

LASTORY



DO THE RIGHT THING

A Kingdom Pictures Release "DO THE RIGHT THING" A KINGDOM NEWS NETWORK PRODUCTION

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Church of Christ

KNN

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Editorial

by Al Baird

KINGDOM MILESTONES	
COUNTRIES PLANTED	154
NUMBER OF CHURCHES	351
SUNDAY ATTENDANCE	179,732

LA SUNDAY ATTENDANCE			
3/7	12,724	3/21	12,867
3/14	12,686	4/4	14,737

DO THE RIGHT THING

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’”

1 Samuel 16:7

Southeast Texas was about as racially prejudiced a place as you could have imagined in the ‘40s and ‘50s. I grew up there. Some nearby towns prided themselves that no African Americans lived there, or even dared to set foot there after dark. All through school, I never had a non-white friend. There were no black students in any school that I ever attended, until college. They rode in the back of the bus and had separate drinking fountains. I, like everyone else, used racial slurs in everyday speech without even giving it a second thought. I did not hate other races; they just were not a part of my world.

That all changed in high school. One summer, I was a lifeguard at a Boy Scout camp where no African Americans were allowed. However, a week was reserved for blacks only. When no lifeguard could be found, I was asked if I wanted the job and I accepted. That one week did more to change my view of other races than all my other experiences combined. One by one my stereotyped images of African Americans were obliterated. They were like me, or I was like them – depending on the point of view. They laughed at

the same things I laughed at. The same things that hurt me hurt them – whether it was a cutting word or a scraped knee. I was the only white boy among a hundred non-whites. By the end of the week, skin color did not matter any more.

But God was not through with me. Several years later when Gloria and I were at church with my Mom, a handsome black couple walked into the all-white service. Heads turned to look at them with angry stares. Soon one of the leaders walked back to where they were sitting and escorted them out, telling them that African Americans were not welcome. I later learned that the couple had recently finished college and were on their way to Africa as missionaries. It was all I could do not to confront the whole hypocritical group who so piously (and mistakenly) called themselves Christians. Now, I am embarrassed that I did not have the courage to take a stand.

After I became a disciple, God allowed me to go through two more major refinements. The first was in the world’s raging racial hot spot in 1987: South Africa. Gloria and I accompanied the 20 daring African Americans and whites who moved to Johannesburg to plant the church. We were out together, street preaching and inviting people to the first service. One of the greatest thrills of my life was to see more than 100 people stream into the meeting hall for the first service, and to see the startled looks on faces as they witnessed for the first time blacks and whites smiling at and hugging each other. The second refining time was the

three years that we spent living and ministering in South Central Los Angeles. There, we were definitely a minority couple. We were able as disciples and ministers to get into the lives of brothers and sisters who were culturally different from us, but who were all the same on the heart level. As a result, Cory and Megan Blackwell and several others are some of our very best friends.

I am ashamed of the years before I became a disciple when I tolerated words and actions in others and myself that hurt those who were different from me. Those who have been hurt by people like myself, I ask you collectively to forgive us. The Kingdom is now in almost every nation under heaven. It is amazing to see the message of the cross penetrate every racial and cultural barrier that Satan can erect. **Jesus said that it is by our love for each other that the world will know that we are his disciples (John 13:34-35). I have worshipped and fellowshiped with disciples around the world, and one distinguishing mark of God’s modern-day movement is the obvious love that we have for one another.** The world is starving for this kind of love. However, before God can use us to provide healing, we must make sure that we ourselves are healed. We who have looked down on others and somehow thought we were better must repent and realize the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Those who have been hurt by the results of racial hatred must forgive and trust again. All of the

people in our world are waiting for us to **DO THE RIGHT THING.** ■

United disciples in Africa (far left), Los Angeles (center), and the HOPE worldwide Youth Corps.



UNITED DISCIPLES



AROUND THE WORLD

JESUS LOVES ME THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO

“For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility . . .” – Ephesians 2:14



*“Therefore **go and make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” – Matthew 28:19-20*



*“. . . the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as chief among the mountains . . . **and all nations will stream to it**. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” – Isaiah 2: 2-4*



*“. . . for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, **for you are all one in Christ.**” – Galatians 3:27-28*



*“My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, **don’t show favoritism.**” – James 2:1*

*“I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be **no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.**” – 1 Corinthians 1:10*

*“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, **but love your neighbor as yourself.** I am the Lord.” – Leviticus 19:18*



THE WHOLE WORLD AS 100 PEOPLE

If we could shrink the earth’s population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:

