

8B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Cornelius a devout follower

Acts 10:1-8

In the days following Pentecost, believers in Christ were being added to the Church by the hundreds. By this time, even Saul (Paul), the dreaded persecutor of the Christians, had experienced a personal encounter with Christ on the Damascus Road. The times were exciting as the Spirit of the God moved among people and changed their lives for all eternity.

During this great move of God, Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was responding obediently to God's leading and the Holy Spirit's persuasion of his heart. Cornelius probably witnessed many injustices directed toward the Jews, who were under Roman jurisdiction. Caesarea served as the capital of the Roman province of Judea. Four significant aspects of Cornelius' character are noted in Acts 10:2. First, Scripture says he actively sought God.

Cornelius is a great example of how God rewards those who "diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6, KJV). Second, Scripture says he revered, or had respect for, God. Third, Scripture says Cornelius was generous in meeting the needs of other people. The Bible is clear about this compassion toward those in need and how he provided from his personal resources. His attitude and actions not only influenced his family, because he also developed a favorable reputation as a devout man. Fourth, Acts 10:2 says Cornelius "prayed to God always." God saw Cornelius' heart and moved to supply his needs.

Unlike "religious" people, Cornelius recognized "religion" was not enough to satisfy to save him. Cornelius was hungry for more than knowledge of God; he desired to know the God he prayed to and the God he feared. Even in the midst of Christians being persecuted because of their belief in God, Cornelius was willing to give God his heart. God already desired for Cornelius to come to the full knowledge of him as much as Cornelius desired to know Him. God has placed the need to know Him in Cornelius, and he was responding to God's gentle wooing.

By way of divine messenger, God began to shape history, time and circumstances so Cornelius could have a divine appointment with Him. The fact the angel of God appeared to Cornelius about the ninth hour, 3 p.m., is not coincidental.

See CORNELIUS /7B

Young at heart

University City pastor connects with inclusive message



PHOTO/CALVIN FERGUSON

The Rev. Michael Stevens of University City Church ranks as one of the young voices to lead the church. By being real, he motivates the young and the old.

By Cheri F. Hodges
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The first thing you notice walking into University City Church is the number of young people involved in the ministry.

The next thing you're sure to notice is the congregation's energy. What you won't be able to miss is the smile of the church's pastor, the Rev. Michael Stevens.

The 36-year-old pastor started UCC with two members 11 years ago. Now the church has nearly 1,000 members.

Charisma, a national Christian magazine, voted

Stevens one of the 30 voices under 40 to lead the American church.

According to Churchcentral.com, the future of the U.S. church is in trouble. The website reports that thousands of churches are on the precipice of closing. The conventional wisdom was that churches were tenaciously stubborn, and could keep going for years. But those churches were led by the Builder Generation, those born before 1946 and they attended out of loyalty and tradition. They would often remain loyal to a church despite deteriorating quality and attendance.

But Boomers, Busters/Gen Xers, and Bridgers - those born between 1977 and 1994 - have no such loyalties. They see no need to remain with a church that exists out of tradition and with little care for the quality of the ministries.

However this is not the case at UCC. Stevens said that because he takes the Bible literally and makes it relevant to members and the community.

"Our church is known for being raw and relevant," he said. "There are no big Fs and little Us, we just keep it really real with people. This is the mosaic

generation, what young people want is absolutes."

Stevens can witness to the grace of God. In 1996 a man held him at gunpoint in an attempted robbery. Stevens turned his assailant over to God and to this day, the man is an active member in the church. And Stevens never called the police.

"We want you to ply your hands to something that brings value," he said.

Joel Ford, who has been a member of the church for eight years, said Stevens' excitement for Jesus and the church is what keeps him involved and coming. Please see PASTOR/7B

Number of Latino Muslims on the rise

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MIAMI—Ask Melissa Matos why she converted to Islam, and you'll likely get an answer that spans 13 centuries.

She may refer to seventh century Arabia, where Muslims believe the Prophet Mohammed received the Koran from the angel Gabriel. Or she might describe Islam's golden age in medieval Spain. Or she'll recall Sept. 11, 2001, when fear and curiosity

drove her to read about Islam on the Internet.

Matos, who comes from a family of Seventh Day Adventists from the Dominican Republic, has answered the question countless times since converting to Islam in April. She now covers her hair, prays five times a day, and is observing Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer and reflection.

"Sometimes it does get a little diffi-

cult," said Matos, a 20-year-old political science student at Florida International University who lives with her parents in Miramar. "I feel alienated from my family and my old friends, but Islam is so beautiful, it's worth it. And with Ramadan, I'm just doing it by myself, just me and God."

Though they make up a small fraction of the nation's 6 million Muslims, Hispanic women converting to Islam

Please see LATINO/7B

California university host first God blogging

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LA MIRADA, California—What would Jesus blog?

That and other pressing questions drew 135 Christians to Southern California this weekend for a national conference billed as the first-ever for "God bloggers," a growing community of online writers who exchange information and analyze current events from a Christian perspective.

The three-day conference at Biola University

marked an important benchmark for Christian bloggers, who have worked behind the scenes for years to spread the Gospel and infuse politics with religion.

