



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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Starting the new year with new spiritual births!

Since 2024 began, we've been privileged to see three new brothers in Christ added to our congregation! First, on January 21st, Lamar Moore was baptized into Christ—



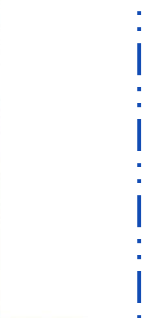
With thanks to Danny Emmett, Sherry Rouse and Peter Berry for information and pictures!





—then on February 18th, Jon Jairo Mazo, husband of longtime member Carmen Mazo, was added to the Kingdom of God—

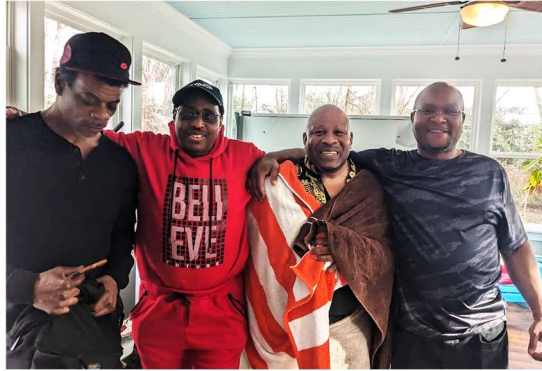






—and a week later, on February 25th, Troy Lewis was reborn!





Troy had planned to be baptized on the same day as Jon Jairo, but was injured in a car accident on the way to the Emmetts' house that day, and plans had to be postponed for a week. J.D. Bush, who had studied with Troy, was driving and was also injured. By God's grace they are on the mend, but as we recognize God's hand in bringing them through this difficult time, let's also remember how little of life is within our control, and make the most of every opportunity to draw closer to God, as all these new brothers have done! Please keep all these new spiritual lives in our prayers, and encourage them as much as possible!



On Saturday, March 9th, some of our mature singles group gathered at the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant and had a great time together, with dancing, dinner and fellowship. (Thanks to Millie Morales and Lisa Gunter for sharing this picture and information!)

A night to celebrate and encourage!

On February 24th, the Mukenyas' clubhouse became a place of beauty and joy as the setting for an encouragement night for the widows and widowers in our congregation. As Tina Shelton shared, "It was truly a night of fun and encouragement for the widows and the widowers. We had amazing food, beautiful decor, wonderful music, and fun games. We were also honored with flowers and a special gift. There were so many people from the church that volunteered their time, talent and resources to make the event special. Everyone was very encouraged and felt loved and supported. This event was the beginning of building a community and unity together as widows and widowers." Natasha Peralta adds, "At the end we were playing games and dancing. The crowd was small, but it was really fun!"



With thanks to Rosa Maldonado, Tina Shelton, Natasha Peralta and Julia Anglin for pictures and information!

Catching up with...

Joshua Britt



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

I'm originally from Cleveland, Ohio. LeBron James claims to be from there, even though he's from Akron, but you know, the Cleveland Cavaliers, they're out there. It's cold and it snows, like, an average snow there is like two feet of snow—it is insane there!

How did you come to live in the Atlanta area?

I've moved a ton in my life! I went to a different school for every grade except 3rd and 4th grades and second half of junior and senior years—every other grade I was in a different school. I've lived in seven states total. South Carolina was the 6th state; I ended up moving to Charleston, South Carolina, and I met a friend out there, God put him in my life and he basically connected me with a lot of different people, connected me with a lot of people in the music world. So we were living in Charleston, we were driving back and forth to Atlanta for a while, then eventually he ended up being able to get a spot out here in Atlanta and was renting a room out to me. We actually started out in Acworth for three months, then we moved to Smyrna, then we moved to East Point, Atlanta, and now I'm here in Lawrenceville.

I just think this is where God has me right now. I don't know if this is my forever home, I just think that the opportunity here is great, and you have a great chance to network and meet people. There are many industries for you to get into, so I think this is a great place to establish a field of work that you want to do, establish a skill set; that's what made me want to stay. Also, my friend—the one who got me here—really guided me all the way through here and was, like, holding my hand the whole way and then finally let go. You know, the people that he knew were the people that I knew, and then finally at one point I had my own life and he had his life, so I just started my own life somewhere else in Atlanta, and who knows? I might get married and move somewhere, or I may stay here.

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

I'm a roofing contractor. I'm really passionate about helping people hit their goals, and roofing is an avenue where I'm able to help people hit their home improvement goals. I started out as a valet luxury car driver at luxury restaurants and some pretty nice hotels, but growing up I just knew I would be good at sales—that was just something that my mom and my friends said, "Ohh, you'd be great at it," so I was really praying about an opportunity to enter sales. At the men's midweek recently we were talking about long-suffering—I was at a point of long-suffering because I knew I wanted to get into sales, but living paycheck to paycheck as a valet, it was hard to just make that leap of faith and transition.

