

**Audio Sermons:** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/caboose-ministries/audiopodcast/id506049887mt=2>

**YouTube Channel [for dramas & sermons]:** [Michael Robert Guertin](#)

**APRIL 2020**

**“THE SUN’S ‘CORONA’ SETS ON VIA DOLOROSA SEASON 17”**



**[3/19]** It is with an ache deep inside that is hard to convey that I must announce our church’s annual production of *Via Dolorosa*, season **17**, has been canceled due to the widespread repercussions of the *Corona Virus* deba-cle. Via began as a 1-night, 4-station, 60-people-in-attendance event in **2004**. It was the brainchild of my former pastor along with our church business administrator. The inspiration for it was birthed in them after they viewed Mel Gibson’s “**Passion of the Christ**” movie released earlier that year. As the years passed, like small children, Via grew-& how! Two years ago we were running 4 nights, with 12 stations, & almost 900 people walking through it! The 4 original rooms were the **Garden of Gethsemane, the Fortress Antonia, the Dungeon, & Reflections**. Over the years Via kept “evolving”. Additional rooms were added: **the Last Supper, the Jewish Marketplace, the Sanhedrin, Herod’s Palace, Claudia’s [Pilate’s wife] Quarters, Calvary, & Communion**. For many years I want-ed to add yet another room (!), vis, **the Zealot Hideout**, but, the Via Coordinator over me would always say, “We don’t have room (or time!) for 1 more room!” 😊 Not to mention the fact that even if I had gotten the go-ahead for said room I wouldn’t have been able to staff it anyway! Actors for Via are hard to come by!

## “BYE BYE PI?”



As one who has portrayed **Pontius Pilate** & other Roman officers for well over 30 years, when my former pastor asked me to be a part of Via Season 1 in 2004, “on the ground floor” so to speak, of course my heart leapt. **Via** for me has been what **Hopewell Summer Camps** has been for me for decades now-the greatest “outlet” for who I am in God & in personality. Both of these ministry venues for years have been “stages” for me, both figuratively-& literally! I couldn’t have asked for more from our Lord. As the years progressed, I would make & buy more & more props, costumes, weapons, & armor. I can outfit just about a whole Roman cohort! 😊 All of this “stuff” is compiled in rooms in my house, backyard shed, & at church. Via would get into my blood *months* before the actual production’s performances began. I would watch annually movies such as **The Robe [1953]**, **Salome [1953]**, **The Greatest Story Ever Told [1965]**, **Quo Vadis [1951]**, **Day of Triumph [1954]**, **King of Kings [1961]**, **I Beheld His Glory [1953]**, etc. to get in the mood & character of Via. As Via enlarged, I would push Pastor to do more, saying, “Let’s do 5 nights! Let’s do 5 nights!”. He would give me much room for my creative bug & resultant whims thereof, but that Via dream never materialized. I’m sure the rest of the cast was relieved! 😊 When Via began it was my own little world. It was my happy place. I lived my part. My ache for myself & my fellow actors when I prayed for them each evening before the 1st group would arrive, was that our Lord would help us “to make the Scriptures come alive”. And by His grace, that’s what we did. Many guests after walking through Via would say they didn’t

recognize the building when they entered. We would “morph it” into 1st century **Jerusalem**. This would take *weeks* to do! When Via was over the emotional “deflation” took weeks to occur in my heart & mind. I told Kim the other day, “I just can’t conceive of Spring without Via”. When our church elders announced that this year would be Via’s last season, of course I was sick & crushed-but I love & trust our elders. [In fact, one of them, knowing me like he does, when he sent out an email to the **IC** family re: Via’s cancellation, he told them he was sure I was setting up Via in my house! How did he know?! 😊] Yet-I must confess, when I heard of the decision, my “love of Roman & biblical epics” mind began racing for Plan B! This may be it: [https://youtu.be/QjFkXL2xr\\_4](https://youtu.be/QjFkXL2xr_4) We will see how our Lord leads our church leaders.



