

Valencia Presbyterian Church

by

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I was trying to figure out a short cut from over here to over there on my way home from work. Instead of finding shortcuts I always found long, winding roads that ran into even longer winding roads. Its funny because I always seem to get lost there but I never seem to mind.

The neighborhoods were older. The homes were modest, neat and tidy. People sat out on their porches and neighbors talked to neighbors. Something natural just seemed to suggest this is the way life was supposed to be.

Its that place north that seems out of place because it has a quaint small town feel yet is surrounded by booming developments on all sides. But after you've driven through it several times, you begin to realize that the boom surrounding it is what's out of place. Valencia is cool. But perhaps the coolest thing about Valencia are some of its thriving little churches.

I was driving through one Sunday and my vehicle's radiator sprung a leak. Oh well, what to do. I had a little time on my hands. Hmm... why not stop in one of those churches and let it cool off for awhile.

As a curious, committed Catholic, I entered the Valencia Presbyterian Church just to sort of pass the time. All I can say is "what a treasure". Constructed in 1905, you immediately marvel at the magnificent stained glass windows. But what is most striking is what it is not. Its not big. It looks like it was built to be intentionally small. That in itself was incredibly refreshing.

No billboards, no glitz, no hype. Just good old-fashioned faith. They didn't invent it. They just captured it and kept that spark glowing for almost a century. A little country church in the middle of nowhere that you find by driving around in circles. It's like a good book. You want to stay with it a spell.

Everyone has a name at Valencia Presbyterian church. Perhaps that was the intent of its founders. Maybe they believed God worked most effectively in small groups. I've always felt doing small things well is better than doing a bunch of big things.

Anyhow the service I attended was unique. The Pastor wore army fatigues because he had just come back from a camp for kids and he was part of God's army. That might not work for everyone but it worked for me. I liked this guy. He was into it. His enthusiasm was contagious.

The songs were a lot older than the church which was interesting. Ok, so the people around me thought they could sing and they couldn't stay on key. They sure sang loud though. It left me smiling. I admired their willingness to give all the songs a go.

The service was over and now what to do about my vehicle. As you probably would expect, I met Mel the mechanic. "Mel, wow am I glad to meet you. I know zip about cars. I have this vehicle that sprung a leak and that's why I'm at your church I think." Mel told me he'd take a look at it. Eventually he did but first I had to meet the other 60 or so people.

Whoa, chocolate chip, oatmeal, raisin cookies. I always thought someone should combine those ingredients. Did this church invent these things or what? Nope, they came from Ida Jean, the best cookie maker in the universe. Now that's someone I want to get to know. Those cookies are enough to bring anyone back to Valencia.

Anyhow Mel patched up my vehicle to get me back to where I was trying to get to. Nothing like finding an honest mechanic at church.

So off I went and I found myself lost in Valencia all over again. Oh yeah, how do you get to Valencia Presbyterian church? I'm not sure. You just keep driving around in circles until you find it or you can ask one of those neighbors walking along the road or you can follow your nose to the best tasting cookies in the universe.



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