- 57 Asians
- 21 Europeans
- 14 from the Western Hemisphere (north and south)
- 8 Africans
- 52 Females
- 48 Males
- 70 non-White
- 30 White
- 70 belong to non-Christian religions
- 30 belong to the Christian religions
- 59% of the entire world’s wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States
- 80 living in substandard housing
- 70 unable to read
- 50 suffering from malnutrition
- One near death
- One near birth
- One with a college education
- One would own a computer
- 100 sinners in need of God’s grace

“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”

– Romans 3:23-24



RACISM BY ANY OTHER NAME

by Mike Taliaferro, Geographic Sector Leader for Africa

In America they call it racism. In India it is called the caste system. In Africa it is called tribalism. The Bible calls it sin. Hatred, distrust, and prejudice are the devil's tools on every continent. The problem is not just hatred between different races. The sin really is hatred on any level. Rwanda, Zaire, and a dozen other African countries are infamous for atrocities between black tribes. The two most devastating world wars occurred in the twentieth century fueled by hatred among white "tribes" in Europe. Disciples in Africa often say that either we will destroy tribalism in Africa, or it will destroy us. That is true all over the world – from Ireland to Iraq to Indonesia.

Nowhere has racism been more evident than in South Africa. The apostle Paul wrote of the "dividing wall" between Jew and Gentile. Here in South Africa the centuries of division have bred deep hatred and suspicion. By the official law of the land (Apartheid), the country separated people into four distinct groups: white, colored, Indian and black. Churches, bathrooms, neighborhoods, park benches, and beaches were all reserved for certain groups only, designed to keep the "colors" apart. In the 1970's a law known as the Mixed Marriages Act was passed outlawing interracial marriages. Yet, by simple faith in God, the Boston Church sent a team of disciples – 10 blacks and 10 whites – to plant a church in Johannesburg at the height of tension in 1987.

Jacques and Berénice were raised at opposite ends of Apartheid. Berénice's family actually left South Africa for a time in order to escape the prejudices and inequality that threatened their future. Jacques writes, "Like every other white disciple in a torn South Africa, when I repented, I built deep relationships with my black brothers

and sisters. Although I went on dates with black sisters, it took me awhile to realize that my heart was not open to falling in love with someone from another race group. I began to pray earnestly that God would change my heart; that he would root out my deepest racism so that I would truly see all people as God does."

"A few months later I went on a date with Berénice and fell madly in love with her. We were married on October 4th, 1997! Sadly, some of our closest family members will have nothing to do with us. I thank God that he took away the 'shield of sin' in my heart. He gave me the woman of my dreams and more."



▲ Jacques and Berénice, leaders in the Johannesburg Church

Spirit of God can bring about the incredible repentance evident in God's modern-day movement in Africa.

Mark and Joseph are awesome examples of true disciples. Mark is from an upper class white family and Joseph from a lower class black family. Mark grew up going to the neighborhood denominational church while Joseph grew up with ancestral worship, becoming a witchdoctor. They met at the university where Mark started coming to Bible Talks. The two of them began to build a friendship, yet were troubled by the doubts inbred from their pasts. In Soweto, where Joseph is from, having a white friend meant that he had sold out his race. Other blacks would shun him if he befriended Mark. Mark also faced the



▲ The interracial staff of the Johannesburg Church (3,336 Sunday attendance), led by Mike and Anne-Brigette Taliaferro (far left and seated with the white blouse)

pressures of Apartheid – the once official policy of racism is still deep in the heart of many South Africans. Yet it is amazing to see how God worked. One day after Mark was baptized, he and Joseph sat down and openly talked about their past racism before becoming disciples. After that talk Mark and Joseph became best friends.

Mark was criticized heavily by his family and friends for going to a church with blacks in it. When his parents decided to kick him out of the house for associating with all races, Mark stood his ground and stayed with some of the brothers who were black.

The most touching part of their friendship came one evening as Joseph became sick and needed a ride home. Mark had always driven to Soweto during the daytime, never at night. Satan tempted him with fear as he thought Sowetans might hijack his car and kill him because he was white. Joseph's family and friends stared in disbelief as Mark carried Joseph from the car into the house. The two young disciples used the opportunity to share with their families about the colorblind love we find in God's Kingdom.

