

Something's in the Air

Christian Television Returns to Decatur

Albert Johnson didn't really want to leave the warm climate of his Florida home to take a job in the extreme temperatures of Central Illinois. But as we all know, God has a way of changing our plans because He sees something bigger, better, and more rewarding for us than we see for ourselves. Such was the case with Albert.

I received a phone call a while back from a gentleman who wanted to introduce himself and set up a time where we might visit about the work he is doing here in Central Illinois. He explained he was the General Manager of the new Christian television station in town and had seen a recent copy of LIVING Christian magazine. A few weeks passed and our schedules finally allowed us to sit down and get to know a bit about one another and the efforts we are making to bring Christ back into the media. I was immediately taken with Albert's soft spoken demeanor and humility despite his imposing physical stature.

"Originally when we purchased the license, I was sent here to start the station up in this community. We needed somebody to be here forty hours per week so it began with the start up. Then God began to move quickly and in less than a year we had a building. We started producing our first program within three months so they decided to keep me here as a General Manager," shared Albert.

By "we" Albert means the Christian Television Network based in Clearwater, Florida. CTN first signed on the air on October 24, 1979. CTN has produced more than 30,000 Christian programs. And today, the good news of Christ has expanded from reaching a few thousand people in 1979, to reaching millions of homes all over North America and Hawaii, as well as into parts of Mexico, Central and South America, Europe and the Islands of the Caribbean.

The station is appropriately housed in the space previously occupied by WFHL, the former home of Decatur's Christian television station, out on Parkway Court. It certainly makes sense given that much of the physical space was already conducive to broadcasting purposes.

I asked Albert about the process of starting the station here in Decatur. "The original license we purchased was registered in Effingham, Illinois, so CTN moved it from there to Decatur. Once we purchased and transferred the license we had to get on the air as a requirement of that license," explained Albert. "What about you?" I asked. "How did you get here?" "Originally, I'm from Newport News, Virginia," shared Albert. "In 1993 I moved to St. Petersburg, Florida and was there until I moved here in 2008. I've been with CTN since 1999."

Currently WLCF is available on AT&T U-verse. If you have an antenna with a digital converter you can tune in at 45.1. You can also visit their website at www.wlcftv.net and click on the button "Watch Us Live!" (Please note: you need to have Windows Media Player on your computer.) WLCF is currently in negotiations with Comcast and hopes to be added to their line up in the near future.

"It has been challenging getting on to Comcast. We have to show we have different programming from the other national Christian television stations," confides Albert. "But also that we are dedicated to serving the community. We



Tammy Wilder adjusts the lighting as Jessica Burkholder prepares the microphone for a guest on the set of WLCF.

are much more local broadcasting verses the national shows. The last contact we had with Comcast, the fellow I was working with was taking it to his superiors because he needs to justify using that bandwidth for our station. It was very positive. It took us two years to finalize things with AT&T U-verse. That process started in 2009, but things are looking very positive for us.

In the very near future we plan to utilize our sub channel 45.2 and have basically an Illinois Church channel. That

way we can air church conferences from local churches. We'll basically air a Christian Lifestyle Network in which we'll have Christian movies, some of the older sitcoms such as *'Dobie Gillis'*, *'The Lone Ranger'*, concerts, and other programs along those lines."

Having recently attended the Annual Conference for the Churches of God, I asked Albert how they might broadcast such events. "We would come to the conference and set everything up, record the conference, and then broadcast it at an appropriate time," explained Albert. "We want to give the viewers a wide variety of programming. For your conference, as an example, people who couldn't make it to the actual event, could still see it for themselves. We could do the same thing with local concerts.

We already record some programs here at the studio in what we're calling *'The Spotlight'*," shares Albert, "where we have a live studio audience. Spotlight features local pastors and preachers and it airs in Missouri, Iowa, and Tallahassee, Florida five days a week, two times a day. We also tape a few other shows as well. There's *'A Word in Season'* with Linda Klingel, *'Christ Light'* with Nelly Cruz, and *'Maximizing Your Authority'* with Zanetta Atlas-Fields."

