

Alexander's Album



by Clifford Alexander

"THE LIGHTER SIDE OF THE PULPIT"

Most of us are very serious about worship and our belief in the Almighty. But the minister has a very heavy and tiresome job in trying to gather the flock together, preaching and teaching the Word. Many people think this job to be a one-day-a-week presentation to the spiritually hungry congregation. But, it requires leadership that makes itself felt and heard in works and deeds, twenty-four hours a day.

Since the minister's job is a high-pressured occupation that requires interpersonal skills with the responsibility for many rich and poor, the preacher should be able to find a moment of humor every now and then. Many pastors are fortunate enough to go through life with out detouring through the insane asylum or committing the madness of suicide. Many pastors find that the deacons won't deak, trustees can't be trusted, ushers won't ush and stewards are always in a stew. Also, there is a problem for Baptist members to make sure that the Catholic crucifix placed on them by a priest does not misinform God that they have changed to the Catholic faith.

There is a need to laugh, if for no other reason than to exercise the facial muscles.

This past week, I attended the California Ministerial Alliance's meeting and had this great opportunity to meet some outstanding preachers. Most were very comfortable about their status in their communities, but looked forward to the day when members would understand that they would like to hear a good joke every now and then. For example, Rev. John said, "I preached against whiskey" and closed by saying, "Every drop of the stuff should be dumped in the river". And I declare unto you if the Choir Director didn't get up and sing, "Shall We Gather at the River"! Well, that sounds true, but, a few days after the general election, a preacher called the local newspaper. My sermon was, "What Jesus Saw in a Publican", but it was misprinted in the paper to read, "What Jesus Saw in a Republican"; still, I had the biggest congregation I'd had in years. Rev. Rouse from Georgia wouldn't be outdone, so he continued, "A Holiness man said to me, "You Baptists will have to admit us Holinesses are better than you." "Why?" he asked. "Well", said he, "We shout all over the church and make lots of noise." Rev. Rouse then said, "Some people eat soup louder than others, but it don't make the soup any better. It isn't how loud you shout of how high you jump, it's how straight you walk when you hit the ground that counts!"

Methodist preachers will not be outdone, so Rev. Teague said, "There's not much difference between Methodists and Baptists" A Baptist preacher replied, "Nothing but the Jordan River and I'll be glad to meet you half-way." To which the Rev. Teague replied, "I'll be glad too, if you'll choose a time when the river is as dry as your sermons." The Baptist preacher, Rev. Johnston, wouldn't be left out, so he said, "A Baptist preacher went to hear a Methodist preacher preach on Heaven." The Methodist shouted to the Baptist, "If you get there before I do, you tell them I'm coming, too". The Baptist shouted back, "I can't do that. You might fall from grace and not get there and I'd be kicked out of Heaven for lying." Deacon Harvey had listened as long as he could without saying anything. His patience had run out, so he had to make his contribution; he said, "A Preacher was speaking to a Sunday School Conference. He had finished speaking on the joys and wonders of Heaven. Then he asked, "How many would like to go to Heaven?" All except one boy raised his hand. "Johnny, don't you want to go to Heaven?" he asked. "Yes, I want to to," said the little boy, "but my mother told me to come rights home after the Conference."

The irony of it all is that most preachers get paid weekly—very weakly. But, you couldn't tell by the outward appearance.

I asked a group of college boys, "Is there a Devil?" One very intelligent looking boy answered, "Naw,

it's like Santa Clause--it's my dad!"

No matter how you look at it, preachers are funny, even with that awesome load. For example, a preacher said to a farmer, "Do you belong to the Christian family?" "No," said the farmer, they live two houses down the road." "No, no, I mean, are you lost?" "No I've been living here 30 years." "I mean, are you ready for Judgement Day?" "When is it?" "It could be today or tomorrow." "Well, when you find out for sure when it is, you let me know. "Cause, my wife will probably want to go to both days!"

All this point, the crowd has grown very large. At the same time, many ministers had gone to their briefcases to find reminders of important messages that would encourage laughter. But, before most of them could return, the meeting was called to order.

The most interesting wisdom in this conversation came from Rev. Peter after the call to order. Rev. Peter said, "Son there are only four types of men in this world—one will say, 'What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine'; another will say, 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is mine'; another will say, 'What's mine is yours and what's yours is yours'; and a fourth will say, 'What's mine is mine and what's yours is mine'." He concluded by saying,

Across The Nation

News From Home Folks

This feature is a news compilation from more than 100 black-owned and oriented newspapers in this nation. It deals with what blacks, who are all-too-often little recognized, are doing to promote full participation in American life by black Americans. It is thus a salute from all of our readers for unsung heroes... and is designed to be a challenge for all of us to keep on doing our very best.

