

Vibes

Burglars Steal Offering During Service

Burglars entered a Louisiana church recently during its 10 a.m. service, kicked down the door to the pastor's office, and stole the money collected during the service's earlier offering time.



[] Earlier this week, burglars entered a church in Slidell, La., during its 10 a.m. service, kicked down the door to the pastor's office, and stole money that had been collected by ushers during the service's earlier offering time, *The Times-Picayune* reported.

According to police, a witness in the parking lot of the First Pentecostal Church later told investigators that around 11 a.m., two men in their early 20s were seen entering the church. About 15 to 20 minutes later the men exited and left in a small red truck.

Investigators suspect the burglars managed to pry various office doors open with a screwdriver, which was found at the scene.

The amount of money stolen was not disclosed. Detectives are asking anyone with information regarding this crime to call the Crime Stoppers line. Tips can be anonymous, and a cash reward is available.

Protestantism: The New Minority?

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[] Compared with nearly 70 percent a few decades ago, only 51 percent of Americans today are Protestant, or members of an evangelical, mainline or historically black church, according to a survey released by the Pew Forum this week.

As Protestantism approached minority status in the U.S., the extensive study revealed Catholicism, which accounts for 24 percent of the U.S. population, would've seen heavier losses if not for the mitigating factor of an influx of immigrant Catholics. Immigration also disproportionately accounted for the presence of Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism in the U.S.

The study showed that various religious groups simultaneously gained and lost members over the years, with Jehovah's Witnesses maintaining the worst retention rate.

More than 40 percent of the population reported no longer being affiliated with the religious or secular tradition of their childhood, demonstrating how fluid Americans' belief systems have become.

Nelson's Bibles to Go Eco-friendly

In an unprecedented move within the Bible producing industry, Thomas Nelson Publishers has announced that it will discontinue synthetic Bible covers in favor of more eco-friendly materials.



[] Thomas Nelson Publishers has announced that the company will discontinue synthetic Bible covers in favor of more eco-friendly materials comprised of specialty papers, fabrics and other materials.

With the move, Nelson becomes the first Bible publisher to transition to environmentally conscious Bible bindings and practices, company officials said. Due to production schedules, some products releasing in the coming months may still include synthetic materials. Customers can expect to find eco-friendly Bible offerings in stores by early 2009, and the company estimates that the total phase-out will be completed in the next three to five years.

“In moving away from oil-based covers, we're not only honoring our customers' needs, but we're also honoring our godly calling to be good stewards of the things He has given to us,” said Wayne Hastings, senior vice president and group publisher for Nelson's Bible unit.

George Gower, vice president of inventory management production for Nelson, added: “We're taking a stand to make sure that all Bible products are eco-friendly. All polyurethane/oil-based covers will be eliminated and replaced with recyclable and recycled materials.”

The company's LeatherSoft binding will be included in the

phase-out, but leather, bonded leather and hardcover formats will continue to be offered. Nelson recently announced a green initiative to reduce the company's impact on the environment, which includes lowering paper consumption by at least 30% by 2012. – *Christian Retailing*

Christian Rock Pioneer Larry Norman Dies

Christian rock pioneer Larry Norman died Sunday after years of ill health. He was 60. Funeral details have yet to be announced.



[] Christian rock pioneer Larry Norman died Sunday after years of ill health. He was 60.

News of Norman's death was announced at his official Web site by his brother, Charles, who said that Norman's "heart finally slowed to a stop." Norman had been semi-invalided following a severe heart attack in 1992.

Dubbed by the media as "the father of Christian rock," Norman recorded three albums for Capitol Records in the 1960s, including the seminal *Upon This Rock*. He later signed with MGM Records for *Only Visiting This Planet* and *So Long Ago the Garden*.

He founded his own label, Solid Rock Records, in 1975 and went on to release more than 50 other recordings, though his output was affected for more than a decade by partial brain damage suffered in a 1978 airplane accident.

Norman was also instrumental in nurturing the early careers of

musicians Steve Camp, Keith Green, Mark Heard and Randy Stonehill. Norman was inducted into the Gospel Music Association Hall of Fame in 2001 for his music that was recognized as “an unlikely mix of love songs, the Gospel message, and wry commentary on American culture” that “exemplified the goals, ideals and standards of everything the original architects of contemporary Christian music intended for it to be.”

In a personal message dictated to his brother for his Web site shortly before he died, Norman said that he felt like “a prize in a box of cracker jacks with God's hand reaching down to pick me up... I am ready to fly home.”

