

News Service 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.

EVANGELIST SOFTENS CRITICISM OF ISLAM

Franklin Graham has softened his criticism of Islam after coming under fire for calling the religion evil. In a column in The Wall Street Journal in December, Graham said he did not believe Muslims were evil people, "but I decry the evil done in the name of Islam," the Associated Press reported. The president of Samaritan's Purse and head of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association sparked a storm of protest when he called Islam "wicked and violent." His comments were disavowed by the White House, which has repeatedly said Islam is a peaceful religion.

CHRISTIAN GIVING DOWN AFTER TERRORIST ATTACKS

The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks sparked the greatest outpouring of generosity in American history—but also dealt a major blow to ministries and nonprofit groups not connected to post-attack relief efforts. According to The Virginian-Pilot, groups such as Focus on the Family and Concerned Women for

America reported 25 percent and 56 percent drops in giving respectively in the weeks since the attacks. Christians overall are becoming less generous, according to a report by Empty Tomb. The Illinois-based research group charts a drop in giving to churches as a portion of household income from 3.1 percent in 1968 to percent in 1991, with churches spending less on community, national and international needs, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reported.

RAZE MEMBER SENTENCED IN SEX CASE

Ja'Marc Davis of the Dove Award-winning dance pop group Raze was sentenced Dec. 18 in Tulsa, Okla., to five years in a minimum-security facility for sex offenses involving a 14-year-old former backup singer, The Tulsa World reported. Davis pleaded guilty last fall to three felony counts of sexual misconduct with the girl, now 17. The state corrections department had recommended probation for Davis, who had no previous criminal record. But Tulsa County District Judge Jefferson Sellers said he deserved incarceration for the repeated sexual contact with a minor, which occurred for a year from mid-1998.

AID WORKERS UNDECIDED ABOUT SHARING STORY

The story of jailed Afghan missionaries Dayna Curry and Heather Mercer could be the subject of a book or movie. Speaking at a citywide worship service Dec. 8 attended by

4,000 people at the Ferrell Center in Waco, Texas, the two women said they haven't decided how to share their story, The Waco Tribune-Herald reported. Rick Christian, president of Alive Communications, a Colorado Springs, Colo., agency that represents Christian authors, said before their ordeal ended, publishers began to buzz about a book deal for the American women. J. Max Robins, a senior editor and columnist at TV Guide, also said producers are trying to talk with the women about turning their tale into a TV movie.

ROBERTSON LEAVES CHRISTIAN COALITION

In a letter released in early December, Christian Coalition founder Pat Robertson announced his resignation as president and board member, saying the group had achieved all of the 10-year political goals it set in 1990. The 71-year-old also cited his desire to give more time to ministry. Roberta Combs, promoted to president after Robertson's resignation, said the coalition would build with "a new generation of leadership."

BILLY GRAHAM KNIGHTED

The world's best-known evangelist was made an honorary knight by the Queen of England in early December. Billy Graham had the title bestowed upon him in Washington, D.C., by Sir Christopher Meyer, the British ambassador, The (London) Daily Telegraph reported. In November, the 83-year-old announced that the ministry will move its international headquarters from Minneapolis to Charlotte, N.C.

TERRORIST ACTS SPARK CHRISTIAN MUSIC SALES

In the weeks following September 11, people have been seeking

comfort from Christian music, with the genre's sales jumping an average of 23 percent, according to SoundScan, The Denver Post reported. Gospel Music Association President Frank Breeden noted that sales this year are 9 percent ahead of 2000, while the entire music industry is down by 4.9 percent, The Hollywood Reporter said. . 's Satelllite and Michael W. Smith's Worship released Sept. 11. Satelllite went platinum in October; Worship was certified gold in December.

If you have a news tip for Charisma News Service, e-mail us at charisma@.