

Pastor sends potent picture postcards to patrons of 'adult' businesses_53104

May 28, 2004

Posted: 5/28/04

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Baptist Press

KENNEDALE—Jim Norwood got so fed up with the negative impact sexually oriented businesses were having on his local community he began an unusual campaign to run them out of town.

And in the process, the Baptist minister was elected mayor.

The pastor of Oakcrest Family Church of Kennedale, a Baptist congregation in suburban Fort Worth, began taking digital photographs of cars parked at local adult businesses and mailing them to the homes of the customers.

Texas public vehicle registration records allow individuals to obtain addresses of vehicle owners just by taking down license numbers.

As his photo-taking efforts were in full swing, Norwood was elected mayor of the town of 3,600 in a two-to-one landslide victory over the incumbent mayor in mid-May.

The postcards Norwood sends have a photograph on one side.

On the other side is printed a message: "Observed you in the neighborhood. Didn't know if you were aware there is a church in the area ... Please stop by next time. We'd love to have you visit."

Also included is a schedule of church services and the church's counseling classes on sexual addiction.

Norwood said his first objective is to send a message to adult business customers that what they are doing is wrong and to make them aware of the help available to them at Oakcrest Church.

His other goal is to curb business at the local sexually oriented places so that they will be forced to move elsewhere.

"Being a chaplain at the jail, I deal with a lot of sex offenders," he said.

"And almost everyone I talk with says, 'Even if it would have been of the negative nature, I wish there would have been some intervention so it wouldn't have gotten to this point.'

"And unfortunately those are pastors, youth ministers, teachers and coaches that I talk to who have watched their lives totally crumble around them because of what happened."

Norwood also has noticed the negative image his community has developed with the abundance of adult businesses.

He added the pornography industry has overflowed into the general public as magazines are left on the streets and lewd acts are performed in parking lots.

For those worried about the problems such a postcard could cause upon arrival at a house, Norwood said the outcome is worth it.

“The thing I tell people is that if the husband and wife or boyfriend and girlfriend are on the same page, regardless of what page they're on, then my postcard isn't going to have any effect,” he said.

“But if they're not on the same page, I can look at this as possibly bringing attention to a problem a wife might want to know about to protect the children, to confront their mate.

“And there aren't just husbands down there, there are wives I've seen too.

“At least maybe it would open up a line of communication between the two so that they can talk about the problem.”

Despite any criticism he may receive for his postcard-sending campaign, Norwood said he and the volunteers he has gathered are determined to keep it up.

“We'll continue the emphasis as long as the Lord says so, but I did hear ... one particular store that's probably the nastiest of them all has plans to move out of the community,” he said.

Also, since the effort began in December 2003, Norwood said the church has seen or received calls from 12-15 people who either saw the media reports or received a postcard and were seeking help with sexual addiction.

“One thing I would attribute our victories to is that we have a group of people who pray on a consistent basis from different churches around the community,” Norwood said.

“And I believe the spiritual emphasis does more than anything else we do.”

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