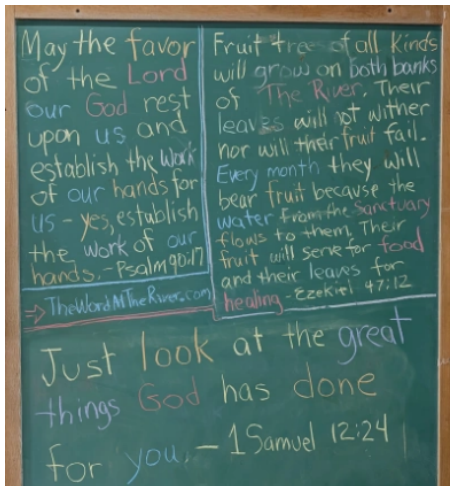


Introduction

God loves diversity. Thus we should too! Just look at his creation to confirm this! So many types of **sheep** (about 200). So many types of **birds** (about 11,000). So many types of **fish** (about 12,000). So many types of **trees** (over 70,000). So many types of **flowers** (about 400,000). So many types of **insects** (about 900,000). So many **stars** in the universe (about 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000). That BIG number is 1 septillion in the American numbering system; 1 quadrillion in the European system.



God has shown favor to The River Food Pantry for 20 years. God has blessed The River over and over and over and over and over and over the past 20 years.

Yes, this is The River over the past 20 years... serving **ALL** who are in need, especially those **MOST** in need! I witnessed with my own eyes how **those in the most need were served over and above a normal pantry session** at The River. No need to be a Christian to receive their service! They don't even ask!

And the blackboard was there from the beginning. And it had (and still has) **something to say!** The top two corners of the blackboard were the foundation for The River Food Pantry from its very inception. **They were God's Words of encouragement.** Looking at them each day reminded Andy, Jenny, Tom, Jed and others who founded The River of **what was really important.**

Getting The River started involved many sacrifices by those founders along with others who spent months converting an empty warehouse into what became The River with over a dozen long tables to share a meal complete with **vases of flowers on each table!** Yes, fresh cut flowers! **Better than most restaurants!**



And a few years later (August 21, 2009) completing the Mural showed how the hundreds of people coming to the River had become a **large joyful family.** God's love and salvation were always the unspoken basis... words were not necessary unless asked. (*referencing St. Francis of Assisi*)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Kiersten Chernovol (Doty) created the design for the mural. About her design she wrote: Rays of light poured from the holes in outstretched hands emerging from a flowing river—bringing to mind how the same Jesus that was nailed through his hands to the cross to die for our sins is there in the midst of The River.



Kiersten's sketchbook design (which she updated to include the Capitol building) was projected onto large masonite panels and the outlines were all painted in black, ready for everyone to paint!

And so it came to pass that on **Friday, August 21, 2009**, all who came to use the services of The River were invited to help paint the mural. **Over 70 people** were given a brush and a cup of paint. Most asked if they needed to stay within the lines. **Nope, no rules.** Paint whatever inspires you. Three hours later the community had painted the entire mural. Six days later it was mounted on the wall. To this day, many volunteers at The River want to have their picture taken in front of that mural. The amazing background story (full of "God-coincidences") is on the next page!

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



A Look Behind The River Mural

By Len Lindsay, Volunteer & Supporter of The River Food Pantry

Kiersten Doty was an intern with Source Ministries in Minneapolis, which used art and music to minister to the area's diverse neighborhood. It was a perfect fit for Kiersten since God had gifted her with artistic skills. A week before the annual Art Fest, Kiersten heard God ask her to create a huge mural for a nonprofit. While that would be truly exciting, she was sad because she realized that a nonprofit wouldn't be asking a girl just out of high school to paint a huge mural for them.

In Madison (270 miles away), Len Lindsay heard God ask him to create a huge mural for The River. Typically, Len immediately did what God asked of him, but in this case, he paused to remind God that he was not artistic. Not even a little. Nevertheless, God asked him again! So, Len said, "Fine!" He was volunteering at the Source's Art Fest and would watch how they did it.

Meanwhile, The River was getting ready to expand their services. Another business in the back quarter of their building didn't renew their lease so this was a great opportunity to expand.

In early July 2009, the city closed the entire street for the Source Art Fest. Len helped by driving to the store to buy paint and brushes. Kiersten helped with the many art needs for the small tables set out along the street. There was no money allowed at the art fest. All food and refreshments were free. The artists at the tables freely helped anyone who stopped by to create their own piece of art that they could take home with them.

At the end of the art fest, the volunteers celebrated and shared stories from the successful weekend. Kiersten mentioned that she would be moving to Madison to attend MATC. That caught Len's attention, so he went over and asked her a simple question. "So, Kiersten, since you are moving to Madison, would you like to create a huge mural for The River Food Pantry?" Len was amazed at her response. With eyes wide open, she said, "Yes!"

Back in Madison, Len got the go ahead from The River and bought all the materials needed (using the same "skills" that he used in Minneapolis) ...drop cloths, paint, primer, brushes and four large masonite panels.

Meanwhile, Kiersten created the design for the mural. Rays of light poured from the holes in outstretched hands emerging from a flowing river—bringing to mind how the same Jesus that was nailed through his hands to the cross to die for our sins is there in the midst of The River.

A bright projector could beam Kiersten's design onto the large masonite panels where anyone (regardless of artistic talent) could paint the black outlines to match the projected image. But this would require a bright projector and quite a bit of uninterrupted space.

Coincidentally, The River was expanding right then into their new space, which was empty for that week. It just so happened that MATC had a bright projector that could be reserved. Andy (co-founder of The River) was an instructor there and was able to get it without a reservation for that same week. Kiersten had time that same week in August before MATC classes started. Len had time that same week to coordinate everything including driving Kiersten to and from The River.

And so it came to pass that on Friday, August 21, 2009, all who came to use the services of The River were invited to help paint the mural. Over 70 people were given a brush and a cup of paint. Most asked if they needed to stay within the lines. Nope, no rules. Paint whatever inspires you. Three hours later the community had painted the entire mural. Six days later it was mounted on the wall. And to this day, most volunteers at The River ask to have their picture taken in front of that mural.

And with so many coincidences, we know that God was working behind the scenes to get that huge mural to remind us that God is in our midst at The River!

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say

The River Food Pantry's 2025 Mission

Mission

Food, resources and faith to build a stronger community.

