

Buzz

SPOTLIGHT

Stirring the Pot

Derek Webb is giving away his latest CD

Singer-songwriter Derek Webb attracted attention when he released Mockingbird, a collection featuring strong messages on issues such as poverty, AIDS and war. His goal was to apply the words of Christ to how believers live today and how they treat others. "I wouldn't consider [the record] anti-war but pro-peace," he says. "That is really the work of the Christian—to be pro-peace, to be pre-emptive about peace." It's a message he thinks is so important that in September he released the disc free at his Web site, . "I don't want to give people any reason to not engage with this record," Webb says. "It's so important that we have these conversations."

DeWayne Hamby

Prayer Point

While most of the world was watching the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, Christians in Sri Lanka were caught in the middle of a civil war that at press time had left dozens dead and thousands displaced. This month, we encourage you to pray that:

1. Civil unrest in the south Asian nation would end
2. Buddhists' attempts to restrict evangelism would be thwarted

3. The Sri Lankan church would grow, unite and be a catalyst for national reconciliation.

Puji TuHan!

That's how "Praise the Lord!" is said in Indonesia, where local Christians are celebrating the arrival of the first issue of Charisma in their own language. Thanks to a dedicated group of Indonesian church and business leaders, the world's largest Muslim nation now has its own version of Charisma—published in Indonesia and loaded with exclusive news and commentary from around the country. The first 100-page issue, released in August, offered a unique look at how early Pentecostals brought spiritual renewal to Indonesia in the 1920s after the Azusa Street revival.

Reaching Out

A Graphic Gospel

Robert Luedke has been a fan of comics for most of his life. He even spent 15 years publishing and selling them. But after the former agnostic accepted Christ in 1999 he decided to use the literary form to present the gospel, especially to youth. Today he's using his Eye Witness trilogy of graphic novels to help young generations avoid the years of searching he endured.

Subtitled "a fictional account of absolute truth," the first installment focuses on the Passion story, and book two, Acts of the Spirit, chronicles the formation of the early church. The final book will focus on the life of the apostle Paul. Widely read internationally, the long-form comic books are

only mildly popular among Christians. But Luedke believes faith-based graphic novels will become more common. He has good reason to hope. In September, Urban Ministries Inc., the largest African-American Christian publisher, debuted the Guardian Line, which is comprised of four series of Christian-themed comics targeting urban youth. The line was developed by Michael Davis, co-creator of the Emmy-winning cartoon Static Shock.

Adrienne S. Gaines

Faith & Culture

The Color of Love

Forthcoming film is designed to initiate dialogue about race

Filmmaker Jean-Claude La Marre knows the jury is still out on the physical appearance of Christ. But he opted to portray Jesus as a black man in his upcoming movie, Color of the Cross, in order to spark a discussion on race that he thinks is long overdue.

“From a spiritual standpoint, [Christ’s] color really doesn’t matter,” La Marre says. But seeing Jesus as black could be healing for African-Americans, he says, offering “a sense of empowerment, that they share a common lineage with Christ.”

Set to release Oct. 27, the film explores the last 48 hours of Jesus’ life and stars La Marre as Christ and Debbi Morgan (Coach Carter, Woman Thou Art Loosed) as Mary. Although many religion historians believe Christ resembled people from the Middle East, various cultures have depicted Jesus to reflect their own ethnicities. Images of a black Christ became more

common among African-Americans after the civil rights era.

“[Christ’s color] would not make a difference in a free society, but it would make a difference in a society where blacks were given to feel poorly about themselves,” says the Rev. Cecil “Chip” Murray, who retired as pastor of Los Angeles’ First African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2004 and served as a producer and consultant on the film.

Murray and La Marre expect their depiction of Christ to upset some Christians—both black and white. But they say those who object to a black Christ and not to a white one underscore the need for the film. Says Murray, “This should not, in an enlightened society, create anything but debate and examination.”

Adrienne S. Gaines