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RELIGION

Vision from God leads a Christian woman to Ghana

By Andrea R. Richards
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Imagine seeing an African man in prayer, crying to God for help.

Trudy Hill, a member of Nations Ford Baptist Church, saw this in 1989. Little did Hill know, she would use her own ministry to help African ministers in need.

"Every morning, real early, the Lord would wake me up in prayer, and I would see the same man in a vision," Hill

said. "He was calling out to God. 'God help me! God help us!' He was weeping and sweating. He had a heart-breaking cry..."

The dream began shortly after Hill returned from training 200 Nigerian ministers' wives and deaconesses in Christian counseling techniques in 1989. Hill has helped meet the needs of struggling pastors in Ghana through her foreign outreach ministry, Preparing the Bride Ministries.

The purpose of PTB is to sponsor, transport and distrib-

ute boxes of goods to African pastors. Individuals, area businesses and churches donated enough Bibles, shoes, rice, clothes and toys to fill 56 boxes. Hill collected the material within two weeks and delivered the packages on a trip to Ghana Dec. 23-Jan 6.

Ghana, located in west Africa, is an agricultural country about the size of Oregon. Cocoa, coffee, kola nuts and palm oil are the most important crops. The country is noted for its rich mineral deposits of gold, diamonds and



manganese. The official language is English, but many Ghanaians speak traditional African languages.

A president, elected by the people to a four-year term, and a 140-member Parliament, elected to a five-year term, compose the government.

Hill said it was a painstaking process transporting the donated items, but well worth the effort.

"Our boxes were first off all late getting there," said Hill, who completed the 25-hour journey by herself. "The boxes were supposed to arrive Tuesday. The boxes did not get there Tuesday. The boxes did not arrive until that following Sunday. So, it gave me

only one week to get the boxes to Kumasi, which was four hours away.

"I had to find a truck. It took us three days to finish the paperwork because the government moves so slowly. To me, that was record time because the last time I was there it took me three weeks."

Hill is already making preparations to return to the tropical country in August. She wants more African American churches to sponsor African pastors.

"We as a people fail to remember that we came from Africa," she said. "Our people are in need, and we have the provision but won't share them. The question is when was the last time you sent

something home? And sometime the answer is never."

How do Ghanaians feel about African Americans?

"They have good feelings about us but they feel that we have forgotten about them," Hill said. "They are aware that we have plenty. They are aware that we should be helping them, and we are not."

"I think the most frequent question that I hear is, 'Why don't the black pastors come over to help us?' And my response is they are getting there."

If you would like your church family to participate in Preparing the Bride Ministries, call Trudy Hill at (704)537-5001.

Trudy Hill (right), founder of Preparing the Bride Ministries, journeyed to Ghana Dec. 23-Jan 6 to provide assistance for African ministers in need. PTB and Nations Ford Baptist Church collected 56 boxes of Bibles, shoes, rice, clothes and toys.

(PHOTOS PROVIDED BY TRUDY HILL.)



Sunday School Lesson

Jonah flees from God

Devotional Reading:
Jonah 2:2-9

Lesson Scripture: Jonah 1, 2

During the depression of the 1930s a stuffed whale transported by a freight car was exhibited in many cities of the United States. The man in charge of the exhibit carefully pointed out that while the mouth of the whale certainly was large enough to envelop a man, the opening in the whale's throat was not large enough to allow the man to pass into the whale's stomach. To that exhibitor, the biblical account of Jonah was a "fish story" - unreliable, untrue.

To the discerning, however the exhibitor's attempt to discredit the biblical account of Jonah don't hold water. The book of Jonah says that God prepared "a great fish" to swallow Jonah in order to preserve the prophet's life. The person who believes in the Creator God has no difficulty believing that He could accomplish this.

Instead of "a fish story," the account of Jonah is a story God's love and human responsibility. It has its miraculous element, and in that regard it is no different from many of the biblical accounts of God's dealings with His chosen people. The fact that the book of Jonah is included in the Bible gives it the full force of a message that God wants us to have. It speaks of his relationship to his chosen people and the rest of the world. Specifically, it emphasizes God's love for all people and his desire for all to be saved from the consequences of wickedness. And, in a forceful manner, it depicts the importance of carrying out God's assigned task, even if the task has unpleasant or difficult overtones.

We are not told of the manner in which God communicated with Jonah, whether audibly or by means of a dream or vision. But there was no question in Jonah's mind that God was the one giving him the commission.

Most of God's prophets delivered his messages to the people of Israel. Jonah, however, was directed to go to Nineveh, Assyria's capitol city which was about 750 miles east of Israel.

Nineveh was called the great, it seems because of its size and the

influential place it held as the capitol of the dominant nation in the regions east of Israel. Jonah 4:11 tells us that Nineveh was home to 120,000 young children. The entire population may have been as large as 600,000.

God was fully aware of the wicked lifestyle of the Ninevites, and Jonah himself was not unaware of their reputation. Unpleasant as the task may have seemed to Jonah, he knew he was to be God's agent to help the Ninevites change - for the good.

We today who have been commissioned to take the Gospel of God's grace to the world may at times be hesitant to warn people of the danger that awaits them if they live wicked lives. Perhaps we are afraid of offending them; or perhaps we fear an unpleasant response from them. Whatever, God's message of warning is always for man's ultimate good, and that should spur us on to do the work he has commissioned.

Jonah tried to run away from God to avoid the distasteful task of preaching to the Ninevites. Like a teen fleeing the control and discipline of parents, Jonah tried to hide from the chief authority figure of life, the omnipotent God.

