MEBANE — Eastside Baptist Church will conduct a special service Tuesday night at 7:30 o’clock. The Rev. Frank Gribble of Burlington will show pictures of his recent trip to the Holy Land.
Bingo Fund-Raiser Postponed After Churches Pledge Support For Youth

By SCOTT HOLLIFIELD
Associate Editor

Representatives of several area churches said a planned bingo game to raise money for youth sports in Nebo may send the wrong message to kids.

Church leaders are now hoping to raise money among their congregations to help Nebo Youth Activities, which has put its plans to sponsor a bingo fund raiser on hold.

"We here in the churches were ignorant of their needs," said The Rev. Bill Long, pastor of Eastside Baptist Church. "When we found out what their needs were, it really bothered us."

Long was among several church leaders who met this week with members of Nebo Youth Activities, a group of parents, coaches and others involved in children's athletics in that community.

The meeting came about after church leaders learned the youth activities group was planning a bingo game to raise money for improvements to the baseball field and school gym and to buy uniforms for kids' teams.

Fencing around the ball field alone would cost almost $3,000, according to youth activities members.

The group, said Nebo Youth Activities secretary Sami Watson, was faced with the age-old problem in kids' sports: lots of needs and few resources.

"We had tried car washes, bake sales, wrestling matches and just about everything else to raise money," Watson said. "We tried to sell candy and the parents wound up buying the candy."

A bingo game looked to be a money-maker to the youth activities board, she said.

But the idea raised concerns — especially among some churches — that the organization might be promoting gambling with such a fund raiser.

"There's people that are hooked on bingo, just like gambling," said Long. "We didn't feel this would necessarily push the child in the right direction."

Long said he and representatives of churches like Bethel Baptist and Nebo Baptist Church met this week with the youth activities group. There, they learned for the first time the money crunch the youth activities group faces and the enormous amount of time a handful of parents and coaches devote.

Long said he was shocked to learn that volunteers had to nail down sections of Nebo Elementary School's gym floor each week before basketball games.

"We now know of their plight," he said. "It was pitiful. It broke my heart when I found out."

The churches in the Nebo community hope to raise $5,000 to help Nebo Youth Activities, Long said. His church expects to collect some money at services tonight. He hopes the effort will encourage support from the entire community.

"They were just trying to find a better way than bingo to help us," said Sami Watson. "I think they will come through. But we made it clear to them that if we didn't get enough money, we will have to do something else."

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