

Revivalist is wanted by Police

Washington state holds three outstanding warrants for the evangelist, who led revivals this year in North Carolina

Charismatic pastors in the Southeast are being more careful after booking a revival speaker earlier this year who turned out to be a fugitive from justice. Four in the region (and one in Idaho) contacted by Charisma have disassociated themselves from evangelist Chad Taylor, a former Washington state resident who developed a following in the Northwest before moving to North Carolina. As of June, he had relocated his ministry to Nashville, Tenn.

Pastor Danny Steyne of Church at the Crossroads in Ahooskie, for two months Taylor preached a few times a week while also visiting other churches—discovered there were three outstanding criminal warrants for the evangelist. Authorities in Yakima County, Wash., issued two of them after Taylor failed to appear for a court hearing last August about child support he owed for two children.

Neighboring Kittitas County issued the other for failure to pay full restitution for a 1994 residential burglary. Taylor pleaded guilty to that crime and served about half of a 15-month sentence.

By April, when Steyne decided Taylor would no longer preach at Crossroads, the evangelist already had become controversial in Boise, Idaho, after being absent from a conference he helped organize and advertised on his Web site.

The no-show came a month after Yakima County's Crimestoppers program posted Taylor's photo on its Web site. He was the first person listed on the site for failing to pay child support, the sum of which totaled more than \$47,000 in late May.

Although Taylor didn't respond to Charisma's request for an interview, in messages sent to the magazine earlier he admitted to a criminal and immoral past and said he was divorced last year. He blamed his lack of payments for child support on his four-year incarceration in the early 1990s. He said he sent \$1,000 in May to begin paying the debt.

At press time, according to the prosecutor's office in Yakima, Taylor had paid \$1,300 since his arrest warrant was issued. The evangelist also owes current support of \$514 a month. His children, ages 8 and 13, are of separate mothers.

Taylor never married the first woman but did marry the second after the child's birth, according to Kevin Callaghan, chief deputy in the prosecutor's child-support division. Callaghan said the marriage ended in divorce in 1996.

Neighboring Kittitas County also wants Taylor to settle criminal restitution he owes. Margaret Sowards of the county's prosecutor's office said Taylor owed about \$1,000 of almost \$1,700 he agreed to pay as part of his plea.

The evangelist said his legal problems weren't the reason he didn't appear at the Passion for Harvest conference in Boise. He said it was because the Lord directed him to remain in North Carolina.

“In war, if the entire to just one battlefield, who would protect the rest of the territory?” he asked. “We are holding the East Coast; Passion for Harvest was holding the West. We are succeeding in both.

“I was taken aback by some of the reactions when I could not attend,” he added. “I made it very clear to leadership there that I was not coming to Boise in March.”

Taylor insists he has not rejected counsel about the need to clean up his act. At least two pastors say otherwise.

Steyne’s decision to curtail Taylor’s appearances followed several counseling sessions in which he encouraged the evangelist to resolve the warrants against him. Steyne said he even offered to accompany Taylor to court in Washington but Taylor refused.

Despite Taylor’s problems, Steyne calls the speaker a “fire-starter.” Because Taylor led members to evangelize in the streets, the Crossroads praise band has played in a local bar, and the owner has attended services.

“What my heart desires for Chad is full restoration,” Steyne said. “I believe God’s hand is on him. I don’t want to destroy him.”

Phil Dowdy, pastor of New Life Center in Elizabeth City, N.C., hosted Taylor in April.

“He does have a call and a gifting,” Dowdy said. There just needs to be some help with accountability. I think God is

doing that work even as we speak.”

A pastor in Mountain Home, Idaho, has a less sanguine view. After learning of the child-support obligations, Larry Seymour said he tried discussing the problem several times with Taylor, but the evangelist rebuffed the offers. Seymour pastors River of Life (Church of God, Cleveland, Tenn.).

“I’m as compassionate as anybody,” Seymour said. “I told him I would be interested in being part of his restoration process. But the subject as quickly as possible.”

Michael Fletcher, leader of a network of 30 charismatic churches based in Fayetteville, N.C., said pastors must get to know speakers before inviting them to their churches.

“We should receive ministry after a relationship is built, not build a relationship after inviting some famous guy to speak,” Fletcher said. “If you do that, you’ll never get burned.”

Ken Walker