

# Christians Set to Adopt Children From State Custody

*Representatives of Focus on the Family and the Colorado Department of Human Services met with nearly 1,500 Christians on Saturday to challenge them to 'Wait No More'—adopt children from the state's foster care system.*



[ ] A new project of Focus on the Family (FOTF) seems to be convincing Christians in Colorado to adopt a foster child.

Hosted on Saturday by New Life Church in Colorado Springs, "Wait No More" () launched its campaign to find homes for every foster child currently living in the state's system. "It was beyond what we could ever ask or think," said Kelly Rosati, senior director of the Sanctity of Human Life, a pro-life division of Focus on the Family. "God just blew us away."

Of 1,200 registrants and hundreds of walk-ins, Rosati told *Charisma* nearly 250 initiated the adoption process on Saturday morning.

"The absolute historic nature of this event ... we have not faced a single obstacle with [state and local governments]," she said. "We have kept our eye on the ball—working together for the sake of these kids."

Christians were urged to adopt at least one child from Colorado's foster care system, which Rosati said has a current pool of more than 700 children. She estimated the average age of a foster child at 8 years.

In explaining the process of adoption, representatives from adoption groups and child welfare agencies also told prospective parents the truth about its hardships. "It was not only inspirational ... we gave them the stark reality of what

some of the challenges are of the kids' behaviors," said Rosati, who has four adopted children herself.

Brady Boyd, senior pastor of New Life Church, told *Charisma* an overwhelming response came ahead of the event. "I am discovering that the church is ready to rally around ministries that are really helping the poor, the widows and the orphans," he said. "We are very excited that children will soon find homes in loving, caring, church communities around our state."

Rosati noted that many churches from eight surrounding counties, all of them on the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, participated in Saturday's launch.

She said St. Louis, Mo., would likely be the next stop for the "Wait No More" campaign, but that the group's long-term goal was to raise awareness nationwide, in order to end the "systemic practice" of kids "aging out" of the foster care system.

"There are 26,000 who age out each year. ... There's just no reason for that," said Rosati, adding that many of them experience homelessness, unemployment, public assistance and even prison. "We have 300,000 churches in America. We can end this."

Boyd agreed, and sees the plight of the nation's orphans as a great opportunity for Christians. "In an hour that the local church is often maligned, this is a positive testimony to people really caring for the orphans," he said. **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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# The Key to Freedom

Chuck Pierce, founder of Glory of Zion Ministries, believes God gave him the word below to share in this season. In it, God says He is going to restructure the world's government, economic and spiritual systems and to lead people out of bondage who learn to listen to His voice above all others.

I am brooding over many areas in the earth—government, economic and spiritual structures—and changing the structures of how these systems have operated in past seasons.

Remove from your heart anything that is above Me. Any strategy or any goal that you have above Me must be removed.

You must have freedom in your heart in [the] days ahead. This new freedom will cause you to follow in the way that I will instruct you. The cry of freedom and the need to worship will save you in the days ahead.

You have been a people that have set your freedom upon the civil authorities that have been over you. But I say come to a more excellent way of understanding freedom. You don't understand the workings of the governments of the world.

Rise up, for your freedom is not in a man's voice but ... in a relationship with My voice. Listen. Listen. Listen. Listen. You must know My voice in this hour.

It is I who will lead you out of bondage. It is I who will bring you through the door of your future. Know My voice and long to become one with Me in [the] days ahead. Listen intently to those who are speaking what I am saying. Listen carefully to all and hear only Me. Worship Me in a new way, and get ready to ascend!

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# Leaders Concerned by Haggard Church Visit

*Ministers involved in restoring the former pastor questioned whether he was ready to return to the pulpit.*



[] Prominent Christian leaders expressed concern in November over Ted Haggard's appearance at an Illinois church, where he repeatedly apologized for the scandal that led to his dismissal from the Colorado megachurch he founded.

