

Allyson Wilkerson

Allyson Wilkerson doesn't remember what caused her to end up visiting New Song in the first place, but she does know why she decided to stay after her first Sunday morning trip. "Everybody was so genuinely nice," she said. "It was like this coming home feeling. It was something I had not felt before."

Since then, New Song has become Ms. Allyson's family and one of the only reasons this Cleveland native admits she stays in Baltimore. "The only thing that keeps me here is the church," she said. "I do not want to leave New Song."

Ms. Allyson came to Baltimore at the age of 17 from Cleveland, Ohio. Her mother had just passed and her father and stepmother lived in the city. She raised two children here: Jason, 23, and Dynna, 24. Her two beautiful grandchildren, 2-year-old Mekhai and 5-year-old Kyren, attend church occasionally.

But the people at New Song are her extended family, she says, and New Song is a place where she loves to spend her time. When Ms. Allyson's stepmother was sick with cancer a few years ago, she was not able to attend church as she was taking care of her family. But people from the church tracked her down, Allyson remembers, telling her they missed her and offering her rides to church. She remembers that time away from Sandtown as a lonely time, when she looked around her new neighborhood for a place to go to church. But she remembers being "not happy" at those other churches. At New Song, she appreciates the diversity of the church and the music. "It's a love of the people," she said, explaining why she stayed at the church. "It's like the colors do not matter at all. We're just people."

In her time at the church, Ms. Allyson has been involved in many things, including Scripture readings, communion setup, nursery duty and Bible studies. She worked at Sandtown Habitat as well as the health center before it closed. She now works at the Johns Hopkins Medical Center Bayiew Campus as a patient registrar. But beyond her day-to-day job, Ms. Allyson also has a passion for writing. She and her sister published a book of poems. She is also taking a college class in business administration and hopes to start a class on Christian counseling. Allyson's encouragement and support is what other people say she is gifted in, which has led her to pursue counseling.

Ms. Allyson also loves her two dogs and cat dearly, as well as fried chicken. And she loves hanging out with her two best buddies, Barbara and Lillian.