The flagship in our nation's capital, the Washington Informer, tells of an important report on housing needs which emphasizes the importance for blacks of preserving existing structures wherever feasible; and of enabling residents, through subsidies, to remain in their original neighborhoods. The thoughtful report deserves to be read in some detail by all of our readers concerned with better—or the best—housing for black Americans. We are grateful to the Washington Informer and its publisher, Dr. Calvin Rolark, for sharing this material with us. The report reads, in part:

The District's Housing program is solid and substantial, based on 10 years of groundwork with the community, private sector and federal government; not just a set of promises. The fact is that there are approximately 36,000 people who already live in or will soon move into the approximately 12,000 government assisted units which have been built or rehabilitated during my administration. These are represented by bricks and mortar in the ground.

Many projects and programs are completed; others are nearing this state; and others are in final planning stages. These programs are the result of planning with the people and of both a creative and practical approach to the human needs of the total population. I believe that four principles are the foundations of an effective housing program:

1. The production of additional housing units through new construction, rehabilitation and return to use of vacant buildings, and creative re-use of other buildings to meet the needs of individuals at all income levels.

2. The maintenance, preservation and improvement of existing housing, primarily for the benefit of its current users.

3. The strengthening and improvement of the ability of current residents—tenants and homeowners—to afford the housing in which they live.

4. The cooperation of all persons concerned in maintaining and improving the condition, supply and affordability of the city's housing supply, including bringing together homeowners, tenants, landlords, lending institutions, other investors and the District government to seek solutions to the housing problem.

The following are key points of my program. Much of it already is in operation, funding has been applied for, or plans have been made. Substantial gains already have been made, and many of these programs already are proven workable, as noted in parenthesis.

1. A program, with an initial capitalization of \$5 million, to make low interest rehabilitation loans to low and moderate income tenant-generated condominiums and cooperatives which wish to convert from rental units to avoid displacement or achieve home ownership. (Belmont Street rehabilitation, in progress; Ritz-Mozart federal funding, applied for; Kenesaw Apartments, loan commitment made).

2. Technical assistance for these tenant-generated cooperatives and condominiums through a special staff within the Department of Housing and Community Development to help with financial management and rehabilitation aspects.

"Watch one and two, be very careful about number four because he's wicked and shouldn't be trusted, but be at ease with number three, because he is a saint."

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3. Technical assistance to owners, managers and tenants of troubled multi-family rental buildings to focus on improving maintenance, physical condition, and stability of landlord-tenant relationships with a goal of improving safety and comfort for tenants and economic stability of buildings. (Rent Administrator's counseling sessions, started recently; and innovative grant application being prepared).

4. Rent subsidy program for low-income tenants to enable them to stay in units they occupy.

The Huntsville, Alabama Weekly News brings to our attention some vitally important statistics concerning our nation-serving black colleges which deserve to be re-emphasized for the interest of us all. The Weekly News reports:

Private black college freshmen are pouring into their schools at a rate significantly higher than the rate of incoming freshmen at colleges nationally, a survey conducted by the United Negro College Fund revealed.

Statistics released by the UNCF show that first-time freshmen at the Fund's 41 schools rose 12.4% between 1976 and 1977, while predominantly-white colleges nationally were reflecting a 0.8% drop over the same time period.

UNCF schools also continued to show an increased total enrollment, a cumulative increase of 12.6% over the years 1975-77.

"These trends indicate the awakened interest on the part of black youngsters to a college education at a historically-black college," Christopher F. Edley, UNCF Executive Director, commented.

Mr. Edley said the enrollment statistics "reflected the vitality of UNCF colleges today."

The statistics are contained in the UNCF's Annual Statistical Report, produced by the Fund's Director of Research,

Alan Kirschner.

Besides the enrollment increases, the figures reveal a grim struggle with personal finances on the part of individual students and their families. About 40% of the UNCF students come from families with incomes under \$10,000. (The number of needy students on predominantly-black campuses varies from a low of 20% to a high of 95%.) By contrast, only 15% of the students in private colleges nationally come from families earning less than \$10,000 a year.

Families of UNCF college students with incomes over \$20,000 a year amount to 3% of the total. Families in that same economic bracket at other schools make up 52% of the total.

Another significant index points up the economic problems of black students at predominantly-black private colleges. At least half of the prospective UNCF freshmen require maximum financial assistance because the median expected parental contribution is zero dollars. The median expected parental contribution of other college-bound high school seniors nationally is \$1,200.

To complicate matters further for the UNCF colleges, revenues per student increased less than 1% between 1975-76 and 1976-77, while inflation increased 6.5%.

Because of the poor economic base of its students, the UNCF schools cannot raise tuitions as the answer to their problems.

UNCF colleges charge an average of \$3,216 for tuition, room, board, books and supplies, while private colleges nationally charge \$4,405—some 20% more. Faculty members at UNCF colleges make sacrifices financially, too, to teach at these schools. The average professor's salary at a Fund school is \$16,371, compared to a \$20,400 average at other colleges in the southeast, where most of the UNCF schools are located.