

O T Tomes and Tyrone Greenlee

Side 1:

[10] O.T. He had been pastor of the Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Canton, NC for five years when he was asked to come to preach at New Mt. Olive. He waited a year and decided to come. [Name listed 1973 Directory]

[31] O.T. The community of faith was warm and accepting. In the city at large the black community was invisible.

[45] O.T. The old church (photo) on 149 Livingston (corner of Herman) was small, and the congregation was less than 100 members, mostly older people. With few exceptions, most males dropped out by Jr. High School. The original church no longer stands. It was founded in 1908 across the street from the old church, marked by a tree. [Jesse Cowan, Tyrone Greenlee]

[59] O.T. He asked the congregation about their long-term plans, and it was decided to use a holistic approach and develop youth participation. The African American male is an "endangered species." Youth retreats and youth ministry were activated. [Tyrone Greenlee]

[80] Tyrone. When O. T. came, he was still attending and has worked as administrative assistant for ten years.

[88] O.T. Kept a high profile. He got majority support from members despite frustrations. Few black males were active, so he held rap sessions with them to get them spiritually focused. The young people assumed responsibility for every kind of service. When he had to draft people to do this, he let it peter out and focused on the 52 younger children coming along. [Jesse Cowan]

[137] Tyrone. His parents made sure that he went to church. It was a way of life. He tries to make the young people realize that their religion is a way of life.

[156] O.T. has youth come to his house for parties where they can see it is possible to have fun without being in a vulgar environment. He does not wear a collar and tie all the time.

[170] Tyrone. Holds retreats in Tennessee, Black Mountain, etc. This is an intensive time for sharing, singing, and Bible study.

[183] O.T. tells about the old church across the street. There were six classes in the auditorium and one in the boiler room. There has been an inquiry about turning the building into a medical clinic. Part of his ministry emphasizes a holistic approach, and he would like to see this happen. As a jogger, he keeps fit. Despite criticism, he wears shorts and exercises. Tyrone has an aerobics class at the Montford Community Center three times a week. Attitudes have changed. He knew Reid (the center, once called Livingston, was named for him) who died young. The center is used as an overflow for church activities. [William Reid, Oralene Simmons]

[250] O.T. Members of the congregation come from all over town, attracted by the friendly atmosphere and emphasis on youth, education and marriage enrichment. Lay people are encouraged to head the congregation in services.

[287] O.T. There are outreach programs and the tutorial program, held every other week on Monday that have been very successful. Eight to ten students made the honor roll, and certificates were presented by the church. Tutoring is basically on a one-on-one basis. He was 'adopted' by a little third grader and has helped him through a difficult time. [Erin Chapman]

[345] Tyrone. Says children from churches out of town come to the youth retreats.

[350] O.T. "Together We Build" was the slogan for the campaign for the new church. A young member, Bank Manager of Union Bank, helped with investments. Ninety thousand dollars was borrowed. Sixty-two thousand was spent acquiring four acres of land between Herman and Beach and the rest of the \$232,000 went into the building. There will be another section added in time. [Lynwood Howard]

[386] O.T. Members of the congregation represent a balance of all professions. His is an "Intentional" ministry, and people must continue to be excited about their activities. There is a spiritual deficiency in the lives of individuals. Joy and excitement can weave itself into the life of the community.

Fast Forward To

Side 2:

[2/00] O.T. He was invited to a meeting to talk about the deterioration of race relations by a white representative of the State Baptist Convention. At first he refused to sit around drinking punch, talking about vertical relationships with God. He wanted to get at the problem - racism. He knew of the resource being used in Brevard, America's Original Sin (enclosed). He was told to check it out and report back (not a single one of those people responded or attended the meetings). In the meantime, he had a call from Grant who had heard from both Susans. [Dr. John Grant, Susan Presson, Susan Walton]

A meeting was held at Mt. Zion. Twenty-three showed up and plans were made for the 1st nine-week program for the fall of 1993. One hundred and ten people registered. The idea mushroomed. The second session 236 people showed up and two groups had to meet at Reid Center. Inquiries have come from the Juvenile Center, MAHEC, and the educational community. There has been a tremendous impact. [Corbin Cooper, Rev. Frederick Gordon]

2/53] O.T. The congregation supported the programs, though a few said, "You're wasting your time - white people won't change." The church has other out-reach programs, i.e. prison ministry.

[2/67] Participants came from many areas - city and country officials, businesses, the mayor, educators, etc. [Susan Walton]

[2/83] The facilitators worked with the Brevard group. There have been viable changes in that community. A "hate" group moved into the area (see enclosure). [Rev. Frederick Gordon]

[2/106] Tyrone. Surprised at the amount of racism still here.

[2/115] O.T. He is the son of a sharecropper. We are no longer living in isolation. Because of technology, we are all interrelated.

[2/133] O.T. The format for the program was modeled on the Brevard experience. There was a key presenter for every section from a minority representative, (Indian, homosexual, black, Jewish, etc.) followed by small group sessions with two moderators.

[2/153] O.T. Assignments were given to the groups-to read the printed material and report on actions taken. One lady made a personal commitment to urge card shops (i.e. Hallmark) to carry cards depicting blacks.

[2/170] O.T. A number of people were invited, and inquiries have come from the city and university. Tyrone shared facilitating with Mary Thomas. [Mary Thomas]

[2/180] O.T. The steering committee was assigned the responsibility of inviting 5 people. The papers carried stories (Greenline, Citizen-Times, African Americans Shopper's Guide, Advocate). [O.L. Sherrill, Larry Wilson, (enclosure), Karl Atherton, Sheri Lane]

[2/219] Tyrone was on T.V. twice.

[2/227] O.T. plans to repeat these programs twice a year, one in the spring and one in the fall, with educational group meetings on an ongoing basis. There will be an attempt to bring alumni together for reflection and dialogue.

[2/256] O.T. feels the small group experience a jewel, for people share real feelings in a safe environment.

[2/270] Tyrone. It was exciting to see that people do have prejudices [he, in addressing the group several weeks ago admitted to a prejudice against "white women with white hair"- I knew I had to interview him - hope it helped - I couldn't be whiter!]

[2/284] O.T. said that a member of his small group worked with some members who agreed to adopt a 6th grade class and work with them for six years. This is a tremendous commitment. A banker said he wanted to change the composition of the workers to include more blacks. [Dwight Hulse]

[2/309] Tyrone is not married but has parents and an older brother. [William and Myrtle Greenlee, Michael Greenlee]

[2/309] O.T. has been married 32 years and has two children and four grandchildren. [Irene Vincent Tomes, Elizabeth Rene, Oliver Theophilus, Tomara Tomes, Christin, Shambera, Chalrisha]