I was applying to so many different places, and I had, like, six different interviews. But the reason I got into roofing—the only thing I could correlate, because I couldn't decide what I wanted to do—I got into roofing because Jesus was a carpenter, and I figured the construction world would be blessed, so I was like, "I'll give it a try." I got started with one roofing company and they were, like, the biggest crooks in the world. I worked with them for a little bit, but I'm a man of integrity, so as soon as people started doing things without integrity, like you would do for yourself, I just started becoming miserable there. Then I ended up finding the company I work for now, Georgia Roof Advisors, which really took my career to the next level.

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

I came to our church with a friend who's actually not a disciple, he doesn't go to our church anymore. My first impression was, "This is different!" My first thought was, "Ohh, everybody's so friendly, so nice, ohh, yeah, but you can only fake this for so long." Then like three months go by, and they're still doing the same thing, so I thought, "Wow, these guys actually genuinely care!" The thing that really stuck out the most to me was the passion for people studying the Bible. I always grew up in a church with prosperity teaching, with someone having a "breakthrough" over something every week, but never knowing actually how to walk. So when I came here, we were studying the Bible—I studied with both the Steves, Steve Collier and Steve Mukenya—and I was drilling them with questions, just asking questions, and I really loved the fact that they related all the answers back to the Bible—it wasn't their thought and their wisdom on anything. And then the best thing about it is, they let me read it for myself, and then I'd answer the question that I asked, so that was what really made me think, "Wow, discipleship really is different than 'Christianity,'" and this church really allows you to see what it looks like to really walk—there are people around you who struggle, but they're actually walking, not people who are pretending to walk but still living their life day to day. That's what I grew up around, a bunch of hypocrites, basically.

What has surprised you most about life as a disciple?

How many people just don't get it, don't get what the walk actually looks like—that's the biggest surprise. It's surprising because, when I actually figured it out, it's like the scripture in the Bible that says basically the road to heaven is narrow but the gate to hell is wide; when you take that perspective and you just look, there's actually not many people that really walk a disciple-life, and that's almost the fruition of the scripture right there. It basically says that not everyone that *thinks* they're walking, is really walking—"Lord, did we not cast out demons in your name? I worshiped you my whole life, I did that," and He's gonna say, "Depart from me, you evildoer!" So when I became disciple and started really walking that walk, it was like, "Man!" It actually brought a passion in me to want to evangelize, just to walk in God-will-calling for me, because I know that we're all created in the image of God, so we have the ability to do great things. Sometimes that worries me because it's like all the people that I know, that I love, I want to tell them, "No, that's the wrong way—you gotta do this!" But then I'm going to be looked at as someone who's pushy, and they don't even want to be around me anymore. So it's knowing that God is in control and trying to be patient, to know that He's working on people and I just need to keep praying about it, because you can't be pushy, or people will literally not talk to you anymore. But also, on the other hand, you have to want it for yourself as well.

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

The biggest lesson that I learned is that I serve a God of grace, because when you become a disciple and you learn what the walk looks like, it's very easy to condemn yourself when you start slipping up. That was my biggest struggle—I would do so good, I would be so good, and I'd mess up and I'm like, "I'm not worthy, I suck, I'm terrible, I don't even deserve to be here!" And God is like, "Bro, come on, just keep walking!" God is a God of grace; He loves you, and even if you mess up, He still loves you! That was the biggest lesson for me; if you just continue to walk righteously, do the things you're supposed to do, then there's nothing to worry about.

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

It's that there is no other truth—all truths outside of Jesus is just Jesus's truth without Jesus, that's all it is. You can get all the answers right, and exclude Jesus, and it's wrong. People will get close to what they think is right, but they never actually get to the real answer—but Jesus is the truth, He is the way, He is the life.

What has your biggest challenge been in following Jesus, and how do you deal with it?

My biggest challenge is accepting that I'm not perfect—I know I'm not perfect, but it's like I was saying previously, about the self-condemnation when I do things that are not aligned with God, not allowing Satan to feed that. I feel like for me he feeds it and says, "You're not worthy, you're not worthy, you might as well go back and do this, you might as well do that"—there's a battle in my head for like a day after I messed up, saying something I shouldn't have said or doing something I shouldn't have done, trying to come back to understanding how Jesus views me; that's been challenging. And the way that I overcome that is understanding the word of God and His promises. When I do mess up, it's so hard for me to open the Bible up again! When I'm on social media is when I'll mess up the most, and when I listen to music more than I do personal development, and I try to catch that—"Look what you're doing, you're literally trying to block out the fact that you need to do some education in the Bible, to figure out how to deal with the way you're feeling or combat what you're going through!" So that's what I've been growing to learn about myself, is that when I do mess up, I need to remember how God used me, remember where He has me going, and continue to stay in the word so I can remind myself of that.

