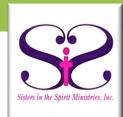
Sisters in the Spirit Ministries, Inc.



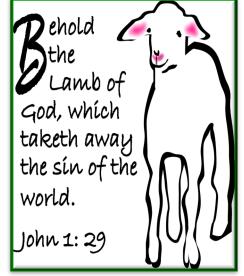
March 2024 Volume V Issue 1

# Sisters in the Spirit Ministries Newsletter

Empowerment for the Christian Woman

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE LAMB





By Rev. Dr. Katrina White Brown

anxiously awaiting the arrival of the Easter Bunny. The Bunny traditionally brings chocolates, candies, and brightly colored and decorated eggs, delivered in a wonderful grass-filed Easter basket. However, Easter is the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus. Nowhere in the scriptures is the mention of a candy delivering bunny. So, where did this come from?

The exact origins of the Easter bunny are clouded in mystery. One theory is that the representative rabbit stems from a pagan tradition celebrating a goddess of fertility. Her animal symbol was a bunny. Rabbits, known for their energetic breeding, have traditionally symbolized fertility. Eggs are also representative of new life, and it's believed that decorating eggs for Easter dates back to the 13th century. In those days, churches had their congre-

gations abstain from eating eggs during Lent, allowing them to be consumed again on Easter. Nonetheless, Easter has never been about the bunny - it's always been about the Lamb.

When Jesus lived, lambs were a central part of the spiritual life of Israel. For centuries, Lambs had died as an atonement for the sins of the nation. Inside the walls of the Temple, two lambs died every day (Exodus 28:29-31), one at 9AM and the other at 3PM. When the lamb died, a priest would sound the shofar, a ram's horn, representing that a lamb had just been sacrificed.

In addition to the twice-a-day sacrifice of lambs, these animals were also killed on all major Jewish holidays. Regardless of the frequency of the sacrifice however, the killing of lambs were not taken lightly by the Jewish population.

continues on page 6



## 20 SECONDS OF PRAISE

Health officials recommend washing your hands frequently, for a minimum of 20 seconds, as a primary defense against germs. You can time this by singing a verse and chorus of:

# Christ the Lord is Risen Today

By Charles Wesley Christ the Lord is risen today, Alleluia!

Sons of men and angels say, Alleluia!

Raise your joys and triumphs high,

Alleluia!

Sing, ye heav'ns, and earth, reply,

#### Alleluia!

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Sisters in the Spirit is an outreach ministry created to empower Christian women in better serving the Lord. We are here to help "equip God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ..."



I am a sister who celebrates - EVERYTHING! I celebrate my birthday for the entire month of July. I celebrate getting new stuff, finding old stuff, reconnecting with friends and family, graduations, baptisms, the arrival of Springtime, going on vacation ... if its something good, I'm going to celebrate it.

I especially like to celebrate anniversaries. For me, anniversaries represent how God is moving us from where we were to where we are, and closer to where He is leading us. This issue of the Newsletter celebrates two anniversaries: March 2024 marks 5 years since Sisters in the Spirit Ministries began the publication of our Newsletter. March 2024 also marks four years since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic.

For the newsletter, in the five years that we have been publishing, subscribers have grown from 30 in 2019 to over 500 today. We have an e-edition, a growing prison distribution, and our newsletters are distributed throughout the United States and the Caribbean.

For the Pandemic, in the four years since it was announced, millions of people have died, and life as we knew it changed drastically and permanently. And you may ask, where's the celebration in that?

Not all anniversaries are happy, but they are always lifechanging. I always cry on the anniversary of the death of my father in 1980, and my mother in 2012. I always shutter on the anniversary of the 1995 hurricane that literally destroyed my home and my beloved St. Thomas, Virgin Islands. And my whole heart aches on the anniversary of 911. Certain dates and the events that took place on them have resonance and meaning for us, and they shape our sense of who we are, both individually and collectively.

Anniversaries give us a chance to look back over time and to see how far we've come. Anniversaries also help us remember - as a society, family, or community - the events that have affected us all. They are a way of sharing the impact of an event or an experience and reaffirming that no matter what,

#### we are still here, and God has more for us to do!

Most important, anniversaries are a way of honoring God. The Bible tells us that God wants His people to remember all His works, to honor Him for what He's done, and to tell their children and grandchildren what they have witnessed.

In my spirit for you my Sisters, is that you celebrate all anniversaries by trusting what God is doing in your life. You may not understand it all, and it may not always be joyous celebrations, but know that God always has you in His heart, and is doing what's best for you in His heart. That will always be a reason to celebrate.

