

# News Briefs

## **JERUSALEM GAY-PRIDE EVENT POSTPONED**

The massive World Pride festival that was to be held in Jerusalem in August has been rescheduled for Aug. 6-12, 2006, because the previous date conflicts with Israel's planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Charismatic pastor Leo Giovinetti of Mission Valley Christian Fellowship in San Diego said he will continue to seek 1 million signatures to a petition posted at [www.gaypride.org](#), which calls for the event's cancellation. Organizers targeted Jerusalem to "proclaim that love knows no borders" in the home of the world's three major religions, their Web site said.

## **PASTOR RESIGNS AMID POLITICS CONTROVERSY**

A North Carolina pastor who came under fire in May for telling members who planned to support presidential candidate John Kerry last fall to "repent or resign" has stepped down from East Waynesville Baptist Church, the Associated Press (AP) reported. The Rev. Chan Chandler, 33, resigned May 10 amid growing internal tension over his decision to make East Waynesville "a politically active church," the Smoky Mountain News reported. Nine members allegedly were voted out of the church after they walked out of a meeting in which Chandler challenged members to support his vision or leave, the Smoky Mountain News said. About 35 members left with Chandler, who had been pastor there for three years, the AP said.

## **CHRISTIAN HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP SUSPENDED FROM UNITED NATIONS**

A Woman's Voice International (AWVI) has been suspended from United Nations activities after allowing China Aid Association President Bob Fu to demonstrate a device Chinese police allegedly use to torture Christian prisoners, Jubilee Campaign reported. Days after the April 5 U.N. Human Rights Commission

meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, Chinese officials filed a complaint against AWVI. Because Jubilee Campaign had fewer than five days to respond, the human-rights organization, which partners with AWVI, said it was unable to counter the complaint. A U.N. council is to review the suspension this month.

## **EPISCOPAL PRIESTS THREATENED WITH REMOVAL**

Six Episcopal ministers in Connecticut have been threatened with removal from their parishes for not supporting their bishop's vote in favor of ordaining the Rev. V. Gene Robinson, an openly gay man, as bishop of New Hampshire in 2003, the Hartford Courant reported. The ultimatum is the latest development in an ongoing rift between the ministers, known as the Connecticut Six, and Bishop Andrew Smith. Church leaders from as far as Uganda and Nigeria have applauded the rectors of Bishop Seabury Church, Christ and the Epiphany Church, Christ Church Parish, St. John's Episcopal Church, Trinity Episcopal Church and the charismatic St. Paul's Episcopal Church. Smith said the priests face removal not because they disagree with him, but because they refuse to fulfill their ordination vows "by being in communion with me as their bishop," the Courant said.

## **CORRECTION**

In a news brief in our May issue, we reported that Living Church of God leader Roderick C. Meredith and his son had been killed in a shooting at Living Church of God near Milwaukee, and that Meredith's wife was among the wounded. It was actually Living Church of God pastor Randy L. Gregory and his 17-year-old son, James, who were among the victims. Meredith is the head of the North Carolina-based denomination, which broke away from the Worldwide Church of God several years ago. Charisma regrets the error.

## **Lesbian Pastor Reinstated**

The United Methodist Church's Northeastern Jurisdictional Committee on Appeals voted April 29 to reinstate lesbian minister Irene Elizabeth Stroud, whose clergy credentials were removed in December after she announced that she was involved in a "covenant relationship" with another woman. A previous church panel found her lifestyle "incompatible with Christian teachings," but the appeals panel voted 8-1 to reverse that decision, saying many of the terms under which Stroud was defrocked had not been properly defined. United Methodist renewal leader Tom Lambrecht told AgapePress the April decision tarnishes the denomination's image. The appeals decision is being referred to the Judicial Council, the denomination's highest court.

## **Inmate Sues to Stop Use of Alpha Course in Jail**

A self-proclaimed witch and jailed sex offender has filed a claim in Australia accusing the popular Alpha discipleship course of endangering his health and safety, CNS News said. Using the state of Victoria's controversial Racial and Religious Tolerance Act, Robin Fletcher filed a complaint against the state's prison authorities; The Salvation Army, which offers the course; and a Christian company that produces the materials, asking that the jail where he is incarcerated stop using the course, CNS News said. In December two pastors were convicted of vilifying Muslims under the law when they "explained Islam" to a group of Christians after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The two are appealing the decision.

## **Texas Public Schools to Offer Bible Course**

The Odessa, Texas, school board voted unanimously April 27 to add a Bible class to its curriculum, the Associated Press (AP) reported. The course, which would be taught as a history or

literature class, is to begin in the fall of 2006. The vote came after the board heard a presentation from the North Carolina-based National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools, the AP said. People for the American Way and the American Civil Liberties Union have criticized the council's material, saying it promotes religion. A Frankenmuth, Mich., school board voted against a similar proposal in January. The council says its material has received support from 292 school districts in 35 states, the AP reported.