

**Celebrating Freedom Through Service**  
**Missions Commissioning Service**  
**Smoke Rise Baptist Church**  
**July 6, 2008**

Thank you Kristen. Jim palmer and Kristen will be going to Siberia to do ministry in an orphanage. At the end of the service they will be in the narthex if you would like more information about their trip and they would gladly receive donations that will be used at the orphanage.

One of the best parts of Smoke Rise is its caring heart. It is seen in the friendly conversation over coffee in fellowship hall, it is seen in a hospital room and at the doorstep of a friend's house in need.

Another one of my favorite things about Smoke Rise is the way you accept everyone for who they are and what they have been through. More and more I see this same caring heart in the way that you give yourselves away through our mission ministry.

Whether it is at the local coops or Siberia, Appalachia, NYC, Tijuana or Knoxville TN, each of these provides an opportunity for Smoke Rise members to become missionaries and to give themselves away.

Acts 1:8 says, "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth." We have consciously developed our partnerships along this model creating partnerships with local, national and international missionaries. In addition to providing a variety of work projects within our mission partnerships. Many of those who will be commissioned today and many others of you have become consistent and regular participants in one of these mission partnerships and you have made that your personal mission ministry. It is that consistent commitment that is a distinctive and key component of Smoke Rise missions' philosophy.

Our mission philosophy is but an outgrowth of that same caring spirit you see and experience here every week. This is how we are taking that same spirit of Christ outside the walls of this sanctuary and into our community the world.

Each of the teams that are being commissioned today is but one aspect of a deeper partnership with each location and the missionaries that serve there day in and day out. A partnership team coordinates each of these partnerships. Each partnership team is linked to a specific missionary to help them further their ongoing ministry to that area. It is the job of the partnership teams to identify and become expert in the needs of those missionaries. And it is their job to suggest the wise use of Smoke Rise resources to best leverage the work of each missionary.

We never want a Smoke Rise team to come to the missionary with our agenda. We want to be sensitive to their work. As one of the missionaries told me regarding another mission team, "It will take me weeks after they have left to undo the damage they done to my ministry"

I want to ask you to do two things today, which will help support these mission teams. First I would like for you to listen to the team leaders as they will tell you specific ways that you can pray for their team. Write that down on your bulletin and pray for them as they go. Second I

want you to take the mission gram that is in your bulletin and between now and the end of the service I want you to write a note of encouragement to specific people on these mission teams. You will find a list of all of the teams on your bulletin. The world changers have just come back yesterday and you can write a word of thanks to them if you like. At the end of the service we will pick your mission grams up and give them to the trip leaders to be given out while the teams are on their trips. It will mean the world to them to know that you are praying for them and encouraging them as they share the love of Christ. These words of encouragement are often just the thing a team member needs when they are working hard, living in less than ideal conditions, and ministering to people of a completely different culture. Through out the rest of the summer there will be a box in the narthex if you would like to write additional words of encouragement to team members.

The world changers got back yesterday from a great week of hard work in Knoxville, TN. Race Roberts would you come and share a bit of your experience? Then the trip leaders for the three teams being commissioned today will share a bit about their work ahead. Sarah Martin is the trip leader for NYC, Gary Prophitt is the leader for Tijuana, and Jenny Brannen is the trip leader for Appalachia. As they are sharing we will ask each team to come to the front. And World Changers I will ask you to join us at the end.

(Race Roberts shares experience from World Changer mission trip in Knoxville, Tn.)

**Sarah Martin – Trip Leader for NYC:**

I'm Sarah Martin, this year's team leader for the New York mission trip. We partner with two New York City churches to help them run their summer camp programs. We work in Metro Baptist in the Hell's Kitchen area of Manhattan, and in Greater Restoration Baptist in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn. We will serve a total of about 70 kids by through staffing a day camp and providing curriculum and activities such as Bible stories, music, arts & crafts, etc. Smoke Rise is one of six churches who will be sending mission teams to New York this summer, each church staffing the camp for a one week period.

