

Universal Ethician Church

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25 June 2014

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BOTANICAL PRESERVE VANDALIZED

A botanical preserve purchased to protect 131 native species was seriously damaged on June 23, 2014 by contractors ordered by Waterwood Improvement Association to mow down 129 of the species protected under the management of The Universal Ethician Church.

The property was leased to the HOA with very stringent protective covenants that only allowed the mowing of 14 non-native and invasive species such as Bahia Grass, Johnson Grass, and Tuberous Verbain. The mowing contractor was threatened with termination of his contract with the HOA if he didn't follow the orders to mow down all but four of the total of 145 species growing on the sanctuary.

Ironically, two of the four species that the contractor was told to avoid were Johnson Grass, an invader from Africa and Asia; and Tuberous Verbain, an invader from Brazil.

The HOA is run by persons having a history of being opposed to the teachings of The Universal Ethician Church that concur with the Biblical admonition that we

act as good stewards of what religious people call God's Holy Creation. The HOA contractors under orders of the association have for 14 years systematically invaded church managed properties to damage or destroy rare native plants and trees.

In the recent past a rare 100 year old Longleaf Pine tree growing in the church's Wounded Warrior Veteran's Cemetery was destroyed by HOA contractors testing out a new chainsaw. The earliest blooming Dogwood tree in the area, on church managed property, was mutilated, and an extremely rare native Bonsai Longleaf Pine Tree growing on the Westernmost Longleaf Pine Preserve was chopped down by HOA contractors after these special trees had been pointed out to the association as having special value.

The contract between the private property owners and the HOA clearly states that the HOA is responsible for "maintaining vegetation as currently exists". The contract further demands that the manager of the botanical preserve be allowed "to point out species which should be protected during mowing."

In addition, the contract states that "WIA will use its best efforts to avoid mowing areas of high concentrations of said species". Except for areas that had been heavily invaded by Bahia Grass due to year after year of destruction of native species on the part of the HOA, there remained until today, areas of "high concentrations" of the 129 native species that the contractor was ordered to mow down before many of which had had a chance to bloom and go to seed.

Taking legal action against the politically powerful HOA in rural San Jacinto County where there is little love for the biosphere or its health, in spite of the fact that today's action clearly constituted a violation of a legally filed court order, would be very expensive for the church and its members.

Arguing in favor of protecting wild flowers and other native plants, some of them very beautiful and very rare is virtually impossible when to the majority of the

persons in charge of the HOA, anything that is not golf course turf grass is a weed that should be destroyed.

Native plants managed by the church have been studied by numerous scientists and include some plant communities in the G1 or “globally imperiled” category yet the HOA ordered that 200 blooming native orchids be destroyed. The church had to hire an attorney at significant expense to get the HOA to back off while the extremely late blooming orchids were being studied by Joe Liggio, author of the book *Wild Orchids of Texas*.

Bishop Russell was obligated by the HOA to place a flag by each orchid to keep the mowing contractor from mowing them down and then the HOA ordered the contractor to remove the flags and mow down the orchids before the orchid seeds had matured and the scientific studies had been completed.

FOR CONTACT INFORMATION OR PHOTOGRAPHS

Call Bishop George H. Russell at 936-581-4302 for further information or to arrange tours of the 25 wildlife sanctuaries and botanical preserves and also the area vandalized by Waterwood Improvement Association contractors.

George H. Russell, an outspoken opponent of the death penalty, is a resident of Huntsville, Texas, known worldwide as "The City of Death."

He is founder of The Patriot Network, and author of its 35+ web sites located at www.patriotnetwork.org, as well as founder of The Universal Ethician Church, an interfaith ministry with a worldwide following via the church's 275+ web sites located at www.salvationnetwork.org, and founder of The Ethician Foundation, www.ethicianfoundation.org.

Russell, born May 22, 1945, is a horror film producer, educational video producer, environmental activist, historic preservation specialist, photographer, art and antique collector, philanthropist, American patriot and ethician.

Additional biographical information may be found in Who's Who in America, through Internet searches, and in other publications. Images of Mr. Russell suitable for downloading for publication may be found at www.salvationnetwork.org.