

Minister Risks Jail to Read Christmas Story, Pray at Capitol

Taking the war on Christmas to new heights, Patrick Mahoney is preparing to go to jail to defend religious freedom.

Mahoney, director of the Christian Defense Coalition, is planning to read the Christmas story at the Capitol Tree on Thursday at noon. The Capitol Christmas Tree is located on the West Lawn of the United States Capitol Building.

“It is hard to imagine that a minister, or any American, would face possible arrest or citation for reading the Christmas story from the Bible or holding a Nativity Display in the palm of their hand in front of the Capitol Christmas tree on the lawn of the United States Capitol Building,” Mahoney says. “Yet, this is what I am facing on Thursday at noon.”

Mahoney met with Capitol police officials to share his plans to sing Christmas carols, read the Christmas story, pray for peace, justice and religious freedom, hold a small five-inch nativity display, and pray for political leaders at the Capitol Christmas tree.

Police informed Mahoney that some of his activities may be prohibited or constitute an illegal demonstration. So Mahoney contacted his attorney, Jim Henderson, senior counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, who in turn called the Office of General Counsel for the Capitol Police on Tuesday.

Henderson sent Mahoney an email explaining that his use of the Bible or the ornament would convert his activity, in the view of the Capitol police, into a prohibited demonstration.

The bottom line: If Mahoney proceeds with his plans he could

be ticketed—or even arrested. And he plans to do it anyway.

“Sadly, we are seeing a growing hostility toward public expressions of faith in the public square especially during the Christmas season. I was told I could hold sheet music, an instrument or camera in my hand, but if I hold a Bible or small nativity scene that would be considered a ‘prop’ and cause me to face arrest or citation,” Mahoney said.

“I want to make to clear that every American should have the right to express their faith in the public square free from government intimidation or harassment. If that means spending time in jail for reading the Christmas story from the Bible, then I consider that a small price to pay.”

This Christmas, Take a Moment to Pray for an Iranian Brother

Those of us in the West who are blessed with religious freedom think of Christmas as a cheery occasion. But how would you like to spend the holiday in a dark prison cell in Iran—where inmates without any legal protection are sometimes rounded up at night and hanged in secret mass executions?

Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani has been in the Lakan prison, near the city of Rasht, Iran, since October 2009. He was arrested after he complained to authorities that the local school was forcibly teaching Islam to his two sons, Daniel, 9, and Yoel, 7. (The Iranian constitution supposedly guarantees religious freedom.) The charges against the pastor, who leads a 400-member congregation in Rasht, were later changed: He was

accused of apostasy and evangelism.

This will be the third Christmas Youcef has spent in a prison cell.

The Nadarkhanis' story resembles a nightmare. After Youcef's arrest, his wife, Fatemah, was arrested, charged with apostasy and sentenced to life in prison. Officials threatened to place their two sons in a Muslim family, but Fatemah was released four months later. Meanwhile, Youcef was often placed in solitary confinement, and prison guards gave him pills to persuade him to renounce his Christian faith.

In September 2010 he was given a verbal death sentence, and that sentence was put in writing two months later. He was told he would be hanged unless he recanted his faith. With help from international Christian organizations, Youcef appealed to the Iranian Supreme Court. In June of this year the court upheld his death sentence.

Present Truth Ministries, a Minnesota-based organization focused on bringing the gospel to Muslims, reported a conversation that took place in September in a courtroom in Raust, when Iranian officials demanded that Youcef renounce his faith in Jesus.

Youcef: "You ask me to recant. Recant means to return. What do you wish me to return to? The blasphemy that I was in before Christ?"

Judge: "To the religion of your ancestors, Islam."

Youcef: "I cannot."

A Muslim attorney told Present Truth that the brave pastor has discovered spiritual strength to endure his struggle. "Physically he looks weak," the lawyer said, "but emotionally his belief in Christ is keeping his spirits high."

President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and

leaders of other governments have demanded that Iran release Pastor Youcef, and mission organizations serving the persecuted church have encouraged Christians around the world to send letters of protest to Iranian authorities. (Please see the link at the bottom of this page.)

I'm asking you to do one more thing: Please pray for Pastor Youcef and his family on Christmas Day. While you are celebrating the freedom Christ brought us, please bear your brother's burden and ask for God's presence, strength, comfort and favor—not only for Youcef but for the many other Iranian believers who are suffering in silence at this time of year.

The clock is ticking, and this man's life is on the line. Says Jason DeMars of Present Truth: "There are no assurances that [Youcef] will not be executed. It could happen at any time. This is the way the Iranian government operates with executions. They do not give advance notice and it is done in secret."

