

Noah's Ark artifacts, mural unveiled local church

Summer Syler Lawrence is learning that God speaks in unexpected ways.

When she agreed to paint a mural last year she could not have foreseen that one job changing the course of her next year and a half.

Lawrence, an Athens resident, had been a muralist for several years. After taking a break following the birth of a child, she decided to go back to work. However, she was looking for a more fulfilling way to use her talent.

"I told God I didn't want to do any more glorifying man. I told him if I had to continue to do that I would just quit," said Lawrence.

Her answer came unexpectedly. As often happens in an artist's world, one contact led to another. She agreed to paint some scripture on the wall of a home office in the McKinney area.

The job was for Arch Bonnema, a businessman in the Dallas area. Bonnema is the owner and president of Joshua Financial - an organi-

zation that helps Christians get out of debt - and sits on a variety of Christian and secular boards.

Bonnema first gained national attention in 2004, when he spent more than \$40,000 to reserve the entire Cinemark Tinseltown 20 Plano. He then gave away all the seats in the theater for showing of the movie "The Passion of the Christ."

Bonnema was also the head of a 2006 expedition which brought back petrified wood from a mountain formation in Iran. Members of the expedition say they believe the formation - found at 13,000 feet above sea level - may be the remains of Noah's Ark.

The expedition, conducted by the Bible Archaeology Search and Exploration Institute, received international attention, including coverage in *National Geographic*.

The archaeological community is still at odds as to whether the evidence is truly from the famed boat.

Several months after the ex-

pedition, in February 2007, Bonnema and Lawrence met for the first time.

"I can't forget it because he started telling me about his ministries and other things. My knees started knocking and tears were coming out of my eyes. I knew this conversation was about to change my life," said Lawrence.

The two became friends. A few weeks into the scripture on the office walls project, Bonnema began talking to Lawrence about doing a series of paintings to put into the ceiling.

In honor of the 2006 expedition, one of those paintings was to be a depiction of Noah's ark.

Lawrence began work on the Noah's ark in July of last year. The end result of almost a year of her life ended up being 15 feet long by eight feet tall, twice as large as Lawrence and Bonnema originally thought the painting would be.

Lawrence said she knew from the first brushstroke this

painting was going to be different from all her other works.

"This is the person who thought it was only going to take six weeks. There's no cheating on something like this when you know Jesus had something to do with its creation," said Lawrence.

She put the last brushstroke on her work last week, and is anxiously awaiting the unveiling of the painting.

"It was at my request that it be unveiled here at home, and he agreed to come here for that. He was very excited about it being unveiled at a church," said Lawrence.

Lawrence's home is Dogwood Church in Athens. Next Sunday, May 18, during the 10:30 a.m. service, the painting will be unveiled.

The speaker of the day will be Bonnema, who will talk about his 2006 expedition and display artifacts brought back from the trip.

Dogwood Church is located on Farm-to-Market Road 2494 four miles west of Ath-

ens. Lawrence says she has no idea where her life and her art will go next, but she knows she has poured her soul into her painting of the ark. And while that painting has shaped her last 18 months, she has a feeling it will shape her coming years as well.

The painting will soon be installed in Bonnema's ceiling. The ceiling tiles will act as a frame for the masterpiece.

Lawrence says she's still awed by the idea. Although details haven't been finalized, there are plans in the works to produce more versions of the painting in various sizes to be used in other ministries.

"It's an awesome opportunity to minister to people who change other people's lives. What a way to speak to people," said Lawrence.

"God has done things for me in days what I couldn't do for myself in 13 years. I can't do anything but trust Him. He gave me my dreams and my faith."



The following individuals are proudly serving the United States of America in the Armed Forces. The Chandler and Brownsboro area communities are proud of you! For those who are serving overseas, we await your safe return.

If you know of someone in the military, whose primary residence is in the BISD, please let us know so we can recognize them.

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To add a name to this list, or have a name taken off please call or email: The Statesman - 903-852-7641 statesman@embarqmail.com

Yard of the Month



Friends and Flowers "Yard of the Month" award winners are Suzanna and Sam Young of Chandler. They are standing at the end of a long walk way which is lined with petrified wood that Sam's west Texas grandparents collect over 35 years ago. They worked hard getting each piece to fit with a couple pieces weighing as much as 400lbs. The Young's live at 429 Sabine Street in Chandler.

