



LIVING RIVER
A RETREAT ON THE CAHABA

November 2023
Newsletter



Living River is an Environmental Resource for Central Alabama

Ideas for engaging the environment in your everyday life,
wisdom gleaned from Living River's first-ever Fall River Fest:

- **Observe.** The iNaturalist and Merlin Bird ID are two of the most user-friendly, beginner-free apps for learning more about the world around you. Data about any natural or social phenomenon is vital. Even our amateur data gathering and observing is helpful and a good spiritual practice.
- **Enjoy nature.** This is one of the best ways to help the natural world. We are more likely to invest in and fight for something that we love. Try to spend time outside each week and help homebound people in your life access the outdoors, too. People of all ages and abilities are healthiest when they can access nature. Here are some ideas for enjoying time outside: creative activities like poetry or journaling inspired by what you see around you or photography; games like I Spy, scavenger hunts, hide and seek, yard games like corn hole, or community sports leagues; meet up with friends new or old to enjoy the time outdoors together.
- **Volunteer with a nonprofit.** Wil Rainer of Cahaba River Society reported in October that, "We've removed almost 11,000 lbs. of litter and invasive species, and we've got a couple more opportunities to increase that final tally." Sign up for the Cahaba River Society's emails by visiting their website or follow Cahaba River Society, Cahaba Riverkeeper, Friends of Shades Creek, or your favorite environmental nonprofit on Facebook to keep up with volunteer opportunities.
- **Try something new outdoors.** At Fall River Fest, everyone of all ages had the opportunity to try or learn about fly fishing, fossils, creative writing, archery, and citizen science. Living River believes in the confidence-boosting yet humbling power of trying new things. It's important and good medicine to laugh at ourselves and discover new skills or strengths we didn't know we had. Trying new things inspires wonder and reminds us of our limited humanity. Summer Camp and retreat experiences are at their best when they provide opportunities for participants to try new things! We're never too old to try or learn something new.
- **Rest.** Just being (and not doing) in nature is important for spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being. May the day come when all can rest and enjoy creation freely.



Summer Camp Dates and Registration!

Living River Summer Camp 2024

Dates	Drop Off / Pick Up	Camp	Intended for Rising Grade	Early Bird Rate	Rate through 02/28/24	Rate through 04/30/24	Rate through 06/26/24
June 9-14	3 pm Sun./ noon Fri	Youth Mission Camp	7-Graduated Senior	\$500	\$550	\$600	\$650
June 17-21	3 pm Mon./ noon Fri.	Elementary Camp	K-6th	\$400	\$450	\$500	\$550
June 23-27	3 pm Sun./ noon Thurs.	Creative Camp	K-9th	\$400	\$450	\$500	\$550
June 28-30	3 pm Fri./ noon Sun.	You & Me Camp	4 yr. old-3rd	\$150	\$200	\$250	\$300

Living River hosts the camping program for the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley, Presbyterian Church (USA).

This year, we're offering a \$25 "bring a new-to-Living-River friend to camp" discount (no limit to number of friends). Once your friend(s) have finished camp, your total discount will be applied to your remaining total owed or credited to you for next year's camp if you pay up front. Campers will be recognized and get a special water bottle sticker! Find additional information about the discount and scholarships at livingriver.org.

All are welcome.

Notes about Camp Pricing and Scholarship

Summer Camp prices increase as the year progresses. There will again be a limited number of first-come scholarships available from the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley for half the base price of camp. If anyone needs additional scholarship, there is some available through Living River. This year, there is also a "Bring a Friend" discount!

Please be an advocate for Living River and encourage your child's friends to attend. We are working towards full capacity and your recommendation to friends and family goes the furthest. All are welcome at Living River!



Apply to be a Summer Counselor or share the opportunity with a college-aged young adult.

The application is live and the first round of interviews will be conducted Dec. 5-7 and Dec. 12-14.

Applications must be submitted by Dec. 1st in order to secure an early interview slot.

2023 Counselor Quotes:

"Being a counselor at Living River is a rewarding experience. Not only did I find friends, but I got to create bonds with the campers that I hope helped them grow closer to God. During our small group time on the last day of Elementary Camp, the kids were asking all sorts of deep, interesting questions. I was amazed that they were so interested in understanding what we were talking about. Being a Summer Camp counselor at Living River helped me confirm for myself that I'm meant to work with children." -Bel Marshall

"This past June was one of the best months of my life! All of these children mean so much to me. Being around them and being in nature and being connected to God meant so much to me. Living River will always hold a very special place in my heart." -Alison Jenkins

Visit our website, livingriver.org for more information.

