

# Christian film rated PG to warn of thematic elements

By Terry Mattingly

WASHINGTON (BP) — The Motion Picture Association of America is crystal clear when it describes why its “PG” rating exists — it’s a warning flag.

“The theme of a PG-rated film may itself call for parental guidance,” the online explanation of the rating system states. “There may be some profanity in these films. There may be some violence or brief nudity. The PG rating, suggesting parental guidance, is thus an alert for examination of a film by parents before deciding on its viewing by their children. Obviously such a line is difficult to draw.”

Disagreements are a given. The Christian moviemakers behind a low-budget film called “Facing the Giants” were stunned when the MPAA pinned a PG rating on their gentle movie about a burned-out, depressed football coach whose life — on and off the field — takes a miraculous turn for the better.

“What the MPAA said is that the

movie contained strong ‘thematic elements’ that might disturb some parents,” said Kris Fuhr, vice president for marketing at Provident Films, which is owned by Sony Pictures. Provident plans to open the film next fall in 380 theaters nationwide with the help of Samuel Goldwyn Films, which has worked with indie movies like “The Squid and the Whale.”

Which “thematic elements” earned this squeaky-clean movie its PG?

“Facing the Giants” is too evangelistic.

The MPAA, Fuhr noted, tends to offer cryptic explanations for its ratings. In this case, she was told that it “decided that the movie was heavily laden with messages from one religion and that this might offend people from other religions. It’s important that they used the word ‘proselytizing’ when they talked about giving this movie a PG.”

“It is kind of interesting that faith has joined that list of deadly sins

that the MPAA board wants to warn parents to worry about.”

Overt Christian messages are woven throughout “Facing the Giants,” which isn’t surprising since the film was co-written and co-produced by brothers Alex and Stephen Kendrick, who are the “associate pastors of media” at Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Ga. In addition to working with the megachurch’s cable television channel, they created its Sherwood Pictures ministry — collecting private donations to fund a \$25,000 movie called “Flywheel” about a wayward Christian used-car salesman.

“Facing the Giants” cost \$100,000 and resembles a fusion of the Book of Job and a homemade “Hoosiers,” or perhaps a small-school “Friday Night Lights” blended with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association movies that used to appear in some mainstream theaters. Sherwood Pictures used local volunteers as actors and extras, backed by a small crew of

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Kris Fuhr, Provident Films

tech professionals.

The movie includes waves of answered prayers, a medical miracle, a mysterious silver-haired mystic who delivers a message from God and a bench-warmer who kicks a 51-yard field goal to win the big game when his handicapped father pulls himself out of a wheelchair and stands under the goalpost to inspire his son’s faith. There’s a prayer-driven gust of wind in there, too.

But the scene that caught the MPAA’s attention may have been the chat between football coach Grant Taylor — played by Alex Kendrick — and a rich brat named

Matt Prader. The coach says that he needs to stop bad-mouthing his bossy father and get right with God.

The boy replies: “You really believe in all that honoring God and following Jesus stuff? ... Well, I ain’t trying to be disrespectful, but not everybody believes in that.”

The coach replies: “Matt, nobody’s forcing anything on you. Following Jesus Christ is the decision that you’re going to have to make for yourself. You may not want to accept it, because it’ll change your life. You’ll never be the same.”

That kind of talk may be too blunt

for some moviegoers, Kendrick said, but that’s the way real people actually talk in Christian high schools in Georgia. Sherwood Baptist isn’t going to apologize for making the kinds of movies that it wants to make.

“Look, I have those kinds of conversations about faith all the time and I’ve seen young people make decisions that change their lives,” he said. “The reason we’re making movies in the first place is that we hope they inspire people to think twice about their relationships with God.”

“So we’re going to tell the stories that we believe God wants us to tell. We have nothing to hide.”

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Terry Mattingly, at www.tmat.net, directs the Washington Journalism Center at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities in Washington and writes a weekly religion column for the Scripps Howard News Service.

## Sacred Heart sister retiring

Sister Kenneth Struckhoff is retiring and moving to Fond du Lac, Wis.

“Sister Act” is hosting a come and go reception in her honor 5

from 2 to 4 p.m., Sunday, June 25, in the Sacred Heart Church basement.

There will be a short program at 3 p.m.

## Jewish group looks to youth for revival

HANIOTI, Greece (AP) — The beach club scene was in full swing: people dancing barefoot, flirting and ordering rounds of cool drinks. Welcome to a gathering on reviving Jewish culture in the Balkans.

“We try to think young. It all depends on young people to make it happen,” said Yair Kamaisky, one of the directors of a program to rebuild Jewish culture and religious life across Europe’s most unstable corner.

The effort — overseen by an international Jewish group — is one of many campaigns to assist struggling Jewish communities in the former Eastern bloc and other nations such as Greece and Turkey. But the style of this program sets a new course by aiming at a specific demographic — young and influential professionals, or as one participant described it, “yuppies with yarmulkes.”

