

Discipleship: More than sitting on a church pew

Some people cozy up to the anemic brand of Christianity that is equated with plush pews and pious prayers — even if it involves signing a pledge card putting some money in the offering



D.E. PARKERSON
THE PAPER PULPIT

plate when it passes by. But Christian discipleship involves much more than sitting on a church pew and shelling out a few dollars.

Jesus chose 12 disciples who would carry on the work of His kingdom following His resurrection and ascension.

Yes, He willingly trusted the work of His kingdom into their hands — even though the task of carrying the gospel to the entire world would not be easy.

It is undoubtedly why He said to them, “If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mark 8:34).

They were shocked, flabbergasted, bowled over. They had possibly not understood until that moment that following Jesus would be anything but, as we say in today’s terminology, “a piece of cake.” It would require every last bit of their time and energy.

This lovely, gracious, all-powerful, miracle-performing Christ, whom they thought was on His way to becoming Israel’s king, was now predicting His own execution.

This is possibly what happens, in some degree, to many of us today.

As long as we can go to church, hear a sermon and then go home, living pretty much as we please, indulging in our material gifts, using them for our personal aggrandizement while continuing to yield to our sinful desires and instincts, nobody is provoked, and we can continue our church relationship as an integral part of our lives.

But when the pastor’s sermons begin to mention cross-bearing and dying to sin, that the cost of dedicated discipleship goes beyond practicing the golden rule to the point of being totally committed to the work of His kingdom, many church members find it easy to cop out.

Not everybody who goes by the name of Christian is willing to deny themselves and take up their cross in order to follow Jesus. To accept the love Jesus carried to the whole world, and to lead the kind of life He taught us to live is not a part-time job.

Discipleship means involvement. Jesus set the pace, and He expects His disciples to make an effort to keep that pace.

He said, “As the Father has sent Me, even so I send you” (John 20:21).

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ means accepting Him not only as our Savior but also as our Lord and Master.

Too many church members try to sing both “I Love You, Lord” and “I Did It My Way.”

That isn’t genuine discipleship. Jesus calls us to become involved with the tears, trials and sufferings of humanity around us in specific caring ways.

The task every Christian is called upon to accept and to carry out includes proclaiming the forgiveness of sins through faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot accomplish this mission merely by attending church on Sunday morning. We must go outside the walls of our churches into the community, sharing our faith with our friends and neighbors, with classmates at school and with fellow workers where we work.

Jesus said to His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13).

He sent them into the midst of a decadent and sin-permeated world.

It was, as if He had said: “You, a mere handful of individuals, have been chosen and imbued with power from on high to keep this world from decadence and self-destruction.”

If there was ever a day in which our sinful world needed salt, it is today.

Fellow Christians: Jesus said we are “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world.”

There is no way we can be salt and light just by sitting on a church pew.

Think about what that means in your life.

CCCC hosts Holocaust Remembrance program

BY FROM
CENTRAL CAROLINA
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Six million Jewish people were killed by Nazis during the Holocaust, a scale of carnage that can be hard to grasp.

If you read the victims’ names, one every 15 seconds, it would take nearly three years to call the roll.

But numbers alone don’t capture the human toll. So, Rabbi Mike Stevens and his wife Judy Stevens, of Holly Springs, have another suggestion: Listen to Holocaust survivors and their families, hear their stories, and consider the lessons they learned.

That was the idea behind “The Story of My Mother: Klara Mermelstein,” an hour-long talk focusing on Judy’s mother, who survived the notorious Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. It was presented for Central Carolina Community College’s sixth-annual Holocaust Remembrance, held Feb. 28, at the Dennis A. Wicker Civic & Conference Center.

Standing in front of a large screen displaying photos of her ancestors and stories about their close-knit family, Judy recounted her mother’s experience as a young woman, in her early-20s, when Nazis occupied her native Hungary late in World War II.

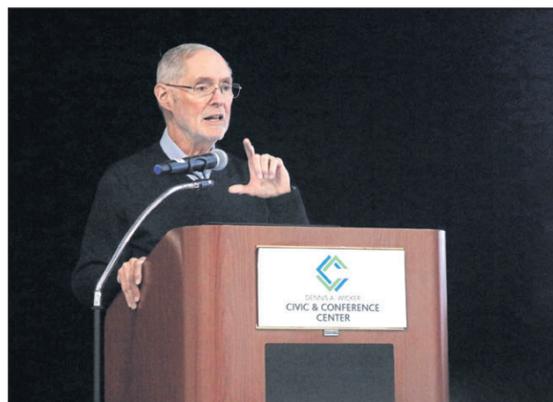
Judy’s husband, Mike, stood behind a podium across the stage, adding historical and philosophical context to help audience members understand one of the worst atrocities in human history.

