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THE LIVING CHURCH

Can the church help stop crime?

By Sue Williams
AFRO Staff Writer

A local pastor announced to his parishoners one Sunday morning that they ought to be in prayer for one member, an elderly man, and his wife.

"Brother Mason (not his real name) and his wife were robbed in their home last night," the pastor said.

Three young men had apparently entered the couple's home through a window after forcing it open.

They had ransacked the downstairs, taking for themselves silver, china, and other pieces they thought were of value, and had decided to go to the second floor.

Finding the old man (he was in his 80s) and his wife asleep, the men began their search for the things they wanted to take. The old man, hearing noises, awakened just to see the men leaving their bedroom.

The young men, sensing the old man's wake from sleep, demanded that he lead them to other valuables, including jewelry and money. When, finally, they had taken just about everything they could, the old man urged them to leave.

They hesitated, and made movements toward the bedroom door. The old man, relieved, was glad they had decided to go.

For some reason, however, one of the young men decided to re-enter the bedroom. He tied up the man's wife, despite his cries that they leave her alone. When he was finished with the wife, the young man turned and shot the old man, at close range, in the chest.

The three fled, and the old man managed to get to the telephone to seek help before losing consciousness. After extensive surgery, he recovered . . . but did he?

Violent crimes in this country are alternately reported to be on the rise or even holding steady. But the fact is, more people are having to contend with violent crimes in ways unheard of before.

It used to be that robbing an individual was enough, but suddenly, the robbers have a "kill instinct" that won't let them be satisfied with having taken that which belongs to someone else. They shoot their victims...and then run.

Many of these assailants are young, in their early to mid-teens. Many of them have prior records, basically for minor offenses, but records just the same.

And many of them profess to come from Christian homes.

The fact that such violence can exist in the midst of a so-called Christian environment has many confused. How can it be? What isn't Christianity doing that it should do? And what can Christianity do?

It is not enough to point the finger at parents alone, or school, and say, "therein lies the cause." The forces surrounding young people today are strong and they are many.

Young blacks don't have jobs, yet they are filled with the American-bred instinct for having things.

Drugs are more rampant today than they ever were before.

And television, instead of giving young people a peaceful alternative to despair, offer only violence, glamorized, as the means out of any situation.

So what do Christians do? There is a contradiction in saying one is a Christian and going out to rob or kill someone. There is also a contradiction in saying one is Christian and not doing something within one's faith to counteract the problems.

A Jewish opthamologist, in a recent interview with this reporter, said that Christians simply do not practice their religion, and that's why the denomination can only be called weak, at best.

"In order to get around the problems we have today," he offered, "you have to practice living right every day.

"You Christians don't do that. All you do is go to church and go home. You'll never get out of your rut that way."

The words were a bit painful, but food for thought. What would happen if there was a revolutionary change in the practice of Christianity in the homes?

How much actual crime would there be if young people felt like if they did something wrong, they would not only have to answer to the police, but answer to God Himself as well?

What would happen to the whole thrust of daily living if Christian families started embodying this religion they hold onto in a practical way so that the words of the Bible were able to supercede the cops and robbers mentality of today's television?

It would seem that the church, as leaders of the flock of God, would be able to come forth right now and begin to do something to reach more of the masses. More so, it seems that the church has an obligation, as dictated by the Bible it lives by, to do something to reach someone, somewhere.

Because it seems readily apparent that somebody...is definitely not being reached at all.

Free school shoes distributed at Bethel Labor Day service

For three years, the Rev. John R. Bryant and members of Bethel AME Church have sponsored a Labor Day sunrise service at the church.

Rev. Bryant says the purpose of the service "is to open ourselves to the goodness of God that we might receive from him direction and strength to face the difficult days which are before us.

Every year, members and friends of Bethel are asked to bring a new pair of school shoes for a child, information about a job or a can of food for a needy family.

Rev. Bryant stated, "We want to open ourselves to other brothers and sisters that we might help those among us who are struggling for survival. As we attempt to prepare spiritually for the struggle, we will come together to praise the Lord for bringing us safe thus far."

The Rev. John R. Bryant

Major restructuring in Pentecostal church

The Right Reverend W.L. Porter

The Most Reverend J. O. Patterson, D.D.

The Right Reverend F. D. Macklin

The Right Reverend Samuel Lowe

A major restructuring of offices has taken place within the Church of God in Christ, Inc., and organization of three and a half million pentecostal members, most of whom are black.

