

Stephen Andersen is a pastor at North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside.

Joshua Bessex
The Daily Astorian



I will follow

Young pastor believes church should always be a place of hope

By STEPHEN ANDERSEN
Special to The Daily Astorian

I am a 25-year-old pastor. Most of the time when I introduce myself to someone and say I am a pastor, I get a very interesting look. Most reply, “You are young to be a pastor”. Indeed. I was born smack dab into the center of the millen-

nial generation, a generation that is not very fond of the church or faith communities in general. I will be honest, there was a time in my life when I didn’t like faith communities either. I wanted nothing to do with faith even though I was raised in the church, and there are thousands of millennials who have a similar story. A question I often ponder is, “Why”? The church should be about hope and love. How can a place that teaches people to love one another be so hated across our country? I firmly believe it is because we lost the mission of the church. Instead of point-



ing people to Jesus, we pointed people to rules they are supposed to follow. And I am so sorry. The church should always be a place of hope. God gives us guidelines to follow but the misconception is that he wants to hold us back from “having a good time.” This is completely false. God wants to protect us, because he loves us just as a parent protects their child. If you are a follower of Jesus, you want to obey him because you understand. It doesn’t make sense for someone who doesn’t follow Jesus

to follow his guidelines. So now God has called me to be a pastor, and I always point people to Jesus, not to a set of rules they have to follow. Stephen Andersen serves as a pastor at North Coast Family Fellowship in Seaside. He enjoys spending time with his family of four, playing music, enjoying the outdoors and preaching in the church. He attended two years at Ecola Bible College and is currently working on his degree for leadership in ministry from Oak Hills Christian College.

‘Rich in Faith’ brings young pastors to reality TV spotlight

By LYNN ELBER
AP Television Writer

LOS ANGELES — As a MTV executive, Rod Aissa helped develop “Newlyweds: Nick & Jessica,” the reality series that peered into the lives of Nick Lachey and Jessica Simpson.

Aissa, now at Oxygen Media, believes he’s found equally engaging young marrieds who will appeal to today’s millennials. The twist: the couple featured in Oxygen’s “Rich in Faith” are pastors, not pop stars.

The reality show features Rich Wilkerson Jr. and his wife DawnChere, both 31 and offspring of ministers, as they launch a youth-oriented Miami church and grapple with balancing work and home life.

Oxygen, which targets 18-to-34-year-old female viewers, is “trying to connect them to relatable characters, experiences and milestones of their lives,” Aissa said.

The Wilkersons are appealing, he said, and the fact that their “business happens to be religion” brings an added dimension.

“What I liked about it for Oxygen is the overlay of the discussion of faith,” he said. “We know from brand research ... that traditional things like family and relationship to God and spirituality are still high on their (the audience’s) list.”

Married Kanye and Kim

Rich Wilkerson, who started with his parents’ ministry in Miami, brings a celebrity connection to the series: He married Kanye West and Kim Kardashian. Vous, the church the Wilkersons are founding, has a cer-



DawnChere Wilkerson, left, and Rich Wilkerson in the “Gator Nuggets” episode of the “Rich in Faith” show on Oxygen.

‘Our idea was to do something that’s encouraging, that’s positive out there. We want to show people you can have faith, even in this busy, chaotic world we live in right now.’

Rich Wilkerson Jr.

a youth pastor who is featured in the show ‘Rich in Faith’ on Oxygen along with his wife, DawnChere

tain glitz of its own, with music, dance, strobe lights and fog machines added to appeal to their generation. They take their ministry to the street as well, meeting people on their own ground. The Wilkersons say it’s their relationship with God and parishioners that’s im-

portant, not TV celebrity or its trappings. “So often it’s really easy, especially for people of faith, to sit around and report negatively about the status quo of where our nation is or where entertainment is,” said Rich Wilkerson, author of the newly published “Sandcastle Kings,”

which includes a blurb from Kim Kardashian West (Wilkerson’s optimism and “passion for the Word of God are contagious,” she said). “Our idea was to do something that’s encouraging, that’s positive out there. We want to show people you can have faith, even in this busy,

chaotic world we live in right now,” he said. While he’s not a reality TV watcher, Wilkerson said, “no matter what you think about it, it’s the language of our culture. We want to be people who are trying to take every opportunity to spread the message of faith.”

Faith and reality TV Faith and reality TV have become close companions. A number of shows are based on families for whom religion is a visible part of their lives, including UP’s “Bringing Up Bates,” in its third season. Others focus on the clergy, among them Oxygen’s “Preachers” franchise that started in Los Angeles and moved on to include other cities. “Preachers of LA” was criticized by some African-Americans ministers who said the show could foster the inaccurate idea that preachers are in it for fame and wealth. Hollywood’s fascination with pairing reality and faith has dubious roots, said Dave Johnson, a film and TV writer-producer (“Against the Grain,” “Doc”) and a Parents Television Council advisory board member. “It’s like the old circus, with the side show tent,” Johnson said. “They’ll use little people, they’ll use Christians, they’ll use tattoo people. It’s a group of people (industry executives) don’t really know or understand or are part of, and think they’re interesting to watch.” That’s fine, he added, if the show is created and produced honestly, citing “Bringing Up Bates” as an example. He had yet to see “Rich in Faith.” “If they chose someone who is genuine and true, who believes and lives that faith, then the show will reflect that faith honestly,” Johnson said. DawnChere Wilkerson believes her series will do that. It demonstrates “how our faith and relationship with Jesus is really the greatest influence in every part of life, whether marriage, at work, with friends and family,” she said.



9-1-WHAT?

THE BEST OF THE WORST CALLS TO ASTORIA 911 DISPATCH

Kitten wrangler

So there is apparently a kitten wrangler in Seaside and what not. Prepare accordingly. Follow reporter Kyle Spurr on his 9-1-What? Twitter watch, where a few of the sometimes head-scratching calls to area dispatch take center stage. The full feed is at www.twitter.com/9_1_WHAT.

9-1-WHAT?

9-1-WHAT?

{12/1 @ 10:17 p.m.} Officers responded to a report of a suspicious person. Subject was trying wrangle some stray kittens. #Seaside

1:42 PM - 3 Dec 2015

9-1-WHAT?

9-1-WHAT?

{12/4 @ 9:26 a.m.} Report of a man on a bike yelling at people. #Astoria

8:13 AM - 8 Dec 2015

9-1-WHAT?

9-1-WHAT?

{12/7 @ 7:09 a.m.} Neighbors installing bright light on their house that shines into the caller’s living room and bedroom. #Warrenton

6:19 AM - 8 Dec 2015

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