

# Gospel brunches enliven Sunday church tradition

Lee Brown

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A new twist has been added to the traditional Sunday routine of attending church and heading home for a homecooked meal.

Since February locals seeking food and fellowship after church services have been frequenting the Gospel Brunch at the Beach.

Held every Sunday at the 365 Convention Center Drive facility, Gospel Brunch offers patrons an extensive menu of southern cuisine — homestyle breakfast items, including such dishes as shrimp creole, roasted chicken in tarragon herbs, New Orleans-style catfish and bread pudding in whiskey sauce, red beans and rice, crawfish, cabbage and more.

While enjoying a meal, inspirational songs come from some of the city's best and nation's brightest choirs, gospel groups and soloists.

The Gospel Brunch begins at 12:30 p.m., with performances at 2 and 4 p.m.

"I consider it inspirational — a place for the community to come, especially on Sundays, to fellowship after they get out of church," said Brenda Smith, a minister at Mountaintop Faith Ministries, who coordinates the Gospel Brunch along with staff at The Beach.

Turnout has been average, Smith said. "I think a lot of it is because the community just doesn't know about it yet. Right now we're just trying to get the participation."

Acts have included the Gaston 5, Gospel Keylites, Gospel Tornadoes, Greater Faith Choir, Monument of Faith Choir, Vision of Praise, solo artist Alonzo, Joy featuring Wanda Cotton, Tony Mitchell Singers and Willing 5. Soloist Yvonne Benson will sing on April 25.

Also getting in on the Sunday Gospel Brunch act is the recently-opened House of Blues inside Mandalay Bay, 3950 S. Las Vegas Blvd.

Like The Beach, the House of Blues, which introduced its version of the Gospel Brunch a month ago, offers uplifting Gospel performances by both local and national



Beach chef Gary Williams offers dessert.



(Above) Sylvia St. James, coordinator for the House of Blues gospel brunch joins in song. (Adjacent) A local choir performs during the Sunday gospel brunch program at the Beach.

Sentinel-Voice photos by John Broussard

touring gospel groups and all-you-can-eat southern style buffet.

Unlimited champagne and mimosas, crispy fried chicken, jambalaya, prime rib, maple smoked ham, bagels, cornbread, smoked chicken and andouille hash, assorted salads and fruit, tossed shrimp remoulade salad and omelets await the palate.

Brunch times at the House of Blues are scheduled for 10 a.m. and 1 p.m.

"Our highly entertaining and highly interactive Gospel Brunch experience is designed to feed the body and the soul," said Sylvia St. James, national gospel brunch coordinator for House of Blues. "Some people see it strictly as entertainment. Others will be changed forever," she said.

Those interested in the Gospel Brunch at The Beach can call 731-1925 or 225-5358. Those interested in the House of Blues Sunday Gospel Brunch can call 632-7600.

## Paintings

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neoclassical style, "Forever Free," whose heady liberationist spirit is very American - a woman kneeling by a standing man, his broken shackles raised above his head. The sculptor was Edmonia Lewis, who was half black and half Indian.

"These are canonical pieces in African-American history," Powell says of the art that is part of a section titled "Forever Free: Emancipation Visualized."

Much of the exhibition highlights black artists like Jacob Lawrence, Romare Bearden, Horace Pippin and Henry Tanner, but the schools' holdings also include work by artists of other ethnic backgrounds.

From Fisk University come paintings donated by Georgia O'Keeffe, who also gave to Fisk some photographs taken by her husband, Alfred Stieglitz.

And the avant-garde work of the late Josef Albers is displayed along with a geometric painting by William T. Williams, a prolific contemporary artist still working in New York.

The exhibition that started at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center in Massachusetts was organized by the Addison Gallery of American Art in Andover, Mass., and The Studio Museum, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary.

Amid the pain of history, the exhibit offers much visual pleasure.

A 1934 night street scene by Archibald Motley, "Black Belt," is a palate of vivid colors depicting a festive crowd, and Motley's "The Liar" features a group of carefree men smoke, drink and play pool.

In addition to Fisk, Hampton and Tuskegee, the art comes from Howard University, Clark Atlanta University and North Carolina Central University.

As a result of the project, funded by sponsors including AT&T and the Ford Motor Company, students helped revive works such as Elizabeth Catlett's "Negro Woman," whose wooden face had fallen off. The subject's high cheekbones are now again illuminated by eyes made of onyx.

And the students breathed new life into the 1858 portrait of the Baltimore butler by Thomas Waterman Wood from the Howard collection.

"It was covered in soot, the frame was green. And we only saw the artist's signature after cleaning," said Powell, chairman of the art history department at Duke University.

The show remains at the Studio Museum until July 11, then travels to five of the universities as well as the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., and the Art Institute of Chicago.

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