



The Cross & Steeple

www.collinsvillebaptistchurch.com

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July 2014

From John

Around July 4, I always think of Maadi, Egypt, a nice suburb of Cairo about 8 miles up the Nile. A place where I learned a lot about Christians being persecuted.

In 1999, Gloria and I were two weeks into our first trip to the Holy Land when we got to Egypt. I had planned our trip so that we could be in Maadi for a church service. Casey Mattox, a young man from our church, had just spent a year at the church in Maadi working with young people. He had encouraged us to visit the church and had arranged for a church staff person to meet us at the service.

It is impossible to express how much that Holy Land trip meant to Gloria and me. We were traveling by ourselves and had wandered around Israel and Jordan. We had “walked where Jesus walked” by the Sea of Galilee, in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Jerusalem and many other places. The day before we were in Maadi, we had watched the sun come up from the top of Mount Sinai.

To get to the service, we rode the subway/train from our downtown Cairo hotel and then took a cab to the church. There are many people from other countries living in Maadi. They are in Egypt to work in companies headquartered in the U.S. and Europe. The services at the church are in English.

We arrived several minutes before the service was to begin. We looked at the small chapel and the three story education building all inside a walled property. The service would be held in an open courtyard with only a tarp for shade. Even in January, the Egyptian sun beat down on us.

As we waited for the service to begin, I talked with one of the church members standing at the back of the courtyard. The subject turned to the large crowd and the lack of facilities. He explained to me that the church was unable to get a building permit to build the facility that they needed. Even with all the money and influence provided by the members’ companies, the government refused to let them build because they were Christians. It took them three years to get a permit to add a bathroom to the building. The only place for the youth to meet was on the roof. And so the church gathered each week for worship in a courtyard in folding chairs.

Looking around the yard, I asked about Egyptian Christians who were there. He pointed some of these out and explained to me that they had it much worse than the U.S. and European Christians. The best that Egyptian Christians can hope for in their home country is to be treated as second class citizens with limited rights and limited prospects. (I had asked Casey before we went where to find local Christians. His answer – if you see anyone collecting garbage, they are Christians. They are not paid for this. Their pay is the privilege of going through the garbage to try to find anything to allow their families to survive.) The Maadi church could not get a building permit. Egyptian Christians live with the knowledge that there may be attacks on their homes, businesses and churches by rioting Muslims, and that there will be little chance of receiving any justice from the Egyptian police or courts. Each year there are Christians killed by some of these mobs. Christians are about 1/8 of the population. And they are at best second class.

Looking near the back gate, the man pointed at three very black men in white shirts and dark pants. He explained that they were the ones who had it worst. They were from Sudan where the government was systematically killing all Christians. These men had taken their families to refugee camps and had then made their way hundreds of miles through Sudan into Egypt knowing that if captured in Sudan they would be executed. They risked their lives to get to Cairo, hoping to find any work to send money back to the refugee camp. They lived in the shadows, knowing that if the police stopped them or someone turned them in, they would be deported to the capital of Sudan and killed. They were risking their lives that day to come to public worship, having to pass by several police and soldiers on the way to church. They had lost family, home, jobs – most everything for their Faith. But still they came to worship.

Gloria and I took our seats as the music began. I looked around the courtyard at the different colored faces – white, brown, black. I looked at the people coming together to worship, smiles on their faces, shaking hands, patting on the back. The people of God gathering in worship and fellowship.

We stood to sing “He’s Everything to Me”. All the emotions of the trip bubbled up – “I will celebrate nativity” and I thought about Bethlehem. “in the stars his handiwork” and I thought about the dying night as sunrise came on Mt. Sinai. “ruleth over land and sea” walking by the Sea of Galilee. “he came to set his people free” and we had stood in the tomb of Jesus. Tears rolled

down my cheeks. Set free by Jesus. "He's Everything to Me. He walks beside me day by day, ever watching over me". I stood with people who were nothing like Gloria and me. I stood with people who were exactly like Gloria and I. And we cried and cried. Tears of joy and love.

