

INTEGRATION:

How It Came To St. Petersburg

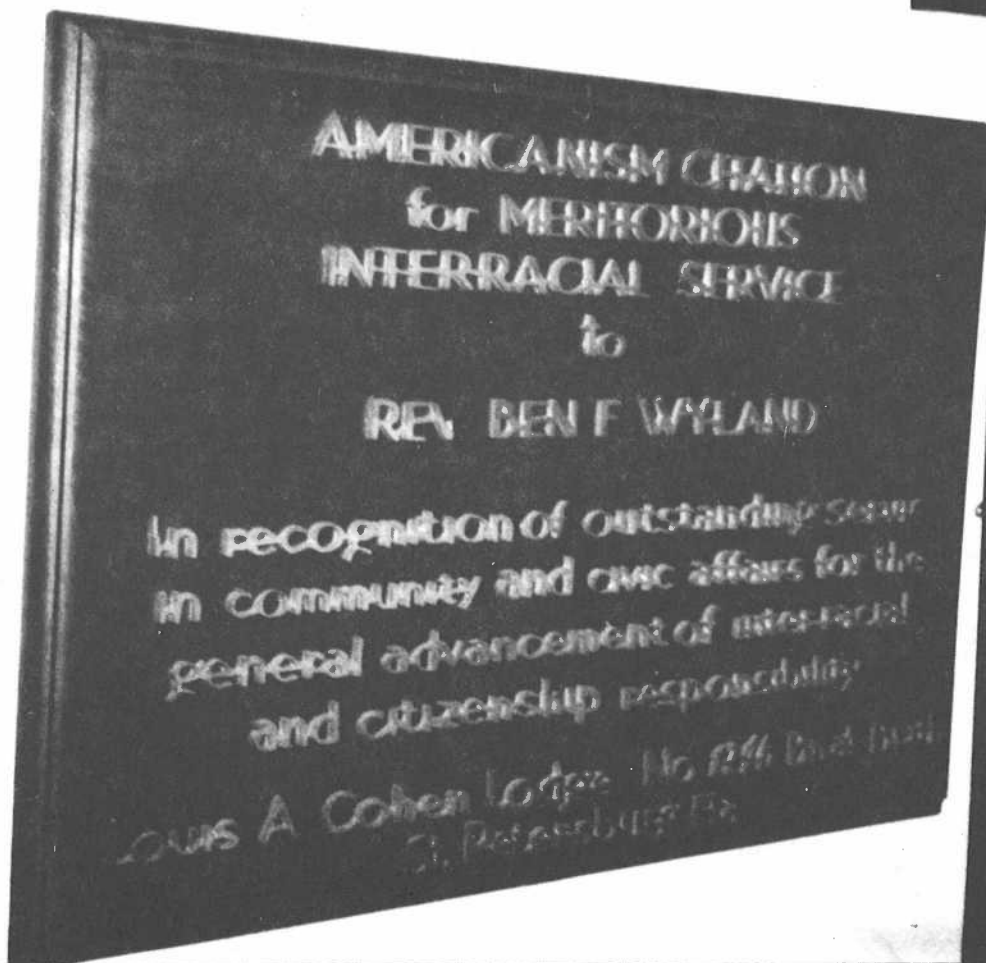
By

Rev. Ben Wyland

Integration: An Historical Perspective

I was called to be the executive secretary of the Council of Churches, the first in Florida. Two problems engrossed me. First, how to get the churches to work together. Second, to secure integration and civil rights for Blacks, Jews and Catholics. Foremost the cause of blacks. They could not bathe on the beaches or enter white churches, etc. An illustration struck me at the time of the beach problem. The mayor was told a black girl was on the city beach. He ordered police to see and report. "If this is true I'll go down there with my shotgun and get her," I was told. The police surveyed the

beach; all were sunburned of one color. So they gave up. The blacks had to sit in the last seats on a bus. Black bus drivers were prohibited. Blacks could not attend our leading church on world missions unless the trustees okayed it and they were carefully escorted. Homes for the blacks were only in the slums. Blacks were permitted only in black schools and their education was limited to menial jobs. They could work for a contractor, but not be one. Black teachers feared discharge if they worked for integration. Jews were not wanted in white residential areas. They could not teach in white colleges.



*The Lord Chamberlain is
commanded by Her Majesty to invite*

*The Reverend Ben F. and Mrs. Wyland
to an Afternoon Party in the Garden of Buckingham Palace
on Thursday 19th July 1956, from 4 to 6 o'clock.
(Weather Permitting.)*

Morning Dress or Uniform or Lounge Suit

An invitation from the Queen of England bidding the Reverend and Mrs. Wyland attend her Garden Party.

Later B'nai B'rith gave me a citation for "Meritorious Interracial Service". The Catholic Bishop invited me to his installation for my efforts. White Protestants formed a monarchy governing politics, business and social life. How to break down these barriers peaceably and bring the churches together was my first problem.

We brought the 125 churches together for the first time. We engineered the first religious census and began new churches for the unchurched. We drove the gamblers out of town. We had a religious parade four miles long, the largest in a city of parades. We began Holy Week in seven

churches and filled Al Lang Field for Easter Sunrise Service. We secured Billy Graham who filled Al Lang Field and a supplementary field; they said 35,000 were present. It went out over TV and radio. When the Sunshine Skyway was completed over Tampa Bay I was placed in charge of a mass meeting. Aunt Jemina joined us. It was the largest gathering of political leaders and the governor attended. General chairman and president of Florida Power Company Bill Clapp said, "A mighty fine job you did". As an exchange preacher under the National Council of Churches, I attended the Queen's Garden party in London with celebrities and the great from all over the world.

THE TRAVELING CLERGY

City Minister Conducts Two Services In Venerable Worcester Cathedral

By THE REV. BEN F. WYLAND

WORCESTER, England — Sunday I preached in morning and evening services in Worcester Cathedral, which is 1,295 years old, turning back to 659 A.D. for its founding date.

The Bible says, "A thousand years are but as a day in His sight." I confess an American cannot look at such evidence of antiquity with so comprehensive an eye.

I walked past the grave of King John as I took communion at the 8 a.m. service.

WYLAND Here also Henry II and his Queen were crowned. Memorials of the great in Christian and English history shine forth from the stained glass windows.

I preached from a pulpit of rare marble, wrought with exquisite carving. Among the relics in glass cabinets is one particularly unique. When the Danes invaded England in the 8th Century, they raided Worcester. One Dane was caught carrying from the cathedral a silver chalice. He was killed and his hide nailed to one of the doors. A piece of his skin is preserved in one of the exhibits for succeeding generations to see.

GRACIOUS HOSTS

"Overhead in the tower melodious bells ring every 15 minutes. I stayed next door with my most gracious hosts, Canon and Mrs. Braley, whose manse dates to 1254 A.D. A group of people led by the Mayor came to greet me on Saturday. The mayor, by the way, is a lady, but is still addressed as "Mr. Mayor."

My presence here is part of a deliberate worldwide movement drawing all churches together. In contrast with history, my presence here is all more remarkable.

I am a nonconformist minister preaching in an Anglican cathedral, a state church of England. The cleavage between the two has



The Rev. Ben F. Wyland preached last Sunday in Worcester Cathedral, founded in 659 AD. The St. Petersburg minister was given a cordial welcome, with the local newspaper reporting, "The guest from Florida joins a long line of distinguished American clergymen who have visited Worcester and preached here."

been great until now. In 1758 John Mass., for ten years. There has been a close tie between the two Worcesters of the Old and New World.

A NEW ERA

Today, in a new era of cooperation and goodwill, my presence here is approved by the canon of the cathedral and by the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is head of the Anglican Church, president of the British Council of Churches, and is now in America attending two great church conferences.

Everywhere in England and Scotland I've seen posters advertising the World Council of Churches in America. Prayers are being said for the unity of Christendom and solution of the problems facing us.

The mayor and other representatives of the city government were in the congregation. Much interest has evolved from the fact of my preaching in a Union Congregational Church in Worcester.

UNITY FOR PEACE

The feeling that America and Great Britain share a common ancestry and ideals should ever hold us together in the interests of world peace.

My presence in the pulpit of Worcester Cathedral is a gesture of goodwill by a great church, a symbol of the spirit of cooperation which the World Council of Church expresses still better.

As I write these words the cathedral bells are calling people to evening service. They are ringing in wild, glorious abandon. Tennyson must have heard such bells when he wrote,

"Ring out wild bells . . . Ring out the old, Ring in the new."

That is what church bells should do, reaching out to every person, high over the city and into the country with their thrilling call.

Original, three times this size, in Wilberforce Museum, Hull.

SLAVES AT SALE

WITHOUT RESERVE.

BY BEARD, CALHOUN & CO.

J. A. BEARD, Auctioneer.

WILL BE SOLD AT AUCTION ON
TUESDAY, Jan. 16th,

AT 12 O'CLOCK, AT BANKS' ARCADE, THE FOLLOWING DESCRIBED NEGROES :

1. ROSIN, 13 years of age, a griffe, good house boy, fine temper, fully guaranteed, and speaks German and English.
2. JORDAN, 23 years of age, a likely negro house servant and trusty waiter, fully guaranteed.
3. JANE, aged 24 years, a very superior washer, ironer, good American cook, and House Woman, fully guaranteed.
4. MARY, aged 24 years, and child 1 year old, a trusty woman, good washer, ironer and American cook, fully guaranteed.
5. EDWIN, aged 27 years, a griffe man, an excellent waiter, steward and trusty servant fully guaranteed.
6. ESTHER, aged 40 years, a smart intelligent and cleanly cook, washer and ironer, title only guaranteed.
7. ANNE, aged 24 years, an excellent house servant, washer, ironer, and good cook, with her three children, one aged 5 another 2 and the last 1 year; they are fully guaranteed but will be sold to go into the country, by her owner's instructions.
8. SAM, aged 28 years, a field hand; title only guaranteed.
9. AGNES, aged 24 years, a good cook, washer and ironer, fully guaranteed.
10. HENRY, aged about 26 years, a field hand, and a stout man, sold as having run away from the plantation.
11. JOHN, aged 15 years, a smart waiting boy, fully guaranteed.
12. JANE, aged 17 years, a fine house girl and field hand fully guaranteed.
13. MARY, aged 35 years, superior nurse and house woman, fully guaranteed.
14. PATRICK, aged 28 years, a likely man good barber, body and house servant. Sold under a good character, and fully guaranteed against the vices and maladies prescribed by law.

ALSO :

TERMS CASH. Acts of sale before J. R. BEARD, Notary Public at the expence of the purchasers.

ALSO

The following described Slaves sold for account of Mr. Henry Deacon, who failed to comply with the terms of sale made for the account of the succession of C. H. L. ELWYN, deceased, to wit : The Negress MATHILDA, aged about 29 years and her son PAUL, 7 years-a good washer, Ironer and Cooker.

TERMS CASH. Acts of sale before H. B. CENAS, Notary Public, at the expense of the purchasers.

Now began my most bitter fight to secure integration for the blacks and civil rights for the Blacks, Jews and Catholics and all ethnic races. To do it in the Christian spirit was the problem. They turned their backs on me and called me a white nigger, lower than the blacks. They posted death signs on my lawn. They called me on the telephone, threatening death. I said, "If you name the place and the hour to get me I'll be there. Don't disappoint me". At night I slept easily and comfortably. My beloved wife said, "Dear, when I married you, I thought I would have peace." She called my doctor to find out if there was something the matter with me. When I went to bed I went to sleep so quickly. He said, "No, he is just well adjusted." I organized trips into black slums to acquaint people with their meanness and filth; their fire and health hazards. I was invited to a black mass meeting in Tallahassee, where I advised with Martin Luther King and sat with him in a Baptist Church on the platform. I put on jeans and an old shirt; recruited some black students and painted a black woman's home.

Two businessmen were riding downtown on a bus and behind them sat a friend of mine. They were discussing investments. One said, "The black slums were the answer few repairs and higher rents make it so the blacks were exploited. I showed it up. I organized trips into black slums. I was bitterly hated. The rent collector for the owners collected the rent weekly. If the blacks could not pay, he took off window and door screens. When the flies became bad he could collect the rent. The collector knew me and when we met

downtown he would walk to the gutter and spit. Finally a break came. A Methodist millionaire and owner of slums whose wife was a church leader came to see me. "I'll build a modern motel and apartment home for the blacks if you'll help me," he said. I said certainly. Black land is the most expensive but let us use the old black cemetery, weed-overgrown and deserted, at 16th Street and 5th Avenue, South. I bought it for one dollar from the city. We dug up the graves and moved the remains to a new black cemetery. Among them I found a black confederate grave. The stone was fallen but legible. We excavated the remains and a color guard of the American Legion came. I gave the ritual of the church and escorted the body to the new black cemetery. I was the only white minister who ever buried a black in Florida, possibly the South. As I was officiating, one of my white haters parked his car on a nearby road and watched me, unbelieving. But it was so. A black motel four stories high was built on the ground and became a monument to brotherhood, later destroyed by the new highway. Then I bought a house from the city for one dollar, the pennies were collected by school children; we moved it and established a black Y. W. C. A. I preached in black schools and churches, instilling in them a new sense of dignity and ambition and their civil rights. In the black high school I sat with Eleanor Roosevelt who was to give the address. The police came and said, "Get out. We have a bomb threat." It was a false alarm. Gradually, a new courage came to blacks. Seven hundred black girls a year went to the black Y. W. C. A. which I founded. I conducted a successful campaign to house 1500 black

When I saw this exhibit in England I came home with a firmer desire to free the Negro and secure him his civil rights.

educators barred from local hotels. President Eisenhower gave us 1500 cots from a nearby air base. We used churches and black homes to do the job, supported by the Chamber of Commerce and Hotel Men's Association. We carried the affair through without an incident. Whenever a black was burned out, I was there. Here is an article that appeared in the St. Petersburg Times newspaper: "The Rev. Ben F. Wyland seeks help for a Negro family

of six recently burned out at 1222 32nd Street, South now housed in garage, mother with a week-old baby. . . father truck driver out of work. . . clothing wanted for baby, girls 1, 2, and 6 years old, boy 4 years. . . clothing can be left on Wyland front porch, 3028 Ninth Avenue, North. . . money may be sent to Rev. Wyland, food too. . . building materials also sought to repair home. . . you call Rev. Wyland."

Civic Group Sees Seamy Side Of City In Slum Area Tour

Ugly tenement districts, their filth and their lack of common sanitary facilities, came under the inspection of a group of civic leaders today as the Rev. Ben F. Wyland conducted a motor cavalcade through the slum areas.

Arbused over the deaths of two children in a Negro tenement fire recently, some persons are demanding a clean-up in the districts. The Rev. Wyland organ-

ized the cavalcade of interested persons after he received a number of complaints. He felt the tour would provide a first-hand look at the conditions.