“These are the people who have the energy and interest to lead a Jewish revival,” said Kamaisky during a three-day meeting known as a “gesher” — Hebrew for “bridge” — in May at a seaside resort village in northern Greece.

It was a mix of Spring Break, spiritual retreat, cultural immersion and high-energy networking.

The music blasting at the hotel pool drifted from rap by 50 Cent to Israeli folk songs. On the Jewish sabbath, more than 300 young people in their 20s and 30s observed customs that forbid use of electricity or machinery beginning at Friday sundown. For many, it was the first taste of a fully orthodox Shabbat.

Earlier, at a beach club down the road, singles took part in a version of “The Dating Game.” The reason, said meeting coordinator Diego Ornique, is exactly what it seems: a chance to play matchmaker. Inter-religious marriage and emigration has cut deeply into many Jewish communities from the Danube River to the Aegean and Black seas — leaving them with populations that range from up to 15,000 in Romania to just 250 in Macedonia.

“Sure, we hope to spark some romance,” said Ornique, a Paris-based liaison for the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which runs the Balkan project with funding assistance from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation based in Owings Mills, Md.

“I guess you could say the base for any revival is Jewish couples raising Jewish children with Jewish traditions.”

But other issues require more pressing attention.

Jewish groups across the Balkans have waged legal battles to reclaim property once held by Holocaust victims or confiscated by governments. In one of the most high-profile cases, Bulgaria’s highest court opened hearings in May on a suit filed by a Jewish organization for nearly half ownership rights to a prominent hotel in Sofia.

In 1943, the Bulgarian government confiscated most Jewish property, including a Jewish

school that formerly occupied the hotel site.

There also are worries of anti-Jewish sentiments being fed by extremists groups such as Serbia’s National Order neo-Nazi faction and Greece’s ultra-nationalist Golden Dawn.

“Yes, there are old prejudices and beliefs about Jews,” said Dr. Alek Oscar, a 26-year-old neurologist in Sofia, Bulgaria, the hub for the nation’s nearly 7,000 remaining Jews. “But we are not about looking back. We are about trying to create a new model and new network for Jews across the Balkans.”

A group that Oscar helps direct, Shalom, has started a business course for teenagers and an Internet chat room. Volunteers take part in an outreach program for Gypsies, also known as Roma, one of the most discriminated groups in the region. They, too, were targeted in the Holocaust.

“Our experiences have taught us what it’s like to be a persecuted minority,” Oscar said.

Judaism has been present in the Balkans since antiquity, but a major immigration began in the late 15th century when Jews expelled from Christian Iberia traveled to the European footholds of the Ottoman Empire, where Muslim rulers were generally more tolerant. By the early 20th century, there were more than 2 million Jews across the Balkans and some cities, such as Thessaloniki, were regarded as important centers of Jewish culture and commerce.

The Holocaust wiped out entire communities and even in places generally spared — such as Nazi ally Bulgaria, which resisted sending Jews to concentration camps — postwar emigration to Israel and the United States drained the population. Those who remained in the Soviet orbit came under pressure to abandon Jewish culture and traditions. Today, there are an estimated 70,000 Jews across the Balkans — in addition to thousands of Israelis who started arriving in the 1990s in search of business opportunities.

“The entire Jewish culture of the Balkans has been slowly wiped away for decades. In many places, there were Jews but no Jewish life,” said Chris Ezri, 21, a Jewish community organizer in Oradea, Romania, where groups are hoping to rebuild the city’s century-old synagogue. “We have to turn on the memories.”

At the meeting, young Jewish leaders described other projects — including training rabbis in Serbia for communities without any religious leaders and plans for a Jewish center in Skopje, Macedonia.

“We see ourselves like the phoenix,” said Lela Sadikario, a 24-year-old Jewish leader in Skopje. “We will rise from the ashes.”

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On the Net:  
Jewish Joint Distribution Committee: http://www.jdc.org  
Weinberg Foundation: http://hjweinbergfoundation.org

## SHARE the FAITH



WESLEYAN CHURCH, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.

Worship in the church of your choice this weekend.

## Schedule of church services

**ASCENSION-ON-THE-PRAIRIE EPISCOPAL**, Rev. Don Martin, College Drive & Wheatridge Rd., 462-3041, Holy Eucharist, 9:00 a.m. every Sunday, Evening Prayer, 5:15 p.m. Wednesday, September through May. Christian Education for Youth, 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, September through May

**COLLEGE DRIVE ASSEMBLY OF GOD**, Pastor, Jeremy Gundling, 245 W. College Dr. - 462-8234, Early Service - 8:00 a.m.; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Morning Worship - 10:45 a.m.

**BEREAN CHURCH**, 1000 S. Franklin, 460-2763, www.colbyborean.com; Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:45 a.m. Awana Clubs, Wednesday, 7 p.m., Middle & High School, Wednesday, 7 p.m. @ the Heartland Christian School Gym

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**, Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, Grant & Webster Street, 462-2867, Morning Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday School 9:15 a.m., Evening Worship 6:30 p.m., Wednesday Bible 7:30 p.m.