The River Food Pantry's 2025 #1 Guiding Principle

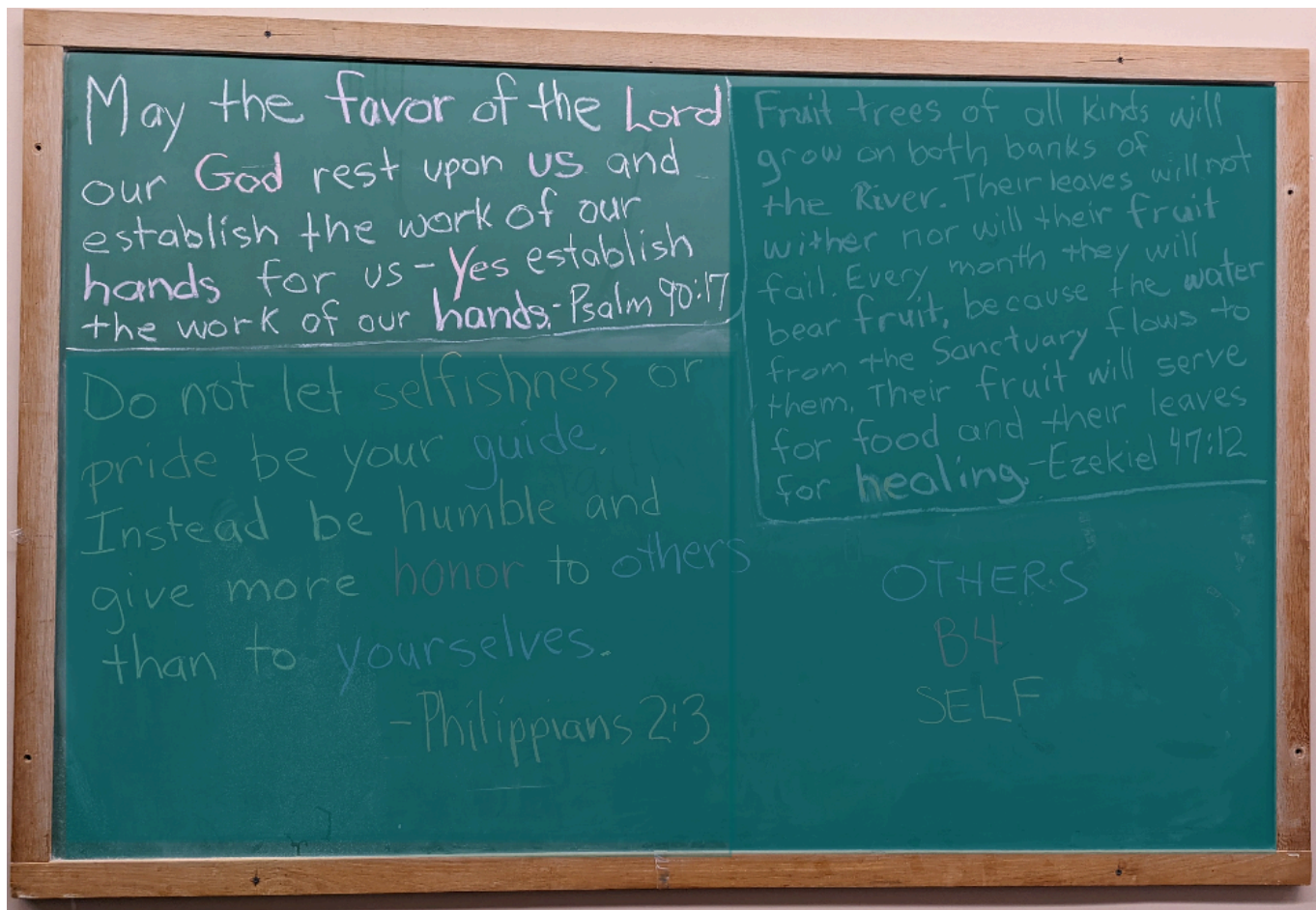
We Believe...

in a foundation of faith and place faith at the center of everything we do.

This continues that firm foundation of The River Food Pantry that started right from when the building was first rented in 2005 (twenty years ago) and opened in March of 2006 with volunteers and support from local churches and faith that God would provide (and "**bring success to all we do**") as reflected in both foundation Scriptures (still prominently displayed on the River Blackboard as shown on the next two pages)!

This book celebrates the River Food Pantry's 20th Anniversary with photos of the huge mural being created as well as being a background for volunteer group photos PLUS a look at the theme of the Scriptures on the blackboard in reverse chronological order (they update most Monday mornings).

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say
A Main Foundation for The River Food Pantry
Psalm 90:17

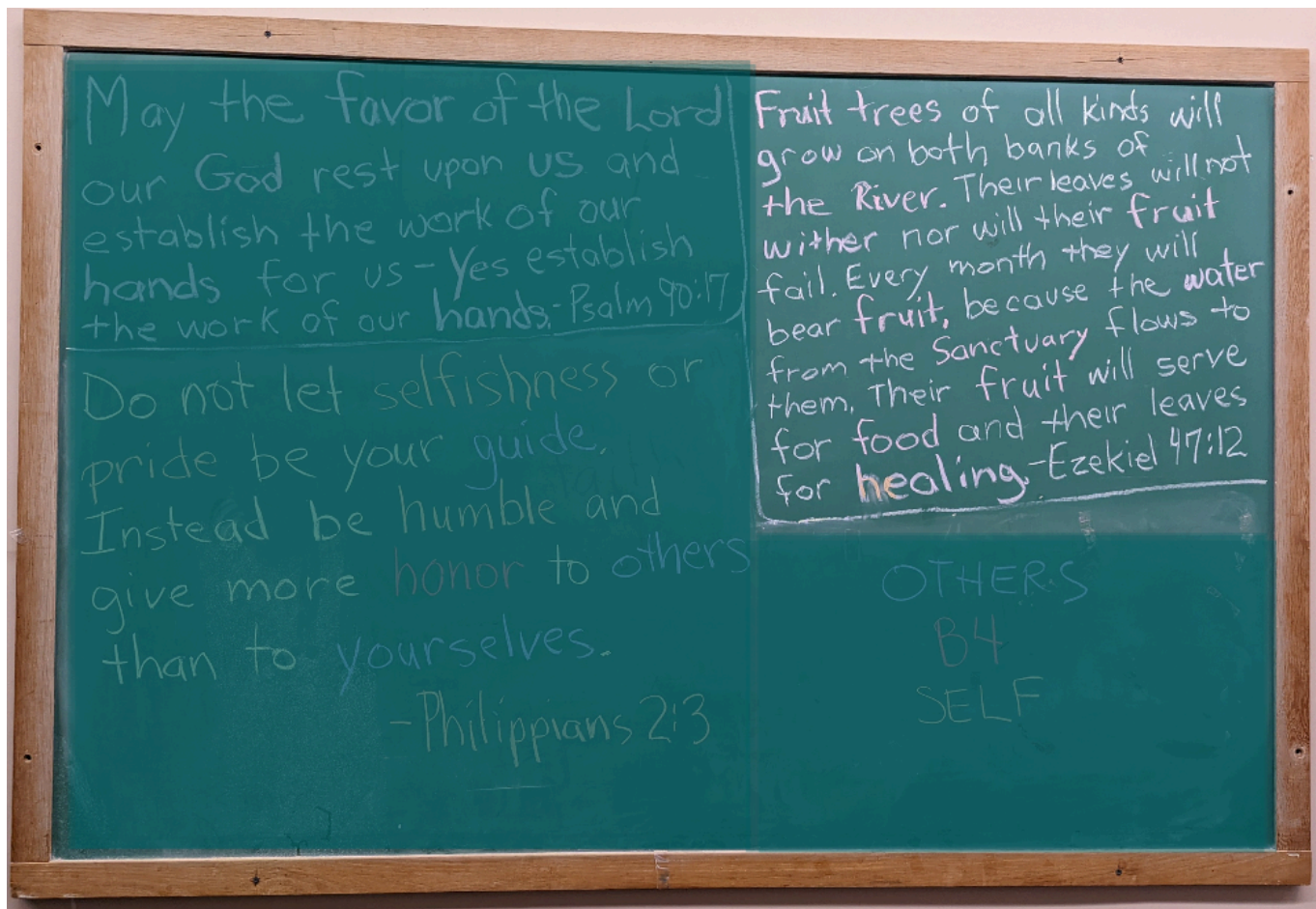


May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us
and establish the work of our hands for us;
yes, establish the work of our hands! (New International Version)

And may the Lord our God show us his approval
and make our efforts successful.
Yes, make our efforts successful! (New Living Translation)

And then let the *beauty and grace* of the Lord our God rest upon us
and bring success to all we do;
yes, bring success to all we do! (The Voice)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say
A Main Foundation for The River Food Pantry
Ezekiel 47:12



Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing." (New International Version)

On each bank of the stream all kinds of trees will grow to provide food. Their leaves will never wither, and they will never stop bearing fruit. They will have fresh fruit every month, because they are watered by the stream that flows from the Temple. The trees will provide food, and their leaves will be used for healing people." (Good News Translation)

All kinds of trees will flourish along both sides of the river. Their leaves won't wither, and their fruit won't fail. Every month they will bear *a fresh crop of* fruit because they are nourished from the water that flows from the *temple* sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves will be for healing. (The Voice)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



