



Chatroom

Randy Hall

Be on the lookout for guardian angels

How many times have we allowed life to dictate to us our own circumstances? To make us victims as if we had no say in who our friends were, where we spent our time, or even in who would decide what we wanted to do with our lives?

While I would admit that there are certain things we have no say in (like who our parents are), most things are well within our control. How we decide to feel about things, whether or not to accept certain behavior from people, or where we want to work. In reality we control our own destinies.

I'm living proof that where you start does not determine where you end up. Granted, I'm not a perfected person by any stretch of the imagination. I still watch too much classic sports, certainly am not out sailing the yacht with Chauncey (yet), and drive a modest mid-size car.

However, none of things are of greatest significance to me. It's the relationships I've had the chance to be a part of and the kind people who've helped mold me into the person I've grown into today.

Not so long ago my life lacked spark and purpose. I was one of the Legions of Mediocrity who worked 9-5 in my office job, relished my weekends off and hoped for enough extra money to enjoy a nice evening out with my friends or female companion.

However, like many of you, I felt an uneasiness that I could do more. I wasn't doing what I really wanted and didn't have the foggiest idea even what it was. And I was living my life in fear. Because of the sustained shame I felt because I wasn't living my life anything near a reasonable facsimile of what I considered fulfilling.

Allow me to stop for a moment and assure you that there is a happy path to this article. And here it is. I finally found my purpose and my courage and my cause became bigger than my fear. I turned to the only thing that could help me accomplish my goals in a reasonable amount of time: God.

I asked God to lead me to people who'd be sympathetic to my need to thrive not survive. Not long after that I met the incomparable Gerri Magee.

For those of you who are familiar with Phenomenonews, Gerri is one of the figureheads of that publication and writes a monthly column. While calling to place an ad for my handwriting business (I'm a certified handwriting expert), I struck up a conversation with her.

Well, we got talking and getting to know one another and it just so happened that we were on the same spiritual page and both into being the best human beings we could be. One thing led to another and a wonderful friendship blossomed.

Gerri helped encourage me to dream big and let me know that I was on the right path to success and fulfillment. She helped me get away from some of the negative influences I surrounded myself with (people, activities, habits) and supported my decision to be a positive person. When I started to change my life for the better,

VBS combines Bible lessons, fun

BY JONI HUBRED
STAFF WRITER

What do bugs have in common with the Bible?

Plenty, if you look at them through the eyes of any child who attended Vacation Bible School at First United Methodist Church in downtown Farmington earlier this month. On a "Bug Safari," kids from First Methodist and Salem United Church of Christ learned the Biblical story of David, who grew from a young shepherd to a great king.

The material was used in a number of churches this year, according to First United's director of education, Carolyn Wik. "It is a very popular one, used all over the U.S.," she said. "It approaches the Biblical story through the use of bugs...each one has a Bible verse."

The idea of combining the program for the two churches came last year, when First Methodist, on Grand River, was undergoing renovations.

"We were looking for a place to have it," Wik said. Salem is located on Oakland Street, within walking distance.

This year, Salem children walked to the Methodist church, carrying balloons and receiving a warm welcome.

"This is something we've decided we want to keep going," Wik said.

At North Congregational Church, vacation church school has been a tradition for many years. Assistant minister Mary Bledron says kids have fun, but that's not the program's main focus.

"We're trying to provide an opportunity for children from our church and children from the community to approach some Bible themes in a way that we can't on a Sunday morning. You can be very interactive when you have more time," she said.

The summer offering gives adults who may be interested in regular Sunday School teaching an opportunity to interact with kids and offers a glimpse into what North Congregational is all about.

"Some churches use (vacation Bible school) as evangelism," she said. "We see this as an opportunity for people to see our church, to see what we have to offer and then make a choice," Bledron said.

Nearly 70 students attended the program this year, which has grown every year by about 10 or 15 children. It's offered in August, between summer vacations and activities and the start of the school year.

"A lot of families are ready for their children to do something constructive," Bledron said.



PHOTOS BY PILL BRESLER | OBSERVER

Carlie Couzens reaches for one of the balloons that didn't get launched at the beginning of vacation bible school.



As one of the morning's activities at First United Methodist's Vacation Bible School program, pre-schoolers (left) helped to make the morning snack for everybody. At right, Megan Pierce says a prayer at the beginning of the program at the Methodist church.



Cantor Dubov forms new congregation

Cantor Stephen Dubov of West Bloomfield is starting a brand new congregation in the Farmington area.

Until a permanent location is secured, the congregation will meet at Green Elementary located in West Bloomfield on Walnut Lake Road. There, Friday night services - which will be open to the public - will take place. Also for this initial period, Green Elementary will be the home of the congregation's new Religious school consisting of pre-K through 12th grade.

Cantor Dubov will personally work with all B'nai Mitzvah students to prepare each and every one of them for their mitzvah. In fact, the congregation is now accepting reservations for Bar and Bat mitzvah dates through 2007. Furthermore, the congregation has arranged for weddings, funerals and namings.

and the community. Our whole mishpacha."

Cantor Dubov explains, "We intend to build a reform house of worship, providing a nurturing Jewish environment by teaching a love and understanding of Judaism, stimulating Jewish fellowship, and applying Jewish values to the individual, the family

every member of our Jewish community to become charter members of the new congregation. Says Cantor Dubov, "Don't wait to join. The congregation's premier services start with this year's High Holy Day services."

Rosh Hashanah services will be held at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 6 and 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 7 at the Parthenon House on Drake Road just south of Walnut Lake Road in West Bloomfield. The Cantor's daughter Aleksandra, a voice major at Interlochen Arts Academy in Traverse City, will join in the services.

The voice faculty from Interlochen Arts Academy in Traverse City will join the services. The voice faculty from Interlochen Arts Academy will present the choral music, accompanied by pianist Martin Mandelbaum. The Kol Nidre

Service at 7:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 15 will feature the beautiful sounds of cellist Yurei Lenovitch.

Cantor Dubov is known for creating outstanding programs such as Jazz Shabbat, the Annual Senior's Concert, and the touring Kidz Klezmer Band. As well, Cantor Dubov has arranged Broadway and Yiddish concerts.

Cantor Dubov was invested in 1991 with a master's degree from Hebrew Union College - Institute of Religion in Jerusalem and New York City. He is a member of the Reform movement's America Conference of Cantors as well as



Cantor Stephen Dubov and his daughter, Aleksandra, member of the Conservation Cantors Union, the Cantor's Assembly.

Call (248) 752-6669 for answers to questions, for the Religious School schedule and to obtain a membership packet.

High Holy Day tickets for this September at the Parthenon House, on sale now, may be purchased by phoning (248) 752-6669.