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County Life

RELIGION

SATURDAY, JULY 21, 2007

THE
DAILY
REPORTER

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Agenda

The Hillsdale Annex is hosting the band Koanyach, with its blend of Scottish, Irish and American folk music, on Saturday, Aug. 4. The Annex will be close Aug. 10 and 11 for the Peace & Music Festival in Carl Fast Park on U.S. 12 in downtown Jonesville. The Annex is at 98 N. Broad St., Hillsdale. For more information, call (517) 437-5539, or visit www.hillsdaleannex.com.

You can help

Christian Services, call (517) 279-2996 or (517) 278-4885.

Community Action Agency, call (517) 279-9325.

Today in history

In 1861, the first Battle of Bull Run was fought at Manassas, Va., resulting in a Confederate victory.

In 1925, the so-called "Monkey Trial" ended in Dayton, Tenn., with John T. Scopes convicted of violating state law for teaching Darwin's Theory of Evolution. (The conviction was later overturned on a technicality.)

In 1961, Capt. Virgil "Gus" Grissom became the second American to rocket into a sub-orbital pattern around the Earth, flying aboard the Liberty Bell 7.

Your birthday

■ Singer Yusuf Islam (Cat Stevens) is 59.

■ Cartoonist Garry Trudeau is 59.

■ Comedian-actor Robin Williams is 56.

■ Comedian Jon Lovitz is 50.

■ Actor Josh Hartnett is 29.

■ Singer Blake Lewis is 26.

Thinking pink

Pastor takes on new hair color to encourage flock's fundraising

BY ROLAND STOY
STAFF WRITER

COLDWATER — In California, it doesn't stand out so much.

In Coldwater, a guy with a head of hot pink hair stands out somewhat more, but the Rev. Rob Patterson said Thursday "The local response to the pink hair has been highly favorable. I love my hometown."

That's right, the reverend. Patterson, a 1975 graduate of Coldwater High School, explained that he lost a wager with his vacation Bible school youth group at Bell Road Baptist Church in Auburn, Calif., and the girls, who collected more money, decided on the new hue of his hair.

The money they collected will go toward building a sanctuary, a medical clinic and to feed and educate children through a children's home and school. Funds will be divided half-and-half between needy pastors in Pakistan and Liberia.

He said he might have liked for the boys to win and dictate a head of blue hair, but "Actually, my wife (Cathy) likes it. It had started to go a little gray," said the father of four. "It has really been an attention-getter."

Patterson drew a little attention at the monthly men's breakfast at the H&C Burnside Senior Center Thursday morning, and the situation was explained to the crowd by emcee Bob Betts.

Patterson was there with his father, Richard. He said he tries to visit at least once a year, and last week was important, with a family reunion on the occasion of his 50th and his dad's 78th birthday.

He was also able to spend a little time with a cherished old friend, Greg

Brayton. While the local singer, songwriter and producer graduated two years ahead of him, they became friends and Patterson hung out a lot with Brayton and his Blind Man's Bluff rock band.

Now, Patterson said Brayton adds the guitar work to his keyboards and songs and puts his musical packages together.

"I count it as a privilege to work with his genius," Patterson said. "For me, I have to practice a lot. I try to promote him every chance I get." He said Greg sponsored an album entitled "Liberia 2004," which contained songs he wrote while he was in Liberia.

"He gets a lot out of me," Brayton said. "He gets my best. We pray before (recording), we pray during and after. God seems to bless the work we do."

"I was at my last church (First Baptist Church of Galt, Calif.) for the last 10 and a half years. While there, our little church was contacted over the Internet by an indigenous pastor from Liberia. This was a war-torn nation in West Africa (the subject of two recent Hollywood movies, "Lords of War" with Nicholas Cage, and "Blood Diamond" with Leonardo DeCaprio)," he said.

While Brayton experienced the Lord at the age of 9, Patterson said he spent 20 years as an agnostic, despite that his late mother, Frieda, was an active member of the Coldwater First Baptist Church (FBC).

He said he was voted "biggest con-artist" in the CHS newspaper, and while he was a "nice guy" later, he said he was a partier, as was Brayton in his hard-rocking Bluff days.

College was at Western Michigan, and in 1982 he said he had a personal conversion to Christ, and went



Richard Patterson, left, and son the Rev. Rob Patterson at the H&C Burnside Center in Coldwater.

to a seminary near San Francisco which was mission-oriented. He went on to pastor four churches.

"I've always been interested in the mission field," he said.

He visited both the Coldwater United Methodist Church and the FBC last Sunday morning, and Brayton, the Methodist music director, said he did

not know his friend was there until Patterson said "Yes, Lord" during a fellowship prayer.

