



2013 PCPC ARTS FESTIVAL

Proverbs 11:10: "When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices."

Symposium and bus tour inaugurate the 2013 Arts Festival

Festival adds events to explore application of Micah 6:8

This year's PCPC Arts Festival season was kicked off on September 6 with the Justice & Mercy Symposium featuring presentations from four organizations that are turning the tide on poverty, racial divide, human trafficking, and other similar issues pertaining to justice and mercy in the inner city of Dallas.

"A righteous person is someone who disadvantages himself, for the advantage of others."

—Reid Porter

Reid Porter, Director of Advocates for Community Transformation (ACT), began the evening's presentations by discussing the life-changing work ACT is doing in West Dallas neighbor-

hoods. Its mission is to see inner city residents experience God's redemptive plan through safer neighborhoods free from urban crime and blight.

The unfortunate reality is that large segments of Dallas's population lack the education, financial resources, or political clout to effect transformation in their neighborhoods. Reid said this void has "left people living in a culture of despair... in a mentality and environment of feeling helpless, powerless, and without a voice," and it is why the call to do justice and love mercy (Micah 6:8) is the theme of this year's Arts Festival; the Church is called to bring hope for our poor and hurting neighbors, and it starts with each one of us "extending the olive branch" to those nearest to us.

ACT also targets the training of leaders by using a unique model for community transformation and neighborhood revitalization. It assists homeowners by providing legal advocacy regarding crime-ridden and hazardous housing. ACT has created a grassroots network of righteous

people who step up in their neighborhoods to provide leadership on issues they are collectively facing, and then creating an avenue for them to pursue biblical justice by advising them on their legal rights, counseling them through the entire process.

"It's hard to talk about mercy and justice, when a (formerly incarcerated) man... isn't accepted back into society. True justice is enabling the man, after he has served his time,

(l to r) Lawan Glasscock, Imelda Ottmers (event organizers), and Brent Ottmers.



to get a job so he can serve his family. We need to be the championing voice, the advocate for these men as they assimilate back into society."

**—Dr. Jeffrey Parker,
ROD Ministries**

Following in the same vein of advocacy for marginalized individuals, Dr. Jeffrey Parker shared about the transformative work of ROD Ministries which serves men in prison and men who are formerly incarcerated.

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"The sexual exploitation and trafficking of women is the human rights issue of our time."

**—Katie Pedigo,
New Friends, New Life**

While ROD focuses on training men to be successful citizens, New Friends, New Life (NFNL) focuses on training women and children, rescuing them from sex trafficking by equipping them to realize their potential. Katie Pedigo, the executive director of NFNL, cited statistics from organizations like the United Nations, which estimates that 25 million people are trafficked around the world. The National Trafficking Hotline says that Texas ranks number two among U.S. states in calls from trafficking victims, and that the border between Texas and Mexico is the number one supply route for trafficking women in the U.S. Ninety-five percent of the women in the sex industry say they desperately want out, and NFNL has helped 650 of these women accomplish that dream.

Traffickers prey on the most vulnerable in our society: young girls, whose bodies are turned into property to be bought and sold. NFNL works with the Dallas Police Department to provide resources to these women

and children. It works with families to restore relationships and provide a nurturing environment for them, and it also works with society to combat the stigma that they're judged or condemned, forever. This effort is where the Church comes in: it's our job to combat the stigma by embracing these women—giving them jobs, friends, homes, and a hope for a successful future.

The practical ways that NFNL empowers women to change their lives is by providing education resources and career counseling, helping them to find jobs to gain work experience for rebuilding their resume. In addition, they provide programming for the children to help break the generational cycle of abuse.



*Panel participants at the symposium were (l to r):
Reid Porter, Katie Pedigo, Elizabeth Cunningham, Shannon Geiger, Celestin Musekura, and Jeffry Parker.*

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African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM) equips leaders to initiate transformation and reconciliation in their own communities. It has trained nearly 9,000 leaders across east and central Africa in biblical theology, conflict resolution, forgiveness, leadership, and reconciliation methods. At the symposium, Celestin Musekura shared about how many countries in Africa have suffered years of war, tribal conflict, genocide and political turmoil. He emphatically proclaimed that the transformation and further development of Africa rests in the hands of Africans who have been effectively equipped to lead by bringing about peace through Christian forgiveness.

The overarching theme that resonated through each ministry's presentation was an emphasis on relational healing and practical training. These truths were beautifully demonstrated by ROD Ministries. Every single week they are mentoring the men in prison and becoming their friends so that they have a place to go and friends to love them whenever they are released. ROD enables these men to successfully reenter society and be as productive as they can be.

ROD reminded us that we should be dedicated to being a part of the rebuilding process, and not a tearing down process. Let us build people up together, linking arms to see change in Dallas.

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"Proverbs says that if you can do good, don't withhold from those who are without. That's what we call justice and mercy."

—Katie Pedigo

The symposium was followed by a bus tour on Saturday to the neighborhoods where these ministries operate and serve our most needy communities in Dallas.

—Laura Allen

Go to the back page for photos from the bus tour and responses from guests who attended the weekend events.