

The Bright and Morning Star

“All the Good News
That's Fit to Print”

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, TARRYTOWN, NY

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Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber and the God-Shaped Void

By Yolanda F. Johnson

FAN: noun; an enthusiastic devotee, follower, or admirer of a sport, pastime, celebrity
Origin: 1885–90, Americanism ; short for fanatic
Synonyms: supporter, enthusiast, partisan, booster, addict.

I observed the audience, as she stood before them giving exhortations. Thousands of people with arms raised, hands reaching out, tears streaming down many faces. Some fans screamed, others silently weeped in adoration. Was this a praise concert or worship service? No - it was a Lady Gaga concert. This left me asking, “What is missing from these people’s lives if that is their reaction to a pop star?”

We as modern human beings are big fans of our free will and independence. This is all very well, especially since free will is one of the greatest gifts given by God to mankind. Simply put – we get to choose who or what we worship. Make no mistake, we are innately wired to understand that there is something greater than ourselves and therefore, people will worship something. When we veer too far off the path on which God is leading us, we begin to frantically search for something to fill this void, and believe me, those are impossible shoes to fill. We might turn to worshipping cars, sports teams, athletes, Harry Potter or Twilight, pop stars, religious leaders, money, success, video games, searching for a husband or wife, popularity, pleasing people, food, power and so on. However, worship is not a multi-tasking kind of activity.

The other day, I realized that standing right in front of me at McDonald’s was Justin Bieber and his girlfriend, Selena Gomez. He’s the multi-millionaire teen sensation with legions of fans, mostly tween girls who have recently hit an all-time level of intensity with death threats to his girlfriend. My severely handicapped brother even loves Justin Bieber, okay? Everyone seems to be a “Belieber.” Thanks to texting, Facebook and Twitter, within minutes of placing his order, he was accosted by a swarm of tweens, teens and 30 and 40-somethings.

I am a classically-trained musician, but I still recognize Gaga’s talent in her singing ability and Bieber, well, it seems that he’s having fun, so let him. I have certain things

that I like and get excited about, although I’ve only been star-struck a few times, with James Earl Jones and the incomparable soprano, Kathleen Battle, who first inspired me to sing opera. I also have a very strong affinity for the Website Shockwave.com and some of its wedding planning, baking and time management games. Okay, there you have it.

Still, our society is in a situation not unlike that of the Apostle Paul’s Rome. Romans Chapter 1, Verses 18-22 reads as follows: 18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal human beings and birds and animals and reptiles.

We have so many stressors - the economy, family issues, work/home life balance, and media. We have a need for escape and fantasy. What if we transformed our own realities to a place that doesn’t need so much escape? If we are fans of a Christ-centered life, with generous, sincere hearts - we will have fewer insecurities. This will lead to being fans of a grateful heart, which truly does know many joys. If we stay present in what’s happening in our lives, we will then be able to enjoy what’s happening around us and have stronger family lives, as it is true that some of the youth who focus so closely on pop stars often have struggled with issues at school and home. What a relief it would then be, to no longer have a gaping God-shaped void, but to be filled by the Holy Spirit.★

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Dear FBC, Greetings from Charleston

By Kenny and Rachel

It's 8:45 am on Sunday, July 3, 2011. Right now I'm thinking that if I was still living in Westchester I would be at FBC practicing for the worship service. Instead, I'm sitting on the couch waiting for the online worship service of a local church to start. Rachel is at the hospital on her third day of residency and she and her co-intern are running the floor already. Over the past few years, I have been the one out of the house early on Sundays, but today Rachel left before 6 am and she won't be home until sometime after 6 pm. She will be doing the same thing tomorrow and probably the next day. Hopefully we'll at least get a chance to see some fireworks tomorrow.

It's hard to believe that we have been in South Carolina for almost six weeks now. We have been to more pre-residency gatherings and met more people than I can count. We even had 8 pediatrics residents over to our place for a pool party and grilling one night.

We visited 2 local churches so far, but have yet to make any connections. It's tough feeling like an outsider in church, and looking for a church seems so arbitrary to me at times (i.e. only visiting churches I can find on the Web, as if a church without a Website is not worth attending). I guess we'll just visit places and leave it up to God to lead us. I am confident of this, God cares about where we go to church and His ways are far from arbitrary, so we can trust that He will direct us to a place where we can worship Him, encourage others and continue to grow into the people He wants us to be.

I guess I should probably be getting out of the house to attend a local church this morning, but it's tough to go it alone. As you go about your activities throughout the day (especially at church on Sunday mornings), remember that there are people around you feeling alone, misplaced, and like outsiders. They could use your friendship and help getting connected. Anyway, here I sit as cyber-church begins.

1 hour later. . .

The sermon is over. It was a valuable message taken from the life of David (including a quote from Mickey in Rocky III, "The worst thing that happened to you, that can happen to any fighter: you got civilized.") and the closing worship songs included "How He Loves" by David Crowder Band, but there was still something missing from my cyber-church experience. Oh, that's it, the people. Not just any people, but the people I have served with, studied

with, worshipped with and grown with over the past four years at FBC. I miss our fellowship – the handshakes, the hugs, the talks, the planning of outreaches, the small group studies and the way I could hear the whole church sing together during certain songs. I am sure Rachel would say the same if she were here right now.

We have never been the type of people to pursue God in isolation, so things are a little bit off kilter for us right now. It's kind of like when we first moved from Pittsburgh to Westchester. Things were a little bit off then, but it didn't take long for us to find a home at FBC. Speaking for myself, I came broken and bruised, but over time the relationships I developed served as God's hand of healing. That is why I am convinced that healing flows through relationships and that each of you are blessed with the gift of healing.

There is an old Swedish proverb that says,

"Shared joy is double-joy and shared sorrow is half-sorrow."

The Apostle Paul put it this way in Galatians 6:2:

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

There is a sense that in relationships joys are shared, pain is split and individual burdens are lessened. I want to thank you all for fulfilling the law of Christ for Rachel and I in so many ways during our time at FBC. We hope to see you again soon.

Love, Kenny & Rachel

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P.S. Don't get us wrong; Charleston is a beautiful place that God has called us to for at least these next 4 years. We are so happy to be here, but that happiness cannot replace the loss of fellowship that we're feeling. So please get a trip to Charleston on the calendar so we can get our lives back in order!★



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Testimony of God's Grace

By Ed Wohlwender



I have grown up around churches and religion as far back as I can remember. My father taught me the only thing I needed to know and believe was John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Even at the age of ten, I realized that the things I did wrong separated me from the God who is perfect, but that Jesus died for me to pay for my sins. And I have believed that ever since.

But what I never did, until 6 years ago, was let Jesus be more than “the only begotten Son” and see myself as more than just part of the big group of “whoever believes.” I never allowed the Holy Spirit to lead me towards becoming more like Jesus. I was part of the religion but not building my personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Oh, I got confirmed in 8th grade in a fine Lutheran Church. I attended a great Catholic High School. I even attended church while at West Point (actually both Catholic and Protestant depending on who had better food!) I married my lovely wife Rosanne in a big Catholic wedding and headed off to pursue my career in the world. By most outward accounts, I was living a pretty good life, being a pretty good person, doing my best. But I had no idea what it meant to surrender my life to Christ. And the world, my sinful self, and Satan knew that.

Jesus warns us in John 10:10 – “The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it in full.” You see, my drinking, “the thief” started costing me dearly from the age of 17 onward. I was what they call a “functional alcoholic”. Outwardly I was doing “normal things,” but I had not “surrendered all” to God. I was working my plan my way. And we are not designed to serve two masters.

Fast forward to six years ago and I was pretending that I was cleaning out the garage of our house in Ft. Lauderdale. I had come to define “the good life” by my idols and lies of this world, like so many hurting people still do out there today. It was all about accumulation and storing up “my treasures for my pleasures.” I was drinking heavily.

But by God’s grace, I have been blessed with a great wife. That day, on the weekend of our anniversary, she simply asked, “Is this how you want our son to grow up?” I realized I was facing the loss of my marriage and my family, everything of meaning, and I had backslidden to the point of nearly losing myself.

The next day I spent hung over and lonely to the point of breaking. That night, I got down on my knees on the tile floor next to the bed and said, “Jesus I don’t know how to take the next step, but I need your help!” The next morning I called the 1-800 number for AA and got a real person on the phone, who directed me to the local meet-

ing. I introduced myself as an alcoholic for the first time. The love that poured out was amazing – God’s amazing grace.

I only went back to one more meeting because Jesus cured me. He took away my desire to drink! He also led us through marriage counseling, helped me exit my job with a severance, and even provided me a whole year to sober up and study Him. It was truly the best year of my life to that point.

While I thought I was through career wise, He was just getting started. He called me to lead a company here in Yonkers facing impossible odds. But God is a God who does the impossible! He has surrounded me with a group of Christian brothers and sisters to help share the gospel to many searching souls in our workplace. It is truly a mission field. Space does not permit me to go into all the 27 journals worth of miracles and answered prayers over the last 6 years. But suffice it to say, I now have come to know in my heart the meaning of, “I will never leave you or forsake you.”

I have larger challenges facing me than I ever could have imagined in “my old life”. And I am so far from sinless. However, the idols of the world, my sinful self, and Satan’s lies no longer have appeal. Only Jesus matters. That’s why, I believe, His first words of ministry were “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” (Matthew 4:17). From my personal experience, it’s humbling ourselves (continuously) to live in His Kingdom, and accepting His grace towards becoming more like Him, which makes for “life to the fullest.”

My testimony is only to give glory to Jesus Christ. The Bible says “Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” This same Jesus who rose from the dead 2011+ years ago still wants to live through everyone who will welcome Him into their life. And when we do, we start to live the “life to the fullest,” He is waiting. He says in this life we will have trials and tribulations, but fear not, for He has overcome the world. (John 16:33b) and He gives us a unique peace. I am a witness to His faithfulness. Don’t let another day go by without solidifying your relationship with Jesus Christ.

While I gave this testimony on Easter Sunday, I am happy to share what God has done in my life at any time of year because I live a “life to the fullest” through my relationship with Jesus Christ the Risen Savior. To Him goes the glory!★

20 Years of Vacation Bible School

By Doug Morton

It was the summer of 1991, just 20 months after FBC Tarrytown fire destroyed the church building when the passion for outreach through VBS was rekindled. VBS had been conducted years before with an intact edifice, but could this ministry to the community be revived without the luxury of a large indoor meeting area and class space?

Creative minds began to think “outside of the box” and beyond the confines of the stone walled building that had once been our haven for worship and service. Our excitement grew as we focused on what we still had rather than on what we had lost. The parsonage front porch became our snack area with the front yard our space for recreation. The garage was cleaned out for craft time and the main office area was used for our Bible lesson time. It seemed appropriate that we put together our own curriculum based on the theme of “Fighting Giants.” God honored our efforts and blessed us with what seemed to be a huge enrollment of 60 students and a daily average attendance of 40. We saw what God could do with limited resources and willing hearts.

Since then, the VBS ministry has grown to be the **largest single outreach event to our community.** By 1993, our enrollment had reached 83 and two years later we saw 123 children in attendance. It wasn’t long before we realized that we needed to cap our enrollment number for safety reasons. Along the way, we discovered a creative way to reach teenagers by recruiting them as volunteer counselors. This year we ministered to over 200 campers and counselors. Our annual Friday night closing program recapped the Bible points and gospel message to a standing room only crowd of about 350 people that included parents, grandparents and siblings of the campers and counselors.

Our VBS program creatively weaves the gospel message into 15 hours of captivating activities throughout the week. This year’s routine involved moving the campers through 20 minute modules that included crafts, snacks, Bible adventure, recreation, “Chadder Time,” opening and closing. Each period was designed to reinforce a major Bible point, verse or Bible story that we were presenting for that day.

This year’s theme was “Pandamania.” Bamboo forests

and panda bears were not an uncommon sight throughout the week. Despite some 70 teenage counselors, over 20 adult volunteers, and 143 campers, there were no outbreaks of uncontrolled pandemonium. The five grade school age categories were taught throughout the week that God made them, God listens to them, God cares for them, God loves them no matter what, and God gives good gifts. Thursday’s Bible lesson was a clear presentation of the gospel message dramatically portrayed within the context of Peter’s denial of Christ

prior to the crucifixion. Peter came to realize the importance of the cross when the resurrected Christ forgave him and commissioned him to “feed my sheep.” At the end of the lesson, campers and counselors were invited to accept His forgiveness and let Jesus be their friend and Savior forever. The response was encouraging. That day, 75 young people requested prayer and more information related to a decision they had made or were considering about their relationship with Christ.

It may not be till we all gather in glory when we see all those who met Jesus for the first time at VBS. But in the meantime, let’s continue to take advantage of the reputation that VBS has established and maintained in the community for the past 20 years. We can consider ways to expand the influence of VBS and its gospel message. Likely, it will involve thinking outside of the box and recognizing the potential in what we have, not what we lack. Certainly, it will require willing hearts. And most definitely it will come about as we grow in excitement about the amazing God we worship. With or without a building, God will accomplish His work. What a blessing to be a

part of it.

It was the summer of 2011, 20 years and 20 months after fire destroyed our church building when God’s Spirit worked through our 21st consecutive VBS. Maybe God will still choose to have us minister to the community through VBS for another 20 years or more, I don’t know for sure. But I do know that VBS will continue to have an impact as long as we remember that it is not simply a program to fill up a week in the summer, but an opportunity to serve and bring glory back to our King.★



Teen Viewpoint *by Christina*

My First-Hand Account of VBS

Pandamania was the theme for the 2011 Vacation Bible School at FBC beginning August 8th through August 12th. This theme required the decoration assistance of Deanna Melillo and her friend Joanna, who led counselors to roll hundreds of bamboo sticks from green paper, set up scenery and more. The hard work proved to be worth it. When campers arrived at First Baptist on August 8th, they didn't see a sanctuary with bare walls and seats, they saw a jungle, where animal characters like Fez, Amanda, Pal and Boomer led children to understand that God is "Wild About Us!"