Welcome to the Kingdom of God. In every church of true disciples on every continent there are living examples of the miracle of racial reconciliation happening in our movement. As Jesus said, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35). ■

"THAT THEY MAY BE ONE . . ." John 17:11

Racism is neither an American problem nor a 20th century curse. Cultural prejudice and hatred have been worldwide plagues since the time of Cain in Genesis 2 and Moses in Numbers 12. Ethnically motivated conflicts in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States have caused untold grief to millions. Only through the power of the cross and God's Word can hatred and prejudice be demolished. Below are some examples of disciples who have overcome the world to love as Jesus loved.

MANILA, PHILIPPINES – Nick Gelson, a British national and VP of a major international bank, once despised his Filipino colleagues but is now a disciple married to a Filipina sister.

SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA – Melinda Contreras had been a skinhead when she began studying the Bible. She repented of her racial hatred when she read about the love of God and later married a Latino brother.



BERLIN, GERMANY – Raised Jewish, Kim Horowitz became a disciple of Jesus in Minnesota. In the Boston Church, she married Dean Farmer, a Harvard post doctorate student from South Carolina. They now lead the church in Germany (437 Sunday attendance) and are Geographic Sector Leaders for central Europe.

SANTO DOMINGO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – Angel Martínez, a Puerto Rican Evangelist, leads the largest Spanish-speaking church in the Dominican Republic amidst the centuries of animosity between the two cultures.

WILLEMSTAD, CURAÇAO – Maria Santillana Hart is a Dominican woman leading the women's ministry in a country where Dominican women are mostly viewed as prostitutes.

LEBANON – A former Shiite Muslim who vowed to kill any Jew who crossed his path, repented and became a disciple. He is now teaching people of all ethnic backgrounds about Jesus' love.



SINGAPORE – John Louis, a Malaysian national, and his wife Karen, an American raised in Lubbock, Texas, lead the Singapore Christian Church (1,106 Sunday attendance) and oversee churches of numerous cultures throughout South East Asia, Indonesia and Australia.

BERLIN, GERMANY – In the midst of rage between Turkey and the Kurdish Separatist Movement, two Turkish disciples, both named Selda, were each raised by their families to hate the Kurdish people. They met and baptized Özgül, a Kurdish national. Members of Özgül's family were killed in the fighting and she grew up hating anyone from Turkey. Now all three women share the gospel with people from both cultures. Recently, Özgül baptized a German student in her class.



CHICAGO, ILLINOIS – Byron and Laurie Parson are an African American couple leading the largest multi-racial church in Chicago (4,851 Sunday attendance) and they oversee the leadership of the other Midwest Region churches.

SYRIA – George, a Syrian, along with his wife Zena, an Iranian, lead the church in this country where there is tremendous hostility between Syrians and Iranians. They recently baptized a Syrian couple.

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA – Kevin West was once involved with racial hatred and violence toward blacks, but is now a disciple married to an African American sister.



TOKYO, JAPAN – Frank Kim, born to a Korean family, together with his Japanese wife, Erica, lead the largest Japanese Christian church in the history of that country, the Tokyo Church of Christ (1,094 Sunday attendance), and they oversee the evangelization of all Asia.

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA – Thomas Augustine, a black man with former gang ties, studied the Bible, repented of his racism and became a disciple. This brother, who was taught never to trust white people, shocked family and friends from the world with a white best man at his wedding and a "rainbow coalition" wedding party.

DUBLIN, IRELAND – Nick Isaacs was raised Jewish in London with a Greek father, Scottish mother and Russian grandmother. Sara Isaacs is from a Catholic background with an Italian father and an English mother. Together they lead the Dublin Church where the Irish disciples dearly love their multicultural leaders.

BREAKING DOWN

... He has broken down the wall of hostility

... in America

TRUE FREEDOM

Two-time Grammy winner Speech Thomas and his band, *Arrested Development*, were traveling throughout the United States on the “Lollapalooza” concert tour in 1993, singing his strong message against racism and hatred. While the band was in Nashville, Speech encountered a violent concert-goer who accosted him, yelling racial slurs and trying to start a fight. Furious, Speech began to retaliate until a security guard intervened. The incident remains in Speech’s memory as a personal reminder of the anger and hurt that racism creates.



