

Pastor, brother sentenced in beating case

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The jury convicted the brothers last week and took about seven hours over two days to decide the sentences.

The victim's mother, Norma Arellano, and stepfather, Genevevo Arellano, held hands while the sentences were announced. The brothers showed no emotion as they were immediately sent to prison.

The brothers' father, Hank Thompson, leads the church and dozens of members of the congregation sat in stunned silence in the courtroom, while Joshua Thompson's wife, Maressa, sat in the front row behind the defendants and cried.

Relatives of the victim and defendants all left the courtroom without comment after the sentences were

announced.

Guerrero and a doctor who treated him said he was hit at least 100 times. During the trial, jurors saw graphic photos of the boy's back with red and purple bruises and blood spots from scrapes or puncture wounds.

The brothers admitted the beating but disputed the blow count and its intensity. Joshua Thompson said

Guerrero's parents had given him permission to punish the boy and that he didn't intend to inflict serious injuries. Guerrero's parents deny telling him he could hit their child.

Neither man had a criminal record before their conviction and both acknowledged during trial that what they did was wrong.

Raleigh congregation gathers young musicians

By Kelly Starling Lyons
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — The door to St. Mark's United Methodist Church opened a few Sundays ago and eyes were drawn forward, past the rows of wooden pews, beyond the stained glass windows and to a massive cross.

Beneath that symbol, a green-robed choir flanked young people who held instruments and waited for their cue.

With a wave of his arms, Steven Wheltle, director of musical ministries, called the strings of St. Mark's Symphony to life. Then, he moved away and Pachelbel's Canon continued as if on its own. As acolytes headed down the aisle to light candles, the young people played. As latecomers trickled in, they kept the music going. Gradually, everything grew silent except the wail of their strings. When the final note rang, people smiled, said "Amen."

And it was good.

It was the symphony's first time playing together for a service, the musicians' first time before the entire congregation. For some of these kids, it was also their first time playing in a church. St. Mark's Symphony is made up of young Christians of various denominations and a few youth who don't belong to a church at all.

St. Mark's used to hire professional players to perform.

But now a music ministry headed by Wheltle has assembled this group of young people. He wanted to create opportunities for professional musicianship and camaraderie, to reach people for Christ through music. He wants the spirit to flow through young people, through the congregation and inspire in all directions. But Wheltle doesn't preach. He lets the music bring the word of God alive, he said.

"We're about developing 'Much the way (Jesus) did. Yes, Jesus preached but quite often he reached people by what he did. Like when he said, 'I'll make you fishers of men.' He got people because of the relationships he was developing with them."

The symphony idea came about this spring when members of St. Mark's were tossing around thoughts for the best use of money. Wheltle and others contemplated building a young community of musicians to reach out to youth in the area and enrich the church. Why pay for professional symphonies when they could do more by creating their own? From the start, Wheltle thought of bringing together youth from within and outside the church realm.

He grew up in a church that stressed social action more than Scriptures. Wheltle learned some of his first

biblical lessons through works like Mendelssohn's "Elijah" and Handel's "Messiah."

"I got my first challenge of faith through symphonic exposure," Wheltle said. "That was my first Scripture lesson."

God calls people to reach others in different ways, he said. Wheltle also helps lead the contemporary service at St. Mark's. "Some people would never walk into a room like this," he said, gesturing earlier to the sanctuary. "I don't want a tradition to get in the way of preaching for the Lord."

When creating the youth symphony, Wheltle focused on getting the best talent he could. He tapped church members connected to schools and drove around speaking with area music teachers and advertising auditions. Young people would commit to rehearsals twice a month and be paid an hourly wage, just like professionals, for their time. Thirty to 35 students tried out. Wheltle and the committee have selected 14 students from colleges, high schools and even one middle school across the Triangle.

Christopher Homick, a senior at Ravenscroft in Raleigh, tried out for both cello and trombone. He made both. "You get paid for something you love to do," said Homick, who attends

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Church Notes

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December 21

Christmas Musical at University Park Baptist Church will be held at 6 pm. Admission is free and all the choirs of the church will perform holiday music.

A Christmas Candlelight Service will be held at 5:30 pm at Simpson-Gillespie United Methodist Church at 3545 Beatties Ford Road.

December 31

Western Avenue Baptist Church will present its New Year's Eve Bash at 8:30 pm at Statesville Christian School Gymnasium at 1206 Museum Road Statesville.

January 4

God's Meeting Place, a newly formed church by Charles W. Reid, will begin services at 9 am at Steele Creek Elementary School, 4100 Gallant Lane.

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DECEMBER NEWSLETTER - PART TWO
J. M. LITTLE - TEACHER

Now you may ask me this question: "Brother Little, are you saying I am a heathen since I put up a Xmas tree and carry on in this custom?" Well, it is a very good sign that you are a heathen. The heathen started this pagan worship. The pagans worshipped the sun and they carried on this pagan celebration long before Christ came. When was Christ born? The Bible does not give us a date. Did you ever give Christ a birthday present? Deceived souls have told me in the past; "we give gifts to one another." Let me ask you a question: "would you want someone to celebrate your birthday and give the presents to someone else?" That would be an insult to you. More liquor is sold during Xmas time than any other season of the year. Would you want someone drinking liquor on your birthday? I wouldn't. But God's Word is to His people and His people will obey His Word. You will not obey His Word because it is not for you. You are religious, but lost. I praise the Lord He opened my eyes to see that this tradition is from the heathen and Christ has nothing to do with it. Now, you'll argue for it because you have never known your lost condition (Luke 19:10, John 16:7-11) under Holy Spirit Conviction. "And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children." (Isaiah 54:13). The Lord teaches His children in truth, and He clearly shows you error. But our church leaders don't know the difference between right and wrong, truth and error. I made a statement along that line to a pastor of a church a few years back and he quickly recoiled like this; "You cannot say that!" Well, that pastor skinned his ignorance in the nth degree. He took sides with the unsaved hearts. An unsaved heart always takes sides with another unsaved heart. That pastor has never been awakened to his lost condition and when he dies it will just be a leap into the dark.



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Sunday, January 4, 2004

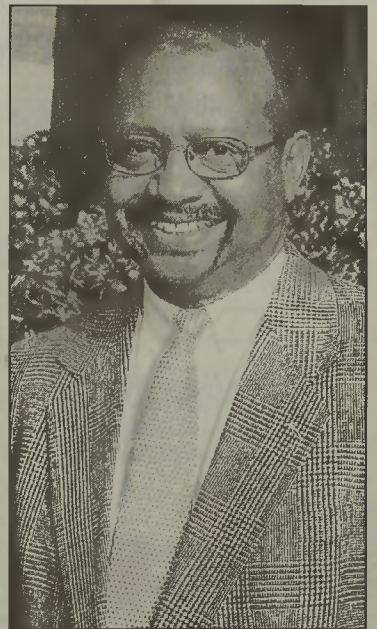
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Galatians 6: 9

- And let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not.

- WELCOME -



You are encouraged to bring non-perishable commercially prepared food items to be given to the **Loaves & Fishes** Food Drive. There is great need for canned meats, peanut butter, canned soup, and canned fruit.

'T'S YOUR TIME -- WALK INTO YOUR SEASON'