



Angels sing at the Voice of a Thousand Angels celebration at the Price Peace Gardens. Torrona Olsen, Madison Anderson, Cate Schade, Lauren Rice and Shainey Hackney get ready to sing and light candles in memory of six trapped miners at Crandall Canyon. Photos by Patsy Stoddard

## thousand angels

Continued from PAGE 1A.

group to the Price Peace Gardens.

The group also worked with Pastor Larry Sweeten who worked graveyard in the Crandall Mine until his arm injury. He was contacted to work with the families of the trapped miners and he has been on the scene from the beginning.

There are 16 members of this group coming from Portland to organize this event. The goal was to have a 1,000 student voice choir from the Carbon and Emery County communities to perform with the support group from Oregon.

There may not have been quite that many voices, but, they tried their best to sound like a thousand angels as they filled the streets of Price with music and light.

Mayor Piccolo welcomed everyone to the program and introduced Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. who spoke to the audience. Gov. Huntsman said, "Mayor Piccolo is a great man and there are great people in these communities. This is a challenge that tries a community. Don't let it be said we didn't

rise to the occasion. We will have a stronger economy, a safer environment and we are learning through difficult times what it means to put our arms together around people; it's about love. Tonight is about remembrance, it's about kids and about people. Keep in mind those candles represent real people and real lives. We are here to remember real people. These are the times that try people, but we will rise to the occasion. Never let it be said we didn't rise to the occasion," said Gov. Huntsman.

Elam Jones a miner who worked with those trapped in Crandall Canyon said he knows all of the miners and those who have been injured or have died. He wanted the trapped miners to know that everyone has put forth 100 percent. Everyone has been hurt by this event, but the miners will remain heroes and no one will ever forget them.

The musical presentations were next and the ceremony ended with song and the lighting of the candles in remembrance of the trapped miners.

## Voice of a thousand angels or coal miners daughters

By PATSY STODDARD, Editor

A celebration called the Voice of a Thousand Angels was held at the Price Peace Gardens on Aug. 28. This presentation was

spearheaded by a support group out of Portland, Ore. called Voice of a Thousand Angels. This group goes to cities where tragedy has occurred and brings a message of hope through

music. Arrangements were made with Price mayor Joe Piccolo to bring this

Continued on PAGE 11A.



A large crowd gathers at the Peace Gardens for the Voices of a Thousand Angels concert.



Jon Huntsman points to the candles and reminds everyone each one stands for a real person.



Gov. Jon Huntsman greets members of the group from Oregon.



# DESERET Morning News

By Amy Choate-Nielsen and Josh Loftin – Deseret Morning News

Published: Wednesday August 29, 2007



## “Concert Aims to Help Family of Miners Heal”

PRICE — Dark clouds surrounded Price’s Peace Garden Tuesday night, but the light of hundreds of candles shining brightly on a choir of children’s faces weren’t doused by any rain.

The “Voices of a Thousand Angels” benefit concert drew a crowd of more than 300 residents [Actual count by 8:00 p.m. was 3,500+ residents] from Carbon and Emery counties — despite an earlier downpour that left puddles on the tops of chairs and loudspeakers set up for the event.

The family members of six trapped miners, local leaders and Gov. Jon Huntsman Jr. attended the concert, organized by the Celebration Tabernacle congregation in Portland, Ore. Members of the congregation paid their

way to come to the city to sing and help heal the community, said director Don Elliott.

“We’ve been watching this whole thing unfold ... and we heard people saying, ‘Where’s God?’ and questioning their faith, which broke our hearts,” Elliott said. “We thought if we came down here, maybe this will say something to them about how the eyes of the nation are on them and supporting them.”

The congregation’s musical director, Robin Gordon, said he felt he was called by God to visit the area that has been reeling since six miners — Kerry Allred, Manuel Sanchez, Louis Hernandez, Carlos Payan, Don Erickson and Brandon Phillips — disappeared in the Crandall

Canyon Mine Aug. 6 and three others died trying to rescue them Aug. 16. This week, 170 local miners were laid off.