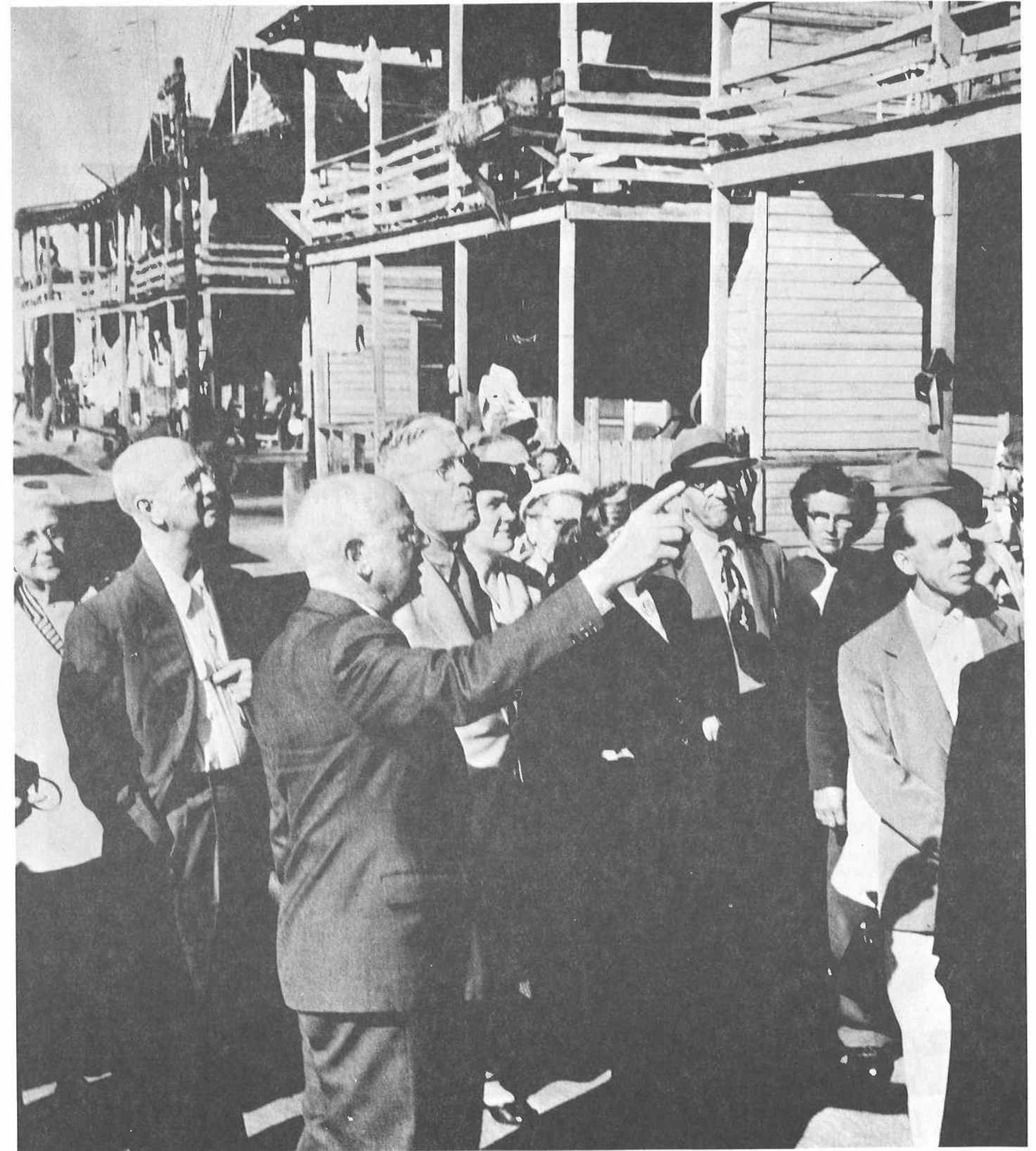
Some 25 automobiles lined up at his home, 3028 9th Ave. N. at 10 a.m. today, with about 40 passengers. The tour covered a section of Methodist Town, where some Negroes opened their homes for inspection, and then rolled into

Southside slum districts in the vicinity of 19th street and 10th to 13th avenues.

REPRESENTATIVE GROUP

The group included representatives of the American Association of University Women, St. Petersburg Council of United Church Women, the Quaker Church, First Congregational Social Action Committee, Trinity Lutheran Church and others as well as a number of interested individuals.

See photo opposite page



The Rev. Ben F. Wyland (center) points to the rickety back porch of a Negro tenement as he led a cavalcade through slum districts today. The group included leaders from various civic organizations

Blacks Win Community Chest Award



Reverend Wyland accepts an Oscar for his black division. The black division exceeded their Community Chest goal.

As chairman of the black division of the Community Chest, I went through the black community with a loud speaker and met the black ministers who gave me their support. We won an Oscar for the black division and went over the top. J. E. Bryon, president of Union Trust and chairman of the Community Chest said, "I should like to express to you my sincere appreciation for the fine job you have done with the black division of the Community Chest. You have done a wonderful job." The St. Petersburg Times referred to it as "proud leadership." Naturally, I was proud of the blacks. Edward Waters College gave me the degree of "Doctor of Humane Letters." Bethune Cookman, a leading black college, gave me a citation "for outstanding service to religion and human relations." I brought about integration in the Ministerial Association where black and white ministers met for the first time. The

barrier between races and groups began to melt down.

