

Southern Moravians apologize for slavery

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WINSTON-SALEM—The Southern Province of the Moravian Church has apologized for the church's historic participation in slavery.

A resolution including the apology was approved unanimously during a meeting last week, when the church also announced the creation of a race reconciliation program for the church's black and white congregations.

"What it means to me is, it suggests our church's deter-

mination to live up to its creed," said the Rev. Wayne Burkette, newly chosen president of the province's Provincial Elders' Conference.

In the church's early days in the Moravian community of Salem, blacks—free and enslaved—and whites often worshipped side by side.

But at the close of the 18th century, white slave owners began to segregate blacks from their community, forcing them to the back of their church on Easter Sunday

1789 and later into separate churches organized under white ministers.

Burkette said that, while about three-fourths of Moravians around the world are people of color, black membership has languished in North America.

"Nothing would please me more than to see it (the resolution) as an acknowledgment of our need for each other and the hope that in the future there can be greater understanding and partner-

ship in the mission of the church," Burkette said.

Roma Combs, a member of group that introduced the resolution, said it stemmed from discussions among Moravians around Winston-Salem. Winston-Salem was formed when the Salem community merged with Winston, a nearby commerce hub.

"I do think there's a gulf between the African-American and Caucasian folks in town and we've got to move forward," he said.

He said that, while some might see the resolution as a ploy for more black church members, it is the result of genuine soul-searching.

"There are people in the Moravian church who are not going to let this resolution remain just a document," he said.

The great-granddaughter of a Moravian slave said she was pleased by the apology, regardless of the motive.

Of course, it doesn't correct what has been done, but an apology is always acceptable, said Georgiana Paige McCoy, whose great-grandfather, Ned Lemly, was born in 1827. It doesn't change the fact that my great grandfather was enslaved in Salem.

Winston-Salem and Bethlehem, Pa., have long been the centers of the Moravian Church in the United States.

Maryland church defaced with racial slurs

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BOWIE, Md.—A Bowie church and nearby sound barrier were defaced this week with spray painted racist slurs, an incident Prince George's County police are investigating as a hate crime.

The large graffiti included swastikas, the letters "KKK"

and anti-black epithets. They could be easily seen Tuesday by motorists driving by the Redeemed Christian Church of God Victory Temple on Route 450.

Firefighters used hoses to remove the spray paint from the church's exterior. A group of volunteers eventually draped a blue tarp over the

defaced sound barrier that sits about 50 yards away.

Mary Nusser, who helped cover the wall, said she was disgusted. "You could just see people's shoulders slump down as they walked by and the sorrow coming out of their pores," Nusser told The Washington Post.

Nusser helps report inci-

dents to the Southern Poverty Law Center, a civil rights group that tracks hate crimes. Members characterized the graffiti as the worst they have seen in the Washington area in 15 years.

ACLU challenges protest laws

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FRANKFORT, Ky.—Portions of a new state law intended to prevent protesters from disrupting funerals for soldiers killed in Iraq are unconstitutional and should be struck down, the American Civil Liberties Union said in a federal lawsuit filed Monday.

The ACLU filed suit in U.S. District Court in Frankfort, challenging sections of the law that the group claims go too far in limiting freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

The lawsuit puts the ACLU, which routinely handles discrimination cases involving gays and lesbians, on the same side as Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., which is known for its antigay protests.

The law, which also applies to memorial services, wakes and burials, was aimed at members of that church who have toured the country protesting at military funerals. The church members claim the soldiers' deaths are a sign of God punishing America for tolerating homosexuality.

The ACLU filed the lawsuit on behalf of Bart McQueary, a Mercer County man who has protested alongside the church members on three occasions. McQueary had no listed telephone number and couldn't be reached for comment.

U.S. District Judge Karen Caldwell has been assigned to hear the case. The ACLU already has asked her to grant a preliminary injunction that would allow funeral protests to continue.

"Mr. McQueary clearly has the right to express his message in a non-disruptive manner, even if others disagree with him," said Lili S. Lutgens, an attorney for the ACLU in Louisville.

Lutgens said the law is so broad that people could unknowingly violate it by whistling as they walk down a sidewalk, or by stopping to chat on a public sidewalk near a funeral home. She said the law also could prevent pro-military groups from standing outside memorial services to counter the Kansas demonstrators.

"The commonwealth simply cannot prohibit free expression because it doesn't like certain activities,

nor can it suppress the speech of groups or individuals because it doesn't like the message," Lutgens said.

Gov. Ernie Fletcher signed the measure into law in March in an attempt to prevent disruptions at military funerals.

Protesters within 300 feet of such services would be guilty of first-degree disorderly conduct, punishable by up to a year in jail. The bill also would prevent protesters from using bullhorns to try to disrupt the services.

Members of the Westboro church have protested at funerals for members of the Kentucky National Guard and U.S. Army soldiers based at Fort Campbell who have been killed in action.

At their protests, members of the Kansas group carry such signs as "Thank God for IEDs," the improvised explosive devices used by insurgents in Iraq.

Fletcher spokesman Brett Hall said Monday the governor hasn't yet seen the lawsuit. "We'll take a look at it and move from there," he said.

However, Hall said mourning families deserve privacy and dead soldiers deserve reverence.

Joyfest '06

Continued from page 5B

through Ticketmaster by calling 704-522-6500, by logging on to www.ticketmaster.com or at any Ticketmaster outlet. Discounted tickets for groups of 15 or more, including a group picnic option, are available by calling Paramount's Carowinds at 1-800-888-4FUN (4386).

Vatican's boycott

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power-hungry sect in the novel, has specifically refrained from publicly calling for a boycott of the film, aware that bitter criticism of Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ" helped generate publicity for the movie.

Opus Dei has, however, asked Sony to put a disclaimer on the movie saying it is a work of fantasy. Sony has not responded to that request but has said it views "The Da Vinci Code" as a work of fiction that isn't meant to harm any organization.

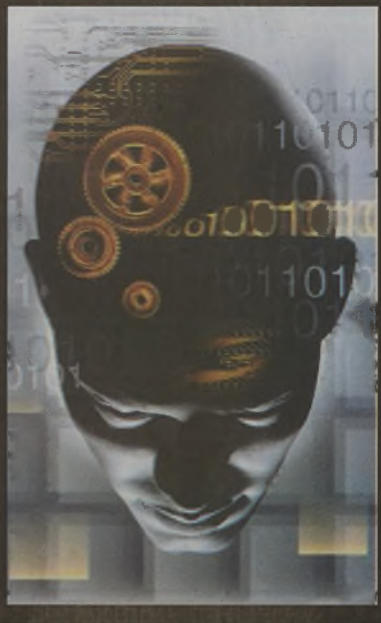
Amato's comments were the second this week against the film by church officials in Rome.

Earlier this week, the Interior Ministry took down an enormous ad promoting the film that was plastered on the scaffolding of a Rome church after church officials complained that the film was against Christ and the Catholic Church.

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