Love, Peace, and Blessings Always, Katrina W. Brown

## IT'S BEEN FOUR YEARS SINCE THE PANDEMIC WAS DECLARED ... NOW WHAT?

he World is observing a grim anniversary. Four years ago in March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. Here's what we've learned about the virus since then, what we still don't know, and its ongoing impact on



both people's health and the society at large.

According to the *New York Times*, "nearly everything about COVID-19 was an open question" during the early days of the pandemic. Since then, scientists have managed to unravel some of the biggest mysteries surrounding the virus, but other questions remain.

How does COVID-19 spread? At the start of the pandemic, many people were concerned that COVID-19 could spread through contaminated surfaces. However, research suggests that it is more likely to spread through the air, either through large droplets produced when a person coughs or sneezes or by smaller particles called aerosols. "These particles kind of behave like cigarette smoke — they come out and float around, and they can drift in the air for a while," said Linsey Marr, an environmental engineer at Virginia Tech. Marr and other researchers have found that aerosols as small as five microns may carry more infectious viral particles than larger droplets. Other studies have found that the virus is still evolving and could spread more effectively through the air over time.

What are common (and uncommon) COVID-19 symptoms? Most people who have been infected by COVID-19 experienced flu-like symptoms, but some people experienced no symptoms at all. Other people, particularly those who were older or had existing health problems, experienced more severe symptoms and may have been hospitalized. Some of the more unusual COVID-19 symptoms that people experienced, such as a loss of smell, may have been due to a dysfunctional immune response. For example, researchers found that the virus attached to the ACE2 receptor in the nose among people who lost their sense of smell. The immune response to the virus can inadvertently change the genetic activity of certain nerves in the nose, which then disrupts the sense of smell.

In addition, Maria Elena Ruiz, an infectious disease specialist at George Washington University, said that this aggressive immune response and subsequent inflammation may also be critical to understanding other lingering neurological effects of COVID-19, including brain fog, headaches, tingling or numbness, and more.

How long does immunity against COVID-19 last? According to Akiko Iwasaki, a virologist and immunologist at Yale University, a COVID-19 infection or vaccination should protect you from the virus for several

months. However, your immunity can also be impacted by many different factors, including age, underlying health, and whether the virus has picked up mutations that make it more evasive.

Generally, health experts believe that higher antibody levels are correlated with better protection, but some studies suggest that antibody levels drop significantly three months after an infection or a vaccination. It's also not clear how many antibodies are necessary for baseline protection since "new variants are continuously arising," Iwasaki said. Another type of immune protection from T cells can reduce the severity of COVID-19 symptoms rather than block infection completely. Currently, research suggests T cell immunity against COVID-19 may last a year or more.

Will COVID-19 ever become seasonal like the flu? After the first winter COVID-19 surge, many people hoped that the virus would spread less readily during the warmer summer months. Compared to summer, there is generally more opportunity for viral spread in the winter since more people are indoors and there is less ventilation in buildings. However, health experts say that COVID-19 does not seem to be inherently seasonal. "We've clearly had surges in the summer as well," Marr said.

Separately, Vincent Munster, chief of the virus ecology section at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Rocky Mountain Laboratories, said that while he would not be surprised if COVID-19 eventually settle into a predictable seasonal pattern, it's difficult to predict if that will occur in the next few years or take decades.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19. Although COVID-19 is no longer as prevalent as it used to be during the early days of the pandemic, it still has a significant impact on many people. Currently, CDC data shows that there were 15,141 COVID-19 hospitalizations for the week ending March 2. There are also around 500 to 1,500 COVID-19 deaths every week — much lower than in the past but still higher than mortality from the flu.

continues on page 7



# RESURRECTION SUNDAY

FIND THESE WORDS PROCLAIMING JESUS HAS RISEN

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LAMB OF GOD
PETER
SALVATION
THIEVES



# The Baseball Game

At a fund-raising dinner for a school that serves learning disabled children, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a question.

"When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does is done with perfection. Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do. Where is the natural order of things in my son?" The audience was stilled by the query. The father continued. "I believe, that when a child like Shay comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes in the way other people treat that child." Then he told the following story: Shay and his father had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, "Do you think they'll let me play?" Shay's father knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but the father also understood that if his son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging.

Shay's father approached one of the boys on the field and asked if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and, getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We're losing by six runs, and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team, and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning."

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the outfield. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as his father waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again. Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base, and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat.