Jonah's case was a unique situation. Many sailors' lives were at risk due to his disobedience. Apparently he experienced great remorse for his sin, for he penitently confessed it to the sailors; and he actually requested that he be thrown overboard.

Despite his disobedience, Jonah had not lost his prophetic perception: he knew he was responsible for the life threatening storm, and he knew it would cease if he were sacrificed to the sea. The gambling guesses of the crew were confirmed by Jonah's admission of guilt. Even so, the sailor were reluctant to harm him and made valiant efforts to bring the ship to shore. Finally, however, they were forced to admit that fighting against Jehovah to their own potential destruction. So after a brief invocation, they threw Jonah in the brink without further ceremony.

From childhood up, people who attend Bible study classes are taught the story of Jonah and the whale. The emphasis is normally on God's power, evidenced in Jonah's miraculous preservation in and rescue from the belly of the whale.

Eye on Gospel

Higher glory: Fred Hammond may have come up empty at the 11th annual Stellar Awards after having earned five nominations, but his plate is more than full.

With the rousing success of his Detroit-based vocal ensemble, Radical for Christ, and their first offering "The Inner Court" (on Benson), Hammond is working on "Inner Court II," his sophomore effort. He designed "Inner Court" as a concept series of three recordings "to bring people into praise and worship with songs of jubilee and celebration."

Hammond, who is one of gospel's most sought after producers, also produced the recently released "Praise in the House" featuring Radical for Christ on Integrity Music for worship and praise followers. Ironically, despite his many accomplishments in the gospel field, Hammond says his success with Radical for Christ has caught him off-guard. "I should know that when God tells you something you've got to believe," he said. "I've been through this with Commissioned. People told us we wouldn't be anything, that the Winans were already on top and that there were so many other male groups better than us. But when God wants something to happen, there's nothing that can stop it. Still, it's really surprising that it's working this fast, but I have a good group of people."

"We're unified and I guess when you're unified anything can happen."

Most of all, Hammond hopes his success with Radical for Christ lets the industry know that he's a survivor. Odd words since little has been heard from Commissioned since Hammond's departure last January after 10 years, nine albums and two Grammy nominations. Hammond has no explanation for the group's silence.

"I hope the best for them,"

he said, "but they need a plan and they need a leader, and I hope somebody steps up. I don't believe we (as Commissioned) finished the work that we started out to do and I hate that, but you've got to go on and I'm not afraid to try different things. I believe God and that's why you can see me switch streams, and I'm going to be in this stream for a nice little while."

Hammond remains close with Marvin Sapp, whose recently released self-titled album he produced for Word Records. Hammond's currently working on Keith Staten's next recorded effort for Integrity and has taken Proclaim recording artist Kim Rutherford under his wing. As if that weren't enough, he's entertaining offers for a label deal of his own.

Briefly: The Mighty Clouds of Joy are preparing to tour South Africa at the invitation of President Nelson Mandela. When they return, they will record their second live album for Intersound. Their debut effort for the label, "Power," earned them a Grammy nomination...

Finally, Kirk Franklin and Tammy Renee Collins tied the knot Jan. 20 in Ft. Worth, Texas to a capacity crowd of about 2,000 that included Hezekiah Walker, Byron Cage, actress Kim Fields and GMWA chair Al Hobbs. The honeymoon will have to wait as the newlyweds jetted to Detroit where Franklin will star in the national stage production "He say, She say, But What Do God Say," which kicked off at the Music Hall. Franklin will reportedly tour with the show through May 26.

This week scripture: "But whoever disowns me before me, I will disown him before my father in Heaven."

Matthew 10:33.

Knowledge is power



PHOTO/ JAMES BROWN

By Andrea R. Richards
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The Bible states "My people perish for a lack of knowledge." The Rev. Sheldon R. Shipman, pastor of Walls Memorial AME Zion Church, is doing his best to inform his congregation of their Biblical lineage.

The church, 2722 Bancroft St., co-sponsored a traveling exhibition with Johnson C. Smith University and The KNOW Bookstore Jan. 27-28. It explores the African presence in Biblical Eden.

The African/ Edenic Heritage Museum includes two northeast African landmarks, the Great African-Syrian Rift and the Suez Canal, the African diaspora and the relevance of ancient Biblical stories for persons of African descent.

The Rev. Sheldon R. Shipman, pastor of Walls Memorial AME Zion Church, was delighted to have the learning tool on site.

"It is my hope and my prayer that not only the congregation but anybody that came, especially the young people, will get a clear, true image of the heritage in the Bible that is us," he said. "If we have a better understanding and can see ourselves in the scripture, then we'll not only want to read them more but we'll also want to apply what the prophets, Jesus and everybody in the Bible talked about. It's a connection of cultural heritage as well as the resurrection of spiritual heritage."

The exhibit opened two years ago, and it's on tour 11 months of the year. It features informative maps, detailed explanations and photographs of African people in Israel.

Ahmadial Ben-Yehuda, the executive director of the heritage museum, said the objective of the museum is to allow African American Christians to identify with the Biblical lineage.

"We hope that people understand that Israel is in northeastern Africa, that the Bible is the history of a particular African people, that the conditions that affect us here in our communities in the United States are Biblically related," Ben-Yehuda said. "I hope that they would see themselves in some of these photographs and understand that there has been a great, great conspiracy to detach that part of the world from our own historical identification."

"Somebody has been telling us (African Americans) lies, and we hope to set the record straight."

(Above) Walls Memorial AME Zion Church, co-sponsored a traveling exhibition Jan. 27-28. Ahmadial Ben-Yehuda (right), executive director of the Heritage Museum, shows visitor pictures. The exhibit explores the African presence in Biblical Eden.