The leaders were involved in restoring Haggard after he left New Life Church in 2006 amid accusations that he solicited a male prostitute and purchased methamphetamines. Noting that Haggard had distanced himself from the restoration process, the leaders questioned whether his speaking at Open Bible Fellowship in Morrison, Ill., on Nov. 2 was premature.

One leader close to the situation said Haggard should be affirmed by a recognized leadership board before returning to the pulpit. "Ted has said he's sorry, but sorry is something someone says when they're caught," said the leader, who asked to remain anonymous due to the sensitive nature of his position. "We haven't really seen repentance as far as submission to leadership."

H.B. London, a leader at Focus on the Family who also was involved in Haggard's restoration process, said it is likely difficult for someone of Haggard's stature to resist the public eye. "To sit on the sidelines for a person with that kind of personality and gifting is probably like being paralyzed," London told the Associated Press. "If Mr. Haggard and others like him feel like they have a call from God, they rationalize that their behavior does not change that call."

Haggard, the former president of the 30 million-member National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), agreed to leave Colorado Springs after the scandal broke in November 2006. He then entered a restoration process facilitated by New Life

Church, which agreed to pay his \$138,000 salary through December 2007. He moved his family to Phoenix in May 2007 to attend Phoenix First Assembly of God, where he was to be counseled by its pastor, Tommy Barnett.

In early 2008, Haggard cut his ties with New Life Church, whose leaders later released a statement saying Haggard's restoration process was "incomplete." They said an "accountability relationship" would continue between Haggard and Barnett. Haggard has since returned to Colorado Springs.

Foursquare President Jack Hayford, who was part of Haggard's original restoration team, said it is unfortunate that Haggard is apparently going his own way. "Having joined with the many leaders who earnestly and patiently sought to graciously serve Ted amid the crisis born of his own admitted struggle and failure," he said, "it is both incredible and regrettable to hear ... of his choice for such a self-distancing pathway."

Haggard did not respond to *Charisma's* requests for comment.

During his two sermons on Nov. 2, Haggard never described a restorative process or accountability structure he might be undergoing, but instead spoke of a Christian's need for "internal transformation."

He repeatedly apologized to members of New Life Church, the NAE and "the body of Christ at large," and expressed regret over the harm he caused his family. "All my shame and sin was placed on [my wife]," he lamented. "People treated her as if she had fallen."

Haggard, who appeared at the Illinois church with his wife, Gayle, said his temptation to engage in homosexual activity might have resulted from a sexual experience he had as a 7-year-old with a male worker employed by his father. "I tell you that simply as an explanation, and certainly not as an excuse," he said.

"When I [turned] 50 years old ... for some reason, what happened to me as a child started to produce fruit."

Haggard said he was at one time suicidal. Then two months before the scandal broke, he said he drove to New Life Church in the middle of the night and begged God to deliver him. "When the scandal happened it was bittersweet for me because I

knew this was Jesus completing His work inside of me,” he said. “I knew that this was the door to healing for my life.”

Haggard said he was getting back on his feet financially by selling life insurance.

New Life leaders expressed gratitude for Haggard’s “many years of dedicated leadership” and wished him well in his business endeavors. Although it was not clear whether his appearance at Open Bible Fellowship marked a return to vocational ministry, the leaders said they could not, at this time, endorse such a move. —**Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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## Focus on the Family Downsizes as Economy Slows

*The nonprofit organization founded by James Dobson announced that it will lay-off 202 employees and the close of half of its print magazines.*



[ ] Citing the economic slowdown, Focus on the Family announced earlier this week that it will lay off 202 employees and turn four of its print magazines into online publications.

Founded by James Dobson, the nonprofit organization will terminate 149 employees and eliminate 53 vacant positions—about 18 percent—of its 1,150-strong staff, company officials said. Focus previously announced in October that 46 employees would be reassigned or laid off in 2009.

Focus' Vice President of Media and Public Relations Gary Schneeberger said that most of the new layoffs will go into effect immediately, but some will be phased out through December and early next year.

“Tough economic times require tough decisions,” he said. “The worldwide economic downturn has had a negative impact on donations—which make up about 95 percent of our operating

expenses.”

