2000's to purchase the land for **Living River**. Covenant Mountain Camp in Springville, AL was sold in 2001 and Gulftreat in Panama City was sold in 2004. Do you have memories of Covenant Mountain or Gulftreat?
4. **Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba** is a 501c3 nonprofit organization governed by a Board of Directors, primarily drawn from congregations and clergy in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. How can you involve your congregation in the ministry of Living River?
5. The first summer camp was held on the **Living River** property in 2012 before buildings were erected. Campers stayed in dorms at the University of Montevallo and were bused to Living River during the day. Living River relies on volunteers for our summer camp ministry. Would you be interested?
6. In the fall of 2014, The Cahaba Environmental Center at **Living River** was opened under the direction of Camp McDowell to provide environmental education to school students. The Cahaba Environmental Center was closed in June 2019 after it was determined that Living River could not sustain it financially. We are searching for a different operating model that will be sustainable. Would you have any connections with higher education institutions that would like to partner with Living River for research or teaching?
7. **Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba** is in a covenant relationship with the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. You, the congregations and minister members, are our Presbytery. Learn more about the Presbytery at www.psipcusa.org.
8. Located close to the center of the state, **Living River** occupies 440 acres on a thumb of woodlands surrounded by 4 ½ miles of the Cahaba River. With the recent social-distancing guidelines, 1,064,800 people could each have 6 square feet at Living River!
9. From 1906-1951 there was a mining operation owned by the Roden Mining Company on the property that is now **Living River**. Mine openings can still be found on one of the hiking trails. If you would like to hike the trails at Living River, e mail office@livingriver.org for availability.

10. On the **Living River** property, there was a small community of houses on the top of fossil ridge and a homesite on the tip of the thumb in the 1910's-40's. The fireplace from the homesite is visible off of the Main Road trail. Have you seen it?
11. The roads and railroad beds on the **Living River** property were part of the mining operation. Two railroad piers are visible at the end of the Marty and Leland Keller trail. Can you imagine riding the train to Living River?
12. The Cahaba River which flows around 4 ½ miles of **Living River** is the longest substantially free-flowing river in the state and is among the most scenic and biologically diverse rivers in the United States. Can you bring someone to Living River to share this amazing piece of God's creation?
13. The New Marvel Slab, a concrete mining road that spanned the Cahaba River, was removed in October 2004. This is the site of the Williams boat launch where **Living River** campers canoe, wade and swim every summer.
<https://www.slideserve.com/conroy/removal-of-the-marvel-slab-reopens-section-of-the-cahaba-river> This project was the result of many partners working together for one goal. Can you help Living River find partners to further its mission.
14. The removal of the New Marvel Slab at **Living River** allowed species of fish, mussels and snails that had disappeared from this section of the Cahaba River to reappear. How can you help Living River be a partner in restoring creation?
15. There are 4 lakes on the **Living River** property. Two of these are located at the base of Fossil Ridge and were former mining pits. Have you picnicked or camped at one of our lakes?
16. On Fossil Ridge at **Living River**, you can find fossils of plants that lived approximately 300-600 million years ago. If you plan a trip to Living River with a church group, add fossil-hunting to the agenda.
17. On the Bill Peters Trail at **Living River**, (near the Charlie and Sandy Durham Chapel), Don Blakely, an elder from Montevallo Presbyterian Church, found a fossil of a dragonfly wing. After study by R.J. Beckemeyer and M.S. Engel of The University of Kansas, it was determined to be a unique species of dragonfly and has been named the *Archaeogaptitus Blakelyi*, or the Blakelyi Dragonfly. This dragonfly lived on the Living River Property during the Pennsylvanian Period of the Paleozoic Era approximately 334 million years ago. Today the fossil is located at the Natural History Museum on The University of Alabama campus. Wouldn't you like to find an unnamed species at Living River?
18. **Living River** has 6 bunk-style cabins with 8 bunk beds and 2 twin beds in each cabin. There is a capacity of 107 individuals in the bunk-style cabins. Brainstorm all the different groups who could benefit from a retreat with communal accommodations. Invite them to check out Living River for their next event.
19. **Living River** has 6 motel-style rooms with private bathrooms with both twin and queen beds. How about sending your church staff to Living River for team building and some rest and recreation.
20. **Living River** has a small-group lodge that will sleep 16 individuals in 8 bedrooms with 4 shared bathrooms. There is a full kitchen, den area, and deck. It is a great location for

session, choir, Sunday School class, PW, staff and corporate retreats as well as family reunions. How about booking a retreat for your congregation?

21. Most all of the buildings at **Living River** were built off-site and trucked to the property for assembly. There are 2 exceptions. The dining hall was built on-site and the McGuire meeting pavilion was built by volunteers from Shades Valley Presbyterian Church. Could you gather volunteers from your congregation for the next on-site build?
22. **Living River** has a health care suite with a treatment room and residential space for a health-care provider. Do you have medical personnel in your congregation that would like to volunteer their services for a Presbytery Retreat or Summer Camp?
23. **Living River** has a steel, above-ground storm shelter that is rated for an EF5 tornado and will hold 190 individuals. Aren't you glad the designers of Living River included this in their plan?
24. All of **Living River**'s communication (internet, telephone) is by satellite and is weather-dependent. Do you know someone in the communications field that could help Living River upgrade their accessibility?
25. The entry-road to **Living River** is 2.2 miles and there are multiple property owners along the road. Most of the other property owners are out-of-state timber companies. To pave the entry road will cost approximately \$500,000. Do you know someone who would like to take on this project?
26. **Living River** has its own water tower and sewer system. Thanks to David McGiffert and the McGiffert family of Tuscaloosa, Living River has enough clean water for a community. Do you know someone who would like to volunteer to be a part of the Facilities Committee to keep an eye on the infrastructure of Living River.
27. **Living River** has over 3 miles of hiking trails. Could you bring a hiking or birding group to Living River?
28. The **Living River** property is located in 2 counties, Shelby and Bibb. Did you know that the County line runs right through the Living River office?
29. Shades Creek out of Birmingham enters the Cahaba at the tip of the thumb of the **Living River** property. If you would like to see the result of urban stormwater runoff, visit Living River a day after heavy rains in Birmingham.
30. **Living River** has 2 outdoor chapels; the Charlie and Sandy Durham Chapel off of the field and the Independent Presbyterian Church Chapel off of the Main Road trail. Several weddings have been held at Living River. Would your Sunday School class like to meet in one of the chapels one Sunday morning?
31. **Living River** has tent camping sites at the LeBron Launch, the Elam-Hayes picnic site, and the Hubbard camp site at the lake. These sites are used by scout troops and families for primitive camping. How about a camping trip with a group of friends or your family?
32. The large field at **Living River** is the size of several football fields. It was built with a federal grant specified for mine reclamation. The field has been used for helicopter training exercises for the Shelby County Sheriff's Department. Are you aware of sports teams, bands, or large camping events that could be held on our field?

33. We always sing the meal blessings at **Living River**. Most have very recognizable tunes. Some of the favorites are Superman, Addams' Family, We Will Rock You, and the Chim, Chiminee Doxology. Email office@livingriver for the words and your family can share in this tradition.
34. At **Living River** Summer Camp, campers compete for the "Clean Cabin Award" each day. Do you wish that your children, grandchildren or great grandchildren would compete for the "clean room award?"
35. At **Living River** Summer Camp, we try to sing the camp song at the beginning and end of each day and at our closing worship service. It was first sung at Elementary Camp in 2015, the first summer of residential camping. It is to the tune, Simple Gifts. Try singing the first verse. "The Cahaba is flowing by the camp we love. Living River draws us to our God above. And when we find ourselves in this place just right, we pray and we sing and we seek the light."
36. Energizers are a **Living River** tradition at retreats and Summer Camp. Energizers are motions put to songs that are used at Presbyterian youth and children's retreats and conferences. Energizers unite our youth in strange and wonderful ways.
37. At **Living River**, we close every campfire with the singing of "Trees of the Field." Here's one version of the song:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6Kg-58repg>.
38. To get camper's attention at **Living River**, a leader calls out "God is good," and the group responds "all the time." The leader then responds, "All the time:" and the group responds, "God is good!." After this everyone knows to listen and pay attention. Try this in your Sunday School or Choir to get folks' attention.
39. **Living River** has declared every Wednesday during Summer Camp to be Wacky Wednesday. We dress in crazy mixed-up clothes and do things backwards...breakfast for supper, campfire in the morning, etc. Do you remember rituals from childhood that bonded you with family or friends?
40. The last night of Summer Camp at **Living River**, we host a talent show and encourage all campers to participate either with groups or individually to share their talents. The counselor skit is always a highlight. What skits from camp, school or scouts do you remember?
41. Before supper at **Living River** we have a sing-off between cabins to see who goes to supper first. Our categories have been Sunday School songs, Christmas Carols, Disney hits, and tv theme songs. How many Sunday School songs do you remember?
42. For our last campfire vesper service at **Living River**, we share communion followed by a candle lighting. The song, *It Only Takes a Spark to Get a Fire Going*, is usually sung. The line, "That's how it is with God's love, once you've

experienced it. You spread God's love to everyone. You want to pass it on." is especially meaningful as we near the end of a camp session.

43. At the end of each **Living River** camp session, we sign a wooden paddle and at the end of the summer, we hang it in the dining hall under the t-shirt for that year to remember all the good times and campers from that year. Have you seen these hanging in the dining hall?
44. Did you know that the electric bill at **Living River** is over \$2000 a month, even with no one on the property. To retrofit Living River for solar power would cost approximately \$150,000. Do you know of someone that would like to take on this project?
45. **Living River** is a ministry. Like all ministries it is dependent on the Body of Christ, our congregation members. How is this different from a business?
46. Many of the pastors in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley were involved in church camping ministries either as campers, counselors or staff. Many of these pastors first heard God's call upon their lives while at camp. Which **Living River** counselors or campers could you see God calling into ministry? Ask your pastor(s) about the impact of camping on them or their colleagues.
47. If every member of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley made a sustaining gift of \$5 a month, **Living River** could sustain operations for a year at the current reduced-staffing model. Have you considered a regular, monthly gift?
48. We need **Living River** as a place for our children, youth and young adults to experience God through a community of faith where they are taught of a sovereign God, reassured that they are already saved, and they respond to God out of gratitude for God's continued faithfulness to God's people. How is this different from other faith messages they may encounter?
49. We need **Living River** as a place for our congregations and small groups to withdraw from everyday life to be nourished in our faith and seek guidance as we discern how to best serve God. Have you gotten away from your day to day routine recently? Come to Living River.
50. We need **Living River** to share the gift of God's creation with others inside and outside our circle in a way that knowledge of this unique environment can lead to a future where earth-care is a priority. Is caring for the environment important for you? How about for your children or grandchildren?
51. **Living River** needs volunteer support in a variety of ways: serving in leadership, taking on projects at camp, telling our story to others, being a volunteer host for user groups, and introducing others to the potential of Living River. Consider volunteering for Living River.
52. We need the congregations of Sheppards and Lapsley to send their children and youth to Summer Camp at **Living River**. Establish a reserve account at your

church so that any child in your congregation or community can come to Living River for a nominal amount.

**LIVING RIVER ARTICLES FOR MONTHLY CHURCH NEWSLETTERS OR
SESSION/COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

JANUARY--

LIVING RIVER IS A MINISTRY, NOT A BUSINESS

Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba exists because of the vision of faithful members of PC(USA) congregations in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley. The vision was of a piece of God's creation that would be set aside, made holy, for the ministries of summer camp, retreats and the care of creation.

So, what is the difference between a business and a ministry? A business operates with the goal of monetary profits. A ministry operates with the goal of glorifying God. A business solicits others for its support. A ministry is supported by the Body of Christ, in our case, the members of our congregations.

As a ministry, Living River is called to be a good steward of all that is entrusted to us. The Board of Directors of Living River takes this very seriously and seeks to be transparent in all decisions and expenditures.

