

RELIGION

Helen Baylor: Love Brought Me Back



Helen Baylor

Helen Baylor has seen and experienced from the bottom to the top, and, the grace of God, lived to tell and sing of it all. Her last album and video, *The Live Experience*, catapulted her for the first time to the top of the contemporary Christian charts under virtual lock and key for months.

Featuring 11 of her best loved songs, and a compelling personal testimony, it succeeded in making Helen a household name in Christian music. And with her newest release, *Love Brought Me Back*, the music and the message only grew stronger.

"The success of *The Live Experience* doubled, and even tripled the size of our audiences," Helen explains, "but that just made me want to seek to do an even better job of what I do...to really reach those people and let them know all that God has brought me through and hope that might help them in their own lives. I'm all for good, wholesome, Christian entertainment, but I've got a calling on my life to go further--to reach into people's hearts and touch and be touched by who and where they are. That's just the minister in me."

The real meaning of Christmas

BY FREEMAN WALKER, JR.

Luke 2:14--Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

That was the plan. Nothing else would work. Mankind had tried it on our own and failed miserably. If there was to be any way out of this mess, God Himself would have to provide it. And He did with a gift to the world. That was the starting point.

God's gift was very special--it was at once a sacrifice and gift. God had only one son: a son with whom He shared all, with whom He did all. The son had been with God at the creation and actually participated in the creation. He was there when, as one, they created mankind to dwell with and walk with God. He was also there when mankind was separated from God by Adam's sin and cast out of the garden "...to till the ground from whence he was taken."

As Adam and Eve represented all of mankind, their expulsion from the garden of Eden also represented our separation from God and the beginning of our enmity with Him. And that would never do! How can any people survive when at odds with their creator? It was by the plan for the redemption of mankind meant

that the only son of God would die, to live again only by our invitation.

For centuries we have sought ways back to God through ritual and sacrifice, and even the creation of our own gods. The book of Isaiah tells of how we cut trees from the forest for fuel to cook and warm us and to be carved into the gods. We tried ploys such as fasting with sackcloth, the sacrifice of animals and even the sacrifice of our own children.

Some say that ancient Romans worshipped the sun. The Sun had apparently become displeased with his parishioners and started to depart. When he changed his mind and sent his son back to warm the people at the beginning of the winter solstice (December 22), the Romans declared the rising of the sun the day of Jr.'s birth and began an annual observance. (The Ancient Egyptians had worshipped the sun as the god Ra, and Greeks had worshipped the sun as the god Helios.) When Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, the church began to celebrate Christ's birth on December, the beginning of the summer solstice.

Today Christmas is a highly successful commercial venture. Up to

70 percent of the volume of department stores and mail order sales occur between November 15 and January 30. Major expenditures are often planned for this time of the year: the ring, the car, the trip and that special toy. The Christmas season not only crowds both requisite and non-requisite spending into a 45 day period, it also stimulates compulsory spending. This is not to say that Christmas has no religious significance.

Although we do not know the exact time of Jesus's birth, we know that His birth signaled that a decision had been made to return us to God. With the birth of Christ God's plan was set in motion. Jesus was born into this world as a baby and the baby Jesus can mature within each of us to the Son who ruled with God, the Father. We have a significant part in the plan, for it is only by our invitation that Christ resides within, and even then, He matures only to the extent that we allow.

The growth of Jesus in us, and Christmas is the starting point.

Freeman Walker, Jr. is the founder and administrator of the WalkerHouse Foundation, a Christian community on the Internet. Contact him at freemanw@wh.org.

AMA's Annual Holiday Adopt-a-Family program

As in years past, the AMA Annual "Holiday Adopt-a-Family" program reaches into the community for help in making the holiday season a bit brighter for homeless and needy families. Last year, one family provided sheets, blankets and other bedding to a family whose house had burnt to the ground--all 6 children stayed warm! Also, a teenage brother and sister got mountain boots and other warm clothing for winter wear. One retailer provided new winter coats for over 20 homeless families.

Through the AMA "Adopt-a-Family", children and families in need can receive certain necessities--to

keep them well, healthy and experiencing community generosity. Community members have the choice of "adopting" an AMA family and buy gifts for each family member. AMA will provide "Adopting" families information about the size of family, ages, sizes and needs or community members can simply purchase one or more of the items from this list which then will be delivered to an appropriate recipient by an AMA volunteer: Sheets and blankets, dish clothes, sweatshirts/pants, pants, pots & pans, towels, coats, mittens/gloves, dishes, dishpans, shirts, wool caps, glasses/cups, silverware, T-shirts, boots or

shoes. (We ask that all items be new and in original packaging when possible. Other possibilities include Tri-Met passes and gift certificates from Fred Meyer, Ross, Volume, Target, etc.)

Persons interested in adopting a homeless or needy family should AMA at 285-0493, ext. 203.

