

News Services Briefs

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VEGGIETALES BOUGHT BY 'WONDERFUL PARTNER'

In a deal announced Sept. 2, Big Idea Productions sold its copyrights to VeggieTales to Classic Media LLC, owner of such children's properties as Golden Books and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. "Due to their great enthusiasm for both our business and our ministry, I believe Classic Media is a wonderful partner to help guide Big Idea back to financial health," Big Idea founder Phil Vischer said. The financially troubled company was forced to sell after losing a breach of contract lawsuit to former distributor Lyrick Studios in July. Forced to pay around \$15 million in damages, Big Idea filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy as a condition of its agreement with Classic Media.

CHURCH LAUNCHES MINISTRY TO COMBAT TOWN'S DRUG WOES

An Alabama church has started a drug-rehabilitation ministry to combat a growing methamphetamine problem in its community. The Church of the Rock (COTR) in Piedmont recently launched a chapter of Mothers Against Methamphetamine (MAMA), a national organization founded a year ago by an Albertville, Ala., physician whose brother killed himself while addicted to the drug, which is also known as speed, meth and chalk, The Birmingham News reported. Despite national statistics that say only 6 percent to 10 percent of users ever recover, MAMA founder Mary Holley said more than 80 percent of users can recover with a year of intense therapy if Christian counseling

is used. COTR began its chapter after seeing a MAMA ad in Charisma.

FORBES EXAMINES MEGACHURCH GROWTH

Megachurches have a lot in common with corporations, said a September report. Examining Protestant congregations with more than 2,000 worshipers weekly, Forbes found that “pastors often act as chief executive officers and use business tactics to grow their churches.” The report noted also that three of the largest—23,093-member World Changers Ministries in Atlanta; 18,500-member The Potter’s House in Dallas; and 25,060-member Lakewood Church in Houston—run businesses and spend millions on broadcasting. Kingdom Ventures, a company designed to help ministries grow, said megachurches’ use of technology also contributed to their size. John Vaughn, founder of Church Growth Today, which tracks megachurches, said the number of megachurches has risen from 250 in 1970 to 740 today.

SETTLEMENT DISBANDS FIRE CHAPLAINS PROGRAM

A chaplain program by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDFFP) will be disbanded to settle a lawsuit filed by six firefighters who claimed it violated separation of church and state. Under the settlement terms, CDFFP will disband the program, but will allow employees to provide chaplain services voluntarily, the Associated Press reported. The chaplain corps included 54 employees throughout California who were trained to provide counseling for the agency’s firefighters. Fifty of the chaplains are Christian. Sarcastically calling themselves the Satanic Six, the six firefighters sued earlier this year, claiming chaplains conducted prayers at meetings, wore crosses on their uniforms and sent e-mails promoting a Christian viewpoint.

Churches Fund Jailed Missionary’s Defense

Churches in Oklahoma and Texas have raised more than \$15,000 for the defense of a missionary to Mexico who was jailed Aug. 23 for possession of allergy drugs commonly sold over-the-counter in the United States. Police arrested Steve Frey in the border town of Reynosa, Mexico, after they found allergy medications in his van, the Associated Press reported. Frey, a Texas-based missionary with Cornerstone International, is being held in a federal penitentiary in Reynosa.

Harald Bredesen Honored

Some 500 civic and church leaders honored charismatic pioneer Harald Bredesen with a birthday bash Aug. 23 in Beverly Hills, Calif. Bredesen, who turned 85 Aug. 16, helped introduce the gifts of the Holy Spirit to mainline denominations in the 1950s. He later founded the Prince of Peace Foundation (PPF), which honors international peacemakers in a Christian counterpart to the Nobel Peace Prize. Past recipients include Anwar Sadat, Mother Teresa and Jordan's King Hussein. Bredesen was given a PPF award at the birthday event.

Paramedic Sues Over Firing

A Georgia paramedic filed a religious-discrimination lawsuit against her former employer after she was fired for inviting a co-worker to her church. Sherry Lambert sued Memorial Health Inc. in September, claiming the company violated a federal law prohibiting discrimination based on religion. Her lawsuit seeks reinstatement and back pay. The case stems from an Oct. 31, 2001, incident, in which Lambert invited a colleague to church while on duty. Although the co-worker did not complain, Lambert was later terminated.

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