

## FIVE MINUTES WITH TOM MOOTY

For Immediate Publication in The "Newport (N) Plain Talk"  
Column Number 2218

### "HERE WE GO, PLAYING AGAIN!"

I have had many wonderful blessings in my life. I was privileged to serve the West End Baptist Church as its pastor over a span of sixteen years, between 1971 - 1987; with a little "time off for good behavior" in 1976. One of the many wonderful things The Lord led us to do was to write and produce several Easter and Christmas Programs.

They were a tremendous amount of work; but always yielded a tremendous amount of spiritual blessings. Ross Woody at Lincoln Avenue Baptist Church and I worked together to produce several of them. I let him direct the choir (yeah, right); and I concerned myself with the dramatics. We had an agreement toward the last of his work in Newport - he "had" Christmas; and we "had" Easter.

We took more than our share of shots from people who didn't understand what we were doing. "Playing with the Gospel" was one of their favorites. That one was lobbed our way more than once.

But, the church was deeply committed to these presentations of the gospel; and jumped right in each year. Then, Ross went into the full time pastorate; and our Children's Church took up the mantle with programs of their own at Christmas.

It was wonderful!

So, when "Miss 'Nita" and I came back to West End Baptist Church, one of the things that began to be discussed was "The Easter Program". Well, "fast forward to today; and "Miss 'Nita" has beaten me to Heaven; and COVID-19 has come and gone and come and gone and come and (well I don't know); but, I can announce that we will present our "Easter Dramatic Program" this Friday, Saturday and Easter Sunday Evenings at 7:00 PM.

The first ever Matinee' Performance last Sunday was well received by the huge crowd that attended; and from the comments, lives were changed by the "Gospel in Living Pictures".

Some of our people who were "veterans" of these Dramas still remembered some of their lines forty and forty-five years ago! The kids (now adults) were talking excitedly about what they did while we were in rehearsal (something about large orders of french fries up at the (long-gone) Burger Chef). The set-builders were talking about the "hooks" and "wires" that were put in the ceilings; and how we "made Jesus go up into the attic for the Ascension scene".

I remember all of that. I remember all the paintings that Dennis Strange and Charlie Kimberlin and a lot of others made. Huge paintings: one of them was over thirty feet wide and twelve feet tall! There were paintings of ornate temples and ordinary homes; stables and palaces. I have been told that the huge painting of the crucifixion scene is still up there in the attic of the church.

In those early days, there were paper mache' rocks and styrofoam blocks and black background material; costumes our ladies had made; crepe hair beards (the men grow their own beards now) and stage blood, chicken wire flats and even a faux dogwood tree. I remember, one sound track took over a mile of recording tape to build, hundreds of feet of cables and wires and ropes, and a gazillion safety pins.

There were songs to learn, lines to learn, sets to build, lights to hang, motors to install, and - have I told you about all the hooks and chains and stuff and things.

I will never forget when we almost hung Judas. I mean - REALLY almost REALLY hung Judas. Joey had a harness that someone was supposed to hook to the rope in the total darkness. (Have I mentioned that one of my biggest problems was teaching men how to walk in a long flowing robe in total darkness?)

Anyway, Joey got on the chair and his "rigger" (I will never tell) "rigged" him by "rigging" his rope to his belt and not his harness; and the music built up to a crescendo, with beating drums and crashing cymbals and blaring trumpets; and Chris turned on his spotlight; and there was Judas, working hard to make it work! Didn't happen!

Then, there was the case of the "automatic stone"; which Bobby Ragan had rigged to move back "by itself" on my cue. It was a good idea, except we forgot to tell Bill and his crew of Roman soldiers standing guard. Talk about realism! When that stone rolled back "by

itself" and that brilliant light came on and all that smoke billowed out of the empty tomb; those guys weren't acting scared!

I could go on and on. We could talk about Pilate taking his break when he was supposed to go on; and the choir platform that fell under the full load; and wires that overheated - but I'll just leave that for another day.

There are new memories being made every day, which will be "column fodder" for years to come (however long The Lord allows). As the old saying goes: "I got a million of 'em".

Suffice it to say that this bunch (some new, some returning) wants to subject themselves to all that again! And so, I hope you will make your plans to be here to enjoy it this Easter. It will be worth your while, I promise!

And, by the way; we are not "playing with The Gospel" when we do this. The message will be abundantly clear - even though the method might be a little "out there".

*Tom Mooty has served the West End Baptist Church as Supply Pastor, Interim Pastor, Pastor, Senior Pastor and Very Senior Pastor over three terms for an aggregate total of thirty-four years. He appreciates the many comment about this long-running column which are sent to tommooty15@gmail or P.O. Box 851 in Newport, 37822.*