

In Lincoln, Past Takes Center Stage

Play to Benefit Old Black Church's Restoration

By LINDA WHEELER
Washington Post Staff Writer

The narrow dirt road leading to the old Grace Methodist Episcopal Church in Lincoln has given way to grass because no one goes there much anymore. The pews and church bell are gone, and the sanctuary floor has collapsed but the sturdy fieldstone walls remain.

The 1885 building was abandoned 50 years ago when members decided to build a new church in Purcellville, naming it Grace Annex and changing the affiliation to Methodist. All that brings members of the black congregation back to Lincoln now is the occasional burial in the cemetery down the hill or tending

of graves.

"We've had projects over the years to repair the church, but for the past 20 years, it's kind of been on the back burner," said Katherine Summers, 70, who played the organ at the Lincoln building as a child. "It's too much for us to do, take care of two churches."

Restoration of the one-room building may move to the front burner if the Lincoln Preservation Foundation can raise \$100,000 to repair and restore the building, which would most likely be used as a museum for black history. The nonprofit foundation, founded in 1999, is dedicated to preserving Lincoln's heri-

See CHURCH, Page 12



Katherine Summers, 70, played the organ at Grace Church when she was a child.



BY TRACY A. WOODWARD—THE WASHINGTON POST

Valerie Konur and other cast members of a play benefiting Grace Church recently entertained guests of a local bed-and-breakfast at a fundraiser.

Groups Seeking \$100,000 To Restore 1885 Church

CHURCH, *From Page 1*

tage.

Grace Church was built by freedmen and members of the 1850 Goose Creek Meeting House, Lincoln's Quaker congregation. Services were conducted by a circuit preacher on the second and fourth Sundays, and the basement served as a vocational school at which Quaker women taught sewing, cooking and shoe repair.

The foundation is working closely with Summers and other members of Grace Annex to save the building and document its history. A two-part Civil War play, "ALL FOR THE UNION in Confederate Virginia!" by Leesburg playwright Meredith Bean McMath is the foundation's first fundraiser for the project. It opens Friday at Goose Creek Meeting House.

The play is based on a true story about three young Quaker women who lived in Waterford and pub-

lished a pro-Union newspaper, a daring enterprise in a state almost wholly on the Confederate side.

John Power, 40, of Delaplane, cast as the mean Confederate officer who harasses the women, said he was raised in Virginia and had relatives who fought on each side.

For Power, a chef employed by a local family, the war is ever present.

"I walk around Delaplane and think of the men who fought there, who traveled through there," he said. "For me, it's not North versus South. I've never had to take a side."

But in the play, representing Capt. John Mobberly, he is not a neutral person.

"This character lived in the bush," he said. "He was not a part of the regular army. He was a raider who lived outside the law. My job is to be despicable, to make sure ev-

See CHURCH, Page 13

Benefit Play to Open Friday

CHURCH, *From Page 12*

eryone in the audience hates me."

Stephen Beggs, 28, an art teacher at the Mill School in Middleburg, gets to play a good guy. As Union Lt. John William Hutchinson, he is a spy who tricks Mobberly into giving him information on Confederate troop movements and then meets and falls in love with Lida Dutton, one of the newspaper publishers.

"I bet my grandfather in Alabama is rolling in his grave," said Beggs, who has Confederate ancestors.

Beggs said he doesn't defend the North or South when talk turns to the war.

"I feel that people just got caught up in the times and where they lived," he said. "A lot of it was about states' rights, and that did include slavery. Virginia was caught up in the thick of it."

He said he was pleased that proceeds will go toward preserving the old church.

"History plays such an important part in our lives, telling us who we are and where we came from," he said. "Preservation enriches people's lives. Middleburg is a good example of that."

McMath said everyone in the cast is from Loudoun and Fauquier counties, and members include a housewife, professional writer, re-

tired airline pilot, lawyer and students from the local elementary and high schools.

The staging is simple, a cleared area at the front of the main room in the meetinghouse, with the 15-foot benches rearranged into a semicircle. Props include a wooden table, three chairs and a few household items such as a teapot. Everyone in the cast wears period clothing.

At a recent rehearsal, the men were getting used to wearing swords and carrying rifles. The younger women were laced in tight bodices, and all of the women tried moving gracefully in hoop skirts.

The play runs at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays through Nov. 22. Tickets are \$12 for adults and \$10 for seniors and children if purchased in advance, \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors and children at the door. Tickets are available at Final Draft Bookstore in Purcellville, the Lincoln post office, the Philomont Store and at www.lincolnpreservation.org.

The foundation is also sponsoring a holiday bazaar on the same days as the play. It will open from noon to 8 p.m. at the old Janney Store next to the meetinghouse, 18204 Lincoln Rd., Lincoln. Artists and crafters will offer pottery, jewelry, books, maps, quilts, toffee, wreaths, holiday greenery and Christmas cards.