What a decision the team had to make. Whether or not to let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game, or to put in a more experienced batter. Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible. Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball. However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came, and Shay swung clumsily and missed. The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly toward Shay. As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and turned and threw the ball on a high arc to right field, far beyond the reach of the first baseman.

Everyone started yelling, "Shay, run to first! Run to first!" Never in his life had Shay ever made it to first base. He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled. Everyone yelled, "Run to second, run to second!" By the time Shay rounded first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions and intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head.

Shay ran toward second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases toward home. Shay reached second base. The opposing shortstop ran to him, turned him in the direction of third base, and shouted, "Run to third!"

As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams were screaming, "Shay, run home!" Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the "grand slam" and won the game for his team.

"That day," said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, "the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world." This is the natural order of the world God created.



Join with Sisters in the Spirit in providing the SIS Newsletter to the 800 women incarcerated at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Troy, Virginia

Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women (FCCW) is the largest prison for women in Virginia. SIS has been sending newsletters to several of the inmates for years, and the women have found *Freedom in the Word* that they read. The FCCW Chaplain Rev. Jerusha Moses, contacted SIS and asked if the Ministry could provide newsletters to all 800 of the women. We said

## Yes, Yes, Yes!

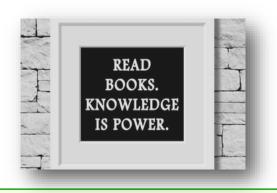
You can help us accomplish this! Your gift of \$25 will help sponsor three months of newsletters for 10 women incarcerated at FCCW.

Jesus said "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

There is encouragement, enlightenment, and empowerment within the pages of the SIS Newsletter. You can help provide this freedom in the words of the Newsletter by sending your contribution to:

SIS Ministries P.O. Box 649 \* Gloucester Point, VA 23062 Attention: <u>Freedom in the Word</u> Campaign Or use our cash app - \$SntheS

> Thank you! for your generosity towards those who are in prison!



# CRAZY CHURCH LADIES

# CXZY Church Ladies Writing Say of to Highest Transport Writing Say of to Hight Transport Writing Say of to Hight Transport Writing Say of

## BY GWEN ADAMS

The priceless story of An unlikely group winning the war against human trafficking

What happens when ordinary churchgoing women heed the radical call of an extraordinary God? The sex trafficking trade is an ugly, messy, and complicated crisis in desperate need

of intervention, but it is easier to stay out of it and pray from a safe distance. However, the church is not called to be safe.

In Crazy Church Ladies, Gwen Adams recounts how she and her group of church ladies became crime-fighting machines to upend the world of trafficking in their city. Their program, Priceless, has become a multifaceted wrecking ball to the crime of human trafficking in their home state of Alaska. But they still focus on the simple truth that as they invest wholeheartedly in the few, they will reach the masses with the hope of the gospel message.

Crazy Church Ladies lays out a blueprint for the church to be the church. In a world with so much conversation about the church and social justice, this story shows how the church can live into its primary calling, to make disciples and impact the surrounding culture in ways that no government, law enforcement, or community activism can.

Get to know the real Crazy Church Ladies and eventually, the men, too, as they encounter victims of trafficking and the worst abuse you could ever imagine. In the most unlikely place, among people with nothing in common, life-changing friendship emerges. The stories will break hearts, but unbroken hearts rarely change the world. In the end, the reader will see the astounding beauty that can only emerge from the darkest of places.

What happens when ordinary churchgoing women heed the radical call of an extraordinary God? It breaks their hearts and brings true hope and healing to the world around them.

Review reprinted from Amazon.com Crazy Church Ladies is available at Amazon.com, Christianbooks.com, and Goodreads.com

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE Lamb

Continued from Page 1

It was the blood of the lambs, smeared on the doorposts, that saved the Jews from death. It was why Passover was such an important holy day for the people.

During the time of Jesus, in preparation for the celebration of Passover, for a few days, every family in Israel would have a lamb, and every person in that family knew that this lamb would be sacrificed and slaughtered.

Since most families didn't have flocks of sheep, they would depend on the shepherds to bring the lambs to Jerusalem every spring. A few days before the Passover holiday, each family would purchase a lamb which lived with the family before it was to be sacrificed. It would have been difficult not to interact with this condemned creature.

That's what made Passover so different. Unlike the daily sacrifices made at the Temple, which most people didn't see, everyone lived with the Passover lamb for a few days. And everyone realized why this lamb would die for the atonement of sin when the hour came.