“But Michael?”, some of you may think, “Don’t you get this “acting bug” satisfied throughout the year by coming out of your **Time Machine** in your itinerant ministry travels?”. To some degree-Yes. But there is nothing like Via! Why? Our church is not that large. I would guess during our Via “run”, we averaged about **250**-& yet, our Via guests in attendance for many years pushed **700-900**! We were like David “feeding” Goliath instead of “beating” Goliath! Of

the various & sundry outreaches & ministries [www.immanuelchurch.us](http://www.immanuelchurch.us) conducted-& there were many!



Via was the “biggie”-both in time, scope, & effort! We would often have behind the scenes strife & issues [welcome to the ministry!], as when Via came into our church, it was often likened to a battleship [more like an *aircraft carrier* to all of my *Navy* friends! 😊] coming into harbor. All other ministries, vis, little boats [NOTE!: this is **not** in any way a reflection on the value, worth, & effectiveness of these ministries!], had to get out of the way. It was just the way it was. I would explain to Pastor, “If we’re going to do Via, we need to do Via!”. He got it. I believe the rest of the cast “got it” too, as recruiting actors, setup, dozens of performances over 4 nights, & tear down were gargantuan. [I’m weeping right now listening to the “Finale” of *Quo Vadis*-one of my all-time favorite biblical epics & a must-see during Via season!].



Another reason-& perhaps the biggest reason-it is hard to get Via out of my blood is that it was not only the biggest thing **our church** did over the years-I believe it was the “best”. How so? Unlike all of the many fruitful outreach ministries our church conducted, vis, **Jammin-4 Jesus, Kids Kandy Carnival, missions trips around the world, summer camps, Celebrate Recovery, Howard Cox’s IC mini-camp for kids too young for Hopewell Camps, Mack Park Outreach, Community Easter Egg Hunts, The Herd**, etc., **Via** was unique. Of all of these blessed endeavors & more by Immanuel Church, Via by far was the most “whole-church family inclusive” of them all, i.e., the vast majority of our members, *from children to senior citizens*, would hold hands & lock arms, so to speak, & “do this” together. I remember the cast & crew being around 100 for many years!



Another one of my very favorite reasons for doing Via each year was the outreach it provided to those “on the periphery” spiritually. I’m not primarily speaking about the vast amount of guests who came though who were not saved,

backslidden, or shaky in their walks with Jesus-I'm talking about *the cast members* who were! I purposely pursued brothers whom I loved & knew they knew the Lord but were kind of "out there", vis, sporadic church attendance, various struggles with sin, the flesh, & the devil-like us all-but who were "weaker" brethren. Also, I pursued brothers who were not very "visible & vocal", relatively speaking, around the church.



I invited them to come & help-put on some armor, brand some weapons, put on the “grease paint”, though, in my **Roman sector** of Via, it was charcoal! And boy-did they put on the charcoal! I think some of them were *addicted* to it! More than one would look like Al Jolson! [But, do you know what, Beloved? I truly believe Via was bringing out the little boy in them-almost like getting to “play Army” again-but as adults! 😊] But, by their involvement in Via, I saw “worth” rise in them-they were once more part of the church family-they were contributing to the gospel ministry. I know of fewer rewarding things in the ministry our Lord has graced me with than this. I truly pray it is in our Lord’s heart & plan for Immanuel to resurrect Via at Immanuel Church in some form or way in the future to continue to present the gospel in this vividly dramatic way. May it be so. Sincerely, **“Pontius”**.

### “HOW I GOT THE ACTING BUG”



“Michael, from whence cometh this ardor for the stage?” When I was 16 years old I was sitting in a movie theater in S. Jersey with my 5 siblings & 7 cousins while our parents talked business at home. The cinema was playing **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS** with **Charlton Heston**. I was spellbound. I recollect all of the other kids wanted to leave, but my jaw was just about on the floor! It was the very 1st time that I can recollect our Lord beginning to draw me to Himself & His Kingdom. About 2 years later that would happen in a convent in S.E. Missouri! About 2 & ½ years after the movie theater experience, our family had moved to VA onto Kim’s family’s street. We met [that’s another story!] & her family took me



in & began to disciple me. My future mother-in-law took me to a Christian bookstore one day. I was **19**-a baby Christian.



