

# Buzz

## SPOTLIGHT

### Bouncing Back

Mandisa shares her heart in new autobiography.

When American Idol finalist Mandisa was voted off the Fox reality TV show after singing the gospel song “Shackles,” she says it was a “dark time.” Media reports accused her of gay bashing after she opened the song by saying that God is bigger than an addiction or a lifestyle. At the time, she says she felt misunderstood. But today, she’s candidly sharing her heart in an autobiography, *Idoleyes*, which released in May and was to be followed with the debut of her first CD this month. “I am a living witness that God can do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine,” she says. “I am so thankful for my experience on Idol, both the good and the bad. Because of it, I am living my dream.”

**Marsha Gallardo**

## ISRAEL BUZZ

### The Watchman

Paul Wilbur’s music fuses ‘the new and the ancient’.

Jewish by birth, Paul Wilbur received Jesus as his Messiah in graduate school while training under the cantor at his local

synagogue. "When I started writing worship music it all came out sounding Jewish," he says. He was later tutored in opera in Italy and now describes his sound as a "blending of the new and the ancient." On his latest live recording, *The Watchman*, Wilbur seeks to create "an atmosphere for the presence of God to manifest." He has seen this happen while performing in Jerusalem, and in those times many Jews have accepted Christ as their Messiah. He believes the decisions for Christ foreshadow Bible prophecy. "It will be the cry that's heard around the world when Jerusalem receives" its Messiah, he says, pointing to Zechariah 12. When Jesus is embraced in Jerusalem, there will be "unstoppable weeping and rejoicing."

**Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

#### Prayer Point

Last April, Christian groups began preparing to respond to natural disasters in anticipation of the hurricane season, which begins June 1. This month we encourage you to pray:

1. That Christian organizations will have the resources to respond to natural disasters
2. For the ongoing relief work in the Gulf Coast and in the Solomon Islands following the recent tsunami
3. That the 2007 storm season will not be as active as weather forecasters predict.

To get regular prayer updates from Charisma's Prayer Initiative, visit [prayer](#) .

#### **Prayer Point – Israel**

Christians are admonished to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

So as Israel continues to face the threat of terrorism and the attempts of Muslim extremists to dominate the Middle East, we encourage you to pray that:

4. God will give Israel favor among Middle Eastern nations
5. The people of Israel will call upon God and not rely on natural strength, wisdom and inventions for protection
6. The Jewish people will be protected from anti-Semitic attacks
7. The plans of Israel's enemies will be exposed.

### **Drawing Strength**

The Power Team is best known for performing feats of strength such as ripping telephone books in two and crushing bricks. But when the Dallas-based evangelistic ministry visited Israel last fall, their mission was to encourage the nation's Golani Brigade, an elite special-forces army that lost 21 soldiers during Israel's war with Hezbollah. "It was amazing to us because the people in Israel don't really know that Christians actually like them," team spokesman Kim Terrell says. "They were encouraged [to know] that Christians stood with them." The Power Team plans to return to Israel this year.

### **Riding Into Missions**

This month teenagers will follow Jesus' example to minister in other nations. But instead of walking or riding in on a donkey, the young missionaries will use motorcycles to take the gospel to remote villages in the African nation of Zambia. In partnership with Florida-based Teen Missions International, the youth plan to build safe housing for schoolgirls; evangelize villagers through drama, puppets and the Jesus film; and share Christ with children orphaned by AIDS.

## **UNSUNG HEROES**

### **Mission: Mobility**

Thirty years ago while in Morocco, California-based engineer Don Schoendorfer saw a woman crawling across the road because she couldn't walk. The image haunted him and eventually inspired him to create a low-cost wheelchair that could be distributed for free in developing nations. Today through his Free Wheelchair Mission ([www.freewheelchairmission.org](#)), Schoendorfer has distributed more than 210,000 wheelchairs at a cost of \$ each. But with more than 100 million people worldwide in need of wheelchairs, he hopes to distribute far more. This month the 58-year-old ends a two-month bicycle trek across the U.S. that he hoped would raise the \$670,000 needed to distribute 15,000 wheelchairs. "A common explanation for why you can't walk in developing nations is because God hates you," he says. "So there's a real spiritual disability there too. ... It's a real neat thing for me to see that with \$, you can help change someone's life."

