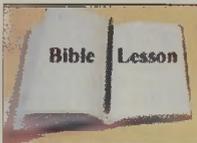


5B

RELIGION



In service to God together

The church in Corinth was founded by Paul himself (Acts 18:1-21). Despite the wickedness that pervaded this city, many people came to Christ in response to Paul's preaching. Apollos and others stepped in to help lead after Paul left the city to continue on his missionary journeys (Acts 18:24-19:1).

However, serious problems developed in Paul's absence. When Paul heard what was happening some four or five years later (about a.d. 55/56), he found it necessary to write to the Corinthians to correct the situation. Foremost among the problems in Corinth was the way the church had divided itself into factions. As the lesson text will show, the Corinthian Christians were aligning themselves with various leaders. Paul would have none of it. Their duty was to serve God-together!

Paul's Concern (1 Cor. 1:10-12)

1. Is it possible to have unity in a local church? Is there room for various opinions? (v. 10)

Everyone can agree that everyone is different. Since everyone is different, people will not always have the same viewpoints on many different issues. It is important that those viewpoints are not self-centered, but rather God centered.

The Corinthians were extremely gifted, not lacking in resources with regard to serving Christ (v. 7). Their problem lay in their self-centeredness. Just because someone is extremely gifted does not mean that he will use his abilities in an appropriate manner.

The very first problem Paul addressed in his correspondence with the Corinthian church was that of internal division. No church can effectively reach the lost or grow spiritually when they are quarreling among themselves.

Since everyone does not have exactly the same viewpoints, it may seem that unity is impossible. 1 Peter 3:8 reminds us to be one minded and love one another. We must be united on the fundamentals of the faith as taught in the Bible. We can also be united in our desire to carry out the commission of Christ. If we fail to do this, "divisions" (literally, "schisms") will result.

Paul's appeal for unity was based on "the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 10). Since we are "one body" (12:12), division among believers is antithetical to what He has called us to be. Remember, everything we do

Please see IN SERVICE/8B

Saving Grace



PHOTOS/CURTIS WILSON

The Rev. Bernard Sullivan of Grace AME Zion greets some of the younger members of his congregation.

Center city church sold for preservation

By Cheris F. Hodges

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History has been sold in uptown Charlotte in order to save it.

The last relic of the former Brooklyn neighborhood, Grace AME Zion Church now belongs to the Mecklenburg Historic Landmark Commission.

Located at 219 Brevard St., the church was constructed in 1902 and served as a hub in the black community of Brooklyn.

"It's the only way it won't be torn down," said Dan Morrill, director of the commission. "It is an icon of African American history."

In spite of the destruction of Brooklyn during urban renewal of the 1960s when most of Grace's parishioners moved to West Charlotte, the church and its leadership continued to play a substantial role in the life of

the city. Many former residents of Second Ward continue to identify with the church as part of their Brooklyn heritage. As well as representing the rich history of its contributions to Charlotte, Grace AME Zion serves more than just the religious concerns of the area from the unique structure on South Brevard Street, according to the Historic Landmark Commission's web site.

In 1886, a group of 11 men and 17 women appointed a committee of G.W. Johnson, W.W. Smith and James Foster to write a letter of withdrawal from Clinton Chapel (the "Mother" church of all black churches in the city) and subsequently obtained permission from the Protestant Episcopal Church to use a small church built for a mission of whites on the grounds where Bank of America now stands.

The 28 members of Grace AME Zion Church adopted the motto "Deo, Religioni, et Temperantiae" (God, Religion, and Temperance) moving into the Gothic design church built by the members supervised by J. T. Smith, the contractor and R.T. Weddington, the plastering supervisor in 1902.

According to a 1980 report from the commission:

"The new church moved to a series of temporary quarters before finding a permanent home. After a few months, they had to vacate the Episcopal Mission, and met for a short time at the Mayor's office in the old Market House on East Trade Street. Shortly afterward, they rented the former Samaritan Lodge hall on East Second Street near Davidson, and then moved again to the A.M.E.

Please see GRACE AME/6B

Debating slavery apology, payment

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBUS, Ohio —The Episcopal Church is poised to apologize for failing to oppose slavery, but making up for its 19th century inaction won't come without 21st century controversy.

At its national convention beginning June 13, the church is expected to approve a resolution expressing regret for supporting slavery and segregation. But the debate will likely get more heated when a second resolution comes up, calling for a study of possible reparations for black Episcopalians.

The church, already divided over the separate issue of gays' role in the church, is struggling over whether reparations would be a meaningful gesture 141 years after the Civil War ended.

"A lot of times you say, 'I'm not a racist, I didn't have slaves, no one in my family had slaves, I could not possibly be complicit in this,'" said Sharon Denton, a member of the church's National Concerns committee that deals with domestic ministry and mission issues.

"But if you start digging back in the history of things, you find out there were a lot of things that came to you that were built on slave-holding and the slave trade," said Denton, a member of a small, all-white parish in Celina in central Kansas.

The Rev. Harold Lewis, a black priest and rector at Calvary Episcopal in Pittsburgh, called the idea of reparations outrageous and impractical.

"The better thing to do is to talk about how we can work to eradicate racism and how we can fight to eliminate economic disparities regardless of racism," said Lewis, the denomination's former long-time staff officer for black ministries.

