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April 1, 2016

Dear Friends & Family,

"VIA 13 IS NOW HIS-STORY"



[3/31] Today is the “eve” of April Fool's Day, & also my 42nd spiritual birthday. In 16+ years of writing these newsletters, I cannot recollect one time writing it the day before! But, alas, that is the nature of *Via Dolorosa* this year. It is the 2nd biggest workload of the year for me—a close 2nd to the 4 summer camps I do, encompassing a ¼ of a year. In fact, it is common to start thinking & planning for this *Easter* season production before *Christmas!* As I do for camp counselors in the Spring, in late Fall I survey our church body for potential actors. Altogether there are about 100 people in our cast & crew each year, most from Immanuel Church—a congregation of about 400. Given I oversee the Roman sector of Via, my particular recruits tend to be **Romans** or **Jewish Zealots**.

"FRIENDS, ROMANS, COUNTRYMEN-START YOUR ENGINES!"



Being the “head Roman” in Via, viz, “**Pontius Pilate**”, I'm taking my liberty to misquote that famous line from **Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar***, which, by the way, I'm into watching my 3rd version of it right now, initially for Via preparation. I'm listening to the “Map of Jerusalem” song from *The Robe* soundtrack right now-one of my top 3 favorite movies. Speaking of the music, one of my many duties/tasks/responsibilities once the engines of Via “start”, is music compilation & editing. I have compiled & edited-down to the second(!), dozens of songs from my various Bible movie soundtracks to use for the many Romanesque stations of Via: *The Roman Courtyard, Herod's Palace, The Antonia Stairwell, Claudia's Quarters, The Antonia Hallway, The Fortress Antonia, & The Dungeon*. In addition to recruiting the actors mentioned above, I'm also responsible to costume many of them. Several bins of clothing, leather military tunics [made from women's coats bought at thrift stores], belts, breastplates, sandals, boots, helmets, weapons, & other often homemade various & sun-dry “era” props are brought from my home. Costume modification & repairs are also always involved. Actors also need orienting, directing, training, etc. I've written a # of the scripts for Via. An astute devotee of Bible movies will recognize many lines from them in my monologues. If I am praised as a actor, as you will see below, it is for 3 reasons: Jesus has gifted me with it to bring Him glory, to bless His people, & to reach the lost. I merely imitate other actors I admire, often practicing while watching them-their facial expressions, pauses, & inflections. This year I

also painted two new Roman banners, both of which I wish so very much I would have made them several years ago: **“Pontius Pilatus Praefectus”** & **“Ave Caesar”**.

“IT'S A SETUP!”



It seems I hardly had taken down our Christmas tree, when Via set-up began. Many, many days involving hauling & lifting bins, setting up tarps, “stone” walls, fabric, 30+ electric “candle” lanterns, chains [found on the highways over the many years], Roman standards, shields, signs, a Roman “pyramid/monument” & flag, overhead “can” lights [I make them from **coffee** “cans”], etc. Despite the fact that this, our 13th year of Via was the most prepared re: set-up I have ever been, yet *still* I was scrambling with several last-minute prop installations, tweaks, & repairs. As with my summer camps & preparations for them, by the time opening day comes of the actual event, I'm spent, drained, exhausted, & empty for it-feeling I have nothing to give. While in my self I detest this place, it is a very *good* place to be. I truly believe our God so ordains & orchestrates it that way. This ensures He gets the glory as for me to pull it off it has to be entirely by His grace & strength.

"THE GLORY & GORY OF THE MINISTRY"



I've often said through the years with *some-what* tongue-in-cheek, "Ministry would be great if you didn't have to work with people!". One of the best & one of my most-favorite aspects of Via is how much of our church family it involves. The cast entails children, youth, young adults, middle-aged, & many senior saints. It is one of the beauties of Via. Our church is very missions & outreach-minded, but nothing we do the rest of the year comes close to Via re: whole-church involvement. And yet, with people, come problems. It must be so. We have saints in Via who have walked with the Lord for decades, & those who have known Him for only a short time-babes in Christ. Hence, at Via each year-*every year*-we have issues. We wouldn't be human & Christian without them. To be honest, many times I have wanted to walk away from it all. Even this year, just a few months ago, I felt my time in Via was over-that I, & maybe it (?), had run its course. This is all the more curious, as oftentimes I feel as if I "live" in Via-its era, its music, its atmosphere-in the Bible movies of the 50's & 60's. And I want to stay there. I "zone-out" in Via many times. Even now, listening to the soundtrack of The Greatest Story Ever Told [perhaps my official Via "theme" music over the many years?], I want to go back to Via. I want to live there. I'm heartsick that it is over for another year, Lord willing. As much of a strain, stress, exhausting enterprise as it is, I wish last week was only a "warm-up" to do it next week. Every year it just kills me inside re: how fast the week of Via goes. Oh God. I know He will help me.

