

Strang Communications Ministry Director Howard Ridings Dies

Howard Ridings, D.D., director of ministry at Strang Communications, died April 17 after a brief illness. He was 79. Ridings was the brother-in-law of Joy Strang, chief financial officer of Strang Communications, which publishes Charisma. Born in New Zealand, Ridings spent more than 50 years in ministry, holding numerous positions in the Assemblies of God and serving as senior pastor of St. Andrews Assembly of God in Panama City, Fla. He and his wife, Rosella, later served as missionaries to Singapore, where they started the Youth and Literature Ministry, and Hong Kong, where they led an international English service that today draws 4,000. After returning to the U.S., the couple founded Christian Center Ministries in Panama City, which they led for 15 years. In addition to his role at Strang Communications, Ridings was on the board of Evangel Fellowship International and was founding pastor of Heart of Orlando Worship Center in central Florida. Memorial services were held April 20 in Orlando and April 22 in Panama City. He is survived by his wife, Rosella; son, Dean Ridings; daughter, Denae Haas; sister, Noelle Midgley; five grandchildren; and numerous extended-family members.

Statement Urges Jewish Evangelism

The World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) released a statement in March that called on all evangelicals to “forthrightly” share the love of Jesus Christ with the Jewish people. Dozens of prominent evangelical leaders signed the statement, dubbed “The Gospel and the Jewish People,” which acknowledged

Christianity's marred history of anti-Semitism, but argued "the most loving and Scriptural expression of our friendship toward Jewish people" is telling them about Jesus and encouraging others to do the same. The statement ran as a full-page ad in The New York Times, other secular publications and in Christian print as well, including Charisma magazine. Meanwhile, a survey published in the Jerusalem Post on April 10 showed more than 80 percent of American Christians still believe they have a "moral and biblical obligation" to support the state of Israel. Conducted by the Washington, Joshua Fund, the study indicated pro-Israeli sentiment cut across all denominational lines.

Copeland, Dollar Question Senator's Probe

Two ministries not fully cooperating with Sen. Charles Grassley's investigation into tax-related issues have sought to reason with the Senate Finance Committee. Kenneth Copeland and Creflo Dollar explained in separate letters that portions of Grassley's probe raised concerns of privacy and basic First Amendment rights. Copeland later followed up his letter by submitting a request to the Internal Revenue Service for an audit of his ministry. Grassley's "most appropriate" course of action for obtaining information into the financial history of Kenneth Copeland Ministries is to use procedural channels that already exist between Congress and the IRS, the letter stated. Full compliance in turning over all tax-related documents directly to Grassley would conceivably clear up his suspicions that tax-exempt donations have been misused by the six TV-based ministries he is currently investigating.

Christian Business Fined For Refusing to Photograph Gay Ceremony

A New Mexico human rights panel ruled in April that a Christian photographer who refused to photograph a lesbian couple's commitment ceremony violated state discrimination laws, the Alliance Defense Fund reported. The couple filed a

complaint with the New Mexico Civil Rights Commission in 2006, alleging that Elane Photography discriminated against them on the basis of sexual orientation when Elaine Huguenin, who owns the Albuquerque studio with her husband, told the women that she photographs only traditional marriages. The commission ordered Elane Photography to pay \$6,637 in attorneys fees. The Huguenins are appealing the decision.

Former Biola University President Dies

Clyde Cook, president for 25 years of Biola University, died at his home in Fullerton, Calif., on April 11. He was 72. Before Cook retired last year, Biola had grown to be one of the largest evangelical universities in the U.S. Bible teacher Charles Swindoll described Cook as “the most encouraging friend I ever had.” A memorial was held on April 19 at Fullerton’s First Evangelical Free Church, where Cook and his wife, Anna Belle, were members for 25 years. In addition to his wife, Cook is survived by two children and six grandchildren.

Commission Calls on China to Stop Deporting North Korean Refugees

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom is urging China to stop repatriating North Korean refugees, who are often subjected to harsh interrogation, torture and long detentions without trial if the North Korean government suspects them of meeting with Christian groups. The call came after a new report titled A Prison Without Bars revealed human rights abuses North Korean asylum-seekers face if they are found to have converted to Christianity while in China or had contact with South Koreans, which are both considered political offenses. Despite decades of repression, the report said “remnants” of Shamanism, Buddhism and Christianity continue to exist in North Korea, though the latter two have been “reduced largely to clandestine worship.”