◀ *Speech performing at the Los Angeles Church Rose Bowl service in November 1999*

In 1997, at the invitation of Nicha Thompson, a backup singer with the band, Speech began to study the Bible in the Atlanta Church of Christ and was baptized as a true disciple. Happy to have his bitterness and hurt behind him, he soon gave a performance at the Southeast Evangelism Conference. The encouragement and energy of the crowd was better than he had ever seen during his years in the music business. But he was amazed at what took place after the concert. A young man approached him backstage asking, “Do you remember me?” He was at a loss, until the man added, “**I’m the one who tried to start a fight with you in Nashville four years ago. I called you all those names.**” Pain flooded Speech’s memory as he recalled the incident – he remembered very well. But the man continued, “I’m your brother in Christ now. And I’m very sorry.” As he embraced the man in

forgiveness, Speech was truly astonished at what God had accomplished. He says, “Jesus heals age-old wounds and transforms us – that is the only way to achieve true unity. In *Arrested Development*, we preached unity but broke up because we were disunified. Jesus gives real solutions.”

... in Africa

BEYOND APARTHEID

Miandrea Steenekamp Williams, a white South African woman, grew up thinking all black people must be ignorant or born to be servants. In 1997, God changed her heart and mind. Seeking a teaching position, she moved to London and was promptly met by the Lead Evangelist of the London Church of Christ, Mark Templer. The warmth of the interracial relationships she saw at the London Church shook her world view. When Miandrea studied the Bible, she quickly saw that God showed no favoritism and she was baptized into Christ.



▲ *Chi Okoye & Miandrea Steenekamp Williams*

Chi Okoye, a Nigerian woman, grew up referring to whites as “them” and to blacks as “us.” She recalls thinking that white people were the cause of problems for black people and chose not to have any white friends. After becoming a disciple in Nigeria, Chi moved to London, where she saw God’s people in all colors and cultures in his church. “**I was a bit nervous when I learned I would be discipling a white woman,**” Chi said, “**but as a disciple, it is the heart of people that matters most, not where they come from.**” Incredibly, Miandrea had requested that her discipler be Chi. Only in the Kingdom of God can these human gaps be constantly bridged.

... in The Far East

SAVING SOULS, NOT SAVING FACE

From 1910 to 1945, Japan occupied Korea and tensions still remains between the two countries. However, at the recent Far East Christian Jubilee, held outside Seoul, Korea, Japan’s Geographic Sector Leader Michitaka Sawamura led a communion service in which he apologized to God and to the Korean disciples for the former oppression. Korean Evangelist Jaeho Park responded by beginning his sermon with an apology for the hatred that many Koreans have had toward the Japanese people. Disciples from throughout the Pacific Rim World Sector were deeply moved by the brothers’ apologies:

“I am so thankful that we can be reconciled in God. Jesus’ blood can make Japan and Korea one. The only way to achieve true unity is to make disciples of all nations.”

– Shin Ok Kim, a 35-year-old Korean sister

“As Christians, we fully support Michitaka’s apology to the Korean people. I grew up looking down on Koreans, but as a Christian I am thankful to be able to love and respect them as brothers and sisters.”

– Yasuyuki Norioka, a 64-year-old retired Japanese businessman



▲ *True brothers in Christ, Japanese Evangelist Michitaka Sawamura and Korean Evangelist Jaeho Park lead the way in forgiveness at Far East Jubilee*

RACIAL BARRIERS

that separated us . . . (Ephesians 2:14)

. . . in Ireland

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER

Wars have been fought “in the name of God” for centuries. Over 300 years ago the British army invaded and remained in predominantly Catholic Ireland. The feud has always been over land and politics, but it became known as a Catholic/Protestant war with religious figures prominently involved.



▲ Rose Chan & Janet Irwin were former enemies but now are best friends as Women's Ministry Leaders in the London Church

Caught in the crossfire were young Rose Chan and Janet Irwin. Rose's father, an officer sent to Belfast as head of the British army's bomb disposal unit, became the number one target on the IRA hit list. For three years, they daily looked for bombs in their cars and their mail, and took different routes to school. Rose's young teen years were lost to constant fears, nightmares and thoughts of death. She grew up angry and bitter toward the Irish, dulling the pain through chemical abuse.

At age 25, Rose began to pray diligently to God for help. She was met by a disciple of the London Church of Christ. The sisters taught her about Christ's forgiving heart on the cross. **“When I saw how Jesus was mistreated and yet he could say ‘Father, forgive them,’ I was convicted and humbled,”** said Rose. **“Serious about repentance, I prayed daily to forgive the IRA. Bitterness and hatred could not be a part of my life anymore.”**

“I would have hated Rose's father,” says Janet Irwin. Her Irish Catholic mother and

Protestant father were alienated by both families and constantly under scrutiny by the British army. Janet was determined to prove her loyalty to her Catholic roots. “Growing up in Northern Ireland, all I remember was violence and death. In my immaturity I blamed my Protestant father who represented the whole problem to me,” she sadly admits.