I wound up buying a whole set of Bible dramatic record albums, produced by **Cricket Records**. There were 8 albums & 16 Bible stories in the set. **Leif Ericksen** was the main actor in these productions. I would lay on my bed & listen to them with my record player for hours. While doing so, I'd envision what it must have looked like in those days. I remember these two experiences as being the seedbed for my **Time Machine** dramas I'd produce some 11 years later 😊. **FROM PUPPETS-TO PONTIUS-in a week!** The "March Madness" of **Covid-19** has disrupted everything on our planet, from getting to work & school to finding food & daily necessities in the grocery store, to even being able to gather as God's people collectively. In spite of that, however, I am grateful I was able to accomplish some ministry before church doors began closing & churches resorted to live-streaming in obedience to state & federal laws. In early March I conducted a **"Vision for the Young"** children & youth workers' seminar at a dear brother's church in N.J. It was actually his wife's vision to have this, though, as I taught in the seminar, the most important person in a church as far as children's ministries is concerned is the head pastor! And, of course, this pastor/friend was not only behind his wife's desire for this training seminar, but he & his co-pastor both attended the 3 & ½ hour event! I'm sure it was not what either of them nor the other attendees expected.

**“3 STRIKES!-YOU’RE OUT!”**



I have given this message, vis, “Vision for the Young”, for decades now. Its basic premise asserts that for one to effectively minister to children & youth, one must have a very sound theology underlying their ministry, particularly, a very sound biblical *anthropology* [the doctrine of man]. How so? If one’s *anthropology* is weak, it is certain their *soteriology* [doctrine of salvation] will be as well. This is **the key** with any ministry, but especially with ministry to the young since so many presuppositions cloud effective ministry to them:



**doctrine-->vision-->burden-->compassion-->action.**

Hence, it is so vital that sound theology be delved into before ministry is attempted. *Vision for the Young* begins asserting that before children even enter the world, 2 of 3 strikes against them have already occurred. **#1:** They are conceived with Adam's sinful fallen nature. **#2:** Children inherit not only original sin but also there is much evidence to believe they also inherit certain iniquities, proclivities, weaknesses, sin-tendencies, etc. that run through family lines. One scholar said these tendencies/similarities, etc. are evidenced in children even in cases where they are not raised by their biological parents. **#3:** It is a clear witness of the Scriptures & history that children & youth always suffer for the sins of their parents.

“THE ICING ON THE [DEVIL’S FOOD] CAKE”



As if these 3 strikes weren't devastating enough, on top of them all, because of constant access via their peers, devices & the internet, the young are daily exposed to the vile God-hating filth of not only our American, but also of the global culture. I told my audience that if this part of the seminar was all they got out of our time together, I would be content. This portion of the seminar was followed by various ministry methods/models/strategies, etc. the American Church has employed that have not proved effective. In turn, we observed what the Lord Jesus did with children & youth. In addition, children & youth, like adults, need the gifts & offices that our Lord has given to the Church for their nurture & edification. As with adults, the goal of a minister to the young is *impartation*, & not information only. This is accomplished by the Holy Spirit coming upon the Word & upon the young as they hear it. And yet, and yet-they're children.



Hence, this is where the **puppets** cited above in the article title comes in. I told the audience when I am not out ministering to the Body of Christ at large on a given Sunday, I strive to bring puppet shows to my own church's young, vis, infant nursery, 4 & 5 year-olds, & element-ary aged [Kim suggested this week that I bring home my trademark puppet "Chip" {the chip-"monk"-he's dressed in a monk's robe 😊} <https://youtu.be/gbPODoH3pIA> home from church & make videos with him to send to child-ren while we are quarantined from gathering together. A great idea!]. I brought 4 of my puppets along & gave a demonstration of each. Puppets are antiquated & dated for sure, but for some strange reason, **if done well**, they bring a piece of felt & cardboard to life! If you question this, just ponder Jim Henson's "Muppets". He made a fortune with them for decades entertaining all age groups! After discussing various & sundry "nuts & bolts" re: kids ministry, I concluded our time together with my "HATS" drama. This skit involves my putting on various helmets & hats in rapid succession to pertinent music & sound effects for each, all the while elaborating what each hat that a worker with the young must "wear" to minister effectively to them.