The Most Reverend James Oglethrope Patterson Sr., presiding Bishop of the Church, and Prelate of the headquarters jurisdiction of the church has announced his official resignation from the position of Prelate.

As Prelate, Bishop Patterson was responsible for presiding over a local territory in addition to his national duties, an added responsibility he felt was too much for one man.

In presenting his resignation of Prelate to the Board of the Church headquarters, who will have oversight of the local congregations while he (Bishop Patterson) continues to preside over the International Church and general offices.

The general board accepted the resignation of Bishop Patterson, from the position of Bishop of Headquarters and resturctured the entire state of Tennessee so that all congregations east of the Tennessee River will comprise the "Second Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Tennessee" with the Right Rev. Audley King of Shelbyville, Tennessee serving as Bishop.

Congregations situated west of the Tennessee River, in the state of Tennessee, with the exception of the incorporated city limits of Memphis, (as it now is and shall from time to time, be amended by the municipality), shall comprise the "Central Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of Tennessee" with the Right Rev. W. L. Porter of Memphis, presiding as Jurisdictional Bishop.

The city of Memphis will be known as "The headquarters Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction of the Church of God In Christ, Inc." The Right Rev. F. D. Macklin of Munford, Tennessee will serve as Bishop of the Jurisdiction and auxiliuary to the presiding bishop at headquarters.

Presiding Bishop Patterson will now assume the position of Titular Bishop of headquarters since he remains head of the denomination and, further, since Memphis is the world headquarters for the church.

Metro church briefs

Officers Day will be celebrated on Sept. 5, 7 p.m. at New Shiloh Baptist Church, Fremont Avenue and Lanvale Street where the Rev. Dr. Harold A. Carter is pastor.

The Rev. Dr. William Lee pastor, and members of Silver Mount Baptist Church, Charlotte, N. C. will be attending the officers day service. New deacons and deaconesses will be presented to the church.

The Saturday church school fall session will start Sept. 19, 10 a.m.

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The Christian Business Men's Club will have Elnior and Herbert Fivehouse as their guest speakers at a friendship breakfast on Sept. 26, 7:30 a.m. at 8302 Pulaski Highway.

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Members of the Young Adult Choir of Jones Tabernacle Baptist Church, 2100 BaltimoreSt., will be observing their first homecoming on Sept. 20, 3:30 p.m. James Cain is president and the Rev. Arthur W. Jones is pastor.

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Valley Presbyterian Church will hold its annual show and go at the church, 2200 Joppa Rd., on Sept. 13, 9:30 a.m.

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"Christian Men Letting Their Light Shine for the Lord," is the theme for Men's Day at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, 1801 East Preston St.

The speaker for the Sept. 20 services will be the Rev. Clifford M. Johnson of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. A prayer luncheon will be held at the church on Sept. 19, 1 p.m.

Gospel films will be shown at the church on Oct. 11 7:30 p.m.

Masjid As-Salaam will present the film "Islam, the Prophet and the People," on Sept. 12, 2 to 4 p.m. at 329 East North Ave

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The gospel chorus of Providence Baptist Church, 1401 Pennsylvania Ave., will observe their annual gospel hour on Sept. 20, 4 p.m. at the church. Ostell Blackwell is president and the Rev. Marcus G. Wood is pastor.

PRAYER BREAKFAST SPEAKER — Evangelist Esther Melcher, a member of Love Faith and Deliverance Church will be the guest speaker on Sept. 5, 9 a.m. at a breakfast. The breakfast is being sponsored by New St. Mark Baptist Church Courtesy Committee. Mrs. Flossie Stewart is chairman; Mrs. Marion Cole is president and the Rev. Allen Jones is pastor.

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The Deacons and deaconess of Emmanuel Christian Community Church, 1210 Lanvale St., will celebrate their 43rd anniversary on Sept. 13, 7:30 p.m.

The Rev. Jentry McDonald of Morning Star Baptist Church will be the guest speaker. James Evans is chairman of the deacon board and Jean Graham is chairman of the deaconess board. Andrew Troy is chairperson.

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The Women's Day committee of Leadenhall Baptist Church will sponsor a shopping trip to Englishtown New Jersey on Sept. 26. Mrs. Marie Cherry is chairperson and the Rev. Eddie R. Wilson Jr. is pastor.

The Hines and Halls Memorial Singers will celebrate their fifth anniversary on Sept. 13 at Metropolitan United Methodist Church, 548 Queenstown Road. Mrs. Vashti Hunt is president; Joyce White, pianist and the Rev. John P. Clark is pastor.