Air time is available at WLCF from thirty second spots up to programs running fifty-eight minutes and thirty seconds. Albert and his crew have the ability to tape a church service and can also edit the programs. WLCF TV airs 24/7. You can call the station at 217-233-3800 for more details. WLCF's coverage consists of over 380,000 households in the Decatur, Springfield, Champaign, and Danville areas.

I was glad to hear about the mechanics of the station but I wanted to get to know Albert better. I could sense there was something stirring beneath this "General Manager" and I had a feeling it was the Holy Spirit. I was right.

In addition to his role with CTN, Albert was also the Associate Pastor of a church in Florida. Then God got a hold of his heart. "I didn't expect to be here," shares Albert. "I even rejected it at first. Not only dealing with the weather here in Central Illinois, but picking up and leaving everything behind in Florida. But God really pressed on my heart. It was a thing where I was with Him 24/7. I couldn't escape Him and He began to deal with my heart and opened my eyes that the pulpit He's given me has millions of people involved."

There was an ever-so-slight change in Albert's demeanor. He seemed a bit more comfortable with me and I sensed he wanted to talk more about what was really on his heart.

"There's things God wants to release in the air," Albert said with determination. "He made me realize I am a steward of what goes out. Because it's all about His Kingdom. God promises if you sacrifice for Him, He'll insure you'll receive both in this life and in the life to come. So that's what I hold onto."



Elizabeth Hallihan Pharm. D.

**Now Serving
You in Two
Convenient
Locations!**



Wole Adeoye R.Ph.

**Want Us to Make a Donation
to Your Church?**

*Just give us a call and we'll explain
how we've donated hundreds of dollars!*



www.victorypharmacy.com
By the stripes of Jesus you are healed.

422-1000
2280 E. William

428-4000
163 N. Water St.

I shared with Albert that I can certainly relate to that. Publishing LIVING Christian magazine is a huge blessing but there are times when you wonder how God is going to provide the people, resources, and money to keep it going.

"It's a total faith walk," agrees Albert. "God, in this age, is redistributing the money and He is going to fund Christian media through Christians. We're not going to need to go to the world because He is going to put it on Christian's hearts to give.

As I was studying one day," he continued, "the Holy Spirit really brought it home to me. I was in Matthew 28. Satan is the prince of the powers of the air. But as Jesus ascended, He gave the command to go and make disciples. Television signals go through the air. Christian television will have dominion over the air. You see, Jesus gave that command when He was in the air. He didn't give it when He was on the ground," smiled Albert.

And then with a grin Albert added, "So I call that the TV scripture. Where Jesus is authorizing us to take back the air waves. You see a lot of things on TV now that just promotes sin—a sinful lifestyle. It tries to make sin acceptable. Our job is to show that living a Christ-like life is the only acceptable way to live. So we have to counteract all the sinful programming. Just as you do in LIVING Christian magazine, we have to illuminate lives.

I would have to say where Christian television has failed, is that we have promoted people who had double lives. When they were exposed, a lot of people were turned off from Christ. So now we have to go back and promote those who make a commitment to living Holy. Because the world needs to see what we're really all about."

You could tell Albert looked at his role not as just the General Manager, but as a man charged with a mission. He had heeded God's call, knew what he needed to do, and had a passion to achieve what God had laid on his heart back in Florida. I thanked him for sharing and allowing me to witness his mission first hand.

"It's what gets me up every morning," confided Albert. "It drives me. I prayed a prayer when I was first hired by CTN. I saw some of the programming and I said, 'Lord, if only you will put me in a position to control the programming, I know I can put forth the ones You want. And now, ten years later, He has me in a position to be His steward over programming at this station."

Even though it is fairly early in the life of the station, Albert said there are ways for local churches, organizations, and individuals to support WLCF. If you would like to support WLCF and its ministry, volunteers are always needed to help pass out flyers or to attend the taping of "Spotlight." He also encourages people to take advantage of their Intercessory Room.

"We invite people to come during business hours to get away for a while and pray. We hope to institute a Prayer Line in the near future. We'll obviously need some volunteers with that as well," says Albert.

God does answer prayers. It may be ten years later, but it's all in His time. And given time, I believe Albert and WLCF will be a prominent media in our area. You can really sense there's something in the air.



Jessica Burkholder operates the remote cameras and other aspects of the studio from the console room of WLCF.

