Salem Baptist Church, 1908

Events Calendar

January 2011

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
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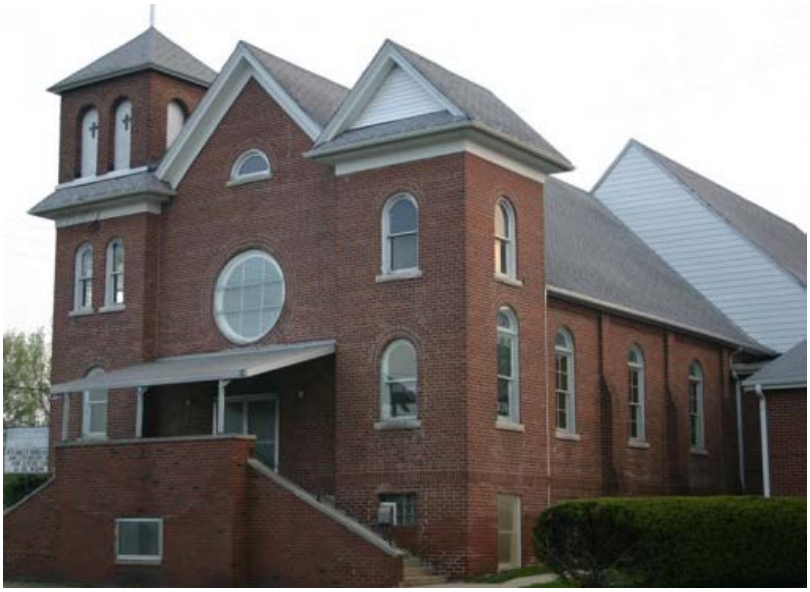
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					



500 East Park Street

Romanesque Revival architectural style

The older portion of the current Salem Baptist Church was re-constructed in 1908 after the original building was destroyed by fire in 1869. It is the oldest African-American based church in Champaign and is an established and familiar visual feature in the community. Listed as a Local Landmark on August 18, 1998.

October 13th, 2008

«Dec | Feb»

Champaign Programs
Urbana Programs
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Champaign County
Neighborhoods
Urbana Neighborhoods
Champaign Neighborhoods
Mahomet
St. Joseph
Tolono
Historic Buildings
Buildings Saved
Buildings Lost
Buildings At Risk
Hidden Treasures
Resources
Education
Preservation
Resource Categories
Moving Buildings
PACA Library
Join Now
Volunteer
The Newsletter
Contact Us
Terms of Use
Privacy Policy
Architectural Salvage Warehouse:
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217.359.7222
pacaexdir@gmail.com.

Salem Baptist Church, Champaign, Illinois

Title	Salem Baptist Church, Champaign, Illinois
Coverage / Year	1950
Description	Salem Baptist Church, 500 East Park Street, Champaign.
Interpretation	The present building stands on site of original frame church, built 1869. Together with the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, it was one of the earliest predominantly Black churches founded in Champaign County. It was originally founded under the name of the Second Baptist Church in 1867 and burned down in th 1870s. While it was being rebuilt, the members of the church rented another facility on East Clark Street. The name of the church was changed to Salem Baptist Church in the early 1900s. The church in this photo was built at 500 East Park Street around the same time. A mortgage-burning ceremony was held at the Salem Baptist Church in 1950. The church has served the need of Champaign's African-American community since 1867.
Lesson Plans / Themes	Urban Treasure Hunt
Learning Standards	16 History 18 Social Systems
Author or Creator	Miller, Patricia L. Illinois Heritage Association
Subject / Keywords	Buildings Champaign, Illinois Churches
Collection Publisher	Illinois Heritage Association
Further Information	For any further information related to this record, please contact the Collection Publisher. See http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/tdc for more information about this project.
Rights Management Statement	http://images.library.uiuc.edu/projects/tdc/conditions.htm
Resource Identifier	pmh4002
CONTENTdm file name	4628171572002_salembaptistchurch.jpg

Important note: Information in this article was accurate in 2008. The state of the art may have changed since the publication date.

Chicago Tribune

Let's talk about (not having) sex

Chicago Tribune - April 16, 2008

Jessica Reaves

Taylor Moore's spirited crusade for chastity is a tough sell to jaded teens. But she has faith in her message.

