Youth speaks

**A Sooner reporter wrote about it**

By Beth Campbell, '29, in the Springfield Leader

AFTER a mad rush to the church in a "stolen" taxicab, frenzied straightening of dress and hair, a slow march onto the platform with toes ailing and knees not exactly normal, I faced what seemed to me the world last night, as I preached my "maiden" sermon from the platform of the First Congregational church under the auspices of the Sunday Evening forum.

And I'll venture no solo flight could equal it in thrill.

I had declared in a column last Monday that religion deserves a better presentation than it sometimes gets, that something ought to be done about sermons, and that I thought I could preach a better one than some I had heard. The result was the suggestion to "see if you can" and finally last night's sincere attempt.

The taxicab which was to take me to the church was late anyway, and when it stalled midway on the journey, I had that sinking feeling, a near-obsession, and I saw visions of a pulpit without a preacher, and a reporter without a job. The driver went for another machine leaving me to wait with my escort, and the hour was tolling for the start of the service. The boy in question, being a brave boy, and heaps more accommodating than the taxi man, tinkered with it a little. There was a sputter, then—contact—and off we went. I had to get there, you see, but HOW. The taxi was returned immediately, of course.

At the church, the Reverend G. Bryant Drake, the alert young pastor, was hurrying, graciously trying to take care of the overflowing audience. He did not appear to be particularly nervous, but when he caught sight of me he looked mighty relieved—or maybe that was when he began to be frightened.

I removed my coat and hat and then waited in a little anteroom. I held onto that precious manuscript which was my sermon with a firm grasp, but I was afraid to appear to be particularly nervous, but when he caught sight of me he looked mighty alarmed. "Is there anyone who didn't come?" I wondered. I felt very much alone although I kept insisting to myself that I was really very calm, and not at all frightened.

And then I looked out into the audience, and for the first time, was seriously alarmed. "Is there anyone who didn't come?" I wondered. I felt very much alone in the midst of many very many people, people in the pews, on the stairs, lining the walls, standing in the rear, leaning over the balcony, crowded in an adjoining room.

"Will I be able to make them hear me?" I thought. "How absurd of me to try a thing like this even on a challenge."—"Oh, I'll never be able to talk loud enough."

And then I wondered if what I had to say was worth their time. With all that crowd—I was beginning to distinguish people—professors, college students, fine sincere-looking men and women, progressive business men—who was I, a 21-year-old girl, just out of college, to think I had a message, something that was worth their while?

"I'll give them all I have," I resolved, "the best that is in me. That's all anyone can do." And then I felt better.

I used only one verse for the Scripture lesson. I have heard long never-ending passages too often. That gave me an opportunity to test my voice, although I will admit the first word I said was one long chance.

The chairman was a great help, occasionally whispering words of encouragement. Although I kept insisting to myself that I was really very calm, and not at all frightened, my hands got unruly occasionally, as I waited for him to introduce me.

I do not believe I have ever felt as responsible, as serious, as I felt that moment when I stood behind that pulpit and looked out at the audience. I have never felt as prayerful, as awed. I have never felt less critical of ministers, and the things which they, against all odds, are trying to do.

The sermon itself I remember as sort of a dream. There was one man whom I had never seen before. I remember, who inspired me more than anything. He laughed when I wanted him to laugh and looked serious at the proper moment. You have no idea what a help that was. The audience for the most part was baffling. The listeners were intent, I think, but I couldn't tell whether what I said was soaking in or not. I wonder how many ministers have felt that way.
The 26th Annual Interscholastic Meet
May 1, 2, 3 at Norman

By all means do not, during the terrific excitement and whirl of the big meet, neglect to make arrangements for a comfortable place to sleep. You may secure good CLEAN rooms at rates most reasonable. This fireproof hotel is located in DOWNTOWN OKLAHOMA CITY with street car and interurban service at its very door.

"BEST BEDS EVER"

HOTEL HUDSON
Rooms $1.50 to $2.00

YOUTH SPEAKS

(Continued from column 2, page 244)

And then I was through, so I stopped. And although the prayer wasn't a part of the program, it had to be. I felt that way. And then that was over, and I was a "pastor emeritus" as it were, and people were crowding up around, as I suppose they always do, but quite overwhelming me. They were lovely, saying nice things, and thanking me, when I should have been thanking them.