Join us in this ministry. Without the support of Presbyterians in Central Alabama, Living River will not exist. Here are a few things you can do:

- Come visit--Contact us at office@livingriver.org to tour the property and experience the holiness of this place.
- Volunteer--newsletters, trail maintenance, cleaning, hosting visitors, gardening, carpentry; Summer Camp nurses, kitchen help, leadership are all areas that could use your gifts.
- Send--Send the children and youth from your congregation to summer camp and Presbytery retreats..
- Give-- \$5 a month from every Presbyterian in Central Alabama would cover the operations of Living River. Sustained giving and support is critical to Living River.

<https://www.livingriver.org/support-living-river.html>

FEBRUARY--

MEET THE LIVING RIVER STAFF

In August 2019, the Living River Board of Directors made the difficult decision to reduce the staff at Living River to cut operating expenses in order for Living River to live within its means. Living River now operates with 2 employees, Executive Director, **Jenny Thagard**, and Facilities Director, **Paul Fancher**. We also could not operate without our contract Bookkeeper, **Wendy Tucker**.

Jenny, a Birmingham native, began as the Executive Director of Living River in September of 2018. Prior to that, Jenny served as the Director of Christian Education for First Presbyterian Church, Tuscaloosa. Jenny is a Ruling Elder and Certified Christian Educator in the PC(USA), and a retired Middle School Principal. In other former lives, Jenny was a High School Assistant Principal, Adjunct Instructor for the UA College of Education, Teacher of Gifted Education, and Assistant Director of Housing and Residential Life at The University of Alabama. Jenny served on the Leadership Team for the Presbytery's Elementary Summer Camp from 2015-2018. Jenny and her husband, George, have been married since 1981. George is the Credit Manager for Hunt Refining Company. They have two adult children, Frank (a Promotions Producer for CBS 42) and Merrill (a Social Worker specializing in International Adoptions with Life Line Children's Services). Merrill's husband, Ben, is a Hoover Fire-Medic and they are the parents of Emmaline, born in December 2019. Jenny and George recently moved back to the Birmingham area to be closer to Emmaline! Jenny currently works 4 days a week and is at camp one day a week.

Paul began as the Living River Facilities Director in March 2019. Prior to working for Living River, Paul worked for The University of Montevallo in HVAC/Steam Plant Utility and for Southern Lime in the area of Maintenance. Paul served in the Army, plays tennis, runs marathons and has served as a volunteer coach for Montevallo High School's Girls Tennis and Volleyball teams. Paul enjoys the outdoors and has been around Bibb and Shelby Counties for many years. Paul's daughter, Bella, recently started her undergraduate studies at UAB as a member of the Honors Program, a Linly Heflin Scholarship recipient and a Smith Scholar. Paul is on-site at Living River weekdays from 7-3.

Wendy has served as a Ruling Elder in three churches within our Presbytery. She and her husband, James, have 2 daughters, Hannah, a doctoral student in History at UVA and Marilyn, Pastor of Forsyth Presbyterian in Forsyth, GA. Wendy is a contract bookkeeper for several non-profit organizations and has been working with Living River since 2017. Living River is indebted to Wendy for her dedication to our ministry.

MARCH--

LIVING RIVER RETREATS

Have you considered planning or attending a retreat at Living River? Living River is a great location for churches, organizations, businesses, schools or families to gather. Getting away from the distractions of everyday life to focus on team building, learning, visioning, or forming relationships is especially suited to Living River.

Church Sunday School classes, sessions, choirs, staff, confirmation classes, circles, and Bible studies all could benefit from a retreat at Living River.

Organizations whose members need a place to gather for meetings or fellowship are welcome at Living River. We have hosted Audubon chapters, hiking groups, garden clubs, scout troops, and many others to Living River.

Businesses can utilize Living River for planning retreats, training events, or team building activities.

Schools may use Living River for academic field trips, organization retreats, faculty retreats, or sports or music camps.

Families can gather for reunions, holidays, family trips or special birthdays.

Living River's location in the center of the state makes it an ideal gathering place for so many different groups. There are a variety of accommodations for overnight stays and we have wi-fi internet, and cell service for meeting needs.

Contact Living River at office@livingriver.org for more information.

APRIL--

LIVING RIVER FINANCES

The financial situation at Living River has been a roller coaster ride. From our initial fundraising, through the early operating years to the present and future; Living River has sought to operate in a faithful and responsible manner.

Initial fundraising began when the Camp Visioning Task Force was formed in the 1990's. Over 10 million dollars was raised prior to opening Living River in 2014. These funds came from the sale of Covenant Mountain and Gulftreat as well as the donations of faithful supporters. These funds purchased the property and provided the infrastructure of roads, utilities and buildings.

The **early operating years** of 2014 to 2018 relied on a model which was dependent on the Cahaba Environmental Center to generate revenue for the operation of Living River. The Cahaba Environmental Center was operated initially in an agreement with Camp McDowell. The CEC was a program intended to bring elementary and secondary students to Living River for Environmental Education. Over the 5 years of the Cahaba Environmental Center's operation it could not sustain itself, much less the operations of Living River. Living River went into debt during this time with 1.1 million dollars owed on a line of credit in June of 2018.

The **present and future** financial picture of Living River began early in 2019. The Living River Board met for a planning retreat in January of 2019 and realized that Living River had to get out from under the burden of debt in order to continue operating. The Board made the very difficult decision to suspend the operation of the Cahaba Environmental Center and eliminate 9 of the 11 staff positions at Living River. With the support of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, funds from the sale of the former Trinity Presbyterian property are now directed to making mortgage payments for Living River instead of loan payments. The amount received monthly from the Trinity sale is greater than our mortgage payment. Summer 2020 we received news that Living River was the beneficiary of approximately \$479,000 from the Alice McSpadden Williams trust. The Living River Board voted to invest the majority of those funds in an endowment with the Presbyterian Foundation. This endowment will grow over the years through investment and donations to support the operations of Living River as well as support summer camp scholarships. Other cost-cutting measures include relying on volunteers to host retreat groups, turning off hot water heaters in facilities when not in use to lower the power bill, eliminating the copier contract, and reducing the waste removal contract. The Board is committed to being transparent with all finances. Our most recent financial statement is available upon request at office@livingriver.org.

Your help is needed for the future of Living River. If you can afford a **sustaining monthly donation**, it can be set up on our website (<https://www.livingriver.org/support-living-river.html>) or through your financial institution. [A sustaining donation of \$5 a month for every member of PC(USA) congregations in our Presbytery would fund yearly operating expenses at our current level.] If you would like to donate to our endowment, send a check to Living River at 2000 Living River Parkway, Montevallo, AL 35115.

MAY--

LIVING RIVER PROPERTY

Living River is located close to the center of the state on the Bibb and Shelby County line. We are approximately 14 miles from The University of Montevallo, one hour from Birmingham and Tuscaloosa, 1 and a half hours from Montgomery, 2 hours from Anniston and Livingston, and 2 and a half hours from Auburn. Living River occupies 440 acres on a thumb of woodlands surrounded by 4 ½ miles of the Cahaba River.

From 1906-1951 there was a mining operation owned by the Roden Mining Company on the property that is now Living River. Mine openings can still be found on the property. There was a small community of houses on the top of fossil ridge and a homesite on the tip of the thumb in the 1910's-40's. The roads and railroad beds on the Living River property were part of the mining operation. Two railroad piers are visible at the end of the Marty and Leland Keller trail. The Cahaba River which flows around 4 ½ miles of Living River is the longest substantially free-flowing river in the state and is among the most scenic and biologically diverse rivers in the United States.

The New Marvel Slab, a concrete mining road that spanned the Cahaba River, was removed in October 2004. A variety of government agencies, non-profits, universities and the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley were involved in the slab's removal. Here is a link to a presentation by Paul Freeman on the removal of the New Marvel Slab:

http://www.cahabariver.net/documents/COE-TNC_Partnership-Marvel_Slab_Dam_Removal_11-17-2004.pdf

The removal of the slab at Living River allowed species of fish, mussels and snails that had disappeared from this section of the Cahaba River to reappear. This is also the site of the Williams Canoe launch/takeout, which is one of 2 sites on the Cahaba Blueway canoe trail developed by The University of Alabama Center for Economic Development.