“We can’t touch the pain that this whole community is going through, but we want to help with it,” Gordon said.

Elliott said the church’s pastor, the Rev. Apostle Elbert Mondainé, told his congregation to come to Utah and show support through music. Mondainé contacted Price Mayor Joe Piccolo about a week ago, and plans quickly moved forward with the help of the community, Elliott said.

“Our goal is just to come and share in music,” Elliott said. “Our hope is that people’s lives are changed for the

better, whatever that means for them.”

Local pastor Lary Sweeten helped bring the event together by coordinating with the Carbon and Emery school districts to recruit students to sing during the evening. At a Monday night rehearsal, Elliott said more than 600 children came to practice, but the threat of rain limited the Tuesday night turnout to about 200 children.

The children sang a song called “Oh, ye, God alone”

that was written specifically for the event by Mondainé. Even with only two rehearsals, Elliott said the children learned the song quickly.

Fifteen candles were placed to remind members of the audience of the six missing miners, three volunteer miners - Dale Black, Gary Jensen and Brandon Kimber - who were killed while trying to rescue the six trapped miners, three volunteers who were critically injured during rescue efforts and three men

who were injured during the rescue but have since been released from the hospital.

Residents said the concert is evidence of the community’s growing support for each other.

“My whole family are coal miners,” said Doloris Quintana, who watched the show. “We’re glad it’s not one of our family, but the reality is, we’re all family down here because we’re all miners.”

## SUNDAY NEWS

By Patricia Poist - Sunday News Staff Writer – Lancaster, Pennsylvania

Published: October 29, 2006



“the Luther Vandross of Gospel.”

“I don’t need the auditorium full tonight, it is full of God,” belted out the Rev. Apostle Elbert Mondainé, senior pastor of congregations in Portland, Ore., and St. Louis, Mo.

Hearing about the killings of five Amish girls and wounds to five others at their Nickel Mines school house, Mondainé said he felt the need to start a national church movement to stop school violence.

“I said, ‘Where does it stop?’” said the pastor, who recalled 1998 in his home state when a 15-year-old boy, Kip Kinkel, shot 20 high school students and killed his parents.

“I said to God, ‘Why is this happening?’”

About two weeks ago, he called upon the 700 members of his churches, Celebration Tabernacle in Portland, where he lives, and Grace Center, in St. Louis, as well as members of other churches across the country to join in the Saturday night “The 1,000 Angels Gathering” at Bright Side.

Mondainé was accompanied by seven clergy and musicians as well as 8-year-old Nashon Jones, who performed a song that Mondainé wrote called “Father God.”

“Father God, take my hand, teach me what it is to live again,” the little boy sang in a sweet soprano in his dedication to the Amish girls and their families.

Mondainé said that churches across the country need to unite and “to stand and recognize our responsibility to once again take the education of our children under our wings and teach the principles of forgiveness, inclusion and social responsibility.”

In an interview after the service, Mondainé said society is filled with so much mania and anxiety that result in tragic and horrific incidents as what happened in Nickel Mines.

“We are building mega-churches, we need to be building mega-clinics,” he said.

Mondainé who has been in the county a few days, said he met with Amish spokesman Herman

Bontrager. Bontrager told him that the wish of the Amish community was for him to use his time here, not to draw attention to them, but to “turn this around” and put attention toward the needs of mainstream society “to prevent it from happening again.”

The Rev. Kevin Brown of Ray’s Temple Church of God and Christ, Lancaster, who served as the local liaison for Mondainé, and the Rev. Gerald Simmons pastor of Faith Tabernacle Church, Lancaster, both helped lead the Saturday night service.

Before the service, Brown said the tragedy in Nickel Mines shows society is at a “crucible” or is being tested. One indication of that is that someone like Roberts, who was described as being kind and mannerly, can fall under the radar; that no one could tell he was very disturbed.

“We are detaching ourselves from one another at such a rapid rate, we can’t pick up on things,” Brown said.

“Nobody is open to what is going on with our sisters and brothers.”

Brown said he was touched that Saturday's gathering included a mixture of white and African-American people "to say that we certainly feel the pain of the Amish."