There was one old man who stooped and kissed me on the forehead, and gave me his blessing. I think the congratulations frightened me more than the rest, but finally I broke away and ran off with the office force. By the way if it didn't do anything else, it got more newspaper people inside of a church than had been in one in many a day.

This morning the Associated Press carrying the story, made what I hope was an error. Instead of calling me the "guest preacher" as they did later on, the...
Because of their dissatisfaction with the churches, many young persons today are "essentially religious, but don't know it," Miss Campbell suggested.

Current history and current literature—the war, the new schools of biography—have been disillusioning to youth—and have lead to a new search for truth, she said. When young people discovered that during the war governments themselves perverted the truth—when they discovered that "G. Washington and A. Lincoln weren't always the little tin gods they were cracked up to be"—their quest for fundamental truth became more intense, she said.

"Youth," she said, "wants to know the facts—all of them. By knowing the truth, even if it is derogatory, essential values can be arrived at."

Miss Campbell concluded by saying that "Life must be more than a gymnasium or a glorified laboratory. It must be full to the brim with happiness and also with meaning."

"A thrill? There is nothing more thrilling than life that is rich, free-sparkling—life that is taught us by Jesus."

"His pathway is one of adventure; one that challenges youth."

"We young people are seeking, searching for truth; and in Jesus we can find it. Perhaps this religion game is worth the candle, after all."

Following the sermon, scores of persons of all ages, from college students to gray haired patriarchs, flocked to the platform to congratulate Miss Campbell.

YOUTH SPEAKS

(Continued from column 1, page 245)

"I say," Power to preachers," seldom un-derstood, yet supremely deserving, won-derfully worthwhile.

The Springfield Leader commented in a lead editorial on February 25 on Miss Campbell's sermon as follows, under the heading, "Youth in the Pulpit:"

It is probably not for us to comment upon the excellence of the sermon which Beth Campbell, reporter of The Staff leader, delivered from the pulpit of the First Congregational church Sunday night. It is perfectly proper we feel, however, to reflect upon the good—or the evil—which it may have accomplished and to criticize or commend what preacher himself may have ex-pressed. Doctor James Hervey of the Benton Avenue Methodist church will not agree that such is our privilege for he has publicly de-clared that no one has the right to challenge a preacher and it is upon that point that we re-spectfully disagree with him.

But the church today does not always offer this religion in a form that satisfies youth, she added.

"The church has in a measure stood still," she said. "It is natural to grow. The world has grown. The churches today which have not been caught by the vital social gospel of the man Jesus are behind the times."

"They are scaring young people away from religion rather than drawing them to it."

"Some young persons today," she said, "have become so satiated with the brand of Christianity that have been hurled at them, that they condemn it all."

"We can't remember the time that Jonah swallowed the whole or the whole swallowed Jonah. And how far is anyone going to get arguing who swallowed what or why?" she explained.

"Unless the church takes heed, all I can see for it is an early death and a group of mourning friends."

More optimistically, she suggested that "Organized Christianity must stop, take stock, and realize that it must adjust itself to this modern world."

"Centuries of accumulated dead wood must be dropped off—to reveal that social ideal which was the inspiring motive and the central truth of the teaching of Jesus Christ."

Pounding out the copy came Saturday. I couldn't find a quiet place to think, and I was desperate with the fatal hour not long off, and not a single line yet transcribed. The office was too noisy. At home where I room radios all over the house, yet grogged, unstrung screeched on unceasingly—I wonder if ministers have radios—Finally, a kind hotel owner proffered me a quiet suite and I locked myself in and really got to work. I kept it up until 11 o'clock Saturday night and started again Sunday, reworking it and revising it and getting it into shape. Then at 4 o'clock I started memorizing it. At 7:30 I gave it. And that is that.

Although I still cling to my contention that religion is too fine a thing to be handled as badly as it sometimes is, that it does not always get the presentation that it deserves, I am content that majority of preachers do a lot better jobs than they get credit for, or than the average man could do in their shoes.

Personally, I have been weighed in the balance, and before some 1000 people.

Whether I have been found wanting or not I do not know and probably never will. But with Paul, "I have fought a good fight. I have kept the faith." Now I say, "Power to preachers," seldom un-derstood, yet supremely deserving, won-derfully worthwhile.

The Leader feels that the Reverend Drake rendered great service to his noble and exalted calling in asking Beth Campbell to take his pulpit. For, as he so aptly said, an opportunity is given to Youth to express itself. Youth that is good and pure and clean and longs for someone to take its hand and say: