

## Gospel Singer Gives Spirited Concert

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ZEPHYRHILLS - The crowd at Fair [Haven Baptist Church](#) stood and clapped to the rhythm of John Waller's acoustic guitar.

A [Christian artist](#) who got a break when his song "While I'm Waiting" was used in the 2008 movie "Fireproof," Waller was the first headlining act at Fair Haven's new location off Eiland Boulevard.

A 39-year-old resident of Senoia, Ga., Waller was persuaded to do the show free by his [friend Jay Heilman](#), who runs the church's special events ministry as well as [www.christianmusicreview.org](http://www.christianmusicreview.org), a growing Web site he created in 2004. When Waller released his first solo album, "The Blessing," in 2007, [Heilman of Dade City](#) received a copy for review.

"I listened, and I absolutely loved it," he said. "The title wasn't just clever, I actually felt blessed after I listened to it. I could relate to a lot of the messages in the CD; I connected. I contacted his [publicist](#) and asked to do an interview. We arranged to meet when he and his family were in Orlando in 2007.

"We hit it off and had a long conversation about his music and my Web site, and there was a lot of common ground between them. I wasn't seeing the results I thought I'd have after doing (the Web site) for three solid years. But he had done what he wanted to do for 15 years and was questioning why it didn't seem to be panning out."

This week, their friendship was a benefit to the roughly 350 people who attended the concert, opened by [local group](#) Josh Helms Project.

Waller was accompanied to the show by wife Josee, sons Baylee, 12, who helped run the sound board, and Ezekiel, 15 months, and daughters, Hadlee, 8, and Sophee, 5. The family was already in Orlando for a Christian leadership conference, where Waller was performing.

Before his 70-minute set, Waller said he was practically raised on folk and gospel music. His father was a musician and his mother often sang along with him. He said he has been writing material for his next solo album, which he expects to be released this fall.

Waller said that being a [Christian artist](#) does not limit the subject matter he can write about.

"I've got the greatest book ever written to inspire me," he said. "There are endless things to write about if you're inspired by God."

Shortly after taking the stage, Waller had the crowd sufficiently stirred. As he sang the following lyrics, a group of teenage girls in the front row stood and sang along:

"You are strong

"So I am strong

"You are power

"So I am powerful"

[Fair Haven](#) Pastor Michael Smith said he hopes the church can host more concerts once its new sanctuary is finished. Since Tuesday's show was the first held by the church, he said he was "freaking out" beforehand.

But the sound was smooth and clear, and the audience seemed to go home happy. Smith said he hopes to hold more concerts in the future.

It will be up to [Heilman](#) to find the groups. Fortunately, he said, traffic on his Web site increased from about 7,000 visitors a month in 2008 to about 12,000 a month last year.

And he continuously meets new artists.

"The sanctuary should be done by late spring, so maybe we can do something again in the summer," [Heilman](#) said. "Who it'll be, I don't know. I know some groups that could have some successful shows, but you really have to book far ahead of time. "Our goal is to make some extra money for the church. But if we can break even and the artists bless the crowd and people have fun, that's the most important thing."

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