

# Hills wants church to close dinner-theater

By JUDY OWEN

FARMINGTON HILLS—The question of customary church use may have broken the dinner-theater "Facades" of University Hills Church.

At issue in the dispute between the Christian Reformed church and the city is a five-week run of a dinner-theater production of a satire "Facades" which was being staged in the sanctuary of the church, 3911 Farmington

Road. The church is affiliated with John Wesley College.

The city issued a cease and desist order March 4 seeking to halt the production which is claimed was a commercial use in a residentially zoned area.

Dr. Harold Ellens, pastor of the church, contested the city's charges to the zoning board of appeals.

THE SIX-MEMBER board unanimously upheld the city's order.

Unless Ellens decides to seek a circuit court injunction to reverse the board's decision, Friday night's production was the dinner theater's final one.

"The show was really very popular and very successful and the cast did a great job," Ellens said.

"It's unfortunate that the zoning board argued that because we had professional people it was a commercial venture," Ellens said.

"IT'S LIKE saying if we hired Norman Vincent Peale to lecture here and charged \$5 admission, it is a commercial adventure."

The zoning dispute isn't the only problem that the dinner-theater has faced since it opened Feb. 6.

The church had to obtain a temporary liquor license to permit wine to be served with dinner. The 24-hour license was renewable only five times by one person.

The church then used other programs held in the church such as Art-tart to list as license applicants. This was stopped.

HAL ROWE is the zoning inspector who signed the complaint which led the city to issue the cease and desist order.

"It is my contention that it (the theater) was not a function permitted in a single-family residential zone," Rowe said.

The zoning code permits "on special approval, a church and other facilities normally incidental thereto," to locate in residential areas.

"THIS IS NOT a facility normally incidental thereto," Rowe said.

"It is a professional, outside group employed to run on a more or less continuing basis. It is interfering into a residential zone a commercial use. Theaters or halls in the area can be rented," he said.

Although the appeals board ruled in the city's favor on March 3, "I just kind of cooled it" to let the engagement expire Friday, Rowe said.

THE PRODUCTION came to Rowe's department's attention through the advertising circulars and newspaper articles which indicated that "the group had found a home and hoped to remain and might even expand."

The dinner-theater concept is relatively new. Because of this, it can't be a customarily incidental, he said.

Bingo may be a proven customary incidental use, but each case is different, depending on how it is operated and where, he said.

THE NEXT move is up to Ellens. He may argue the zoning board's right to determine what was an appropriate church program.

"I might raise that in terms of a law suit," he said.

"If we continue with the production, we will continue with it in the church and take appropriate action."

## Rep. Brotherton foresees welfare reform in state

By REP. W. V. BROTHERTON (R-Farmington)

We may finally be moving towards some sort of welfare reform in Michigan. There are several reasons to hope.

First, a recent audit of one of the divisions of the Social Services Department showed that Michigan taxpayers are spending more than \$7 million a year so welfare mothers can have baby sitters for their children because "both the mother and child would benefit if they are separated for at least part of the day." Some of these mothers are also receiving welfare funds for baby-sitting for other welfare mothers' children.

The audit also showed that about \$1 million was being paid to day-care centers for children who were no longer in attendance.

Second, Social Services Director John Dempsey has told a house appropriations subcommittee that Michigan will lose about \$6 million in federal funds this fiscal year and \$30 to \$40 million in 1975-76 since our welfare error and ineligible rates are higher than new federal standards allow.

During the last half of 1974, about eight percent of all ADC families were ineligible for aid, 30 percent were overpaid, and eight percent were underpaid.

Dempsey said that although the department has set up tighter review procedures, the error rates have been rising due to the sudden increase in welfare rolls and the accompanying increase in new, inexperienced welfare caseworkers.

THIRD, AND MOST important, a special house committee recently released its report on the need and potential for welfare reform in Michigan. Of course, it found plenty of need for reform; unfortunately, the potential for reform has to depend to some extent on Federal welfare regulations.

The committee recommended the following changes in Federal regulation:

- Drop the food stamp program entirely and substitute a cash grant.
- Deny food stamps to college students unless they are the head of their own household, or their parents' income falls below \$15,000 a year.

- Deny ADC eligibility to those over 18, the Michigan age of majority, or at least grant eligibility to 18-21 year-olds on a case-by-case basis only.

- Set up a six-week waiting period for those who quit a job or are fired before they can apply for ADC (Aid to Dependent Children).

The Committee's general recommendations for Michigan centered on increasing both trained staff and investigative personnel in the Department of Social Services.

- Make the DSS Inspector General appointed by and responsible only to the Governor.

- Authorize the Inspector General to make unannounced audits of DSS operations and procedures.

- Increase training and decrease caseloads of welfare workers.

- Increase the number of in-home visits to re-determine eligibility.

- Set an absolute maximum amount for mortgage or rent payments.

### Farmington Observer & Eccentric

Published every Monday and Thursday by the Observer & Eccentric Newspaper, 3801 Schenck Rd., Livonia, Michigan 48150 Second-class Postage paid at Livonia, Michigan 48150. Add dress all mail (subscriptions, change of address, form 357) to P.O. Box 308, Livonia, Michigan 48150 Telephone 388-3888

Co-Publishers: Henry M. Hagan, Jr. Philip H. Power

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Newsstand ..... per copy, 15¢  
Carrier ..... monthly, 38¢

## Storm sewers

(Continued from page 1)

City Manager George Majoras said. Standing water increases problems with the roads.

The council will be studying the design criteria to determine how much of the project should be done, Majoras said.

The retention basins have been required in new projects for about seven years, he said. The idea is to give the water a place to run into so that the land would be as if the property had remained an undeveloped field. Eliminate these basins and the property which had been set aside for them could be used for something else, he said.

Cost is the biggest problem.

At present, six mills generates the city's income.

An added two mills would produce about \$800,000, Majoras said.

"AT THAT RATE, it would take 25 years to finish the whole project," he said. That estimate is based on present costs. Continued inflation would push the costs up.

"If we can get everything to balance without a tax increase, we're sure going to try," he said.

The council will be "trying to get a feel for the time taken and the cost of getting this thing going."

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