

Baptist says black church seen as refuge



Rev. John Corbitt

Photo by Patrick Sullivan

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

Throughout American history, from before the Civil War to the turbulent sixties, the black church in America has always been seen as a "refuge in a hostile white world," Rev. John Corbitt, a black Baptist minister, said Monday night.

Corbitt, speaking as part of the week long campus Black Arts Festival, said throughout history the church has been a focal point of the black community, not for just political issues but also civil problems.

"The black church was a refuge in a hostile white world for many blacks," Corbitt said. "After going out and working in the field or cooking in some kitchen and being humiliated all day long, the blacks could go to their church and really be somebody."

Speaking to a small audience, Corbitt, pastor of the largest black church in South Carolina, outlined the characteristics of the black church throughout American history from its beginnings in the South during slavery to the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Although Corbitt was to deliver a similar speech today, his appearances were cut short by prior commitments to church business.

Tracing the evolution of the black church in America, Corbitt said that although much of the African tribal culture was destroyed when blacks were brought to America as slaves, the early church gave black slaves a new rallying point.

"Anybody who says that the Christian church kept the blacks in slavery doesn't know that they're talking about," Corbitt said. "Christianity and the Bible inspired many blacks to protest their slavery."

Blacks detested slavery and went to the Bible for comfort, he said. Through their readings they discovered the God of the Bible was a "liberator of slaves."

The early black church was also a great stabiliser of ethics, Corbitt said. The church was not only a pioneer in community politics, but also in education and financial assistance for fellow blacks.

"When blacks gather it's not just for church," Corbitt said. "It is a gathering of the community and a meeting of all the people there."

Black ministers are still the most respected members of their communities, Corbitt said.

Even though he led the successful civil rights movement during the sixties, Dr. Martin Luther King was just an "old time Baptist preacher," Corbitt said.

"He couldn't have done what he did without being an old time black Baptist preacher," he said.

East Butte controversy decided; city opts for medium density

By ANN TRENEMAN
Of the Emerald

The Whiteaker Neighborhood Community Council got their wish Monday night when the Whiteaker Refinement Plan was adopted by the Eugene City Council with a medium level density for the East Skinner's Butte area.

Fourteen people gave testimony favoring the medium density (20 units per acre) in a public hearing conducted before the vote. Two people spoke against the medium density saying they would like to see high density (30 units per acre) in the small three block area.

The East Butte area has been a bone of contention between city planners and the Whiteaker neighborhood with the city favoring high density zoning. The Whiteaker plan, which has been in the works for over two and a half years, presents specific area goals for zoning, economic development and land use and is designed to back up the more general 1990 Plan.

"It would be irresponsible for the Council to take any other position," David Filer, a member of the refinement planning team said.

An adjoining issue clouding the air is that currently the Eugene Historical Board is working on a proposal to allow an area to be designated historical. That proposal will not be concluded until June or July.

The East Butte Area, part of Eugene's original city platte dating to 1852, is being studied for possible historical designation.

Council member Betty Smith expressed her regret that the plan had turned into a neighborhood versus city issue and urged the council to vote in favor of preserving the historical neighborhood and medium density.

The council approved the plan 6-1 with stipulations that the East Butte area will be reviewed by one council for historical designation at a later date and that a site review for the East Butte area will be first on a priority list of implementation.

The council was advised that the policies and zoning changes proposed in the plan would not be implemented for over one and a half years because of lack of city planning staff.

Proponents of the medium density emphasized that the refine-

ment plan was peppered with high density areas. "We've recognized our role as an inner city neighborhood and have placed a strong emphasis throughout the plan on high and medium density zoning," Jim McCoy, Whiteaker Council's president said.

Write your complaints

SALEM (AP) — The Oregon Court of Appeals said Monday renters have to provide written notice of health hazards to landlords to collect damages under the state's landlord — tenant law.

The court reversed a Multnomah County damage award to Larry and Carol Morrison. They had complained to health authorities about an upstairs toilet that leaked into their kitchen. Their landlord, L & M Investment Co., ordered them to vacate their house for nonpayment of rent after the firm was notified to fix the leak.

Judge Donald Londer of Mult-

nomah County District Court had ruled that the landlord sought to evict them in order to retaliate for their complaint. The judge ordered the landlord make repairs and to pay the couple \$1,050 in damages for reduced rental value, mental distress and for retaliating against them.

But the appeals court threw out the repair order and the damages because the couple didn't give written notice to the landlord about the leak.

And the court said they could not collect retaliatory damages because they did not pay their rent when it was due.

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