I think often about the people at the church that day. On this July 4, I will want to complain about being persecuted for my faith because I cannot do a prayer at a public gathering or do one of the other things Christians are no longer allowed to do in our country. But I will not insult those men from Sudan by thinking my situation is anything like their real persecution. Or the persecution of the local Egyptian Christians as they gather garbage. Or even the church of well-to-do Americans and Europeans who had to fight so hard to be able to build a bathroom at their church. No, they are truly persecuted. We in the U.S. are not.

But I will also not insult the continuing Christian witness of the Maadi church by not standing up to the bullies in this country who insist that Christians sit down and shut up. Our freedom of religion in America is much too precious to let the bullies win. To help our country, we American Christians must first be great followers of Jesus. And be willing to lay our lives on the line for Him to become light and salt to the U.S. Freedom of religion is a rare and valuable thing that must be protected.

When Gloria and I had gotten off the train in Maadi, we had grabbed a taxi. The staff person from the church had told us that any taxi driver would be able to get us to the church. But we had a driver who did not understand us. "Take us to the church." A look of total incomprehension. "The church." Still no understanding.

I put my left index finger across my right index finger making a cross. The driver's eyes lit up. "Ah, kanisa" he said. "Kirche". "Yes", I said, "Church". He understood that Christians are a people of the cross.

And the cross was not easy for Jesus. So it will not be for us. We follow Jesus to the cross. We do it because we understand that following Jesus is the only road to life and freedom. It is a narrow road, a road often filled with persecution. But a road of tears of joy and love. We are a people of the cross.

Congratulations To Lona Perkins

Who Made Her Profession of Faith in Jesus As Lord and Savior on June 15.
She Will Be Baptized in the Near Future .

Ministry Meeting

At our last meeting (April) it was suggested that we try having all motions submitted by Wednesday, July 2 so that the motions may be printed in the bulletin to help all of us be better prepared for making decisions. It is understood that there will be times when an emergency prohibits this. This policy was not adopted, but it was felt we should try to do it this meeting to see how it works.

Some motions already mentioned:

1. Adopting part 2 of the report on the video system, placing a monitor for the choir to be able to see what is on the screen.
2. Forming a committee to suggest ways to have a recreation area for the church outside the building.
3. Forming a committee to make a plan for ministering to people during a disaster such as a tornado.



Next year's Shocco Music Dates

July 13-17, 2015

Put it on your calendars now

School Begins for DeKalb County Students

and Fort Payne Students Thursday, August 7

Labor Day

Monday, September 1

See You at the Pole

Wednesday, September 24

Sermons this Summer

Lessons from Bible Animals

~ July 2014 ~

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
 June – Girls' Clothing	Operation Christmas Child	1 Birthdays Lue Deen Perkins	2 Birthdays Emilee Garoutte CBC Kids Grades 4-6 CBC Youth Grades 7 and Up	3 Birthdays Jared Edwards Jerry Alexander	4 Independence Day	5 Birthdays Teresa Bobo
6 Flowers Belinda Barksdale	7 Birthdays Julie Norris	8 Birthdays Haley Hunt	9 Birthdays Julie Arthur Smith CBC Kids Grades 4-6 CBC Youth Grades 7 and Up	10 Birthdays Rodrigo Ventura	11 Birthdays Glenda Morgan Music Leadership Summit	12 Music Leadership Summit
13 Lord's Supper Clyde & Sandra Killian Birthdays David Borntrager Dylan Nelson	14 Birthdays Tammi Tucker Music Camp	15 Birthdays Larry McKinnon Anniversaries Scot & Angie Shankles Runoff Elections Music Camp	16 Birthdays Bryan Scott Jess De La O CBC Kids Grades 4-6 CBC Youth Grades 7 and Up Music Camp	17 Birthdays Annabelle Shankles Music Camp	18 Birthdays Nikki Nelson Shelby Godshall Anniversaries Rosemary & Hoyt Brooks JoAnn & Lamar Smith	19
20 Flowers Brenda Navarro	21	22 Birthdays Belle Hamiter	23 CBC Kids Grades 4-6 CBC Youth Grades 7 and Up	24	25 Anniversaries Jimmy & Tangy Carter	26 Birthdays Jason Norris
27 Flowers Marilyn Borntrager	28	29	30 CBC Kids Grades 4-6 CBC Youth Grades 7 and Up	31	Ladies Day Out FUNdraiser Saturday July 26, 9-3 Nazareth Baptist \$6 – All proceeds donated to Long Ranch 4 Boys Christmas in July shopping Lunch and snacks at additional cost	



