



**3 STARS FOR 'END DAYS'**

Lawrence Toppman reviews comedy about a quirky family expecting the Apocalypse. **3E**

**Good stuff inside:** Ethics guy gives advice on tutors and neighbors; Phuzzle, comics, Ask Amy, Billy Graham, horoscope.

The Charlotte Observer

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# God and green



PHOTOS BY LAURA-CHASE MCGEEHEE - lmcgehee@charlotteobserver.com

Covenant Day School fifth-graders, from left, Libby Rau, Carly Brower, Caroline Wray and Leah Ertel dig for earthworms to add to a compost pile started by fifth-grade teacher Karen McKenzie. She taught the girls about how earthworms help create a richer compost. She also is working on a community garden to grow food for the poor.

## Believers say religion goes hand in hand with protecting the earth



A Covenant Day School student holds a worm she plans to add to a compost pile at Matthews Community Garden.

BY AMBER VEVERKA  
Special to the Observer

Karen McKenzie spent the best part of her coastal Carolinas childhood outdoors. She and her friends wandered the woods, scrambled through the salt marsh, went crabbing at the beach and played in pluff mud.

So it was not much of a stretch when McKenzie, 44, a lifelong practicing Christian, grew up to be an environmentalist. Tag along with her on a hike, and she's the one lagging behind to pick up trash. Follow her at work and she's teaching fifth-grade science students to bring forks and spoons from home instead of trashing plastic ones. Hang out with her on a Saturday, and she'll probably rope you into weeding the community garden plot where she hopes to grow food for the poor.

There's a growing movement among people of faith to put "God" and "green" together.



McKenzie

**Learn more**

- The Evangelical Environmental Network: [www.creationcare.org](http://www.creationcare.org).
- The essays of Christian writer and farmer Wendell Berry often focus on stewardship, and one of the most famous on the topic is "Christianity and the Survival of Creation," found in his book, "Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community," (Pantheon, 208 pages, \$14). From the essay: "We have no entitlement from the Bible to exterminate or permanently destroy or hold in contempt anything on the earth or in the heavens above it or in the waters beneath it."
- "Buddhism, Virtue and the Environment," (Ashgate Publishing, 159 pages, \$35) gives an overview of the Buddhist connection between religion and care for the planet.
- Resources for Catholics interested in environmental care from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops: [www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/ejp).

SEE GREEN, 3E

## Direct from Anchorage, Alaska, 'Woody & Wilcox' at the 'End'

TV/RADIO



MARK WASHBURN

"Woody & Wilcox" debuts Monday on WEND-FM ("End" 106.5) and the pair didn't come cheap.

Based in Anchorage, Alaska, for the last four years, the morning team of **Greg Wood** and **Chris Wilcox** have run up bills for moving to Charlotte of nearly \$20,000.

Each. Whatever the cost, they say they're thrilled to be moving back to the Lower 48, though Alaska's splendors were impressive. Wood has a video of one of them on his cell phone: a hulking moose snuffling around on his front porch looking for food.

"Moose are like pigeons out



CLEAR CHANNEL

**Greg Wood and Chris Wilcox, new morning duo on WEND.**

there," says Wilcox. "Only they taste better."

Wood grew up in suburban Washington, D.C., and Wilcox in Southern California. They met in San Diego, where they were working for CBS Radio stations. They had good chemistry and the company agreed to pair them up for a morning show, but it was canceled after only five months to make way for **Howard Stern**.

So they took their act to Anchorage and built the show at a

Clear Channel rock station there. When WEND-FM went looking for a new show to replace the syndicated "Bob & Tom" this year, "Woody & Wilcox" stood out from more than 100 potential candidates, says **Bruce Logan**, Clear Channel's Charlotte programming chief.

Wilcox, 41, says their show will combine music, listener call-ins and their own banter about the lives of young men—topics like romance, first jobs, starting families and getting mortgages.

"And lots of sarcasm and self-deprecating humor," adds Wood, 38.

WEND-FM program director **Jack Daniel** says the morning show will be a better fit for the station, which targets a male 18-34 demographic, than "Bob & Tom," which appealed to an older audience.

"There was a disconnect

SEE WASHBURN, 6E

## Billy Graham in the pulpit again? Maybe so.

FAITH & VALUES



TIM FUNK

**Billy Graham** may preach again—at least on video.

That's according to **Franklin Graham**. He said his 91-year-old father, whose last crusade was five years ago in New York, still has a message he wants to deliver.

