

Persecution Watch

PASTORS MURDERED IN INDIA

Officials in southern India have ordered an official investigation into the recent murders of two pastors in southern India, BBC News reported. K. Isaac Raju and K. Daniel, were found dead within days of going missing in Hyderabad, capital of Andhra Pradesh state. Raju went missing on May 24. Just days earlier, on May 21, the body of pastor Daniel was found with marks suggesting he had been the victim of an acid attack, Compass Direct reported. Both men led churches on the outskirts of Hyderabad. A letter sent to a local newspaper claimed the killings were the work of an organization called the Anti-Christian Forum, Compass said. Police later questioned 150 members of Hindu nationalist organizations but at press time authorities had no suspects. The All India United Christians Movement for Equal Rights is putting pressure on the state officials to speed up its search into the pastors' deaths, New India Press reported. A reward also is being offered for information leading to the arrest of those responsible for the deaths, Compass said.

PENTECOSTAL PASTOR RELEASED IN IRAN

An Islamic court has acquitted an Assemblies of God (AG) lay pastor on apostasy and proselytizing charges. During a court hearing May 28 in Bandar-i Bushehr, a judge reportedly declared he was acquitting Hamid Pourmand because he had "done nothing wrong" based on Islamic law, Compass Direct reported. Pourmand had

faced execution by hanging under Muslim law for leaving Islam for Christianity 25 years ago. Despite the acquittal, the pastor remains imprisoned, serving out a three-year jail sentence for a separate military court conviction also linked to his religious conversion. Pourmand, 47, was arrested last September by the Iranian security police while attending a church conference near Tehran. An army colonel, Pourmand led an AG congregation in the southern port city of Bandar-i Bushehr.

NIGERIAN CHURCH DESTROYED IN FIRE

Arsonists recently set fire to a church in Kaduna state, destroying the sanctuary for the fourth time in five years. Conquerors Chapel pastor Ndubuisi Chiazor was holding an elders meeting at the church on April 10 when it was torched, Compass Direct reported. Chiazor suspects Muslim extremists living in the area were responsible for the attack. "From the comments we hear from Muslims in this area, we know that they have resolved to force us out of the area through terrorist acts," he said. "We hear them all the time say, 'You must leave this place. We shall build a mosque on this land where your church is standing.' " The Word of Faith Ministries' congregation has rebuilt their meeting place after each attack. Chiazor said he is prepared to die rather than move, but many church members have left. Word of Faith Ministries counted 500 members at the onset of the arson attacks, but today less than 150 remain. Chiazor

said the arsons

began with the introduction of Shariah law in Kaduna state in 2000.

Duke University Medical Researcher
Says Faith Is Good Medicine

Dr. Harold Koenig says the key to good health is having a deep, personal relationship with God

Duke University researcher is changing the heart of the medical community with a simple, yet profound message that faith is good for your health.

Dr. Harold G. Koenig has found a clear relationship between faith and health, one that he has dubbed "the healing connection." Koenig, founder and director of the Duke University Center for the Study of Religion/Spirituality and Health in Durham, N.C., and editor-in-chief of Science & Theology News, has published 25 books and more than 200 professional journal articles detailing his findings.

"The pile of evidence is growing and showing that spiritual faith has a very real, scientifically measurable, and positive association with mental and physical wellbeing," Koenig writes in his book The Healing Connection. According to Koenig, the key to the healing connection is "having a deep, personal relationship with God and loving your neighbor."

"The combination of those two things, at least the research seems to show, is one of the most powerful combinations of things that predict a person's health," he said.

Koenig has extensively studied the healing connection in the mentally and physically ill, and in the elderly. "Our research has found a simple behavior that might save more lives than buckling seat belts or quitting smoking," Koenig reported after studying 4,000 randomly selected people over the age of 65 in North Carolina. "People who attend church regularly live longer," he concluded.

After following the subjects for six years, Koenig said he found that the likelihood of dying during that six-year period was 41 percent lower among those who regularly attended religious services.

His most current research involves chronically ill patients. In April, Koenig and his colleagues reported in *The Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* that among patients with sickle cell anemia, those who go to church at least once a week had the lowest pain scores.

Bottom line, Koenig says, is "as long as you are here on this earth, God has a purpose for your life. That purpose is not sitting around just existing. That purpose involves ministry to others. It's when people do that, that people get healthier."

