

More than a hundred churches and ministries in the Coachella Valley partnered with Horizon Christian Fellowship to reach their community for Christ in the

# Festival of Life



Pastor Mike MacIntosh



A woman worships the Lord on Friday night. More than 24,000 people attended the three-day Festival of Life.



A man who accepted Christ receives prayer and encouragement from Steve Cashman.

Story by Margot Bass  
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***Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*** Psalm 133:1

“My heart was hurting,” Pastor Mike MacIntosh, the founder of Horizon Christian Fellowship, later declared. “My wife Sandy and I both could feel the spiritual oppression the entire afternoon leading up to the multicultural night on Saturday.” It had been the second evening of the Festival of Life (FOL), a three-day outreach to Coachella Valley in Southern California.

From backstage, Mike watched the sea of faces. It saddened him that cultural boundaries divided the region socially. But as he approached the podium, Mike felt a sense of freedom come over him. He spoke with firmness. “From the lush, green golf courses to the dusty trailer parks, everyone in Coachella Valley needs Jesus Christ,” he proclaimed. “In His holy Name, I challenge the demonic forces of racism, prejudice, and bias.” Applause began slowly and spread from one section to others.

Mike quoted from Romans 10:12-13. “Remember that the apostle Paul said, ‘For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For “whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.”’” As Mike continued teaching on the grace of God, he sensed barriers beginning to shatter. After well-known Hispanic musical artists performed, Mike said, “a feeling of oneness in God” replaced the previous discomfort, as the event became a night of healing.

Later in the evening, two security guards asked if someone could get them two of the free Bibles offered since they could not leave their posts. Of Hispanic descent, the men confessed that they had been touched by the compassion they observed. One said, “We have worked security at many large events, but we have never witnessed so much love and concern expressed for the Hispanic people [as] here in the name of God.” After counselors shared the Gospel with them, both men prayed to receive Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

Forty-five miles long and 15 miles wide, Coachella Valley’s 15 municipalities are worlds apart. The western end’s wealthy homes, country clubs, and golf courses attract the rich and



Thousands worship with the bilingual band Salvador on Saturday night. The multicultural night sought to unite the area’s diverse population through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.



Helpers sing and dance onstage at the Kids Zone event, where thousands of children enjoyed Bible-based crafts, bounce castles, games, and music from Friday to Sunday.



At one of six mini-festivals, Kathleen Domen tells a boy how to be a son of Jesus.

famous. At the valley's eastern end is an agricultural community of migrant Hispanic workers and an Indian reservation. Here, according to Horizon's FOL Assistant Director Eric Martin, a typical home is a dilapidated trailer that may not have running water and electricity. "The rich, gated community—they need Jesus. In the east, with their huge social needs, they need Jesus. The thing that unites the valley is that they need Christ," Eric said. Mike added, "Jesus is Lord in both communities." Following the FOL, new relationships between the churches unite the valley.

The FOL was organized by Horizon Christian Fellowship in San Diego and Coachella Valley's Lighthouse of the Valley movement, a coalition of 100 area churches

and 15 parachurch/business organizations. Together they targeted the valley with prayer and action to proclaim the Gospel and unify the body of Christ for ministry.

The three main festival days of April 9-11 at Indian Wells, CA, featured well-known speakers and musicians: retired three-star Gen. William "Jerry" Boykin, author Joel Rosenberg, musicians Third Day, Jonathan and Sarah MacIntosh, Steven Curtis Chapman, and Brenton Brown. Younger audiences enjoyed professional BMX exhibitions, Kids' Zones, and concerts. Mike capped off each evening with an evangelistic message. He described three students who responded to the Gospel during the main festival's youth night on Friday: a 10-year-old boy hooked on pornography who asked

Jesus to "set him free"; a 12-year-old boy addicted to heroin; and a 13-year-old girl who had prostituted her body to pay for school supplies.

One of the top heroin dealers in the valley attended. "Somehow I knew that if I didn't come here, give up drugs, and surrender my life to Jesus Christ that I was going to die tonight," the man said to counselors. Another young man, a professed atheist and drug user, came at his mother's insistence. "I didn't believe in God," the teen said. "But when I came to the festival I felt an incredible tug on my heart to give my life to Christ that I could not resist." Since the event, he has been baptized and begun attending a Bible-teaching church.

The 30 smaller mini-festivals throughout the region leading up to the main event were as varied as the churches planning them. Thousands received free clothing, food, haircuts, and medical, dental, and eye care. Other events included nursing home outreaches, car washes, a women's tea and breakfast, and golf tournaments. Churches held seminars on sober living, marriage, divorce recovery, and new believers' counseling.

One pre-festival event was held in Thermal, a town populated mostly by migrant workers. A shed used for packing produce and the dirt field next to it were transformed into a performing showcase. "We didn't know who would come to this field in the middle of nowhere," admitted Eric. But a crowd of 7,000 heard Mike share the Gospel, and more than 900 chose to follow Christ. Police officers told Mike it was the largest and most peaceful crowd ever assembled in the area.

Between September 2009 and April 2010, approximately 56,500 people attended FOL events, and 3,600 made decisions for Christ. The work has continued with smaller festivals and discipleship. Eric Martin said that 1,200 people were trained for follow-up, calling everyone who filled out a response card.

"The churches have become healthier; they have a heart to serve. Some have seen significant growth," Eric said. "There's power in unity." 

**You are all one in Christ Jesus.**

Galatians 3:28b



Olivia Smith grabs her sister Isabella's newly painted face at the Kids Zone.



Pastor Obed Martinez preaches to the crowd at a mini-festival in Mecca, CA.



A counselor prays for a teenager who accepted Christ at the youth event.

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