



Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

Romans 5:5

August 2007

Coffee & Power Outages

by Duan Walker, Executive Director

Summer greetings! It's that time of year when school, work, and ministry seem to slow, in some fashion. We have vacations and travel and just generally try to enjoy the weather before the Northwest Grey sets in. For others of us, summer can be a time of preparation. Last summer at this time, Kendra and I were laying groundwork for Mid-Valley Fellowship's official startup in October. I had the occasion last year to reflect on what the summer held and write about it. I thought I'd share that article this month, in the middle of another summer of preparation. At the time, I was still living in Portland, in the process of returning to Albany after being gone for a year.

The last thing I thought I would be doing this summer was beginning the ministry of Mid-Valley Fellowship. At the beginning of the internship at Portland Fellowship (PF), I wasn't sure where God was leading, but I was *certain* that he was *not* leading me to start a ministry. I did not see myself (and sometimes still struggle with seeing myself) as a leader – as someone God had called to be a leader. I wholly embraced this belief, to the point that I even quashed one of my mentor's attempts to acknowledge leadership potential in me. Part way through the year, another mentor pointed out leadership potential in me, and it was harder to ignore this time. In our conversations, we reached a place where I finally said, "Okay, God, I still don't see it, but I believe you're calling me to this. I'll step into it, because of that belief, but I don't want to do it by myself." Within a couple weeks, I was contacted by a woman living in the Mid-Valley area who had been a participant and teacher at PF a few years ago and had a desire to be a part of ministry in the Mid-Valley area (Kendra). So, the adventure began ... and that is precisely what it has been.

The best way I can illustrate how the process has been so far is to relay a story about a recent visit to my hometown: Albany, Oregon. Many projects had been happening this summer around PF and with Mid-Valley Fellowship, and I was feeling a bit ragged. There were three potential meetings on this visit to Albany, but all of them were tentative. My plan was to assess whether they would happen, and then use the extra time in the afternoon to sit in a coffee shop and do some reading and writing. As I drove into town, none of the traffic lights seemed to be working (a bit strange). I made



my first stop, and it became apparent that most of the city was experiencing a blackout (Albany, Corvallis, and Philomath were all affected). Pretty soon, I realized that only one of my meetings might happen and that one was uncertain.

I headed to the local branch of an international coffee chain to enjoy some iced tea and sit in a comfy chair for a couple hours. It's odd though: when there is no power, it renders most, if not all businesses inoperative, including the local branch of that international coffee chain. That was a bit frustrating. I decided to meander back through town and all those inoperative traffic lights to find another coffee shop, perhaps in a non-affected area of town. Sure enough, the local coffee house downtown (Boccherini's) had power and was open for business (unfortunately, they don't have soft chairs). I decided to go with a milk shake instead of the tea and pulled out my card to pay. "I'm sorry – we only take cash." Drat – I've been spoiled by the big city. So, I walked two blocks to an ATM and came back for my now long-awaited cool drink on a warm afternoon. On the way to the ATM, I left a message for a friend, asking if he wanted to get together for dinner. While I was receiving my milk shake, I got a call about my last potential meeting – it wasn't going to happen either.



There I was: in a different coffee shop, no meetings in front of me, and just some time to stop ... The afternoon had not looked as I anticipated ... So, I had a choice: embrace where I was and the situation or focus on all the things that weren't working "right." The reality was that I *needed* a quiet afternoon, and that's what I had. I was able to sit in the coffee shop for a while and write and reflect. Then I found a quiet place to have a nap. Later, my friend called back, and we had dinner, catching up on what God was doing in our lives and encouraging each other. Although the day did not look as I originally thought it would or should, God's plan for the day was what I needed.

Many times, stepping into the ministry adventure of Mid-Valley Fellowship feels the same way. Things don't seem to be coming together as I anticipated. Things didn't come together by the deadline I set. What's going on? Then, when I relax and let God lead, things come together. We already have a few volunteer leaders, the beginning of a Board, financial supporters, and soon will have our non-profit status. Word is spreading that there is a new ministry beginning in the Mid-Valley, and more exciting things are on the horizon. Along the way, crazy things happen that we could not have constructed or imagined. And it reminds us that *God* is growing and establishing this ministry – not us. Sometimes my pride makes that hard to swallow. I Corinthians 1:26-31 helps me keep things in focus:

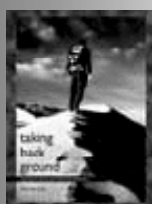
"Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God deliberately chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose those who are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important, so that no one can ever boast in the presence of God."

This summer is much the same. It is a time of preparation. Over the last year, much has happened, and there is much to be thankful for. There is also much to anticipate. We are continuing to develop our Board of Directors, seeking to add diverse experience. Additionally, we will be beginning the process of becoming an Exodus International member ministry. Exodus is a network of over 120 local ministries in the USA and Canada similar in purpose to MVF.

Early this fall, we hope to see some strategic partnerships fit into place with a couple local organizations. Then in mid-October, we will be having our first annual benefit dinner. It will be an exciting evening to celebrate what God has been doing during our first year of existence and look forward to what the future holds. We would love to have you be a part of this incredible event. Simply contact us to discuss how you can participate.

God surprises and challenges us as we continue the adventure that is Mid-Valley Fellowship. That passage from I Corinthians is still encouraging and humbling. I hope you'll join us in the adventure and see what God does.

Applications Now Being Accepted for Taking Back Ground in October



This two-year discipleship program is designed for men and women seeking to heal from sexual and relational brokenness. The program includes worship, teaching, and small group participation.

- ✓ Understanding Homosexuality
- ✓ Knowing God in the Struggle
- ✓ Walking Out the Process

Please Call or E-mail for More Information



Pray With Us

Lord, there is no way for us to live out the kind of love You ask of us without Your help. You've drawn us to You with Your perfect love, and we so imperfectly give it back. Help us today to love You and love others better, especially those we feel don't deserve it.

Love Won Out Saturday, August 4, 2007 City Bible Church, Portland, Oregon

Focus on the Family's Love Won Out ministry exhorts and equips the church to respond in a Christ-like way to the issue of homosexuality. To those who struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions, it offers the Gospel hope that these desires can be overcome.

For Registration or More Information:
Call 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459) or
Visit www.lovewonout.com



PO Box 3141, Albany, OR 97321
www.midvalleyfellowship.org
541.928.2164

Duan Walker

Executive Director

duan@midvalleyfellowship.org

Kendra Hanes

Women's Ministry Director

kendra@midvalleyfellowship.org