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The Rev. William D. Borders, archbishop of Baltimore, will officially open the seminary program at St. Mary's Seminary and University with a Eucharistic celebration on Sept. 9, 7:30 p.m. at 5400 Roland Ave.

The Rev. Robert F. Leavitt, president rector of St. Mary's Seminary and University, will give the homily at the mass. The archbishop's mass, open to the public, annually begins the seminary year at St. Mary's. St. Mary's is now celebrating its 190th year.

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A choir singers workshop for adults, youth and potential singers wiol be offered at Grace United Presbyterian Church, 2604 Bannister Road on Sept. 19, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. For additional information on the class call 655-1766, 466-4000 or 448-3016.

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Revival services will be held Sept. 13-18 at Bethel AME Church, Druid Hill Avenue and Lanvale Street at 7:30 p.m. The Rev. Dr. John R. Bryant is pastor.

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New Fellowship Christian Church members will observe Men and Women's Day on Sept. 13, 11 a.m. in the chapel of Wayland Baptist Church, 3200 Garrison Blvd. The Rev. Mrs. Sarah Johnson of Gillis Memorial Church will be the 11 a.m. speaker and the Rev. Arthur Jones will be the 3:30 p.m. speaker. Mrs. Verleen Rogers is chairperson; Ronald Billy is co-chairperson and the Rev. Kevin A. Rogers is pastor.

Air pollution threat prevents record burning rally

Texas' air pollution laws have put a crimp in the plans of a Dallas youth evengelist who has been exhorting teenagers to burn their rock records, so the Rev. Billion Garrison is settling for a record breaking rally instead.

Garrison had urged youngsters to bring their rock records and burn them at the Oct. 10 rally in nearby Hurst, Texas. Informed that Texas air pollution laws prohibit open burning, Garrison said he will ask the participants to break the records instead of hurling them into a bonfire.

Executives of KWJS radio, a gospel station sponsoring the rally, failed to convince the city to permit the record-burning.

"We explored that to the Nth degree," said Jack Rabin, the station's general manager. "But there seems to be some kind of red tape about lighting fires around here. It's pollution."

Glenn Draper, an engineer with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, agreed.

"Records are made of plastics and plastics are made of hydrocarbons," he said. "If you burn them, they give off a real black smoke."

The evangelist remained unperturned vy the change in plans.

"I'll urge the kids to bring their records to the rally," Garrison said. "When they get there they can decide whether to break them."

Rabito said the purpose of the rally is to show we need to more effectively monitor what is being done in the music industry and make guidelines available to young people and their parents."

Garrison said his rally is only a spiritual protest.

"We're not trying to influence people outside the Christian community or tell them what to do. We're not trying to antagonize people."

The evangelist says he is mainly concerned with rock lyrics and he urges young people to consider those lyrics and the lifestyles of musicians when selecting their music."

Minister defies court order, keeps children home

A pastor in Anne Arundel County has defied court orders to return his children to public school, saying there is an "immoral atmosphere" in the school system.

The Rev. Richard Offer, pastor of the House of Prayer For All People Church located in Harwood, said he intends to ask district court Judge George M. Taylor to allow that his children be taught by members of the nondenominational church.

Last month Taylor ordered Offer, his wife, and three other parents to return their children to school this fall or face fines and possibly imprisonment.

Offer took his five children out of Anne Arundel County Public schools last year because of what he termed an "immoral atmosphere" containing too many "drugs and sex" and because God told him it was right.

"There is no way that they can get an education, as far as I'm concerned. They are no place for my children and I'm not sending them back," he said.

Offer said he and other members of his congregation will teach about 10 children at the church. "We will teach them to read and write. Things that's no good will be left out," he said.

The county's educational board took offer to court after his children missed the bulk of classes last year.

Edward A. Miller, director of the division of pupil services, said he plans to meet with staff members to discuss the situation.

Taylor said he would fine each family $50 for every day their children missed of school last year if they were not in school this semest er. School started Sept 1 in Anne Arundel County.

For Rev. Offer and his wife who removed their children, aged 7 to 15, from school in December those fines could total more than $28,000.

The other three church families, Gloristine M. Gray of Lorthian; Linda Sanders of Harwood and Pamela A. Brown of Shady Side, face fines totalling more than $5,000 for disobeying Maryland's compulsory school attendance law.

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