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NORTH VALLEY FRIENDS CHURCH

Official Newsletter

THE FAMILY WHO SNUGGLES TOGETHER MEET (SOME OF) NVFC'S BAKER WOMEN

If you enjoyed the North Valley Friends Church chili cookoff, you should probably thank Jessica Baker. Not necessarily because she won the contest for the best overall chili, but because Jessica and the entire Fellowship Committee spent ample time setting up for the cookoff, gathering contest entries and side dishes, and making sure the entire event ran smoothly.

The Fellowship Committee is also responsible for the coffee and tea we enjoy every Sunday, the Fellowship Sundays that occur once a month, and the holiday meals, including the upcoming Easter breakfast. Jessica provides the organizational power behind these efforts, sending out emails, encouraging people to sign up for various tasks, and ensuring that all the bases are covered for important community events.

Sometimes this means sourcing extra spoons. At December's holiday meal, Jessica realized that spoons had gone missing from the NVFC kitchen and put out an APB to the congregation, hoping to find more spoons. By the chili cookoff in February, there were at least enough spoons to go around (though I'm guessing there's always room for more).

Jessica has been an integral part of NVFC since 2006, when she started attending after some time at a Baptist church where she "couldn't hear God." She had attended George Fox University, earned a teaching degree, and then went to Kotzebue, Alaska, to begin her career. When she returned to Newberg a few years later, Jessica decided to give NVFC a try since some of her friends were attending.



THE BAKER FAMILY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

“I came, and I loved it, and I haven’t left,” Jessica said. “I just love the people. I love the people, and I love how we love each other, and how we decided to be together.”

Although Jessica says the people brought her to NVFC, her daughters, Vivian and Evelyn, insist that it is, in fact, their parents’ car that brings them to North Valley each Sunday. (Their answer suggests that perhaps the interviewer needs to write clearer questions!) At any rate, Jessica and her spouse, Jeremy Baker, have assured that their daughters feel welcomed at NVFC, and both girls are involved in the middle school youth group and children’s church.

Jessica points out that her daughters are vastly different from each other, although they also share many of the same traits. “Jeremy and I are just constantly struck by how extremely different they are even having been raised in the same house and coming from the same, you know, genetic pairs, from the two of us,” Jessica said. “How very different they are and how there are little echoes of similarity between them. They’re both sweet, and smart, and crafty, but they approach those things very differently.”

Evelyn, who is in the fourth grade, enjoys school because of her teacher, who is nice. She likes watching shows and Tik Tok, “pinky stuff,” working on her rainbow loom, and writing, including making Dragon Girl fanfiction.

Vivian, who is in the sixth grade, loves school because of her friends and because of “how easy it is to get to classes.” She likes going to the park with her friends and being outside, and has taken up knitting and crochet, as well as drawing.

Both girls mentioned that one of their favorite things is cuddling with their mom—something that is vital to Jessica as well. Jessica enjoys snuggling with Vivian and Evelyn so much that she gets up earlier every morning to make space for this time together. “We snuggle every morning,” Jessica said. “Before we get ready for school, I’m required to get them up a little earlier than is necessary so that we can have time.”

According to Vivian, time with her mother isn’t always quiet and calm. She said she likes “snuggling my mom [and] having my mom tickle me and trying my hardest not to laugh. Or, having my mom tickle me and trying my hardest not to kick her in the face.”



*Evelyn, above, is in grade four;
Vivian, below, is in grade six.*



THE BAKER FAMILY (CONTINUED FROM PAGE TWO)

Beyond cuddling, the family shares many other interests, from watching shows together to taking walks to trying new restaurants. Evelyn claims to not like trying new restaurants, except when they go to McMenamings, though she, like her mom and sister, clearly enjoys being together with family.

Jessica described the many events they enjoy: “We will watch movies or shows together. We go for walks together. We like to explore new places; we’ll go shopping or try new restaurants. We’ll sit on the couch together and read our own books, and Evelyn will interrupt me constantly because every time she finds something interesting, she wants to tell me about it, and I just love it. I love being with them.”