St. Boniface Catholic

by Sue Beams

The members of St. Boniface celebrated Pentecost and Mother's Day on Sunday. A special blessing was bestowed on the moms, and a single rose was given to each in honor of the day.

At the Spanish Mass, Fr. Jesse spoke of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples at the first Pentecost. The disciples were afraid, they were alone and they were feeling abandoned. They were there and witnessed His life; they mourned His death and were astonished at His resurrection! How could this be?

In reference to the first reading, Fr. Jesse spoke of the astonishment of those present who understood, in their own language what was being preached. How can that be? The answer is simple ... the Holy Spirit ... the Help mate,

the Comforter was sent by the Father.

The Holy Spirit is here with us now as we face our fears, our troubles and our worries. Fr. Jesse likened the fuel of the auto to the Holy Spirit within each of us. What good are all the 'gadgets' if you are out of gas? With the Holy Spirit we have the gifts to propel our lives. We ask in prayer for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us through the grace of God the Father!

There will be a work day at St. Boniface on Saturday, May 17th. A fresh coat of paint will go on the walls of the church (inside). Volunteers are needed. Everyone is welcomed, so bring your favorite paint brush, wear your old clothes and have a generous spirit. A light breakfast will be served at 8:00am and then the painting will begin! Please join us for this day of service.

Please see Danny Schroeder if you would like to purchase a copy of the DVD of this year's presentation of the Passion Play. The cost is \$5.00 each and there are a few copies left. You can call Danny at 903-849-6501 to reserve your copy.

Someone is needed to prepare the Sunday bulletins beginning in June. You are asked to please see Fr. Jesse to volunteer your services.

Congratulations and Best Wishes to all who are celebrating birthdays and anniversaries.

We pray for those who are sick and suffering. Remember, too, the souls of the faithful departed; may they rest in peace. We ask for the comfort and protection of the Holy Spirit for the men and women in the armed services.

God bless each of you!

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Leagueville Baptist

by Church staff

We had a wonderful Mother's Day service this past Sunday morning. The title to Bro. Tom's message was, "Mothers: Patterned After God's Heart." He spoke to us about Dorcas and how she touched many lives with her deeds, much like our own mothers. We hope that you had a great Mother's Day.

Our women had their monthly Bible study this past Monday night and enjoyed the lesson brought by our pastor's wife, Lynnetta. She spoke to

the ladies about inner and outer beauty. The ladies really enjoyed the lesson and the fellowship. If you have not attended a ladies meeting before, we would like to encourage you to make plans to attend the next one. You will be glad that you did!

The wedding of Emily Bailey and Todd Epperson will be Saturday, May 17th at 6 p.m. at Rock Hill Baptist Church. Everyone is invited to attend. We want to wish the happy couple all the best.

Next Sunday, May 18th, there will be a spaghetti supper after the evening services. This is a fundraiser for the Church Camp fund. We want to make camp possible for each and every

camper, regardless of finances. If you would like to help, please see Angie Parker or Michelle Wood.

There has been a change in our Memorial Day services. The Bragg family will be singing for us and then Bro. Chris Menefee will be preaching during our morning service. We will then have lunch at the church. Following lunch, we will have an afternoon service and no evening service.

Baccalaureate service for the Senior Class of 2008 will be at 6 p.m. at the Brownsboro High School Gymnasium. We have several seniors graduating this year and we want to wish them the best. Graduation will be Saturday, May 31st

at 7 p.m. It will be at Wagstaff Gym, on the campus of TJC.

Forms for Church Camp are in the foyer. We encourage anyone interested in attending camp to sign up and take a form. These need to be completed and returned by May 25th, along with your \$10 deposit per camper. There are also shirts available to pre-order for \$8 each. Camp is always a memorable experience for each and every camper, young or old.

We would like to wish a happy birthday to Alison Owen, Linda Dingler, Lynn Huggins, Craig Parker, Kevin Head, LouJean Epperson, Jearl Shavor, Sue Wylie and Joyce Jordan. We hope you have a great week!

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