"BREON'S NEON"



Once again, as I've done so many times during the Via season, I “fell on” my pastor, Bill Breon. I feel as if he “endures” me every year at Via-my angst, stress, etc. He seems not to mind! When I felt like I was finished with it, he turned on the lights for me, hence, “Breon's Neon”. He helped me to see that I do much more in Via than just act. I actually help him pastor & shepherd many people through its several weeks of preparation, setup, & performance. Another golden aspect of this production is that many brothers who are not typically “seen or heard” re: in Immanuel's limelight the rest of the year, come out of their wood-work, so to speak, during Via Dolorosa. They “put on the greasepaint”, or more accurately, *charcoal*, & help impact over a thousand people each year.

"THE SHOW MUST GO ON!"



So, despite all of the behind-the-scenes' struggles & issues each year, our God has so graciously enabled this ministry to continue. What makes it all worth it is the feedback we get from the public who walked through it. This year, amazingly, about 75% of the people who went through Via had never been! I've copied & pasted below various comments from people's texts, emails, FB messages, etc., basically, as they came to me. Jesus be praised & blessed for them all. Sincerely, **"The Procurator"**.

**Brother ,brother, brother. Thank you for piercing my spirit tonight. My wife and I thoughtfully and emotionally endured the journey...the mirror reflection was needed in my walk...this was an incredible event. What an honor it was...to walk thru this year. My love and adoration for my precious savior poured out during the Judas in the garden scene.*

***Guerty, we were so blessed to be able to attend tonight! What an amazing night! Thank you to your team that worked so diligently to bring the Easter story to life! We were humbled to walk through all the scenes, and share a glimpse of what Jesus went through for us, knowing that it was indeed our sin that put him on the cross, and that he willingly went to the cross for us, out of love for us, and obedience to the Father. Hopefully, next year, we can bring a whole gang from Pottstown!**

**Sharon and I loved going through the Via Dolorosa last night and it was very meaningful and emotional for both of us! To experience and see what Christ went through for us, to die for our sins so we could have eternal life with Him, was very moving. Thank you again and God Bless*

**...last night was about Jesus...The way you and your team portrayed the last days of Christ was magnificent and powerful; it was good for my heart.*

***[WE] MADE OUR WAY TO EMMANUEL CHURCH LAST NIGHT WITH ANTICIPATION BUT NOT KNOWING EXACTLY WHAT TO EXPECT. WE WERE THE FIRST ONES IN OUR 6:00 GROUP TO ARRIVE. WE ALL GREETED EACH OTHER AND SAT RATHER QUIETLY EAGER TO BEGIN THE "EXPERIENCE". WE MOVED TO THE FIRST TENT AND WERE ENRAPT WITH THE PRESENTATION THAT SET THE STAGE AND PREPARED US (IN OUR MINDS) FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD OF US. HOWEVER, THE APPEARANCE AND DEMEANOR OF THE GUARDS AND THE PROCESS OF GAINING PERMISSION TO ENTER BROUGHT ME THE REST OF THE WAY IN REALIZING THE SERIOUSNESS OF WHAT WE WERE ALL SUBMITTING TO. A HUSH SETTLED OVER US .THE MAR-KET PLACE WAS A GENTLE AND QUIET BEGINNING AS MAGDALENE WELCOMED US AND EXPLAINED WHAT WAS GOING ON ABOUT US IN THE CITY. IMMEDIATELY WE FELT THE CHANGE OF ATMOSPHERE AS WE BEGAN TO WALK THE NARROW, DIM STREETS OF JERUSALEM. EVERY STATION FOLLOWING, UNFOLDING THE EVENTS OF JESUS' LAST DAYS,WAS OVERWHELMING! THE CHARACTERIZATION, THE COSTUMING, THE PROPS, THE DRAPING OF THE WALLS , THE TEMPLE ,ETC. , THE PALACE, PONTIUS PILATE, THE GUARDS , THE VOICES OF THE GUARDS COMMANDING US TO GET UP AND MOVE ON, THE STERN REMINDER, "NO TALKING!"PETER, JUDAS, THE DANCING GIRL, THE YOUNG MEN IN THE GARDEN.....I APPLAUD YOU ALL! SO MANY ..TO DO SUCH A SUPERB JOB! THE PREPARATION, THE PRACTICING .HOW DID YOU DO IT? SOUND EFFECTS, LIGHTING. I KNOW THAT JESUS IS APPLAUDING YOU TOO. TO ALL THAT I DID NOT MENTION, MY APOLOGIES! I SAW YOU ALL. I APPRECIATED YOU ALL.AND THEN AT THE END YOU GAVE US A CHANCE TO RESPOND TO WHAT WE WERE FEELING. OH, MY!!THE CRUCIFIXION! HOW DID HE DO THAT EVERY 15 MIN.? IT WAS GREAT THAT YOU RELATED IT TO PRESENT DAYS. I AM PRAYING FOR THOSE WHO FOUND THEIR PERSONAL JESUS THROUGH YOUR EFFORTS.AND FOR THE OTHERS WHO HAD OTHER BUSINESS TO TAKE CARE OF WITH GOD. I KNOW GOD WILL BLESS YOU ALL FOR YOUR EFFORTS AND PRAY THAT YOU WILL CONTINUE THIS MINISTRY AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. THANK YOU ALL FOR LETTING ME SIT AND REACT AND BE THAT PART OF IT! (I TAUGHT FOR MANY YEARS IN ONE OF THOSE CLASSROOMS ON THE SECOND FLOOR FOR WILMINGTON CHRISTIAN SCHOOL AND LOVED REVISITING THERE.)**

