



The Valley Voice

VALLEY CHRISTIAN CHURCH
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

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COFFEE AND A STORY

Dear Valley,

I write this second column in the Valley Voice to you from our new house here in Birmingham—we arrived a few days ago, and I am grateful to have all of August to set up house and put things in order before I officially become your seventh Senior Minister on September 1. Knowing I have this time allows me to be patient, to watch and listen and learn from my new surroundings.

Already, I am seeing many of the differences between here and the beloved Pacific Northwest from whence Carrie, Sadie, and I came. I know now that I will have to get used to days reaching 80 degrees by midmorning, I will have to cover myself in bug spray pretty much anytime I am outdoors after working hours, and the rolling hills of Cahaba Heights means that I will be getting a much better workout with our dogs, Sir Henry Wiggly and Dame Frida Koala, than I would have in the sea-level expanse of southwest Washington.

But I am also looking forward to many of these changes. I see people wave to me from the road, whether I am in the car or walking the dogs, which was seldom the case in Washington unless you knew the person. Carrie and I have had great fun comparing notes on restaurants whose take-out we want to try first. And seeing the movers bring in all our trappings reminded me that while we have a new home here, we also brought home with us—a blessed mix of old and new.

I strive—sometimes more successfully than other times—to see God in those little moments. It can sometimes be tough to do so amid the chaos and fatigue of a cross-country move. But I feel the Holy Spirit’s presence here, and that helps counteract the chaos. The Spirit can work a bit differently in each of us; for me, it is both a stirrer of passion and a calmer of nerves. I know I will need to rely on both of those qualities as I lay the groundwork towards starting with y’all on September 1.

And until September 1, you have a caring and devoted Interim Senior Minister in Pastor Edd. While I am very excited to take up the mantle of the office, neither do I want to push Pastor Edd out of his prematurely! I am greatly enjoying getting to know each of you, but by the same token I would gently ask you to not request anything of me that would step on Pastor Edd’s toes. He will need those toes for hiking!

Christ’s and yours, Pastor Eric

A THANK YOU NOTE

Dear Valley,

We want to thank all y’all so very much for the socially distanced ‘pantry pounding’ (the Visa gift cards in lieu of the traditional home visit with pounds of food). Not only did this make us feel very welcome and at home here in Birmingham, but it indeed went towards that traditional purpose of feeding our family, especially initially when we were busy unpacking and setting up our kitchen. Thank you for this kind and generous gesture of welcome, and we look forward to getting to know y’all in the coming weeks!

Christ’s and yours, Pastor Eric & Carrie

A NEW DAY

About this time last year, we received a letter from Gary Edge telling us that he was going to retire. In October we celebrated his twelve years of ministry with Valley. A search committee was appointed and began work. The first of November, Edd Spencer came as our Interim Pastor. Edd spent the next three months either visiting in our homes, going out to eat with us, or talking to us on the phone. He had a visit, in one of these ways, with every participating member of Valley. We have been very blessed to have called him as our interim. Words are not adequate to express to Edd our thanks for the care he has given this congregation during this interim period and especially the time of the virus.

Then comes March and the Coronavirus hits our nation. We were asked by the CDC and other health officials to not meet in groups in order that the virus not be spread. We thought that would last until at least the end of May. Edd continued contacting our members each week and we began worshipping by Zoom. The search committee continued the task of searching for a new minister.

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Candidates were interviewed by zoom. The search was narrowed down to one candidate - Dr. Eric Atcheson. The Board and congregation had several interviews with Eric before he was called to be our Senior Minister.

A new day is coming. On September 1, 2020, Eric will begin his ministry with Valley as our Senior Minister. He is married to Carrie and they have a soon to be two-year-old, Sadie. The first Sunday for him to preach will be Sunday Sept. 6. At this writing we probably will still be worshipping by Zoom. I am excited to welcome Eric to Birmingham and Valley. I feel God's hand in bringing Eric and his family to Valley and know that we will have a blessed ministry together.

