

News Brief

Elsie Mason, 'First Lady of Church of God in Christ,' Dies

Elsie Louise Washington Mason, wife of Church of God in Christ (COGIC) founder Bishop Charles Harrison Mason, died Jan. 31 in a Memphis, Tenn., hospital. She was 98. Widowed in 1961, Mason served as an evangelist, was secretary of the denomination's missions department and helped found an orphanage in Haiti, the Commercial Appeal reported. She also served as editor of COGIC's official newspaper, The Whole Truth, and despite failing health recently completed a history of COGIC titled The Great Cloud of Witnesses. "She was a very distinguished lady, a good wife and a dedicated church worker," David Hall, pastor of Temple COGIC in Memphis, which was founded by C.H. Mason, told the Appeal. "She was very active in many facets of our church and she will be greatly missed." Funeral services were held Feb. 6 at Temple of Deliverance COGIC in Memphis. She is survived by three sisters: Ceneta Qualls and Ida Jamison of Memphis, and Clara McAdams of Los Angeles.

Jordanian King Urges Cooperation among Christians, Muslims and Jews

King Abdullah of Jordan urged cooperation among Christians, Muslims and Jews at a luncheon speech during the National Prayer Breakfast events Feb. 2, the New York Times reported. The speech was the first by a Muslim head of state before a mostly Christian audience. Quoting as often from the Bible as the Quran, Abdullah told the 3,000 attendees: "Extremism is a political movement under religious cover," the Times said. "Its adherents want nothing more than to pit us against each other, denying all that we have in common."

End of the Spear Opens in Top 10

End of the Spear opened at No. 8 and by February had grossed more than \$10 million amid criticism that it lacked an overt gospel message and that its producers should not have cast an openly gay man as the lead. The film, released Jan. 20 by Every Tribe Entertainment, is based on the true story of five missionaries who were killed by the Waodani tribe in

the jungles of Ecuador 50 years ago. Though some Christians said casting gay activist Chad Allen as the lead was irresponsible, Every Tribe CEO Mart Green maintains that Allen was the best man for the part. “[Allen] raised the bar for us,” he said. The film is expected to release on video in May.

Canada's Christian Prime minister May Put Gay Marriage Before Voters

Conservative Party leader Stephen Harper, who is a member of the Christian Missionary Alliance, became Canada's prime minister in January after promising to let Parliament vote on whether to reopen the issue of same-sex marriage, Reuters reported. Canada is one of four nations worldwide where gay marriage is legal. If Parliament were to approve the motion and a bill were introduced defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, observers question whether it would pass in the House, and they doubt it would gain approval from the Senate, which is led by the Liberal Party.

Hispanic Ministers call for immigration Reform

A newly formed coalition representing more than 20 million Hispanic evangelicals announced its opposition Feb. 3 to immigration reform proposals its members regard as anti-immigrant. Among the group's concerns is H.R. Bill 4437, which would subject to arrest anyone assisting undocumented workers. Comprised of leaders such as the Rev. Samuel Rodriguez of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and Dr. Jesse Miranda of AMEN ministries, the Hispanic Coalition for Comprehensive Immigration Reform outlined four major goals, including humanitarian border protection policies and an opportunity for immigrants who are already contributing to the U.S. to pursue an option to eventually become citizens. “What we are looking for is a more balanced and comprehensive approach to immigration,” said Mark Gonzalez, founder and president of the Standing for Truth Foundation, “and we believe [these proposals] accomplish that.”

World Council of Churches seeks to dialogue with Pentecostals

More than 50 Pentecostal groups were expected to participate in the World

Council of Churches (WCC) assembly held Feb. 14-23 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, the Associated Press (AP) reported. The council, whose liberal-leaning members are losing congregants to Pentecostal and charismatic churches, planned to discuss ways to begin serious dialogue with Pentecostals and similar groups, who make up 25 percent of the world's churches. "We need a fresh look at global Christianity," WCC head Samuel Koiba told the AP. "I will also call on Pentecostals, charismatics and others to approach us in an open mind and not with the hostility of history that has led to suspicion." While participating in the WCC conference as "observers," the Pentecostal and charismatic groups were to hold a separate, smaller gathering during the weeklong event, the Christian Post said. The WCC meeting—the largest since its 1998 gathering in Zimbabwe—was also expected to address rifts over same-sex unions and homosexual clergy, and discuss ways to forge closer ties between Christians and moderate Muslims, the AP said.