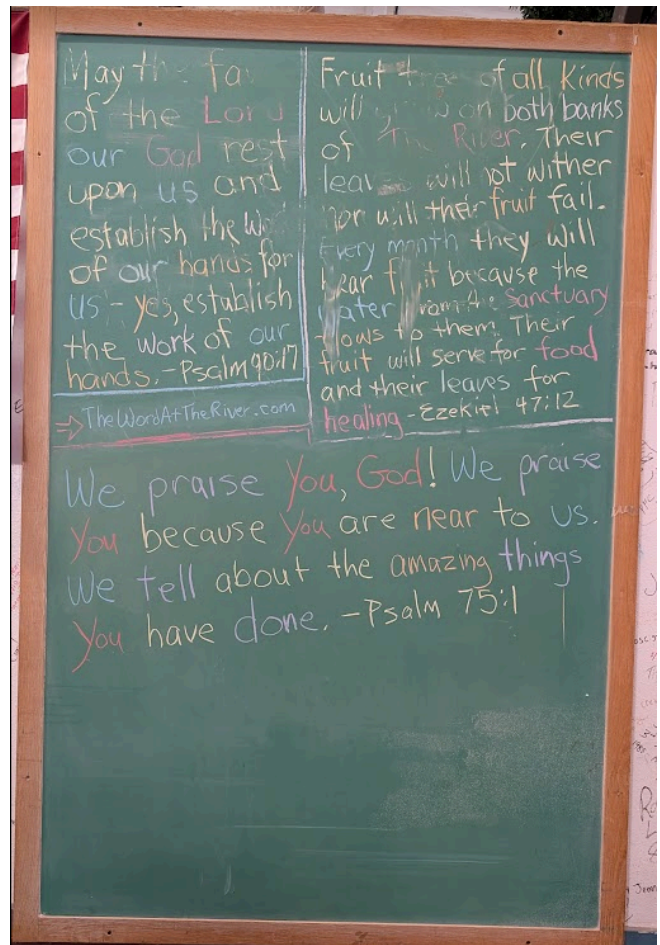
The original design for the huge River Mural taken from the Kiersten Chernoval (Doty) sketchbook (*before she added the Capitol building*).



A bright projector was used to project this design onto three masonite panels where the lines of the design were painted in black as kind of an "outline".

We praise You,
God! We praise
You because You
are near to us.
We tell about the
amazing things
You have done.

(Psalm 75:1 Easy to Read Version)



April 14, 2025

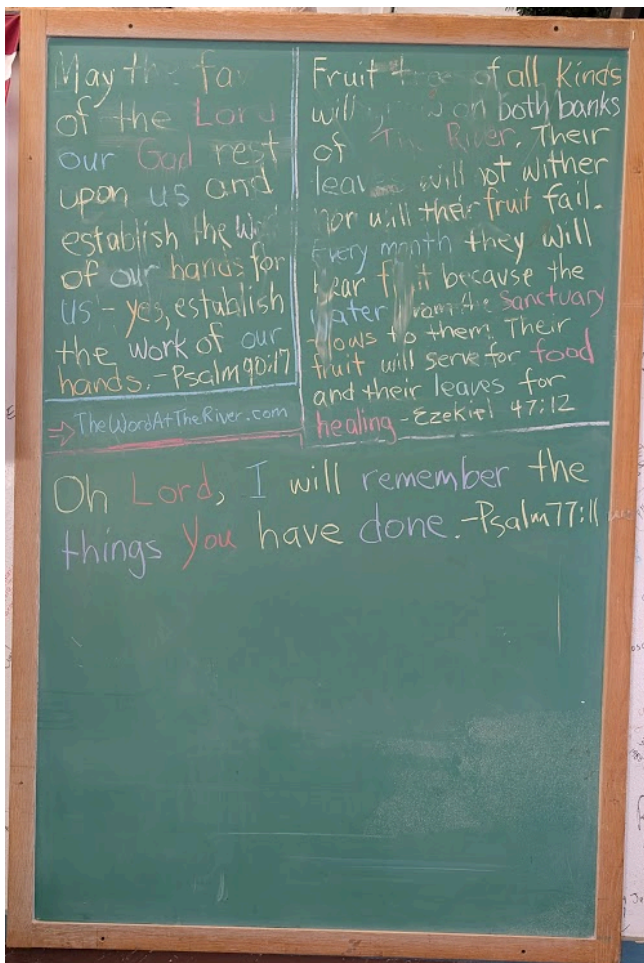
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Kiersten's giving a two thumbs up for our efforts to paint her design onto the three masonite panels.



You can see how Kiersten (the artist) has her arms outstretched **just like the outstretched arms** in her design and how the three masonite boards were actually set up on three wooden pallets with two pieces of scrap wood to keep the masonite boards from falling forward.



Oh Lord, I will
remember the things
You have done.

(Psalm 77:11 Contemporary English Version)

April 7, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



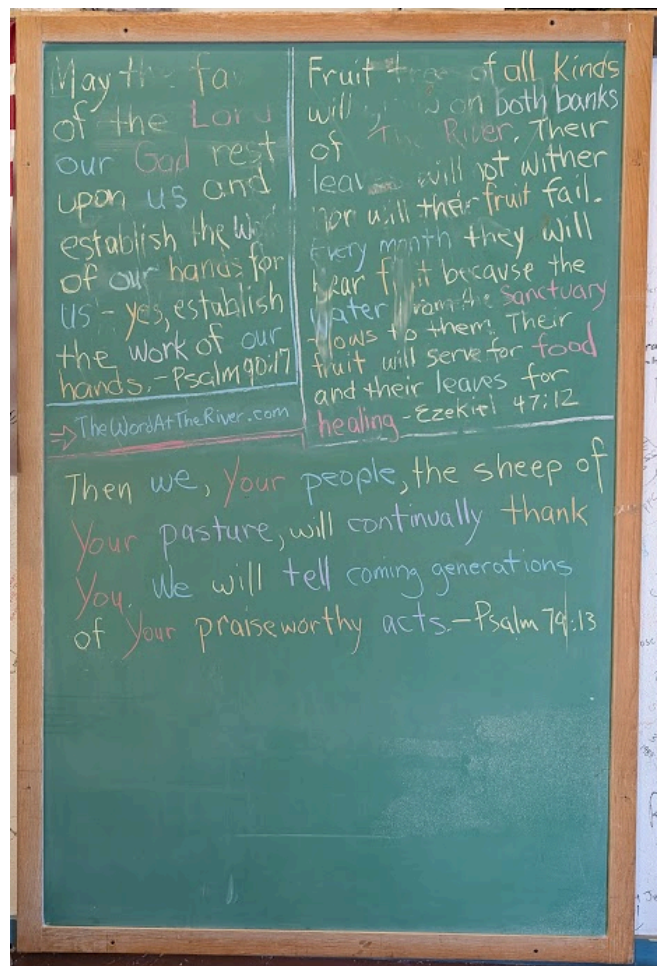
The final outline design is completed and propped up until PAINT DAY AT THE RIVER (August 21, 2009)

Then we, Your people,
the sheep of Your
pasture, will
continually thank You.
We will tell coming
generations of Your
praiseworthy acts.

(Psalm 79:13 New English Translation)

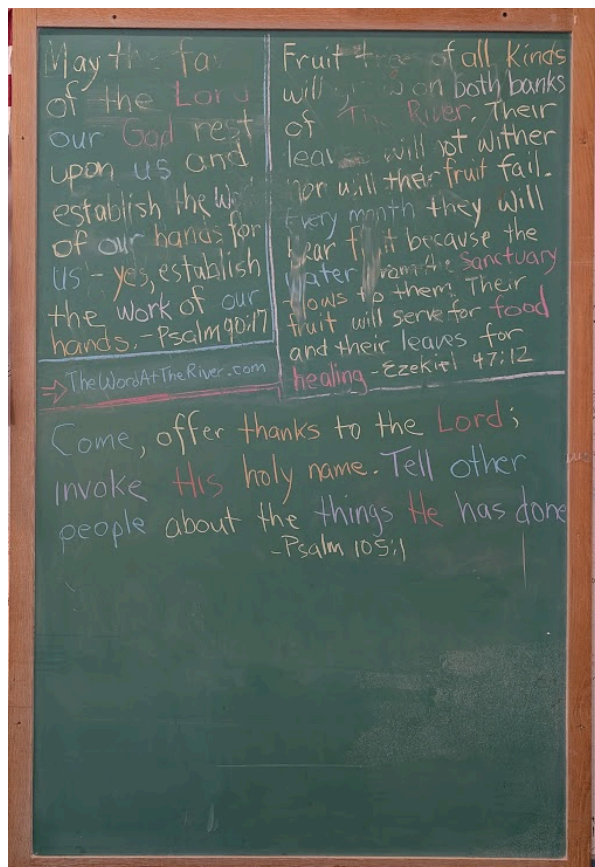


Kiersten is preparing cups of paint that will be handed out to anyone who would like to help paint the mural.



March 31, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



I wonder what the artist is looking at?
Or more likely it is an artistic pose! :)

Len's pose is not as artistic! :)
And, yes, he is wearing a tropical shirt
... wore one every day all year round for
the seven years while coordinating the
Handwritten Bible project (the River
provided table space each month)

**Come, offer thanks to the
Lord; invoke His holy
name. Tell other people
about the things
He has done.**

(Psalm 105:1 The Voice)

March 24, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



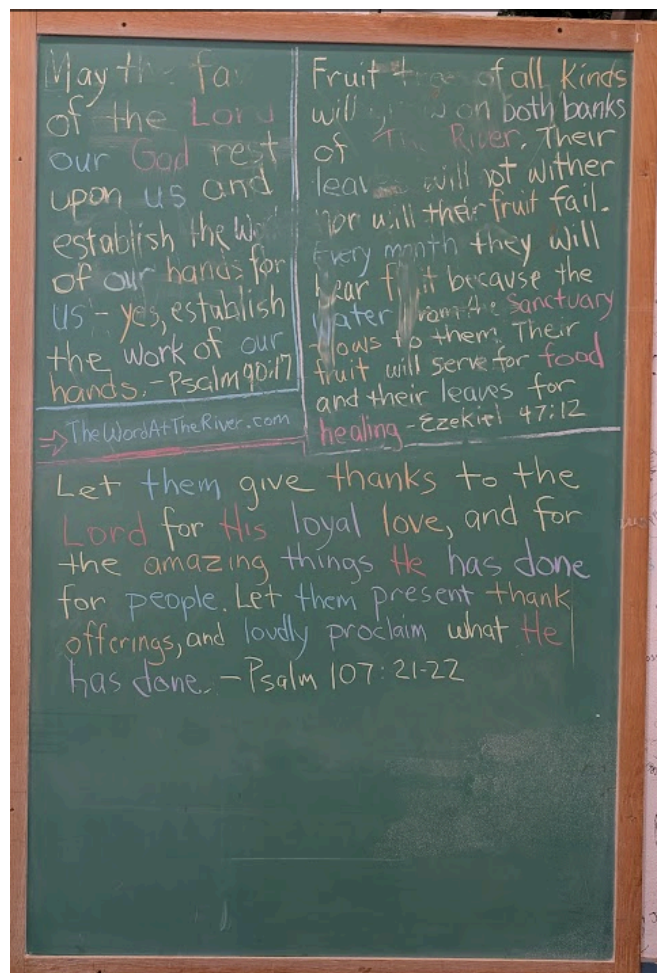
The painting is underway! And KIDS are full partners in this ... and having fun being artists!



Interesting to see WHAT our River artists are painting first!

Let them give thanks
to the Lord for His
loyal love, and for the
amazing things He has
done for people.
Let them present thank
offerings, and loudly
proclaim what
He has done.

(Psalm 107:21-22 New English Translation)



March 17, 2025

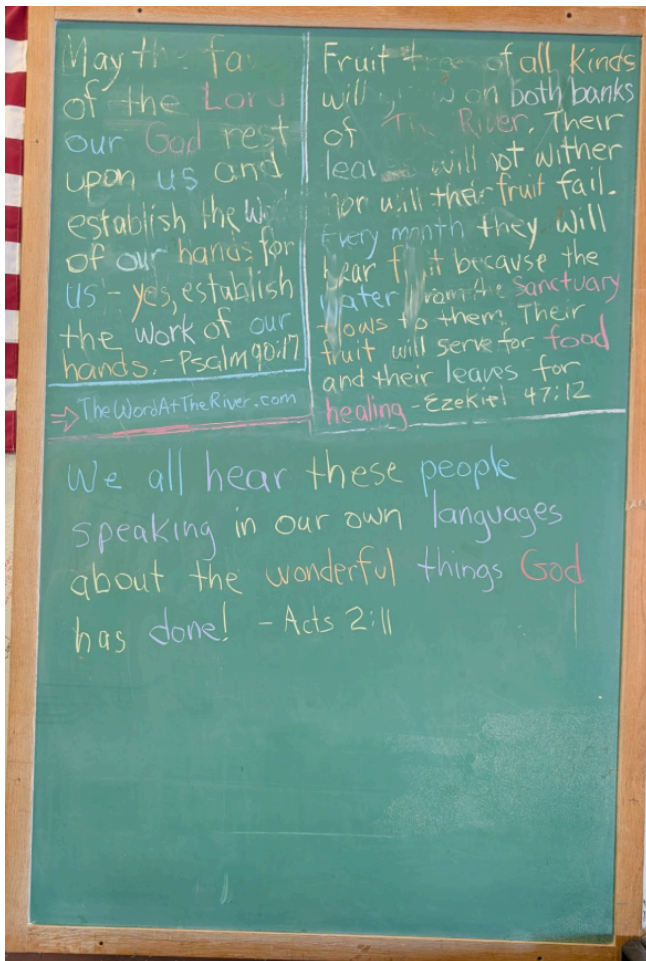
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Sections of the Capitol building are getting some color!



Notice the gentleman talking with Kiersten (the artist). Maybe he was asking if it would be OK to add some graffiti in the top right corner!



We all hear these
people speaking in
our own languages
about the
wonderful things
God has done!

(Acts 2:11 New Living Translation)

March 10, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



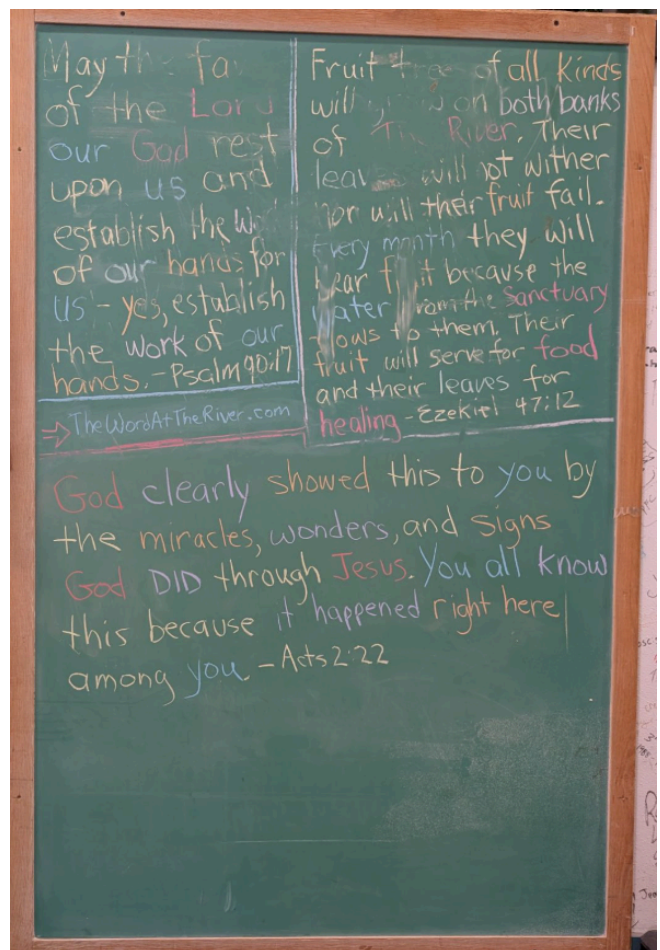
The graffiti is taking shape in that top corner now (while Kiersten is getting more cups of paint ready)



HOPE appeared at the top corner... graffiti style! And... notice how painting is like a magnet to the kids!

