

Florida's The Story of Noah looks for financial assistance

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=5951>

Each year for the last five years, my wife and I have gone to Florida to see the Story of Jesus Passion Play. For over twenty years, Mike Graham of the non-profit company Power and Light Productions, along with hundreds of volunteers, has produced the play, typically doing two performances per weekend for five consecutive weekends around Easter time.

The Story of Jesus is a powerful drama about the life of Jesus from the time of his birth until his triumphant final return on a white horse. The drama focuses mostly on the time of his ministry, crucifixion and rising from the dead. Even after having seen the play many times, I am always struck to see the portrayal of Christ in his humanness, which is what sets this play apart from other passion plays.

The seasonal attendance averages around 13,000 to 15,000, and it has attracted national attention in recent years. Last year, New York Times reporter Dan Barry wrote a front-page article about the play in its April 21 issue.

After having done The Story of Jesus for so many years, last year Graham and his Board decided that it was time to do a new play in the 2012 season that Graham had written, The Story of Noah. When the decision was made to do so, Graham and the Board had no idea if the audiences that had attended the Story of Jesus would be interested in the new play. As it turned out, tickets for the entire season had sold out before the fourth weekend of the play, which had not happened for a number of years.

Just as The Story of Jesus is not a play intended for children, The Story of Noah was not written in the traditional style as a children's play. Though many of the elements of a typical Noah play were present, including many animals, the essence of the play centers upon Matt. 24:37 when Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the Son of Man. Graham described the play as an answer to the question, "why was mankind so evil that God decided to destroy the earth?" Most of the play was about the period of time between God's revelation to Noah that He was going to do so and the great flood.

Of course, the Scriptures don't tell us specifically what happened during that time, but as Graham explains on their website, "The Bible says of that day, "every imagination of the thoughts of mankind's heart was only evil continually," and that the intent of the play is "to capture the terrible challenges that Noah might have faced as he struggled to build the ark and preach to a very wicked world for 100 difficult years."

The Story of Noah portrays a family that takes Noah at his word that he had heard from God that they were to build the ark, despite their own skepticisms. It also described what it must have been like to have lived under the duress of the Nephilim, an evil people with a governor that declared himself to be God.

The play ends with a transition to modern times and end times, since Noah's life was a foreshadow of things to come.

Both plays are facing a challenging future. There is a strong need for permanent facilities so that there can be more performances and more plays can be done throughout the year.

The facilities that are being used now are rented every year, requiring a strenuous and expensive set-up and tear-down of the set. There are few restroom facilities, seating is on very uncomfortable bleachers, and there are steel columns every twenty feet in front of the audience. Despite the drawbacks of the facilities, people come back to see the play year after year for one simple reason – the quality of the performance is fantastic. In fact, one person who conducts business with Disneyworld and Sea World was astonished at the quality of the play, even going so far as saying that it was better than most Broadway plays he had seen.

Others have seen the value of the play as well. A local family has donated forty acres of land for the construction of a new theater, and others are beginning to give more to help in the effort. Still, it will take a substantial amount of money to build a basic no-frills but functional facility. That is where I hope my readers can help. We are seeking interested partners who see the value of live Christian drama and would be willing to help financially or otherwise to see that the new facilities will be built within the next few years.

Information about the plays are available at www.storyofjesus.com, and I would welcome any inquiries as well.

As they say in show biz, the show must go on!

©2012 Randy W. Bright

Randy W. Bright, AIA, NCARB, is an architect who specializes in church and church-related projects. You may contact him at 918-582-3972, rwbrightchurcharch@sbcglobal.net or www.churcharchitect.net.

This entry was posted on Thursday, May 10th, 2012 and is filed under [Columns](#).