

Ken Starr, Christian Billboards, Al-Qaida Threats and More

In case you haven't been reading news over the holiday weekend, here's a round up of some interesting stories relating to Christians, Christianity and the Middle East:

The Dallas Morning News reports that Baylor President Ken Starr, whose claim to fame is investigating Bill Clinton's Affair with Monica Lewinsky, is aiming to [exalt faith and academic rigor](#) at the Christian university he leads.

Indonesian Churches Wary of Islamist Offer of 'Protection'

DUBLIN, (CDN) – In the wake of several attacks on worship services by Indonesia's notorious Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), several Jakarta area church leaders rejected the FPI's offer to help protect them over Christmas.

FPI leader Rizieq Shihab made the offer last week, saying he was working in cooperation with the Indonesian Communion of Churches and the Indonesian Bishops Conference. But several churches publicly rejected the offer, with online forums comparing FPI church protection to "foxes protecting a chicken coop."

Theology Students in Indonesia Still Seek Facilities, Compensation

JAKARTA, Indonesia (CDN) – Two and a half years after an Islamic attack on a seminary here left hundreds of students without facilities, they are still in temporary shelters and the government has not compensated the loss of eight buildings.

Students from the Arastamar Evangelical Theological Seminary (SETIA) have until the end of this month to leave the Wisma Transito building, and no alternative shelter has been arranged. At the same time, the school is still wrangling with the Jakarta Provincial Government over compensation for eight buildings the government took in Kampung Pulo, Pinang Ranti, East Jakarta.

Israel Prepares for Christmas Tourist Rush

Israel is getting ready to welcome 90,000 tourists this Christmas. The nation is promoting access to holy sites and working to ensure the safety of all visitors.

One third of the 2.4 million Christian tourists expected to

visit Israel by year's end are pilgrims visiting holy sites in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Nazareth, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Via Dolorosa and the Mount of Olives are located in Israel. Bethlehem is in the West Bank.

Can Church Channel Replace Local Church?

What if there were a special television channel that carried the most popular church services and ministry programs featuring America's favorite Christian leaders—24 hours every day of the week?

That was the question Dr. Paul Crouch, founder of the religious broadcasting giant Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN), began asking himself several years ago as he and the team at TBN looked for ways to expand the influence of faith-and-family TV to new audiences.

"We were seeing an increase in the number of specialty —or niche—networks on cable and satellite television, channels that were geared for a particular group of viewers," Crouch recalls. "At the same time our research was showing that churches services were among the most watched religious programs on television."

In addition, Crouch notes, cultural shifts were beginning to dramatically impact the worship habits of millions of Americans—a shift that continues to this day. Researcher George Barna, one of the leading authorities on the changing face of religion in America, has noted that while a majority

of Americans retain a strong belief in God and many express a desire to maintain a connection to church and organized worship, fully one-third of Americans do not attend church on a regular basis. In fact, over the past few years the number of “unchurched” Americans has grown by nearly a million individuals annually.

“But Barna’s research was telling us that these millions of folks who weren’t going to church were still looking for spiritual input in their lives,” says Crouch, “and many were relying on Christian media as that spiritual touchpoint.”

In 2002 TBN launched the Church Channel, the only network dedicated to broadcasting church services and ministry programs 24 hours a day. Since its beginnings the Church Channel has drawn some of the most influential and popular Christian leaders in the nation, from a broad range of denominations and traditions.

Bob Higley, TBN’s vice president for cable and satellite relations, notes that the Church Channel stands out among the scores of niche networks vying for attention in the world of cable and satellite.

“Among current cable subscribers, we found that a healthy 31 percent were interested in receiving the Church Channel,” Higley says. “That interest goes to the heart of our philosophy behind all of TBN’s networks. From the very beginning our focus has been to respond to that need every individual has to be uplifted and inspired in their daily life. We think the Church Channel, like all our networks, does that pretty well.”

What about you? Do you watch the Church Channel? Can TV replace a local church?

Pat Robertson Gives Nod to Marijuana Legalization

Pat Robertson doesn't condone smoking weed, but he's giving the nod to legalizing the drug. On a recent episode of the *700 Club*, the Christian Coalition founder says legalizing marijuana is one way to get smart on crime.

"It got to be a big deal in campaigns: 'He's tough on crime,' and 'lock 'em up!'" Robertson said on the show. "That's the way these guys ran and, uh, they got elected. But, that wasn't the answer."

Chan Steps Down from Cornerstone, Moves to Asia

Francis Chan has picked up and moved his family to Asia. Chan pastored the 4,000-member Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, Calif.

Chan was making quite a name for himself in Christian circles, penning two best-selling books, including *Crazy Love* and *Forgotten God*, and authoring a DVD teaching series. But he has resigned and left for an unnamed country in Asia. Chan reportedly told his church that he "wanted to disappear for a while" in late September.

Zondervan Releases 2011 Digital NIV Bible

Want to put the Bible on your iPod? You could download an app, or you could carry the entire 2011 NIV version around in your pocket with you.

Zondervan just launched the first product featuring the updated New International Version of the Bible—a digital e-book. The digital release marks the first time that a new Zondervan Bible translation has launched in a digital format before it is released in print. The printed version is due out March 2011.

Sanctified Slide Vies for Guinness Book of World Records

Can you do the Sanctified Slide? It's nothing like "the hustle," but in Christian circles it may become just as popular. That's because the so-called Sanctified Slide is vying for a spot in the Guinness Book of World Records.

Next question: What on earth is the Sanctified Slide? It's a Gospel line dance. You might have to see it to understand it. [Click here](#) to watch the video for yourself.

Kansas Town Tries to Tax Church Attendance

The Kansas City of Mission is working to make sure churches in its area understand that there are two things certain in life: death and taxes—even in the sanctuary.

Mission implemented a property tax in the name of a “driveway fee” in efforts to evade having to grant tax exemptions to two local churches, according to the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF). ADF filed a suit on behalf of the churches, First Baptist Church of Mission and The Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas.