

# Charisma News – Christians Remember the Poor During Thanksgiving

Christians across the U.S. spent Thanksgiving helping the poor in their communities by distributing food before and during the holiday. Campus Crusade for Christ distributed enough “Boxes of Love” to feed more than 111,000 families nationwide. In Florida, Tampa-based Without Walls International, in cooperation with Paula White Ministries, distributed turkeys and a week’s worth of groceries to thousands of needy families through its annual Table in the Wilderness outreach. And in Washington, D.C., the Washington Redskins teamed with Operation Blessing, a nonprofit organization founded by Christian broadcaster Pat Robertson, for the annual Harvest Feast. The groups distributed some 32,000 pounds of turkey and 120,000 pounds of fresh and packaged food. “I am so thankful.... I've got four grandchildren, and I am raising them all,” said Mary Johnson, 64, who stood with 20,000 others in a line that wrapped around the NFL’s FedEx Field, the Washington Post reported. Although many of the outreach activities were held before the holiday, Central Union Mission, also in Washington, focused its efforts on those with nowhere to go on Thanksgiving, according to the Christian Post Web site. The mission served roughly 200 meals and provided beds for the homeless Thanksgiving evening. “Only the most hardcore of the homeless don’t have anywhere to go on Thanksgiving Day,” said the mission’s executive director, O. Treadwell, according to the Post. “This is what ministry is all about.”

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# **Charisma News – Chaplains Invited Into the Workforce**

Businesses across the country are bringing chaplains into the workplace, a sign of a growing trend among employers to embrace religion rather than reject it, according to a New York Times report. Modeled after the military chaplaincy program, which requires chaplains to serve a religiously diverse community and not evangelize, corporate chaplaincy programs have doubled in the last five years, said David Miller, executive director of the Yale Center for Faith and Culture and author of the book *God at Work*. He said roughly 600 to 700 businesses currently have chaplaincy programs. Though many chaplains are ordained ministers and hired directly by businesses, Corporate Chaplains of America has found a market in staffing chaplains across the country. “Our mission is to build relationships with employees, with the hope of gaining permission to share the life-changing Good News of Jesus Christ in a non-threatening manner,” read a statement on the group’s Web site. The Rev. Ken Willis told the New York Times he has presided over funerals, visited employees in the hospital, arranged housing and even opened bank accounts as a staff chaplain for Tyson Foods. “My hope is that they will see in me the love of God,” he said.

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# **Charisma News – ‘Christmas’ Makes a Comeback**

Christ is re-emerging in Christmas themes across the United States. “There is now evidence that our prayers over the last few years are being answered,” wrote Ted Baehr, founder and publisher of *Movieguide*. “Hollywood, Big Business—they seem to be finally getting the message: There are believers out there!

God is alive and well in popular culture!" Some of the nation's largest retailers, including Wal-Mart, Macy's and Sears, are using the greeting "Merry Christmas" instead of "Happy Holidays," incorporating "Christmas" in displays and promotions, and playing sacred and secular carols throughout their stores. "We, quite frankly, have learned a lesson from last year," Wal-Mart spokeswoman Linda Blakely told USA Today. "We're not afraid to use the term 'Merry Christmas.' We'll use it early. And we'll use it often." Baehr believes the re-emergence of Christ in Christmas may be a sign of a budding revival. He said another sign of this potential awakening is the release of *The Nativity Story*, which he described as a "wonderful, dramatic, engaging movie" that tells the "ultimate truth" of what Christmas is about. "Christ is marching triumphantly back into Christmas," he said. "...The tide is starting to turn." To learn more about *The Nativity Story*, see the December issue of *Charisma*, which is on newsstands now.

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*The walk was held two days before the 34th anniversary of Roe v. Wade.*



Two days before the 34<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Roe v Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court case that legalized abortion, 25,000 pro-life advocates walked the streets of San Francisco in the third annual Walk for Life West Coast. "San Francisco is well-known for its counter-cultural protests—the Gay Pride Parade, anti-war protests, and anti-Bush protests," said Dolores Meehan, co-founder of Walk for Life West Coast. "We wanted to send a message that it's OK to be pro-woman and pro-life—even in the city of San Francisco." Participants walked along the San Francisco Waterfront to the Marina Green. Before the walk, crowds listened to speakers including pastor Clenard Childress Jr., regional director of the Life Education and Resource Network (LEARN); Talitha Phillips of the Silent No More

Awareness Campaign; and the Rev. Frank Pavone, national director of Priests for Life. "Walk for Life's primary goal is to reach out to women and men of all political persuasions with the message that abortion hurts all women," said Eva Muntean, Walk for Life co-founder. San Francisco is also the congressional district of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi. "Speaker Pelosi now has a greater responsibility to serve as a role model for all women in America, not just in San Francisco," Meehan said. "She must no longer ignore pro-life women. Many of us share the same Catholic faith, and we hope as speaker [of the House], Pelosi will bring a broader perspective to women's issues."—**Felicia Mann**

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*The Band won more votes than popular secular artist like Prince, INXS and Christina Aguilera.*



Recently the David Crowder Band won the MSN Music's 2006 Artist of the Year award, getting more votes than Prince, INXS, Christina Aguilera and Kenny Chesney. "They've single-handedly redefined what contemporary Christian music should sound like," the MSN Music Web site stated. The alternative worship sound of the band is extremely popular in both emergent and traditional churches, with songs such as "Here Is Our King," "Our Love Is Loud" and "O Praise Him" being sung every week in churches nationwide. David Crowder, the dynamic singer-songwriter who has led the band to multiple Dove Awards, started the group as a worship leader in the 1990s while struggling to find songs for the campus-based church he helped found at Baylor University, according to the group's Web site. Now in the studio working on the band's eleventh album, Crowder's success also spawned two books. His latest, *Everybody Wants to Go to Heaven but Nobody Wants to Die* (2006,

Relevant Books), is co-authored with bandmate Mike Hogan. The band's main thrust is "to be a relevant force in our culture, to give hope to those who have left the church and those who have come back."