There are 4 lakes at Living River. Two of these lakes are located at the base of Fossil Ridge and were former mining pits. A primitive camp site used by Scout troops is located at the larger lake and summer campers camp, fish canoe and swim at the larger lake.

On Living River's Fossil Ridge, you can find fossils of plants that lived approximately 300-600 million years ago. On the Bill Peters Trail, (near the Charlie and Sandy Durham Chapel), Don Blakely, an elder from Montevallo Presbyterian Church, found a fossil of a dragonfly wing. After study by R.J. Beckemeyer and M.S. Engel of The University of Kansas, it was determined to be a unique species of dragonfly and has been named the *Archaeomegaptilus Blakelyi*, or the Blakelyi Dragonfly. This dragonfly lived on the Living River property during the Pennsylvanian Period of the Paleozoic Era approximately 334 million years ago. Today the fossil is located at the Natural History Museum on The University of Alabama campus.

JUNE--LIVING RIVER SUMMER CAMP TRADITIONS

As Summer Camps go, Living River is in its infancy, but the tradition of camping in the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley is a long one. Here are a few of our camp traditions at Living River.

- Meal Blessings--We always sing the blessing at camp. Most have very recognizable tunes, like the Superman Blessing, Johnny Appleseed, We Will Rock You, and the Addams' Family Blessing.
- S'mores--We try to have s'mores at the first and last campfire of each camp session. You should see our counselors at work with their assembly line system.
- Clean Cabin Award--Campers compete for the "Clean Cabin Award" each day. They are expected to make their beds, sweep the floors, clean the mirrors, make sure the showers have nothing left behind. They like to try to bribe the judges with sweet notes and creative stuffed animal displays.
- Camp Song--We try to sing the camp song at the beginning and end of each day and at our closing worship service. It was first sung at Elementary Camp in 2015, the first summer of residential camping. The tune is Simple Gifts and the words are: *The Cahaba is flowing by the camp we love. Living River draws us to our God above. And when we find ourselves in this place just right, we pray and we sing and we seek the light. Come then wherever you may be. Come to the river that's flowing free. The three in one is calling you and me to the banks of the river that's flowing free.*
- Energizers--are motions put to songs that are used at Presbyterian youth and children's retreats and conferences. Energizers unite our youth in strange and wonderful ways. Some of the favorites of our campers are Istanbul, 500 miles, Star Trekkin and The Davis.
- End of Day--As we leave the campfire at the end of each day, we sing, *Trees of the Field*.
- "God is Good" Call and Response--To get the group's attention, a leader calls out "God is good," and the group responds "all the time." The leader then responds, "All the time:" and the group responds, "God is good!." After this everyone knows to listen and pay attention.
- Never ending story--One of our favorite activities around the camp fire is the never ending story. We throw out a story starter like "it was a dark and stormy night when suddenly..." and it goes around the fire ring with campers taking the story in strange and unusual twists and turns.
- Wacky Wednesday--On Wednesdays we dress in crazy mixed-up clothes and do things backwards...breakfast for supper, campfire in the morning, etc.

- Talent Show--The last night of camp, we host a talent show and encourage all campers to participate either with groups or individually to share their talents. The counselor skit is always a highlight.
- Sing for Your Supper--Before supper most nights we have a sing-off between cabins to see who goes to supper first. Our categories have been Sunday School songs, Christmas Carols, Disney hits, and tv theme songs.
- Candle Lighting and Communion--For one of our last campfire vesper services, we share communion followed by a candle lighting. Some of the songs for this special time are *A Place at the Table*, *It Only Takes a Spark* and *Sanctuary*.
- Signing of the Paddle--At the end of each camp session, we sign a wooden paddle and at the end of the summer, we hang it in the dining hall under the t-shirt for that year to remember all the good times and campers from that year.