Upcoming at Living River

Solar on the Dining Hall

Thanks to a generous donation from First Presbyterian Church in Wetumpka and leveraging a federal credit, Living River is working to have solar panels installed on the Dining Hall by the end of the year! The addition of solar power to the Dining Hall is estimated to save Living River over \$6,000 a year in energy costs. Thank you for helping us better live into our values as an environmental steward and giving a gift that will keep on giving in many ways, FPC Wetumpka! And thank you to Eagle Solar & Light.

Environmental Benefits

Over the next 20 years, your system will do more than just save you money. According to the EPA's Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator ([source](#)), your solar PV system will have the emissions equivalency impact of:



Living River Sunday 2024

Living River plans to provide a full worship liturgy again in 2024 for a Living River Sunday in any congregation. Next year, the liturgy and theme will be for an ordinary Sunday or your worship committee's choosing. We hope this is helpful to worship leadership and for raising awareness about environmental wonders and concerns. The liturgy will be available in late January.



Book a Retreat for a Small Group in the Shades Valley Lodge for 2024

With 8 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a full kitchen, living, and dining space, Shades Valley Lodge is a beautiful place for a small group to have a retreat! Reserve a weekend in the Spring soon before they fill up!

Financial Health and How You Can Help

As the end of the year comes to a close, Living River is trusting in our call to the work of stewarding a sacred corner of Alabama. Our greatest need is donations to cover operations expenses.

Giving Tuesday

This Giving Tuesday, your donation keeps Living River accessible for joyous, sacred experiences and environmental work.

Help us put gas in the tank!

This Giving Tuesday, donations of any size will be matched up to \$5,000 thanks to a generous donor. **Save the date!**

Donate at livingriver.org or by mailing a check to Living River between Nov. 14-28 and your donation will be doubled.



\$35 fills the zero-turn lawn mower
\$50 fills the tractor
\$80 fills the Living River truck
\$100 fills the Living River bus

2024 Tangible Needs:

- Closable cabinets for storage in the Dining Hall
- PTAC HVAC Units for Motel-Style Rooms 4 and 5
- 3-ton Heat Pump HVAC Unit for the Office
- A permanent hiking trail sign
- A PA and speaker for the Dining Hall
- Living River branded pop-up tents
- Exterior paint for each cabin
- Utility Trailer

Become a Bedrock Sustaining Donor

Living River's Bedrock of Sustaining Donors give to cover operational costs so other revenue sources are freed to grow its ministry. **Currently, Living River's annual giving covers just 36% of its operational costs.** Living River needs your support. Become a Bedrock Donor by giving a minimum of \$25 a month or \$300 annually, strengthening Living River's foundation! Donations can be made online using the code above, by visiting our website, livingriver.org, or by mailing a check. Sustaining Donors are recognized annually.



Executive Director's Corner, **CELEBRATE THE JOY**

We **celebrate the joy of our recent Living River events**- Fall River Fest and the Fall Presbytery Elementary Retreat. We **celebrate the joy of the many fall retreat groups** including Mt. Brook Presbyterian Youth, UAB Honors Program Freshmen, Northeast AL Community College Cross Country Team and Coach Patrick Laney, First Presbyterian Tuscaloosa's day of hiking, canoeing, and picnicking, Independent Presbyterian Church's Youth, Bama Catholic-the Roman Catholic Campus Ministry at UA's fall Search Retreat, Alabama Meditation Network's fall retreat, and Montevallo Middle School's 7th-grade field trip.

We **celebrate the joy of representing Living River** at the Tinglewood Festival in Montevallo, the Southern Exposure Film Festival (Alabama Rivers' Alliance), the Cahaba River FryDown (Cahaba River Society), South Alabama Presbytery's Fall meeting, and the Presbytery of Sheppards and Lapsley's fall meeting. We **celebrate the joy of seeing projects in progress and nearing completion**. The dining hall stage was floored by George VanKirk, Brett Melton, Rachel VanKirk Mathews, and Greg Byrd. The Shades Valley Lodge renovation project is nearly complete. The Solar Panel project on our Dining Hall funded by a donation from First Presbyterian Church, Wetumpka, should be complete before the end of December.

This joy that we celebrate is possible because of you; because you care about the mission and vision of Living River. Please go, and share this good news and be an advocate with your friends, families, and communities to spread the word that amazing things are happening at Living River. Lives are being impacted, faith communities are being strengthened, and the seed of environmental justice has been planted.

All are welcome. **Come, and celebrate the joy!**



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