

By **CARLA MEYER**
Staff Writer

The Dixie Melody Boys, who are scheduled to play in the Gospel Tent at the Auglaize County Fair at 7:30 p.m. on Monday, Aug. 2, say they are looking forward to coming to Ohio to perform.

"Last year was our first year playing at the Auglaize County Fair, and we loved it," Dixie Melody Boys manager Ed O'Neal said. "We had a full crowd under the tent and it was a really great time."

O'Neal, who is the owner and manager of the quartet, joined the group in 1961. The band has experienced success in the last four decades. The group's success includes a Grammy nomination and numerous Fan Award nominations from The Singing News Magazine, which is a southern gospel music fan and trading publication.

O'Neal was named recipient of the Marvin Norcross Award, which is the highest honor presented at The Singing News Fan Awards ceremony. This was a highlight of O'Neal's career, he

said.

He received this award for his lifetime of service to the community and southern gospel music industry. O'Neal was inducted in the Southern Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2004.

"We love to perform in Ohio, and we are looking forward to seeing everyone again," O'Neal said. "We cleared our schedules so we could play at the fair again this year."

For the rest of Melody see the July 30 issue of the Wapakoneta Daily News

Separation of Church & State

By **MEGAN VEIT**
News Correspondent

More than 220 years after the Bill of Rights was written, an American ideal stemming from the document is still up for discussion. For area churches, separation of church and state is a way of life and a work-in-progress.

Freedom of religion is granted to each American citizen through the First Amendment. According to the Amendment, there may be no established state religion. There shall be no law "prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

"To me, one of the prominent themes in the Old Testament is showing hospitality to your neighbor," said the Rev. Steve Nelson, pastor of First English Lutheran Church. "This hospitality should be extended to all religions and all denominations."

The idea of a separation between church and state was originally recorded in the United States in a private letter from Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists in 1802. Jefferson stated that the First Amendment created a "wall of separation" between the two entities. He believed that religion is "solely between man and God."

Today, the United States still operates under Jefferson's idea that the law "can reach actions only, and not opinions." As citizens, Americans' religious beliefs are permitted to be an American's decision.

"I think overall the Lutheran church would favor the separation of church and state," Nelson said. "What we have works very well."

"In the silence of my heart," he said, "I can pray anywhere I want in this country."

The separation of church and state allows room for this hospitality, an understanding and respect for other religions.

The Rev. Dr. Alex Gondola, senior pastor of St. Paul's United Church of Christ (UCC), said his church has a similar perspective. The United Church of Christ is a "very strong supporter of the separation of church and state."

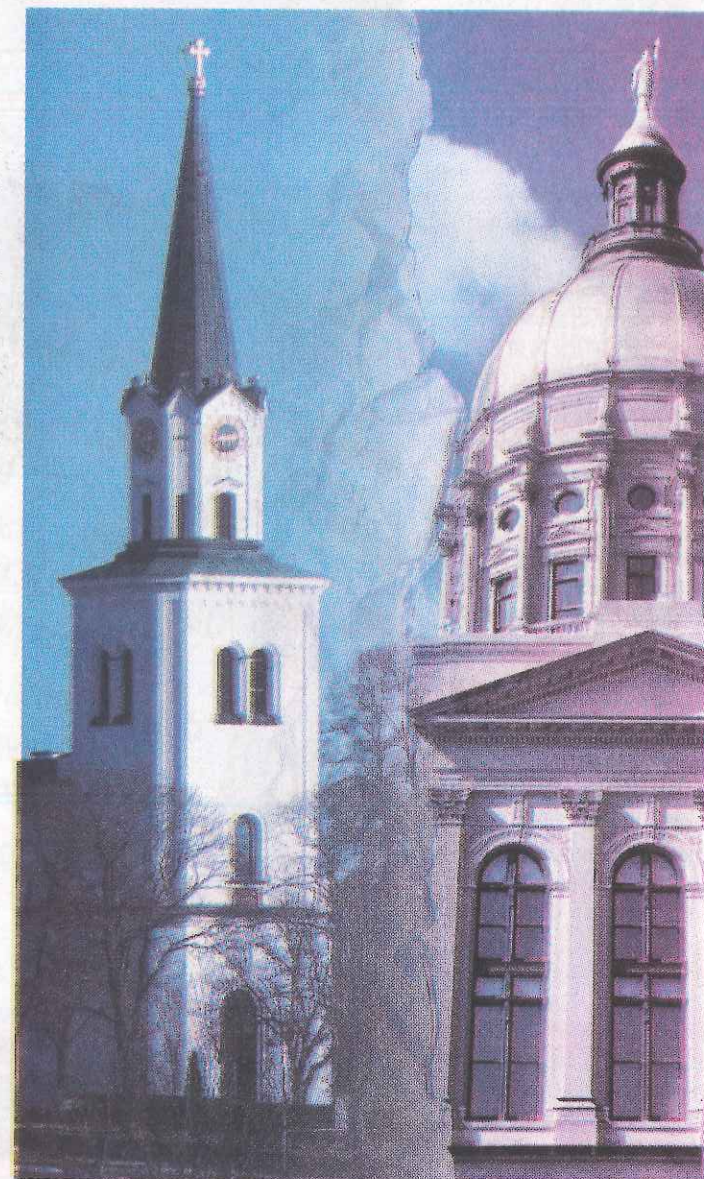
"In a sense, it protects us all," Gondola said. His UCC ancestors in Massachusetts felt differently.

Until the early 1800s, UCC was the official state church. Suffrage was granted only to members of the church.

The Roman Catholic Church was also slow to accept the idea of separation between church and state.

The Rev. Pat Slonecker, pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church, said that this slow adaptation is what keeps the church united.

For the rest of Church & State see the Aug. 13 issue of the Wapakoneta Daily News



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Brian Schlosser
Owner/Funeral Director

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