



Atlanta Church of Christ ⁱⁿ Gwinnett

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The birds of the air come and perch in its branches.

- Matthew 13:32

Issue 29

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In this issue: Superheroes on the move! – p. 1-3
A royally entertaining event – p. 3
Catching up with the Stehrs – p. 4-6
Taking time to serve the aging – p. 7-8

Stepping out to make a difference!

On Saturday, November 3rd, HOPE worldwide Africa held the 5th annual Atlanta4Africa 5 Km Walk/Run to raise funds to provide care and support for orphans in Africa. Tau Alpha Omega at Georgia Tech hosted this event starting at a chilly 9 am on Tech Green. Many of our culture's comic-book or movie superheroes were orphans themselves at one time; the theme of "Superheroes for Orphans" gives us the opportunity to be superheroes for the orphans in Africa whose needs are so great but who are unfortunately so easily forgotten by those of us living in hectic first-world societies. Participants were encouraged to wear superhero costumes or the event T-shirts which were available for sale or given free to those raising \$100 or more. Awards were given for the best times for the runners, and for various categories of costume. Whether award-winners or not, everyone participating came away with warm hearts and happy memories!

Here is a taste of what the day was like (with great appreciation to the Rouses for these pictures!):



Alan and Sherry Rouse brought their grandson Captain America...er, Micah Lee, to walk with them. The cool morning warmed into a beautiful day, and we saw some familiar faces, including Olivia Stehr and Jacob Peters, among the volunteers cheering the walkers and runners along their path.



Water and healthy snacks were available to replenish participants' energy levels, and the great fellowship boosted everyone's spirits. Several of us from AcoCG helped with registration and other functions—a special shout-out to Quentin and Sarah Russell, who were key organizers for the event but were so busy they didn't make it into any of these pictures!



Walking together made great opportunities to make new friends or visit with longstanding ones like HOPE worldwide Africa's Dr. Mark Ottenweller, and at every point fellow disciples provided spirited encouragement.



And here are some more familiar faces!



Across the finish line – victory!



The orphan epidemic in Africa due to AIDS continues to grow, and UNICEF has estimated that there are 18,000,000 orphans in Africa that now face increasingly desperate challenges due to lack of health care, education, nutrition, child protection, and increasing poverty. Millions of young girls are now at risk of rape, abuse, and violence. 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. Funding raised for the orphans will supply food, educational materials, health care, staff salaries training, building capacity and program development for these programs in Africa. Although the walkathon is now over, donations can always be made by credit card online at www.hopewwafrika.org. All supporters will receive an official receipt in the mail from HOPE worldwide for tax purposes.

Royally entertaining!



As promised in the last newsletter, here are just a couple of pictures from our very special women's theatrical night, Katie Del Rocco's Last Nights of the King. Katie combined brilliant creativity, faith, hard work, and a few simple costume props to bring twelve very different women to life onstage. From teenage Abishag, King David's last concubine, to the (in)famous Bathsheba and wise Abigail to the lesser-known Rizpah and others, Katie showed us what these biblical characters' lives might really have been like, and helped us connect emotionally with their stories. It was a very special night for all of us and for our friends who were able to come share it with us. Many thanks to Katie, to our leaders who organized the event, and to everyone who brought refreshments and willing hearts to make this a memorable, faith-building, encouraging occasion!

Catching up with...



Dan and Cathi Stehr

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

Cathi: Bryan/College Station, Texas, the home of Texas A&M University. I have deep Texas roots – my great-granddad was president of Texas A&M. It was hard for me to leave Texas! Being from Texas is like being from another country, and most of us from there are very proud of being Texans.

Dan: Hutchinson, Kansas, in an area that has rolling sandhills along the Arkansas River, and salt mines, and the Cosmosphere Space Museum. Kansas is the country's bread basket; lots of wheat is harvested there.

How did you come to live in the Atlanta area?

Cathi: After I left Texas, I lived in Orlando for two years to be part of the church there, then I came to Atlanta for paralegal school. I had planned to move back to either Orlando or Texas (of course), but could not get any interviews, and had several here in Atlanta right off the bat, and ended up with a paralegal job downtown. I do have an aunt and uncle who live here, so that also helped me connect.

Dan: I was 25 and looking for a change from restaurant work. My mom followed my stepdad here, so I gave Atlanta a try. The economy here was very good. I wanted to apprentice as a chef, but that did not work out, so I went to work at QuikTrip. Within a month of moving here a disciple came into my store for his final paycheck and saw me reading my NIV and asked me about it. He invited me to Bible study, and within three weeks I studied and was baptized. I had been searching while I still lived in Kansas – I was religious, and the ministers I talked to there all said I was okay, but I still felt something was missing. When I heard the full message of the Gospel from the Bible, I started a new life!

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

Dan: I'm a software developer; I went from clerical to PC support because I was good with the systems at my job, and I went back to school to pursue that. I started at Southern Polytech part-time, then transferred to Georgia Tech and finished my computer science degree there, specializing in software engineering and database design.

Cathi: Right now I'm a lunch lady, which is a "mom job" with same schedule as kids in school (even though mine are no longer in school I do like having summers off.) I get to be very active at work (we walk 5 to 7 miles in the course of a workday), working with people from all over the world. Before kids I was a paralegal, which can have long hours, and I took this job for insurance coverage and for the schedule.

