



# Forty Years of Ministry

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## Forty Years of Salvation Decisions

*Contributed by Kathy Casler*

2010 is a year to celebrate many things, one of which is 40 years of the Awana program at First Baptist Church. It was started in 1970 by youth pastor, Ray Luke, who also served as the first Commander. At that time, Pastor Decker was our relatively new pastor. He had begun his ministry in 1969.

Following Ray Luke as Commanders in the beginning years were Leonard Ortiz, William Rexford and Warren Johnson. Leadership included the faithful ministries of Ray Luke, Glen Burton, Mike Snyder, William Rexford, Ken Bullis, Donald Gerard and Wes Lindock.

Awana is a children's ministry which began in the Chicago area in 1950. So it is celebrating 60 years of assisting children to know, love and serve Jesus Christ with the support of the church and parents. It was established by Pastor Lance Latham and Art Rorheim as a youth program at the North Side Gospel Center. They were committed to creating a program that would appeal to youth, teach the salvation message and help them grow spiritually so they could experience an adult lifetime of serving the Lord. From humble beginnings in the Chicago area, the ministry has grown to serving over a million children in over 18,000 churches world wide with more than 12,000 being in the United States. Over 100 denominations are involved.

The name, Awana, is an acronym for **Approved Workman Are Not Ashamed** which is taken from 2 Timothy 2:15 in the Bible: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth [NIV]."

The Don and Lynn Greens, the Rance and Linda Bennetts, Matt Sobie, Willow Cramer, and Elisabeth Tarchala are just some of the several families that have come to know Christ and attend FBC because of the Awana program. Our Awana program is one of FBC's primary evangelistic outreaches.

At FBC, Awana will start in September and will meet weekly into the month of May. Awana meets on Wednesday evenings, filling the entire facility with learning God's Word, music, game time, snacks and discipleship.

Over the past 40 years, many have served as leaders and assistants. Commanders include David Cobb (youth pastor), Herb Haines, George Watson, Lynn and Julie Ort, Bill Green, Rich and Gina Doorn and John Gerard. For several years, the Commander position was vacant, with the responsibilities divided between Pastor Taylor, serving as Administrator, and Kathy Casler, as program coordinator. Later, Karen Onan filled the position of program coordinator.

The 2010-2011 Awana year will have the position of Awana Commander filled by Phillip Van Laan. Brenda Nauta is the current club leader for the Truth and Training (grades 3-6) girls; Herb Whorley is the boy's club leader. Angie Ingram returns as club leader for the Sparks, which includes K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade. A Cubbies program, led by Kailey Van Laan, is offered to the children of Awana workers and ESL students. Handling all the financial and attendance/section record keeping are Davidpaul and Sheila Lemmen, Awana Club secretaries.

The Awana staff will be holding their annual staff/leaders orientation on Wednesday, September 1<sup>st</sup> with dinner catered by Louise Green.

If you would like to be involved in this ministry by listening to children recite their memory verses, please contact Phil VanLaan.

## Hardship and Harmony Meet in Two Lives---One with Local Connections.

Bruce and Lisa Wethey lead our worship with music and testimonies during the morning service at First Baptist Church of Lowell, Sunday, July 25 at 9:30 a.m.

In decorated venues as well as difficult personal challenges, the music

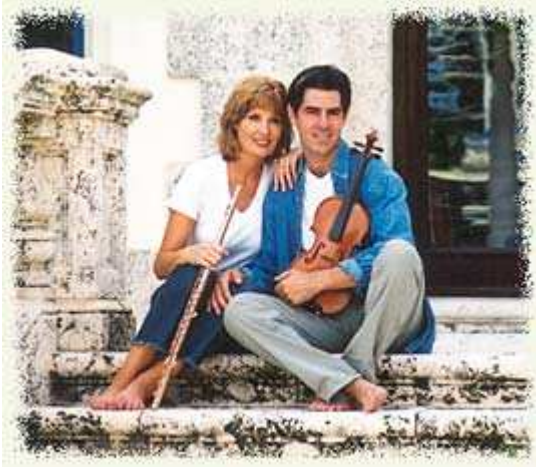
of Bruce and Lisa leaves an inspiring impact.

From the concert stages of the world, including Carnegie Hall and La Scala Opera House, come celebrated violin and flute duo BRUCE & LISA. Husband and wife Bruce & Lisa (LaCross) Wethey left highly successful careers in the mainstream classical music world to pursue full-time instrumental music ministry.

Unlike any other performing duo today, BRUCE & LISA have an incredible range of worship, recital and lecture experience. Answering God's call in their lives, BRUCE & LISA now serve the Lord with their gifts, sharing the love of Christ with audiences in concert and testimony, delivering His message of hope, peace and encouragement.

The ministry of BRUCE & LISA has taken them from church concerts to conferences nationwide. They have led worship for special prayer services at the Pentagon, and have appeared with the ministries of both Chuck Swindoll and David Jeremiah. They have recorded for many artists and have been guests on numerous television and radio programs, including Washington D.C.'s "Janet Parshall's America" radio broadcast.

Bruce is a Grammy-nominated violinist and composer who has performed with Michael W. Smith, Natalie Grant, Avalon, Michael English, Josh Groban, Martina



## Another abortion center closes

The local 40 Days for Life campaign leaders in Fayetteville, Arkansas recently reported that their city's one and only surgical abortion facility is CLOSING!

Praise God!

During three previous 40 Days for Life campaigns in Fayetteville, the abortionist grew more and more aggressive towards the prayer volunteers, taunting and ridiculing them in person -- and in the media ... but they did not react; they persisted in peaceful vigil and remained to pray for the unborn, the women entering the facility -- and especially for the abortionist himself. And NOW ... that facility is closing down!

All the glory belongs to God ... and please remember to pray for the conversion of the abortionist -- and for all women who have been hurt by abortion since that facility opened in Fayetteville.

The legs of the hideous monster that is the abortion industry continue to crack.

McBride, Alan Jackson, Natalie Cole, Ray Charles, and Michael Jackson. He joined Casting Crowns for their tours of Europe, Australia, New Zealand and throughout the United States. Former first violinist with the Florida Philharmonic Orchestra, he now tours regularly with Christian artist, Twila Paris. Bruce's solo violin can also be heard on VeggieTales videos, including, "Sheerluck Holmes and the Golden Ruler."

Lisa made her New York debut at the age of 20, toured as concert soloist and premiered over fifty works for flute. She is a Yamaha clinician and performing artist and the former professor of flute for Florida International University. Her amazing experience as the survivor of multiple brain tumor surgeries over the past ten years has given birth to a strong, new side to their ministry. Lisa has become a sought-after women's ministry speaker bearing witness to the power of prayer and God's healing.

Lisa has a local connection to Rance Bennett, a member of First Baptist Church of Lowell and former owner of Lowell Auto Body. Bennett shared, "We knew each other in junior and senior high school in Ionia. In high school we played in the jazz band together. My most memorable moment [with Lisa] was playing Led Zepplin's "Stairway to Heaven" with an-

*(Continued on page 4)*