

Jews, Christians buy tickets, plan forums on Gibson film

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ASHEVILLE - For the first time, the Rev. Darrell McClaren of Asheville, like thousands of pastors around the country, is recommending an R-rated movie to his flock.

Churchgoers are responding in droves, buying advance tickets for a film that won't open for more than a week.

Biltmore Baptist Church in Asheville has rented a theater at the Biltmore Square mall for two nights for preview showings before the official premiere of the film "The Passion of the Christ." The 700 tickets sold out in two days.

"If our church could afford it, I'd walk the streets of Asheville and hand tickets out," said McClaren, pastor of Harvest Time Assembly of God Church. "It's so important for people to see this story."

Actor Mel Gibson funded, directed and co-wrote the film depicting the final 12 hours in the life of Jesus.

A private screening was held Monday in Charlotte for several thousand delegates to the National Religious Broadcasters' convention.

The delegates who get a seat were asked to sign a statement promising not to discuss the film until its release Feb. 25, the Christian holy day of Ash Wednesday that starts the Easter season.

The actor who portrays Jesus, Jim Caviezel, held an invitation-only news conference on Tuesday in Charlotte.

Movie industry experts say the movie could top \$100 million at the box office - blockbuster status for a bloody, religious film in Hebrew, Latin and Aramaic with English subtitles.

Some \$5 million worth of advance tickets have already been sold, many to eager pastors and congregations that have bought out entire movie theaters.

A member of Mt. Harmony Baptist Church in Matthews gave \$2,500 to buy out two showings at one theater. Church members are asked to bring unchurched friends. The congregation will pray after each showing.

But while many Christians are counting the days until they can see "The Passion," others are organizing forums to offer a view of the crucifixion that might differ from that of Gibson, a traditionalist Roman Catholic.

National Jewish leaders have expressed concern that the film unfairly portrays Jewish involvement in the crucifixion of Jesus and has the potential to fuel anti-Semitism. Critics focus on the film's portrayal of the Jewish high priest Caiaphas

leading a Jewish crowd.

Rabbi Murray Ezring of Temple Israel and the Rev. James Howell of Myers Park United Methodist Church looked at what Jewish and Christian texts say about the crucifixion at Tuesday evening at Temple Israel in Charlotte.

"There are scholars on both sides who are worried about what this film might cause," Ezring said.

Rabbi Michael Samuel of Temple Beth Israel in Asheville believes there is reason for concern.

"We do know that today there is a surge of anti-Semi-

tism in the Middle East and in Europe, and it's reaching the United State," he said. "I just fear people who don't like Jews will find reinforcement in this film."

But Samuel and the Rev. Buddy Corbin, pastor of Asheville's Calvary Baptist

Church, believe the movie should open a dialogue among Christians and between Christians and Jews.

"You need to reflect on the movie," Corbin said. "It's not the kind of thing to see and then just go about your business."

Obituaries

Alexander Funeral Home, Inc.
Pearl Walker died Jan. 30 at Carolina Medical Center-University. Funeral service was held Feb. 5 at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church. Burial was at York Memorial Park.
Alice Adger died Feb. 5 at her residence. Funeral service was held Feb. 9 at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church. Burial was at York Memorial Park.
Samuel Archie died Feb. 13 in Charlotte. Funeral service was held at 12 pm. Burial was at Oaklawn Park Cemetery.
Charles L. Wright died Feb. 6 at Carolina Medical Center-University. Funeral service was held Feb. 12 at Greater Myers Chapel, P.F.M. Burial was held at Beatties Ford Memorial Gardens.
Barbara Holmes died Feb. 9 at Presbyterian Hospital. Memorial service was held Feb. 16 at Zechariah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel.
James Mitchell died Feb. 11 the Brian Center. Memorial Service was held Feb. 14 at Zechariah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel.
Joseph White Sr. died Feb. 2 in Philadelphia, Pa. Graveside service was held Feb. 7 at Beatties Ford Memorial Gardens.
A.L. Jinwright
Thelma L. Page at 4536 Sampson Street died Feb. 8. Funeral service was held at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Harrisburg, NC.
Pearly Louise Harris Grady at 2821 Mayflower Road died Feb. 8. Funeral service was held Feb. 14 at Antioch Baptist Church.

Sr. Pastor Rev. Errick O. Redmond Pastor Angie Redmond

Rock Christian Church of Charlotte

4400 Hobbs Hill Drive, Charlotte, NC
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Revival Services:
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Evangelist Monica Redmond

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Sunday, March 7th - 10:30 am & 6:00 pm
Monday, March 8th - 7:00 pm
Tuesday, March 9th - Thursday, March 11th -
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"Upon This Rock I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" Matt. 16:18

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Worship Service..... 11:00am
Wednesday Bible Study..... 7:00pm
Wednesday Prayer Service.. 8:00pm

Rev. Cuthbertson

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 Wed. Bible Study 11:45am - 1:00pm & 7:00pm - 8:00pm

A.C.E. Fellowship: Sun. 6:00 pm
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 http://www.gbamec.org

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 The Reverend Dr. Casey R. Kimbrough, I. Senior Pastor

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 Prayer & Praise: 6:00 p.m. • WOW Bible Study: 7:00 p.m.
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Joseph L. Dempsey, Pastor

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 28208

Sunday Morning Worship Services... 8:30 - 9:30 - 11:00am
 Sunday School..... 9:45 - 10:45am
 Singles Ministries (Mon.)..... 6:30 - 7:30pm
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