



Atlanta Church of Christ ⁱⁿ Gwinnett

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*The birds of the air come and perch in its branches.
- Matthew 13:32*

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Building unity in diversity



Over the weekend of November 3-5, we were privileged to hear several lessons from Michael Burns, author of ***Crossing the Line: Culture, Race, and Kingdom***. He and his wife, MyCresha, are part of the leadership of the Minneapolis-St. Paul Church of Christ. He taught at our rescheduled midweek service that Friday evening, held a workshop for family group leaders Saturday afternoon, and brought us the lesson Sunday morning as well. He is pictured here with MyCresha, who helped Michael with his workshop presentation, and their son Elijah. Michael even took part in the Superheroes 4 Orphans walkathon on Saturday the 4th before leading the workshop!

Recordings of Michael's lessons from Friday the 3rd ("Crossing the Line") and Sunday the 5th (Bible class: "Crossing the Line"; sermon: "Liquid: A Cruciform Life") are available on our website; please go back and listen to them again, and share them with friends and family members who could benefit from the wisdom they contain. Michael's approach is firmly based on the Bible and anchored by academic research; from his experiences in life as well as his studies in the field, he shares clear truths and spiritual perspectives with sensitivity and compassion. We appreciate the Burns family taking the time to come and share their hearts and lives with us, and we're grateful for our leaders reaching out to them, opening the door for us to be challenged, encouraged and enriched through their visit!

Catching up with...



Bianca Tripp

Where are you from originally? What would you like people to know about where you're from?

I was born in Greensboro, Georgia, a very small town near where the Swamp is located – there's not much more to say about it. I was raised in New Orleans and Columbia, SC for a little while, but I've spent most of my life in Georgia.

How did you come to live in the Atlanta area?

My family has always lived around Gwinnett for the most part, from as early as I can remember—since I was three or four. My parents wanted to move to Buford because it was quieter and less built-up at that time, which was around the time that the Mall of Georgia was being built.

What do you do for a living? How did you come to be in that field?

Right now I'm unemployed and looking for a job, while preparing myself for medical school. I always wanted to be a pediatrician because of I love kids, love helping people, love anything science-related. The human body is very interesting! Specifically, I want to be a pediatric oncologist, despite knowing it'll be a sad field to be in because some kids will die of cancer, but kids with cancer are so helpless and I want to do anything I can to help them overcome it! I want to be a light for them and for their parents.

Tell us how you first got involved with disciples – what was your first impression of them/the church?

I was a Kingdom Kid – I grew up in the church. My mom was pregnant with me when my parents studied the Bible the first time, so I've been coming to church from day one. When in my teen years Marisabel Becker reached out and asked me to study the Bible, I was interested; her help and guidance are a big part of why I'm a disciple today. Of course my parents were a big influence also—we played Bible trivia on road trips, etc., but Marisabel taught me how to have my own relationship with God, and helped me recognize my need for it and really want it. I became a disciple on April 4, 2010, when I was 17.

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

Honestly, growing up as a Kingdom Kid I saw people make mistakes, but I still thought it would be easy and my worries would go away after I was baptized. But life as a disciple means living to please God and be obedient, as opposed to living for me and doing what I wanted. I have to remind myself every day to keep dying to myself – by nature I'm an introvert, so I'd rather stay home, but I remind myself to go out and be with people. I have so many more relationships now than I ever expected!

What has your biggest challenge been in following Jesus? How do you deal with it?

As I said, my biggest challenge is denying myself – opening my heart to be vulnerable and let people in, when sometimes I would rather be home watching Netflix (especially Stranger Things) or reading books. It's challenging to open my heart and confidence to people, but it's really healing and it's what we're called to do. Also, if we're not opening up, we're denying other people their healing as well – it's a mutual thing!

Those early lessons still help me remember that my confidence should come from God. I was very insecure before I became a Christian, and still can be somewhat, but now I can remember He loved me before I was even a thought on Earth—loved me enough to die for me, so I have confidence in that, not how I look, my intellect, etc. His plan is great for me even if it's different from my plan – He has the best in mind for me!

What is your favorite scripture?

Matthew 11:28-30, because it shows that Jesus is love, and reminds me how He wants me to seek comfort in Him. Life isn't easy, but He loves us and wants us to come to Him.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Reading scary novels – I enjoy paranormal and horror books and movies. And I love music and singing; music is a very big part of my life. I played French horn in middle and high school, and I love performing in general. I did drama in high school, and performing a monologue or singing a song doesn't make me nervous, but the thought of doing a speech terrifies me.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

One surprising fact about me is that I have a fascination for snakes, or reptiles in general. For the most part, people think of me as a very “girly” girl, but I do love snakes, lizards, and even amphibians like toads and frogs.

If you could speak to yourself as you were ten years ago, what advice would you give yourself?

If I were to go back in time to talk to myself 15 years ago, I would tell myself to be more productive in finding internships or job opportunities in my field. Also, I would tell myself to get more advice on juggling school, work, and still being a part of the Body of Christ.

Superheroes to the rescue!



A true superhero for orphans and others in Africa and around the world, Dr. Mark Ottenweller strikes a heroic pose at the Superheroes 4 Orphans walkathon on November 4th.

Saturday, November 4th turned out to be a beautiful fall day in Atlanta, and the crowds who turned out were delighted to have such great weather for their five-kilometer walk/run.



Every year HOPE *worldwide* sponsors the Atlanta4Africa 5 Km Walk/Run, organized by Dr. Ottenweller to raise funds to help orphans in Africa. The need is great; decades of the AIDS epidemic in Africa have left about 18 million orphaned children, in desperate need of health care, education, nutrition, protection, nurturing, and basic resources most of us here take for granted. "HOPE *worldwide* has worked with orphans in Africa for 20 years and it has provided care and support to over 170,000 orphans and vulnerable children in Kenya, Ivory Coast, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, and South Africa." (per their website)

Working together, disciples raised \$30,168 for this campaign, and enjoyed both warm fellowship and healthy exercise on the Georgia Tech campus on a sunny autumn day—that's a win/win! Here are some of that day's scenes:



Participants caught up with old friends or made new ones; costumed adults and children and even their dogs were part of the fun as they waited for the walkathon to start...



...And they're off! Dr. Ottenweller sent the runners off first, with the walkers following at their own pace.



Here are some faces from AcoCG you might recognize (plus our guest speaker Michael Burns)



The statue of Albert Einstein got some special company...



...and at the close the best costumes and other achievements won awards. A great ending to a great event!

We welcome news and pictures on interesting personal stories, family group activities, and more. Please send them to Nancy Berry, nberry2@gmail.com. Thank you!
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