

Opinion

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

ONE-ON-ONE

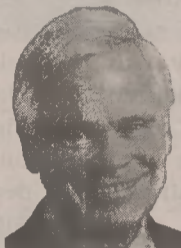
Taking Moral Mondays...

Is the Rev. William Barber, leader of North Carolina's Moral Monday protests, going to take the movement to the rest of the country?

Beginning in 2013, the Goldsboro minister has led demonstrations at the state's legislative building and in other state offices and properties. The groups he led often used civil disobedience to protest against actions that he said resulted in unfair treatment, discrimination, voting suppression, damage to the environment, unfair taxes and cuts to public education.

"I have always wondered about Barber's lumbering style..."

- D.G. MARTIN



He explained in a lecture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill last week that he plans a series of Moral Monday-type protests and civil disobedience that will occur in public buildings and facilities across the country next year.

Barber's Chapel Hill speech was this year's Weil Lecture on American Citizenship, part of a series that began in 1915 when former President William Howard Taft gave the first lecture. The prominent Goldsboro Weil family founded the series and continues to support it and other public causes. Gertrude Weil (1879-1971) is the subject of a biography, "Gertrude Weil: Jewish Progressive in the New South," written by Leonard Rogoff and published this year by UNC Press.

In his stirring speech, Barber shared his plans for 40 days of protests, beginning on Mothers' Day next year and continuing until the beginning of summer. The name of the organizing entity is "The Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival."

According to the campaign's web site, "By engaging in highly publicized civil disobedience and direct action over a six-week period in at least 25 states and the District of Columbia during the spring of 2018, the campaign will force a serious national examination of the enmeshed evils of systemic racism, poverty, militarism and environmental devastation."

I have always wondered about Barber's lumbering style of walking. He explained that when he was 30 years old, a medical condition almost paralyzed him. Afterwards, he was confined to a wheelchair for 12 years, and then only gradually learned to walk again. "But I am a fighter," he said, as he promised to keep getting better and better.

People ask if Barber is trying to be the new Martin Luther King. Barber only acknowledges that the new campaign is inspired by King, but it is not the same thing. Barber views the upcoming season of protest as part of a third Reconstruction. The first Reconstruction came after the Civil War and ended with the establishment of Jim Crow white control. The second Reconstruction came as a result of the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 60s led by King and others. It has been brought to an end, Barber says, by the current times of backlash and retrenchment.

Barber hopes next year's campaign will bring about a third Reconstruction, with its leaders inspired by King, but using modern tactics and strategies that were not available in King's time.

Barber may not be another Martin Luther King, but if the new Poor People's Campaign mounts a successful 40-day effort next year, he will become North Carolina's best-known national figure.

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FARM LIFE WIFE

Memories of Halloween...

In honor of Halloween, here is a memory called up from the cobwebs in my mind.

When my older sister and I were 6 and 4, respectively, we liked to spook ourselves by listening to a recording of a little-known book by Dr. Seuss.

We listened to the soundtrack on my grandmother's stereo-style record player. (Yikes, that dates me!)

We would gingerly lay the needle down onto the spinning vinyl, then hastily dive onto the golden-tweed couch, bury ourselves beneath Gramma's hand-crocheted afghans, then wiggle and giggle, trying our hardest to be brave.

We both our hearts pounding, no matter how hard we tried, we would get terrified, anyway. Looking back, I guess that is what we were after.

The name of the recorded book was, "Why Was I Scared?" but some will know it better by what the book is about: "The Pale Green Pants with Nobody Inside Them."

I don't know if it was the narrator's intonation, or if it was the subject matter that truly scared us.

We never owned the book, so it was left up to our imaginations to illustrate the scenery in our minds, which was much scarier.

"I found the very recording we listened to as children..."

- DEBORAH GRIFFIN



My imagination has always been a bit overactive. If I'm left alone with my thoughts long enough, just about anything can seem scary.

I found the very recording we listened to as children. (The Internet is nothing short of amazing.)

I can see why it petrified me as a child - it still creeps me out.

With spooky music playing with our minds in the background, the tale is told of a pair of pale green pants (with nobody inside them) that seemingly stalk the author.

Not the most pleasant thought for two impressionable little girls.

The pale pants show up, first in the deep woods - at night. Why the author feels the need to be out in the deep woods - at night - is not addressed.

Next, the pants show up pedaling a bicycle, almost knocking the storyteller over.