In a recent interview, the younger Graham also gave me a preview of what we'll see when the Billy Graham Library reopens next week. And he talked about his meeting last week with former Vice President **Al Gore**, who stopped in Charlotte to ask Graham to meet with some evangelical



COURTESY OF THE BILLY GRAHAM EVANGELICAL ASSOCIATION

**Franklin Graham, left, gave former Vice President Al Gore a tour of the Billy Graham Library last week.**

Christians who are working with him on environmental issues.

"I suggested he should get **Sarah Palin** involved. She loves Alaska," Graham said. "It's going to take something like Al Gore and Sarah Palin (work-

ing together) to get people's attention and save the planet."

More details on that and the library later. But first: Is Billy Graham really thinking about coming out of retirement to preach one more time?

SEE FUNK, 3E

## Faith Notes

### ■ CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST

**Concert:** Concert organist Lester Ackerman to perform 4 p.m. April 18. Freewill offering taken to support Arts Outreach program. Reception afterward. 6030 Albemarle Road. 704-536-9157.

### ■ CENTRAL CHURCH LIFE CARE CENTER

**Seminar:** "Singlehood Phenomenon" with Drs. Tom and Beverly Rodgers of Rodgers Christian Counseling Center. Practical tools for single adults on dating, parenting and discovering life's purpose. Limited enrollment. 8:45 a.m.-12:30 p.m. May 1. 5500 Randolph Road. Register at 704-365-6112 or [www.centralchurchofgod.org/lifecare](http://www.centralchurchofgod.org/lifecare).

### ■ UNITY OF CHARLOTTE

**Services:** The Rev. Michael Ulm to lead series of healing services 7:30-9:30 p.m. April 17; 1-4 p.m. and 7:30-9:30 p.m. April 18; 7:30-10 p.m. April 19; 7-9:30 p.m. April 20. [www.alllightministries.com](http://www.alllightministries.com).

### ■ OUR CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL WALKWAY

**Memorial service:** Those grieving loss of a loved one are invited. Larry Dawalt to speak on "Grieving Hearts, Young and Old." Bring lawn chairs. 2 p.m. April 24, Frazier Park, 1201 W. Fourth St. [www.ocmw.org](http://www.ocmw.org).

### ■ TEMPLE ISRAEL

**Concert:** Five cantors - from Charlotte, New York, Baltimore and Asheville - will perform love songs, liturgy, and Broadway, Israeli, Jewish and American hits. Free. 3 p.m. April 25. 4901 Providence Road. 704-362-2796.

### ■ TORRENCE GROVE AME ZION

**Anniversary service:** Church to celebrate 205th anniversary. Guest speaker: the Rev. Ellison Bowman. 3:30 p.m. April 18. Fellowship dinner 2 p.m. 1200 Torrence Grove Church Road. 704-597-0291.

### ■ UNITED HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLE

**Community event:** Family and Friends Days with marching bands, gospel choirs, prizes, children's activities, more, noon-3 p.m. April 24. 2321 Beatties Ford Road. 704-394-3884.

### ■ WESLEY UNITED METHODIST

**Korean cultural festival:** Families who have adopted Korean children invited. Lunch and small gifts provided. 10:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. April 24. 3715 Rea Road. Advance registration required. 704-542-1122.

### ■ STONECROFT MINISTRIES

**Workshop:** Sexual assault awareness workshop for women. \$25 registration includes lunch and book. 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. April 24, Embassy Suites Charlotte, 4800 S. Tryon St. [www.stonecroft.org/awarecharlotte](http://www.stonecroft.org/awarecharlotte).

### ■ ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC

**Concert:** Sacred and classical selections featuring organ, voice and trumpet. Reception and tour of church's artworks and garden afterward. \$20 admission to go toward restoring church exterior. 7 p.m. April 17. 507 S. Tryon St. 704-332-2901.

### ■ CALVARY CHURCH

**Seminars:** "Caring for Aging Parents," 7-8:30 p.m. April 19, room 232. "Managing Your Finances in Divorce Crisis," 7-8:30 p.m. April 19, room 222. Free. 5801 Pineville-Matthews Road. Register at [www.calvarychurch.com/equip](http://www.calvarychurch.com/equip).

### ■ SHEPHERD'S CENTER OF CHARLOTTE

**30th anniversary homecoming:** Free luncheon with raffle, exhibitors, featuring WCNC meteorologist Larry Sprinkle. 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. April 21, Pritchard Memorial Baptist, 1117 South Blvd. Reservations: 704-365-1995; [plampel@shepherdscharlotte.org](mailto:plampel@shepherdscharlotte.org).

### ■ TRANSFORMATION CHURCH, INDIAN LAND

**Sermon series:** "Heaven and Hell: Separating Fact from Fiction." 9 and 11 a.m. April 18 and 25 and May 2. 9030 Northfield Drive, Indian Land, S.C. [www.tc521.org](http://www.tc521.org).

