

S U M M E R F E S T

Taking the Gospel to the People

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Believers worship God openly.

On a sunny afternoon in June, a young man walked along the bustling Pacific Coast Highway near Huntington Beach, CA. All around him were the bars, shops, surfers, tourists, and drifters common to “Surf City, USA.” Though he had committed his life to Christ years before, he had stopped walking with the Lord and reading the Word.



Logan Martin of the band Benjiman performs at Beachside Summer Fest, a free Christian concert with family-friendly vendor booths in Huntington Beach, CA.

Suddenly, a loud, clear voice penetrated the air, proclaiming, “If you can hear my voice on the beach, if you can hear my voice on the pier, on the street, over at Duke’s Restaurant—God is calling you to be born again ...”

The voice went on, talking about God’s love and forgiveness for sin through faith in Christ. The young man’s heart was pierced. Not only did he recognize the message, but he recognized the voice—it was his old Christian friend, Mike Harris. Something deep in his heart responded; he had to

find Mike and talk to him about Jesus. He followed the voice. Soon, he came to the promenade near Main Street. There, on a stage between the grass and the sea, was Mike, sharing the Gospel to a whole crowd that seemed to have been stopped in its tracks. There was a hush over the whole

area, from the famous Huntington Beach Pier, the wide beach, the packed plaza, and even across the street in restaurants with outdoor seating.

“I felt like I was talking to a congregation. Everybody was tuned in. I could sense



The Gospel message echoed through the streets as well as on the beach.

there were thousands all around, just listening,” Mike, pastor of Calvary Chapel Beachside, said later. “It was just an invitation for everybody who was in earshot to give their lives to Christ.”

As Mike descended the stage, the young man rushed to talk to him. Pouring out his questions and frustrations, he admitted that he had walked away from his faith. Mike shared scriptures and encouraged him to recommit his life to Christ. He agreed, and they bowed their heads and prayed together.

Bringing Gospel to a Multitude

Several believers at the event testified that they saw God working in a powerful way at the all-day outreach. Christian bands had played music, drawing passers-by, while believers passed out tracts and hosted vendor booths.

“Every 15 minutes, the Gospel went forth,” Mike said. He and Pastor Brian Brodersen of CC Costa Mesa took turns sharing between sets of music.



Drawn to the energetic music of Olivia the Band, many were surprised to find the songs were about Jesus Christ.

“The best thing about this outreach is that we are taking the Gospel right to where the people are, rather than expecting them to come to us,” Brian said. “Good music draws people’s attention, and then we give the Gospel in a straightforward, non-offensive way.” He added that the vision was “getting the Word out to people and letting the Holy Spirit take it from there.”

When *Grand Prize* lead singer, Luke Caldwell, began praying and worshiping on stage at the end of the event, the Holy Spirit seemed to descend on the whole area in what was described by attendees as a “holy hush.” Christians stood to their feet, lifting hands in adoration. Casual observers for several hundred feet all around

stopped to listen. It was then that an older Christian man turned to Mike and said, “You’ve been sharing that they need Christ all day. Now they’re ready to hear how.”

Later, Mike learned how far that message had gone forth. More than a block away, the city’s special events coordinator heard Mike’s voice from her living room. Across Pacific Coast Highway, a woman standing below Fred’s Restaurant said she heard the message as clearly as if Mike was standing next to her. A lifeguard who had heard the message while working at the pier’s famous Tower Zero, several hundred feet from the stage, also heard and sought out Mike, asking about Jesus Christ.

Organizers estimated that 4,000 people heard the Gospel that day, either through the Christian music, the messages over the loudspeakers, believers passing out tracts, or in the vendors’ booths. The evangelistic music festival was staffed by nearly 300 believers from 19 Christian churches in the Huntington Beach area. CC Beachside spearheaded the effort. God provided for the costs of the event through KWVE, Reaction Radio, CC Costa Mesa, and many of the participating churches.

The event also coincided with the popular Surfrider Celebrity Surf Jam contest at the same spot, drawing flocks of celebrities and surf fans to the beach all day. From the stage, Mike interviewed ASP-rated pro



Ken Sutton, an assistant pastor at CC Costa Mesa, and son Noah enjoy the day.



Many sensed God’s presence as Grand Prize’s Luke Caldwell was drawn into an intimate time of worship and prayer.



Pastor Brian Brodersen, CC Costa Mesa, shared the Gospel throughout the event.



Pastor Mike Harris of CC Beachside, right, talks to a homeless man.

surfer, Damien Hobgood, 27, fresh from winning a World Championship contest in Fiji a few days before. His candid testimony echoed clearly across the beach filled with surf enthusiasts. After reaching his dream of qualifying for the World Championship Tour, Damien gave his life to Christ on a Brazil beach in 1999. “Jesus Christ was there waiting for me all the time,” he said. “I found out that all the questions and the emptiness in my life that I had been trying to fill by partying or surfing were answered by His love.”

While it is not known how many accepted Christ as a result of the event, Mike said he had talked to nearly 50 people who said they each had prayed with at least one person to accept Christ. Hundreds of people were given Bibles and other resources.

God Opens Doors

Not only was God's presence evident during the day of seed sowing, His hand was also evident before the festival even started, said Chad Amico, assistant pastor at CC Beachside.

"For two months before the event, we met every Friday and prayed for specific things. I was really encouraged to see that God did more than we could ask or even imagine in everything we prayed about," Chad said, citing Ephesians 3:20.

"It took about seven years to get the permit," Mike recalled. He and other churches had tried to gain access to the popular spot for years but were denied a meeting with city officials. Then Bob Jones, a believer from CC Beachside who knew the mayor, went to talk to her personally. The mayor, also a believer, urged the other city officials that any group, Christian or not, should have a chance to present its proposal for any event and be able to apply for permits. That opened the door for last year's first-ever Beachside Summer Fest, with a handful of churches involved. This year they gained permission again to hold the event at Huntington Beach Pier, though some city leaders opposed the openly evangelistic event.

"God just raised up the right person at the right time," Chad said, citing Psalm 115:1, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to Your name give glory..." He added, "May our God be glorified for all He did at the Beachside Summer Fest."

Brian Brodersen added, "The city told us that this was one of the best events they have ever had, and they're happy for us to be there permanently." 🙌



Grand Prize closed out the day.



Huntington Beach's outdoor amphitheater stayed packed throughout the day. Here, crowds listen to the band Benjimin, who performed at the previous Summer Fest.



Volunteers shared the Gospel while painting colorful characters.

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On-the-spot prayers were offered up throughout the day.



A pelican dropped in to share the stage.



A prayer team covered the event in constant supplication and intercession.