In a related move, Focus will suspend publication of four print magazines—*Plugged In*, *Brio*, *Brio and Beyond* and *Breakaway*—over the next several months. Aimed at teenagers, *Breakaway*, *Brio* and *Brio and Beyond* will be revamped into online versions, and their content will be targeted at parents not teens, Schneeberger said. “*Plugged In* (will also) continue, and is one of our most popular features online and via radio,” he added.

Focus will have four print magazines left—*Citizen*, *Clubhouse*, *Clubhouse Jr.* and *Focus on the Family*. *Citizen* will be reduced from 12 to 10 issues in 2009, while *Focus on the Family* will go from 12 to six issues a year.

Additionally, Focus' budget will be reduced from \$160 million in 2008 to \$138 million next year. “It's worth noting that Focus brought in a record donation amount (in the) last fiscal year ending Sept. 30—\$146 million,” Schneeberger said. “That indicates that donors still greatly support what we do to ... but with the economic crisis affecting their budgets as well as ours, we have a responsibility to steward wisely what they give to us sacrificially.”-**Christian Retailing**

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## eHarmony Forced to Launch Site for Homosexuals

*Following an unfavorable verdict this week in New Jersey that stemmed from a discrimination lawsuit against the company, eHarmony will need to come up with an online portal for the gay community.*



] [After settling this week with New Jersey's Civil Rights Division, online dating service eHarmony will be required to create a new Web site catering to same-sex singles, reported the Associated Press (AP).

The settlement came three years after a New Jersey resident, Eric McKinley, 46, filed a complaint for not being given an option by the dating service for men seeking men.

McKinley called the 3-year-old incident in which he couldn't find a match at the online dating service "frustrating," "very humiliating" and "very hurtful," according to the AP.

Neither the company nor its founder, Neil Clark Warren—who successfully marketed eHarmony to the Christian community in earlier years, including on James Dobson's Focus on the Family—acknowledged any liability in the case.

Theodore B. Olson, an attorney for the Pasadena, eHarmony, said even though the company believed McKinley's complaint was "an unfair characterization of our business," the company settled because of the unpredictable nature of litigation.

"eHarmony looks forward to moving beyond this legal dispute, which has been a burden for the company, and continuing to advance its business model of serving individuals by helping them find successful, long-term relationships," Olson told the AP.

The case in New Jersey marked the first time that eHarmony loses a high-profile case based on similar discrimination complaints.

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## **Christmas Ads Meant to Create Doubts About God**

*Atheists have begun plastering the sides of buses with ads in the Washington, D.C., area asking holiday shoppers: "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake."*



[] Observers say Christianity and the Christmas spirit are under attack after an atheist organization kicked off an ad campaign in Washington, D.C., that suggests believing in humanism is a better alternative for Christmas enthusiasts than believing in God.

Sponsored by the American Humanist Association (AHA), ads reading: "Why believe in a god? Just be good for goodness' sake" began appearing Tuesday on buses in the nation's capital. The ads, which will run through December, are a play on the lyrics from the famous Christmas song: "Santa Claus is Coming to Town."

"It is the ultimate 'grinch' to suggest there is no God during a holiday where millions of people around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ," said Mathew D. Staver, founder and chairman of Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based legal group that just launched its "Friend or Foe" Christmas Campaign in an effort to defend America from the same secularization faced by people living under atheistic governments.

"Christmas is a time of joy and hope, not a time for hate," Staver said.

But Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the AHA, said humanists have always believed society doesn't need God to be good. "Morality doesn't come from religion," he said.

His organization proclaimed the ad campaign as a new kind of "holiday ad" and boasted that for them such high-profile promotion wasn't new.

Earlier this year, humanist ads popped up outside New York City and Philadelphia, which read: "Don't believe in God? You are not alone" while in Europe, a similar campaign supported by the British Humanist Association and best-selling atheist author Richard Dawkins was launched by a 28-year-old comedy writer.

Ads from that campaign reading: "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life," will begin appearing on London buses in January.