We tend to think of Christmas as festive and delectable, full of hot cider, sweet treats and warm memories of family togetherness. Yet the first Christmas was neither warm nor friendly. It was fraught with danger, especially after King Herod launched his campaign to kill the baby Jesus.

The same spirit that controlled Herod (and drove his son Herod Antipas to behead John the Baptist) is operating in the world today to falsely accuse, imprison and kill Christians. It is the reason more than 450 Christians are martyred every day around the world. The Bible commands us: "Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body" (Heb. 13:3). Let's stand in solidarity with our brother.

Live Prosperously

God's best for you includes every good thing you could possibly need.

☒ If I began to tell you about heaven, I couldn't give you any firsthand information because I haven't been there. But I can teach on prosperity because that is something I have experienced. I've gone from absolutely nothing to abundance in my life.

God's ideal prosperity includes healing, protection, favor, wisdom, success, well-being and every good thing you could possibly need. It's what Jesus provided for us by laying down His own life.

In the nearly 40 years of my Christian journey, the Lord has led me in the way of true prosperity using seven steps. Let's briefly take a look at these key elements to living the prosperous life—the blessed life for which Jesus redeemed us.

The apostle John reveals the first step, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4, NKJV). "Truth" means to walk in the light of God's Word, according to His ways and His wisdom. It's living a godly lifestyle in obedience to what God says is right. You can't do it and not be blessed.

Faithfulness is another step that moves us closer to prosperity. It's a fruit of the Spirit you received when you were born again. Scripture says: "'His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord''" (Matt. 25:21).

To live abundantly we must also be diligent. The Word repeatedly says we are to seek God with all diligence, hearken to what He says and obey His commands. Why? Deuteronomy 28:1-2

says that when you listen diligently and obey, blessings overtake you! Diligence brings increase. As Proverbs 10:4 says, "The hand of the diligent makes rich."

Tithing and giving are essential too. The Bible says, "Honor the Lord with your capital and sufficiency. ... So shall your storage places be filled with plenty" (Prov. 3:9-10, The Amplified Bible).

My husband, Ken, and I never had any financial growth until we became faithful in tithing. The tithe belongs to God. As we give it to support those who feed us spiritually, we honor Him.

In addition to tithing, we must give as the Lord leads us to the people and places where we are to sow. The Hebrew word for "offering" comes from a root word that means to "draw nigh." We have the privilege of coming close to God when we obey in the area of finances.

Second Corinthians 9:6 says: "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (NKJV). God desires to increase you and bless you because He loves you.

To live prosperously, we must practice believing and saying God's Word. "Since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, 'I believed and therefore I spoke,' we also believe and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13).

Faith must be in two places—in your heart and in your mouth. Believing in your heart and saying with your mouth produce the operation of faith.

I learned to take the Word literally as God speaking to me. I learned if I put it in my eyes, put it in my ears, and let it get down into my heart in abundance, it would come out my mouth in faith-filled words.

I learned faithfully and diligently to do what it says to do. My life and circumstances changed, and they still get better every day.

To me, these are the major steps to enjoy the prosperous life that God offers to every one of His children. I can tell you from my own experience that these steps will bring you increase, no matter where you are in life and no matter what you need.

Gloria Copeland is co-founder and vice president of Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas. She and her husband, Kenneth, are known for their teachings on faith, healing and victorious Christian living. Their daily TV broadcast, Believer's Voice of Victory, airs globally on more than 300 stations.

In 40 days, Church Raises \$1 Million

Living Hope needed 'faith and a fight' to hold on to its former Kmart campus




Despite high-profile ministry bankruptcies in the past year, Living Hope Church is proving God is still faithful by raising more than \$1 million in just 40 days to maintain possession of its Vancouver, Wash., campus, a former Kmart retail store.

Of course, no one said the miracle came without faith and a fight.

Not only did the 6,000-member church have its challenges, senior pastor John Bishop personally felt the impact of

principalities and powers that opposed his gospel mission. Bishop suffered health problems even as his son battled with drugs.


Francis Chan's 'Crazy' Vision

Crazy Love author wants to plant 586 churches—all in apartment buildings 

San Francisco's Tenderloin district houses 37,000 people in 586 apartment buildings—all in just one square mile. The multi-denominational ministry San Francisco City Impact (SFCI) dreams of planting churches in those apartment buildings—in every single one of them.

Francis Chan, author of *Crazy Love* and former pastor of Cornerstone Community Church, is working with the SFCI team on an initiative called Adopt a Building. Their mission: to “holistically heal and transform” the San Francisco community through urgent-relief works and preventive works.

