

- ▶ TV grid, E3
- ▶ Advice, E4
- ▶ Calendar, E6

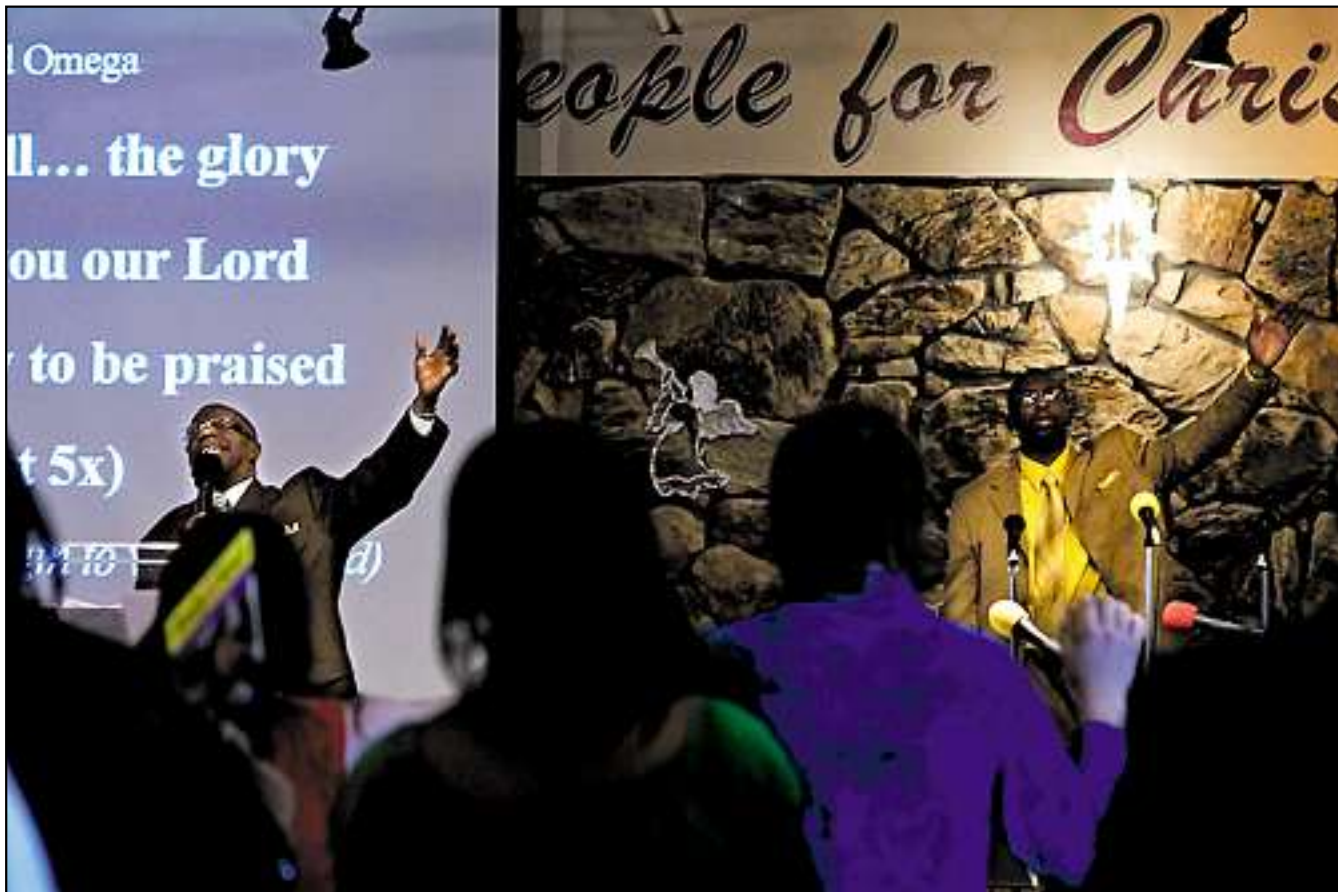
- ▶ Actor-director: Mel Gibson is 53.
- Actress: Victoria Principal is 59.
- Singer: Kimberley Locke ("American Idol") is 31.



"After what I've experienced, nobody can tell me that God is not real. He's real, and he changes lives."

— Rev. Erick White

Journey to faith followed a rocky road



The Flint Journal • John W. Adkisson

▲ Apostle Charles Dantzler (left) and Erick White lead the Sunday morning service at A Word in Season Christian Fellowship in Flint. White, a former prison inmate who served 8 years for dealing drugs, turned his life over to God when he was arrested, and spent his time in prison studying the Bible. White was just ordained as a pastor this month under the guidance of Dantzler, who counsels and teaches Bible studies to prison inmates.



The Flint Journal • Melissa Cousineau

▲ Flint Baptist Temple is at 1430 E. Bristol Road, Burton.

Flint Baptist Temple gets up-close look

By Jean Douglas Clarkson
Contributing Writer

Burton — Flint Baptist Temple reaches out to residents of Briarwood Manor in several ways. Two years ago, Lee Beasley began Robbie's Club, named for a church member. The group goes to Briarwood on the third Saturday of the month to provide a worship service with music and a speaker. Each resident received a Christmas gift through a program organized by Sherry Van Karen.

People in the church select residents' names and buy them individual presents, given out on December 22.

A bus ministry headed by Jeff Keen sends out two busses and a van to pick up children for services, according to the pastor, the Rev. Glenn Tatterson.