One of his church members, Wanda Cannon, accompanied by friends Carmella Artis, Jannette Toney, and Dominai Taylor—all African-American women from Lancaster city—said she believes that it was

a lesson for all that the Amish were so quick to forgive.

"The enemy did it for evil, but God turned it around for good," Cannon said.

Fran Catanzaro, Mount Joy, who is white and a member of Brown's church, also attended the Saturday service. She said she believes a lot of society's ills are a result of God being

removed from schools and public places.

"God became hush-hush; that is so wrong, because we need him," she said.

Mondainé said he hopes to someday return to Lancaster County, when all the media glare is off the Amish, to speak to Amish leaders and to form a unity with them to further the cause in stopping school violence.

## Intelligencer Journal

By Carla Di Fonzo – Intelligencer Journal

Published: October 25, 2006

### "On 'Angels' wings – Faithful Coming to Discuss School Violence"

LANCASTER COUNTY, PA - When the Rev. Elbert Mondainé heard about the shootings at West Nickel Mines School, he began asking himself serious questions.

For starters, how could such violence take place on Amish soil?

"The Amish are such a plain, gentle people," said the senior pastor of congregations in Portland, Ore., and St. Louis, Miss.

He was even more affected when he learned the Amish community in Bart Township had forgiven the shooter,

Charles Carl Roberts IV, who killed five girls and wounded five others.

"I thought, 'What is God trying to say to us through this tragedy?'" he said.

Suddenly, an answer came to Mondainé, who decided to start a national campaign to unite churches across "denominational lines" to take a stand against school violence.

On Saturday, he plans to bring 50 to 100 members of his congregations to Lancaster, where they'll be joined by churchgoers and religious

organizations from around the country.

The gathering, to be called "The Voices of a Thousand Angels," will take place at Bright Side Baptist Church in Lancaster city.

"The campaign will unite church leaders who want to take responsibility for our children and take a stand against violence in schools," said Mondainé's associate, Don Elliot.

"This campaign was put together only two weeks ago, and already we've heard from

almost 200 churches across the country,” Elliot said. “We’re hoping to come together and figure out a way to educate our people and look at the mental-health and violence issues in our communities.”

After church and community leaders meet, participants will convene by candlelight near the village of Nickel Mines, singing hymns and praising God.

But Elliot stresses the group will not in any way disturb the residents of the Bart Township community.

“We visited Lancaster last week to get a better view of the area,” he said. “We met with some churches in Lancaster and began speaking with an Amish spokesperson — Herman Bontrager.”

Elliot said the meetings proved to be fruitful and affected how the “Voices of a Thousand Angels” was planned.

“At first, we thought we’d hold the gathering closer to the Nickel Mines community,”

Elliot said. “But then we thought a less invasive approach was better. We understand the Amish community values privacy.”

And though the gathering will end up in Bart Township, Mondainé said, the group’s attire and conduct will be within the behavior codes adhered to by the Amish people.

More information about “Voices of a Thousand Angels” can be found at [www.friendsoftheamish.org](http://www.friendsoftheamish.org).

“It’s time for the church to once again take the lead in teaching our children social responsibility,” Mondainé said. “It’s not through legislation and governmental interference that this shift must occur, but through example and the raw proof given from a united faith community.”

The Nickel Mines community also has inspired an event called “Prayer at Binns Park,” to be led by Lancaster city pastors. The prayer rally will take place Tuesday. Lancaster

County church leaders and members plan to walk from North to South Queen Street, then to East and West King Street before ending at Binns Park.

There also will be a time of prayer at 7:30 p.m. Friday at the Mennonite School auditorium on Lincoln Highway East.

Elliot said the Nickel Mines tragedy obviously struck a chord with a lot of people, whether they are from Lancaster County or not.

“The way the Amish community dealt with this tragic situation has been amazing,” he said.

“And, overall, we found Lancaster to have a certain welcoming air, with genuine people.”

Mondainé reflected on the young lives lost.

“They were sacrificed,” he said. “If we let their sacrifice go unseen and unheard, something’s wrong with us.”

