

Kids bring Easter to life at historic church

BY TODD LUCK
THE CHRONICLE

From the mouth of babes, congregants at Bethania A.M.E. Zion Church witnessed the true meaning of Easter.

The youngsters in the church's Sunday School program headlined a special holiday production Sunday. Though the small, intimate sanctuary has no stage, allowing only the space between its pews and the pulpit for the performance, it didn't deter the children from staging a grand show.

The entire story of the crucifixion and resurrection was performed, with children playing the roles of Jesus, Roman soldiers and other Biblical characters. The story was also interpreted through liturgical dance by the girls of the Little Angels of Zion. The young dancers also performed with women of the Anointed Daughters of Zion.

The performances drew spirited applause from the dozens of congregants; and Bethania's pastor, Rev. Louis Hunter Jr., freely admitted to his congregation that the program had brought him to tears.

"I realize the significance of this day," said Hunter. "Thank God for our children for helping us to remember this story. A lot of us know the story, but are we living the story?"

In the skit, Dakyah Hughes, 9, is schooled about the true meaning of Easter after she accepts a job playing the Easter Bunny. In real-life, Hughes said she has always known that the holiday is not about egg hunts and chocolate bunnies.

"Easter means a good thing to me: that Jesus rose from the dead on the third day," she said.

David Killian, 9, who played a soldier, said he loves Easter.

"It's my favorite holiday," he said. "It's all about Jesus."

Brenda Killian, David's mother and the church's Sunday School superintendent, said the kids worked very hard during their six rehearsals in order to expertly convey the meaning of Easter.

"Christmas is a good holiday too, but this is the day He died for all of us," Killian said. "There's nothing you can't do that you can't ask for forgiveness."

Bethania began its Easter celebration a week earlier with its immensely popular Palm Sunday Vesper Service, which featured an Easter cantata performed by the church's Senior Choir.

Last Friday, Hunter was one of many pastors who took part in Goler Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church's "Seven Last Words" service. Also that day, local A.M.E. Zion churches held an easter egg hunt at Bethlehem A.M.E. Zion Church. Events on Easter Sunday began at 6 a.m. with a joint sunrise service at Bethania with guests from Steward's Chapel, Center



DaJohn Hughes portrays the risen savior at the end of the liturgical dance performance.



Jamya Byrd, Dawan Sheff and Zaron Hughes hold signs that together declare "He is Risen."



Rev. Louis Hunter Jr. delivers his Easter message.



The Anointed Daughters of Zion perform.

Grove and Benbow Chapel A.M.E. Zion churches. A breakfast cooked by the men of the church followed. The children's program was held at 9 a.m., followed by a special early worship service at 10 a.m.

It was a rainy, damp morning, but it didn't stop the faithful from filling the pews to hear Hunter's Easter message, "A Cross with Benefits."

"Easter, Mother's Day and Christmas are the biggest time in the African American church," said Hunter. "A lot of people come home. They come home to visit their families and to be a part of the home church."

Bethania is a little church with a lot of history. It officially started in 1875, but its roots go back to a black Moravian congregation that was founded in 1846. The actual church building was constructed in 1893 and rebuilt in 1926 after it was damaged in a storm. The old church still forms part of the current building, which added its current sanctuary in 1971. Beside the church is a historic African American graveyard that dates back to 1875. The church is in Bethania, which has a long history of its own as the first planned Moravian settlement in North Carolina.

Bethania A.M.E. Zion Church is located at 2120 Bethania-Rural Road and regularly holds its worship service at 11 a.m.



Brenda Killian



Participants (from left, front row) Jason Williamson, Alexander Holt, Diana Chew, Anna-Carolina Pelaes, Phyllis Elliott, Caroline Phan (back row, from left) Zachary Skillings, Tristan McGuire, Monet Beatty and David Hill.

Student orators shine in Optimist competition

DA'YONA MCLEAN
FOR THE CHRONICLE

The Optimist Club of Winston-Salem held its annual oratorical contest on Monday, March 18 at Ardmore Church of Christ.

The 10 contestants all attend Paisley IB Magnet School and are in Marshall Marvelli's English I class. The English curriculum at Paisley includes a public speaking component, so the oratorical program was a perfect fit. Marvelli, who has made the Optimist competition a part of his curriculum, had his 9th grade students write and present their essays in class. He then choose the best to participate in the contest.

The contest is held annually by the Winston-Salem club in coordination with Optimist International's contest of the same name. Phyllis Elliott, Diana Chew,

Anna Carolina Pelaes, Monet Beatty, Caroline Phon, Tristan McGuire, Jayson Williamson, Alexander Holt, David Hill Jr. and Zach Skillings were selected for the competition.

The annual local competition is held in conjunction with Optimist International, which selects a theme for the contest each year. "Why My Voice is Important" was chosen this year. In constructing their essays and presentations, students were charged with examining their own self-worth and how they can make a difference.

They were judged by Wake Forest University Professor Allen Lowden,

Winston-Salem State University Professor Soncerey Montgomery and Bob McHone, a broadcaster and motivational speaker.

McGuire and Elliott won the competition. They each took home gold medals. Silver medals went to Chew and Williamson, while Pelaes and Holt took home bronze medals. McGuire and Elliott will now advance to the zone level competition in Thomasville on Tuesday, April 9. If they advance there, they move on to the District round, where they could win scholarship money from Optimist International.

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The YWCA of Winston-Salem Announces:
Stand Against Racism
April 26, 2013
Join us. Take a stand!

The YWCA's Stand Against Racism 2013 is a collaboration of YWCA Associations throughout the country with the goal of bringing people together from all walks of life to raise awareness that racism still exists. We are expecting that over 300,000 people will take a Stand Against Racism on April 26, 2013. Join us!

The YWCA of Winston-Salem is inviting organizations that believe in a society free of racism to join us in taking a Stand Against Racism by becoming a Participating Site.

As a Participating Site of the Stand Against Racism, you will host your own "Stand" at your location. It could be either private or public.

Becoming a Participating Site is very easy. We will provide you with all the necessary tools to organize your Stand. There is no cost to participate.

Strength comes from numbers! Join us on April 26, 2013 by becoming a Participating Site and help us in our fight to eliminate racism.

To learn more or to sign up, please visit www.StandAgainstRacism.org or contact Angie Huffman at 354-1589 ext. 302. You can also follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/ywcaSAR

eliminating racism
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Sunday School program participants.