On a bitterly cold Tuesday evening in February, the pews of Salem Baptist Church in Champaign were packed with teenagers who had been hustled into the warmth of the sanctuary by a lone parent or teacher. The girls shed their coats and made their rounds, greeting one another with glad shouts, while the boys slouched into the benches, the furry trim of their parka hoods lined up like a parade of woodland creatures.

Associate Pastor Rev. Lorenzo Bolden struggled mightily to hold their attention, trying to drum up some friendly school rivalries, but it was no use. It was 7 p.m., the kids had put in a full day at school, and they were resisting this egregious imposition on their free time. A few minutes later, just as their restlessness was approaching all-out rebellion, a hiss came from the hallway.

"She's coming. . . . She's here!"

At the front of the sanctuary, a middle-aged woman stood, a microphone in her hand. "I can tell you a lot of things about her," she proclaimed over the muffled din of kids' voices and the shushing of the adults. "But the only thing you really need to know about Taylor Moore is that she loves the Lord with all her heart. And so I'm going to bring her up. . . . Not my child, but God's child." Trudy Moore's voice took on the booming effect of a Chicago Bulls announcer calling out the starting lineup: "Taaaaaayloooooooooor Mooooooooooore!"

The doors swung open and a petite young woman, sleek in a black pantsuit, her long hair swept back into a ponytail, strode quickly down the aisle, smiling broadly.

Accepting the microphone from her mother, she turned the full force of her enthusiasm on her audience. "Come on, make some noise!" she called out into the grumpy snickering and murmurs of teenagers being held against their will. Scattered applause and a weak "Woo-hoo!" rang from the pews. "Come on, now," she tried again. "Y'all ready to have a good time?"

The adults in the side pews applauded pointedly, their eyes seeking out and nudging their unresponsive charges. Undaunted, the young woman tried another tack: reciting Scripture, calling out the verse from Thessalonians with the confident cadence of a seasoned preacher:

" 'For this is the will of God,' " she intoned, " 'that ye should abstain from fornication!' Somebody say amen!"

"Amen!" came the reluctant response from her young audience.

"Somebody say amen," she repeated, cajoling.

"Amen!" A little bit louder-she was getting to them.

"Somebody say amen!" This time it was a command. And her audience obeyed, shouting "amen!" as one. Now she was on a roll.

"I am an 18-year-old virgin!" Dramatic pause. "But wait! There's more! I am an 18-year-old virgin who is practicing abstinence until marriage!" Deep breath, voice lowered conspiratorially. "I know what you all are thinking: 'She ain't gonna get none till she's married?!' " An exaggerated, theatrical nod. "Yup."

She was working the room now, picking out individuals, forging a connection. "Yup," she repeated. A warm wave of laughter rose around her, as everyone nodded along.

"Yup," she continued. "Until you put that fat rock on my left hand." A wave and flourish of her ring finger. "Then you release the beast..." She paused for the roar of laughter she knew was coming. "I said I was gonna be for real tonight . . . Like I said, I'm proud of it."

And with that note of defiance, she had them: Abandoning their postures of boredom or studied nonchalance, they were enraptured by this charismatic, apparently fearless, girl. She was hawking the same shtick their parents and grandparents and aunts and uncles and preachers had been trying to sell them for years. But this time-and they weren't quite sure why-they were actually thinking about buying.

"It's something I've heard before, but (she) made me think about it differently," said Moneesha Sibley, 16, who began the evening slumped in the back row, but slowly changed her posture as Moore spoke.

Taylor Moore, rising star of the Abstinence Education movement, had arrived. Moore would probably resist that characterization, only because it doesn't begin to capture the range of her talents. She's a gifted singer and drummer (as a student at Kenwood Academy in Chicago she was a Ravinia Jazz Scholar and a member of the All-City High School Orchestra) and a cable television host and producer. She has campaigned nationwide for abstinence education, as well as literacy and anti-violence programs.

Now she's a freshman at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Jazz Studies major) and a recipient of a prestigious scholarship from the Jackie Robinson Foundation. Moore's application, according to foundation president Della Britton Baeza, included "effusive" endorsements from Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the late Yolanda King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr., who, after hearing Moore speak at an event honoring her father, wrote, "Many people have recited my father's speeches . . . but this child brought tears to my eyes."