Topics included God bloggers' relationship with the traditional church, their growing influence on mainstream politics and how to manage outsiders' perceptions.

Some predicted bloggers could play a role in reforming the modern church by keeping televangelists and

other high-profile Christian leaders honest.

Joe Carter, author of evangelicaloutpost.com, compared blogging to the 95 Theses posted by Martin Luther nearly 500 years ago that launched the Protestant Reformation.

"It's like putting 95 blogs out there," said Carter, who previously said God bloggers offer an "uncensored and unadulterated" view, of contemporary Christian thought on politics and organized religion.

Many bloggers are now writing about religious oppression, poverty and world hunger; instead of hot-button issues such as abortion, homosexuality and assisted suicide, said the Rev. Andrew Jackson, a seminary professor and pastor at the Word of Grace Church in Mesa, Arizona.

"With blogging you tend to break out of those circles and you see other points of view," Carter said. "There's a bigger world out there

See CALIFORNIA /6B



Yohe belts out a solid second album

Vicki Yohe
He's Been Faithful
Sanchez Harley, Geron Davis
and Ay'Ron Lewis, producers
EMI/Puresprings Gospel



Vicki Yohe's "I Just Want You" CD caused a few people to pause. Is that a white woman singing like that? Yep, sure was and still is. She's got an expressive voice that's more gospel than contemporary Christian.

That's about how I'd sum up her latest CD, "He's Been Faithful" - her first for Cece Winans' Puresprings Gospel label. While not pure gospel, there's a lot of punch in Yohe's delivery and song choices.

The title song was originally done by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir, a mixed denomination choir that straddles the fence between gospel and contemporary Christian. Yohe gets the choir to back her up on this endearing testimony. Yohe gives this song a loving makeover, making the lyrics live. It's one of the better Carol Cymbala (Brooklyn Tab's director) compositions. Yohe borrows a Brooklyn Tab alum, Alvin Slaughter, for "Increase Me," based on the Prayer of Jabez. Slaughter and Yohe are a formidable pair, lifting a somewhat mundane song into something special.

Yohe has several moments on her own. She anoints V. Michael McKay's "Deliverance Is Available." She's singing the life out of these lyrics. On "Here In This House" Yohe combines the text with "Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing." It's a near-knockout performance, building to a swelling chorus. Yohe shifts gears on "In The Sanctuary" (not the Kurt Carr song) adding a bit of uptempo flavor to the recording.

Yohe seems to be right at home on her new label. This is a solid recording that should garner a larger group of fans while satisfying her core audience.

Ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★
Good	★★★
Fair	★★
Why?	★
No stars - A mess	

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline to have your church announcements added to the calendar is 5 p.m. on Fridays. Fax your announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail your announcement to cheri.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

October 21

Macedonia Baptist Church of Charlotte, 1300 Hatteras Ave, will host the Queen City Music Workshop "Called to Praise and Designed for Worship." The event begins at 6:30p.m. There will be a Concert Celebration Saturday, October 22 at 5p.m.

Guest clinicians include Rev. Michael Smith and Ricky Collins. For more information call (704) 392-8496.

October 23

The Women's Ministry of Tabernacle Baptist Church presents "Making the Shift: Moving

from self-confidence to God-confidence." On Sunday, the Rev. Richetta Daniels will lead the Woman's day service. The women's revival begins Monday at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (704) 568-2374.

October 29

Greater Mount Moriah Primitive Baptist Church will host its sixth annual golf tournament at Renaissance Golf Course, 1525 West Tyvola Road. For more information, call (704) 376-8806.

October 30

Divine Praise and Deliverance Ministries is hosting a Youth Fellowship Explosion at 5 p.m. The theme is God has broken the unbreakable chains - Acts 16:26.

The event will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, located at 4800 S. Tryon St. The speak-

er for the event will be Prophet Lorenzo A. Moore of New St. Luke Church in Monroe. For more information call Prophet Nathan McDaniels at (704) 492-2566.

November 2

University City Church will host "Dwelling In His Presence" Music & Worship Arts Conference 2005. Worship Service will take place nightly Wednesday through Friday at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 10 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Guest speakers for the conference include singer and songwriter Evangelist Kim Rutherford, Kingdom International Ministries, Sherman Oaks, Calif., and author Bishop George Bloomer of Bethel Family Word Church, Durham.

This event is free. University City Church is located at 7829 Old Concord Road.

November 4

Reeder Memorial Women's Ministry will present an evening of pampering featuring a facial-nails and fashion show. Registration is required and the cost is \$10. The church is located at 3725 Beatties Ford Road.

November 5

The Pineville Church of the Nazarene will host its fourth annual Christmas Arts & Crafts Festival. The event will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The church is located at 8614 Pineville-Matthews Road. For more information, call (704) 542-3618.

• Reeder Memorial Women's Ministry will present "A Celebration in the Midst of Womanhood" workshop beginning at 9 a.m. The church is located at 3725 Beatties Ford Road.

• Thomasboro Church of Christ, 216 Bradford Drive in Charlotte, will be hosting an

Please see THRIVE/5B