"I can speak with authority about these issues because I experience them myself," stressed Koenig, who was diagnosed in his late 20s with psoriatic inflammatory arthritis, a progressive disease that inflames the tendons and makes even the most ordinary

movements painful. Once athletic, Koenig now relies on a wheelchair when the pain is heightened and must carefully plot his every movement.

But Koenig says God is using his background in some extraordinary ways, giving him an open door to many secular audiences, including the mainstream media and some of the world's most prestigious medical schools. To date, Koenig's research has been featured on every major U.S. news outlet, and has been included in cover stories for Reader's Digest, Parade magazine and Newsweek.

While his research has amassed international attention, Koenig points to his life's testimony as his most powerful witnessing tool. While a third-year medical student, Koenig says he experimented with a slew of Eastern religions in an effort to overcome shyness. But his attempts to speak up in class became increasingly disruptive, and he eventually was expelled.

After his expulsion, Koenig battled mental illness as a homeless person on the streets of San Francisco for almost four months. Later, a devastating divorce after 2-1/2 years of marriage changed everything for Koenig. The breakup led to a "spiritual rebirth that brought him back from an emotional brink."

At the age of 33, Koenig gave his life to Christ, and he hasn't looked back since. Today Koenig celebrates almost 19 years of

marriage with his wife, Charmin. The two attend King's Park International Church, a charismatic ministry in Durham.

Koenig credits God for giving him a second chance, particularly when he was accepted back into medical school as a third-year student. "When I read the living Bible, it explained just about everything about my life to me," he said. "That helped to organize my life and gave it direction. Turning to Christ helped to really bring it together; it has for almost 20 years now."

This fall, Koenig will release Simple Health, a book he co-wrote with Today's Christian Doctor editor David Biebel. It explains 20 easy and inexpensive changes people can make to improve their health.
-SUZY RICHARDSON IN GAINESVILLE, FLA.

Liberty Watch

CHRISTIAN GROUP ENDS DISNEY BOYCOTT

The American Family Association (AFA) has ended its nine-year boycott of the Walt Disney Co., citing new challenges in the culture wars and some positive signs of change at Disney, including the resignation of CEO Michael Eisner. The Tupelo, group was instrumental in initiating the boycott in 1996 to protest Disney's extension of benefits to domestic partners of homosexual employees, promotion of gay-related events at its theme parks, and violent and sex-filled content of movies made by its Miramax subsidiary. In June, the Southern Baptist

Convention announced that it also is ending its boycott of Disney. Earlier this year, representatives from Focus on the Family and other Christian groups that had participated in the boycott agreed to meet with Disney to discuss its production of C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, set to release in December. The Orlando Sentinel reported that Disney has launched a 10-month marketing campaign to get Christian support for the film.

8-YEAR-OLD'S CHRISTIAN SONG BANNED AT TALENT SHOW

A federal judge declined to overturn a New Jersey school's ban on a second-grader singing "Awesome God" at a talent show, but said he would consider the case later. On May 20, Stanley Chesler declined an emergency request to compel Frenchtown Elementary School to let Olivia Turton sing the pop song by the late Rich Mullins at Frenchtown Idol, which was held that night, the Associated Press (AP) reported. School officials claimed that such a performance would be inappropriate at a school event. A lawsuit filed May 27 on behalf of the 8-year-old claimed the school violated her constitutional rights. The suit, brought with the support of the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), a Christian legal advocacy group based in Scottsdale, Ariz., argued that the constitutional separation of church and state does not restrict an individual's religious

speech.

CHRISTIAN ATTORNEYS APPLAUD SUPREME COURT DECISION

Religious liberty attorneys are applauding a June 1 Supreme Court decision that upheld the constitutionality of a federal law requiring prisons to accommodate inmates' religious beliefs, AgapePress reported. Cutter v. Wilkinson involved two Ohio prison inmates-a witch and a Satanist-who claimed they were improperly denied access to religious literature and other ceremonial religious items. The high court overturned a lower court ruling that a 2000 law called the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act prohibited the access because it would violate the separation of church and state, the news service said. Attorney Brian Fahling of the American Family Association Center for Law & Policy said the decision will benefit Christians, "but the oddity about this, again, is the fact that we have religious freedom being protected through the agency of a Satanist and a witch." Brad Dacus of the Pacific Justice Institute called the decision "an outstanding victory for prison ministries and people of faith," and he expected it to enhance his group's work.