But now I learned and suffered the most grievous attack from the diehards on my character and work for civil rights for the blacks and all ethnic groups. The fight now by the diehards was to send me to jail as a communist stirring up black and ethnic groups. The Lake County sheriff was a black hater. One case developed in which he was reputed to have tried to kill two blacks, reputedly in self defense while handling those blacks. It outraged me and the Christian community. I got in my car and drove to his bailiwick. It centered around Walter Lee Irwin, who had been arrested for rape of a white woman. The Lake County Grand Jury proceeded to try and indict me and send me to prison. They failed and I was discharged free. Walter Lee Irwin was saved from death and commuted to a life sentence by the governor.

GRAND JURY WITNESS SUBPOENA (COPY) DREW'S FORM C. C. 3011% REV. Manufactured and for sale by The E. & W. B. Drew Company Jacksonville, Florida

In Circuit Court,
of the State of Florida, in and for
LAKE County.

By _____ D. S.

SEAL
A TRUE COPY
SID M. SAUNDERS SHERIFF

The State of Florida, to All and Singular the Sheriffs of said State, Greeting:

YOU ARE HEREBY COMMANDED to subpoena _____
Ben F. Wyland, 3020 8th Avenue North, St. Petersburg, Florida
to be and appear before the Judge of our Circuit Court for the _____ FIFTH
Judicial Circuit of the State of Florida, at the Court House in _____ Tavares
on _____ Thursday, March 22nd, 1956, to testify and the truth to speak in behalf of the
State of Florida in a certain matter before the Grand Jury impaneled and sworn to inquire in and
for the body of _____ Lake County. And this you shall in no wise omit.

WITNESS _____ Frank E. Owens, Clerk of our said Court,
(Seal) _____ and the seal of said Court, at the Court House at _____ Tavares
aforesaid, this _____ 22nd day of _____ March, 1956.

A true copy.
_____ Sheriff. _____ Frank E. Owens, Clerk.
By _____ Deputy. _____ Deputy Clerk.

My Part in the Walter Lee Irwin Case

When the case was first presented to the executive committee, the United Churches turned my request down on the opposition of Judge Victor O. Wehle, who later became embittered on this issue. Later I renewed my request to do something and was given authority (February 15, 1955) to go ahead with a supporting committee. I first appeared before Governor LeRoy Collins and the Pardon Board asking Irwin's death sentence be commuted to life. I was the first white man to appear for him.

The St. Petersburg Times tried to secure a white lawyer to assist me and eight refused. We had the full cooperation of the St. Petersburg Times and worked closely with the managing editor Tom Harris. We began a letter-writing campaign to the governor, securing consideration through his intimate family connections. This gave us time.

I then went into Lake County, the scene of the alleged raping. I interviewed Dr. Binnevelt, Leesburg, he having examined the woman and appeared before the Grand Jury saying she was raped. I then interviewed the doctors of the Leesburg Hospital. One doctor said, "I appeared before the Grand Jury. There was no evidence she was raped." This I reported to Governor Collins asking him to call this doctor in.

I went to Groveland, where black homes had been burned in connection with this case. I secured the cooperation of the Methodist minister who tried to contact and get the woman to talk. She was a frightened little swamp woman giving the appearance of being a pawn.

Shortly thereafter, Sheriff Willis McCall heard of my activities and wrote the governor saying I was sticking my nose in his business and I had no authority from anyone. He

wrote to each member of my executive committee. They wired individually and collectively to the governor supporting me. Then I went to Attorney Jesse Hunter, the prosecuting attorney in the case against Irwin. I appealed to him to come out for us and become our attorney. His reply was, "I can't. The ethics of my profession prevent it. But if you had new evidence I could." "What new evidence," I asked, "would convince you?" He said, "You might investigate two things. Greenlee was said to have a venereal disease. I never investigated. Greenlee was charged with Irwin. Also the technician of Dr. Binnevelt had her brother telephone me that the examination of the woman showed no rape."

