

Morning Star Church Rises from the Ashes



A makeshift tent overflows with nearly 500 people attending Morning Star's first Sunday service, just a few feet from the burned ruins of their historic church on Northeast Ivy Street and Rodney Avenue.

PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

continued **▲ from Front**
witness of faith."

The impact of community support was apparent as people filed into the tent, ushered by visiting members of New Hope Baptist Church. A row of individuals seated behind Rev. Johnson included Sen. Margaret Carter and Mayor Tom Potter, joined by his wife Karin Hansen. Potter had received a call from Johnson asking him to join the services, after the mayor had fielded hundreds of calls to his office regarding the church. Potter ensured the congregation that the church would not only be rebuilt, but more beautiful than it was before.

"I want this to be an example of what happens when we create something golden from the ashes," he said.

The ceremony signified rebirth for two churches lost in a fire; just

four months ago Johnson opened his facilities to New Generation Revival Church led by Pastor Johnasen L. Pack, offering them a chance to get on their feet after relocating from Vancouver.

When Pack addressed the audience he brought people to their feet in an impromptu but spirited sermon. Armed with ironclad faith, he shouted his heartfelt hope that the fire created a turning point that will lead to a prosperous future.

As the service continued, Sen. Carter was frank as she implored people to donate a hundred dollars or make a deposit to Morning Star Catastrophe Relief Fund at Wells Fargo Bank. As ushers passed collection plates, Carter reminded the crowd that despite deep affinity for the building, in essence it was not the church.

"Morning Star, your best days

are ahead," she said.

Johnson was the final speaker, that morning, and in an emotional tone thanked the countless ministers, counselors, ushers and city officials who have offered help during this difficult time. Johnson then pledged to continue the church's services for those in need, including an on-site soup kitchen and after school program.

"Everyone is not destined to stay in the same place, but we plan to stay right here. We plan to rebuild," he said.

A prayer in the final minutes of this historical service brought Johnson to tears in a mix of grief, happiness and outreach hands of support. As the pastor led his fellow ministers one by one from the tent and into a relatively warm February day, he carried with him enough hope to take yet another step from the ashes.

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NAACP Defends Salem Organizer

The Salem/Keizer branch of the NAACP is coming to the defense of one of its organizers who is accused of sexual misconduct as a former Salem police officer.

Sterling Alexander goes to trial in April to face allegations of sex abuse that allegedly occurred from March 31, 2003 to July 6, 2004. A third charge of sexual misconduct dates back to 2001.

Alexander served as a military police officer before moving to Salem in 1998 and has played an active role in the Salem/Keizer National Association for the Advancement of Colored Persons, organizing Civil Rights marches to advocate for the social justice of individuals



Sterling Alexander

in situations much like his own.

The local NAACP says it has joined with Rev. Jesse Jackson of the Rainbow Push Coalition on behalf of Alexander, calling the investigation a "public/political lynching" by the Salem Police Department and Marion County District Attorney.

"We will be pursuing further investigative actions in a successful attempt to have all alleged charges dropped," said a letter signed by Salem/Keizer NAACP President Sheryl Dash.

"In addition, we will be holding accountable all those involved and who have played a role in the violations of Mr. Sterling Alexander's civil rights," Dash said.

Teen Missing from Bethany



Jade Richard

A family from the Bethany area southwest of Portland is asking for help in finding their missing 14-year-old daughter, Jade Richard.

Jade has been missing since Jan. 27. She was last seen at ChristieCare, a residential treatment facility for at-risk youth located in Lake Oswego.

Her parents believe she could be living with other adults.

Jade is described as African American, 5 feet, 8 inches tall, and 159 pounds. She has a dark spot on her lower lip and pierced ears. She enjoys journaling and writing and crafts such as crochet, basketball, volleyball and reading.

Anyone who may have spotted Jade is asked to call Lake Oswego Police at 503-635-0250 or 1-800-The-Lost.

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