"And I thought, omigosh, Rob's here. It gave me God-bumps (wife Sally's version of goose-bumps)," Brayton said.

Patterson is back home today in Auburn, population 20,000, about two hours east of San Francisco.

He said his plans are to build up the attendance at his church of around 200.

"They've been without a pastor for three years," he said. "I really want to go after those not thinking about going to church in the morning."

Patterson can be found at pastorob.com and his daily journal can be visited at pastorob.com/rob'sblog.htm.

Keep first things first: Inclusivity cannot be the Church's goal

"Inclusivity" has become the rallying cry of the church in many places around the world. These days there is an inclusive church network, inclusive church assessment forms and inclusive language guidelines. There are even inclusivity educational programs. In a growing number of churches, inclusivity has usurped the place of the gospel or, more precisely, inclusivity has become the gospel.

This is unfortunate, and that for two reasons. The first is that inclusivity is the wrong word to describe the church. The right word is not inclusivity but catholicity, (referring not to the

Roman Catholic church, but to the universal Church as it exists across denominational lines.)

Catholicity is both exclusive (as Bishop Timothy Whitaker of the United Methodist Church puts it) and inclusive. It is exclusive in the sense that it has an identity distinct from the world at large: The Church is comprised of people who have identified with Jesus and seek to follow God's ways. This, by necessity, excludes people who do not identify with Jesus or want to live for God.

But the Church is inclusive in the sense that it seeks to extend the gospel to all men and women. As such, the Church of Jesus Christ is a paradox: It is an exclusive community that does not want to exclude; it desires to include everyone within the circle of its blessing. It speaks the good news to everyone who will listen.

When the Church's mission is described only in terms of "inclusivity," its nature as the unique people of God is threatened. When its nature as "exclusive" is its primary concern, its mission to take the gospel to all people is derailed. As Jaroslav Pelikan wrote, the Church is "neither exclusive nor inclusive alone, but catholic."

The other reason it is the wrong word to describe the mission of the Church is that "inclusivity" is a by-product of divine and human interaction, not its primary goal. Inclusivity only happens when people are more concerned about their relation to God than their relation to each other. One cannot hit the bull's-eye of inclusivity by aiming at it. One must aim higher.

When churches make "inclusivity" their summum bonum (their highest good) they are inadvertently undermining its very

possibility. Prior to Britain's entrance into World War II, the commitment to peace as the highest good led Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's government to appease Adolf Hitler's desire for expansion. But Hitler's appetite was unappeasable, and the attempt to preserve peace at any cost led ultimately to war at an unimaginable price.

Churches that make "inclusivity" their highest good undermine the very forces that lead to it. It is true that St. Paul writes that in Christ "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female." And yes, he tells the Colossians that there is a place where "there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free" (the epitome of inclusivity). But note that this inclusivity is only achieved where "Christ is all, and is in all."

Where "Christ is all, and is in all," racial, gender and socio-economic distinctions lose their power to divide. But this happens only where "Christ is all, and is in all." Where "Christ is part, and is in some," inclusivity must remain a pipe dream. It is only when a community of believers lives for Christ, when he is their highest good and loving him is their principle goal, that the dividing lines of race and gender disappear. Not before.

The church that aims at inclusivity is, ironically, not aiming high enough. It will not even reach the target. But let it aim at a radical and total devotion to God through Jesus and it will soon be hitting the bull's-eye. It is only as we love God with all our hearts that we can love our neighbors as ourselves.

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People

■ Cincinnati

Women told to remove scarves

Two Muslim women had the right to continue wearing their head scarves when sitting for a driver's license photo, the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles said.

Clerks at separate bureau offices in southwest Ohio were wrong to insist that the women remove the scarves, also known as hijabs, which are expressions of faith and modesty, said Tom Hunter, spokesman for the Department of Public Safety, which oversees the motor vehicles bureau.

The women's photos were shot again for free.

"It was just a misunderstanding on the part of BMV employees as to what the policy was," Hunter said. "We want to be respectful to all people and all cultures."

■ St. Louis

Synod re-elects president

The head of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Gerald Kieschnick, will serve a third term as president of the 2.5-million member church.

Kieschnick was re-elected at the church's convention in Houston. He received 644 votes, or 52 percent of the delegates' vote. The Rev. John Wohlrabe Jr. of Virginia Beach, Va., came in second with 42 percent of the vote.

Kieschnick, 64, has been president of the St. Louis-based church since 2001.

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was founded in 1847 and claims more than 6,000 congregations and the largest Protestant parochial school system in America.

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