

News Briefs

CHARLES COLSON 'SHOCKED' BY DEEP THROAT REVELATION

Prison Fellowship founder Charles Colson said he was “shocked” to discover that W. Mark Felt, 91, former deputy director of the FBI, was the notorious informant who helped expose the Watergate scandal. In a statement on his ministry’s Web site, the former senior Nixon adviser said he knew Felt well and considered him trustworthy. “No matter how Felt may justify his actions, it is not honorable to leak classified information to the press,” Colson said of the man who became known as Deep Throat. Ironically, the crime that led to Colson’s seven-month imprisonment was leaking a secret FBI report to the media. He believes going to prison was good for him, and he said he realizes that the end doesn’t justify the means. That’s why he says Felt is no hero. “I am disappointed in Mark for choosing the media as the way to expose the corruption,” Colson said. “If he felt that the wrongs of the Nixon administration had to be remedied, he should have walked into the FBI director’s office and told him so, and if necessary walked in to the president.”

JUDGE OFFERS OFFENDERS 'WORSHIP SERVICES' OPTION INSTEAD OF JAIL

A Kentucky judge has been offering some drug and alcohol offenders the option of going to God’s house instead of going to the “Big House” or rehab. District Judge Michael Caperton, 50, a devout Christian, believes church attendance could help some of those convicted find spiritual guidance, the Associated Press reported. But

critics say the practice violates the separation of church and state. "The goal is to help people and their families," said Caperton, who requires defendants who choose the church option to get a signed affidavit from a pastor or spiritual leader after attending 10 services. "I don't think there's a church-state issue because it's not mandatory and I say worship services instead of church." A district judge since 1994, Caperton has offered the option about 50 times to repeat drug and alcohol offenders in Laurel and Knox counties since early spring.

PASTORS MEET WITH WHITE HOUSE TO DISCUSS AFRICA INITIATIVE

More than two dozen African-American ministers met with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and senior White House officials in May to discuss how the faith-based initiative could be expanded to fight AIDS in Africa and care for orphaned children, the Los Angeles Times reported. Attendees at the private meeting included Bishop T.D. Jakes, Bishop Eddie Long, Bishop Charles Blake, the Rev. Eugene Rivers, the Rev. Frank Reid and pastor Donnie McClurkin, as well as civil rights veteran Andrew Young and the Rev. William Shaw, president of the National Baptist Convention. Observers say the meeting was an attempt to woo African-American voters to the Republican Party by expanding black church participation in the faith-based initiative. The meeting was held the same day as a Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) summit with 200 black clergy. Some saw the timing as an attempt to upstage the CBC's effort to strengthen ties between Democrats and religious leaders. Several of the delegates at the Rice meeting also attended the CBC event.

PASTOR PLANS TO RETURN TO PULPIT AFTER REHAB.

An Arlington, Texas, pastor is expected to return to the pulpit of his church after his June release from a second drug-treatment facility.

Charged in March with drug possession and sexually assaulting three church members, Bishop Terry Hornbuckle was reinstated as pastor

of Agape Christian Fellowship in April after a six-week suspension, the Fort Worth Star Telegram reported. After being rearrested in May for failing to pass a drug test, Hornbuckle checked himself into a drug-treatment facility May 16. On June 1 he checked himself into another "after care" center, his attorney, Mike Heiskell, told the newspaper. Hornbuckle maintains his innocence and says he is a victim of extortion. His wife, Renee, has been leading the church since his arrest and suspension.

MINNESOTA CHURCH HIRES TRANS-GENDER MINISTER

A Minneapolis church has hired a minister who had surgery to change

sexes from a woman to a man, the Associated Press (AP) reported. The Rev. Malcolm Himschoot, 27, is to serve as an outreach minister

at 1,800-member Plymouth Congregational Church. Himschoot, who is married to a woman, is the subject of a documentary titled Call Me

Malcolm, which was produced by the United Church of Christ, the denomination that ordained Himschoot, the AP said.

RONALD WINANS DIES

Gospel recording artist Ronald Winans died June 17 of heart complications. He was 48. The second oldest of 10 siblings,

Winans was part of the five-time Grammy winning quartet The Winans and a member of a famed musical family. He had suffered a massive heart attack in 1997, but experienced a miraculous recovery. In recent weeks, he had been admitted to a Detroit hospital for observation because he was retaining an unusual amount of fluid, the family said. In addition to recording with his brothers, Winans released solo projects, the most recent of which, Ron Winans Family & Friends V: A Celebration, came out in January. A musical tribute was to be held June 23 at Perfecting Church in Detroit. Funeral services were to be held June 24 at Straight Gate Church, also in Detroit.