

News Briefs

EVANGELISTS SAY TSUNAMI HAS BROUGHT GREATER UNITY

Evangelists working in Southeast Asia say the recent tsunami has helped unite Christians and Buddhists in Sri Lanka, where more than 50,000 people died in the disaster. "For so long churches have been persecuted, but today we see everybody joining hands," said Raymond Mooi, who founded the School of Acts in Malaysia and ministers throughout Asia. Gospel for Asia president K.P. Yohannan agreed, saying Christians have been reaching out to help Buddhists who lost everything in the disaster. "One [Buddhist] man said, 'I never knew your Jesus made you do things like this,'" Yohannan told Charisma. Still, Mooi said Christians are being urged to exercise caution when sharing their faith. "At the moment, I'd say ... it is not wise to proselytize," said Mooi, who visited the United States in January to raise money for relief efforts in Sri Lanka and Thailand. "But as the Lord leads and relationships develop, there may be opportunity to present the gospel. People are wary of some people's motives."

SUDANESE VP, REBEL LEADER SIGN PEACE DEAL

Sudanese Vice President Ali Osman Mohammed Taha and John Garang, chairman of the Sudan People's Liberation Army, signed a comprehensive peace agreement Jan. 9, in a move that observers hope will end the 20-year civil war that has left some 2 million Sudanese dead, the Associated Press (AP) reported. Secretary of State Colin Powell signed the agreement as a witness and said the deal will "close a dark chapter in Sudan's history" if both parties implement the provisions of the agreement. The agreement still needed to be ratified by

the Sudanese parliament and the rebels, the AP said. Peace talks are still under way to end the violence in Darfur, in western Sudan, where thousands have died since February 2003.

PREACHER DIES DURING SERMON

A Florida minister collapsed and died Jan. 9 in the middle of a sermon after saying, "And when I go to heaven," the Associated Press (AP) reported. Jack Arnold, 69, was nearing the end of his sermon at Covenant Presbyterian Church in the Orlando suburb of Oviedo when he suffered an apparent heart attack. Several church members tried to revive him, but Arnold appeared to have died instantly, the AP said. Arnold served as pastor of Covenant Presbyterian until the late 1990s, when he began training pastors in Africa and the Middle East. President of Equipping Pastors International and a former UCLA basketball player under Coach John Wooden, Arnold contributed to Wooden's book, Coach Wooden's Pyramid of Success, which Regal Books is scheduled to release this month. Covenant's associate pastor, the Rev. Michael S. Beates, told the AP: "It was traumatic, but how wonderful it was he died in his own church among the people he loved the most."

NEW PALESTINIAN LEADER ELECTED

Observers hoped the Middle East peace process will continue under the direction of newly elected Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. Winning 62 percent of the vote, Abbas had spoken out against violence and promised to reform the government and security services, the Associated Press (AP) reported. But after Palestinian militants killed six Israelis in a bombing attack in the Gaza Strip, Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon cut all ties with Abbas, saying he was too soft on militants, the AP said. Abbas is viewed as a moderate, but

an Israeli spokesman told the AP his nation opted to cut all ties because the bombing was launched from a Palestinian Authority base.

Gospel Artists Honored at Stellar Awards

Martha Munizzi became the first Caucasian woman to receive a Stellar Award after being named New Artist of the Year during the 20th annual music awards show held in Houston Jan. 15. Other recipients included Tonéx, who was honored with six Stellar Awards, including Artist of the Year; Bishop Paul S. Morton, who received three Stellar Awards, including Traditional Vocalist of the Year; Cece Winans, who was named Female Vocalist of the Year, and Israel Houghton, whose honors included Male Vocalist of the Year.

World Evangelical Alliance Leader Resigns

The Rev. Gary Edmonds, secretary general of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), has resigned from his post as leader of the global network of evangelicals. Assist News Service reported that on Feb. 1 he was to become executive director of Churches Together, a ministry that mobilizes North American churches to partner with African congregations in the fight against AIDS. Meanwhile, the WEA Mission Commission announced the appointment of Bertil Ekström, 52, as successor to William Taylor, who had served as executive director for 20 years. The change is to take effect in 2006.

Pro-Life Candidate Seeks DNC Chairman Post

Former Rep. Tim Roemer announced plans Jan. 9 to run for the top spot in the Democratic National Committee. A Catholic and

longtime abortion opponent, Roemer said he respects the position of pro-abortion Democrats but hopes to expand the party geographically and ideologically, the Associated Press said. In an interview on ABC's This Week, Roemer noted that Democrats "lost 97 of the 100 fastest-growing counties in the United States" and had lost ground among Hispanic voters and African American churchgoers. Abortion advocate Kate Michelman said the election of a staunchly anti-abortion committee leader would "signal that the Democratic Party is retreating from one of its core principles." The election was scheduled for February.