

# Vancouver Ave. Baptist Re-enacts Palm Sunday Procession

By Lisa Loving  
Of The Skanner News

Half a dozen local congregations will join together in recreating an historic march celebrating the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church 60th anniversary.

The Palm Sunday Procession, Sunday, April 17, marks the 1951 community event in which the church congregation paraded down Vancouver Avenue to officially open their new church.

"It's huge," said event coordinator and church historian Raymond Burrell. "And it's an event that's etched in a lot of peoples' minds."

"This year marks the 60th anniversary of that historic march, and so we're going to

grown extensively following the Vanport Flood in 1948.

"And this was an area that was redlined, so they were very limited in what they could actually acquire and so when they were able to purchase the building it was huge — number one, because of the cost of the structure, and two, the size of the structure," he says.

So the congregation rallied together, found the funds to buy the church, and chose Palm Sunday as the day to commemorate this milestone in the community.

"And they marched up Vancouver Avenue by the hundreds and people from everywhere joined in," Burrell says.

The Oregonian article from that day includes pictures showing Vancouver Avenue filled with two straight lines of congregants in choir robes and Sunday clothes. Beloved Rev. O.B. Williams — looking youthful at the beginning of his many years of service there — is pictured at the pulpit.

Ten years later Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., spoke at that same pulpit, in his only visit to Oregon.

The April commemoration starts with breakfast at Albina Park on North Flint Street from 9 - 10 a.m. The procession will depart from the park at approximately 10:15 a.m.

Shuttle buses are being provided at the church to bring people to the march location.

"So people can park at the church and ride the bus down to the starting point, have breakfast, catch up with old friends and have a great time in terms of fellowshiping, and then join the procession," Burrell said.

Wheelchairs are available for seniors and



PHOTO BY JERRY FOSTER

Thelma M. Sylvester, Ora L. Brown-Nunley, Marage White (Cannon), Margaret J. Payne-Isaacs and Olharyn E. Rand met at the Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church last weekend to share memories of the original Easter Sunday Procession in 1951. Watch videos of their testimony on The Skanner News YouTube Channel.

the disabled, which can be reserved by calling 503-320-4592.

Also participating are: Woodlawn United Methodist Church, New Covenant Baptist Church, Calvary Christian Center, Morning Star Missionary Baptist Church, and the Greater Mount Gilead Missionary Baptist Church.

The breakfast is being hosted by the Links women's association. Also participating are the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge is involved in the celebration, as is the St. Joseph's Grand Lodge.

"So there's a host of religious and civic organizations that are joining forces to really celebrate this," Burrell says.

'And they marched up Vancouver Avenue by the hundreds and people from everywhere joined in'

Raymond Burrell III

be celebrating it in the same fashion that they did back in 1951," he said.

The Vancouver Avenue First Baptist Church congregation was able to purchase their historic building at Vancouver Avenue and North Fargo in 1950.

"It was of huge significance because at the time the African American community resided in the lower south end of North Portland, which is now known as Jump Town, and they were in a makeshift condemned rooming house," Burrell said.

The congregation's membership had

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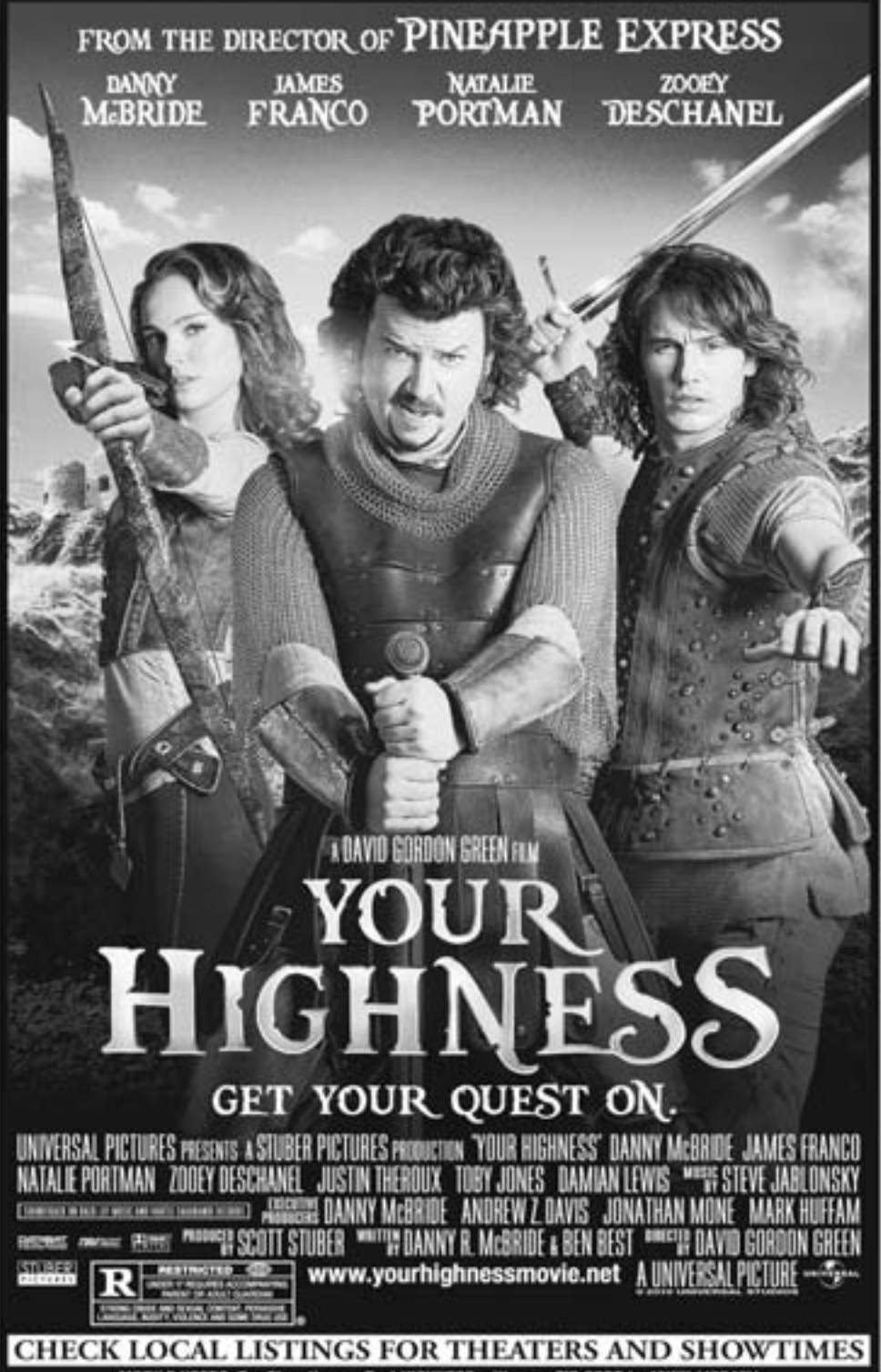
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