But Tim Wildmon, president of the American Family Association, took issue with the notion humanists promote that good can be derived from some place other than God.

"It's a stupid ad," he said of the AHA's latest campaign, according to the Associated Press. "How do we define 'good' if we don't believe in God? God in His word, the Bible, tells us what's good and bad and right and wrong. If we are each ourselves defining what's good, it's going to be a crazy world."

"Why believe in God?" asked Staver. "Because Santa is not the only one coming to town." **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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## Radical Gay Activists Seek to Intimidate Christians

*Since Nov. 4, Christians have reported increased incidences of church vandalism and sometimes-violent attacks for their support of traditional marriage.*



[ ] The Nov. 4 passage of constitutional amendments banning gay marriage in California, Arizona and Florida has evoked a sometimes-violent response from radical gay activists who have vandalized churches, mobbed intercessors and disrupted a worship service in Michigan.

Intercessors with a house of prayer in San Francisco said they feared they might be killed Friday night during a routine prayer walk through the area's Castro district, which has a large gay community. They said a crowd who thought they were

marriage amendment demonstrators shouted lewd remarks, pushed them, threw hot coffee on their faces and threatened the prayer group leader with death. (See related video.)

One man reportedly hit an intercessor on the head with her Bible before shoving her to the ground and kicking her. Before police arrived, another house of prayer member said someone repeatedly tried to pull his pants down.

“We hadn’t preached, we hadn’t evangelized,” one of the intercessors said after the incident. “We worshipped God in peace, and we were about to die for it.”

Police eventually escorted the group to their van, telling the intercessors they had to leave if they wanted to make it out, one witness said.

“These are the nicest kids,” said TheCall founder Lou Engle, who knows many of the young intercessors involved in the incident. “That night they were doing only worship. They weren’t trying to aggravate anything.”

“I think what’s happening is an exposure of what’s really there and an underbelly of this [radical gay] movement,” Engle added. “I think the church has to really reveal what’s going on there so the nation gets a clue about what they’re making an alliance with.”

In Michigan, where voters in 2004 approved an amendment defining marriage as the union of one man and one woman, a Chicago-based gay rights organization called Bash Back interrupted a Nov. 9 service at an Assemblies of God congregation in Lansing. (See related video.)

After staging a demonstration outside Mount Hope Church to draw most of the security staff away from the worship service, protestors masked as congregants stood up in the middle of the service, “declared themselves fags and began screaming loudly,” Bash Back leaders said in a statement posted online.

The protestors pulled the fire alarm and threw thousands of fliers into the congregation, while a gay couple rushed to the front and began kissing in front of the pastor. "Let it be known: So long as bigots kill us in the streets, this pack of wolves will continue to BASH BACK!" the group said in a statement about the incident.

Bash Back leaders said Mount Hope was targeted because it is "complicit in the repression of queers" by working to "institutionalize transphobia and homophobia" through "repulsive" ex-gay conferences and hell house plays, "which depict queers, trannies and womyn [sic] who seek abortions as the horrors."

In a statement posted on Mount Hope's Web site, church leaders said they don't "attempt to identify the church as anti-homosexual, anti-choice, or right wing" but do "take the Bible at face value and believes what the Bible says to be the truth."

Mount Hope spokesman David J. Williams Jr., said the sheriff's department had launched an investigation into the incident. "We're really asking for prayer for the people that did this," Williams said. "They need Jesus; they need to know His love."

Attorney John Stemberger, who chaired Florida's marriage amendment campaign, said many gay protestors want to intimidate the public into silence. "Their goal is to create an intense climate of intimidation and hostility within the culture to try and deter people from supporting traditional marriage and other pro-family initiatives in the future," Stemberger said. "We will not be bullied into silence, indifference or inaction."

In Palm Springs, Calif., a 69-year-old woman planned to file charges against protestors who reportedly pushed the woman and spit on her during a Nov. 8 rally opposing the passage of Proposition 8, which amends the state constitution to define

marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Phyllis Burgess said authorities convinced her to press charges against the attackers.