**COLLEGE VIEW BAPTIST CHURCH**, (SBC), Pastor Tom Huffman, 1185 Wheatridge Rd. at College Drive, 460-7144, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship services, 10:45 a.m.

**MINGO BIBLE CHURCH**, 420 Main Mingo, 785-462-2992: An independent community church served by Village Missions Pastor Chris Shubert. Sunday School: 9:30AM - all ages. Sunday Services: 10:45AM. Sunday Nights: 1st Sunday of the month: potluck following morning service - no evening service; 2nd Sunday: services at 6:30 PM; 3rd Sunday: informal fellowship - bring a snack to share!; 4th and 5th Sunday: services at 6:30 p.m.

**SACRED HEART CATHOLIC**, 462-2179, Father Dana Clark, Pastor, Saturday Eve. Mass 5:30 p.m., Sunday Masses 8:00 & 10:00 a.m., Confessions will be heard Saturday 4:30-5:05

p.m. and from 7:30-7:45 a.m. and 9:25-9:40 a.m. on Sunday.

**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**, Rev. Carol Rahn, 515 W. 4th, 462-6342, Worship, 9:00 a.m.

**WESLEYAN CHURCH**, 320 W. Pine - 462-8391, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:40 a.m., Sunday Evening Cell groups at 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Youth Ministries, Kids Clubhouse 7 p.m.

**CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS**, 1145 S. Franklin - 460-6605, President Gary Slavens, 460-2656; Rocky Robbins, 1st counselor, 460-1101; Tim Wilson, 2nd counselor, 785-846-7796. Sacrament meeting 10 a.m., Sunday School and Primary 11:20 a.m., Priesthood, Relief Society, YM/YW, 12:10 p.m.; Family History Center open to public, 7-9 p.m. Thursdays or by appointment. Call 462-3571.

**COLBY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**, Rev. James Mardock, pastor, 950 S. Franklin, 462-6521, Sunday Worship Services at 8:30 and 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Fellowship coffee 9:30 a.m., Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., KXXX broadcasts 11:00 worship. http://www.gbmg-umc.org/colby-umc/

**REDEEMING LOVE MINISTRIES, INC.**, 345 N. Franklin, Apostle W.G. and Rev. Orvella Romine, Equipping Class, Sunday, 10 a.m., Sunday worship, 11 a.m., Wednesday, R.L.M Training Center (Bible School), 7 p.m.

**CHURCH OF CHRIST**, 510 E. 4th, Jay Kelley, minister, Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m., Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m., Sunday Eve. Worship 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

**COLBY EVANGELISM CENTER**, Rev. Robert Cooper, 815 West 3rd - 462-2062, Sunday School 9:45; Sunday service 10:00 and 6:30 p.m.; Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.; Friday Youth Power Hour at 7:00 p.m.

**FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH**, (Disciples of Christ), Pastor Bradley L. Herndon, 385 W. 3rd - 460-2718, Sunday Morning Worship at 9:00 a.m.; Sunday School at 10:30 a.m. E-mail: fccolby@st-tel.net

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Rev. John L. Schmidt, East 5th & Country Club, 462-3497, Services, Sat., 5:30 p.m., Sunday; Sunday School and Adult Bible Class 9:15 a.m.; Services, 10:30 a.m.

**OUR SAVIORS LUTHERAN CHURCH**, Brewster, Sunday worship 9:00 a.m.; 2nd Sunday of the month at 8:00 a.m.

**PLEASANT HOME CHURCH**, Pastor, Charlie Busch, 694-2242, 3190 Road 70, Edson, Worship, 9:00 a.m., Sunday School 10:00 a.m., Evening service, 6:00 p.m.

**LEVANT COMMUNITY CHURCH**, 205 1st St., Pastor Jerry Vincent, 586-2376, Sunday School (classes for 3 years & up and 3 adult classes) 9:30 a.m., Morning worship 10:30 a.m.

**WINONA METHODIST CHURCH**, Rev. Michael Eurit, Sunday School, 10:30 a.m., Morning Worship 9:30 a.m. (CDT)

**BREWSTER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**, PO Box 250, Brewster. Pastor Dorine Chambers, 785-462-6044, Sunday School, 9:45 a.m., Morning Worship, 10:45 a.m.

**THE SHEPHERD’S STAFF, REXFORD**, Joan Dingwerth, Director, 687-2565

**REXFORD COMMUNITY CHURCH**, Rexford, Pastor Lane Purcell, 687-3305, Sunday School 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

**BREWSTER COMMUNITY CHURCH**, Mike Pinkelman, Pastor, Brewster - 694-2720, Sunday School (all ages) 9:30 a.m., Worship Service 10:30 a.m., Bible Study 7:00 p.m., Wed. mornings 6:30 a.m. - Men’s Bible Study, Wed. 7:00 p.m. - Children’s Ministries (Royal Rangers/Missionettes), Wed. 7:15 p.m. - Intercessory & Prayer, Thurs. 4:00 p.m. - Women’s Bible Study

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