The horror began slowly, Judy said, when



PHOTOS FROM CENTRAL CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Above: Judy Stevens speaks about her mother, Klara Mermelstein, who survived the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. **Below:** Rabbi Mike Stevens speaks during Central Carolina Community College’s sixth-annual Holocaust Remembrance event Feb. 28 at the Dennis A. Wicker Civic Center.



Jewish residents in Hungary lost civil rights to operate a business or attend school. But things accelerated when they were forced to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing to identify themselves as Jewish — a Nazi policy that made it easier to round up those same residents just weeks later and force them into “ghettos,” densely packed, walled-off portions of the city, where Klara Mermelstein lived briefly with 11 people

sharing one room with a bathroom and kitchen.

Despite the misery, Jews were already suffering in Germany, her family never expected the same thing to happen to them.

“Mom always felt, ‘I’m Hungarian. Nothing’s ever going to happen to me,’” Judy said. “There was this denial.”

Things got even worse when Jews were herded from the ghetto onto railroad cars for a long trip with no food or water.

Nazis told everyone they were being resettled. They were really being sent to Auschwitz.

As they entered the concentration camp in German-occupied Poland, healthy people who were able to work were sent to the right and survived, at least for a time. Elderly people and children about 14 and younger were sent to the left and gassed to death.

Judy’s mother was pushed right along with a sister and four friends. Her mother was pushed left. As Judy read from her mother’s own writings, Klara Mermelstein described that horrible moment: “My mother looked at me as we were separated. She did not know why we were separated, and her eyes looked desperate. It was the last time I saw her.”

Life in Auschwitz was

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Believe the eyewitnesses

I recently read an article about the skeptical younger generation.

It seems that the youth of America are less willing to believe what they read or what they hear, feeling they must see it to believe it.

Some have called them the video generation, with their phones always on the ready and their sharing of videos and pictures to chronicle all the events in their life. When it comes to believing something, they want to see the video.

Their skepticism is understandable in our culture of lies and spins, but history was not captured on video, it was recorded by eyewitnesses who, if reliable, must be believed.

In our text for today, the Apostle Peter speaks of the return of Christ in power and glory as both promised by the prophets

and confirmed by what he himself had seen.

On the mountaintop with Jesus unveiled in glory, Peter, along with James and John, witnessed with their own eyes the transfiguration of Christ, as well as the appearance of Moses and Elijah who had died long ago.

Peter remembers verbatim the words that were audibly spoken by God the Father, “This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased.” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:17 with Matt. 17:5)

A voice from heaven; a man arrayed in heavenly glory and two men, long dead, standing with him in glory speaking about events soon to come, which would bring Jesus back to where they were in heaven (see Luke 9:30-31).

Some might think this is a cleverly devised tale concocted by Peter and

the others to make Christ out to be more than just a man, but it was not. They saw it with their own eyes and heard it with their own ears.

The Apostles were not men crafting a new religion to gain a following but men who would one day die for the truth of their testimony about Jesus, God’s Son.

I spoke with a young man years ago who had grown up in church, heard the biblical stories, read the Bible himself, yet still did not believe it was true.

He said he had a problem, “with all the miracles and fantastic stories,” which seemed to him as though they were myths, legends and fairytales.

I said I would agree with him except for one thing; the eyewitnesses. They were either the most clever and diabolical liars the world has ever known or, they actually saw what they wrote down for us to read.

The Bible speaks

through eyewitnesses and I believe them, even without video. For some, seeing is believing, but for me, believing has been seeing.

I believe the eyewitnesses — do you?

The Bible Speaks Luncheon Study meets every second and fourth Thursday at noon at the Golden Corral. Join us for our study in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. No charge except to purchase your lunch.

Bruce MacInnes is pastor emeritus of Turner’s Chapel in Sanford.



BRUCE MACINNES
THE BIBLE SPEAKS

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Contact The Herald at news@sanfordherald.com or call us at (919) 709-9000 for information about items in our Wednesday or Sunday Carolina section.