***Hi Stephen...I wanted to thank you for inviting me to come to the Via Dolorosa production last night. I had quite a busy day yesterday and almost did not go. I hate to admit it but I did not have high expectations of the evening. Way too many of these productions are OK but quite boring. Not this one! From the start, I was immersed in**

the time period and felt like I was walking the weathered streets of old Jerusalem. The sets were great and the performance was as professional as any stage performance! It would be difficult to pick out a best actor/actress but the individual who performed the role of Pontius Pilate was so good that I thought that he must be a Shakespearean actor! I wanted to sit through it again, it was that good. Each room was a special setting with outstanding performances. Bravo! I learned things that I did not know. This was a wonderful experience. Thank you so much!

**I heard (their adult son) was really moved. Both adult kids have had their trials-But they went through too. [Our daughter] came through on Final night. Last minute decision. As soon as she got in the car- she said her favourite part was Guerty and she wondered why you never tried out for Hollywood-then she said, "But he definitely has his job here, spreading Gods Word!" My two neighbor ladies were deeply moved.*

***[From a local pastor]: I just wanted to take a moment to thank Dr Bill Breon and my brothers & sisters at Immanuel church for putting on such an amazing gospel presentation this evening. I was TRULY blessed!!! I have never been engrossed in the Gospel the way I was tonight. I love you all so much for your dedication to the message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**

***From a PA camp Program Director: Very meaningful performance at Via Dolorosa last night. Thoroughly enjoyed it.Great job to all those involved. May the Lord reach many for Him through this. Good to see many of our Tel Hai Camp friends involved.**

***The Good Friday depiction gets better every year. We were very moved! Your soldiers get scarier by the year!**

***From our backyard neighbor: Thanks so much for everything! The Family and I really enjoyed the presentation. You and the cast are truly talented. God Bless you, your Family, the Cast and Church for delivering such fine entertainment. You made me feel like I was right there during the last days of our Lord, before he rose again from the dead. Thank you Bro! We love you!!!**

****Via Dolorosa was all and more than we expected it to be! On top of that we were very impressed with your acting skills as Pilate. Jesus is always worth our time & we thank you so much for including us. Hope that you & your family have a Happy & Blessed Easter! Warmest regards.***

***My mom had two groups go through that were brand-new. They are blown away by via. They called her this morning saying that they can't stop thinking about it. They plan on bringing more people next year.**

***From camp receptionist: It was Great! We all really enjoyed it very much! Everyone did such a spectacular job! Hope all goes well the next few days and you can collapse on Saturday!!**

From a camp administrator: *Guerty: The performance was excellence and the testimony by the Church to the public was a Godly message.....and you were a rock star :-)

***From a pastor from PA: My kids loved Via last night! Excellent work brother. The 3 year old was concerned, but we briefed them before we went in...Absolutely was [worth the trip]. I've been telling everyone to go.**

“WHEN KINGS GO OFF TO WAR”



In II Samuel 11, reference is made to the time of the year in that era when kings went out to do battle-in the Spring. The same is true for me. I feel as if I have just returned from a huge battle, encompassing months of work, worn & weary-but blessed from the fight, of Via Dolorosa. I want so very much to rest-& yet-there is more work to be done. Each day, without exception, I number my days. I am constantly aware of how fast the days rush by & the years come on. Now is the time to preach the excellencies of Christ. I'm am constantly made aware through theological YouTubes I frequently watch, re: the desperate & decadent times we live in. Both young & old inundate themselves daily with the vanity & filth of the world via incessant images & messages via social media. They must be preached to. Hence, despite how spent I feel right now [that's why I'm not writing this until the day before it “goes to press”!], I have already been praying for open doors of ministry in the near future. If you would join Kim & me in this endeavor, we would be truly grateful. May our God's doors, will, & timing for them be done. Sincerely, Michael

Caboose! on the Loose:



Ministry/events for April & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

April 5: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//HN pastors' mtg.

April 21: EMF local pastors' mtg.

April 26: Shady Maple Banquet Center, East Earl, PA: Tel Hai Camp Spring Banquet:
drama & preaching

*Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant Stateside missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, Immanuel Church. *Caboose!* is also an affiliate ministry of The Hopewell Network of Churches. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485, marking it "Preferred-Michael Robert Guertin" or https://www.denarionline.com/DONORSERVICES/TEMPLATEPAGE.ASPXCOMP_REF=ELIMFEL&SID=vjywxzcot0d5c5pnrq1f0rnl&CONTENT=MISSIONARY&MISSION_REF=E8668ABEC7

If your church would be interested in ministry by Michael, please feel free to contact us. www.cabooseministries.org