

Rapping the gospel

When Montgomery, AL Branch 106 member **Terry Pope**, also known as “T. Pope,” isn’t delivering mail, chances are he can be found performing gospel hip-hop.

“Basically, it’s Jesus-believing, God-believing men who rap about the gospel of Jesus,” Pope said, adding that it has a positive swing to it. The six-year letter carrier says he’s been rapping since the age of 11.

Pope and his friend Larry Rockette, whom he met playing basketball at True Divine Baptist Church in Montgomery seven years ago, would occasionally rap together. When their pastor heard that they rapped, he asked them if they would perform as a group for a church event.

“We used to rap anyway, and so we decided to do it for the Lord,” Pope said. “We are Christian, but when you listen to the music, it talks about certain life situations.”

They soon formed the duo “Life Through Colors.” They are “two broth-

ers who rap,” he says.

Pope said that he and his rapping partner grew up without dads, and try to be positive role models, especially for younger men. “We get a chance to live like we never had,” he said. “Coming up, I never experienced anything like what we’re doing.”

The carrier said they make a point not to deliver sermons. It’s motivation, he says, adding, “We keep the foundation of Christ in it, inspiring kids.”

Together as a gospel hip-hop ministry, they have been traveling, entertaining and speaking to people of all ages either for free or a modest honorarium. They perform at “churches, family reunions, cancer walks, fairs, children’s homes—you name it,” Pope said.

The duo travels as often as possible to perform. Though they have mostly performed in the Southeast United States with performances in Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee, they’ve toured as far away as Haiti, where they were invited in 2015 by the U.S. embassy there to perform in the capital city, Port-au-Prince—an event the carrier called “life-changing.”

They spent a week there, performing at an orphanage and a women’s prison, and had several visits with youth in the area. To travel to a poor country and see it with their own eyes was quite the experience, Pope said, adding, “We had to be in bulletproof vehicles and had guards wherever we went.”

The group’s message is generally aimed at the younger generation. “That was the plan,” Pope said, but then they “gravitated toward everyone.” They try to show that though

they’ve dealt with failed expectations, broken promises and a yearning for something greater, they’re stronger for it because of their faith.

“We feel it’s urgent and it’s needed in today’s generation,” Pope said.

“Music is one of the most looked-at arts. It was a chance to get into it and make it positive and good. It gives them something to...make better decisions and it drives us.”

When they are invited to perform, T. Pope and Rockette go out on stage and one of them introduces the group and gives

a run-down of what they’ll be doing. “It’s new to a lot of people,” Pope says of gospel hip-hop.

Life Through Colors follows that with a couple of tracks, before the other member speaks. After the music ends, the audience can ask questions and the duo gives away some of their CDs.

“It’s very interactive,” Pope said. “We hope they take something [from the performance] and it helps them to rekindle the flames of dreams they’ve thrown away.”

When they connect with listeners, they occasionally exchange phone numbers or contact information with some youngsters, with parental permission, to keep in touch.

Pope doesn’t take his role as a gospel hip-hop performer lightly, knowing that it takes a lot for people to reach out to them. The carrier says he is proud that they can “walk through the journey with them.”

He and Rockette get together once a year for studio sessions to write together and record, throwing ideas and instrumentals at each other. They spend about a month in studio



One of Life Through Colors’ CDs



Terry Pope



A recent performance by Life Through Colors

mode, getting their album together. Life Through Colors' most recent of its three albums is called "Strings."

The past year and a half, though, has been busy, with both of their marriages and their children. "We've been moving and life's been happening," Pope explained, adding, "We normally get together now, depending on what we're trying to do, maybe one to two times a month."

While Pope is used to performing his music, he was invited in October 2017 to deliver a keynote speech for students completing the University of West Alabama's Upward Bound program. "It was different because I never had to prepare to speak for an hour straight," he said.

Diana V. Pullum, director of the school's Upward Bound program, invited Pope after hearing him speak at the church she attends, Mount Olive Mission Baptist Church in Gallion, AL.

"I saw the youth there really enjoyed it," Pullum said. "He spoke, then he performed a song—he rapped his gospel music. The message was great."

Impressed, she invited him to speak to the Upward Bound program, which is composed of high school students. The response there was positive as well, Pullum said, adding that part of his message was aimed at student-athletes

who hope to turn professional—urging them not to neglect their education.

"A lot of the students added him on social media, and some still communicate with him to let him know when they're doing positive things. I really feel like the speech he gave impacted the students. It was from someone who came from the same sort of background as them. He's a great role model."

Pope's writing expands beyond his music. He said he had some vivid dreams about a decade ago, before he found the Lord. "I was in a dark place," he said. "I had a chance to go to heaven and hear some things. I had a seat at the table in heaven. I decided to write about that experience."

The result was an autobiography published two years ago, titled *A Table in Heaven: Where Uncertainty Meets Fate*. It describes his personal life experiences and his choice to live his life with intention. "I could have given up, but I'm still here and I'm still smiling," he said.

Some readers have taken encouragement from his works.

"A short while ago I just finished reading one of the greatest personal and inspirational stories of our time," one reviewer wrote on Amazon. "In it you're sure to see the hand of God

navigating Terry through the trials and triumphs of life and bringing him to a place of gratitude and motivation for himself and others."

Another wrote: "His point was clear and the message intentional. It definitely left an impression on my life, and I am grateful he chose to share his story. I hope this reaches many around the world and shines light on a truly amazing God we have."

A number of his co-workers know about his rapping, he says, and give him feedback "all the time."

Life Through Colors has even been recognized at the Alabama People's Choice Awards over the years, having won awards in the categories of Hip-Hop Artists of the Year, CD of the Year and Contemporary Artists of the Year.

Pope is glad he's able to bring his love of gospel hip-hop and messages of hope to whoever wants to listen. He says it is not about having the perfect life, but rather trying to keep the right perspective through it all.

"It's a blessing to many people," he said. "You can have a lot of trials dealing with your own life, [but] it's bigger than you." **PR**

You can learn more about Life Through Colors at facebook.com/LifeThroughColors or by searching their group name on YouTube to watch their music videos.