

News Briefs

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RADIO STATION NIXES 'GRAPHIC' FOCUS ON THE FAMILY KWVE

In Santa Ana, Calif., run by Calvary Chapel of Costa Mesa, dropped James Dobson's Focus on the Family radio show from its format because the broadcasts were too graphic. A statement at KWVE's Web site says concerns came to a head earlier in the year with a series of broadcasts on women and sexuality, which included " [discussions] concerning marital sex." Paul Hetrick, Focus' vice president of media relations, said the organization was "shocked" at the decision. He says the program has not changed in Focus' 25-year history, but tackles tougher issues.

MUSLIM CLERIC WANTS CHRISTIAN LEADERS KILLED

An Iranian newspaper reported that during an Oct. 11 prayer sermon, Ayatollah Mohsen Mujtahed Shabestari called for the killing of Baptist preacher Jerry Falwell, evangelist Franklin Graham and Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson for a recent series of disparaging remarks they made about Islam. Shabestari reportedly referred to the three as "the Israeli mercenaries" who needed to be "separated from other Christians." Experts say the ministers' remarks sparked riots in India, helped religious parties win elections in Pakistan and undermined public sympathy in Islamic countries for the U.S. war on terrorism, The Washington Post reported. Falwell recently apologized for calling Muhammad, the founder of Islam, a "terrorist" during a 60 Minutes broadcast in October.

But Akbar Ahmed, chairman of Islamic studies at American University, said Falwell's comments already had been "flashed all over the Muslim world" and "are doing serious damage to U.S. interests," the Post said.

MISS AMERICA 'BULLIED' OVER ABSTINENCE MESSAGE

Pageant officials are allowing Miss America, who is a Spirit-filled Christian, to talk publicly about sexual abstinence as part of her platform. Pageant officials reportedly urged Erika Harold, 22, to talk only about youth-violence prevention. The Washington Times reported that she was "furious" about the decision and said she "will not be bullied." Miss America President George Bauer later told Harold she could speak out on abstinence along with her violence-prevention platform, reported Project Reality, a pro-abstinence organization Harold is affiliated with.

CHURCH MEMBERS CONVICTED OF ABUSE

An Atlanta pastor and four members of his church were convicted Oct. 17 of abuse for whipping two boys in front of the congregation. Arthur Allen Jr., 70, who leads the House of Prayer, and the other defendants were found guilty of aggravated assault and cruelty to children and were given prison sentences ranging from 20 to 90 days, the Associated Press reported. They were also fined amounts ranging from \$250 to \$8,000, placed on probation and ordered to attend parenting classes. Members of the 150-strong congregation have repeatedly said the church was being persecuted for its biblical beliefs.

Bishops Council Examines Pearson's Doctrine

Bishop Carlton Pearson agreed to appear before the World Bishops Council (WBC) in October to address their concerns

over his teaching on universal reconciliation. Pearson is not a member of the 488-strong WBC, a broad ecumenical group comprised of Catholic, Episcopalian, Orthodox, Lutheran and Pentecostal bishops. WBC president Timothy Paul said the closed-door meeting was called after the group received more than 100 e-mails inquiring about Pearson's doctrine.

Juanita Bynum Marries

Well-known preacher and author Juanita Bynum and Bishop Thomas Wesley Weeks Jr. announced their marriage during a live interview on the Trinity Broadcasting Network Oct. 1. The couple was married this summer during a small, private ceremony. The groom is the founder and pastor of the Center of (Helping Other People to Excel) New Destiny Christian Cathedral in Washington, D.C. The newlyweds, who both have been married before, plan to have a public wedding ceremony in April.

Jonah Debuts at No. 6

Jonah—a VeggieTales Movie was the No. 6 film after its Oct. 4 debut, earning \$6.5 million, the Associated Press said. The weekend's only other new wide release, Red Dragon, debuted at No. 1 with \$37.5 million. Jonah, however, was released in just 940 theaters, while Red Dragon played in more than 3,000, Reuters reported. In its third week Jonah had grossed \$16.2 million and had been viewed on 1,581 screens.