The Baker family is “kind and quirky,” Vivian said, adding that they have a cat who likes water. “Like in the wild, they actually swim in water to find food,” a factoid that checks out, at least according to the Internet.

Despite their differences, both Evelyn and Vivian mentioned one surprising aspect they especially liked about their church home: the secret passageways that apparently exist in the church building. Vivian said she “likes all the different secret rooms, upstairs and in crevices, and the attic,” an observation shared by her sister. Like their mother, they also appreciate the people at NVFC, who make church so much better.

When it comes to her girls, Jessica has been open-hearted in sharing their struggles and their gifts with the congregation. Her deep love for Vivian and Evelyn resounds through what she says about them and the way she responds to their needs. Ultimately, Jessica said, she prays that her daughters will “grow up to be strong and kind.”

“I want them to love themselves, just the way they are,” Jessica added. “And [I hope] they learn to love others the way they are as well and spread that love into wherever they are. They’ve already got a pretty good start on that. I’m very proud of them.”

From sharing their hearts to sharing good food (and sourcing more spoons), we are grateful for all the ways Jessica, Vivian, and Evelyn have enriched our congregation (and Jeremy, too!).



May I Please Speak to the Manager?

BY SARAH LANDREY

For weeks on end now, my nightly dreams have centered around traveling. I wish I'd written down some of the ways they've unfolded. They're never the same scenario. Different people, different unnamed destinations, different obstacles to overcome or sometimes, even nice surprises. And before I wake up, we've yet to arrive. A lot of the time I'm not even clear where we're headed. Make that most of the time. Amazingly, in my dreams I'm rarely alarmed or upset by the detours, uncertainties, and obstacles. I take the randomness all in stride.

Why can't I be more accepting of the unpredictability of this journey in my waking life? Why does God allow each week to be filled with so much that feels like I'm -- like all of us -- are being pummeled and flung around in a WWF match? Or like we're on the X2 at Six Flags? One minute we're all strapped in, smiling and waving to our loved ones standing on the sidelines in the sunshine, and the next thing you know, it's whiplash, baby.

It's all "hallelujah" and "I've Got Peace Like a River" until we're screeching, "No! No! Oh God NO!" All within the span of a couple hours. We're outside weeding our gardens and next we hear gunshots coming from the school on the other side of the fence.

It's So. Messed. Up.

Grace, peace, anguish, love, fear-filled rumination, pain, grace, anger, tears. This is how the week goes.

Why can't God be clearer about Their plans for the week -- or for that matter, life? If I were in charge, I'd create some sort of divine daily planner system and share it with everyone. That would certainly help this mortal feel more grounded. With plans laid out, I'd know when to brace for impact and, like my mother always warned me, made sure I'd changed into clean underwear. In case the medics had to cut my clothes off.

I heard a story once, and I can't vouch for it, but I'd like to believe it's true. Someone came to ask Mother Teresa to pray for them that they would get clarity on a particular issue. But Mother Theresa said she would not pray for more clarity, she would pray for more trust.

May I Please Speak to the Manager?

BY SARAH LANDREY, CONTINUED

With all the uncertainties on this journey, maybe that's all I have. Maybe that's all any of us have. I've not been appointed God, nor would I want to be. So, after I go on tilt, cycle through all my own strategies and do what I can, I find myself at a loss. What have I got left but to trust? Actually, to surrender and trust. No actually, to surrender, trust, and still do loving things to make the world a better place.

I try to do loving things every day – sometimes anonymously. Sometimes, if I'm honest, I want full credit. But even if I don't get credit -- which I mostly don't -- I'm learning to circle back to surrender, and trust that my acts of love make a difference in this crazy, messed up world.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR VERY OWN JODY JONES,
EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR / CHEHALEM VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE!



NVFC Chili Cook-off Winners



**MOST UNIQUE CHILI:
PAT SCHMIDT**



**TRADITIONAL CHILI:
SUE O'DONNELL**



**OVERALL WINNER:
JESSICA BAKER**



**SPICIEST CHILI:
LARRY HAMPTON**



**VEGETARIAN CHILI:
JESSICA TROUT**