



# ‘Everyman’ Gives Hope



## Theater program performs play for Lexington church

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The Lindsey Wilson College (LWC) Theater program recently brought a message of hope to dozens of homeless with their performance of “Everyman” at Hope Springs Methodist Church of Lexington.

The students drove up to Lexington by their own means on the Saturday of Easter weekend to present a “powerful play about salvation, redemption and death,” according to Robert Brock, LWC’s assistant professor of theater.

“The title alone just says it,” Brock said. “It’s everybody’s story. Wherever you are in life, whatever class you’re in, whatever age you are, everybody deals with this. So ‘Everyman’ represents all of us.”

Hope Springs United Methodist Church is a 12-year-old church that meets in a warehouse in Lexington, Ky. for service.

The church has a ministry for the homeless with a part called Hope Theatre that they have been doing since 2005.

According to David Calhoun, the assistant professor of religion at LWC and the teaching pastor at Hope Springs, the focus of the homeless ministry is on the quality of life, not survival.

“They can find something to eat,” Calhoun said. “They can usually find clothing and shelter if they want it, you know, to sleep at night. So the question we deal with is ‘What do you do for fun, if you’re homeless? Where do you find friends?’”

Calhoun and the people at Hope Springs, however, don’t like to call them “homeless.” They prefer “houseless” because they have a home with God and with God’s people.

In this ministry, the church buses in many people from shelters around the city four to five times a year. They bring them in and usually feed them and let them watch a movie.

Last year, when the LWC theater program performed “Godspell,” Calhoun thought that it would be a good idea to bring this play to Hope Theatre.

The audience’s reaction to “Godspell” led Calhoun to believe that they connect better with plays than the normal dinner and a movie.

“I saw people laugh that you hardly ever see laugh,” Calhoun said. “I saw tears; it was just a great experience.”

The students also felt the audience’s reaction.

“An actor can tell when they connect

with an audience,” Brock said. “I mean, they can feel it.”

LWC senior, Natalie Vickous, played the role of Good Deeds and was the only one to stay by Everyman’s side until the end.

“The majority of the people who attend Hope Theatre don’t have any close family or friends, riches, or many things that they can hold onto in this life,” Vickous said. “Seeing a theatrical representation and reminder of how the good things they do and the way they live their lives are all that matters in this life was very powerful for them.”

They may not have riches, houses or things the world deems “necessary,” they are reminded that they do have all these things in God.

“Anyone can accept grace and do good in this world, and I think that was a way to give these people renewed purpose in any situation in which they may find themselves,” Vickous said.

According to Calhoun, when the church brings them in to watch a movie, there is a lot of up-and-down movement, whether it be getting food or just going outside. When the play was going on, however, Calhoun noted people were more engaged. There was little-to-no movement by the guests.

Sam Wilson, a junior at LWC, was the main character in the play. He said that the audience really connected to him because he was like all of them.

Wilson hoped that everyone could see themselves in his character and to “see the journey that everyone must take at some point in their lives”.

Another main character in the play was sophomore Sarah Jo Jacobs, who played the character of Death.

“It was wonderful to see that this audience understood that I was gaining life as Sam [‘Everyman’] was losing it,” Jacobs said.

Jacobs thought that the audience at Hope Springs really connected with her more than others and that she loved this outcome so much she would have done the play even if that audience was the only one she could have done it for.

Both Calhoun and Brock said Hope Springs United Methodist Church will continue to host these plays as long as the students are willing to do so.

Vickous was encouraged with the results of the “Everyman” theater outreach project.

“From a story of despair and dread in death,” Vickous said, “comes a story of redemption and hope in eternal life.”

Photos by Lisa Spears and  
Danielle Bennett