Albina Ministerial Alliance, provides emergency, energy, child care and housing services to over 7,000 families each year. Should you have any questions, please call me at 240-2825. We can make photo and audio opportunities available concerning typical families to be adopted.

Alaska Pastor Receives Honorary Degree

Eighteen graduates of an innovative environmental science program will leave Concordia University this month prepared to do their part in making the world a better place.

There are among 150 bachelor's degree recipients at the Winter Commencement program in the Concordia gymnasium, according to Concordia University President Charles E. Schlimpert.

In addition, the Rev. Dr. Chris J. Reinke, a Lutheran Pastor from Anchorage, Alaska, will receive an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. Pastor Reinke, who is a high school graduate of the former Concordia College Academy, was nominated to receive Concordia's highest honor for his work in apostolic ministry. Reinke is also the commencement speaker.

Pastor of Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church in Anchorage, Reinke is the founder of the Alaskan Road Ministry, a road ministry now serving people in some 53

Alaskan communities. Of the 60 lay people serving the road program, this spring 15 of them will be certified through the Church Staff Lay Assistant Program of Concordia University.

The 18 environmental students are graduates of the Environmental Remediation and Hazardous Materials Management.

The undergraduate degree program was launched in 1995 to meet a pressing industry need -- preparing entry-level managers for increasing opportunities in the environmental field. As such, the curriculum was developed with input from business, industry and government leaders, and is designed with a focus on meaningful practical experience in the field.

In earning their degrees, students completed a rigorous academic curriculum and participated in industry-sponsored practicums designed to give them a working knowledge of environmental issues. Some of the practicums included analyses of underground storage containers and re-

lated regulation development for Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality, and participation in a sophisticated Columbia Slough Water-testing project for the City of Portland.

For both students and industry, the program has proved an effective means of offering targeted education and training in an increasingly specialized field.

Mike Stock, a former National Institutes of Health researcher and member of the first graduating class, already had a doctorate degree in physiology when he entered the program with the goal of making a career change.

"I found the instructors challenging, and because of the flexible curriculum design I was able to go beyond some of the other students--given my background," said Stock, a Tigard resident. He completed his practicum working with the Department of Environmental Quality to develop and draft new risk assessment rules.

Preparing for Kwanzaa

BY DR. CONRAD W. WOKRILL

The Kwanzaa season is right around the corner and, once again, the National Black United Front (NBUF), Chicago Chapter, is preparing for our sponsorship of the annual citywide Karamu Ya Imani (Feats of Faith) Kwanzaa celebration.

This year's Karamu Ya Imani (Feast of Faith) Kwanzaa celebration will be held on Wednesday, January 1, 1997 at Kennedy King College, 6800 S. Wentworth. The celebration will begin at noon.

It is estimated that more than 18 million African-Americans participate in some sort of Kwanzaa event. In the wake of the rising African-American community begins preparing for the Kwanzaa season. In order for this to occur parents, teachers, principals, ministers, business people and community activists must begin preparation immediately.

The first question that should be asked in preparation for the Kwanzaa season is, what is Kwanzaa and why is it as important for African-American people?

In the 1960s, the Black Power explosion shook up America and successfully began the dismantling of the legal system of racial segregation in the south. However many blacks felt there was a deeper meaning to the ideas of freedom, justice, and equality that had not been advocated by Civil Rights Movement. The call for Black Power by Con-

gressman Adam Clayton Powell, Kwame Ture (a.k.a. Stokely Carmichael), and others gave a new impetus for the Black Liberation Movement in America.

When the smoke cleared from the Watts rebellion in 1965, an organization emerged in the Los Angeles, California area called "US". Its leader, Dr. Maulana Karenga, became a noted spokesman for the independence, liberation and the acquisition of power for African-American people.

After intense study of African cultural traditions, Dr. Karenga established the only nationally celebrated, indigenous, non-heroic black holiday in the United States that he called Kwanzaa.

The concept of Kwanzaa, as Dr. Karenga established it, was derived from the African custom of celebrating the harvest season. Dr. Karenga's explains that, "The origin of Kwanzaa on the African continent are in the agricultural celebrations called the "first fruits" celebrations and to lesser degree the full or general harvest celebrations. It is from the Swahili phrase Matunda Ya Kwanzaa."

Dr. Karenga further explains, "The first fruit celebrations are recorded in African history as far back as Egypt and Nubia and appear in ancient and modern times in other classical African civilizations such as Ashantiland and Yorubaland."

Dr. Karenga created Kwanzaa to introduce black people to new values, "which, if practiced, would give (us) a

set of priorities and lead to (our) liberation and a higher level of human life." And this is a major reason that Kwanzaa should be celebrated by all African-American people.

