



# BUILDERS

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## Helping Second-Gen Hmong Reconnect with God



### RiverLife Church of the C&MA ADF CHURCH LOAN

Church: *RiverLife Church of the C&MA*  
 Pastor: *Greg Rhodes*  
 Address: *520 Howard Street North*  
*St. Paul, MN 55119*  
 Phone: *(763) 300-8739*

**Loan type:**

- Building purchase     Land purchase
- Building renovation     New construction
- Refinance

**Ministry Focus:**

*2<sup>nd</sup> - and 3<sup>rd</sup> -generation Hmong*

**MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT:**  
 RiverLife Church of the C&MA  
 St. Paul, MN

“We want to be a church that makes a difference in our community,” says Greg Rhodes, Pastor of RiverLife Church in St. Paul, Minnesota.

RiverLife is only a few years old and is primarily composed of second-generation and third-generation Hmong Americans. The Hmong are one of the ethnic groups of China and Southeast Asia that immigrated to the United States after the Vietnam War.

After attending a traditional Hmong church for many years, Pastor Greg and his wife, Pang Foua, started RiverLife in September of 2014.

They saw a need for a church that would specifically reach the children and grandchildren of first-generation Hmong immigrants, many of whom had stopped attending church.

Pastor Greg discovered that “second-gen” Hmong are looking for many of the same things in a church that their millennial peers throughout the U.S. desire. They want a church that will minister to them in their various stages of life, whether they’re young, single professionals, or couples with growing families.

(Continued on inside)

*“We’ve managed by God’s grace to create a place where people feel really comfortable coming back to church.”*



COVER STORY (cont.)

They appreciate a casual, relational atmosphere and a high-tech service. At the same time, many second-gen Hmong are also looking for a church that embraces their bicultural identity as Hmong Americans.

To meet these needs, RiverLife makes space for its young adults to have influence and to start new ministries. The environment is informal—people of all dress and appearance are welcome. Every Sunday, all attendees wear nametags and are encouraged to meet new friends. The church also provides coffee and snacks.

Many of these characteristics, while now common in American churches, are new in Hmong churches. Pastor Greg says, “While we haven’t done a formal survey, we estimate about three-quarters of our folks weren’t attending church prior to RiverLife. We’ve managed by God’s grace to create a place where people feel really comfortable coming back to church.”

When RiverLife first began, it was mobile, setting up and tearing down before services each week. With the help of the North Central

District and a loan from ADF, the church has been able to purchase a permanent building and make some much-needed repairs.

The new building is in the East side of St. Paul, which has one of the highest concentrations of Hmong in the Twin Cities. The loan has enabled RiverLife to make several significant renovations—replacing the new roof, repairing mold damage, installing new carpet, and lifting the outdoor concrete walkway to prevent flooding.

After moving into the permanent building, RiverLife’s attendance increased by 15 percent as people from the surrounding neighborhood started attending regularly. Prior to the move, the congregation was almost entirely Hmong, with some interracial couples. Now, about 15 percent of attendants are not Hmong.

There’s no doubt that God is perfectly capable of working in any environment. But Pastor Greg observes, “A lot of our folks are re-learning or learning for the first time how to connect with God, and our desire is to remove as many obstacles as possible.”

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# President's Corner

Sharing with Larry McCooey



## FINANCIAL MARKETS: THE LONG VIEW

### Dear Fellow Investors and Friends,

The Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 went into a two-week slide after reaching all-time highs on January 26, 2018. Both stock indexes dropped by more than 10%, a margin that is typically considered a market correction. Analysts have been saying for quite some time that the market was due for a correction, so the drop was not a surprise when we consider the big picture. Even after the correction, the Dow was up 19% over the previous 12 months, and the S&P was up 12.5%.

It is unsettling to experience this kind of volatility, especially after unusually low volatility in 2017 and during the beginning of 2018.

Factors such as strong job creation, low unemployment, and rising wages are great news for U.S. workers. However, these circumstances also generated fears on Wall Street of higher inflation, which might drive the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates more quickly than anticipated. At its December 2017 meeting, the Federal Open Market Committee signaled its intention to raise the benchmark federal funds rate three times in 2018, but they could execute further increases if inflation heats up.

Higher rates affect the stock market because investors are more likely to move money out of risky stocks into more stable bonds as fixed-income yields become more attractive. In addition to the jobs reports,

two other factors have affected bonds. One is the increased treasury sales to pay for the \$1.5 trillion in tax cuts from the recent Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. Another is the bipartisan budget deal that further increased deficit spending. The question is, who will buy these bonds and what are they willing to pay for them?

Mounting government debt is a serious concern. But it is the economy that drives the stock and bond markets in the long term, and the economy is experiencing many positive tail winds.

Only God knows the future. We might see volatility for some time. The wisest course is to maintain perspective, remain patient, focus on long-term goals, and avoid making portfolio decisions based on emotion. And of course, we need to put our hope in our God and not in riches.

Thank you for your ongoing investment in Alliance churches through ADF.

Please share your thoughts by contacting me at [presidentcorner@adf-inc.com](mailto:presidentcorner@adf-inc.com). Your feedback is always welcome.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence L. McCooey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lawrence L. McCooey, CPA, PFS, CGMA  
President

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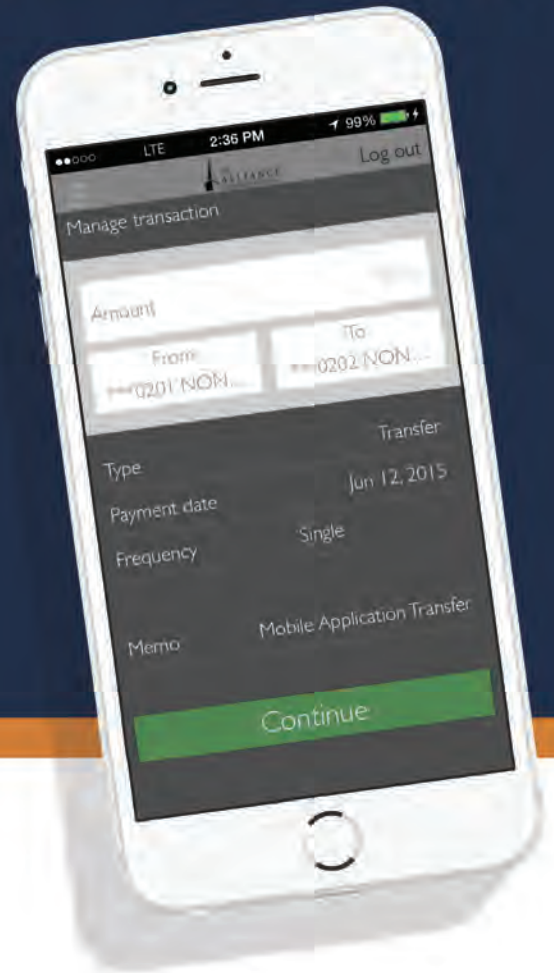
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