The church declined to embrace a resolution three years ago backing federal legislation to create a national reparations task force. This year's resolution is more focused on the church, calling for a study of how the denomination benefited economically from slavery and how that benefit could be shared with black Episcopalians, about 5 percent of the denomination's 2.2 million members.

But it does not give specifics, and both supporters and detractors say reparations could mean anything from cash payments to college scholarships.

Previous attempts to deal with the issue have proven difficult. In 1969, the church's General Convention—or legislative body—approved a \$200,000 grant to the National Committee of Black Churchmen in response to calls for reparations from activist James Forman.

Please see WIDOW/6B

Baptists toughen policy against gay members

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH—The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina toughened its policy on churches or affiliate groups that welcome gays, proposing a new policy that says they may no longer be eligible for membership.

The policy, proposed by the convention's board of directors at its meeting this week in Asheboro, would forbid churches from ordaining gay

clergy, making public statements supporting homosexuality or accepting as members people who have refused to "repent of the sin of homosexual behavior."

The policy must be ratified at the convention's annual meeting in November.

The convention, with about 4,000 affiliated churches, has been taking steps to tighten its policy against homosexuality for several years. In 1992, it adopted a financial

policy that refused money for churches showing "public approval, promotion or blessing of homosexuality."

At last November's annual meeting, delegates asked the board of directors to gauge the stance of individual churches on homosexuality, adding that standard to the question of whether a church is "in friendly cooperation" with the convention.

Board president Don Warren said he "absolutely"

believes convention delegates will approve the policy.

"We believe homosexuality is sin, as are many others," Warren said. "But we are not aware of any other sin that has a national organization that promotes its happening beginning in kindergarten and first grade."

The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina is the largest denominational body in the state and, with 1.2 million members.

Please see BAPTISTS/7B

War widow holds Wiccan ceremony for husband

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FERNLEY, Nev.—A war widow who has failed in her efforts to get a Wiccan religious symbol recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs for her husband's memorial plaque held an alternative memorial service on Monday as a form of protest.

A few hours later and a few miles away in this pastoral community east of Reno, official ceremonies were conducted at the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Ceme-

tery, where a space for the plaque remains blank.

"It's been a long, very hard 8 months," Roberta Stewart said. "No one who has loved ones serving in the military wants to be the one hearing the knock on the door."

Federal officials so far have refused to grant the requests of the family of Sgt. Patrick Stewart to have the Wiccan pentacle placed above his name on the government-issued memorial plaque set on a wall at the cemetery here.

"This is discrimination against our religion," she said at the gathering of some 200 people at a tree-lined park just east of Fernley. "I ask you to help us remember that all freedoms are worth fighting for."

Patrick Stewart, 34, of Fernley was killed in Afghanistan Sept. 25 when a rocket-propelled grenade struck his helicopter. Chief Warrant Officer John Flynn of Sparks also died in the crash along with three other crew members.

Stewart was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart, but the Wiccan belief is not among the 38—including atheism—recognized by the Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration.

"We are here today to honor American religious diversity of all faiths," the Rev. Selena Fox said.

Fox, senior minister of a Wiccan group based in Wisconsin, said Stewart died defending the country that is

Please see WIDOW/6B

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for calendar items is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

June 8

The United House of Prayer will host a grand parade—Celebrating 80 Years of Precious Memories—beginning at their Biddleville Mission, 601 Beatties Ford Road and concluding at the Mother House at 2321 Beatties Ford Road. The parade begins at 10 a.m.

June 9

CPCC's Sloan-Morgan Building will ring with the sound of a capella African American gospel when the Charlotte Folk Society gathers.

For half a century, the group Men Standing

For Christ has been carrying on the tradition of black quartet singing. Voices rise in rich four-part harmony, accompanied from time to time by keyboard.

The free and family-friendly program begins at 7:30 p.m. in CPCC's Sloan-Morgan Building, 1220 Elizabeth Avenue. Donations, which benefit the performers, are appreciated. Refreshments, jam sessions, and a song circle follow the hour-long concert. Free parking is available in the Faculty-Staff-Theater parking deck on 4th Street. For details call (704) 377-5257 or www.folksociety.org.

June 10

The Marriage Ministry of New Beginnings Community Church will hold their annual

Marriage Emphasis Weekend through Sunday. Senior Pastor Michael and First Lady Twanna Henderson will be the facilitators. The cost is \$50 per couple or \$25 per person if registered by June 4. The church is located at 9229 Lawyers Road, Suite K, Mint Hill.

The Little Rock AME Zion Church presents the Amen Choir in concert. The event begins at 6 p.m. The church is located at 401 N. McDowell St.

The Restoring Life Worship Center will host a community flea market from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 3523 Nevin Road. Vendors are welcomed. Tables are available for \$15. For more information, contact Kim Alston at (704) 509-1255.

June 11

Trinity Park Baptist Church will host its annual Men's Day Celebration at 4 p.m. The guest speaker will be Rev. Terry Wallace Jr., pastor of Greater Life Ministries, York, S.C. The church is located at 9115 Trinity Road.

The New Beginnings Community Church will host Marriage Emphasis Sunday services at 8:30 a.m. and 11:30 a.m. For additional information call (704) 567-2900.

Waddell Chapel AME Zion Church's board of Stewards will sponsor its annual pastor appreciation program for the Rev. Clarence C. Roberts Jr. at 3 p.m. The church is located at

Please see COMIC/6B