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Elevation Baptist Women's Day Guest Dr. Eliz. Young

Elevation Baptist Church will hold its annual celebration of Women's Day at 11 a.m. on Sunday.

The speaker for the occasion will be Dr. Elizabeth Young, president of the North Carolina State Baptist Congress of Christian Education Auxiliary to the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

Dr. Young is from Winnabow. She is married to Robert Thomas Young and is the mother of three daughters. They are Roberta Renee Young Jackson, Sonia Lorraine Young Baxter, and Shelley Elizabeth Payton.

The theme for this year's service is "Isaiah 32:9, Women Rising on the Wings of a Dove."

The public is invited to take part in the service. Representatives from visiting churches will be recognized.

4

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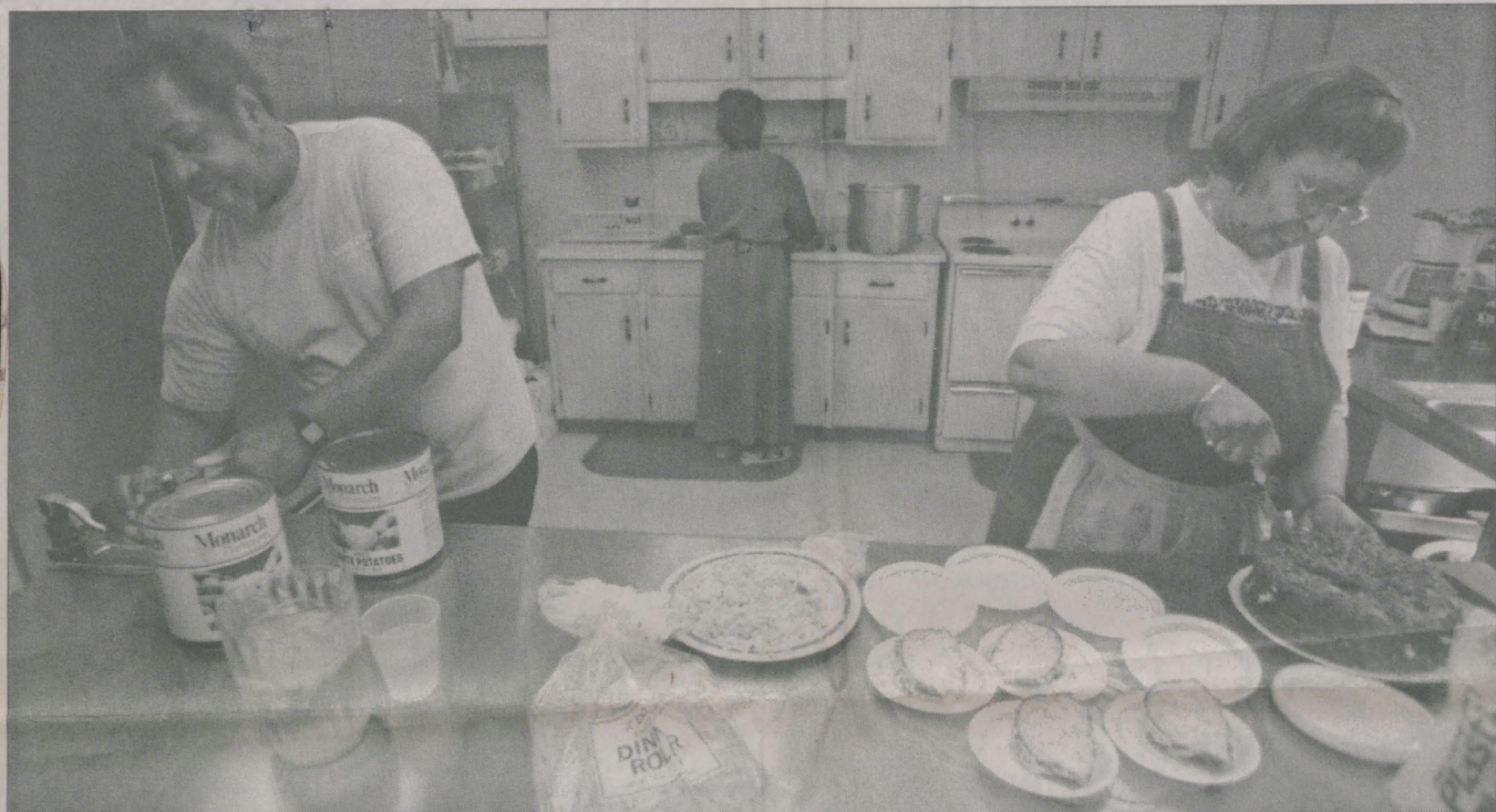
GETS