While attending college in London, Janet was met by disciples and studied the Bible. When she understood how she was controlled by her embittered heart, making Jesus her Lord was the only solution. Janet became a disciple in March 1996.

By the world's standards, these two women should perpetuate the age-old hate between their cultures. However, Rose and Janet are now best friends. In fact, Rose, a Women's Ministry Leader in the London Church, trained and appointed Janet as a Women's Ministry Leader. Together they are uniting souls to God, tearing down walls of hatred. The true God does not cause wars, he heals them.

. . . in India

HOPE AND A FUTURE

Indian disciples, Nagaraj and Meeraj, had already overcome prejudice and hostility to become Christians; **Nagaraj comes from a Hindu background and Meeraj was raised Muslim. Even though their cultures were so different, they knew as disciples that “all are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28)** when they met and were married as disciples. Grateful to God, they built a happy Christian home and they now have a son, Stephen.

One day Nagaraj and Meeraj heard about Harshita, an infant girl abandoned by a railroad track and brought to the HOPE worldwide orphanage. Many Hindus believe that orphaned baby girls should be allowed to die and come back to a better situation in life rather than grow up to be a poor woman. But Nagaraj and Meeraj were filled with compassion for this baby and wanted to adopt her. Because their family income is only about \$100 a month, they worked out a payment for the adoption in installments, but later decided to sell all their gold, including their

wedding rings, to speed the process. Now Harshita, rescued from death, has been placed by God in a loving family that has bridged unthinkable barriers in the world.

. . . in Latvia

AT HOME ANYWHERE

Aivars Terauds remembers his language and culture being constantly ridiculed as he grew up. **Born in Riga, Latvia when it was occupied by Russia, Aivars developed an intense hatred for Russians and their communist propaganda.** In spite of these feelings, he perfected his personal dreams and became the #1 badminton player in Latvia. His sport became his ticket out of his oppressed country. Aivars moved to Stockholm to play with a professional club.

In 1991, Aivars was met by disciples in the Stockholm Church and was baptized into Christ on May 17th – just two months before the planting of the Moscow Church. The Stockholm Church leaders asked Aivars to consider going with the team to Moscow because he spoke Russian. At first, Aivars could not imagine living in Moscow as he recalled his painful childhood experiences. But after praying and coming to the conclusion that God lovingly wants all men and women to be saved, Aivars agreed to go to Moscow with the team. He developed a godly love for Russians, baptizing many into Christ.

Aivars and his wife Eva are now leading the church in Latvia. But Aivars will always have a soft spot in his heart for Russia – something only God could instill.

▼ Brothers united in Christ (front row left to right): Russians, Max Feldman and Sergei Kononenko with American, Shawn Wooten; (back row left to right): Latvian, Aivars Terauds and American, David Bruce



UNC TV – “BREAKING DOWN RACIAL BARRIERS”

TRIANGLE CHURCH, NORTH CAROLINA

Usually television broadcasts only bad news about race relations. However, the Triangle Church in North Carolina is challenging all that, as reported by North Carolina News on UNC Center for Public Television, an affiliate station of the University of North Carolina and Public Television.

Marita Matray, UNC TV anchorwoman, introduced the October 30, 1998 story: “The president’s advisory board on race relations . . . was formed to keep tabs on the progress being made to break down racial barriers. One might think that churches would be the best place for breaking down these barriers and yet churches are one of the most segregated arenas of our country, with very few exceptions.”

Kelly McHenry, a UNC reporter, states, “It is a rare sight to see blacks and whites coming together to worship. Yet every Sunday that is what you will see at the Triangle Church of Christ.” Mitch Mitchell, Evangelist of the Triangle Church shared, “This is not a white church with some black people in it or a black church with some white people in it. We are

a group of people committed to Jesus and we are all in it together.” McHenry continued, “With a minority membership of 44%, the racial balance is extraordinary by North Carolina standards. Many churches here have separate statewide organizations for blacks and whites. But, as Mitchell says, ‘The Bible does not account for segregation. There is one church with black and white together as well as all races and backgrounds.’”

McHenry continues, “The Triangle Church has accomplished this integration by putting men of different races at the pulpit.” Dr. Cora Bernard, a disciple in the Triangle Church and an MD in the Department of Family Practice at UNC said, “I believe that God wants us to celebrate the differences – not to ignore them – but to enjoy one another.”