BIRTHS

• Ashley Danielle Hunt, daughter of Denise and Matthew Hunt of Sanford, was born Feb. 4. (FirstHealth)

• Broughton Lee Butler, son of Karly Eckey and Brandon Butler of Sanford, was born Feb. 7. (FirstHealth)

• Blakelee Jo Combs, daughter of Ashlee Jo Newell and Christopher Blake Combs of Cameron, was born March 11. (CCH)

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SEASON

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presented each of the debutantes with a red rose, a sterling silver charm bracelet and charm engraved with their initials.

Co-chairs of the ball, Mrs. Clifton Waldo Paderick III and Mrs. Justin Brent Smith, welcomed the debutantes and their mothers.

Mrs. Christopher Bruce Slate shared the history of the Sanford Cotillion Club with those in attendance and spoke about etiquette and responsibilities of the debutantes.

Mrs. Edwin Lewis

Foushee Jr., calendar chair woman, provided debutantes with a calendar of events and gatherings for the debutante season.

Bailey Elizabeth Heins was named the lead debutante of the June 6 presentation ball.

Bailey's parents, Mr. and Mrs. James Edward Heins Jr., have been club members for over 20 years.

Bailey's grandparents, the late Mr. James Edward Heins Sr. and Ms. Carroll Butts Heins, were also members of the Sanford Cotillion Club, which originated in 1950.

This event marks the start of the 2020 Debutante season.

CLUB NEWS

SANFORD CIVITAN CLUB

Two longtime members of the Sanford Civitan Club, Peggy and Jimmie Coggin, were recently presented an award to honor their contributions and service to the ideals of the Civitan.

They were honored with the status of Lifetime Members and are the first in the club to receive this honor.

The Sanford Civitan Club was chartered in 1956 and has served Sanford and Lee County, focusing on helping those with physical and developmental disabilities.

Projects such as wheelchair ramps, the Floyd Knight School Christmas party, the N.C. Special Olympics and the Junior Civitan and Boys & Girls Home at Lake Waccamaw are some examples of what the club helps with.

The club also supports many organizations financially including the Salvation Army, HAVEN of Lee County, Bread Basket of Sanford, Family Promise of Lee County and Christians United Outreach Center.

KIWANIS CLUB OF LEE COUNTY

At the Kiwanis Club of Lee County's March 11 meeting, guest speaker was Margaret Cannell, with North Carolina Operation Lifesaver.

She joined NCOL as the state coordinator in May 2015, and works with a network of volunteers to promote railroad safety education.

Cannell spoke about railroad safety issues and solutions.

Operation Lifesaver is a national rail safety education group that began in 1972 in Idaho in response to a rising rate of incidents.

Many people are unaware that trains cannot stop quickly to avoid collisions; or, they take chances by ignoring warning signs and signals, going around lowered gates, stopping on tracks, or simply not paying attention when approaching highway-rail crossings. People also make the potentially fatal mistake of choosing railroad tracks as shortcuts or as places to walk or run for recreation. They may not realize that walking on train tracks is illegal, or understand how quickly and quietly

a train can approach.

Safety tips given by Operation Lifesaver can save your life — or the life of someone you love.

JONESBORO ROTARY CLUB

The Jonesboro Rotary Club met at The Flame on March 12 with President Bill Stone welcoming all those present.

Mike Stec welcomed guest Martha Oldham and zipped through announcements and brags (get well, David Spivey) because it was White Elephant Auction day.

Robert Gilleland was the auctioneer.

Determined to generate money to fight polio, the club sold some amazing items including a real beach umbrella, a bird house, giant stuffed animals, a hammer with several 007 features, original art from Larry Aiken of unidentifiable fruit, a cannon from Sweden (it's true), an almost-working miniature wooden windmill (ready for painting), a back massager, a fondue set, pottery, ash trays, salt and pepper shakers (possibly belonging to The Flame), golf balls, a golf cap (don't ask Jim Miller to wear it), beer (that's right, beer, from exotic places), a volume of "Rotary Club Murder Mystery," a TV stand, luggage, and on it went.

An amazing collection of items for an amazing cause.

Neal Jensen faithfully recorded every successful bid, and his quick estimate of funds generated was in excess of \$500.

Special thanks to assistant auctioneer Van Silliman for his invaluable help at the podium.

Nobody presents an item like Van. And Debbie Scott, Yvonne Bullard, and John Ramsperger truly bring the auction spirit to the White Elephant sale. Thanks so much.

There was another weekly winner in our \$100 drawing in Jonesboro Rotary's Pots of Gold fundraising effort for club projects. The Pots of Gold Fundraiser benefits local nonprofits, features \$20 tickets, which earn weekly chances to win a \$100 prize chosen at a drawing each week (through June) at regular meetings of the club. A drawing

for a grand prize of \$1,000 will be held in June. Every winning ticket is reentered and can win again.