### ■ THE ROCK HILL ORATORY

**Workshop and retreat:** "Discovering the Core of My Identity." 7-9 p.m. April 23 and 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m. April 24-25. 434 Charlotte Ave., Rock Hill. [www.rockhilloratory.org](http://www.rockhilloratory.org).

— COMPILED BY ERICA BATTEN

## FUNK

■ from IE

That's what daughter Anne Graham Lotz, a Raleigh-based evangelist, told some reporters in Missouri last month, adding that the Graham family "is praying that he'll have that opportunity."

So I asked Franklin Graham. "The desire in his heart to preach is still there," Graham said. "He wants people to know that they can have forgiveness of sins and that they can be assured of the certainty of heaven."

But is he up to another crusade?

No, Graham said, his father's hoped-for sermon would not be in a stadium. He can't hear very well, his fading eyesight would prevent him from reading his notes, and his energy level - he's easily winded - would probably rule out anything but a short message.

"But he speaks very well, very clear, and his mind is as sharp as a razor," his son said.

So, instead of a live public appearance, Graham said he'd like to have his father record something that could be

shown and reshown.

"I would like him to do something on video, talking into a camera," Graham said. "Then we'd have it for generations to come."

Any timetable?

Graham said the family hopes to work out a plan in the next few months.

### Library reopening

Meanwhile, Billy Graham is scheduled to be in Charlotte on Tuesday for the invitation-only ceremonial reopening of the Billy Graham Library.

It's been closed for upgrades and additions since Jan. 9. It'll reopen to the public on Wednesday.

What to expect?

For starters, a new painting by Thomas Kinkade, whose idyllic scenes have sold by the millions. For the library, he's done a mural of an empty cross. At 18 feet tall and 32 feet wide, "it's the largest painting he has done," Franklin Graham said.

On Tuesday, Kinkade is expected to be in Charlotte for the reopening.

Graham also said his father's personal library has been shipped to Charlotte, and many of the 10,000 books will be

## GREEN

■ from IE

A Sierra Club survey in 2008 revealed that 67 percent of Americans said they care about the environment because it is "God's creation." The Vatican that same year labeled pollution a sin and a group of Southern Baptist Convention leaders called for believers to combat climate change. In the Charlotte area, people of faith say their religious convictions go hand in hand with protecting the earth.

For McKenzie, nothing makes more sense. "If God cares about the birds in the sky and their feathers, shouldn't we?" said McKenzie, who worked as an environmental educator in county parks and is now a teacher at Covenant Day School.

Believers are greening up in ways big and small, from the energy audit Our Lady of Consolation Catholic church recently performed to the new recycling campaign at Covenant Presbyterian Church to the community-supported agriculture (CSA) program at Temple Beth El.

### A way of life for some

For the Fletcher family in Huntersville, caring for nature as God's creation is a way of life. Scott Fletcher, a biologist and a manager at an environmental engineering firm, is a birder and serves on the board of the N.C. Wildlife Federation. Before their kids could even walk, Fletcher and his wife, Ann, piled their son and daughter into backpacks for hikes. The family pulls on boots and gloves to clean trash out of area streams.

"I think they're very interrelated - the environmental movement and your belief in God as a creator," said Scott, a member of Huntersville Unit-



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**Covenant Day School fifth-graders Katherine Stroud and Carly Brower shield their noses from the earthy compost smell.**

ed Methodist.

For many believers, a concern for the environment is tied to a concern for the poor.

"Matthew 25 tells us we are called to care for the 'least of these,' and there are millions upon millions of people who are being affected by (environmental degradation)," said Mitchell Hescoc, president of the Evangelical Environmental Network, a Washington-based group that promotes "Creation care" among churches.

The network is a supporter of "Hope for Creation," a live simulcast of a faith-based Earth Day event based at Orlando's Northland Church on Wednesday. The event is sponsored in part by Blessed Earth, a nonprofit run by Dr. Matthew Sleeth, author of "Serve God and Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action."

Sleeth spoke two years ago

at a "Faith, Spirituality and Environment" conference at Catawba College in Salisbury. People returned to their congregations and started environmental committees and community gardens, said John Wear, founding executive director of Catawba's Center for the Environment. "This was the first conference where when we did evaluations at the end, we began to see things like '(it was) a life-changing experience,'" Wear said.

Matt O'Neil and his family began to make changes after he preached a series on the environment for Watershed, the nondenominational church he co-pastors in NoDa.