Sam Laing, Evangelist for the Triangle Church, concludes, “Most of us come from racially insulated backgrounds. One of the greatest joys of being in God’s Kingdom is



▲ Interracial leaders of the Triangle Church in North Carolina (left to right): Sam Laing, Mitch Mitchell, LaShay Rhodes, Dave Hawkins

the glorious privilege of becoming friends with men and women from many different races. We need to shout this from the mountain tops that there is a place on earth where the terrible divisions and suspicions are broken down and that people of different races can be friends and can be brothers and sisters. It is a taste of heaven on earth.”

DISCIPLE APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF NEUROSURGERY DEPARTMENT AT UNC

Dr. Estrada Bernard was recently appointed the rank of Van L. Weatherspoon, Jr. Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, an endowed Chair at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. Estrada’s honor is one of only 125 African Americans who hold such appointments in the US today, according to Chuck Stone, Professor of Journalism at UNC who is a similarly distinguished recipient of an endowed Chair.

Estrada received this honor at the age of 38, the youngest to be so recognized in the field of neurosurgery, consistent with his already distinguished career. A native of Liberia, he received his BS degree from Morehouse College

at age 19 and graduated from Duke Medical School at the age of 23. At UNC he continued his academic and clinical pursuits in the Department of Neurosurgery. In 1996, Estrada made a critical decision to remain at UNC rather than take a very lucrative offer in a private practice in another city in North Carolina where there was no church of



▲ Drs. Estrada & Cora Bernard

disciples. Estrada felt that it was best for him and his wife, Cora (also an MD on the staff of UNC in the Department of Family Practice), and their two-year-old son, E.J., to remain near the Triangle Church. God blessed that decision by allowing Estrada to be appointed to the chairmanship of the Department of Neurosurgery a short time later.

Evidence of Estrada’s commitment and impact as a disciple of Jesus was seen this past June when he baptized his friend Dr. Tim George, a Pediatric Neurosurgeon at Duke University, into Christ.

“But seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”

– Matthew 6:33

CURRENT RELEASES

LOS ANGELES

HOPE for Children just completed their 200th adoption, according to Mark Johnson, Director of the Atlanta-based non-profit group. On December 7th, 1998, three-year-old Adam Xinxing was adopted by John and Frances Thorne, of the Los Angeles Church. His siblings, Elizabeth (10), William (9), and Rebecca (7) are thrilled with their new little brother whom they describe as "happy and lots of fun." John serves as administrator for the churches of the former Soviet Union.



▲ The Thorne family left to right: William, John, Frances, Adam, Elizabeth, and Rebecca

GREEN CRESCENT 03 SOUTH ASIA

George Mathew, Evangelist in India, reports that a new church has been planted in a city hostile to Christianity with a population over 99% Muslim. Daily sharing their lives with people despite illness, danger and extremely poor living conditions, eight bold disciples went to every area of the city in two and a half weeks. God blessed their faith and hard work as he brought over 400 people to their inaugural service! People immediately began to study the Bible and the first new disciple was baptized on January 25.

THE CARRIBEAN

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO – God blessed the 288 disciples of the Port Au Spain Church of Christ's first Bring Your Neighbor Day service on March 7 with an attendance of 1,125 people. This is their first time ever for the attendance to exceed 1,000.

THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC – In the month of February 1999, the 459 disciples in the Santo Domingo Church baptized a record 42 new brothers and sisters.

HAITI – On Sunday, February 28, the 325 disciples in the Port au Prince Church set a new record for all the Caribbean churches with an attendance of 1,700 inside and an estimated crowd outside of well over 300. Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

UPDATE ON CRISIS IN AFRICA

BRAZZAVILLE, CONGO – Of the 12 disciples reported missing in the last issue of *LA Story*, only one has been found: Hortense Bandila was located in a refugee camp about 800 miles from the city. The local government will not release her. Disciples are still trying to locate the remaining missing brothers and sisters.

FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE – Disciples in Sierre Leone are continuing to put their lives back together after rebels burned most of their city to the ground. Johnson and Gloria Daniel were leading the church when their lives were threatened because they were Nigerian. They were airlifted out by disciples, and became parents of a baby girl in Lagos. Though the delivery was difficult and Gloria would have died had she not escaped the fighting in Freetown, mother and daughter are now doing great. Admired for her "courage under fire," Gloria was appointed Women's Ministry Leader at the Lagos Church 10th anniversary service.