Nationwide, gay rights advocates protested marriage bans on Saturday, pointing particularly to California's Proposition 8, which defined marriage as between one man and one woman and overturned a state Supreme Court ruling that had legalized gay marriage. Many of the demonstrations were peaceful, according to Associated Press (AP) reports, with participants waving rainbow-colored flags and holding signs saying "Don't Spread the H8."

But pastors across the country, particularly in California, say incidents of vandalism and theft have increased since Nov. 4. One California pastor said a minister in his state received death threats for his support of Proposition 8.

According to reports from California's Protect Marriage campaign:

- At Messiah Lutheran Church in Downey, Calif., a "Yes on 8" sign was wrapped around a heavy object and used to smash the window of the pastor's office.
- Several "Yes on 8" yard signs were stolen from Calvary Chapel Ventura, as well as a large banner displaying the church's name and service times.
- Park Community Church in Shingle Springs, Calif., received harassing phone calls and has been threatened with lawsuits by Proposition 8 opponents.
- Bloggers targeted Yorba Linda, Calif., pastor Jim Domen, who is open about his past struggle with same-sex attraction, and his girlfriend for harassment after seeing the couple's photo in news reports about the passage of Proposition 8.
- The words "No on 8" were spray-painted on a Mormon church in Orangevale, Calif.

- A brick was thrown through the window of Family Fellowship Church in Hayward, Calif., and at Trinity Baptist Church in Arcata, Proposition 8 opponents vandalized the church's marquee, which encouraged support for the marriage amendment; stole the church's flags; and committed other acts of vandalism totaling \$1,500.

- Eggs thrown on the building of San Luis Obispo Assembly of God and toilet paper was strewn across the property, while a Mormon church in the same city had adhesive poured onto a doormat, a keypad and a window.

The Mormon Church, headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah, has also become a target of gay rights activists because it provided major funding to the Proposition 8 campaign and encouraged its members to support the marriage amendment, which passed with 52 percent of the vote.

Some gay rights advocates have called for a boycott of the state of Utah, and Bash Back leaders admitted to vandalizing Mormon churches there, as well as in Washington state and California. A Mormon temple in Salt Lake City reported receiving a letter containing a white, powdery substance that forced the facility to close while police launched an investigation.

"The hypocrisy, hatred, and intolerance shown by the gay rights movement isn't pretty," said Randy Thomasson, president of the Campaign for Children and Families, a leading California-based pro-family group. "While claiming to be against hate and for tolerance and choice, the homosexual activists are revealing their hatred of voters and religion and showing their intolerance of people's personal choices to support man-woman marriage. By attacking the people's vote to protect marriage in the state constitution, homosexual activists have declared war on our republic and our democratic system."

Christian leaders say the backlash is likely to continue and may worsen. “It’s actually desperation time for us all across the nation to be praying,” Engle said. “They’re calling [Christians] haters when all they’re doing is simply saying there’s a higher authority. It’s a raging against Christ and His loving, foundational laws. It is becoming an anti-Christ rage. They are creating a Jesus of their own mind, a Jesus who lets everybody do whatever they want.

“I think the church has to be prepared [for religious persecution],” he added. “Our allegiance is to God and His Word, and if that means imprisonment and martyrdom, so be it.”

– **Adrienne S. Gaines**

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## Prayer Booths™ Erected in New York City

*An art exhibit in the center of one of the nation’s most liberal cities is inviting passers-by to think about faith and the power of prayer.*



[. 08] They look much like typical phone booths, but instead of facilitating 50-cent local calls the two stalls sitting in the heart of New York City are designed to help passers-by make free long-distance calls to heaven.

Created by artist Dylan Mortimer, a pastor at Rivercity Community Church in Kansas City, Mo., the public prayer booths depict the word “prayer” instead of “phone” and include instructions for using the flip-down kneeler instead of a calling device.

And though Mortimer hopes New Yorkers will stop in to say a

prayer, he also wants the booths to spark conversations about private faith in a very public place.

