

OKLAHOMA CITY TIMES

Waning interest in institutions cited

Youths want 'people change'

Collegian interest in institutional religion is declining, while student concern about personal religion is growing, a young California broadcaster specializing in campus ministry says.

Vern Bennom Grimsley, director of the Spiritual Renaissance Institute in Berkeley, was in Oklahoma City this week to interview about 40 Oklahoma City University students for his radio show broadcast weekly by stations throughout the nation.

During interviews with more than 11,000 students on campuses of about 50 colleges and universities across the country, Grimsley said he feels the ma-

ior trend is the decreasing interest in religion as an institution and increasing interest in religion as a personal thing.

"In the 60s, students were predominantly concerned with changing social and political structures. There has come on the campuses a disillusionment about changing the structure without changing the people," Grimsley said.

"They feel even if we could create an ideal political structure, it would be torn down if people hated each other. You can't make a good omelet with bad eggs — you can't make a good society with bad people," he said.

Grimsley, 34, said he has gathered from his interviews that students are realizing there must be a change of the inner attitude before the social system can work.

"Many more are open too — gaining positive attitudes toward the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. This is one of the particular things I found at OCU."

"Students are deeply chagrined that most of the wars that have been fought have been religious wars. They find inter-religious conflicts repugnant . . . they want a religion that will unify rather than disrupt."

Grimsley said he talked with an OCU political science major who told him he couldn't love other people until he achieved a sense of self-worth and esteem.

"He said he couldn't see them as children of God until he saw himself as a child of God. This is typical of the struggle many are going through . . . this generation is so deeply interested in examining life."

Another student told him he never thought about religion, but instead asked himself who he was, where he was going and why he was here.

What the student called the "post-Watergate consciousness" is leading people to the realization "that will touch the Genesis (starting) point — that only changed people can create a changed world."

Grimsley, a Phi Beta Kappa from Kansas with a degree in philosophy, is a former psychological researcher for the National Science Foundation in Washington, D.C.

He travels the nation's campuses searching for the mainstream of religious opinion from persons of all backgrounds, he said.