**Adrienne S. Gaines**

### **Making Aliyah**

Since 1995 a Florida-based Christian ministry has helped more than 65,000 Jews in the former Soviet Union make aliyah—that is, immigrate to Israel. Founded by Mel and Joanne Hoelzle, Ezra International relocates Jews to their biblical homeland to fulfill prophecy found in the book of Isaiah, ministry vice president Barry Wagner says. "The burning passion that drives [Ezra International] is simply knowing that the return of God's chosen people to the land of Israel is God's plan for them in these last days," he says. Ezra's leaders also seek to mitigate the discrimination and persecution many Jews suffer. "Anti-Semitism is sweeping across Europe," Wagner says. "Some

are reporting that it is now at the level it was just prior to the Holocaust. Swastikas are being spray-painted on buildings throughout the former Soviet Union. We are seeing signs calling for 'Death to the Jews' and 'Six million Jews was not enough.'" Ezra assisted more than 6,000 Jews in returning to Israel last year, while another 31,000 are currently awaiting documentation.

## **OUTREACH**

### **An Abundance of Compassion**

The Joseph Storehouse is helping needy Israelis

Although financial analysts report growth in Israel's economy, beneath the prosperity lies another statistic: At least 20 percent of Israelis live in poverty, according to government figures, and roughly one-third of Israeli children live beneath the poverty line.

To respond to the humanitarian needs in their homeland, Messianic ministers Barry and Batya Segal founded Vision for Israel and created the Joseph Storehouse to distribute food, clothing, medical and school supplies, and assist victims of terrorism. Based outside Jerusalem, Vision for Israel and the Joseph Storehouse ([visionforisrael .org](http://visionforisrael.org)) also reaches out to Israel's Arab community.

Last year, the ministry presented a monetary gift of \$150,000 to the mayor of the northern city of Maalot-Tarshiha, which was devastated during Israel's war with Hezbollah. The gift was funded in part by contributions from Charisma readers and is being used to rebuild a community center.

In addition to responding to physical needs, the ministry seeks to meet Israel's spiritual needs. Segal, who with his wife is a recording artist with Galilee for the Nations, says the continued threat of war is causing Israelis to look "to fill a void with something spiritual."

"People are in their own way saying, 'What is truth?'" Segal says. "People are asking all the questions, and out of that, I think, is where the spirit of God is on the move. ... We're seeing more people coming into the kingdom than at almost any other time."

**Adrienne S. Gaines**

#### MARKETPLACE MINISTRY

### Farm Doubles as Prayer House

Bill James says his family's pecan farm is a ministry tool

James Pecan Farms has gained national attention for its 12,000-pound concrete pecan, which is considered the largest in the world. But farm co-owner Bill James says the business his parents founded near Brunswick, Mo., in the 1940s is more than just a tourist stop. It's also a ministry tool.

"In 1998 my dad passed away," he says. "We felt called to prayer ministry, [so] we considered selling my part of the farm to support ourselves in full-time ministry."

Instead James and his wife, Sandy, decided to convert an old abandoned hog house into a prayer house, where the couple

hosts meetings each week. As a result of the weekly prayer meetings, James says God inspired him to write a children's book titled Wham and Petey: The Harvest, and accompanying songs, though he says he doesn't have experience doing either.

Farm visitors can see live performances of the Wham and Petey story, which is about a hammer and a pecan that get lost after the harvest and have to work together to find their way home. "We have a lot of church groups that realize the stories I've written parallel with the Bible," says James, who formed Farmagination LLC to produce his books and music.

He believes the books and music are just the beginning of God's plan to use the farm (james ) to bring revival. "We live near a small town that's declining, and now we're hoping to revitalize the area economically and God's people spiritually."

**Leilani Haywood**

#### MINISTRY PROFILE

Pastor Reaches Philippines' Poor

Elvie Go marks 25 years in ministry this month

Inside an old warehouse in Ozamis City, Philippines, nearly 10 percent of the city's population gather each week at Salvation and Praise Fellowship. Better known as the Happy Church, the 10,000-member congregation is dedicated to serving the poor and castaway, says the church's pastor, Elvie Go. "When God's people care enough for the poor, we send a message of hope that God cares [for everyone]," she says. "Enough to send His Son, Jesus."

Raised in an obscure mountain village, Go started a home church in 1982. When the group grew to 100 people, she began doubting herself, wondering if she was too “uneducated and untrained” to lead so many. But as she sought the Lord, she heard three times, “Feed My lambs.”

“I feel humbled to see someone [like] Elvie Go, who has not been trained by men but by the Holy Spirit Himself,” says Mary Valdehueza, the principal of Happy Church Bible School. “It is a blessing to watch her loving the sick and hugging the dirty, smelly street children.”