God clearly showed
this to you by the
miracles, wonders,
and signs God did
through Jesus.
You all know this
because it happened
right here among
you.

(Acts 2:22 International Children's Bible)



March 3, 2025

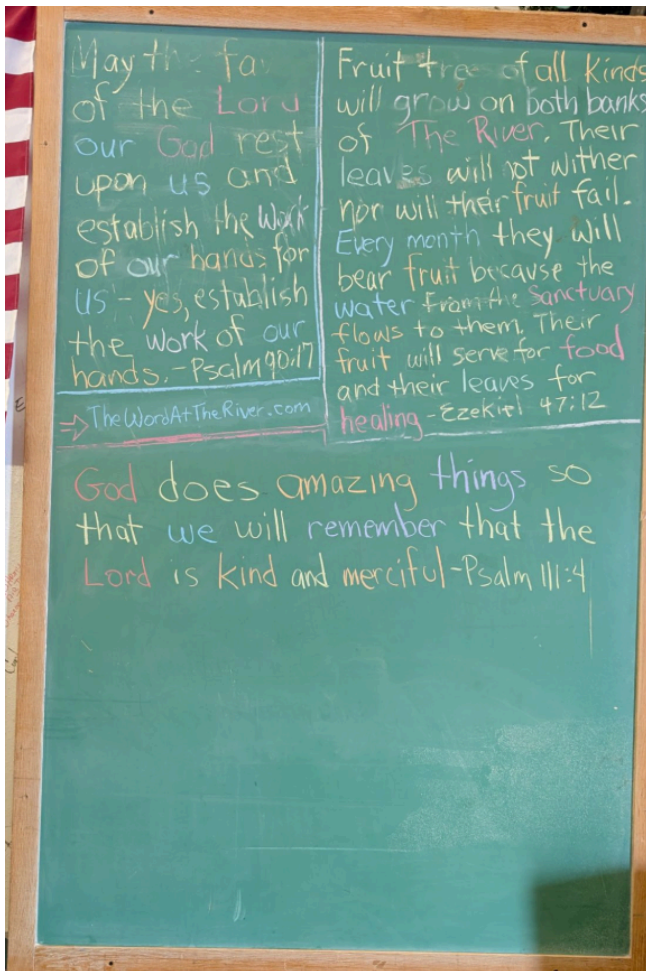
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Fun to see the graffiti artist on the right side pondering the color of HOPE :)



HOPE is gaining its color now ...
YELLOW!



February 24, 2025

Yellow is associated with sunshine, **hope**, laughter, warmth, happiness, and energy. It tends to make a person feel spontaneous and happy. A touch of yellow on something dull or dark can make a person feel cheerful and optimistic.

God does amazing things so that we will remember that the Lord is kind and merciful.

(Psalm 111:4 Easy to Read Version)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say

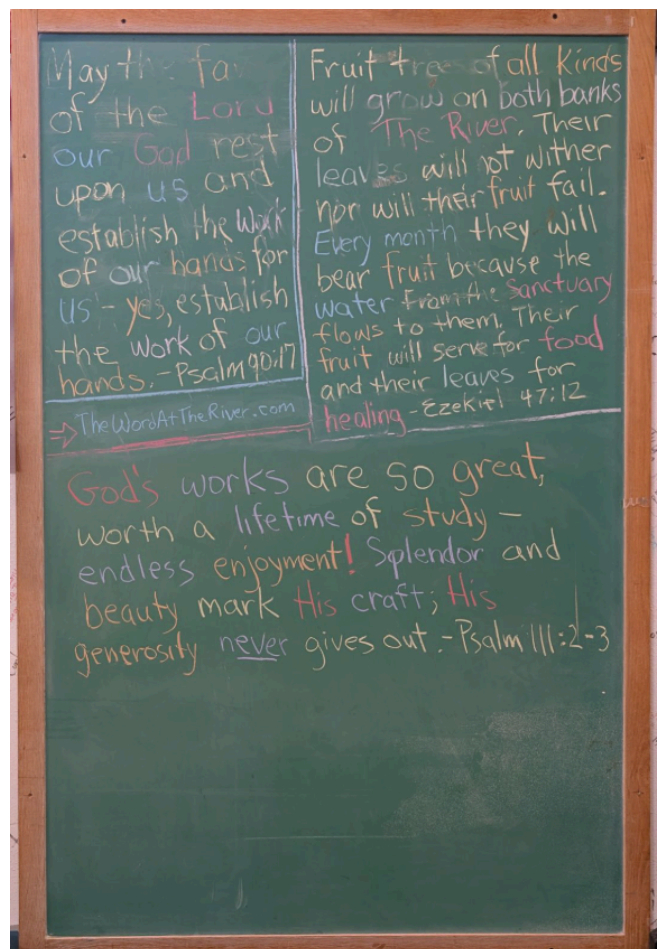


YELLOW graffiti for HOPE is taking shape! And the young girls on the left are taking a breather!

Once HOPE was filled in with **YELLOW**, the sky started turning **SKY BLUE**! And notice the young girls on the left! They are standing on milk crates to reach areas they wanted to paint! And I think that they may be about to paint those cool footprints over on the left side of the mural.

God's worlds are so great,
worth a lifetime of study –
endless enjoyment!
Splendor and beauty mark
His craft; His generosity
never gives out.

(Psalm 111:2-3 The Message)



February 17, 2025

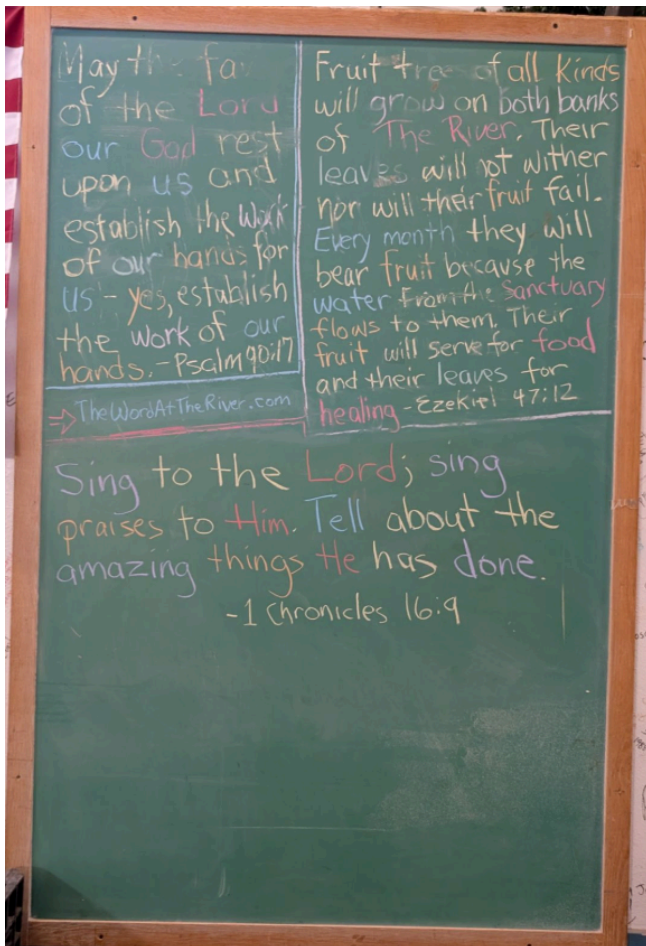
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Notice the footprints now are on the left side of the mural ... but it is not certain just HOW they got there :)



Soon the **dark blue** ray of light from the crucified hands of Jesus will continue nearly all the way to the edge.