The concept of Kwanzaa strikes at the root of the African Centered Movement in this country. It provides a forum for us as a people to define ourselves in the context of their own experience.

Kwanzaa is officially celebrated December 26 to January 1st and each day is dedicated to on principle of the Nguzo Saba (the Seven Principles of Blackness is celebrated). They are: December 26--Umoja (Unity); December 27--Kujichagulia (Self Determination); December 28--Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility); December 29--Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics); December 30--Nia (Purpose); December 31--Kuumba (Creativity); January 1--Imani (Faith).

Kwanzaa is a celebration that gives African people in America a re-affirmation of our greatness and the possibilities for continued growth. It is a holiday season for us that gives us a chance with our families and loved ones the prospects and future of black liberation. It gives our children a positive reinforcement for what we must continue to fight for as a people.

If you are not familiar with how to celebrate Kwanzaa, I suggest you purchase and read Dr. Karenga's book, *The African American Holiday of Kwanzaa*.

Religious Freedom Week celebrated

Churches across America recently celebrated Religious Freedom Week to commemorate the Congressional passage of the First Amendment in 1789. Churches participating ranged from the famous Old North Church in Boston to the Founding Church of Scientology in Washington, D.C.

The celebration, recognized in

September of each year, became an annual tradition after the U.S. Congress--with strong support from members of the Congressional Black Caucus--passed resolutions in 1988, 1989 and 1990 officially declaring the last week in September as Religious Freedom Week.

"religious freedom is one of the

bedrocks of American life," said Rev. Sue Taylor, the national spokesperson for the Religious Freedom Week Committee. "Like most of our freedom, it is something we take for granted, but this week we take time to reflect on both the power and the richness of this freedom and our responsibility to protect it."

Celebration of Life for E. Jean Amerson



Remembrance--Jean Amerson was born July 27th in Tyle, Texas to Laurene and Theodore Moffatt.

In 1941, she and her family moved to Portland, Oregon where she attended Jefferson High School and Lewis & Clark College. She later met and married Herbert L. Amerson. During their years of marriage, they had four children, Denise, Jeanette, Gregory and Deborah.

During the last 12 years of her life, she was a companion to John Savoy and played a major role in raising John's youngest daughter, Rachel.

She retired on December 30, 1983, after 31 years of dedicated service with Pacific Northwest Bell.

She was a faithful member of St. Phillips Church, where she was confirmed by Father L.O. Stone in 1957. Jean was also a founding member of the Royal Dion Social Club.

Those mourning her passing are her mother, Laurene Jackson, her four beloved children, Denise Ragland, Jeanette Mebane, Gregory Amerson and Deborah Cross, together with her father, Herbert L. Amerson.

In Loving Memory

Charlotte Marie Moore was born February 13, 1950 in Portland to Emma Moore. Upon her mother passing away, she was left to the care of Julius Moore, Sr., Lavon Allen, and Theodore Rogers. During her school years, Charlotte attended Jefferson High School, Portland, OR. She was a member of the class of 1968. Charlotte continued her education at the University Beauty College and completed her studies in cosmetology in 1977. She later became a well known hair dresser in the city of Portland. Charlotte's love for people compelled her to help those around her.



This was reflected by her last employment where she served as a Residential Advocate for the mentally disadvantaged. She was a loving and outstanding mother to three children: Bryant, Tammi, and Nyla Moore, all who reside in Portland, OR. Charlotte was outgoing, approachable, and loved to meet people. She never met a stranger. Her home was always open to those in need. Preceding her in death: Michael Vaughn, brother.

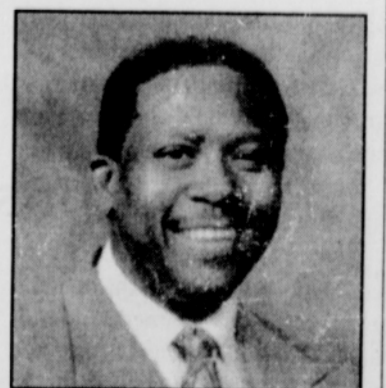
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Kwanzaa 1996

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Kwanzaa

The hearts of millions of men and women across America and around the world rejoice as together we enter into the spirit of this uplifting holiday.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa-- unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith -- teach us that when we come together to strengthen our families and com-

munities and honor the lessons of the past, we can face the future with joy and optimism. Through prayer, song, and the exchange of gifts, Kwanzaa helps us celebrate the human experience and appreciate our many blessings.

Today, we have a renewed sense of hope in America, a hope based on the idea that our great diversity can unite -- not divide -- our society. As we rejoice in the rich cultural heri-

tage of the African American community during Kwanzaa, let us work together to ensure that the meaning and energy of this inspiring festival will remain with us throughout the coming year, bringing courage, renewal, and even greater hope for the future.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes for a wonderful holiday and every happiness in the year ahead.

William J. Clinton