291

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OUTSTANDING MINISTER—Rev. Thomas B. Jiles, left, receives the outstanding minister of the year award for his contributions to religious, community and political organizations. The Wendell Wake County Branch of the NAACP chose Rev. Jiles for this award for his participation and support of the NAACP. As a result of his leadership, Elevation Baptist Church, of which he is pastor, has purchased a lifetime membership in the organization. Presenting the award, right, to Rev. Jiles is Mary E. Perry, president of the branch.



Ronald Cabiness, a co-adviser for the homeless ministry, and volunteer Allie Cobb prepare food for homeless worshippers, while Pearl Cabiness washes dishes.

PHOTO BY BRAD SMITH FOR THE NEWS & OBSERVER

BRICKLE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

he enforced the rules: No smoking or cursing on church property.

He organized fishing trips and persuaded Jeff Shea, general manager of a Golden Corral Restaurant near the church, to give the ministry a discount rate for Sunday brunch. For three years before the church organized its own Sunday dinner, Shea allowed the homeless diners to dig deep into the buffet every week: the first seven free and the rest at half-price.

Shea said he welcomed the homeless guests because he has so many regular customers from Elevation and because he became good friends with Brickle.

"Phil's such a good guy ... I never see him stop," Shea said. Shea recruited a few of the homeless when he needed a grill cook and dishwashers. Except for a tendency to move on quickly, he said, they made good employees.

Giving work and hope

Brickle, a warm, open man who makes friends easily, often uses his network of connections to match homeless people with available jobs.

Last month, after some church members said they needed repair work and lawn service at their homes, Brickle began driving a van to pick up workers from the shelters at 5 a.m. He serves breakfast, then works alongside them — on a recent weekend for 12 hours — to serve a growing number of clients. The men can make as much as \$70 a day; more important, Brickle said, they increase their sense of self-worth.

Inez Reid, 42, who has been homeless for nine months and was baptized last month at Elevation, said she can't express with words how much Brickle's compassion has meant to her. Some treat homeless people "like they are just nothing, but not Brother Phil or Elevation," she said. "They don't never forget about us."

Reid said she admired Brickle's efforts last month to borrow suits so homeless men could form a church choir. "He takes men out of the gutter, cleans them up and makes them somebody," she said.

Reid said that the night before this Easter, she was getting high near railroad tracks in Raleigh. Miserable and sick from her eight-year addiction to crack, she walked out onto the tracks, weeping and drawing her sleeping bag over her head. She half-shouted, half-prayed: "Oh God, please help me, I can't live like this no more."

Reid stumbled around the corner to find a CAT bus marked as the Rex Hospital route. She didn't have any money but begged the driver to take her to the hospital. The driver gave her \$6 and dropped her off.

When she woke up Easter morning, Reid felt as if she had been reborn. She knew that God had

sent that bus for her, she said, and she began going to church regularly at Elevation after seeing its vans come around to the homeless shelter where she was staying.

Reid slipped back into drug addiction once, but Brickle wasn't ready to give up on her, encouraging her to return to church. Reid said Brickle helped pull her from a "dark, midnight world" of crouching under bridges, lonely and estranged from her son, to a sunny church picnic she attended with her new granddaughter last month at Shelley Lake.

"I've never been this happy in my life," she said.