Sing to the
Lord; sing
praises to Him.
Tell about the
amazing things
He has done.

(1 Corinthians 16:9 New English Translation)

February 10, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say

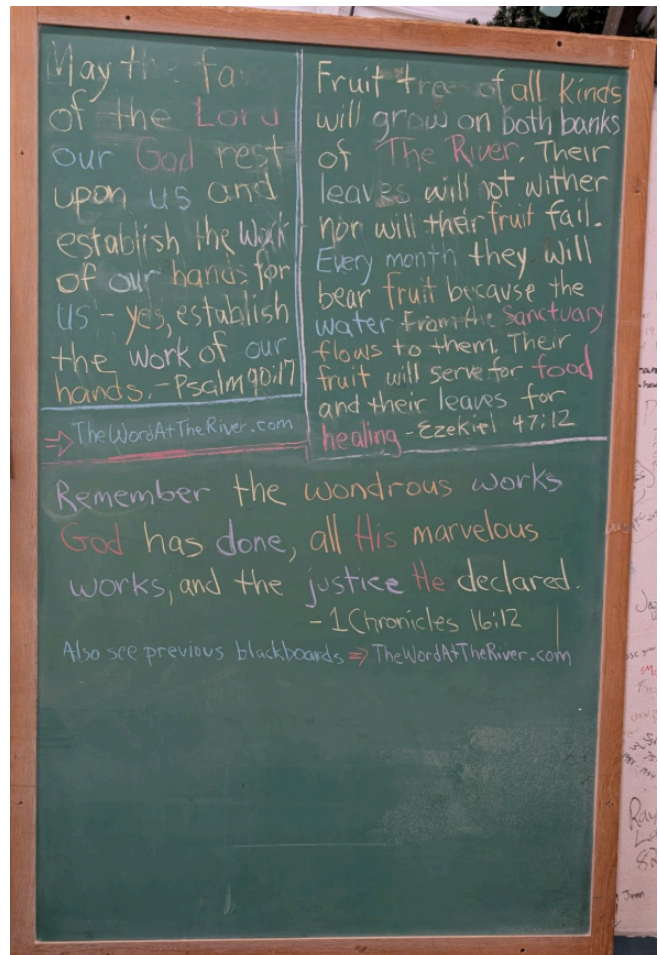


More milk crates in use ... plus a look at the **secret paint laboratory** over on the right :)

Milk crates are in use again to help get to those hard to reach spots! And, yes, someone is there in the middle holding a loaf of bread (*that he will be taking home with him*).

Remember the
wondrous works
God has done, all His
marvelous works,
and the justice He
declared.

(1 Chronicles 16:12 Common English Bible)



February 3, 2025

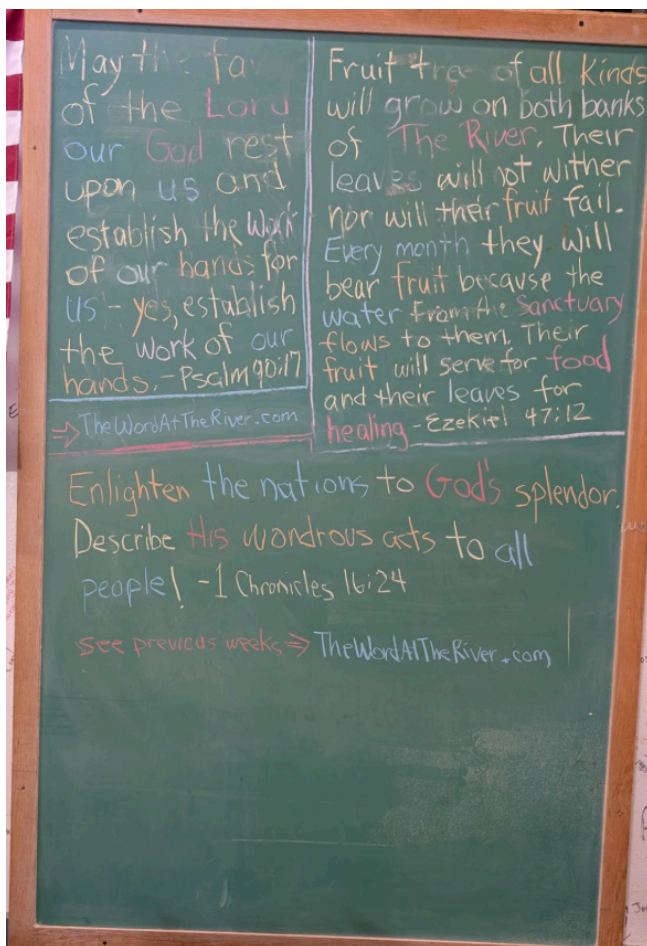
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



Being an artist is hard work ... but I do think that the kids are enjoying it!



Yes ... I do think the kids are happy!

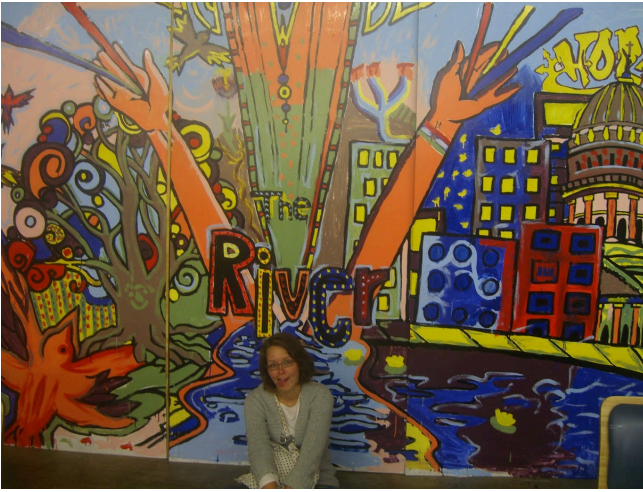


January 27, 2025

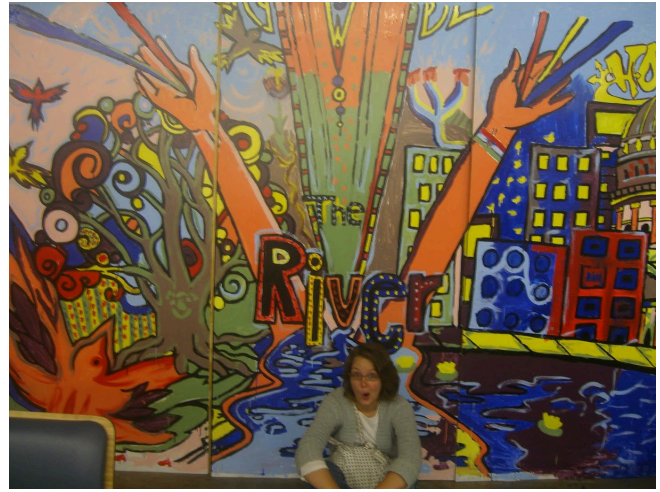
Enlighten the
nations to God's
splendor.
Describe His
wondrous acts to
all people!