LAGOS, NIGERIA

The 3,100 disciples in Lagos, Nigeria held their 10th anniversary service of the church and saw an amazing attendance of 18,000 people! Onyechi and Deysi Oguagha powerfully lead this church, which was planted in 1989 with only 18 disciples. ACES World Sector Leader Steve Johnson and Africa Geographic Sector Leader Mike Taliaferro spoke to the jubilant congregation as they all celebrated the Lord's great victory.

URGENT PRAYER REQUEST

Please pray for our new churches in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Slovenia as they bring the message of Jesus' love to an area that is torn by the current ethnic war.

"WALKING WITH GOD"

Russ Ewell, the Lead Evangelist for the San Francisco Church of Christ is the featured speaker in a powerful tape series, "Walking with God." Russ preaches Biblical convictions as he shares about his own spiritual struggles and victories, including his reactions to his son's Downs Syndrome. Al Baird, Kingdom Elder, says, "This tape series is the best resource in helping a person see that God is enough, regardless of their circumstances." Tapes are available through DPI's toll free number: 1-888-DPI BOOK or their website at <http://www.dpibooks.com>.



▼ Russ Ewell, Geographic Sector Leader in the Pacific Rim World Sector and Lead Evangelist for the San Francisco Church, with his wife Gail and their children



"WHEN YOU BELIEVE"

1999 WOMEN'S DAY IN LOS ANGELES

by Maryann Rose

Coinciding with International Women's History Month, the Los Angeles Church produced its final Women's Day of the millennium, "When You Believe." Prompted by their love for God and the lost women of this city, the 4,054 women disciples prayed, fasted, and were bolder than ever before to bring as many women as possible to hear God's amazing promises. Guests included local opinion leaders, relatives, and professional job

supervisors. Brothers also reached out to female family members, co-workers and friends. God blessed the efforts of the LA Church as an amazing 12,724 women attended 40 different events held around the metropolitan Los Angeles area. To serve the majority and fastest-growing ethnic group in the city, five sectors conducted their Women's Days entirely in Spanish.

The extraordinary success of the women's event required tremendous prayer, planning and spiritual unity. No one woman could pull this off alone. In October of 1998, the Women Region Leaders met with Elena Garcia-McKean at her home to begin praying and planning for this powerful event. They relied on God and unified to choose the theme, "When You Believe," drawn from the title of the Academy Award winning song from the animated motion picture, *The Prince of Egypt*. One week before the Women's Day, all the sisters and some of the women studying the Bible

in the LA Church came together at the historic Shrine Auditorium for an inspiring "Sisters' Night Out." The Women Region Leaders shared miracle stories from each region, and Elena addressed a crowd of over 6,000 women, inspiring them to believe that God can work incredible miracles through each woman.

As an integral part of the Women's Day program, *KVVV* produced an incredibly moving short film, *The Prodigal Daughter*, adapted from Luke 15 (see related story on page 11). Guest speakers included visiting World Sector Leader Women Pat Gempel, Lisa Johnson, Kay McKean and Laura Garcia-Bengochea. God blessed the unity and faith of the sisters as thousands of women responded with a desire to study the Bible.

12,724 WOMEN ATTEND LA WOMEN'S DAY

Some women, who had committed to come, were unable to attend for various reasons. To meet their needs, the sisters in the Inland Empire Region, led by Saun Galang, held a follow-up Women's Night with powerful personal sharing, performers and a repeat showing of *The Prodigal Daughter*. More women began to study the Word of God. Many other regions followed suit. God blessed the sisters of the LA Church with great fruit as **308 women were baptized and 29 were restored in just one month**. That same weekend, the brothers held Men's Services, resulting in a record-breaking total church attendance of 20,481. There will be miracles, ***When You Believe***.

MIRACLES IN THE COMMONWEALTH WORLD SECTOR

The women in the Commonwealth World Sector, led by Joyce Arthur, had an awesome month of Women's Day events in March 1999. Inspired by the incredible efforts of churches like Los Angeles, New York, Manila, Washington DC, Lagos and São Paulo, they set their hearts to truly make a difference. On March 14th, each of the churches in India, led by Nadine Templer, held Women's Days in their respective cities. The 1,940 sisters had a combined total attendance of 7,890 women – over three visitors for every disciple.

For centuries, Hinduism and other Middle Eastern religions have dominated most of the South Asian countries included in the Commonwealth World Sector. However, God is moving powerfully through the women disciples in this region of the world. See God's mighty hand in the number of women who heard the message of Jesus during the month of March in just a few of the toughest cities in India and South Asia.