Help children come to Living River by donating to the Summer Camp scholarship fund endowment. These funds will be invested and provide Living River scholarships for years to come

JULY--LIVING RIVER HISTORY

- 1988--Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley was formed and became the owner of Gulftreat (Panama City) and Covenant Mountain (Springville).
- 1999--Camp Visioning Task Force was formed.
- 2001--The sale of Covenant Mountain helped to provide the funds for the purchase of the 440 acres that is now Living River.
- 2004--The New Marvel Slab (a concrete road that spanned the Cahaba on the Living River property) was removed. Gulftreat property was sold.
- 2005--Property officially named “Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba”
- 2006--PSL elected a temporary Board of Directors. Linda LeBron named facilitator.
- 2007--Last summer camp at Gulftreat. Fundraising began in churches. Keenor Hudson elected as first Board Chair.
- 2008--Living River received tax exempt status as a 501(c)3 organization.
- 2009--Summer Camp “Wandering Years” begin. Camp held at various locations through 2014. Strip mine high-wall removed with funding from Mine Reclamation Act. Assistance provided by U.S. Representative, Spencer Bachus.
- 2010--Culvert on entry road washes out and requires significant reconstruction. Dedication of LeBron canoe launch and Tate canoe take-out.
- 2011--Received Vision Award from Cahaba River Society.
- 2012--Infrastructure construction begins. Groundbreaking held. Summer camp activities held at Living River while campers stayed at Univ. of Montevallo.
- 2013--Living River received Betty Wilson estate gift of \$2 million.
- 2014--Construction of buildings. Cahaba Environmental Center established with Kim Hall as Director. CEC was operated in conjunction with Camp McDowell.
- 2015--Grand Opening and Dedication of Buildings. First Residential Summer Camp. John Erdman named as first Executive Director.
- 2016--Covenant agreement with Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley adopted. LR received ACA accreditation. CEC becomes part of Living River ending McDowell agreement.
- 2017--Robert Hay retires. Rev. Betty Angelini becomes Executive Director.
- 2018--Spring, Frank Sutherland named as Interim Executive Director. September, Jenny Thagard named as Executive Director.
- 2019--Board makes difficult decision to close CEC and cut staff from 11 to 2 to cut expenses and address debt. Trinity Church property sold with a portion of proceeds allowing Living River to convert debt into a mortgage.
- 2020--Living River is a beneficiary of Alice McSpadden Williams trust as well as PPP loan allowing LR to stay open during a time of COVID with no retreat or camp income.

AUGUST--LIVING RIVER SUMMER CAMP

(to be sent in July with recent summer camp statistics and pictures)

Email office@livingriver.org to receive this article.

SEPTEMBER--LIVING RIVER FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Living River: A Retreat on the Cahaba has a variety of facilities that can be utilized by groups while at camp.

- Accommodations
 - **Small Group Lodge** The Small Group Lodge has 8 bedrooms and 4 “Jack and Jill” style bathrooms and can sleep 16+ individuals. The lodge has a fully equipped **kitchen**, **multi-purpose room** with television, board games, couches and tables; **outdoor deck** with charcoal grill, **outdoor fire ring**, and **communication** consisting of internet, wi-fi and satellite telephone. This lodge is perfect for retreats for Sessions, Sunday School classes, choirs, circles, confirmation classes or youth groups.
 - **Bunk Cabins** Living River has 6 bunk cabins with 8 bunk beds (16 campers) and 2 twin beds in each cabin. There are 2 showers and 2 toilets in each cabin.
 - **Staff Rooms** There are 6 motel-style rooms with private bathrooms in the main area of camp. This building also has a small kitchen area and a healthcare suite.
 - **Office/Welcome Center** The office is a modular home building and has 2 bedrooms and a kitchen available to volunteer hosts and staff.
- Meeting/Eating Space
 - **Dining Hall** The dining hall will accommodate over 200 for meeting or eating. There is a commercial kitchen that is inspected by the Bibb County Health Department available for groups to fix meals or bring in caterers.
 - **McGuire Meeting Pavilion** This meeting space provides room for 30-50 individuals seated in rows or 20 at tables. This is the only building built on-site by volunteers from Shades Valley Presbyterian Church.
- Camping
 - There are **primitive campsites** at the lake and along the river at the LeBron Canoe Launch, the Tate Canoe Take Out, and the Elam-Hayes picnic area.
 - The **large field** is also available for primitive camping and has easy access to restrooms, water and kitchen facilities.
- Activities
 - Living River has canoes to rent in addition to hiking trails, a ga-ga pit, disc golf course, fishing at the lakes or river, picnic sites, fossil hunting, archery equipment, a swimming area (must abide by our regulations and provide a certified lifeguard).
- Worship

- There are 2 chapels with river views: the Charlie and Sandy Durham Chapel, and the IPC Chapel. Both of these chapels can fit approximately 100 individuals and are available for worship or weddings.