Moore is preternaturally mature-in her stately bearing, careful diction, single-minded focus-but doesn't come across as creepy or plastic, as is often the case in kids who take on adult responsibilities.

Still, she's only human, and it must be tough being a full-time student, motivational speaker, media darling and lightning rod for one of the country's most contentious social issues. She's a rebel in a turtleneck sweater and modestly cut wool pants, standing amid a crowd of low-cut jeans and spaghetti-strapped tops. And like any true rebel, she knows how challenging, even hostile, an uncomprehending world can be.

Moore freely admits her path isn't always easy; she's just good at making it look that way. "I have long days," she says. "And nights. It's hard; I'm not going to beat around the bush." When things are bad, she turns to God. "And we just talk. And in that time of talking and communication, I just bawl, you know, like a baby."

But she's fully committed, she says. Doing God's work.

Growing up on the South Side, the only child of a single mother, Moore's faith was evident at an early age. "I've been praying since I could talk," she says. And she started performing soon after, singing or reciting poetry to anyone who would listen. One day, after hearing her speak at the Scott Joplin Elementary School on the Southwest Side, a custodian asked her to speak at a school event in his neighborhood.

"He said, 'People need to see this-young people taking control of their lives,' " Moore remembers. So she stood up in front of a crowd of strangers and delivered what she calls "a message of excellence."

"I told my peers, 'As we go back to school, let's remember why we're there.' " When she finished, she was swarmed by kids and parents who wanted to shake her hand, talk to her, ask her advice. One woman pulled Trudy Moore aside. "She said, 'Your daughter is such a wonderful motivational speaker,' " Taylor says. "And a light went off: Finally, I had a name for what I did." One week later, she had her own set of business cards.

She was 9 years old.

By the time she was 12, Moore's "message of excellence" had gained fans at churches (which provide a "love offering" to offset her expenses) and secular groups (which pay her a speaker's fee). Abstinence crept gradually into her speeches, a natural extension of her original theme: "Excellence" is only achieved through discipline and self-respect, neither of which, in Taylor's mind, is compatible with premarital sex.

The year she was 12, after speaking at a national abstinence event, Moore stepped down from the podium and scanned the crowd. She spotted Libby Gray Macke, director of Project Reality, the Glenview-based abstinence education organization that provides curricula for schools nationwide. Moore walked over and introduced herself. Macke replied, "I know who you are."

This was a big moment for Moore. She describes her friendship with Macke, who has since left Project Reality, as something pre-ordained. "You know when you meet someone and you feel like you've known them forever?" Macke quickly became "Aunt Libby" to Moore, who was thrilled to find a mentor who had created a successful professional life out of abstinence activism.

Abstemious people-regardless of which transgression they're resisting-aren't known as the life of any party. They are often thought of as deprived souls, faces pinched and drawn, mouths tight in distaste or disgust. Taylor doesn't fit this mold, which is one reason she's so good at what she does-getting an unconventional, unpopular message across to kids who aren't sure they want to listen in the first place.

She speaks to groups of teenagers, to congressional committees, to church groups. She talks about her experiences with would-be boyfriends, her anecdotes delivered with what seems like startling candor. And then you realize Moore has perfected the art of controlling a conversation-answering each question, sprinkling in a juicy detail or two, all the while skillfully leading you to the topic she wants to discuss.

She'll talk about her mother ("She's really proud of you," I tell Taylor. "I'm proud of her too," she says) and her father, who left before Taylor was born. ("I know his name. But I don't care to Google him, I don't care to know who he is, where he is. He knows how to get in contact with us.")

But eventually we're back to one of her favorite subjects, a source of indignation: the teen obsession with relationships. How can you be in a relationship,

she demands, when you don't even know who you are?

It's a question she asks her peers, as well as guys who are interested in her-and there have been quite a few over the years, including a smooth-talking high school football star. Anyone who approaches Moore in the hopes of making a date gets the lowdown on her commitment to abstinence, which rules out any physical contact. ("It's a slippery slope," she says of kissing.)