(1 Chronicles 16:24 The Voice)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have **Something to Say**



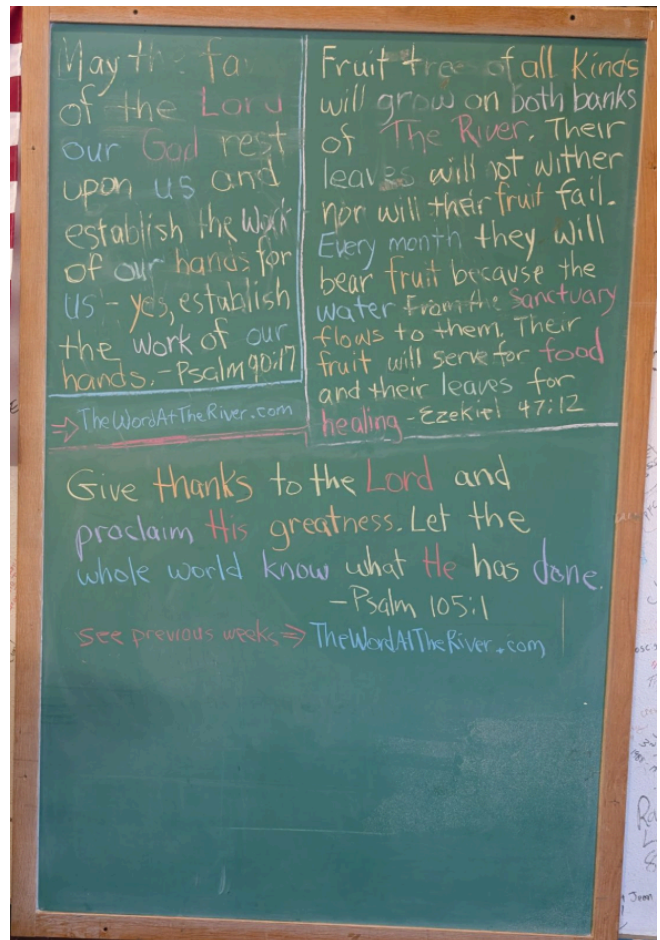
It seems that Kiersten (the artist who designed this mural) is happy (and silly) too!



Did Kiersten realize how **significant** this mural would be? 16 years later volunteers want their photo by it!

Give thanks to the
Lord and proclaim
His greatness. Let the
whole world know
what He has done.

(Psalm 105:1 New Living Translation)

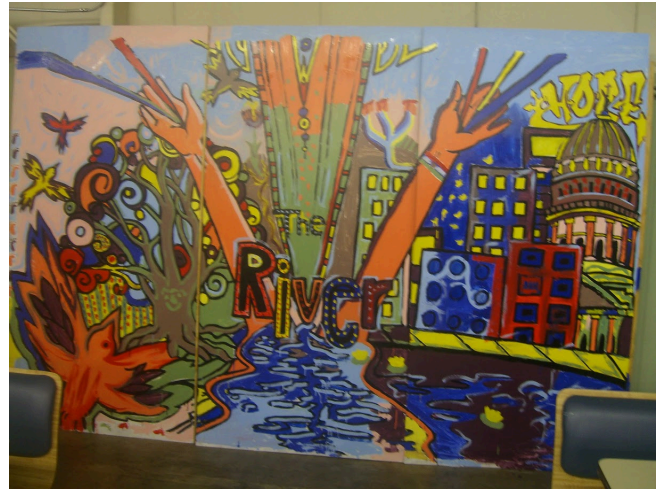


January 13, 2025

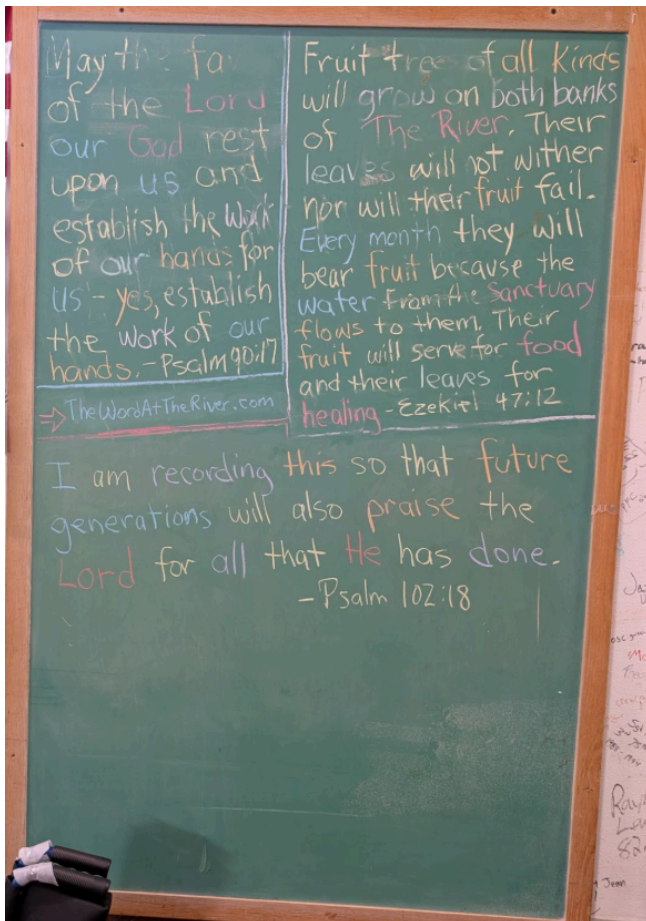
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



The mural is finished, but still resting on the floor. **Six days later** it will be mounted on the wall.



Did you notice the "face" painted on the brown tree trunk?

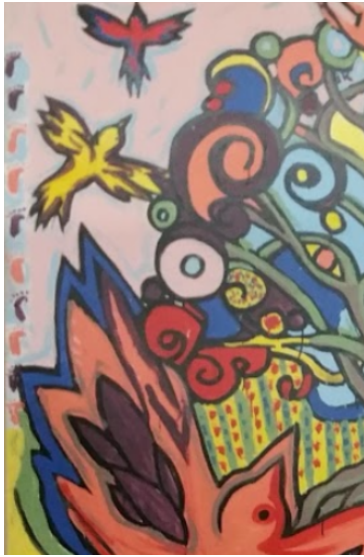


I am recording
this so that future
generations will
also praise the
Lord for all that
He has done.

(Psalm 102:18 Living Bible)

January 6, 2025

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



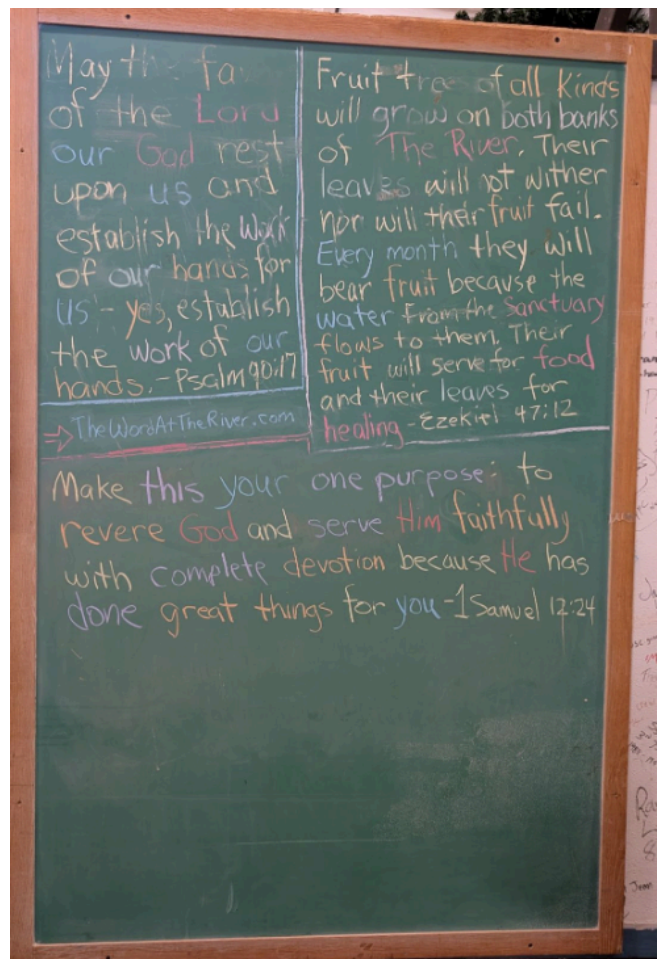
A close up at those footprints on the left side of the mural! Did you know you can paint footprints with the side of your hand and your fingertips?