Yes, it's a new day at Valley Christian. I hope to see you or hear you next Sunday when we worship again by Zoom. When we are able to worship in the church, I look forward to seeing you there. May God's love and powerful hand keep you and your families safe. Stewart Draper, Moderator

AAA

After missing several activities because of the Coronavirus, we will resume AAA events in August, assuming that the virus permits. Please wear a mask or other face cover for our AAA activities.

Our first event will be a tour/talk at St. Elias Maronite Church, 836 8th Street South, Birmingham, Alabama 35205, on Wednesday, August 26th at 10:00am. St. Elias is one of a group of twenty-two churches which form the Universal Catholic Church. We know St. Elias as the Old Testament prophet Elijah. The word "Maronite" comes from the name of the holy prophet Maron who lived in Northern Syria in the 4th and 5th centuries. The residence of the Maronite Patriarch is in the country of Lebanon.

Please meet at Valley at 9:30am to travel in cars rather than the van. For reservations call Marilyn at the church (205-879-0419) by Monday, August 24th, and also indicate to her if you would be willing to drive your car.

We will eat lunch on the patio at the Botanical Gardens restaurant at 11:30am, maintaining social distancing there as far as possible. Everyone is welcome to come! Join us as we begin our fall AAA activities!! Please note that if plans change because of the Coronavirus, everyone will be notified by Monday, August 24, 2020. Thank you.

LIFE IN THE VALLEY

- Our sympathy goes out to the family and friends of Mike Gibson, Billy McDaniel's cousin's husband) who passed away last week.
- Please pray for Eloise Hatcher, Sharon Hill's (Macedonia) mother.
- Please pray for Robert Wilkes, husband of Ruby Wilkes (Macedonia).

- Please pray for John Gregory who is recovering from a blood clot removal in his foot.
- Marilyn and Lola are working on revitalizing and updating the rolodex cards.
- Every Tuesday at 6:30pm, there is a church school class on Zoom led by John Gregory. Contact the church office for information on how to connect to the class.
- Regional Office wrote Valley a nice "thank you" letter for our gift of \$300 to the region's virtual camp for kids in August. The letter is on the bulletin board.
- Please share what is happening in your life, for all of us to read in "Life in the Valley".

THE LITTLE RIVER

Last week our family stayed in cabins by a little river that flows out from the mountains of the Great Smokies. We went swimming in the little river, white water rafting down the little river, and sat by the beautiful waters of the little river. Henri Nowen also spent some time in the mountains and shared his story about a little river.

Once upon a time there was a little river that said, "I can become a big river." It worked hard to get big, but in the process, encountered a huge rock. I won't let this rock stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally made its way around the rock. Next the river encountered a mountain. "I won't let this mountain stop me," the river said. And the little river pushed and pushed until it finally carved a canyon through the mountain. Next the river came to an enormous forest. "I won't let all these trees stop me," the river said. And the river pushed and pushed until it finally made its way through the forest. The river, now large and powerful, finally arrived at the edge of a vast desert. "I won't let this desert stop me," the river said. But as the river pushed and pushed its way across the desert, the hot sand began soaking up its water until only a few puddles remained. The river was quiet. Then the river heard a voice from above. "My child stop pushing. It's time to surrender. Let me lift you up. Let me take over." The river said, "Here I am." The sun then lifted the river up and turned it into a huge cloud. And the wind carried the river across the desert and let it rain down on the hills and valleys of the faraway fields, making them fruitful and rich.

The question we have to ask ourselves is what will we do when we, like the little river, get to the desert? There will come a time for all of us when the heat of the desert will be intense, and we will not know what to do. That desert may contain failure, rejection, disappointment, or loss. What will we do then? When our desert comes, may it be an opportunity to hear the voice of God saying, "It is time to surrender". He wants to lift us up and make us fruitful for Him in ways we never imagined. Can we hear Him? God Bless You, Edd.