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*The issues topping the agenda are Iraq, minimum wage and immigration reform.*



Christian leaders began 2007 by outlining their social agenda for the new Congress. During a teleconference held Jan. 9, the National Association of Evangelicals urged Congress to help reduce pollution, raise the standard of fuel efficiency and provide proper care of natural life and natural habitat. Meanwhile the Christian Peace Witness for Iraq called for an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq, and Sojourners expressed support for raising the minimum wage, the *Christian Post* reported. Sojourners is a supporter of the Let Justice Roll Living Wage Campaign, a nonpartisan coalition of faith-based organizations, including the Episcopal Church USA, that is urging Congress to raise the minimum wage from \$5.15 to \$7.25 per hour. Also last week the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC), which is led by Pentecostal minister Samuel Rodriguez, sent an open letter to Rep. Nancy Pelosi urging her to see that Congress develops a compromise on immigration reform. "The current state of immigration in this country is a complex situation; nevertheless, we as Americans have the intellectual wherewithal, the political acumen and the spiritual fortitude to reconcile the principles of law and order with a pathway to citizenship for those that seek to live the American dream," the letter stated. The NHCLC is calling on Congress to pass legislation that protects U.S. borders, ends illegal immigration and creates ways for families without legal status to gain citizenship.

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Evangelicals and Scientists agree that creation care must be a top priority.



In an unprecedented collaboration, leaders from the National Association of Evangelicals and the Center for Health and Global Environment at Harvard Medical School convened in Washington, D.C., Jan. 17 to issue a joint statement that calls on the nation's leaders to address environmental issues such as global warming. "We scientists and evangelicals have discovered that we share a deeply felt common concern and sense of urgency about threats to life on Earth, and that we must speak with one voice to protect it," said Eric Chivian, Nobel laureate and a speaker at the event. The group's "Urgent Call to Action" was sent to President George W. Bush and House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calling for drastic changes in values, lifestyles and public policies to avert disastrous changes in the climate. "We are glad to be partnering with our friends in the scientific community," said Florida pastor Joel Hunter, who resigned as president of the Christian Coalition of America last year because the organization would not broaden its agenda to include such issues as protection of the environment. "They have the facts we need to present to our congregations; we have the numbers of activists that will work through churches, government and the business community to make a significant impact." The group's next step is to meet with congressional leaders to bring more attention to "creation care" issues.

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# Passion Event Makes Global Impact

Attendees at the Passion 07 conference that concluded last week in Atlanta were challenged to make a global impact. Responding to the event's theme, Do Something Now, the more than 23,000 young adults exceeded organizers' goal of raising \$500,000 by contributing \$700,000 toward various global initiatives. The sponsored projects include digging 38 wells in Africa, building a freedom center in northern Iraq, translating the New Testament into the language of the Dela and Rikou people of Indonesia, and sponsoring 100 life-changing surgeries for children. "Colossians 1:6 says, 'All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit,'" Passion Conferences founder-director Louie Giglio told the crowd. "The same changing power in your lives is working all over the world. This gospel is bearing fruit and growing, and we can see that in what you've done through the Do Something Now campaign." Drawing participants from all 50 states and 33 nations, Passion 07 assembled such speakers as John Piper and Beth Moore, and several worship artists, including Chris Tomlin, David Crowder Band, Charlie Hall and Matt Redman. Giglio said Passion is planning to host smaller gatherings in cities around the U.S. this fall and early winter of 2008. Next year he said the conference will go international, touring 20 cities in 15 countries.

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A recent study found that nearly all of the 811 Protestant ministries surveyed engaged in evangelism during 2006. The survey by Ellison Research of Phoenix, which was published in LifeWay magazine, found that 97 percent of the churches studied held evangelistic activities last year. Vacation Bible School was the most popular action, with 70 percent of the

churches participating. Distributing tracts and other literature had the second highest participation, with 59 percent reported use. The study found that while it was common for Protestant churches to evangelize, the methods varied according to denomination. Noncharismatic evangelical churches were likely to participate in diverse evangelism activities, from pregnancy counseling to sports programs. But they were less likely to engage in community programs such as outreaches to the homeless, blood drives and domestic-violence programs. Pentecostal churches frequently used concerts, revivals, "invite a friend to church" days and audio-visual productions to evangelize. But they were less likely to host vacation Bible schools, the study found. In general, 39 percent of churches said it is more important to focus on programs that address spiritual needs rather than physical needs.

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A recent study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center of Excellence in Cancer Communications Research found that female cancer patients who prayed in online groups recovered faster. Researchers studied breast cancer patients through a computer-based health program, where the test group was surveyed before the experiment began and then again four months after.

The study found that the women whose text messages included a high percentage of words such as "pray," "worship," "faith," "holy" and "God" had low levels of negative emotion and high levels of functional well-being. "From a psychological standpoint, there are a variety of reasons why cancer patients may benefit from prayer—whether on the Internet or elsewhere,"

said Bret Shaw, lead author of the study.

“In reviewing the messages, some of the most common ways study participants used religion to cope with their illness included putting trust in God about the course of their illness and consequently feeling less stresses, believing in an afterlife and therefore being less afraid of death, finding blessings in their lives, and appraising their cancer experience in a more constructive religious light.”