Contact Living River at office@livingriver.org to reserve Living River for organizations, families or friend groups.

OCTOBER--

LIVING RIVER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Living River welcomes volunteers whether they are individuals, youth groups, scout troops, or organizations.

Individuals--Here are a few ways individuals can volunteer:

- Serve as volunteer retreat hosts. (Training provided)
- Adopt construction projects. (Shelters, bridges, gazebos, bell tower, entrance gate, storage at lake, activity areas--volleyball, basketball, kickball, archery, put-put, etc.)
- Assist with on-going maintenance projects (trail maintenance, vegetable and native plant gardens, monitoring of bird houses, staining of decks, repair of wooden signs, replacing carpenter bee damage at chapels)
- Assist with Technology--Web-site and Facebook maintenance.
- Serve on a mailing team to assist with mass mailings of newsletters and giving statements.
- Be a Living River Ambassador to your congregation. Arrange for Living River presentations to Sunday School classes, Session Meetings, or Circle meetings.

Youth Groups/Campus Ministry/Scout troops/Adult Groups (SS Classes, Circles, Choirs)--Opportunities to serve:

- Clear trails
- Organize and clean out program/craft supplies before camp
- Take on a building project for a confirmation class/Eagle Scout/Girl Scout Gold project.
- Raise money for a particular item for Living River.
- Painting projects
- Deep clean Small Group Lodge, Cabins, Office, Dining Hall, Kitchen

NOVEMBER--

LIVING RIVER IS THANKFUL

During this month of Thanksgiving, Living River is thankful for

- God's many blessings that brought Living River into existence.
- Those who had the vision and did the hard work to make Living River a reality.
- Those who continue to support our mission financially and with their time and labor.
- All who care about the well being of the Cahaba River and understand its importance in the bigger picture of Alabama's environment.
- Those who have answered the call of service and leadership for Living River.
- The Cahaba Riverkeeper for testing our water and being vigilant about the River's health.
- The children, youth and young adults who love Living River.
- The congregations of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley who support us.
- The leadership of the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley who understands the gift of Living River to the Presbytery, the state and the world.
- The college and university faculty members who are discovering Living River's gifts for teaching, research and service.
- Mr. Paul, who maintains our facilities and grounds with a willing and loving spirit.
- Our Living River summer campers, counselors and volunteers.
- Those who bring groups to Living River for retreats.
- You, who care enough about Living River to see the impact it can have in the world.

DECEMBER--

LIVING RIVER DREAMS AND VISIONS

The end of the year is often a time of looking back and looking forward. As we look forward to the dreams and visions for Living River, we see the following:

- The *Cahaba Environmental Center* reopened as a research center available to faculty and students from Higher Education Institutions. This will lead Kindergartners to graduate students visiting Living River once again to interact with the researchers, conduct their own research and learn more about God's Creation. This dream involves a research center on the property and "tiny homes" for researchers while they are working.
- Living River as the center for congregational vitality renewal in our Presbytery. Children, Youth and Adults will come to Living River to deepen their faith through retreats based on study, contemplation, and mission.
- A thriving Summer Camp program where children and youth gather with adult leadership to explore God's Word and how we are called to respond to the call to love God and love others.
- A sustainable stream of funding that allows for a **full staff** (Executive Director, Facilities Director, Development/Awareness Director, Office Manager and Program Director), and **facilities and grounds upgrades** (paving entry road, solar power, back-up generators, indoor chapel, playground, and ball fields).

You are invited to become vested in the work and mission of Living River as we strive to make these dreams and visions a reality.