

February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007

Greetings,

This month I would like to let you know about some of the ministries that the church I am attending is involved in. As I have mentioned in earlier newsletters, I am attending a small neighborhood church, Georgia Avenue Church. There are about 15-20 people who attend regularly, so I have gotten to know most of the members of the church very well. One thing that I have grown to love about the church is that it is strongly rooted in the community, and most of the members of the church live in the surrounding neighborhoods, so I see many of them during the week.

Two of the major ministries that Georgia Avenue is involved in are food co-ops and a weekly lunch open to members of the community. The food co-ops are part of a separate program called Georgia Avenue Community Ministries, which is tied very closely with the church. There are four food co-ops and each co-op consists of 50 families from the surrounding area. The point of the co-ops is to help provide those families with food to supplement what they can buy with their normal income. All of the food is bought with money that is donated to the ministry, and if they are able, co-op members are asked to bring a dollar or two to each meeting in order to help offset the cost of repairs to the truck they use to pick up food and pay for gas. Every week food is picked up from the Atlanta Food Bank and brought back to the church where members of the co-ops help to divide the food up into boxes and then they hold a meeting for announcements and discuss any relevant business. Leaders of the co-ops are elected members, and the entire co-op is involved in the decision making process. This helps members to take ownership of the co-ops and to help identify and support leaders in the community.

Another ministry is a weekly lunch that the church hosts every Wednesday from September through May. Different groups bring lunch every week, and everyone from the community is invited to come and share a meal together. For the last few months, the church has been preparing one of these meals every month, and after church our entire congregation heads to the kitchen to prepare a meal for 100 people.

Attending a church that is small yet so active in the community has in many ways challenged my ideas of what valuable ministries a church can provide to its community. The church does struggle financially at times, but has an overriding commitment to mission. Attending this church has been very different from any other church that I have ever attended. One reason I chose this church was because instead of finding a church that has the most to offer me, attending a small community church makes you see what you have to offer it. I have recently begun to become more active in worship by leading music on guitar and I am now trying to teach myself to play the piano.

I have been keeping busy at work as normal. Even the most straightforward day becomes an exciting adventure when the kids start showing up around 5. Over the last two months we have gone from having a group of younger kids to having families with mostly teenagers and back to a group with mostly younger children again, so I have been on my toes trying to adjust back and forth to the different groups that require vastly different things of me. As always there are quiet days and days that the time I spend in the shelter goes by in a flash, but it is always rewarding. Just earlier today I was able enjoy spending some time watching and playing with an 8 month old and see the joy he had in exploring the some of the toys we have and trying to use my arm and shoulder as a balance while he attempted to stand up. Working with the children in the shelter, whether it is helping someone with their homework, playing a game, or just exploring all of the exciting things in the room with a younger child are the joyful experiences that keep me energized and wanting to come back every day.

Sincerely,  
Joshua Newton