The Collinsville Library

Is Offering
Kids Book Club
And
Discover Science Through Art
This Summer

Shocco Music Leadership Summit July 11-12

Mix and Remix Music Camp
Dates July 14-18

Thirty Children and Four Adults Are Registered to Date

Concert – U Knee 2
from Daphne, Alabama
Saturday, June 28
6:00 P.M.

La Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana de Fort Payne
230 55th Street
Proceeds to help youth attend summer camp

Collinsville Baptist Church
P. O. Box 558
Collinsville, AL 35961

Non-profit Permit Imprint
Permit Number 2
Fort Payne, AL 35967

Blowing up the Fourth of July

by John UpChurch, Senior Editor, BibleStudyTools.com

I nearly blew up Fourth of July. Well, not the holiday, just the block party we had when I was a kid. For a couple years when I was young, the residents of our neighborhood would congregate at an open lot on the corner. Many of the families would bring bags and boxes of giant bottle rockets, roman candles, sparklers, fountains, and other color-shooting fare. They'd dump them on a ratty blanket and sit in the grass. Most of them took turns launching the flaming orbs into the air, littering the ground with the paper and cardboard of spent fireworks, and filling the night with acrid smoke.

It was glorious, and I wanted to make a huge splash (cue the dramatic music).

Before descending upon the second—and last—of our block parties, I scanned the aisles of the fireworks tent not far from our house. Just shooting flaming balls or seeing a pretty sparkly pop in the sky wasn't enough. I wanted to go big. There'd be nothing mundane for my moment of greatness this year.

And that's when I found the perfect Chinese-made, powder-stuffed wonder. I have no idea what it was called, but it was a green plastic tube longer than my hand with fins sticking out from either end. The packaging promised showers of sparks as it rose into the sky, a loud report (code for explosion), and an unforgettable display of color. Some might say spending three bucks on one moment of awesome is a bit excessive. I just saw it as a small price to pay for a green wonder.

When we arrived at the party, I plopped that bad boy on the blanket and waited. The dozen or so puny pops and whistles made me all the more eager to get to my *pièce de résistance*. Everyone seemed to be enjoying the lightshow, but they didn't know what real excitement awaited them.

Finally, my time came, my moment of triumph. Although I was too young to do the lighting (so said my parents), I marched with my firework contraption to the middle of the road and placed it exactly in the center. This green wonder needed the perfect launching pad, after all.

I hurried away when the host of the party lit the fuse. To this day, I have no idea what happened exactly. I followed the instructions on the wrapper, and yet the green wonder's shower of sparks weren't enough to get it off the ground. Instead, it limped across the road with a pathetic whimper and shot toward the blanket full of fireworks.

Neighbors scattered. People screamed. God had mercy. At least, that's the best way I can explain how a shower of sparks and flame didn't set off any of the other fireworks or burn anyone.

Intersecting Faith & Life: Too often, I'm just like I was back then on that Fourth of July: I want my service, my gift, my moment to be more awesome than anyone else's. I compare what I'm doing with what you're doing or he's doing or she's doing to see how I stack up. That's exactly the point where things go boom.

But freedom in Christ begins with a humbling. We're meant to keep our eyes on Him, so much so that we aren't able to compare ourselves with others. One person may preach the gospel to an entire nation, and another may work with gospel-saturated hands in a tiny community. One may write books that sell millions of copies, and another may have a blog that ten people read.

We don't need green wonders to make a big splash. We need surrender to the One who made us. That's what sets us free.