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

Dan: The first thing I noticed was the hugging – I was not a fan!

Cathi: He's Norwegian, and they don't hug much.

Dan: No, really, I noticed the love, and that there were "all nations" like it says in the Bible. That had a huge impact; I hadn't seen that before. Genuine love! I had so much junk going on, I was glad to have people to talk with about dealing with it and being forgiven.

Cathi: I was raised in the church of Christ; I was baptized as a 12-year-old and remember nothing except that it was like a rite of passage instead of a conversion. When I was 19 a couple came from Crossroads church (in Gainesville, FL) and started a "soul talk" (the old term for Bible talk). They were the first disciples I'd met, and they showed me what it meant to follow Jesus in everyday life. I was used to being religious, going to church, reading the Bible some but not every day, but being very worldly in priorities and attitudes. I felt like the only difference between me and my religious friends, and people who didn't go to church at all, was the church attendance. My life and relationships had plenty of gossip, backbiting, cursing, materialism and the like. Meeting the Christians at the soul talk was such an eye- and heart-opener. In that little group was such a variety of people, and they were devoted to each other, to living like the Bible says to, and to reaching out to others, which was very convicting to me, and I so wanted to be a part of it. I was baptized at 20, and I still had a year of school to go when they moved to Orlando to be part of the church there, so I stayed to finish school, then followed them out to Orlando. I am still in touch with some of them.

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

Cathi: That the church continues to grow and change—that it's not set in stone.

Dan: Teaching one another day by day; when you first come around you think about it being your life-long commitment. It is a lifelong journey. We continue to grow.

What lesson have you learned as a disciple that continues to help you every day?

Cathi: That God is real and if you're faithful and patient and wait on God, He will come through. It may not be what you expect, and it probably won't be! When Dan lost his job a few years ago, I learned that. When I moved from Texas, I felt like I had to move, if I wanted to survive spiritually; I didn't feel like I was stepping out in faith, but I was. At the time, I thought I might move back someday.

Dan: How much more true Romans 8:28 holds year-over-year, and how I've seen it in my life when I've been laid off two times, when there were struggles in the church, issues with health and family—if I just trust God and stick with Him, He's fulfilled that promise every step of the way!

What do you wish other people outside the church knew about following Jesus?

Cathi: That it's worth it. When was the last time being greedy or immoral made you happy? Ugh! Nothing you can "give up" is better than what we have in God!

Dan: The freedom we have in Jesus, as opposed to the idea most people have that Christianity is a list of rules to follow.

What has your biggest challenge been in following Jesus? How have you dealt with it?

Cathi: My first biggest challenge was leaving Texas; I'm very close to my family, and I cried the whole two-hour drive from my hometown to Houston when I was moving to Orlando. However, there was nothing like the soul talks then in College Station, and I knew that was what I needed to grow spiritually. My overall biggest challenge has been to find my security in God alone, and that has been a series of lifelong lessons.

Dan: Continually, when you feel stuck in temptation or sin, just believe you can keep repenting and not give up. We all need to have people we can be uncomfortably real with.

What is your favorite scripture?

Cathi: Psalm 16—especially verses 5 and 6, but the whole thing is awesome!

Dan: Acts 8:26-40, the Ethiopian eunuch – that story helped me when I was struggling with whether I could commit to being a disciple for the rest of my life. It just connected for me!

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time—interests, hobbies, organizations you belong to?

Cathi: I read a lot of nonfiction—memoirs, like *The Sun Also Shines*— people's real stories and travel memoirs.

Dan: Golf, travel, watching college football and basketball—the Kansas Jayhawks and Georgia Tech Yellow Jackets, and I'm a fan of Cathi's Texas Aggies.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

Dan: I've made a hole-in-one, bowled four 300 games, and my mother was born in Madagascar.

Cathi: I was on academic probation two times while I was in college.

Dan: I flunked out of college once, so I one-upped you there!

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

Cathi: "Be faithful! People are just people; don't be so wrapped up in what they think." We spent too much time worrying about what leaders and others thought. Not about God, just people. We all need love! And—"Listen to your husband; he's really smart!"

Dan: "You can never have too many close friendships—people who relate to what you're going through and can help when hard times come."

Warm hearts bridge the gap!



The Muriithi, Hepburn and Moton family groups met for midweek on October 24th at the Bridge, an assisted living center in Lawrenceville. Sherry Rouse said, "We helped with bingo and sang hymns and prayed before we left. Everyone, from the residents to the family group members and their kids, had a great time. The residents loved the singing!"



Wendy Muriithi shared, "On our next visit we led a singalong. The residents were eagerly waiting for us, and the children in our group have really enjoyed it as well. We are planning on volunteering here at 10:30 am on the first and third Saturdays of every month, God willing." Amen! Volunteer groups often visit nursing homes and assisted living facilities during the holiday season, but during the rest of the year, residents in facilities like this are often forgotten. These family groups are setting a great example in serving and giving!

As we enjoy and share the Christmas spirit in the coming weeks, let's remember not to let thoughtfulness become a once-a-year event—let's keep imitating Jesus and showing His compassion to everyone we can throughout the year!

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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