

News Briefs

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DAYSTAR, FAMILYNET TO REMAIN ON DISH NETWORK

After six months of legal wrangling, Christian TV networks Daystar and FamilyNet will be allowed to remain on the Dish Network. On Jan. 30, a federal appeals court reversed a July preliminary injunction that would have forced both networks to be immediately removed from Dish, which has 10 million viewers. The dispute stems from a lawsuit filed by Dominion Sky Angel, a Christian satellite company, against EchoStar, which owns Dish Network. Dominion claimed EchoStar breached its contract with Dominion by allowing Christian stations other than SkyAngel, Trinity Broadcasting Network and the Eternal Word Television Network to air on Dish. Though the ruling allows Daystar and FamilyNet to air on Dish, Dominion said it is still in litigation with EchoStar. Meanwhile, FamilyNet has announced plans to expand its programming to include a news show in partnership with Fox News, as well as Focus on the Family's Adventures in Odyssey children's series. The programs are scheduled to debut in September.

PONZI SCHEME VICTIMS LAUNCH COMPENSATION FUND

Benny Hinn, Marilyn Hickey and Christ for All Nations are among several ministers and Christian groups that helped start a compensation fund for the victims of a three-year Ponzi scheme involving International Product Investment Corporation (IPIC), which bilked mostly churches and Christian ministries

out of \$160 million. Though some investors lost all their money, others received profits. The fund was established with excess money the ministries or their leaders received through their dealings with IPIC head Gregory Setser, who was arrested in November and charged with securities fraud and money laundering.

CHURCHES UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN CHINA

Two state-sanctioned churches are under construction in communist China, which has repeatedly been criticized by the U.S. State Department for harassing and persecuting Christians there, the Associated Press reported. The Beijing Religious Affairs Office said the new facilities in eastern and western Beijing should be completed by Christmas. The structures would be the first churches built in Beijing since 1949. Critics believe the move is an attempt to get Chinese Christians to abandon their underground congregations for state-sponsored churches, thus making them less of a threat, the AP said.

AIRLINE EXECUTIVE APOLOGIZES FOR PILOT'S CHRISTIAN REMARKS

The head of American Airlines apologized Feb. 13 for remarks a Christian pilot made during a recent cross-country flight. At the start of the Feb. 7 trip from Los Angeles to New York, pilot Rodger K. Findiesen, who had recently returned from a missions trip, asked all Christians on board to raise their hands so fellow passengers could search them out for discussion about faith, the Associated Press reported. In a letter to Anti-Defamation League Director Abraham Foxman, American Airlines' Gerard Arpey said: "Let me assure you that we take this very seriously and are conducting a thorough investigation. [The airline] promotes an environment of respect for the diversity of all persons, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation." Findiesen has been grounded with pay.

Church Planter and Missionary Earl Kellum Dies

Missionary Earl Kellum, who planted dozens of churches across Mexico and Latin America through his Irving, Texas-based Latin America Missions, died on Jan. 21 of an apparent heart attack at his Iguala, Mexico, home. He was 77. Born in Mississippi, Kellum moved to Mexico in 1954 and went on to plant more than 400 churches there and another 100 in Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, Nicaragua and Peru. He is survived by two adult daughters and two brothers. Memorial services were held in Mexico Jan. 23 and Oneonta, Ala., Jan. 26.

Singer Stacy Orrico Decries Sexy Pop Image

Contemporary Christian singer Stacy Orrico, 17, decried the revealing clothing worn by pop stars Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera during an interview Feb. 14 in Singapore, where she was preparing for the MTV Asia Awards, the Associated Press (AP) reported. Calling the pair poor role models for girls, Orrico said: "I don't think that's sexy, I think it's degrading. I think that a truly sexy woman comes from being confident and being classy, respectable and mature," the AP said.

Israeli Official Calls for Muslim Conversion

During a February meeting with Christian leaders visiting from Europe, Israeli Tourism Minister Benny Elon asked missionaries to try to convert Islamic militants, the Associated Press (AP) reported. Elon said Israel would not tolerate evangelism among Jews, but recommended missionaries "remind all the Muslim killers that thou shalt not kill. Make them good Christians and good people," according to the Yediot Ahronot daily, the

AP said.

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