I thanked Jesse Hunter and from then to his death he cooperated with us. We secured an affidavit proving Greenlee had V. D. before going to prison and was treated in prison for the same. This affidavit I took to Jesse Hunter. He read it through carefully and said, "This raises doubt the woman was ever raped." This affidavit was taken by me to Governor Collins and it stood up upon investigation by his attorney.

I could not find the technician, but I gave the information to the governor. I saw the governor three times and appeared twice before the Pardon Board with Tom Harris. We maintained careful and good public relations with my own organization, the newspapers, the governor, the Pardon Board and with the prosecuting attorney Jesse Hunter. As a result we secured the commutation of Irwin's death sentence to life. Now we are in a position to ask for a new trial for him at a later date. Greenlee was dropped from the case.

Among many opinions concerning my efforts, are two and they are

attached to this report, namely, former President Herbert Hoover, and Thurgood Marshall, attorney for the N. A. A. C. P. and now a member of the U. S. Supreme Court.

So now that we have ended victorious I say with Tiny Tim, "God bless us everyone."

Rev Ben Wyland

A POST SCRIPT

A lasting memory has been given me by a black friend. He was the pitcher on our baseball team, a forerunner of Jackie Robinson. It was a close game and he was being bitterly razed. At its peak he left the mound, walked over and faced his critic. He said, "I may be blacker on the outside than you are but I am whiter on the inside than you are." He won his game.

N. A. A. C. P. LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND, INC.

107 West 43rd Street, New York 36, N. Y.

JUN 28 6-2397

January 5, 1956

Rev. Ben F. Wyland
The United Churches of Greater St. Petersburg
512 First Federal Building
St. Petersburg, Florida

Dear Rev. Wyland:

I have been out of the country since the time of the wonderful news concerning the commutation of Walter Irvin's death sentence and therefore have not had the opportunity to express my appreciation and highest regard for the marvelous work you did in the Irvin case. Your initiative persistence and great sensitivity to the moral issues involved and your wonderful ability to convey the moral importance of the case to others were some of the most important factors responsible for the great victory.

Let me thank you once more.

Sincerely,

Thurgood Marshall
Thurgood Marshall
Director-Counsel

TM:arw Later member U.S. Supreme Court

HERBERT HOOVER

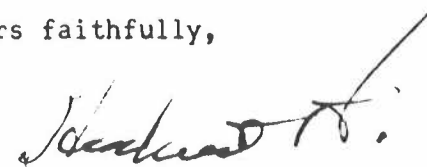
The Waldorf-Astoria Towers
New York 22, New York
January 6, 1956

My dear Reverend:

You have successfully proved that
the right and truth win out, even if slowly.

With all good wishes for the com-
ing year,

Yours faithfully,



The Reverend Ben F. Wyland
The United Churches of Greater
St. Petersburg
512 First Federal Building
St. Petersburg, Florida

MUSIC FILLED THE AIR

'Hymn Of Brotherhood' Dedicated To Rev. Wyland Sunday Night



(Times Photo by Bob Moreland)

LIKE BREAD CAST UPON THE WATERS

... good deeds are returned manyfold, the Rev. Ben F. Wyland, center, was reassured Sunday. With the honoree are the Rev. Dr. Enoch D. Davis, Second Bethel's pastor, and Lauffer Branch YWCA Executive Director Mrs. Monticello Campbell.

St. Petersburg Times, Tuesday, April 28, 1959

"Hymn of Brotherhood," penned by composer Mrs. Lue Cunningham and set to music by Dr. George Shackley, Sunday night was dedicated to the Rev. Ben F. Wyland, outstanding local humanitarian.

A capacity audience was present for the dedication in Second Bethel Baptist Church which featured the Misses Muriel Biggali and Kha Dennard of Westminster Presbyterian Church and Second Bethel Baptist Church, respectively, as soloists.

Rev. Wyland, who later Sunday evening accepted a citation from Lauffer Branch YWCA for "humanitarian service to the Negro people," is former executive secretary of the United Churches of Greater St. Petersburg and is currently president of the Florida Council for Racial Cooperation. He was instrumental in securing Lauffer's present association house at 2129 15th Ave. S.

Dedication of the hymn and presentation of the citation followed a 30-minute concert of organ classics by Dr. Shackley, director of music at Christ Presbyterian Church, Belleair.

THE LYRICS

The hymn, sung by Miss Bag-gali, reads thus:

God made the leaves, no two
alike,

On each and every tree.

The lovely flowers in gay ar-
ray

In many shades to see;

And yet he loves them all

In the very same degree.

And so the same is true of
man

No matter what his hue,

If yellow, white or black or
brown

God loves them through and
through

The same as you and I
should do.

Yes, tolerance is very good,
As far as it may go;

But we must walk a further
mile

Great understanding show
Our Master said it should
be so.

"The policy of our paper is very simple — merely to tell the truth."
—Paul Poynter, publisher 1912-1950

Editorial Page-6

Phone 5-1111

Tuesday, May 22, 1956

A Fitting Tribute To Dr. Wyland

The testimonial dinner given Dr. Ben Wyland by the United Churches of St. Petersburg last week is a fitting tribute to the leadership that he has exerted in the never-ending fight to keep St. Petersburg the state's cleanest city.

And Dr. Wyland's decision to move up to the executive secretaryship of the Florida Council of Racial Cooperation will give that group a solid and dedicated leader in its effort to solve one of the South's greatest problems through the medium of goodwill and Christian principles.

ST. PETERSBURG IS A better place because of the 10 years service Dr. Wyland has given here. He proved himself a good organizer and a fearless combatant in the campaign of the churches to restrict the liquor sale zone, the battle against summer racing and the appeal before the State Pardon Board to spare the life of Walter Lee Irvin in the Groveland rape case.

His activities — and those of the United Churches which he brought from humble beginnings to a cooperative effort by 65 churches — have included a Korean clothing campaign on Hal-

loween, the mammoth mass religious service at Al Lang Field for the dedication of Sunshine Skyway, work for Goodwill Industries, putting the Negro Community Chest campaign over the top, work in setting up a Negro Youth Center, securing a home for Lauffer Branch YWCA for Negro girls, housing 1,500 Negro educators who conventioned here, direction of the Easter Sunrise services, now a major event in St. Petersburg, and numerous other services.

THE STATURE OF the man has been recognized by the National Council of Churches which has drafted him three times as an exchange preacher to England. He has received many other citations and awards.

In retiring from the position as executive secretary of United Churches, he said his deepest sympathies lie in the field of racial cooperation and the challenge of the new job renders greater public service possibilities. He will remain in St. Petersburg and, as he said, serve here in every good cause.

The Times wishes him well in his new endeavor and knows he will take into it the zeal and understanding necessary for its success.

BETHUNE-COOKMAN COLLEGE

Awards To

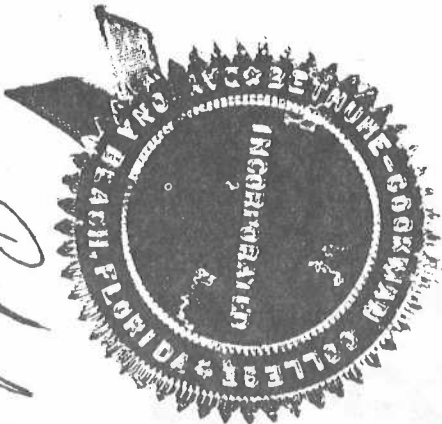
Benjamin F. Wyland

This Citation

In Recognition Of Outstanding Service In
Religion & Human Relations

Given At Daytona Beach, Florida

FEBRUARY TWENTY SEVENTH, NINETEEN HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE



PRESIDENT

DEAN

REGISTRAR

CONVOCATION CHAIRMAN

Richard V. Moore
Benjamin F. Wyland
W. M. Anderson
Walter Lee Irvin