The very next night the pants show up rowing a boat straight

toward the frightened (and probably, by now, neurotic) author as he fishes.

How pants (with nobody inside them) can row, or ride a bike never crossed our young minds, we just felt like they were coming straight for us.

The scariest moment is yet to come.

Our pursued author thinks he is alone in a field of "Snide" (a Seussism), nine miles wide, when those pants show up right beside him.

One mommy-blogger recently wrote about the book:

"The tale was a simple fable about the importance of not judging others for being different; the narrator is initially afraid of the pants and tries to avoid them, but then he discovers that they're afraid of him as well. They both get over their fear and become friends."

The moral of the story was lost on us - as I still have an aversion to vomit-colored pants.

You can listen to this scary tale at the following link: http://www.dadazi.net/audioryms/aud_story/afraid/scared.html

Deborah Griffin is Staff Writer for the Bertie Ledger-Advance. She can be reached at dgriffin@ncweeklies.com or 252-792-1181.

OUT HERE IN LEFT FIELD

If we loved one another...

"Before you speak to me about your religion, first show it to me in how you treat other people; before you tell me how much you love your God, show me in how much you love all His children; before you preach to me of your passion for your faith, teach me about it through your compassion for your neighbors. In the end, I'm not as interested in what you have to tell or sell as I am in how you choose to live and give."

- Cory Booker

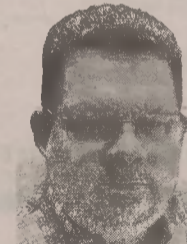
Saturday night I was fortunate enough to be in church where Father Joe Cooper shared a sermon with those of us gathered for evening prayer at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Roxobel.

Father Cooper talked about the love of Christ, and the Episcopal church's doctrine that all of us have sinned, and we are all in need of God's love. He spoke about the need for a place of love and acceptance, a place where flawed people come together to thank God for his unwavering love.

We sang our hymns, read the Biblical passages, prayed and then spent time as a congregation eating and spending time together.

"This is why we can't get people to attend church..."

- THADD WHITE



I truly look forward to our service each month, as do many others.

It was a stark contrast to the scene in our humble church just moments before.

See, a pastor - I will decline to mention his name - took it upon himself to come to our church and condemn the beliefs we have that God loves everyone and welcomes us all to himself.

I could share with you some of the issues he took with the congregation with which I worship regularly, but I won't.

Instead, I'll say what I said to others: This - this right here, this thing - is why we can't get people to attend church, and why they don't believe in the message of Christianity.

It's why Christian people are often seen as a group that promotes hatred and intolerance, rather

than the love always taught by Jesus Christ. It is why Christian people are too often known by what they are against rather than what they are for. And what they are for is supposed to be sharing the love God has for all people.

The meeting Saturday night was not that of a witch's coven or Satan worshipers or even a division of Westboro Baptist Church. Instead, it was a meeting of people doing their best to serve Jesus and proclaim his love - just people who didn't do it to suit the person who showed up at our doorway.

All Christian people don't hate those who are different than the ones they gather with on Sunday mornings - or indeed Saturday nights. They love God with all their hearts, they love their neighbor as themselves and they are indeed their brother's keeper.

In short they obey Christ's command, "By this all men will know you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Thadd White is a fallible person living life as best he can, and is thankful for God's love and grace. He can be reached via email at twhite@ncweeklies.com.

Bertie Ledger-Advance

The fabric of Bertie County since 1832

THE BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1928 THROUGH THE HERITAGE OF THE WINDSOR LEDGER AND THE AULANDER ADVANCE. THE NEWSPAPER TRACES ITS HISTORY TO 1832 WHEN IT WAS FIRST PUBLISHED AS THE WINDSOR HERALD AND BERTIE COUNTY REGISTER

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THE BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE (ISSN 051-700) IS PUBLISHED EACH WEDNESDAY FOR \$26.69 (PLUS TAX) PER YEAR (IN BERTIE, HERTFORD, MARTIN, NORTHAMPTON, CHOWAN AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES) BY COOKE COMMUNICATIONS NORTH CAROLINA, LLC, 109 S. KING ST., WINDSOR, NC 27983. PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID AT WINDSOR, NC AND ENTERED AT ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.

POSTMASTER: ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE BERTIE LEDGER-ADVANCE, P.O. Box 69, WINDSOR, NC 27983.

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