For the guys who stick around, there's a conversation-heavy, getting-to-know-you phase, which weeds out guys who think they're going to be the one to "crack the lock" of the abstinence vow, as Moore puts it (ahem, high school football star). The truly committed get a lesson in appropriate "date" locations and behaviors. One young man was foolish enough to suggest watching a movie in one of their dorm rooms.

"I said, 'I don't know you,' " Moore recalls, " 'and even if I did, you're still not coming to my room.' Because has anyone ever watched a movie with the lights on? No." So they played pool and ate pizza instead.

Moore is able to function socially, in part because she's absolutely committed to abstinence. But what about all the other kids who don't have Moore's unshakable self-confidence, her intimidating list of talents or her all-encompassing faith? The 12-, 15-, 18-year-olds who don't have a sustaining force like Trudy Moore in their lives, who aren't equipped, for whatever reason, to take the high road? What happens when they're tempted-by hormones, puppy love, peer pressure or a heady cocktail of all three-to make a choice other than abstinence?

The sex education debate has its own language, words that seem chosen for their blandness: "Comprehensive" and "abstinence-plus" sex education programs promote appropriate condom use, teach sexual communication skills and encourage abstinence, although not to the satisfaction of abstinence advocates. They favor "abstinence-only" curricula, which focus exclusively on maintaining virginity until marriage.

Sex education, long a hot potato on the plate of public education, has bounced among school boards and PTA meetings and teachers' lounges. For years, individual schools did their own thing, usually without much oversight. Things began to change in 1982, when Congress passed the Adolescent Life Family Act, which provided small grants to education programs promoting abstinence. In 1996, an obscure provision in Bill Clinton's national welfare-reform legislation earmarked certain state education funds for abstinence-only education. But the serious money didn't start flowing until 2001, and today, state and federal spending on abstinence-only education has surpassed the $1.5 billion mark. To receive the money, school programs may not discuss contraceptives except to emphasize failure rates.

Some of the nation's most popular abstinence-only lesson plans come from Glenview-based Project Reality. Founded in 1985 by Kathleen Sullivan, who was alarmed by sex education in her children's school, Project Reality sells "character based" abstinence-only education materials to elementary, middle and high schools in 23 states. Their curricula, which focus exclusively on practicing abstinence until marriage, were used in 34 percent of Illinois schools last year, reaching some 120,000 students.

Last year, when abstinence-only education funding was cut for the first time in a decade, Project Reality was blindsided, says Sullivan. Every May for the last 20 years, Project Reality got a check from the Illinois Department of Human Services. So last spring, when the check didn't arrive, Sullivan figured there'd been a clerical error, or that the state budget stalemate had delayed payments.

In September, they still hadn't gotten a check, and Sullivan started worrying.

She called the state budget office and asked where the money was. "We'd sent thousands of books out at that point," Sullivan says. No one had an answer. (Repeated calls for this story to the Illinois budget office and state public health department were not returned).

Meanwhile, Sullivan and her colleagues have tried to patch together a funding plan for some of the Project Reality programs around the state using private donations and grant money, and often asking the schools to pay for the curricula themselves.

Sullivan is infuriated not only because she's gotten the runaround, but also because the state has made the "unjust" decision to cut $1.2 million to Project Reality while continuing to funnel cash into other adolescent health programs.

It was a purely political move, she maintains, designed to benefit the politically connected health clinics and youth parenting programs, which, says Sullivan, are designed to "pick up the pieces after things go wrong."

Long before her daughter arrived to give her speech at Salem Baptist, Trudy Moore was glad-handing in the sanctuary and halls, shaking hands and waving at old friends and new acquaintances.

A vivacious, energetic woman who has unapologetically shaped her life around her only child's growing roster of public appearances, Trudy has probably heard 100 variations on this Teen Talk speech. Not that you'd ever know it. In the first few minutes, as Taylor struggled to engage her young audience, Trudy bolstered her daughter with a chorus of lusty "Amen's!" and loud "I-know-you-did's!"

Each exclamation was delivered at precisely the right moment, and with the absolute conviction of someone who believes they are bearing witness to the truth. Although she acts as Taylor's full-time manager, Trudy's unfaltering support isn't limited to public appearances; the pair are exceptionally close.

