



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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Warm fellowship on the chilly Chattahoochee

On Saturday, June 29th, the Yangs took a combination of teens, parents, and campus students tubing in Helen, Georgia. John says, "We tubed down the chilly Chattahoochee River for two hours, had lunch together, walked around downtown to see all the beautiful shops, and rode back home. It was a great time to bond and build community together. Thank you to all the chaperones that came that day.

Looking forward to doing it again next year." Here's a look at the day's fun—



With thanks to John Yang for pictures & information!



Catching up with...



Ron, Cathy and Lheya
Frazier

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

Cathy: I was born and raised in the Philippines, in a really small town. Most people in our town ended up marrying their own cousins if you are going to search the roots of their clan. Everyone there knows one another. If you're looking for a family, just tell us the name and we'll help you find them easily. That's how small the town is!

Ron: I'm originally from New Orleans, LA. Without a doubt, it has the best food there is—I'm sure many would agree, but in case they didn't know, now they do! There's no place like it – the food, the place, or the people.

How did you come to live in the Atlanta area?

Ron: In 2005, Hurricane Katrina displaced most of my siblings to here. One of my brothers had relocated here in the '90s and this was the only place that had family, so this was where everyone settled. I came here because, one, I was looking for a job in my field, and two, to be close to my family for the first time since I left Louisiana for college in '92, so, over 20 years.

Cathy: I met my husband in 2012, and when we got married, someone had to make the decision where to live. Before that I got my computer science degree from AMA Computer College in the Philippines, but I moved to Toronto where I worked and sent money to support my family back home. My aunt is a cleaning lady in Toronto, and the Jewish family she worked for sponsored me. My first job was at a bank in the Philippines, but then I chose to move to Toronto to serve a family as a nanny for seven years.

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

Ron: I'm an engineer for a local electric utility. Paul Stovall works there and referred me for the job. In middle school my best friend and I dreamed of going into business together—he wanted to be an architect, and someone had to design the wiring. It sounded cool to me; electrical engineers do residential and industrial electrical design, and that got me interested.

Cathy: I'm a full-time homemaker. We talked during our engagement about having kids, and decided that I'd be the one taking care of the children and home, and I'm happy to do that. I love and enjoy it! And yes, kids! We are expecting another one, due in February 2020.

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

Ron: A guy cold-contact invited me to church on campus in the summer of '95, but I didn't go because I worked on Sundays. Instead, I scheduled Bible study on the spot for the following Friday. The first thing I went to was a midweek service, and I was blown away by the fellowship and the people. I'd already had the discipleship study, so I knew what I was getting into.

Cathy: I was baptized in the Philippines. The church was very warm, like a glimpse of Heaven, everyone smiling and welcoming—no need to ask for a hug, you're getting one! I felt safe in the church. I was working in a bank when a sister reached out to me; she mentioned a speaker, and I thought it was a seminar and wanted to learn more. I was open to the invitation, and I thought having a speaker meant there was something special to learn—but it was an invitation to church. Even before that, in college, God was reaching out to me, though I didn't realize it; I got an invitation from a disciple I met on campus. I didn't know till much later that there was a connection between those two invitations!

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

Cathy: You always have struggles, but you see victories over struggles a lot more. You can struggle but it's not always permanent, and you can learn from it—sickness or something can seem like it lasts forever, but there's a better promise and we don't need to worry about that.

Ron: Just how difficult it is. I had no idea how hard it would be when I became a disciple at 21 years old. Living in this world with biblical principles in many ways has continually become more difficult. This society does not value God or His children. It's good to remember this world is not our home.

What lesson have you learned as a disciple that still helps you today?

Cathy: To trust God, no matter what the circumstances are.

Ron: That there's no substitute for the word of God. Worship is good, practical stuff is good, I'm an advocate of mental health care, but when it comes down to it, the word of God is the source of all wisdom and peace.

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

Cathy: That it's like a glimpse of Heaven, when you're with believers with the same heart and mind. It's not really hard if you have someone with you to spur you on, to correct and encourage you. Jesus is our Savior, but when you're open to help and support from others, it's really helpful to walk together so we all make it to Heaven!