New Life Grows on Nomad's Land

Counterculture farm's organic community a rich soil for God's love 

Three couples. One vision. And a 40-acre farm. That's the

genesis of Nomad's Land, a cooperative community that aims to give road-weary travelers a place to rest and find fellowship with like-minded believers—and offer a new beginning to hippies, gutter punks, train hoppers and societal outcasts.

Joshua Hanson and his wife, Shallyn, along with Beau and Ashley Armistead, founders of Lone Sheep Ministries, and evangelists Al and Tina Nord, purchased the Alabama farm to fulfill a common vision: bringing together nomadic ministers and counterculture youth for an organic experience sprinkled with the love of God.

Steve Hill Battles Back From Cancer


Evangelist endures “toughest year of my life” but says Jesus has healed him



The evangelist perhaps best known for the Brownsville Revival in Pensacola, Fla., Steve Hill battled melanoma for more than three years—and refused to give up despite what sounded like death knocking at his door. Now he's preparing to run back to the battle line with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Steve Hill Ministries' staff in June called for 48 hours of focused prayer and fasting on behalf of the evangelist who founded Heartland Church in Las Colinas, Texas, after the battle for his life intensified. What the staff didn't tell the world at that time was that doctors had given him three days to live.

Empowered21 Asia Sparks Charismatic Revival

Holy Spirit sweeps over 14,000 conference attendees from 49 nations who gathered in Indonesia 

Fourteen thousand people from 49 nations recently convened in the world's most populous Muslim nation for a single purpose: to unite the Spirit-filled movement across Asia to focus resources on the harvest.

After the dust settled on the four-day Empowered21 Asia Congress, Spirit-filled Christian leaders spoke out about what they experienced in Jakarta, Indonesia, and what it means for the global church.

"I believe those who were present received the fire of revival and will bring that fire to the nations," says Empowered21 Asia host Niko Njotorahardjo, senior pastor of Gereja Bethel Indonesia. "This fire of revival was initiated by prayer, praise and worship, and unity over the past four days."

Feedback

"The roots of the NAR were Christians in small groups. When we gather together so we can influence the world, true relationships form."

—Linda Jones

Forming the reformation

I enjoyed "The Truth About the New Apostolic Reformation" (by C. Peter Wagner, November), but my view of the church world is that the basic building block is not in its right place. The roots of the NAR were Christians meeting in small groups where people knew each other, and there were personal relationships. When we gather together to be refilled so we can influence the world, then the result is that true godly relationships are formed.

Linda Jones, Panama City Beach, Fla.

Classifying catholics

I am a Catholic priest who has enjoyed reading *Charisma* for 20 years. The article "So Help Us, God" (by Stephen Mansfield & David A. Holland, November) speaks of odd teachings, and groups together Muslim teachings about Gabriel and Mohammed, Mormon teachings about spirit babies and spirit bodies, and two Roman Catholic teachings. The authors might not agree with Catholic theology, but to group this with the other teachings is unfair.

Monsignor Vincent M. Walsh, Darby, Pa.

Outreach versus inclusion

I have to adamantly object to the article, "Out, But Not Disqualified" (by Richie Hughes, November). The writer said we should accept homosexuals into our churches and let them be involved in sharing their gifts. Homosexuality, along with adultery, thievery and other strongholds, are not of God's design. Yes, we need to reach out to all those in

“lifestyles.” We need to inform them that God is ready to deliver them from any bondage they do not like.

Roy Proctor, Enterprise, Ala.

Messy ‘housekeeping’?

Disturbed. That’s how I felt after reading Kimberly Daniels’ “Spiritual Housekeeping” (November). The easy way she attributes misguided giving, oppressed youth, traditions of men and elders becoming “demonically old” as manifestations of demonic spirits is disturbing. Jesus said religious leaders made God’s Word ineffectual by their traditions, not “generational religious spirits.” Paul attributed his Pharisaical works to zealous ignorance, not demonic activity.

Jim Mackey, Duncanville, Texas

Saving Winston Shane Hawks

The debut inspirational project *Saving Winston*, by three-time horror filmmaker Shane Hawks, builds on lessons he learned in those previous productions, but it’s a far cry from their dark content.

The family-friendly drama revolves around a troubled teen who finds redemption through caring for an abandoned horse and includes a scene featuring the sinner’s prayer.

“It’s the longest shot in the whole movie,” Hawks says. “I felt like because my first three films were so unChristian I needed to make up the difference.”

Saving Winston was filmed around Hawks' hometown, Eugene, Ore., where he returned after several years in Los Angeles in which his secular movie efforts did not bear fruit. "I said, 'Lord, give me another chance and I will make films for you from now on.'" Things started to turn around almost immediately, resulting in *Saving Winston*.