By serving this way we enable the New York churches to offer a summer program to the children in their communities. By helping this program we enable Greater Restoration Baptist and Metro Baptist to help maintain a solid, year-round presence in their communities, which in turn strengthens their other ministries—things like food pantries, clothing closets, and Christmas store. Many of these children and their families are not regular church members, so the programs offered by these churches, including the summer camp, are a touchstone for sharing Christ with them.

Please pray for the camp directors, Amanda Hambrick and Taisha Rose. They have been working hard all year with their respective churches in preparing for this summer's campers. Pray for our Smoke Rise team as we prepare for our trip—we leave on Saturday! And please pray for the children in New York. They have just finished their first week of camp.

This year's camp theme is "The Never-Ending Story"—pray that they will all learn to see God as the author of their stories!

**GARY PROPHITT – TRIP LEADER FOR TIJUANA, MX:**

I want to take a few minutes to tell you what you should expect if you go on a mission trip. First, a well organized mission trip is serious business.

Expect that there will be some inconvenience. The showers may be cold, the weather may be hot and the bed may be hard.

Flexibility is an important term, so don't be surprised if the job that you thought you were going to do, changes to something more challenging.

Be prepared to work hard.

At all times observe cleanliness.

When called upon to achieve a difficult task, accept success with modesty.

Know that you will make fast friends.

Our mission in Tijuana began in 2001 when six of our men met with Pastor Fernando Martinez to do some construction work at his facility. At that time Pastor Martinez' ministry was focused on poor children, and through them, their families at a place called Miramar.

The children who come learn songs of praise, the books of the Bible, and about Jesus, the one who cares for them most. While we are in Tijuana, we feed the children a meal. In addition, Pastor Martinez arranges for school supplies, clothing, vitamins and school uniforms. Many of you sponsor a child in Tijuana. It's through your sponsorship that these things are provided.

In 2004, a second location of ministry was established at a place called Alamar. Our teams have conducted Bible School and other activities at this location and we have done some of the construction work at Alamar

Alamar is situated on an abandoned landfill. The structures that these folks occupy might conservatively be called primitive. No running water, no plumbing and no sanitary facilities. The needs are not hard to imagine; they are basic, shelter, food and clean water. While it is true that a picture is worth a thousand words, seeing it in person is worth a million. Neither pictures nor words can do it justice.

At Alamar, rather than a ministry focused primarily on children, it has become a meeting place for a vibrant and growing congregation of adults and children. As a result, the original assembly hall was expanded last summer. They are now at capacity again.

Our team this year will conduct Bible School, and deliver food and clean water, paint houses and feed the children at least one meal.

Thursday or Friday will be a special day for sponsored children. On that day we will treat them to some fun activities that our children would take for granted... a movie at a nice theater, lunch at a restaurant, play on the Pacific beach and perhaps cap it off with ice cream. For some of these children, this will be a first time experience.

On the day that we return, there will be reflection. Some will feel sad that they couldn't do more. Some will reflect on the blessings that we enjoy and wonder why not them. Some will feel the "Spirit" saying "next year."

All will be forever changed.

As the sun sets in Atlanta, so it does also in Miramar and Alamar.

God is there, as God is here.

Our continuing challenge is to convey to these precious children that truth. That God loves them just as much as he loves us. On our trip in '06, this crude symbol of hope appeared in the midst of Alamar. The message is being heard. I want you to pray for three things:

1. God's continued blessing on this growing congregation in Alamar.
2. Pray for what God would lead you to do, that would affirm God's Love for them.
3. Pray for the continue health and well being of his servant Fernando, and all who come to serve in this place.

**JENNY BRANNAN – TEAM LEADER OF APPALACHIA, KY:**

Our team is going to McDowell, Kentucky, to work with G.A.P., God's Appalachian Partnership. McDowell is located in the coal mining country of Eastern Kentucky. It's a very depressed area with widespread poverty, unemployment and illiteracy. The people there don't have a whole lot of hope for anything better.

At the end of our mission trip last year, we were asked to complete a questionnaire that included the question, "What was the best part of this trip?" The answer was easy – it was the people.