# PortlandTribune

By Eric Bartels – Portland Tribune

Published: October 17, 2006



## “Voices With a Mission – Pastor Plans to Take Message of Hope to Grieving Pennsylvania Town”

Pastor Elbert Mondainé, who pronounces his last name with continental flair and goes by the honorific Apostle, is a big talker.

Ask members of his congregation. Some of them jump-start their days with the sound of his megaphonic orations, which he cranks up at twice-weekly services that start at five o'clock. In the morning.

But the charismatic Mondainé also walks the walk. While maintaining a congregation in his native St. Louis, he has ministered to folks in North Portland for 18 years, inspiring the creation of a small empire of self-empowerment.

On Oct. 28 he'll be in eastern Pennsylvania,

leading a choir of voices from around the nation that represents different churches and different faiths.

Named the Voices of 1,000 Angels, the hastily arranged project is designed to show support for a small town devastated by tragedy and to issue a call to America's religious community.

“We will be there, come rain, snow or shine,” Mondainé says. “If it's 10 people or 1,000 people, we're going to sing.”

On Oct. 2, a schoolhouse shooting in Nickel Mines, Pa., left five Amish girls dead and five others wounded. Mondainé says news of the tragedy affected him deeply, in part because

of the image of the Amish as a plain, gentle people.

“I heard about the shooting, and it really, really gripped me,” he says. “Why did it end up on the Amish soil? I thought, ‘What is God trying to say to us?’”

The Amish, descendants of 17th-century Mennonite reformers, subscribe to an insular, agrarian lifestyle largely devoid of modern technologies like electricity and the automobile.

“If it's happening in this community, can't you imagine what's happening on the street?” Mondainé asks. “Do we have to wait until there are dead bodies all over the place before we answer the call? In a crisis, we have to be ready to go.

“What a perfect use of resources. Why not go to where the call was made?”

Mondainé plans to lead between 50 and 100 members of his Portland and St. Louis congregations – most of them paying their own way – to the Lancaster County community, where they’ll be joined by churchgoers and religious organizations from around the country.

“It’s really taken off,” says Don Elliott, Mondainé’s executive assistant. “There’s a church in Denver; there are two churches in Florida that are joining us. We’ve got churches of all affiliations. All the denominations across the board are responding. Everything from Mennonites to Catholics and Lutherans. Also, the Mormons.

“We haven’t even done much of the outreach to Portland churches yet.”

Mondainé says the message he hopes to convey in Pennsylvania is not aimed solely at the Amish community.

“It’s about our gesture, to say, ‘We love you,’ ” he says. “We’re going to sing as the Amish sing. We’re going

to sing their songs. It’s also a call to Christian people. It’s time to take our schools and our children seriously.”

The Nickel Mines incident closely followed fatal school shootings in Colorado and Wisconsin. Oregon was home to a 1998 tragedy in which a student at Thurston High School in Springfield killed his parents, two classmates and wounded 25 others.

“They were sacrificed,” Mondainé says of the five Amish girls. “If we let their sacrifice go unseen and unheard, something’s wrong with us. This is His way of telling us it’s time to educate our people, also to look at the mental health piece in our community.”

#### **Faith flows before dawn**

Mondainé, 47, admits to heading a different kind of organization, something he calls an “entrepreneurial ministry.” Within one block of its base in Kenton, non denominational Celebration Tabernacle has spun off an accredited Christian K-8 school, a day-care center, a dance studio, a cafe and an improvisational comedy troupe for young people.

In all, his organization includes at least 20 such “ministries.”

Mondainé, whose first official role was as a music minister, is also a pianist and singer whose group, Belief, has recorded two energetic, gospel-inspired albums and performed at the Newmark Theatre downtown.

He is an outspoken, outside personality who needs little time to warm up at the pre-sunrise services, which have become the basis for a planned series of books called “The 5 a.m. Chronicles.”

On a recent morning his amplified voice rebounded sharply off the walls inside Celebration Tabernacle as he hectored two dozen sleep-deprived souls, tagging the end of passages with provocative exhortations.