Where we worship

- Address: 1430 E. Bristol Road, Burton
- Services: 11 a.m., 6:30 p.m. Sunday; 6:30 p.m. Wednesday
- Pastor: The Rev. Glenn Tatterson
- Affiliation: independent Baptist church

The recent Christmas program included an original drama written by Bethany Lougheed. She leads the drama team and writes original plays for special presentations.

Lougheed's great grandfather, the Rev. Don Lougheed, founded the church in 1952. Many of the family members still attend the church and are active in its ministry. The church met in a home, a store front and at West Bendle Public School before purchasing the current property in 1954. The original building, once a Christian school, now serves as a chapel. An auditorium was added in 1957 and a gymnasium in 1969.

The property was mostly swamp land, secretary Lisa Overby said, and the church dug a hole and prayed it would be filled. The red brick building seats 600; average attendance is 200. The 17 acre property has two houses, a shelter area for picnics and a baseball diamond.

The church supports over 150 missionaries and gave \$70,000 to missions last year. Members pledge support at a Faith Promise conference, held in March with missionary speakers.

Youth leader, the Rev. Josh Hubbard, heads a strong and growing junior and senior high group called

▶ Worship, E2

New year, new life

By Rose Mary Reiz
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A Flint pastor who was once a drug dealer knows that a relationship with Christ can change a person's life.

"Beyond a shadow of a doubt, I know that change is possible," said the Rev. Erick White, who was ordained last month as a pastor of A Word In Season Christian Fellowship, a 60-member, charismatic gospel church in Flint.

"After what I've experienced, nobody can tell me that God is not real. He's real, and he changes lives."

But before change can happen, a person has to be humbled and ready, said White, 40, of Flint. In his case, the readiness process took decades, and involved an 8-year stint in prison.

White, an only child, was 10 years old when his mother died. Earlier, she had lost her eyesight, and had taught her young son how to pay bills and do other household chores that she could no longer perform.

As a result, White grew up feeling self-sufficient and invincible. As a teenager, even when his father left him, he figured he could do just fine on his own.

"I had that 16-year-old male attitude like, 'I don't need anybody,'" he said.

White was placed with a loving foster family, graduated from high school and went to college. He ran track, but lacked the discipline necessary to maintain good grades. He dropped out of college, got a job, was laid off and followed the example of a classmate who had put himself through college by selling drugs.

White's new career selling cocaine didn't last long. He was caught, spent two years at an Upper Peninsula pris-

on, and was released. He got a job as a janitor, then lost it due to the ailing economy.

"When you're 23 and laid off, you do what you know how to do," White said. "For me, that was selling drugs. I didn't do drugs, but I sold them. I didn't love doing it; I did it because it was what I knew how to do."

White lived in southwestern Michigan, where he went back to school and earned a history degree. An accomplished musician, he created an independent record label. Earning a full-time income was still a challenge, so he continued to sell cocaine to make ends meet.

"I treated it like a 9-to-5 job," he said. "It seems crazy now, but in the culture I was in, it seemed normal."

White married and divorced. He began searching, and even praying, for a better life. He read the New Testament and watched television evangelists. He was even baptized in a local apostolic church.

"After that, my conscience really got to me," he said. "I prayed, 'Lord, get me out of this.'"

One night in 1997, White was home alone, praying, when he heard a voice tell him to flush all the drugs he had down the toilet.

"It was as if another person was in

the room with me," he said. "My reaction was, 'All this religion stuff I'm getting into must be making me crazy.' I didn't do what the voice said. Instead, I went out and got very drunk."

Three months later, White was arrested.

"The police came to my house and, while I was laying on the floor with my hands handcuffed behind my back, I remember thinking, 'Well, Lord, it's finally over.' I was nervous, but I was also relieved."

First in the Cass County Jail and then in the Carson City Correctional Facility in central Michigan, White studied the Bible in earnest. He felt blessed to be in a prison with an active ministry. He attended seven church services a week while in prison, and read every book about Christ he could find.

Occasionally, White heard about a Flint church called A Word in Season. Once, he was given a newspaper article about the church from another inmate. Other times, he heard inmates who had passed through the Genesee County Jail talk about a dynamic pastor from A Word in Season who ministered regularly to inmates.

One story in particular got White's

▶ Life, E2

Holy Humor

A pastor was known for his well-timed sermons, which always lasted exactly 30 minutes. One Sunday, however, he spoke for over two hours. The congregation, including his wife, were surprised.

"Why was the sermon so long today?" his wife asked him on the way home.

"Well, I usually grab a mint from my pocket and pop it in my mouth before I start preaching," the pastor said. "I make sure I'm done by the time the mint is gone."

"But today, I grabbed a shirt button instead."

Submitted by B.J. Walker

Submissions for Holy Humor may be e-mailed to rreiz@flintjournal.com or mailed to: Religion Section, The Flint Journal, 200 E. First St., Flint, MI 48501-1925.

Understanding each other

- Scripture (SKRIP' cher): A sacred writing or book. A passage from such a writing or book. The sacred writings of the Bible.

Source: www.thefreedictionary.com/Scripture

NO KIDDING

"PLENTY"

What it cost to build famous structures

• Walt Disney World (1971) — \$400 million, or \$2 billion now

• Carnegie Hall (1891) — \$1 million, or \$23 million now

• Houston Astrodome (1965) — \$35 million, or \$220 million now

• Gateway Arch (1965) — \$13 million, or \$82 million now

• Sydney Opera House (1973) — \$66 million, or \$305 million now

• Louisiana Superdome (1975) — \$134 million, or \$529 million now

Source: World Features Syndicate