On our first trip to Kentucky, we met a young minister and his wife, John and Shaughnassey Morris. John is pastor of Lothair Baptist Church in Hazard, Kentucky, an old church that had been dying. John is slowly bringing that church back to life and one of the things he is doing through this church is reaching out to a community called George's Branch –back in one of the isolated "hollers" in the mountains. When we visited, I would not have been surprised to meet the Hatfields or McCoys. It was a different world, the poverty was awful and the people there don't trust outsiders. We would never have gone alone but they trust John because he grew up in the area. His father was a cop and his mother was a public health nurse. They know who John is and what he stands for. Not all of them are pleased. Drug traffic is widespread there and, of course, Christians are a threat to that. John asked us to pray for Rose, a new Christian who had agreed to have a Bible study in her home. The first night after the study, there was a fire outside Rose's house. After the second study, a rock was thrown through a window. After the third meeting, there was another fire in an old car in Rose's yard. That's when John called me and asked us to pray. I asked everybody I knew to pray. Rose remained committed to the Bible study and there were no more incidents.

John introduced us to a couple in McDowell, Kentucky who had left a comfortable life to raise their own support and begin a mission they call the G.A.P. – God's Appalachian Partnership. Lynn and Angie Waggoner are the missionaries we will be working with and they are truly incredible people. They came to McDowell from Florida with nothing more than a vision a lot of

faith. They know without a doubt that they are where God wants them to be and doing what God wants them to do. It's not an easy life. They live at the poverty level themselves. But they are accomplishing incredible things. They have established a ministry center where they serve as many as 440 families in a month. It is an amazing operation and you can see the hand of God in all that happens there. Their clients qualify for a certain amount of points, based on their income, bills, and the number of people in their household. In the process of qualifying, the gospel message is presented. They can use their points to buy the things they need in the distribution center – food, baby items, clothing, small appliances. The clients are treated with as much dignity as if they were shopping at Macy's with money. They must re-qualify every six months and at that time, the gospel is revisited. Many have come to Christ in the tiny office there. And many of the clients have become volunteers there, serving others.

The GAP also helps with home repairs. The women come into the center and are reached there. The men usually wait in the car. But, the men get involved when volunteers are repairing their homes and are reached in this way.

This year, we will have a back-to-school cook-out at a low-income housing project, we will be doing home repairs, working in the distribution center, conducting Back Yard Bible Club, and visiting a nursing home. The nursing home is new with us this year and we need your prayers especially for this part of our mission. It is a government run facility and I've been told it's in about the same condition as the homes we help repair – pretty bad.

Most of the residents are bed-ridden with some degree of mental impairment. Please pray that we will be able to bring God's love to these people and brighten their lives.

Please pray, also, for Lynn and Angie. The couple that has been helping them with the ministry for the past two years will be leaving in October. The full burden for G.A.P. will be resting on their shoulders once again.

The questionnaire also asked, "What did you like the least about the trip?" Again, that was easy. The needs are so great and we could do so little. But we did make a difference and we are going back. I hope you'll consider joining us next year.

#### **COMMISSIONING PRAYER:**

God you have allowed us to be a part of your plan to share your love both here and around the world. Thank you for show such great confidence in us. We know that in our own strength we cannot accomplish your will. So we ask for your spirit to be with us to work through us and to prepare the hearts of those we will touch in your name to fully experience and receive your love. Whether it is be through a nail driven in a shingle, a Bible story and a craft, or a cookie and some Kool-Aid let these common things become sacred on your eyes. God I am thankful for each of these team members who have already given of their time and money to prepare for these trips. Take their willingness and use it to bring your love to some who may have never seen it.

Father, be with each on that is going and give us each a time of growing spiritually. Take our discomfort and fear of being out of our normal environment as a gift to you and sue it to allow us each to return to our normal lives changed. Changed so we will always be in an attitude of missions looking for those in need and ready to share ourselves and our resources to allow others to experience your love as we have experienced it.

God we ask you to be with the families of those going keep both safe. We ask that you be with the leaders of each of the teams and the missionaries they will work with. Give them wisdom and energy to do your work.

In Jesus name

Amen