

Dear Riverlawn family and friends,

There is a new twist on an old scam that many churches in our area and across the country are experiencing. Scammers are contacting individuals and requesting an electronic copy of their church directory. They claim to be a recent visitor or a regular visitor wanting to see who else they may know in the church.

Once they receive the directory, they use the personal information to send out spoof emails and text messages from a local number pretending to be the pastor or another church leader, asking for emergency assistance, gift cards, or money. These often include a need for secrecy or surprise. In at least one reported incident the scammer reached out to every church member in the directory via text message within 24 hours of receiving a copy of the directory.

Confirm the message to be authentic by checking the phone number or the email address listed in brackets following the person's name in the from section. If the phone number or the address in brackets is not the contact information you know and use for the sender, it is a spoof. Delete and/or block any texts or emails from non-authentic phone numbers or email addresses.

Spoofing is when an email or text appears to be sent from someone you trust but is actually from a scammer trying to trick you into giving them personal information, gift cards, or money by making the sender look legitimate – it involves scammers pretending to be someone else to get something from you. Our desire is to proactively safeguard the personal information of our members, and we ask for your help in accomplishing this, Thank you.