

1-24-2008

Keeping the Faith

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls

Recommended Citation

"Keeping the Faith" (2008). *News Releases*. 1961.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1961

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Marketing and Communications at eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in News Releases by an authorized administrator of eCommons. For more information, please contact frice1@udayton.edu, mschlangen1@udayton.edu.

University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



Keeping the Faith

01.24.2008 | Culture and Society, Campus and Community

It's not often student performers get the chance to share the stage with a five-time Grammy Award-winning gospel superstar.

Kirk Franklin, the Ebony Heritage Singers and the Dayton Jazz Ensemble performed stirring, soulful renditions of "He Reigns" and "Brighter Days" before a sold-out crowd of nearly 800 in the Frericks Center at the annual Martin Luther King Jr. prayer breakfast Jan. 22. In what an appreciative Franklin called a display of? "late-night soul," faculty, staff and students swayed to the rousing music at the early-morning hour.

Franklin, whose popular music has been called "gospel rap" and "hip-hop gospel," didn't come to Dayton to perform at campus and community MLK events. He came to preach a message.

"The race is not given to the swift or the strong, but the one who endures to the end," said Franklin, relating an anecdote about his son's relay race in a track meet. A teammate dropped the baton in the mud, losing valuable time.

"How my son responded when that baton was dropped told me how I was doing as a father," he said. "I saw my son start to stretch, start to jump. I saw him reposition himself to get back into the race."

Adopted at 4 by his deeply religious Aunt Gertrude, Franklin grew up estranged from his father, became a father when he was a teenager, hung out on the streets and wrestled with his faith. "My father handed me a dropped baton. He was not there. I've been running harder and faster to get back into the race."

He challenged those who have faced hardship and injustice to "reposition themselves" for a marathon.

"Remember you're not running for yourself. No matter what happened to you in your past, you cannot run your race bitter," he said. "I can make many excuses. I didn't have a father to show me what it was like to be a father or a husband. I can be like all my brothers at the barbershop and blame 'the man.' I cannot make excuses and run my race well."

Describing himself in a self-deprecating fashion — "I'm not the most eloquent dude. I'm not the most educated dude" — Franklin connected with audiences ranging from community leaders to predominantly white college students to Dayton Early College Academy students with candor, grace, humor and an infectious belief in the power of people to unite in faith and confront societal ills.

"It's our fight. It's everyone's fight," he said. "We have the power and responsibility to stop music that's degrading our women. We have the power to stop churches from building bigger churches when they're not worried about the crack house on the corner. We have the power to say no to the foolishness going on in our urban communities."

The University of Dayton collaborated with the Dayton Chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to bring Franklin to Dayton. He's part of an all-star line-up of acclaimed artists and journalists, including filmmaker Spike Lee, on tap during UD's 2007-08 Diversity Lecture Series.

A half-hour interview with Franklin will air at noon on Sunday, Feb. 3, on WDTN's "Dayton and Beyond."