Eighteen years ago, Trudy, a former editor at Jet Magazine, was living in a condo on the South Side. She met a man at her gym, they dated, and she got pregnant. The guy-Taylor's father-didn't stick around, and Trudy was left to raise their daughter on her own.

As opening chapters go, it's hardly unusual. Identical scenarios play out every day. Which is why, Trudy says, the rest of their story resonates with so many people.

"It's just like God to use the child of a single parent in the inner city to relay a message of abstinence, when so many of our kids are growing up in single-parent homes," Trudy says. "If she'd been the daughter of a doctor or a lawyer in one of those gated communities, well, people would have said, 'You don't know my pain.' "

Recent legislation ensures the continuation of federal funds for abstinence-only education at least through the end of 2008. Beyond that, no one's taking anything for granted. Within the last year, a handful of high-profile reports have hammered at abstinence education, questioning the programs' results and putting the advocacy community, including groups like Project Reality, on the defensive.

Most recently, researchers at the University of Washington found that students who attend comprehensive sex education classes are half as likely to get pregnant as their peers in abstinence-only education classes or those who don't receive any sex education. The study, which appears in the April 2008 issue of the Journal of Adolescent Medicine, is the first to compare national teen pregnancy rates and sex education methods, but only the latest to discredit claims that abstinence education delays sex or prevents pregnancy.

One report, from the nonpartisan National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, went further, stating that abstinence programs pass along medically inaccurate information about the efficacy of condoms and ways of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. The group agrees with 90 percent of U.S. parents and teenagers who, according to polls, favor a curriculum that encourages abstinence but includes practical information about contraception.

Abstinence-only proponents insist their programs are working. And certainly the abstinence message is making an impact: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, between 1991 and 2005 there was a 14 percent drop in the number of teenagers who reported having sex. (It's not clear whether the successful abstinence messages are delivered at school, at home or in a religious setting.)

More nebulously, teen pregnancy and birthrates also dropped during that period, a shift that may be attributable to increased abstinence-only education or improved use of contraception, depending on your point of view.

This type of statistic, so easily manipulated to fit any agenda, is the bane of social scientists. Unfortunately for them, and anyone else looking for concrete answers, the sex-ed files are filled with malleable numbers. Case in point: In 2007, the teen pregnancy rate rose for the first time since 1991. Why? Tony Perkins, president of the pro-abstinence Family Research Council, pinned the jump on the "utter failure...of contraceptive-focused sex education," while comprehensive sex-ed boosters blamed a lack of information about contraceptive use.

Or consider March's headline-making CDC report showing that one out of every four teenage girls has a sexually transmitted disease. Among African-American girls, the incidence is nearly 50 percent. From any perspective, this is shocking news. But what does it mean?

According to Cecile Richards, president of Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the study shows that "the national policy of promoting abstinence-only programs is a $1.5 billion failure, and teenage girls are paying the real price." Abstinence educators beg to differ.

No one knows better than politicians just how treacherous the subject of sex education can be. Factor in the inevitable laundry list of companion issues-AIDS, condom distribution, abortion, parental notification-and you're in no-win territory, a.k.a. political hell.

And so, in statehouses and in the U.S. Congress, inaction rules the day. Despite polls showing widespread public support for teaching a broad range of sex-education topics, including abstinence and contraceptive use, and support for comprehensive sex education from such professional organizations as the **American Medical Association** and the American Academy of Pediatrics, most politicians won't publicly resist requirements for abstinence-only programs-or, by extension, publicly challenge the Bush administration. The White House has repeatedly defended abstinence-only education, commissioning studies criticizing comprehensive sex-ed programs for not including enough information about abstinence.

At the state level, governors face a tough decision. Rejecting the Title V funds earmarked for abstinence-only education, as 17 states have already done, means more freedom for local school boards to decide what sex-ed format works best for them. It also means coming up with new ways to pay for those formats, a real challenge for most cash-strapped local governments.

While Illinois continues to accept federal funding for abstinence-only education, standards for sex education don't seem to exist. According to a paper commissioned by the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health and Planned Parenthood and published in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology, 97 percent of Illinois public schoolers who attend sex-ed classes learn about HIV/AIDS, 89 percent are told about abstinence until marriage but only 34 percent learn how to use condoms.

