

News Briefs

The following reports were released during the last month by Charisma News Service. Go to our Web site at www.charismanews.com to subscribe to the free weekday service or to access full-length versions of each day's stories. The site also includes a search engine so you can access archived news.

BISHOPS ENDORSE CARLTON PEARSON

At its annual meeting in May, the International Communion of Charismatic Churches (ICCC) "affirmed and confirmed" that Bishop Carlton Pearson of Tulsa, Okla., is a member in "good standing." Pearson has caused a firestorm for preaching universal reconciliation, which says no confession in Jesus as Savior is needed to go to heaven. "We ... recognize him as a valuable leader in the body of Christ," said the ICCC statement, which was signed by Earl Paulk, the group's presiding bishop. Bishop David Huskins, another signatory, said universal reconciliation was not discussed at the meeting, but that the statement is an endorsement of Pearson and not his doctrine. Pearson raised concerns recently when he said he believes Satan himself may go to heaven.

CANADIAN COURT OPENS DOOR FOR GAY MARRIAGE

Two Toronto men wed June 11 in North America's first legal gay marriage after an Ontario, Canada, appeals court ruled that the heterosexual definition of matrimony was unconstitutional. The court also ordered marriage licenses issued to nine homosexual couples involved in the case, the Associated Press reported. The Canadian government did not challenge the ruling. Vermont and the Canadian province of Quebec have allowed gay civil unions, but not full marriage. Conservative groups blasted the ruling.

MOVIE NUMBER PROMPTS DIVINE INTERRUPTIONS

A pastor and a Christian couple have been answering calls to God after their telephone number appeared on a fictional pager in the new Jim Carrey hit comedy, Bruce Almighty. Carrey stars as a constant complainer who receives the powers of God, who tries to reach Carrey by repeatedly leaving a phone number on his pager. But instead of the usual fictitious 555 prefix used by most TV shows and films, God's exchange is listed as 776. When people in Sanford, N.C., dial the number, they reach Bruce MacInnes, pastor of Turner's Chapel Church, the Associated Press reported. In Horrell Hill, S.C., David and Myrtle Hallman received more than 30 phone calls the week after the film opened, The (Columbia) State reported.

EUROPE 'THE NEW MISSION FIELD'

Ugandan minister Arnold Muwone is part of a new breed of missionaries in Europe who are coming from countries once on the receiving end of evangelistic efforts. Muwone said his Pentecostal ministry "targets first and foremost the British people as a gesture of thank-you for coming to Africa and bringing us the gospel," Time magazine said in a report examining how Christianity is becoming a minority faith in Europe. The newsweekly also mentioned a 1,500-strong church in a Paris suburb founded by an Indian man, Selvaraj Rajiah, whose members are almost all from outside France. The report also noted the success of Alpha, a discipleship course launched at a charismatic Anglican church in London that has spread to more than 130 countries since 1992.

T.D. Jakes Urges Pastors To Confront Racism

Bishop T.D. Jakes challenged pastors to preach against prejudice during the National Conference on Racism in the Church in Fairfield, Ohio, June 12. "We must preach against racism ... until people are ... falling on the altar and

confessing racist behavior,” he said, The Cincinnati Post reported. Jakes was a keynote speaker at the three-day event organized by Cincinnati Area Pastors . Others included Bill Hybels, Fred Price and Glenn Plummer, chairman of National Religious Broadcasters.

Pastor Ron Mehl Dies

Oregon pastor Ron Mehl died May 30 after a 20-year battle with leukemia. He was 59. Mehl was senior pastor of 6,000-member Beaverton Foursquare Church in suburban Portland, and supervisor of the Columbia District of Foursquare Churches. Mehl hosted a daily radio program and wrote several books, including Right With God, the official handbook for the 2003 National Day of Prayer. Mehl is survived by his wife, Joyce, and their two sons, Ron Jr. and Mark.

Leon Patillo Arrested

Former Santana lead vocalist-turned-Christian minister Leon Patillo, 56, was arrested recently “over a real estate check,” his wife, Renee, told Charisma. “It’s not ministry related,” she said. “It’s from a long time ago. That’s all I know.” The Federal Bureau of Prisons confirmed that Patillo was being held at the Central Detention Center in San Bernardino, Calif. Patillo reportedly had not been allowed to post bail.