Turning lives around

John Woods, who officially joined Elevation with the Right Hand of Fellowship ceremony this month, said he was grateful for the way Brickle and the church embraced him, even when he came to services in dirty clothes. The worst part of being homeless for him, he said, was the rejection and loneliness. It seemed as if he was getting run off from everywhere he tried to go, and he didn't have anybody in Raleigh.

When he first visited Elevation, he hadn't called his mother back home in Gadsden, Ala., in four months because he was too depressed and ashamed.

"You don't want to talk to anybody," he said. "Sometimes you wish that you were dead."

But because he didn't have an address of his own, he listed his mother's in the church visitor log. When the church sent her a letter thanking her son for visiting, she called Elevation, thrilled to hear that he was alive, the Rev. Dunn said.

Woods, 42, has saved \$600 by working full time as a cook at the Veterans Administration Hospital and moved off the streets into transitional housing. He beamed like a kid talking about reconciling with his mother: "She's proud of me because I have the Lord in my life. Now we've gotten back close."

But, sometimes, there are disappointments.

Brickle was excited for a man named Eddie, who had said his family was coming from out of town to see him get baptized at Elevation this month. The week before, Brickle heard that Eddie had been kicked out of the shelter for fighting. He hoped that, come Sunday, Eddie would be waiting with the crowd, as always. But Eddie didn't show.

"I would have let him stay at my house until he got back on his feet," Brickle said.

Going home

Reid said Brickle does not have an easy time reaching people from the streets: "A lot of people say, 'What has God ever done for me?'"

Brickle said he works to open hardened, bitter souls to change by showing patience and understanding. He talks to them about his own addiction and rehabilitation so they feel hope, not shame. He stresses his unconditional love for them, while preaching hard work and responsibility.

The homeless help clean the church basement after their Sunday meal, and some tend church grounds and help clean out the church vans. Recently, a group from the shelter pooled their money to buy Brickle a thank-you card and a plate carved with a tableau of Jesus and his followers.

One recent day, almost 40 other homeless people greeted Brickle at the shelter stops, some almost tackling him with the force of their hugs, exclaiming, "Brother Phil! Brother Phil!" while others filed onto the vans with hard, sullen faces.

After the last stop, he asked everyone in the vans to bow their heads for a prayer: "Lord touch the prostitute, Lord touch the dope fiend," he boomed.

"Yes!" Reid answered.

During a break in a recent Sunday service, many of the homeless hugged Carl Evans, who was once homeless but now has established himself and sings in Elevation's men's choir. The congregation stomped, hollered and pounded tambourines, singing of joy and miracles. Later, the preacher thundered: God is building a mansion for you in Heaven.

After church, the homeless people gathered for lunch prepared by church members. As the smells of beef, chicken, green beans, potatoes and chocolate cake filled the room, Brickle asked the group to hold hands and invited them to speak if they wished. After many had given thanks, Caroline Bryant, who is homeless, closed her eyes and began to sing deep and slow:

Soon it will be done, with the troubles of this world, because I'm going home to live with my Lord.

No more crying, no more heartache and pain, because I'm going home, home, to live with my Lord.

The old spiritual reminded Ronald Cabiness of his mother, who used to sing it to him.

"Girl, you took me home. ... You nearly broke my heart with that song," he told her as they lined up to eat.

Before the group broke up to go back to the shelters, church leaders left them with words to shepherd them through another week on the street. When you are confronted with an ugly situation, they said, close your eyes and hum a hymn, and God will shelter you from harm, like Daniel in the Biblical story of the lion's den.

Brickle spoke last, asking everyone to be strong and to pray for Eddie, wherever he might be.

As the vans rolled back out, not all were going back to the shelters. Some who gathered for the meal were going home to new apartments, and Robert Taylor planned to begin a new job the next day.

These are the stories that Brickle said sustain his effort.

"I'm not Superman; I get weary, and I get low. But then I'll see somebody riding on the back of a garbage truck, calling out my name, and his circumstances have totally changed.

"And that's just beautiful to me."

BL

Phil Brickle says a prayer of thanks at a lunch for homeless members of Raleigh's Elevation Baptist. A former drug addict, Brickle knows that 'When you're down, you just don't need nobody stepping on you.'

