

Minister's secret surprises church



EUGENE (AP) — The minister of a prominent Eugene church led a secret life as a bisexual who tried to seduce clergymen and others before he succumbed to AIDS, church leaders say.

The Rev. William O. Walker, 60, asked friends to tell others that he was dying of lymphoma before he passed away from complications related to AIDS on July 4.

The disease also was blamed for the 1990 death of Walker's wife, Carol, at age 58.

The truth has left many First United Methodist Church members hurt and angry, including members of a Corvallis congregation where he had served from 1968 to 1976. He had been at the Eugene church since 1982.

Church leaders said that more than a dozen men, including at least six ministers, told them that Walker had made sexual advances toward them.

The information was not shared with the Eugene congregation for more than a year while church leaders wrestled with the problem.

But on Nov. 4, 400 parishioners were called to an unprecedented meeting to learn the circumstances surrounding their minister's death.

First came a reading of a letter from Bill and Carol Walker's four children, who reluctantly confirmed that their parents had died from AIDS-related illnesses.

The Walkers had kept their illness a secret, the children said, because of their "great love for the church and their desire to avoid perhaps hurtful controversy."

A second statement was read by Tom Whitehead, superintendent for the church's southern-Oregon district, on behalf of Bishop William Dew. The

statement said Walker had recently been accused of making sexual advances toward two male teen-agers at a Methodist church camp 17 years earlier.

Since Walker's death, more allegations about Walker's past have surfaced. But Whitehead emphasized that "we have no allegations of behavior that would place another person at risk for the transmission of AIDS from Bill."

Whitehead admitted that Walker's secret sex life was "clearly outside the boundaries of Christian ethical behavior."

But he defended Walker's long career.

"We must be honest with the whole of who Bill Walker was," Whitehead said. "We must also remember the positive influence Bill had upon thousands of people."

Walker previously served churches in Dillard-Winston, North Bend and Salem.

He was elected an unprecedented six times to attend the national church's quadrennial General Conference.

Three times a candidate for bishop, Walker also won praise for his work on behalf of gays and lesbians, and his commitment to the church's African-Methodist University in Zimbabwe.

The Rev. Tim Stover, a family friend, described Walker as a man who was warm and generous with people but difficult to know.

"There are probably hundreds of people who would describe Bill Walker as a close friend, even though Bill probably wouldn't have described them that way," Stover said.

Jim Hulett, pastor at Lake Oswego United Methodist Church, worked with Walker when Hulett served two Portland churches and Walker was a district superintendent. Hulett said he believes Walker was devoted to his career and his sexuality was kept in check.

For the forests



Photo by Pat Malach

Adam Handwerker of Cascadia Earth First! and about 30 other people gathered in the EMU Courtyard Monday to protest the proposed salvage of timber in the Warner Creek fire area. Speakers at the rally condemned the salvage operation, saying it would reward arson.

Nutritional info to appear on ale

YAKIMA, Wash. (AP) — Bert Grant wants to take the guilt out of drinking beer.

His Yakima Brewing and Malting Co. is going to offer nutritional information on six-packs of its Grant's Scottish Ale, Grant said Monday, about a week after the federal government announced that new food-labeling rules to make it easier for consumers to evaluate products.

Grant plans to list the fat and cholesterol content, as well as vitamins and other nutrients in 12-ounce bottles of the ale, which is sold in much of the West and in major cities from coast to coast.

"While the data on our beers indicate that none of them is a complete meal in a bottle, one or two bottles a day would make a significant contribution to the adult diet," Grant said.

The move is part of a crusade against what he calls "neo-prohibitionists," who oppose all consumption of alcohol.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms have no problem with Grant's labeling plans as long as there is no reference to alcohol content, which is prohibited by law for beer.

Les Stanford of ATF said the bureau will take a close look at the label.

"We would look with some skepticism at anything that might be related to a health claim," Stanford said from Washington, D.C.

He said he can think of no other brewery with such labels, though so-called light beer is required to carry a label showing information

on calories, fat and carbohydrates.

Mothers Against Drunk Driving, based in Irvington, Texas, supports warning labels noting that alcohol can impair one's motor skills and can cause birth defects. The group has no position on nutritional labeling, said spokeswoman Ann Russell.

Grant claims that his Grant's Pub is the nation's first brewpub — combination brewery and pub — since Prohibition. He has been making and selling beer in this central-Washington city for 10 years and helped launch the Northwest's microbrewery fad.

Most of the nation's hops, used in beer flavoring, are grown in the Yakima Valley.

The nutrition label for Scottish Ale says a 12-ounce serving contains 145 calories, no fat or cholesterol, 2.24 grams of protein and 12.7 grams of carbohydrates.

The label says each bottle provides 4 percent of the U.S. Recommended Daily Allowance of protein, as well as 4.6 percent of the vitamin B-2, 14.6 percent of Niacin, 62.5 percent of Folic acid and 170 percent of vitamin B-12.

The labels cannot appear on the bottles because of federal regulations, but they will be printed on the cardboard containers of six-packs and on store signs and displays.

Sherry Grant, the brewer's wife, said the goal is to counter negative publicity about alcohol.

"There is a group of neo-prohibitionists at work out there, and they confuse alcohol use and alcohol abuse," she said.

Snow and ice lead to trouble throughout state

PORTLAND (AP) — The morning rush hour was more of a crawl for some Portland commuters Monday as snow fell atop already icy roads.

U.S. highway 26, the main route through Portland's west hills, resembled a parking lot early in the morning commute. The highway finally closed after numerous cars spun out of control on the steep Sylvan Hill.

Slippery roads also slowed the rush hour in Salem and Eugene, where many fender-benders — but no major accidents — were reported.

In Corvallis, police broke up an early morning snowball fight that left two people injured near the Oregon State University campus.

Police said 200 to 250 people were involved in the melee in front of the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity. Two people were hospitalized after being hit by snowballs packed with rocks and tomatoes. Ten windows were broken at the fraternity house.

Freezing rain coated roads with ice Sunday in the Portland

area, and up to 2 inches of snow fell on top of that early Monday.

Schools opened late or not at all.

"I guess I'll go outside and go sledding and have snowball fights," said Adam Rauh, 10, whose school was closed in the suburbs west of Portland.

In the Cascade Range, ski area operators hoped the snow would bring them a bonanza of fresh powder.

"It sounds worse down there than it is up here," said Lea Stencil, spokeswoman for Timberline, a ski resort on Mount Hood.

A winter storm watch was in effect for the Cascade Range and Siskiyou, with heavy snow expected above 3,000 feet.

Snow is expected to spread today across Eastern Oregon, where a winter storm watch is also in effect.

However, temperatures were expected to remain above freezing Monday night in the valleys, turning the precipitation to rain.