{Actual pic of seminar host church's kids' pastor & me}

One of the many was a **G.I. helmet**: = that you want to have by your side fellow-workers whom you'd want in a foxhole with you in mortal combat! You need people covering your back as you seek to minister to that age group which are the easiest to reach-for *either Kingdom!* **"PUPPETEER TO PROCURATOR"** Well, 7 days after "playing with puppets" in N.J. I was portraying a Roman procurator in MD! This United Methodist Church had requested I play **Pilate** last Fall, to which I requested, given it was *Reformation Sunday* when I went there the last Sunday of October, that I might portray **Martin Luther** instead. I told them I could come back

in the Spring & do the Roman Governor. They agreed. In the space of about a week, I went from doing various goofy, funny puppet voices <https://youtu.be/NgjSUGxjNOM> to depicting this evil, capricious, unpredictable, violent Roman officer of the Equestrian class. <https://youtu.be/TAL4pNozFPs> On more than one occasion he slaughtered thousands of Jews. On one of these occasions it was when a group of Galilean Jews were offering their sacrifices [Luke 13:1ff]. Hence, such is the nature & calling of the giftings & graces our Father has placed in me to serve His people & to reach the lost.

**“CABOOSE! & YOU-FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”**



I was on the phone yesterday with an Elim connection brother/pastor/friend whose church I am preaching at later this month. He told me he was in some form of media production work decades ago in New Zealand. He told me that when the average person today is watching a preacher online they may watch a sermon for about 90 seconds! He said even nightly news stations know they must hit their audiences within the 1st several minutes of the broadcast with the major headlines rapid-fire as via research the average American will stop watching to use the restroom! These broadcasters air their commercials during this time! With most churches in America now using livestream services, my friend said a “magazine” approach re: visuals, information in various & sundry fragments, etc. may prove more effectual in keeping the audience’s attention, given they may & can get up at any moment & give themselves to some distraction at home that they cannot do at church. He said “what I do & how I do it” [in my words] could prove very beneficial re: audience attention span during this live-streaming season. I hope to portray Pontius Pilate <https://youtu.be/TAL4pNozFPs> at his church followed by a highly-visualized, dramatized, & musically oriented verse-by-verse expository message re: the deity of Jesus from Hebrews chapter 11 <https://>

[youtu.be/YEqCxqsOrzo](https://youtu.be/YEqCxqsOrzo). If you're reading this & this interests you for possible ministry at your church or event, contact me at your convenience. I'm in my 21st year of itinerant work. The "show" of Jesus' excellencies *must go on!* Sincerely,  
**Michael & Kim**



**P.S.-Kim & I pray during this unprecedented time of "quarantine" that our Lord would move you to find a place to "quarantine" yourself alone with Him. It will be worth it. Despite ministry functions being canceled or postponed, I have continued to study, pray, prepare, do administrative work, etc. as we await His move.**



**\*Caboose! Commentary Corner:** [Our daughter Laura once said she'd love to have my old Bibles when I passed for all of the notes I have written in them over the decades. This was quite humbling to say the least, especially coming from one of your own children. Hence, I've decided to post each month random notes/comments from Bibles I have studied from: "Two things necessary for an effective ministry of the Word: #1: an opening of the Scriptures (Lk.24:32), &, #2: an opening of the eyes (Ps.119:18)". [MRG-6/22/2014]





**Caboose! On the Loose:**

**\*Lookin' out for the little guys...**

**Ministry/Events for [APRIL](#) & those not listed in last month's newsletter:**

**NOTE: the month of April was originally slotted for Via Dolorosa prep, setup, performances, & tear-down ☺!**

**April 19: Cornerstone Church, Broomall, PA: Sun. a.m. service**

**April 22: New Covenant Community Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim area pastors' mtg.: teacher**



\*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 [any amount no matter how small is greatly appreciated!], 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 you may click on the link below to give directly. Any gift no matter how small would be greatly appreciated! Thank you! [click here](#)

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