"I'm basically trying to make people talk about or dialogue about a subject that is often avoided," he told *Charisma*. "It's sort of ... an entry point to even having the conversation about faith, spirituality."

The prayer booths, which sit near the Manhattan platform entry to the Roosevelt Island Tram Station, were erected on Nov. 7 as a temporary art display sponsored by the Roosevelt Island Parks and Recreation department.

"Most of my work is kind of developed by seeing things that already exist in the public and transforming them slightly," said Mortimer, who received his MFA in 2006 from New York's School of Visual Arts.

"The prayer booth just came from looking at a phone booth," he told *Charisma*. "That idea of just going to make a private telephone call in public. I just transformed that into a private prayer in public."

Mortimer says he also wants to show people that they don't need a specific place to pray or talk about faith and spirituality. "That's what I hope is a fairly obvious humor of [the prayer booths]," he said. "Do you actually need to go to a booth to pray? Of course not. You can pray wherever you want."

Though people from many faiths have used the prayer booths, Mortimer said most of the people he has spoken with have been Christians, and they have appreciated the display.

"The more prayer there is in the world, I guess, the better as far as I am concerned," Mortimer said.

The prayer booths also have been displayed in sculpture shows in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Jackson, Tenn.

The New York City prayer booths will be on display until the

end of November. –**Felicia Mann**

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# Richard Roberts, ORU Reach Severance Agreement

*The former ORU president pays past personal expenses, receives salary until next year.*



[] Leaders at Oral Roberts University (ORU) decided Friday to pay its former president Richard Roberts an annual salary of \$223,600 through November 2009.

Details of the severance package included a confirmation that Roberts had paid ORU \$23,179 for personal and travel expenses not previously billed to or paid by Roberts. The agreement noted payment included interest because expenses were reportedly incurred prior to 2004.

According to ORU, an independent consulting firm the university selected called Roberts' compensation "reasonable" and "consistent with competitive practices."

Roberts, who had served as ORU's president since 1993, stepped down in November 2007 amid allegations that he and his wife, Lindsay, misspent school funds to finance a lavish lifestyle. They have both denied wrongdoing.

ORU will recoup expenses incurred following Roberts' resignation by reducing his severance pay against the fair market rental value of housing the Roberts family stayed in prior to moving off campus. In August, the Tulsa, university began its first full academic year since the scandal last year.

Since his family donated \$70 million to ORU last year and instituted a new shared-governance system along with a board of trustees, businessman Mart Green has brought "dramatic, sweeping, campus-wide renovations," school officials said in a statement. Ralph Fagin, ORU interim president, said in a statement that the school appreciates the years Roberts invested and "the mission and spiritual heritage" his father, Oral, established. "We move forward with a heightened sense of duty and responsibility to the fruit of this great university—its students and alumni." **-Paul Steven Ghiringhelli**

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## Coffee House Teaches Biblical Lesson

*Owners of a Michigan-based gourmet coffee shop have been able to minister to secular patrons as a result of their name, Shadrach, Meshach & ABeanToGo.*



[ ] Kirk Walker has had a passion for coffee since he drank his

first cup at age

14. His love for the brew has since led him to launch a business that is not only satisfying palates, but also creating ministry opportunities.

"The name always gets people's attention," Walker says of Shadrach, Meshach

& ABeanToGo Inc., the gourmet coffee company he founded in Goodrich, Mich.

"Mostly the secular world has reflected back to their childhood and remembered those things" they learned in Sunday school.

Walker says God gave him the name several years ago, but brought it back to

mind in 2003 when he was praying about the next step he should take after his

concierge business failed. He launched ABeanToGo () the following

year, and today its coffee is sold in grocery stores, restaurants, theaters and

coffee shops in 13 states, as well as in Christian stores and church bookstores

nationwide. Last spring, Walker and his wife, Amy, opened a café of their own in

Goodrich, which he says has created opportunities for the couple to pray with

customers. **-Adrienne S. Gaines**