CITY	NUMBER OF SISTERS	WOMEN'S DAY ATTENDANCE
London	1,000	3,800
Delhi	326	1,249
Madras	359	1,200
Lucknow	13	298
Green Crescent 3	5	241
Ahmedabad	14	136

20,481 ATTEND LA CHURCH SERVICES IN ONE WEEKEND



▲ The Women's Ministry Leaders for the LA Church set an example of unity: (left to right) Robyn Williams, Megan Blackwell, Elena Garcia-McKean, Gloria Baird and Chris Fuqua

▼ Lisa Johnson, Women's Ministry Leader for the ACES World Sector, spoke for the UCLA Sector



▲ A rainbow of bridesmaids in the LA Church

BELIEVE " Women Disciples Make History

THE PRODIGAL DAUGHTER A KNN PRODUCTION

In Luke 15, Jesus told the parable of "The Lost Son" to convict the hearts of the self-righteous as well as to demonstrate God's forgiveness for the humble. Set in modern times, the third *KNN* dramatic production, *The Prodigal Daughter*, follows this parable closely. It has a message for the hearts of people of all ages: "It's time to come home."

Ceci, the prodigal daughter, is played by Vanessa Londino, a talented young intern with the New York City Church who is completing her final semester at the prestigious Tisch School of Drama at New York University. Jenny Gago, a disciple in the Media North District of the LA Church, and an outstanding actress known for her role in the film *Mi Familia* and numerous television and movie credits, plays the role of Rosa, the mother. The cast and crew took to heart the disciple's responsibility to portray God's powerful message of repentance and forgiveness.

The fruit and joy of this powerful production was celebrated the Sunday before the LA Women's Days at the baptism of DB Florio, head of make-up and costumes for all *KNN* productions. Elena Garcia-McKean, Gloria Baird and Marcia Lamb have all had a powerful impact on DB's life as well as each of the *KNN* anchor teams who have shared their lives and faith with her over the years. Sonja Chloupek, English anchorwoman for *KNN* from 1995 to 1997 and LA Women's Ministry Leader, led the studies with DB, helping her make the decision to be a true disciple of Jesus.

When *The Prodigal Daughter* premiered at the March 1999 Women's Days and several of the Men's Services in the LA Church, the impact was the most powerful of any *KNN* to date.

The Prodigal Daughter cast and crew includes:

VANESSA LONDINO • JENNY • GAGO • TOM BRISCOE
CYNTHIA KERSHAW • SHAUN BIENIEK • ROBIN LEE NOLL
BERNADETTE CLARKE

ORIGINAL
CONCEPT KIP AND ELENA MCKEAN

EXECUTIVE
PRODUCERS KIP AND ELENA MCKEAN, AL AND GLORIA BAIRD

PRODUCERS ROGER LAMB AND BARBARA KRAFT
(EMERALD COVE PRODUCTIONS)

AUTHOR MARCIA LAMB SCREENPLAY PAT DADE

DIRECTOR LANCE TRACY

The Prodigal Daughter was released as *KNN* 27 and is currently being distributed to all 351 International Churches of Christ in 154 countries and in 15 languages. This timeless story was created for the Women's Days around the world, but is equally powerful for Bible studies, Bible Talk groups, and future events.



PAT DADE



Pat Dade is the talented script writer for *The Prodigal Daughter*, a *KNN* dramatic short film. Pat moved from Washington, DC to Los Angeles three years ago to pursue her career as an actress, writer and comedienne. She was met by fellow comedienne, Rebecca Lumianski, at the Comedy-sportz Workshop. After studying the Bible, Pat was baptized as a true disciple on February 28, 1997 at a LA Church Women's Day in the AMS Arts and Entertainment Sector.

Pat has received awards and recognition for her work as a writer from the Washington, DC Arts and Humanities Council for a screenplay about black women serving in the WACS in World War II. She also co-authored the book *You Must Remember This* that became a Wonderworks Family Movie seen on PBS and frequently on the Disney channel.

Pat also plays the recurring character, attorney Monica Murphy on the NBC TV Series, *Homicide*. She teaches comedy improvisation classes and is honored by being accepted into the Groundlings Theater, an elite troupe of regular performing comedians and training ground for such shows as *Saturday Night Live*. One of Pat's greatest thrills was to view *The Prodigal Daughter* at the LA Women's Day knowing her writing talents were used to change lives for God.



◀ DB Florio on the evening of her baptism with Marcia Lamb, Sonja Chloupek, Gloria Baird, and Elena Gracia-McKean

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Kip McKean

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