What is your favorite scripture?

James 5:16 is my favorite scripture of all time! "Therefore confess your sins to your brothers and sisters, and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective"—it's that last part, "the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective." So when you're living righteously it's almost as if a righteous God is like, "Ohh, that's my righteous son praying right now!" He's always listening, always hearing, but to me it's the attention to detail I think God has with the righteous person praying; I think it's like He's *really* hearing you, He's *really* listening to you. That's the way I view that scripture.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time—interests, hobbies, etc.?

I'm pretty much work, work, work; I'm very into business, and my passion is motivational speaking. There's a guy named Myron Golden that I listen to that I really, really like; he's a motivational speaker, but he's also a extremely, extremely wealthy multimillionaire who teaches wealth based on physical principles, and once I have the wealth, I want to teach wealth based on biblical principles. I really want to teach people how to walk in their God-likeness—we were made in the image of God; God was the Creator, He created us with the ability to create, to Imagine, to do phenomenal things. And so Satan's number-one job is to stop you from believing you could ever do anything; he has a lot of the world fooled to think that, so I want to motivate people, and that's what I'm really passionate about.

As far as fun time, Tommy is my gym partner; I go to the gym with Tommy early every morning. I'm big in my health—I want to be healthy, but I like to eat whatever I want. I also enjoy hanging out with friends, brothers and sisters of the church, going to events and stuff like that, but right now I don't have a ton of fun; I think there will come a point in time where I will be able to have more fun, but I care more about my relationship with God, serving God and building myself before I have a ton of fun, because I don't want to do that later on in life—I'd rather just go ahead and take care of it now, so that later on in life I can have fun while still doing these other things, that's kind of where my mind's at.

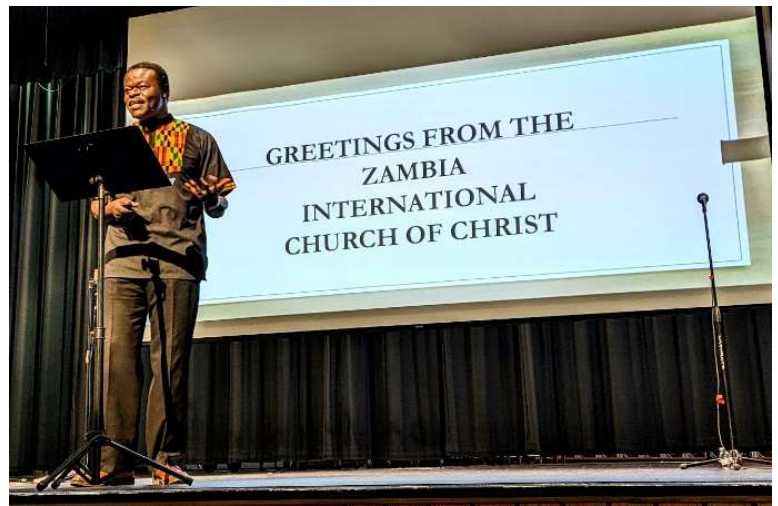
What might someone be surprised to know about you?

I make music! I make rap, melodic, singing-type music—some people are surprised at how it sounds. I have studio equipment at home, we're actually working on a Church of Christ in Gwinnett album, almost—I have people that come to my house and we record and make music together. It's all original; I'll just think of something, put on a beat, I'll listen to the beat for like 10 seconds and then it's like, "OK!" and I just flow straight off the head.

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

Five years ago I was 19 years old, I was actually making motivational videos, and I stopped doing it. I would tell the younger me, "Give your life to Christ now, bro! And continue to do what you're doing!" But everything happens for a reason, so maybe that delay was also needed for me to grow and mature and things like that. But I think I would definitely tell myself to give my life to Christ ASAP!

On February 18th, evangelist John Maleya brought us a lesson on being led by the Spirit, along with encouraging news from our sister congregation in Zambia, and an invitation to come visit and to build relationships with our brothers and sisters there! Our fellow disciples there offer to house and feed us as their guests, and show us the scenic wonders of their country—and what better way to build one another up all around the world?



"The flowers have appeared in the land..." (Song of Songs 2:12a)

Here are a few glimpses of spring God sent somewhat early this year—with the promise of more to come!



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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