“Did you hear what I said?” he challenges, and the faithful respond with expressions of “Yeah” and “Amen.”

Then his voice is suddenly soft and almost apologetic. “Don’t you like being screamed at at five in the morning?”

“He’s very engaging and accessible, which I think is cool,” says Megan Turvey, 19, a University of Portland sophomore in sweat pants and a hooded sweatshirt. “A lot of people, when they go to big megachurches, the pastor doesn’t even know your name. He’s visible.”

The man who can startle associates with his assertiveness one moment can shock them with his candor the next, speaking frankly about growing up poor and suffering abuses as a child.

Elliott says that while the pastor’s honesty has put off some church members, it also has helped generate intense loyalty and trust.

“My previous church had 1,000 members and tons of money,” he says. “I never saw the kind of life change I’ve seen here.”

### **Treading softly**

The Voices project may call on every tool in Mondainé’s skill set. Residents of Nickel Mines reportedly struggled with the media attention attracted by the schoolhouse shootings, but Mondainé says he spoke to Amish leaders, who have approved of his planned visit.

“The message they asked me to pass was that the Amish community is fine,” he says. “They’re doing well. It is not for the Amish alone that we’re going. We’re going to give praise to God.”

Scott Fischer, executive director of the Lancaster County Council of Churches, says other events, including a community march, had already been scheduled to take place in the area.

“I know the Amish are very private people,” he says. “We want to be very sensitive about that. We try to be very responsible as we seek to stand with them.”

Given the sympathy he’s seen for the bereaved of Nickel Mines, Fischer says Mondainé may have trouble limiting the size of his choir. “Quite frankly, I could see it being more than 1,000,” he says. “The Lancaster community is very interested in doing whatever is possible to show our support.”

In an oft-repeated refrain, Mondainé maintains that the trouble for America’s youth began when churches, which were once centers of learning, c e d e d

responsibility for educating children to the public sector.

Mondainé says Voices of 1,000 Angels is not about generating policy so much as ratcheting up awareness of the faith community’s responsibility to wider society.

“How can we help?” he wonders. “How can we make this better? We’re going to try to say we have to turn our empty churches into classrooms. We’re going to say to our churches, teach your people how to educate our children. We’re going to have to start understanding the manic behavior that is taking place in our societies.”

In a way, Mondainé says, Christians fail in part of their mission when they insist on prayer in schools while losing sight of the meaning behind it.

“What is the prayer intended to do?” he asks. “Let’s celebrate what that was. Let’s bring back unity, the sense of community that religion teaches. The ultimate responsibility is to each and every man to love his neighbor.”



Published: May 24, 2006



The gospel music phenomenon Apostle Elbert D. Mondainé and Belief will celebrate the release of their debut album, "The Blessing Box", on Friday, May 26 at 8 p.m. at the Newmark Theater, 1111 S.W. Broadway.

The Show will feature a horn section fronted by Portland Jazzman Farnell Newton, a string section arranged and orchestrated by Jennifer Arnold, the lead violist of the Oregon Symphony, and dance from Empeyan Movement.

"This is going to be an amazing production," said veteran producer Howard Waldron. "We're bringing

everything from fire to snow right in the midst of the concert. And when you hear Apostle Mondainé sing you'll just cry."

The show marks a milestone for Portland, as Apostle Mondainé is the first Black Gospel Music poster child to hail from the Northwest. Sure to make a national impact, he chose not to release his debut in the Bible belt as most artists of his genre do, deciding rather to make a splash here in the desert region of American Gospel Music.

Mondainé, whose markedly more liberal as a pastor than many of his professional counterparts, feels that

Portland is the perfect breeding ground for the new evolution of the Gospel culture, stating "propensity for open mindedness, critical thinking and the arts in general."

The ministry of Apostle Mondainé began over 25 years in St. Louis, MO where he was raised. His beginnings were humble as a minister of music for several area churches. He did not make a great deal of money from it, even had to spend cold winter nights in his car for lack of a shelter to call home, but he persevered because he loved the Lord and was obedient to His call.