

Fraudulent Letters Threaten Pastors Political Participation

At least two Iowan evangelical pastors received fraudulent letters threatening sanction by the IRS if their church became too politically involved.



Despite Republican presidential candidate Mike Huckabee's win last Thursday in the Iowa caucus, at least two evangelical pastors in that state discovered that supporting him may not be easy.

In what *Time* magazine called a case of "dirty tricks," the Iowa pastors each received fraudulent letters warning that their churches were risking sanction by the Internal Revenue Service if they became too involved in the political campaign.

The pastors said the letters were aimed at discouraging them from getting their church members to show up on caucus night reports *Time*.

Following a 30-minute conference call that included advice from prominent evangelical leaders and an attorney, the pair were assured they could continue to urge congregants to vote.

Violence in Kenya Leads to Torched AG Church

The Assemblies of God leadership in Kenya is asking that Christians pray after 50 churchgoers were killed and 80 were hospitalized after rioters set fire to an AG church earlier

this week.



(01-04-08) The Assemblies of God (AG) leadership in East Africa is requesting that Christians pray for an end to the violent unrest in Kenya triggered by accusations of a rigged election that placed President Mwai Kibaki in office for a second term on Dec. 27.

The violence intensified earlier this week when 50 churchgoers were killed and 80 were hospitalized for severe burns after rioters doused the Eldoret AG church with gasoline and set it on fire reports the AG news service. Rioters accused church members hiding inside, which were mostly women and children at the time, of voting to re-elect Kibaki.

More than 300 have been reportedly killed since the rioting kicked off following last week's presidential election. Kenya's opposition party is claiming the election was a fraud and made a public appeal today for a new vote. Some international observers have indicated the election was rife with voting irregularities.

Many believers have fled their homes and are hiding in churches and police stations across the nation the news service said.

"This is entirely a political conflict that has unfortunately inflamed tribal prejudices," said Randy Hurst, AG World Missions' communications director. "What needs to be remembered is that the Assemblies of God has church members from all the major tribes, who not only live in peace, but worship together in the same congregations."

The opposition leader also scheduled a march for this Tuesday to protest the election, the news service reports.

AG leaders are asking that believers pray that the violence would not escalate after the march and that food and other relief supplies would come to one of Africa's most economically viable nations.

“Right now the urgent need is for food,” said Peter Njiri, Kenya’s AG superintendent to the news service. “We have two AG churches in Nairobi with more than 500 displaced AG people camping in them.” –**Felicia Mann**

Buzz

FeedBack

Vibes

Churches in Europe To Mark Holocaust

Leaders say anti-Semitism is again on the rise in the region. Church leaders across Europe will unite this month to remember the Holocaust.



(01-2-08)—Church leaders across Europe will unite in January to remember the Holocaust and challenge Christians worldwide to resist what they see as a growing anti-Semitic sentiment in their nations and the Middle East.

For the second year, churches are being invited to participate in the International Holocaust Remembrance Day to be held Jan. 27.

Sponsored by the European Coalition for Israel (ECFI), the campaign (learnfromhistory.eu) is intended to remind Christians of the consequences that can result from a failure to confront genocide and anti-Semitism. Hundreds of churches are expected to participate.

The effort has received support from such ministry leaders as Jeff Fountain, European director of Youth With a Mission; Colin Dye, pastor of Kensington Temple London; Swedish pastor Ulf Ekman; and Catholic and Orthodox leaders from Austria, France and Ukraine.

Organizers say Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map" and European protestors' calling for "death to the Jews" are signs that anti-Semitism remains an international threat.

"Europe is being given a second chance to stand up for the Jewish people and the state of Israel," ECFI executive director Tomas Sandell says. "Rather than just getting emotional about the past, we need to speak up in our neighborhoods and churches about the fact that while Hitler rose from obscurity, today we have a world leader of an oil-rich nation who is a member of the United Nations repeating quotes of Hitler and taking steps to build a nuclear bomb."

—Renee DeLoria

The Luke 18 Generation

The movement to establish nonstop prayer on college campuses will gain momentum when youth from across the U.S. meet on Jan. 2-5 to launch of the Luke 18 Project.



(12-27-07) The movement to establish nonstop prayer on college campuses will gain momentum this month when youth from across the U.S. meet in Kansas City, Mo., Jan. 2-5 for the launch of the Luke 18 Project.

An outgrowth of the TheCall prayer ministry, the project draws its name from the parable of the persistent widow and seeks to mobilize 10,000 young leaders to plant prayer ministries, evangelize communities and fight injustice.

This year, Luke 18 hopes to start 24/7 houses of prayer at every U.S. college.

Congregation Forgives Pastor With Porn Addiction

A New Tampa, Fla. pastor recently confessed his habit of pornography to his congregation which responded to his apology with tears and applause.



(12-24-07)—What happens when a pastor comes clean about porn? At least in one case, he receives forgiveness and

understanding.

The Rev. Brian James, pastor of St. James United Methodist Church in New Tampa, Fla. confessed his habit of pornography to his congregation, which responded to his apology with tears and applause.

“I have failed this church,” James said. Though James was forgiven, he will step down from the church he pastored for seven years. “Obviously, this is not acceptable behavior for a pastor,” said the Rev. Bert Blomquist, district superintendent of 89 Methodist churches, including St. James.

“These actions are very serious and prohibit anyone from functioning as a pastor in any of our churches.”

James will undergo therapy and Blomquist said he may pastor at some point in the future.

A Deeper Walk

The Indianapolis Colts' star punter led worship for a campus Bible study at Notre Dame before teaming with singer-songwriter Chris Wilson and becoming a worship leader.



For Hunter Smith, writing and leading worship songs comes just as naturally as booting a football 45 yards and dropping it inside the 10-yard line.

The Indianapolis Colts' star punter led worship for a campus Bible study at Notre Dame before teaming with singer-songwriter Chris Wilson and becoming a worship leader at Every Nation Church in Nashville, Tenn.

With the release of the duo's self-titled debut, *Connersvine*, Smith says worship is still his goal.

“If we can lead people into eternal life and into a deeper relationship with God—that they would know Him more intimately—then we will have completely succeeded in everything we're supposed to do.”—**Chad Bonham**

Billboard's Top Albums Feature Christian Artists

Casting Crowns' 'The Altar and the Door'; Toby Mac's 'Portable Sounds' and Alan Jackson's 'Precious Memories' were all among The Billboard Top 200 albums of the year.



(Dec. 21, 2007) *Casting Crowns' The Altar and the Door* has made The Billboard Top 200 albums of the year.

The band's third studio album was ranked No. 144 on the list. Besides *The Altar and the Door*, The Billboard Top 200 albums also featured Toby Mac's *Portable Sounds* at No. 185 and Alan Jackson's *Precious Memories* at No. 123.

According to Billboard, the top Christian albums in 2007 were *WOW Hits 2007* by various artists, *Flyleaf* by Flyleaf, *Precious Memories*, *The Altar and the Door* and *Portable Sounds*.

The top gospel albums of the year were *WOW Gospel 2007* (Provident-Integrity) by various artists; *The Gospel According to Patti LaBelle* (Universal Music Group Distribution) by Patti LaBelle; *Songs for the Storm, Volume I* by Kirk Franklin; *Hero* by Kirk Franklin and *A Piece of My Passion* by Juanita Bynum.

For a complete list of The Billboard's top Christian and gospel albums of the year, visit www.billboard.biz/bbbiz/charts/yearendcharts/index.jsp.