On June 11, a citywide event in Ozamis City will mark the 25th anniversary of Happy Church, which runs a health clinic, tribal ministry, prison ministry and home for the elderly. The building of another orphanage awaits financing.

### Changed Lives

In the original Dreamgirls cast, Brooklyn, N.Y., native Ben Harney was awarded one of show business’ highest honors when he won a 1982 Tony Award for his portrayal of Curtis Taylor Jr., a role Jamie Foxx played in the 2006 film adaptation. But following the whirlwind win, Harney, a born-again Christian, eventually walked away from a business that seemed to embrace him.

“You enter that arena called show business because of your love for the arts, but then you realize it’s all about buying and selling,” he says. “It’s about what sells, and what sells is sex, and what sells is a lot of racy issues that don’t promote what you want to make statements about.”



But instead of abandoning the theater, Harney fused the arts with his faith. Today, he directs the youth and adult drama ministry at Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn and is the founding director of the Brooklyn-based BAMSS (By All Means Save Some) Theatre Works. The ministry develops theatrical projects for its youth theater ensemble, adult repertory company and summer musical theater camps that teach life skills and biblical principles. "Our focus is on process, because it is in process that relationships are built, that lives are really transformed," Harney explains. "So we are building community, but we are also helping people to develop a biblical worldview."

**Suzy A. Richardson**

#### FAITH & CULTURE

#### Getting 'In the Zone'

Every night thousands of men across the U.S. sit down on their couches, turn on the television and vegetate to the background noise provided by ESPN's SportsCenter and CNN's Headline News—the glazed look on their faces a result of stress at work and in the home. It was that stark reality that caused CEO consultant Joe Pettigrew and sports agent Kyle Rote Jr. to create In the Zone (), a men's ministry designed to reach 28- to 40-year-old family men.

Launched after two years of research and planning, the traveling event recreates some of the popular sports and lifestyle programs found on sports networks. Over four hours, or "quarters," issues such as life at work, gender differences and fatherhood are addressed using hi-tech video production, no-holds-barred discussions and energetic music performances. The 2007 tour, scheduled to hit 10 cities in 10 states, kicks

off in Pensacola, Fla., on June 2 and closes Aug. 18 in Birmingham, Ala. "We tried to find people to be on our program that fit the demographics of the guys that would be there, so everybody can relate to somebody on the stage, and it's not just a bunch of superstars that they couldn't touch," says Pettigrew, adding that the ministry will be more like a live TV show than a traditional men's ministry.

Speakers include CBS college football analyst and Super Bowl champion Spencer Tillman, comedian Thor Ramsey, author Eric Metaxes and legendary collegiate track star turned financial wizard Stephen Bolt. Pettigrew says empowering men to grow deeper in their faith by plugging into active small groups is the heartbeat of what In the Zone hopes to accomplish. "For churches that don't have a men's ministry, this is a great way to kick one off," Pettigrew says. "If a church has one, this is a great way to expand it and revitalize it."

**Chad Bonham**

#### NOTEBOOK

Former National Baptist Convention (NBC) USA leader Henry Lyons in April lost his bid to regain the presidency of the Florida General Baptist Convention, the St. Petersburg (Fla.) Times reported. Lyons, 65, held that post until 1995 when he became president of the NBC. He resigned in 1999 after being convicted of grand theft and racketeering. He served five years in prison and is now pastor of New Salem Missionary Baptist Church in Tampa, Fla.

Christianity Today International (CTI) has named Harold B. Smith as its editor-in-chief and CEO of its magazines, church resources, Web sites and periodicals. The 56-year-old served six years as executive vice president of CTI. He succeeds

Harold Myra and Paul Robbins, who retired after serving as CTI's leadership team for three decades.

Greater Europe Mission (GEM) named Henry L. Deneen its new president. Founder of the Center for Global Strategies in Columbia, S.C., Deneen ministered in France for four years after working as lawyer, pastor and lay minister. Deneen begins his term in September and succeeds Ted Noble, who stepped down as president in May 2006. GEM has 400 staff serving in 27 European nations.

One of gospel music's best-known groups gave their farewell performance in a concert that aired on the Gospel Music Channel Easter weekend. Led by their mother, Dr. Mattie Moss Clark, the Clark Sisters—Karen Clark-Sheard, Twinkie Clark, Jacky Clark-Chisholm and Dorinda Clark-Cole—began recording together in the 1970s. Their farewell concert, *Live—One Last Time*, releases on DVD this month, and a related tour is scheduled to begin in September.