

MID-VALLEY fellowship

releasing the power of hope

*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

April 2009



This month, we have the privilege of hearing from a guest author for the Mid-Valley Fellowship newsletter. Ed Sweet is the Senior Pastor of Valley Christian Center in Albany and a great friend and supporter of the ministry. VCC has partnered with Mid-Valley Fellowship over the last year and a half by having us share in Sunday morning services and Sunday School classes. We are excited to have Ed share about VCC's experiences with us. It has been a pleasure to get to know Ed and see his heart for people.

Partnering in Hope

by Pastor Ed Sweet

His name was Bob. Early in my ministry this former college housemate shared about how guys were "hitting" on him. He referenced some abuse by older boys when he was a kid. And he alluded to some of the confusing emotions he was experiencing. I listened, but I was clueless. I didn't know what to say or how to respond. I'm sure I prayed a feeble prayer, asking God to guide Bob. Mostly I was uncomfortable and felt completely inadequate in my ability to help. I don't recall purposefully avoiding Bob, but neither did I do anything to pursue him, to love him, to serve him, to really help him. Bob ended up moving into an openly gay lifestyle. I haven't heard from him or about him for over twenty years.

Could I have made a difference in Bob's life? Could I have led him toward help and healing? There is, of course, no way of really knowing. But as a Christ-follower, and as a pastor, I sincerely want to love and serve the people God brings my way. I want to be able to listen better, extend hope, and provide greater assistance to each and every "Bob" who comes to me for understanding and help.

There are a lot of men and women like Bob in our world, and in our own community. Their stories vary, but like Bob, many are looking for a way out of their pain. They don't understand what they are feeling and why. They may be ashamed and embarrassed. Likely, they are feeling guilty, dirty, unworthy or unlovable.

How are you and I going to serve them?

My experience with Bob and others who have struggled with, or who are currently struggling with homosexuality is what motivated me to invite Duan Walker to speak to our church. It isn't enough just for the pastor to be able to minister to Bob, all the saints need to be equipped to love and serve their neighbor. Most of the people in my church have some contact with individuals who are in the gay lifestyle or who are wrestling with homosexual thoughts or tendencies. They may be working together, sitting next to each other in class, or living next door.

Duan has provided our church with a measure of awareness by sharing his own testimony during our worship services. He also taught a Sunday morning class, Homosexuality 101, to equip folks in the church with some fundamental insight and understanding of the issues and concerns people face in these regards. I highly recommend both the public testimony and the class for any local church.

So often in the church when there is discussion of homosexuality, those who are being referenced are "out there" somewhere. But my friend Bob was not "out there." For a

Host MVF for
Homosexuality 101
at Your Church!



Educational

Interactive

Practical

Homosexuality 101 is an interactive three-part curriculum, intended to fit into a Sunday School or Small Group format. The focus is to educate, give practical advice, and answer questions on this complex and confusing topic.

Contact Us to Learn More

541.928.2164
office@midvalleyfellowship.org

Upcoming Events

April 5

Homosexuality 101, Part 3
Willamette Community

Youth Leaders Meeting
North Albany Community

April 7, 14, 21, 28

Taking Back Ground

May 6

Pastor's Lunch



Prayer Requests

Please pray for our **Taking Back Ground participants and leaders** as the program resumes in April. As they encounter challenges and new issues to address, pray for strength, courage, and endurance.

Please pray for our **Pastor's Lunch** coming up at the beginning of the month.

Praise for **opportunities to share** in various church settings. Pray for those who will hear about MVF and their response to the message.



Neighbor to Neighbor is a strategy we are initiating to share the ministry of MVF with new people. The simple idea is to invite 5 or 6 friends to your home for a meal and conversation with Duan Walker, MVF's Director. Contact us for more information.

couple years we worshipped together in church, sat next to one another in Bible studies, and prayed side by side. I heard his confession of faith in Christ and have no doubt of his sincerity as a Believer.

Having Duan visit our church and partnering with Mid-Valley Fellowship is about equipping the saints – no question. But it is also about reaching the persons in my congregation; the individuals who sing and pray to the Lord and who read their bibles, but are nonetheless confused and struggling. I want them to receive the help, the instruction, the love, and the hope they need. That is what MVF is about and what our partnership with MVF makes available.

One final thought: Even if nobody in our church struggled with homosexual issues personally and even if nobody in our church was in contact with people in the gay lifestyle (neither is the case), I would still engage with Mid-Valley Fellowship. I would still have Duan visit our worship services and teach the class. Why? Because if there is one value that we need to trumpet in the church, it is that Jesus loves, saves and heals broken people.

For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:17) The message of compassion, understanding, healing, and hope is one we all need to embrace. MVF communicates that message.

Pastor & Ministry Leader Lunch

Enjoy a free lunch

Learn about the ministry

Hear how we can serve you

Ask questions about homosexuality

Wednesday, May 6, 2009

12:00pm - 2:00pm

Flinn Block Hall in Historic Downtown Albany

Cost is Free. Please RSVP.

Online: www.midvalleyfellowship.org/pastors

Phone: 541.928.2164



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Duan Walker
Executive Director
duan@midvalleyfellowship.org

Shar Geisert & Angela Miller
Women's Ministry Volunteers
women@midvalleyfellowship.org

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