Ron: That true peace can only be obtained through following God.

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

Cathy: My family—I almost didn't get married because I was focused on helping them, putting my energy towards supporting them. I couldn't see that God has more vision than I dream for myself until sisters and the Singles Minister helped me see God has plans for me and I don't need to be the savior of the world.

Ron: Being single and wanting to get married. It took lots of prayer, but more than that—I built relationships with single sisters, going on dates, engaging in fellowship. I was submitting to God's will, whether He wanted me to get married or to remain single the rest of my life. By the end of my singlehood I enjoyed every day of it. I prayed for God to open doors and to lead me to my spouse if that were to be—and He did, 20 years and almost two months after I became a disciple.

What is your favorite scripture?

Ron: Right now, my favorite verse is **Galatians 6:9-10**, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." Verse 9 is on my Facebook profile. I was single for 20 years before I got married; I started college in '92, and got my degree in 2004; so my life theme as an adult is "Persevere—don't give up!"

Cathy: **Philippians 4:8**, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." Because I tend to have thoughts that aren't nice, but negative, I have to be very careful, and not judge. God is the judge; we aren't to judge one another.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

Cathy: Gardening! I'm still learning—this has been our first year in this house, and I'm still getting to know Georgia weather, etc. I have tomatoes and peppers growing; Lheya picks the little green tomatoes and is proud of herself for helping. Also, I like ballroom dancing and karaoke—in the Philippines, there's a karaoke machine on every street corner, so that's a regular activity for parties there!

Ron: I like reading, and fantasy and superhero movies—I'm a fan of *Star Wars* and *Lord of the Rings*. I also play board games—I'm talking *strategic* board games; two of my favorites are "War of the Ring" and "Sentinels of the Multiverse," which is a cooperative superhero card game.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

Cathy: I can choreograph dance! Also, I play Dungeons & Dragons; my character is a ranger.

Ron: I have been playing D&D since I was 13. I'm usually Dungeon Master, which means I organize and run the game – it's like being the producer or director of a movie.

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

Cathy: "Keep being faithful—something great is going to happen!"

Ron: I'd say basically the same thing; ten years ago was three years before I met Cathy. "Stay the course!" I still tell myself that today.

Disciples celebrate freedom with music!



Strike up the band! Peter Berry and Donnell Francis took part in the Independence Day festivities at Marietta Square, playing in the Atlanta Concert Band. Several disciples turned out to cheer them on and enjoy the patriotic music and other fun aspects of the celebration.

The day was hot but clear, and the brothers were encouraged by the friends and family who came out for the occasion. Pictured between Peter and Donnell are Bill Francis (whose sister and a friend of hers also attended), Quran Salaam, Patrick Green, Amanda Andre, and Jennifer Rodriguez (I was there also, and took the picture).

If you'd like to come to other ACB concerts, please ask Peter or Donnell—the concerts are usually free, and always fun! Next up is a Disney-themed concert (costumes welcomed!) on August 11th.

— Nancy Berry

Trusting God in All Circumstances

Does it ever seem like our Sunday morning message was created just for you? I recently had that experience after a message about learning to trust God's plan for our lives. The statement that hit home went something like this: "Learn to trust God, even if the answer is 'wait.'"

The circumstances that led up to that Sunday morning's message, and the reason why that statement had such impact, were as follows: My wife and I both drive old vehicles that we have had for a very long time. She bought a new Toyota Rav4 in 2002 that now has over 240,000 miles on it, and I am driving a 2009 Camry that is nearing 190,000 miles. Our plan was to buy, pay off, and save, rather than trading them in for the latest and greatest—and constantly making car payments. We had been saving for many years, and hoped that our savings would one day grow large enough to pay for a new car.

Over the past two years, however, I diverted from our plan. I insisted that we look for a new car. I reasoned that our cars were aging quickly, and might soon need expensive repairs, or worse, that one or both vehicles would need to be replaced. I figured that if we bought now, then we could pay off her new car before mine needed to be retired. This, I thought, would help us avoid the stress of having two car payments.