PHOTO BY
BRAD SMITH
FOR THE NEWS
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291

GRATITUDE INSPIRES ONE MAN'S DEVOTION TO VOLUNTEER MINISTRY

He offers the homeless food, shelter and a Ray of Hope

By KATHLEEN CHAPMAN
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — On Raleigh's streets and in its homeless shelters, Phil Brickle's home phone number is scrawled on dirty scraps of paper and passed from hand to hand.

The 45-year-old former heroin addict answers collect pay phone calls at all hours in the hope that he can lead the poor and forgotten to salvation in this life — and the next.

Brickle said he has devoted nearly all of his free time in the last four years to the Ray of Hope Homeless Ministry, the volunteer ministry of the Elevation

Baptist Church on New Bern Avenue in East Raleigh, because he is so grateful for the unshakable love of his family through his 20 years of drug addiction. He and other church members help the most desperate retrieve what they have lost: an address, the smell of fresh laundry, hope and dignity, faith in God.

Five years ago, when Brickle's marriage was crumbling and heroin had trapped him "on a course to death" in his native New York, he agreed to live with his parents, who had moved to Raleigh. A cousin came to bring him home, and his mother cooked every day

for her 40-year-old prodigal son.

"When I was at my lowest point, they still loved me unconditionally," he said.

Less than a year after he came south, Brickle said, he quit drugs and took a job as a state correction officer at Polk Youth Institution. A neighbor invited him to Elevation Baptist, where he immersed himself in his faith after his divorce.

"We are trying to reach out to those who are lost," said the Rev. James Dunn at Elevation. "We want to pull them out and lift them up, and when they see the light, to help them follow."

Brickle began his ministry with a few

church members, one pot of chili for the hungry in Moore Square and a simple philosophy: "When you're down, you just don't need nobody stepping on you."

Soon afterward, he began leading Bible study classes for the homeless and driving a church van on Saturdays and Sundays from the shelters to Elevation Baptist. When a few church members complained that the visitors were unkempt and uncivilized, Brickle launched a clothing drive and built rooms where the homeless could change in the church basement. And

SEE **BRICKLE**, PAGE 5B

Jan. 5, 2001

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FAITH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1N

while others come together after Wake County Schools Superintendent Bill McNeal speaks to congregations to recruit volunteers.

"Churches have — as part of their mission — taken care of the quality of life for both adults and students," McNeal said. "Academics is part of that."

By speaking to church congregations, McNeal hopes to educate the community at-large about the school system's expectations.

Wake wants to have at least 95 percent of its students performing at or above grade level in reading and math by 2003. Such proficiency is measured by end-of-grade tests.

"Goal 2003 has forced this agen-

da," McNeal said. "It's gonna be essential that they have some instruction or some tutor-mentoring outside of school."

For many parents, McNeal's words provide a wake-up call. They don't recall EOG exams because they didn't have them.

"These people are finding out education is very important," Coston said. "A lot of parents just send their children to school and that's it."

North Raleigh's Carroll Middle School has a program with Davie Street Presbyterian Church in downtown Raleigh that aims to empower families whose children are bused to the school. Twelve students from Carroll go every Wednesday to Davie Street to work with tutors and mentors from Shaw University.

The church is in the center of the

children's community, making it easier for parents to pick them up and making it possible for children to return often.

"This is their church in their neighborhood," said Debbie Dayson, a school guidance counselor. "That's why I think it's so wonderful — [parishioners] are tending their flock at home."

That's the same philosophy used by the satellite tutoring program that North Ridge Elementary's Coston started five years ago at St. Joseph Catholic Church.

The church wanted to help kids who lived in the vicinity but who were bused to North Ridge Elementary.

Coston became the teacher in charge. Four days a week, she supervised and tutored third- and fourth-graders, often communi-

cating with their parents about their progress. The church also hosted PTA meetings.

"Many of the parents said [North Ridge] was too far to come ... for teacher meetings and so forth," Coston said. "They felt much better because the school was going to the community instead of them going to the school."