In April 2006, the Chicago Public Schools issued new comprehensive sex-education standards. But since no one seems to be keeping track of who's teaching what to whom, the standards are effectively moot.

At Kenwood Academy, Moore sat through comprehensive sex education alongside her classmates. She did not enjoy the experience. "The comprehensive classes felt really uneasy," she says. "And it wasn't just for me. I don't mind. . . you know . . . whatever . . . ." Moore, usually so articulate, is fumbling for words. "It just created this awkwardness within the class."

How does she feel about mandatory comprehensive sex education? "I'd argue against it because it lowers the bar for students," she says. For many kids, she says, an abstinence class provides an alternative to the status quo.

"Maybe they're coming from a household where it's cool to be promiscuous, or to be out all hours of the night, with whoever, doing whatever." Abstinence classes, she adds, give those kids a new choice. "They can say, 'Hey, there's nothing wrong with me. I just don't want to [have sex], because that's not where my priorities lie.' "

Wendy Shalit, whose books "A Return to Modesty" and "Girls Gone Mild" recount girls' reactions to a hyper-sexualized culture, first met Moore several

years ago at an abstinence-education conference.

Shalit was struck by Moore's effect on other kids: "As soon as I saw her peers' reaction as she sang the lines, 'What's wrong with being a good girl? I can make a difference in this world,' I thought, "Wow-now here's our answer to Britney Spears!" And so I wanted to let more people know that Taylor was out there."

Moore is at the forefront of the modesty movement-or, as Shalit puts it, she rejects the assumption that "the only way to be empowered is to be publicly sexual, and everyone else is just repressed and a prude." Says Shalit, "Taylor just says and sings what she believes, she's not a pleaser. Her response to peer pressure is to 'peer-pressure your peers back!' And I think that's what makes her such a gifted leader. She is totally fearless."

And in many ways, Moore is a remarkably brave person. But after spending some time with her, one can't shake the sense that her fearlessness doesn't extend to her dealings with other people, or opening up to platonic friendship, let alone romantic love. When I broach the subject of friends, Moore turns coolly analytical, and shrugs, as if to say it doesn't much matter.

"I don't have a lot of friends," she says in her forthright way. "My mom is my friend. She knows a lot about me, and she's seen me at my highest and my lowest. And unless you've seen that in me, you can't possess that title [of friend]." She considers a few girls "sisters," which is different than calling someone a friend, because "you can talk to a sister on an intimate level, but you don't have to hang out."

This is not to suggest that Moore is blind to what's happening around her. She knows, she says, about sex, thanks to a cultivated circle of "associates," as she calls them. That sounds pretty businesslike, I say. She shrugs again. "I've been known to be very diplomatic. Very political. But that's how it is. A lot of people use the term friend very loosely."

Her associates, she says, help keep her informed. "If I didn't have associates, I'd be in an abstinence box. So we talk," she says. "[One classmate] was saying she didn't want to talk to me about [sex] because I'm a virgin-she didn't want to 'tell my virgin ears.' And I was like, 'Girl, please!' Although I'm a virgin, I know things, I'm informed, I'm educated. . . ."

Another associate told Moore about her first sexual experience. "She's like, 'It hurts at first, but you know, with more experience, then it's walking in paradise.' "

Moore maintains that she's perfectly fine with the choices other people make. But, she allows, if she thinks she can help someone, she's open to the possibility. "In my purity, there's a chance that I can help," she says. "If it happens, it happens. . . . Because people can only live un-righteously for so long."

And yes, she has been attracted to guys. One in particular really got to her, and she found herself "in a state of lust."

"But lust is totally different from actual love," Moore says. "When you're in a state of lust, you'll do crazy things. And then you'll look up, like, 'I can't believe I just did that.' Because now you don't even like that person anymore."

The guy has since dropped off the radar. "So, apparently it wasn't anything worth having anyway," she says. I search her face for a trace of defensiveness, but can find only cheerful resignation.

It's just as well he showed his true colors when he did: Moore spends so much of her day running from clubs to appointments to meetings to classes to studying to speaking engagements, it's hard to imagine her squeezing anyone into her frenetic schedule. And that's no accident: Moore is a big believer in the power of distraction over temptation. "Distractions are great," she says. "As long as they're good. Good distractions keep you from bad distractions."

