

Bad manners and misguided zeal

It was a classic case of bad manners and misguided zeal. The kind of experience that leaves you feeling embarrassed, angry, and sad that some people choose to apply their intelligence and enthusiasm towards such a negative end.

Nancy Nagy Williams, the visiting pastor at St. James Presbyterian Church, had just begun conducting the morning service when suddenly, a voice rang out from the back of the church. "Excuse me", the disrupter began "but it is unscriptural to have a woman leading worship."

You could have knocked the entire congregation over with a feather, such was their state of shock. Several said afterwards they thought perhaps they were being treated to an unannounced 'real life' drama, preplanned and designed to make a point in an unexpected fashion.

But no, it soon became evident that this was the real thing.



FROM WHERE I LIVE
Bruce Stapley

I suppose all church officials harbour a silent fear of such an outburst. To happen, however, with a guest pastor in charge is a nightmare come true.

The 28-year-old minister stood in the pulpit, wide-eyed and open-mouthed for only a moment, then proceeded to tell the man she was entitled, according to the laws governing the Presbyterian Church, to conduct a service.

Her accuser, an outsider, insisted on carrying on with his outburst, until he was escorted from the sanctuary by an elder. As he went, he made one last attempt to

lay a biblical heavy on the energetic young lady; claiming that the day would come when she would have to hold herself accountable for her inappropriate station.

The man was treated more than fairly. It turns out Tribune Editor Jim Thomas, an elder in the church, had provided the man coffee money before the service. Fellow elder Alan Powell spoke with the man both before the service, and after escorting him out of the sanctuary. He was not nuts, it was agreed. In fact, his knowledge of scripture was essentially sound. Which leads me to wonder how any would-be Christian could apply his time, steeped faith in such a disturbing fashion, bearing in mind that Christ himself emphasized the importance of consideration of others.

Nancy Williams, try as she did, was unable to pull herself together for at least 15 minutes after the incident, so great was her upset. When the tears finally

flowed, I'm sure I was not alone in my feeling of anger and disgust towards the man who had so self-righteously levelled one who had spent much of her week preparing such a positive spiritual message.

It particularly gripes me that someone would deign themselves an appropriate critic of a church where members and staff alike are earning their keep, while the

detractor is unable to buy himself a coffee.

The apostle Paul, addressing the Thessalonians who were content to sit back and watch the world go by, made it quite clear we are to support ourselves whenever possible.

The church needs people who make it their business to delve deeply into the Bible in an effort to

interpret and apply what is written there, both to their own lives, and to the church in general. But when an individual barges into a church and, as a guest, proceeds to lay all sorts of heavy indictments on the modus operandi as practised by fervent believers, then I'm afraid all I can feel is what I believe to be 'righteous' anger.

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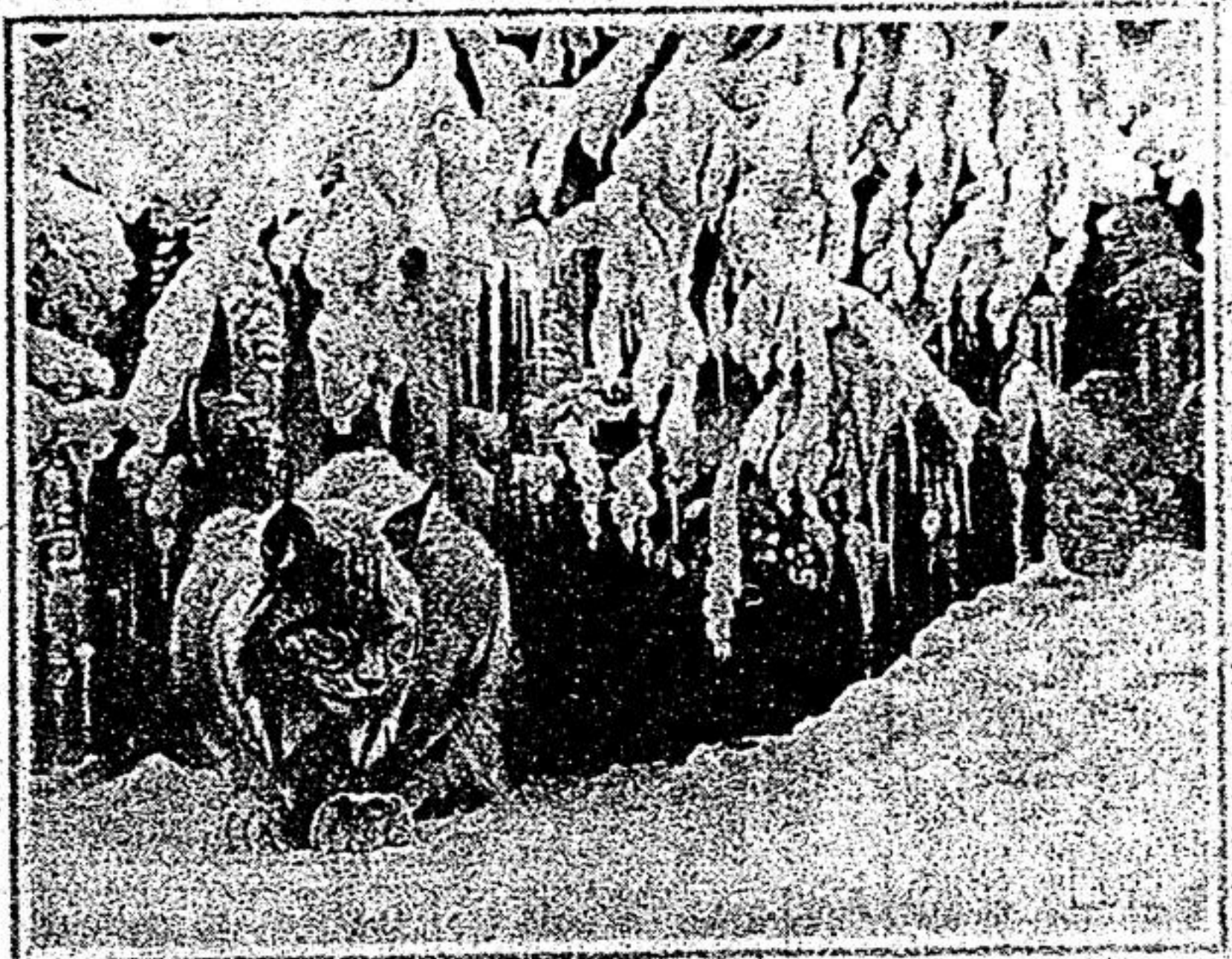
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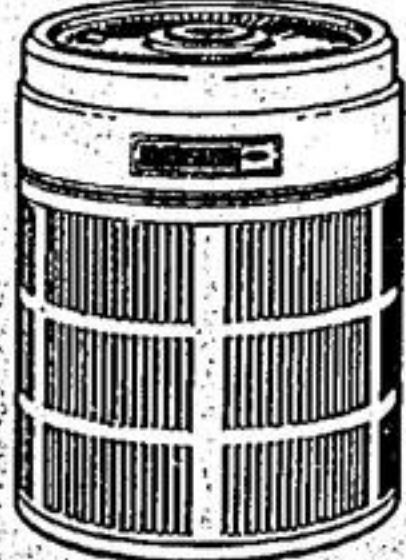
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