Based on my "reasoning," we test-drove vehicles and "ran the numbers." Every time, we left the dealership despondent as we realized that the vehicle we wanted was out of reach. The answer was definitely "wait."

Then, three weeks ago, my wife's vehicle was rear-ended. The accident was not severe, and thank goodness no one was hurt. However, it turns out that even a little bit of damage to an old vehicle with over 240,000 miles can be enough to total that car. We were stunned.

I was particularly upset because after I had given up on replacing my wife's car, our plan had once again been to save enough money to buy a new car outright. In addition, I wanted to get my wife the vehicle she wanted. Now, it seemed, we would have to settle for what we could afford.

As it turns out, though, God had other plans. During a visit to Chattanooga, where we went to support a family member in need, we decided to stop by a local dealership. There, we found the perfect car for the perfect price—and then we received news that the insurance would pay more for my wife's vehicle than trading it would ever have yielded. In the end, had I simply trusted that God was in control, I would have saved us both a lot of anguish, stress and worry.

As Steve preached in his message that Sunday morning, God knows what is best for us even when we don't want to accept that the answer is "wait."

– Alex Neumann

Greetings from Zambia!

Z6, the six single disciples who sacrificed and saved for their journey to Zambia, returned with great pictures and souvenirs, stronger relationships and convictions, deeper understanding, and memories that will last a lifetime! Z6 team members Donnell Francis and Rafael Troche shared about their experiences there at the Sunday service on June 30th.



A week later, evangelist Twaambo Chikoye from the church in Lusaka, Zambia, brought us a lesson in gratitude as he expressed their thanks for the Z6 team's visit and work there, and Simon Agalory, who was once a member at AcoCG but now lives in Zambia, led us in communion.



At our July 10th midweek service, team members Kes Robinson, Toni Butler, and Antoinette Hawkins shared more with us about what they had seen and done on their journey there.



It's been great to get a better picture of our brothers and sisters in some parts of the world far from here, and if you would like to hear more of their stories, just ask! They have great things to share!

A special time of worship

For our midweek service on July 17th, rather than meeting in family groups in our homes, we received a special treat—a prayer and song service in Rhodes Jordan Park in downtown Lawrenceville! Rain earlier in the day gave some cause for concern, but the evening turned out beautifully. The scriptures, songs and prayers combined to give us a positive and encouraging worship time together. Take a look—



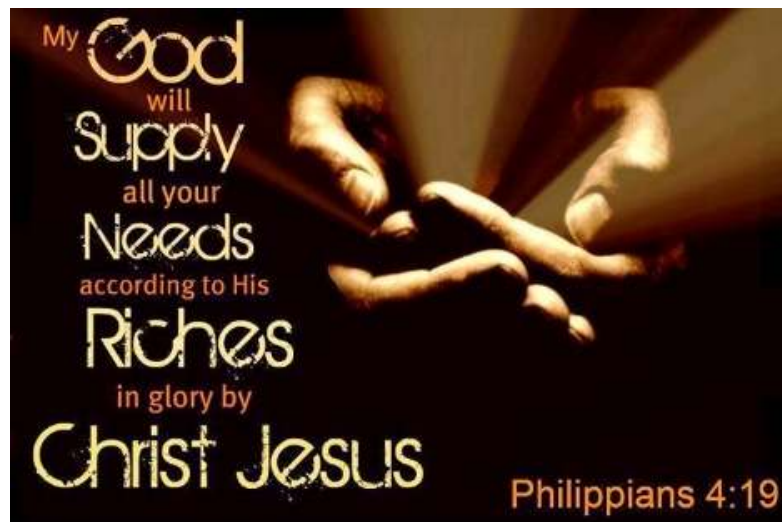
With thanks to John Yang and Sherry Rouse for help with pictures!



(and happy birthday, Jennifer!)



As the sun set and our time together wound down, disciples (and even some of their pets who had been with us at the park) kept the warm conversations going all the way to their cars. Let's keep the good fellowship going!



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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