It seems an unfilled schedule, to paraphrase the old saying, is the devil's workshop. "When you're idle," Moore says, you're susceptible to daydreaming, which might lead eventually to impure thoughts. "But if you're out, busy, involved, doing community service-there's no time."

It's the morning after Moore's Teen Talk at the church, and we're sitting in the Bruce Nesbitt African-American Cultural Center on the U of I campus. As Moore reels off her schedule from the last 24 hours, I'm overwhelmed by the urge to take a sympathy nap.

"Yesterday I had class from 12:30 to 6:50, " she says. "Then Teen Talk from 7 to 8, then scholarship meetings from 9 to 10:30, so I don't get in until 11 or so. And then I'm e-mailing people and texting and doing homework. So I didn't go to sleep until around 3 o'clock. And I had to get up for a 9 o'clock class this morning."

Her school schedule is paramount, because as much as she enjoys her travels and speaking engagements, Moore considers herself a student first. And she takes that job seriously, earning a 3.66 GPA her first semester. ("I was thoroughly pleased with that," she says.) She was chosen to be a resident adviser during her sophomore year, and is taking a special class to prepare for that role.

Moore wears a silver ring on a chain around her neck. I ask about it, and she explains it's her "purity ring," given to her by an aunt-a symbol of the commitment she's made. She won't take it off, she says, until she gives it to her husband on their wedding night.

Will he be a virgin as well? Is that a requirement?

"A lot of people ask me that," she says. "And yes. I say, I've done it, and the same faithfulness I'm giving to my husband before I even know him, I'm sure he's giving to me too."

How will she know for sure that he's a virgin?

"Oh, I can spot a liar," she says. "I'm thankful I've been given the spirit of discernment. I can spot who's keeping it real and who's being phony just to get

some undergarments."

This wasn't boastfulness. It was faith, as Moore explained a few days later in an e-mail. Her confidence in finding a suitable husband, she says, is really just her confidence in God.

The night she delivered her Teen Talk, Moore was trying to see whether she could take a midterm exam a few days early so she and her mother could go to New York later that week. Moore was scheduled to make her third appearance on "The Morning Show With Mike and Juliet," where she's become the de facto cheerleader for the abstinence cause. But while Moore prevailed over her exam schedule, even she is no match for the weather. When I e-mailed to ask how the trip had gone, she wrote that the flights had been canceled. Which may have been providential.

"I looked at the segment I was going to be on and was glad I wasn't there," she wrote. "They were talking about this group that makes fun of people who practice abstinence. As you know I am very passionate about abstinence, and if I had been on the show my passion would have probably been a little too intense and the show would have had to go to a commercial. So everything happens for a reason."

That e-mail-candid and slightly feisty-is classic Taylor Moore. She's nervy and funny in a slightly old-fashioned way. And, thanks to nearly a decade of performing in front of crowds and fielding nosy questions from her peers (and reporters), she's a true professional, handling her demanding schedule with the grace any adult would envy. But every once in a while, for a brief moment, her guard budges-she blushes, or laughs a bit too loudly, or glances at her mother, as if waiting for answers. She flashes a hint of the kid she still is, and that momentary, jarring juxtaposition of chilly poise and childlike vulnerability triggers a surge of protectiveness.

In that instant, I abandon all pretense of journalistic objectivity and acknowledge that I really want Moore to find that fairy-tale ending, her pure-as-the-driven-snow Prince who will make her weak in the knees, put that rock on her left hand and lead her to happily-ever-after.

And even though I'm not a big believer in fairy tales, I harbor a sneaking suspicion that Moore will find what she's looking for. Not because she deserves to, which she certainly does. But because her faith is so strong that she will accept whatever happens as God's will, and that knowledge alone will make her happy.

Barring some dramatic scientific or political breakthrough, the debate over abstinence education will rage on for years, long after Taylor Moore has found her Mr. Right. Ironically, for true believers like Moore, the outcome of this debate is largely irrelevant. They trust absolutely in the abstinence message because they believe it is nothing less than God's own truth.

And nothing-no scientific study, no political argument-stands a chance against the power of that faith.

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