When North Ridge implemented its Accelerated Learning Program for struggling students last year, St. Joseph became a satellite site.

"We wanted to keep the unity we had developed with the community," Coston said.

Third-, fourth- and fifth-graders go to the church two days a week. Other teachers are assigned to help, freeing up Coston to spend more time with her own church — Elevation.

Of the 11 parishioners who vol-

unteer their time at Elevation, Coston is the only teacher. The rest are professionals in other fields.

"They know what they're doing," Coston said. "They want our children to be successful."

Of the children who receive tutoring, not all are church members. Some have heard about it from friends.

This year, Carmichael devoted the church's entire newly renovated basement to the tutoring program. There are classrooms, a computer lab and meeting rooms. Eventually, he envisions a school.

"We want to shoot for excellence in ministry," he said. "Education is one of the ministries for the community."

Staff writer Manya A. Brachea can be reached at 836-4952 or mbrachea@nando.com

291 Churches tending the flock by hitting the books

BY MANYA A. BRACHEAR
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — When the Rev. T.L. Carmichael came to North Raleigh as pastor of Elevation Baptist Church, he envisioned a broad youth ministry that would include Bible study every Wednesday night.

But because that was a school night, kids tended to stay home and do homework. No one in good conscience could discourage that.

So Carmichael decided to use it to his advantage. He turned for help to parishioner Lilly Coston, a teacher at North Ridge Elementary School who ran a satellite tutoring program.

She rounded up a library of old

textbooks, secured a budget for school supplies and began running a tutoring session at Elevation every night before Bible study. Kids came for the tutoring and stuck around for the encore.

"It started out slow, because a lot of people didn't believe ... it was free," Coston said. "Tutoring can be very expensive."

More and more churches in North Raleigh are discovering the benefits of adding tutoring and mentoring to their ministries.

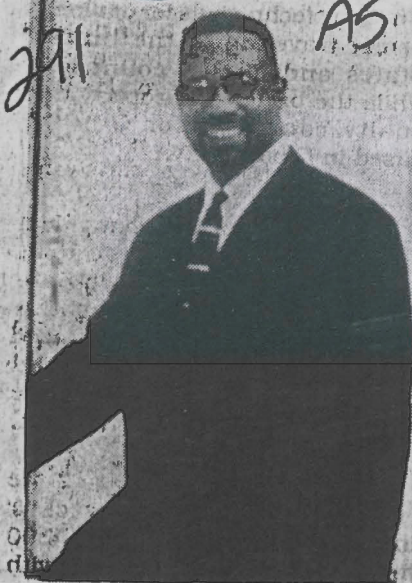
Some tutoring programs originate within the churches themselves,



Taylor Braxton, a second-grader at Raleigh Christian Academy, works with Cassandra McDowell at Elevation Baptist Church's Tutorial Ministry.

STAFF PHOTO BY
JUDITH SIVIGLIA

SEE FAITH, PAGE 5N



Rev. Alexander B. Herring

Herring to Be Installed as Pastor

Wk The Juniper Level Baptist Church, at 9104 Sauls Road, Raleigh, will install their pastor, the Reverend Alexander B. Herring.

Rev. Herring is the son of Mr. and Mrs. James T. and Alice B. Herring Sr. He is married to Valerie B. Herring, who is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Timothy and Doris Rogers, and the granddaughter of Addie Rogers.

Rev. Herring is a native of Pender County, where he grew up in the Piney Woods community. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Shaw University in 1989 and is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Divinity at Shaw University School of Divinity.

He is an active member of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc., along with numerous other civic and community organizations.

Mable B. Herring
Wk Prior to accepting the call to Juniper Level, Rev. Herring was the pastor of Timberlake Grove Baptist Church, Louisburg. He also served as an Associate Minister at Elevation Baptist Church in Raleigh.

The Installation Service will be held Sunday, December 12, at 4:00 p.m. The guest minister will be the Reverend J. Vincent Terry, along with his choir and congregation of Mt. Peace Baptist Church (formerly Halifax Baptist Church) of Raleigh.

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