Jesus died while the entire nation of Israel was celebrating Passover. Before Christ, Isaiah had prophesized that the Messiah would be like a lamb led to slaughter. John the Baptist had proclaimed "behold the Lamb of God, who comes to take away the sins of the world." (John 1:29) After the resurrection, Peter called Jesus "the Lamb" in his first letter, and the apostle Paul called Jesus the ultimate Passover lamb. In Revelation, John refers to Jesus as the Lamb 28 times in 18 chapters, and in 1st Corinthians Paul wrote "for Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

In his book entitled "Songs of Innocence and Experience" poet William Blake honors Christ in his work "The Lamb." The poem written in 1789 provides a beautiful poetic acknowledgement of Christ, whom Blake represents as a meek and gentle lamb. The poem asks:

Little lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee, Gave thee life, and bid thee feed Bu the stream and o'er the mead: *Gave thee clothing of delight,* Softest clothing, woolly, bright; Gave thee such a tender voice, Making all the vales rejoice? Little lamb, who made thee? Dost thou know who made thee Little lamb, I'll tell thee; Little lamb, I'll tell thee: He is called by thy name, For He calls Himself a Lamb. He is meek, and He is mild, He became a little child. I a child, and thou a lamb, We are called by His name. Little lamb. God bless thee! Little lamb, God bless thee!

Indeed, it was never about the bunny. It's all about the Lamb.



## Testimonies from our Readers

ometimes it is little things that God uses to make His presence known. He doesn't have to shout in a booming voice from heaven, it could be a quiet whisper in your ear saying, "I hear you, and I'm here for you." That is what happened to me awhile back when I was asked to help a bible study group set up their audio/ video equipment in a church my bible study group uses. I have some technical ability that allows me to set up and operate the audio/video equipment for my bible study group but was unsure on advising another group what they should do. I struggled with the thought of volunteering to help them and not being able to do a single thing that would get their system up and running. I prayed for guidance, that God would touch all the equipment for them the same way He handles



all of our needs. When I arrived the next day to assist that group, I silently prayed and simply walked them through all the steps I do to get the system up and running for my group. To my amazement the same steps worked for them, they had sound, even though they use an entirely different software system. God was quiding me that day for His glory, for the women of that bible group to receive His word without hinderance. I was able to assist those ladies with their needs and I am thankful, grateful, and blessed that God was with us. Testimony by LaVerne C. Foster

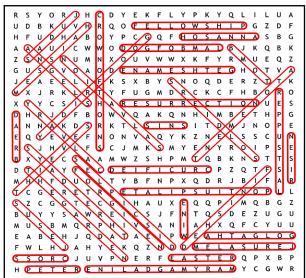
Our new **Grateful, Thankful, Blessed** column is for you to give your testimony. Let us know about how God is moving in your life. We'll publish your story.

Mail or E-mail your testimony to:

Grateful, Thankful, Blessed P.O. Box 649 | Gloucester Point, VA 23062 Email: kawbrown@yahoo.com

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#### Solution to RESURRECTION SUNDAY Word Search



# FOUR YEARS AFTER THE PANDEMIC ... NOW WHAT?

### Continued from page 3

There are also many people with long COVID, or persistent symptoms after their initial infections. According to a CDC study, 6% of U.S. adults reported having long COVID in June 2023, and 26.4% of these individuals reported "significant activity limitations" due to their symptoms.

The COVID-19 pandemic also led to a significant number of excess deaths, or the number of deaths above what was expected from pre-pandemic trends, worldwide. According to *The Economist*, there have been roughly 30 million excess deaths in the four years since COVID-19 first emerged. These excess deaths include deaths from COVID-19, deaths from undiagnosed cases, and deaths from pandemic disruptions, such as missed doctor appointments, that could have prevented other diseases. The isolation of the pandemic may have also led to an increased number of deaths from alcohol, drugs, vehicle crashes, and more.

There have also been indirect effects of COVID-19, including learning loss among young students. Although some states are beginning to see improvements from pandemic-era proficiency scores, others are still lagging behind. So far, Minnesota, Missouri, Massachusetts, and Nevada have all seen continued declines in their statewide English language arts proficiency rates.

"Four years ago, our world changed," the *New York Times* writes. "As a society, we are not close to fully recovered."

Information for this article came from a compilation of articles printed in the <u>New York Times</u>, and from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) <u>COVID Data Tracker</u>.

# FREEDOM IN THE WORD Campaign

## THANK YOU!

We have raised almost half of our \$3200 goal needed to get the SIS Newsletter to the 800 at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women.