The meeting was closed with the 4-Way Test and Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag. God Bless America and Sanford and Lee County. Stay healthy and clean everyone.

SANFORD ROTARY CLUB

It was a beautiful day at the March 10 meeting of The Sanford Rotary Club with President Nominee Melissa Richardson presiding.

Tommy Thystrup, owner of Carolina Town and Country, led The Sanford Rotary Club Prayer. Melissa then thrilled us with her knowledge of 80s TV trivia.

Under announcements/bragging bucks: Mindy Marlowe bragged on her son for competing in the North Carolina State Chess Championship for K-3rd graders. Tom Spence thanked fellow Rotarians for sharing their concern for him while he was out sick. Alan Dossenbach, owner of Dossenbach's Finer Furniture, bragged on the N.C. State Women's Basketball team for becoming the ACC Champions.

Raffle Winners: Both Joy Gilmore and Tommy Thystrup won \$5 gift cards to Java Express and Huggger Muggger. The 50/50 winner of \$25 cash was also Joy Gilmore.

Rotarian Bill Morgan, a qualified professional at the Stevens Center presented about the importance of summer camps for children.

Bill is a big believer in summer camps for children, as they have a huge impact on our youth.

Visit the American Camp Association at www.acacamps.org for more information on summer camps.

A contribution will be made by Sanford Rotary Club in Bill's name to Lee County Partnership For Children & Families.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by James Mitchell, The 4-Way Test was led by Tony Lett, and the meeting was adjourned.

The Sanford Rotary Club meets at The Flame Restaurant on Tuesdays at 12 noon.

CCCC

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brutal for those who lived. Five people slept in a bed, usually on rags and straw, and her mother

was fortunate to share hers with relatives and friends, who huddled tightly together to stay warm. Prisoners in the camp were starving; her mother, whose job was to peel potatoes, survived by eating unserved scraps.

Still, that was far better than what was happening in another building not far away. By her second day at Auschwitz, Judy's mother understood the atrocity taking place.

"She could smell the burning, and the burning

was the flesh of people who did not survive, the ones who went to the left," Judy said. "But she didn't tell anybody. She kept it to herself, because she didn't want to scare everybody."

Over the course of months, Judy's mother

survived forced labor and packed train trips among concentration camps, until one day, the Red Cross showed up and announced that everyone was free.

Because Klara Mermelstein and her sister were too sick to travel, they couldn't leave the camp for another three months. When they did, they returned to Hungary, where Judy's parents were married and Judy was born.

the recent resurgence of antisemitism and other prejudice in America. "There are people who are still treated like that. You must not forget that we are one story. We survived, but there are other people."

The Holocaust presentation was arranged through the Center for Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education of North Carolina, a speakers bureau based in Chapel Hill. It was offered as part of CCCC ACES, the college's Academic and Cultural Enrichment Series, with assistance from CCCC Foundation's Joyner Fund.

Fearing a new wave of antisemitism when Russia invaded their homeland in 1956, Judy's family escaped, fleeing first to Austria, then to England and eventually Canada, where they settled in Montreal as refugees.

Klara Mermelstein, her sister and one brother survived the Holocaust. Her mother, father and three brothers did not.

"The reason my mother got through the Holocaust was because she had a goal," Judy told the audience. "And her goal was not herself; it was to save her younger sister, who was 14 years old."

There were very few empty seats in a Civic Center auditorium packed with college students, elected officials and even a group of fourth- and fifth-graders from Tramway Elementary. Still, except for some conversation during a 15-minute question and answer session that covered topics ranging from immigration to how people should teach the Holocaust, there was not a sound as Judy and Mike recounted the history of Klara Mermelstein and her family.

"It's not over," Judy concluded, encouraging everyone to reflect on

As guests moved in and out of the auditorium, many stopped in front of more than a dozen easels, taking in photographs of the Holocaust. Images of victims and sites like the Auschwitz concentration camp were framed in historical periods, beginning with Jewish life between the two World Wars and moving from Adolph Hitler's rise to power through life after liberation from Nazi rule.

The exhibit, titled "Shoah: How Was It Humanly Possible?," was provided by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel, and considered that question: How could something as immoral as the Holocaust — or "Shoah," using the Hebrew word — have happened at all?

The final easel presented a quote from Primo Levi, a noted writer and Holocaust survivor. It came as an ominous warning, one that still resonates, even an ocean and many decades away: "It happened, therefore it can happen again."

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