

Charisma News Service

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.

TIM LAHAYE SUES LEFT BEHIND FILMMAKERS

Tim LaHaye, co-author of the best-selling Left Behind fiction series, is suing Namesake Entertainment, makers of Left Behind: The Movie, which earned \$2.8 million in its opening weekend. Also named in the suit is Cloud Ten Pictures, the company hired to make the film. Central to the lawsuit are the rights to the Left Behind: The Kids spinoffs. Publishers' Weekly reported that in a letter filed with deposition papers, LaHaye wrote that Cloud Ten "obviously intend[s] to dig all the gold they can from our terrible an all-inclusive contract." Series co-writer Jerry Jenkins has not been part of the action, but was recently "enjoined" in the case by a U.S. district judge. He plans to seek to be excused from becoming a plaintiff for "religious reasons."

MASSIVE RESEARCH PROJECT IS 'WAKE-UP' CALL TO CHURCH

The newly published second edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia, an exhaustive eight-year, 1,800-page survey of

global Christianity, reports that Christianity has become “the most extensive and universal religion in history,” with some 2 billion adherents at the start of the new millennium. Produced by the World Evangelization Research Center (WERC) at the Global Evangelization Movement in Richmond, Va., the encyclopedia is considered the definitive reference book for religion scholars, students, missions leaders and clergy. By analyzing costs of evangelism, baptism rates and other data, the researchers developed a response rate to the gospel for each country—which found Afghanistan, ruled by Muslims and closed to missionary activity, much more “responsive” than Argentina, home to a long-running revival.

JIMMY SWAGGART RECOVERS AFTER HEART SCARE

Televangelist Jimmy Swaggart is recovering after a heart scare that saw him admitted to the hospital Feb. 3. Linda Westbrook, Swaggart’s executive secretary, told The Baton Rouge Advocate that the 65-year-old was “doing just great” after an angioplasty procedure to clear a blockage in an artery leading to his heart. Swaggart has resurrected his Baton Rouge, TV ministry since the 1988 sex scandal that toppled the ministry. The telecast airs in almost 30 countries, Swaggart’s Web site said.

TV MINISTRIES BECOME POLITICAL PULPITS FOR ELECTION

TV ministries turned from preaching to politics during the presidential election. Although they did not endorse individual candidates, some TV ministry leaders devoted significant airtime to the race for the White House, urging

viewers to vote. Of 21 major TV ministries surveyed, D. James Kennedy's focused most on the election, giving 13 percent of its airtime to politics between September and November. Details of the study—conducted by Stephen Winzenburg, communications professor at Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa—were published in the National Religious Broadcasters' magazine, NRB.

WURMBRAND DEAD AT 91

Richard Wurmbbrand, a defender of persecuted Christians, died at his home in Southern California Feb. 17 after a lengthy illness. Imprisoned by communist authorities in his native Romania for 14 years, Wurmbbrand wrote about his experiences in the best-selling book *Tortured for Christ*. He and his wife, Sabina, left Romania for a new life in the West in the mid-1960s, when they founded Voice of the Martyrs. The organization promotes awareness of the needs of persecuted Christians around the world, with ministry in 40 countries. Wurmbbrand was 91. Sabina Wurmbbrand died last August at 87.

R.T. KENDALL TO RETIRE

R.T. Kendall, 65, has announced plans to retire as minister of Westminster Chapel in London after 25 years of ministry there. Kendall and his family moved to England in 1973 while he studied at Oxford University. He then was appointed minister at Westminster, home for many years to the celebrated preacher Martyn Lloyd-Jones. Under Kendall's leadership, the conservative church became open to the work of the Holy Spirit. Kendall intends to move to Florida.

O'HAIR MYSTERY SOLVED

Bones that are believed to be the remains of atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair and two members of her family were found at a ranch 125 miles west of San Antonio, Texas. O'Hair, who led a crusade to remove prayer from public schools, disappeared in September 1995. Texas inmate David Roland Waters, a former O'Hair aide, is suspected of murdering O'Hair; her son, Jon Garth Murray; and granddaughter Robin Murray O'Hair. Waters led investigators to the burial site in January.