(See page 5)

Your gift of \$25 will help sponsor three months of newsletters for 10 women incarcerated at FCCW.

We still have a ways to go. Please give as much as you can. These women may be in physical bondage, but not their spirit, because there is true freedom in God's Word!



# Sisters in the Spirit Newsletter

This is a free monthly publication of Sisters in the Spirit Ministries, Inc, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded to empower Christian women in better fulfilling their God-given purpose. Editor: Dr. Katrina W. Brown The newsletter is distributed via mail and online throughout the United States and the Caribbean.

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# The LAST Laugh

#### For my brothers

A cowboy, who just moved to Montana from Texas, walks into a bar and orders three mugs of Bud. He sits in the back of the room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finishes them, he comes back to the bar and orders three more. The bartender approaches and tells the cowboy, "You know, a mug goes flat after I draw it. It would taste better if you bought one at a time."

The cowboy replies, "Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in Arizona, the other is in Colorado. When we all left our home in Texas, we promised that we'd drink this way to remember the days when we drank together. So I'm drinking one beer for each of my brothers and one for myself." The bartender admits that this is a nice custom, and leaves it there.

The cowboy becomes a regular in the bar, and always drinks the same way. He orders three mugs and drinks them in turn. One day, he comes in and only orders two mugs. All the regulars take notice and fall silent. When he comes back to the bar for the second round, the bartender says, "I don't want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your loss." The cowboy looks quite puzzled for a moment, then a light dawns in his eyes and he laughs. "Oh, no, everybody's just fine," he explains. "It's just that my wife and I joined the Baptist Church and I had to quit drinking. It hasn't affected my brothers though."

#### His name is Jesus

Late one night, a burglar broke into a house he thought was empty. He tiptoed through the living room but suddenly he froze in his tracks when he heard a loud voice say: "Jesus is watching you!" Silence returned to the house, so the burglar crept forward again. "Jesus is watching you," the voice boomed again.

The burglar stepped deed again. He was frightened. Frontierly, he leeked all

The burglar stopped dead again. He was frightened. Frantically, he looked all around. In a dark corner, he spotted a bird cage and in the cage was a parrot. He asked the parrot: "Was that you who said Jesus is watching me?" "Yes", said the parrot. The burglar breathed a sigh of relief, and asked the parrot: "What's your name?" "Moses," said the bird. "That's a dumb name for a parrot," sneered the burglar. "What idiot named you Moses?" The parrot said, "The same idiot who named the Rottweiler Jesus."

#### **Praying for a Word**

A little boy goes up to the preacher after service and says, Pastor, I noticed you do a lot of praying before service, what are you praying about? The Pastor answers, I'm praying that the Lord will help me give a good sermon. The little boy looks puzzled and asks, then why doesn't He.

#### I can't help you

A drunken man staggers into a Catholic Church and sits down in the confession box but says nothing. The bewildered priest coughs to attract his attention but still, the man says nothing. The priest then knocks on the wall three times in an effort to get the man to speak. Finally the drunk replies, no use knocking mate, there's no paper in this one, either.

#### **Happy Birthday!**

A man was sitting on the edge of the bed, watching his wife, who was looking at herself in the mirror. Since her birthday was not far off he asked what she'd like to have for her birthday. 'I'd like to be eight again', she replied, still looking in the mirror.

On the morning of her birthday, he arose early, made her a nice big bowl of Coco Pops, and then took her to Adventure World theme park. What a day! He put her on every ride in the park; the Death Slide, the Wall of Fear, the Screaming Roller Coaster, everything there was.

Five hours later they staggered out of the theme park. Her head was reeling and her stomach felt upside down. He then took her to a McDonald's where he ordered her a Happy Meal with extra fries and a chocolate shake. Then it was off to a movie, popcorn, a soda pop, and her favorite candy, M&M's. What a fabulous adventure! Finally, she wobbled home with her husband and collapsed into bed exhausted. He leaned over his wife with a big smile and lovingly asked, 'Well Dear, what was it like being eight again? Her eyes slowly opened and her expression suddenly changed. 'I meant my dress size, you Moron!!!!' The moral of the story: Even when a man is listening, he's gonna get it wrong.

#### **Anonymous**

A church usher was asked by an older lady to be led to the front seat of the church. He said, "are you sure you want to sit that far up, because we have a new minister and he is a little boring and you may fall asleep." She asked him if he knew who she was and he said no, and she replied that she was the ministers mother. The usher said, "do you know who I am" and she said no. He wiped off his brow and said, "Good"