"I never recycled a day in my life and we're obsessed with it now. ... We're not setting the world on fire, but all of a sudden, it became something that was part of our conversation,"

O'Neil said.

### As old as faith itself

The idea that people of faith ought to care for the natural world may have new traction, but it's as old as faith itself, said Rabbi Micah Streiffer of Temple Beth El.

"The first book of the Torah, which is Genesis, says God looked at the world and saw the world was very good," said Streiffer. "I think (caring for environment) has taken on a new meaning and sense of urgency, but it's an idea that's always been there."

The temple's environmental committee, Teva (Hebrew for "nature"), organizes recycling drives and brings in films and speakers on environmental responsibility.

The Koran recounts Allah creating the first man, Adam, as a vice-regent over creation, said Kathryn Johnson, director of the Islamic Studies Interdisciplinary Program at UNC Charlotte. "It's a guardianship," Johnson said. "Even in the early centuries it was viewed (that) ... creation should be respected."

St. Francis, Catholicism's 13th-century patron saint of ecology, is the inspiration for the "Franciscan pledge" to care for creation and the poor, said the Rev. Martin Schratz of Our Lady of Consolation. Schratz, a Capuchin Franciscan, said he and other church leaders have encouraged parishioners to take the pledge.

For Karen McKenzie, caring for the earth isn't just about duty. It's about love. Everywhere, she said, there is something to celebrate. Insects, stunning in their intricacy. The surprising call of a daytime owl in Freedom Park.

Nature "works in perfect harmony, and as a Christian, (I believe) there is one person who orchestrated that," she said: "God."

## Laufer's laughter teases the gray cells, too

In the weeks after the World Trade Center was struck down, various reactions made sense:

Shutting down emotionally.

Angrily declaring, "Nothing matters, and what if it did?"

Turning to God for answers, as none were found on earth.

Looking beyond the chaos to grapple with larger questions about how the universe works.

The four real characters in Deborah Zoe Laufer's "End Days" each adopt one of these behaviors. (The unreal ones, who appear to characters under the influence of ecstatic faith or marijuana, are Jesus and Stephen Hawking.)

And each person realizes that none of these "answers" is the answer: Like Voltaire's Candide 250 years earlier, they may simply have to take pleasure in making their own small garden grow and letting the universe take care of itself.

The play has been described as an absurd comedy, and the striking set by Stan Peal reinforces that impression. The world of the Stein family (and by extension, next-door-neighbor Nelson Steinberg) has literally been blown apart: Dish-

### THEATER



LAWRENCE TOPMAN

es fly through the air, while an end table hovers above the ground with just enough mass to support a telephone. The house looks as though the Apocalypse has already come and gone; we see stars twinkling above the cratered walls and shattered door.

The Steins' psyches are in similar shape. Sylvia (Allison Lamb) chirps about her newfound joy in Jesus (Michael Sharpe) and worries that goth daughter Rachel (Meagan Douglas) will be damned if the Rapture comes on schedule - by her calculation, next week.

Husband Arthur (Lamar Wilson) slumps over the kitchen table, occasionally rousing himself enough to be horrified anew by the devastation of 9-11.

(The play is set in 2003.)

Nelson (Joshua Ozro Lucero), who dresses like Elvis and sings his bar mitzvah text like "Love Me Tender," has a crush on 16-year-old Rachel and woos her the only way he knows how: with physics theories. The ideas of astrophysicist Hawking (Sharpe) catch Rachel's fancy, and she hallucinates about him when stoned.

All four main characters have been or are about to become Jews, perhaps the most philosophically disputatious of all religions. They are seekers, meant to be taken seriously.

Laufer is least kind to Sylvia, whose confidence in Christ turns shrill and shrewish. (This Jesus, who smirks like a Cheshire cat full of cream, is no help.) I don't think this is anti-Christian sentiment as much as anti-sureness: For Laufer, insisting you're the only right one in a muddled world is unhealthy.

### REVIEW

★ ★ ★

### 'End Days'

Deborah Zoe Laufer's comedy about the Apocalypse.

**WHEN:** 8 p.m. today and various times through May 1.

**WHERE:** Actor's Theatre of Charlotte, 650 E. Stonewall St.

**RUNNING TIME:** 125 minutes.

**TICKETS:** \$24-\$29.

**DETAILS:** 704-342-2251.

[www.actorstheatrecharlotte.org](http://www.actorstheatrecharlotte.org).

The actors play this quirky script straight, as they should, while Chip Decker's unfussy direction keeps the show grounded. I wish Laufer had made Sylvia less of a caricature early on, but she grows on us. And though it's almost impossible to make a needy, gabby character endearing, Lucero pulls off that small miracle.

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