He thanked people for their prayers and support, ending with, “Goodbye, farewell, we'll meet again/Somewhere beyond the sky/I Pray that you will stay with God/Goodbye, my friends, goodbye.”

Funeral details have yet to be announced.—**Christian Retailing**

NFL: Churches Can Air Super Bowl

Last month the NFL sent letters to some churches prohibiting them from showing the Super Bowl on screens larger than 55 inches. Recently they recanted their regulations.



[] Last month the NFL sent letters to some churches prohibiting them from showing the Super Bowl on screens larger than 55 inches. The controversial move prompted some lawmakers to complain, leading the NFL this week to recant its regulation. The big game will air on churches' big screens

next season.

In a letter Tuesday to Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), NFL Commissioner Roger Goodall stated that religious organizations could air live showings of the Super Bowl “regardless of screen size,” reported *The Washington Post*.

Before this year’s Super Bowl XLII, *The Post* reported that many churches had canceled their Super Bowl parties for fear of being sued. Conservatives on Capitol Hill then threatened to create legislation that would allow churches to be exempt from the NFL’s limitations. Under the league’s previous regulations only bars could air the game without the restrictions.

“Many families want to enjoy the Super Bowl in a group atmosphere,” Hatch said, “but obviously aren't going to take their kids to a sports bar.”

Conservatives and clergy alike are now praising the NFL for overturning their position.

Steve Holley, executive pastor of Immanuel Bible Church in Springfield, Va., who canceled his church’s Super Bowl party this year, told *The Post* he was encouraged by the NFL’s decision “to set aside profit for community spirit.”

Missions Group Apologizes to African-Americans

The group apologized after finding that black missionary candidates had been excluded from service. As a symbol of repentance the agency's director washed the feet of black church leaders.



[] An international missionary agency issued a formal apology to the African-American community recently after discovering that black missionary candidates in its past were excluded from service.

Founded in the late 19th century, the U.S. branch of Serving in Mission (SIM) denied blacks missionary status in the early 20th century to comply with the concerns of colonial governments in African nations.

This history prompted Steve Strauss, director of SIM USA, to publicly apologize to all African-Americans for the “sinful” exclusionary practice. As a symbol of SIM’s repentance, Strauss washed the feet of three African-American church leaders.

Americans Believe Nonprofits Are Wasting Money

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Sixty-two percent of respondents believe nonprofits spend more than what is reasonable on expenses such as administration and fundraising.

Americans believe that for every dollar given to a nonprofit, around 22 cents should be spent on overhead expenses. That’s in comparison to the 36 cents those same people believe is spent for every dollar.

According to Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research, “Most people really don’t know much about how non-profits operate. But even when people are misinformed, their perceptions still influence how they make giving decisions.

That’s why it’s so important to understand how people perceive charities in general, as well as why individual non-profits really need to learn how their own donors or potential donors see them.”

Teens Protest Negative Media

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[] An estimated 500 youth gathered in Times Square recently to protest the cultural degradation, which they say, is quickly destroying their culture.

Dubbed *RECREATE '08*, which was the first Teen Mania event in 2008, also encouraged the students to use their gifts—writing, fashion design and Web design—in positive ways to help affect change in the media.

“With the Internet at your fingertips you don’t need a multimillion dollar broadcast facility to get your message out to the world,” Ron Luce, founder of Teen Mania said addressing young people. “So go, do that, and shape your generation rather than basically being a culture zombie doing what the culture tells you to do.”

Pastors Apologize to the Gay Community

Recently a group of Australian pastors issued an apology to the gay and lesbian community for not accepting them within their churches.



[] A group of Australian pastors recently issued an apology to the gay and lesbian community for not accepting them within their churches reports .

“We really recognize that the church has been completely silent on the issue of embracing a homosexual community and if anything actually, has been quite hostile,” said pastor Mike Hercock, a spokesman for the group called 100 Revs.

Hercock says homosexuals are more likely to suffer from depression, which he believes is directly correlated to the church’s treatment of the community.

In recent months Sydney’s Anglican bishops have vowed to pull out of a top global meeting this year because of the church’s acceptance of gay bishops and same-sex marriages.

Other leaders, however, claim the church at large has continuously reached out to homosexuals.

“The church is loving to all individuals and all groups, but it can’t compromise on biblical truth as revealed by the Creator,” says Fred Nile, a former minister who resigned from the Uniting Church after it ordained a homosexual minister.