Make this your one
purpose: to revere
God and serve Him
faithfully with
complete devotion
because He has done
great things for you.

(1 Samuel 12:24 The Voice)



May 29, 2019 volunteer group photo by the blackboard and small River artwork.



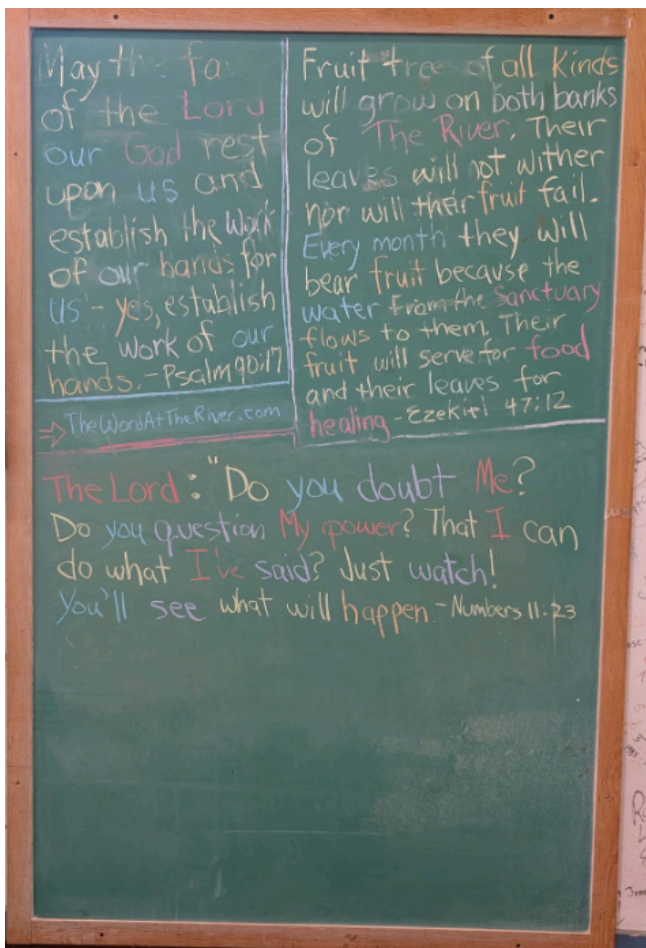
December 16, 2024

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



May 10, 2019 volunteer group by the blackboard and small artwork.

April 4 2025 volunteer group by the mural.



December 9, 2024



The Lord: "Do you doubt Me? Do you question My power? That I can do what I've said? Just watch! You'll see what will happen.

(Numbers 11:23 The Voice)

The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say

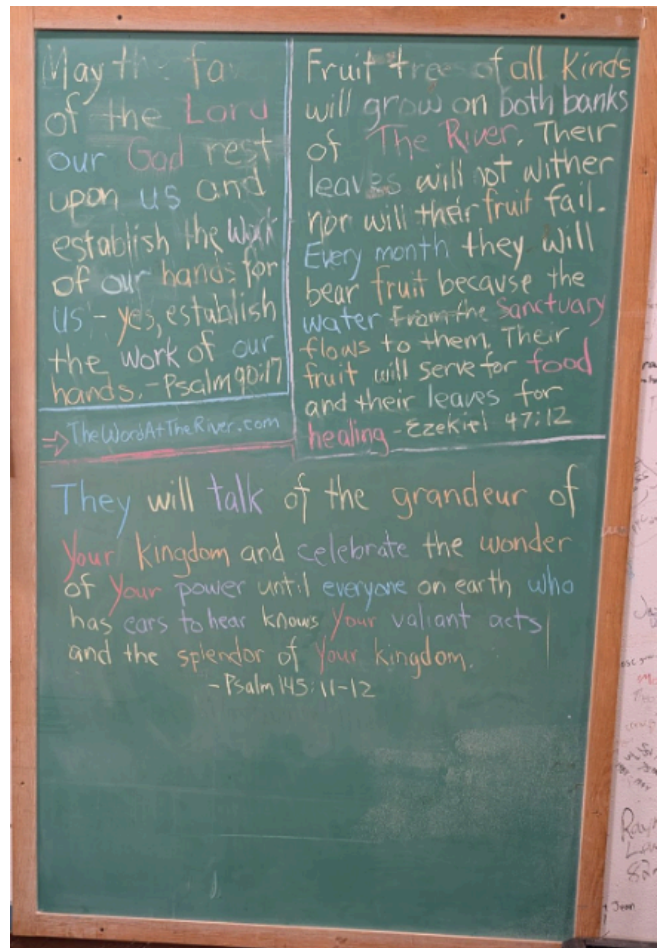


May 7 2019 volunteer group by the blackboard and small artwork.

April 2, 2025: At [Certco Inc's](#) Spring Food Show, vendors were invited to donate any products they brought to The River! As a result, we received 7,229 pounds of food and household goods to nourish our neighbors in need 🍌🍌🍌 We are super grateful to Certco for allowing The River to be the event's donor partner and to all the vendors who donated their products 🙏

They will talk of the
grandeur of Your kingdom
and celebrate the wonder
of Your power until
everyone on earth who has
ears to hear knows Your
valiant acts and the
splendor of Your kingdom.

(Psalm 145:11-12 The Voice)



November 18, 2024

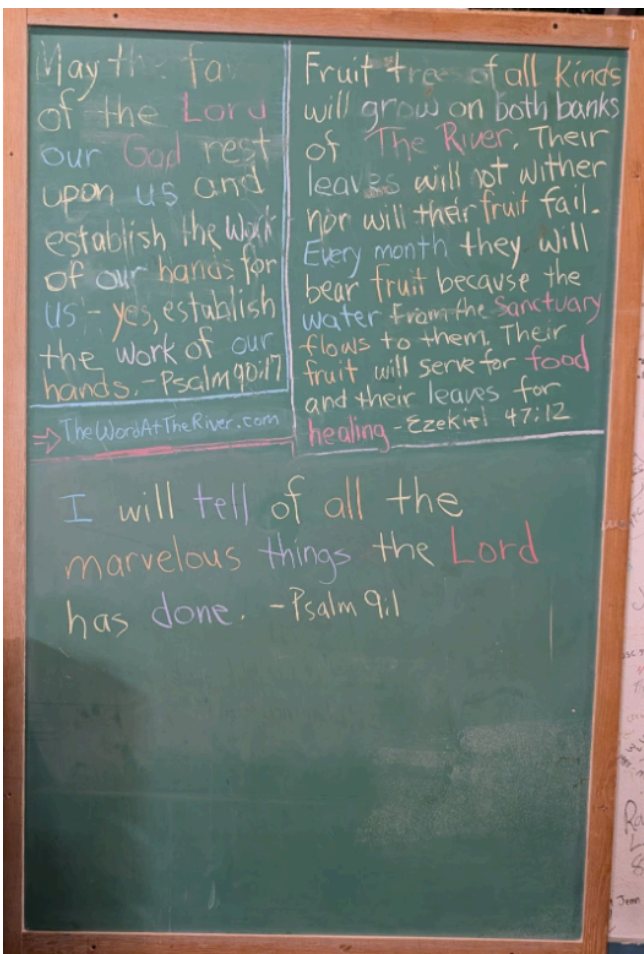
The Blackboard and Mural at The River have Something to Say



April 27, 2017 past and current staff (with Jenny and Rhonda on the far left, Andy near center in back, and Charles at the right) by the blackboard.

I will tell of all the
marvelous things
the Lord has done.

(Psalm 9:1 New Living Translation)



November 11, 2024



April 4, 2025 volunteer group by the mural.