The turnout was rather large this year. There were 140+ campers and around 70 counselors signed up, along with the various adult staff assisting in areas such as Arts and Crafts, Music, Chadder and Bible Time. I enjoyed working as a counselor again this year, and I invited two of my friends from school to work with me.

As children poured into the church, they were greeted by "Adventure Aaron" (Aaron Morton) and "Master Pete" (Steve Armstrong, the VBS Director this year), who aimed to show children how much God truly loved them, not to mention Pandas, of course!

After a rendezvous with Pete and Aaron, the music team led children in songs such as "Watching Over You" and "Sing, Sing, Sing." Afterwards, campers were dismissed to their daily activities. Campers attended Arts and Crafts, where they created crafts related to the daily Bible point-like goggles, necklaces and "Panda Packs." Snacktime was a camper favorite – delicious treats were given to the children, which they even customized to their liking sometimes.

At Chadder Time, the children viewed a video of Chadder, the Jesus-loving chipmunk, and his adventures. At Bible Time, the adult staff brought children into the world of exciting Bible stories; such as Jonah and the Whale, where campers climbed into the belly of a gigantic (but inflatable) whale. At the end of each day, Aaron and Pete, along with the music team, returned to reinforce to campers with what they learned throughout the day.

Children got an extra chance to be inspired by Jesus when Adventure Aaron led "God Sightings". Campers joined him on the stage to tell everyone at VBS about their prayers and how God answered them.

When VBS ended, every camper walked away with the memory of the amazing time they had all week. The finale was the well-awaited celebration for both campers and counselors at the end of the week. Campers sang the songs they learned and watched the slideshow of the week's memories, before they headed outside for dessert.

FBC has done it again, and again, as they celebrated the 21st VBS ever. The 2012 theme will be SKY – and we have no doubt there will be just as large a turnout again!★

Air 1 Offers Online Mixology

Air 1, a national Christian radio station targeting the teen generation is trying to obtain a radio frequency from the FCC in our area. The station, which is broadcasting in just about every state with multiple frequencies, play music ranging from Toby Mac, Jamie Grace and Skillet to Matthew West and Chris Tomlin.

Though the station lacks a frequency in the New York Metro area (it's closest frequency is in Albany, New York), anyone can tune in online.

What makes this station stand out against others like K-Love, however, is their 10:00 pm Mixology program. Mixology is when every night at 10 pm, thousands of listeners go onto the Air 1 Website and vote for and request what songs they want to play. From 10 pm to midnight, the songs with the most votes play.

It's actually a fun experience – you'll be hooting and squirming for your favorite song to play, and shouting whenever someone votes it up the list.

In the meantime, you'll hear songs you might not have heard before, which may become your new favorite songs. Air 1 is also commercial-free.

Air 1 also offers a prayer request service and spiritual coaches. And, most importantly, people call in constantly, telling radio personalities how Air 1 helped God save them, something no other station could do.

Just tonight, I heard about three testimonies from people either released from prison about a year ago, or recovering from drug addictions who broke down crying for God after listening to Air 1 for the first time.

To listen to Air 1, simply head to <http://www.air1.com> and click "Listen Live."★

Please visit my Christian book review for teens blog: www.greatteenchristianreads.wordpress.com

It also has a music page where I link to some great Christian music videos.

There's a New Christian Music Station in Town

Do you enjoy listening to contemporary Christian music by bands such as Switchfoot, The Newsboys, The David Crowder Band, Steven Curtis Chapman, Nichole Nordeman, Mandisa, Third Day, Casting Crowns, Jeremy Camp, Matthew West and more?

Well then tune your radio right this very second to WKLV 96.7 FM. This is a nationally broadcast station, but has a transmitter located right here in Westchester County in New Rochelle, so the sound in your car radio is extremely clear.


K LOVE does not have many commercials in its programming or any sermons during the day

so it's great for music for your long commute to work. And the station will not fade in and out as some of the New Jersey-based Christian stations.

It's a station worth listening to when you need encouragement, and they also have a call-in number if you are in need of prayer.

So the next time you turn on your car radio, take a break from your lite-fluffy station, your classic rock, your head-banging heavy metal CDs, bad-language rap, same-old love songs or your bad-news station, and arrive at your destination feeling uplifted and refreshed!★




STAR 99.1 FM
Today's Christian Music
24/7 Evangelical Christian Television on Cable TV
Channel 134 or 10, TBN Network (Trinity Broadcasting Network)
Channel 136, Daystar

SAVE THE DATES
Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday, December 6, 7, 8
Church Directory Photos
Sunday, December 11 – FBC Christmas Dinner
6:00 p.m.
Saturday, December 17 – Christmas Festival
2:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

Please call the Church office for more events and times 914-631-6372 or visit www.fbctarrytown.org

With God's help we seek to be "A Community where God is at work, lives are changed, broken hearts are healed, hopes are real, and people are on fire for God and His Word."

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF TARRYTOWN

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