Minister Translates Bible Into Remote Languages

Syvelle Phillips has spent the last 30 years working to make the Scriptures available in every language

In an effort to make the gospel accessible to the more than 500 million people who don't have a Bible in their mother tongue, a former Assemblies of God pastor has taken up the task of translating the Scriptures into little-known languages spoken in remote regions around the world.

During the early 1970s, while he was pastoring an Assemblies of God church in Southern California, Syvelle Phillips says he felt God calling him to translate the Bible. Through relationships with church members who worked for Wycliffe Bible Translators, Phillips learned the importance of their unique ministry.

"I had never been aware of the need for Bible translation," Phillips said. "I thought the entire world had the King James Bible, and it was good enough for everyone."

After much prayer and research, Phillips founded Evangel Bible Translators, which is based in Rockwall, Texas. Since 1976, he and his team have devoted millions of hours to studying and recording the nearly 7,000 languages spoken worldwide. "When I said goodbye to my church, I had no missionaries and no money," Phillips said, "but I attacked the project with great zeal, and there was tremendous response."

More than 30 translators and their families, located primarily in Africa and India, currently direct Evangel projects. Most work in their native countries. They

receive both biblical and linguistic training before journeying to the mission field, and they are equipped with laptop computers to aid in their translation work.

"One of our first translators was a Quechua Indian who took up a project Wycliffe had abandoned and returned to his native people," Phillips said. "After we trained him, he completed an entire Bible before he was killed by guerillas in Peru."

Evangel also encourages missionaries to plant local churches and lead the congregations in worship and Bible study. "I'm highly committed to the church," he said. "I tell our people when Sunday comes to get their guitars, go sing and tell someone about Jesus. It will be therapy for your souls."

Evangel trained 15 translators last year and expects another 30 to complete their preparation this year. Although the ministry is grateful for the increased interest, the growing demand also requires more financial resources. To fund these needs, the 76-year-old Phillips preaches more than 200 times annually in local churches and at conferences.

"God called me from the start to challenge the charismatic, Full Gospel churches into involvement with Bible translation," he said. "He began us at a point we could comprehend and moved us into an area we had never known. We've seen God raise up our mother-tongue speakers

and connect us with them.”

-JOHN HILLMAN

IN ROCKWALL, TEXAS

Couple Reach At-Risk Youth in Hollywood

Through their Oasis of Hollywood outreach, Ron and Judy Radachy are sharing the love of Jesus with needy families

Nestled in Hollywood's inner city, a Christian outreach and drop-in center is shining a different kind of light in a city filled with stars.

Oasis of Hollywood, founded in its current location by pastors Ron and Judy Radachy in 1993, is located a half dozen blocks away from the famous Walk of Fame sidewalk and the Kodak Theater, site of the Academy Awards and the crowning episodes of American Idol.

But within another 10 minutes' walk is Santa Monica and Highland, a haven for male, female or transsexual prostitutes of almost any age and drugs of all kinds. Two blocks farther is Panpipes Magickal Marketplace, a supermarket for occult shoppers and spiritual home to local Satanists.

“This is a very oppressive area,” Ron Radachy said. “It's like someone handed you a 10-pound weight to carry around and you carry it easily for a while, but then it starts to wear you down. There's obviously a spiritual influence on the kids here.”

Judy Radachy recounts the details of their ministry in her book, *Walk of Faith on the Walk of Fame*. Included in its short chapters are accounts of their Jesus Night Patrol, a fistfight at the center's front door and a 9-year-old who overdosed on drugs during a suicide attempt.

But the most poignant moment in the book-and perhaps in Judy Radachy's life-came in 1982. Three years after she and husband Charles McPheeters arrived in Hollywood, he suddenly died, leaving her with two young children and a leaderless ministry. A talented speaker and musician, McPheeters had found Christ after a nearly fatal drug overdose and became one of the best-known ministers and anti-drug advocates of the 1970s' Jesus Revolution.

After Charles' death, Judy Radachy's family wanted her to move home to Texas. "Charles was the source of all my financial support, and I just couldn't see how I could go on," she said. "I opened my Bible and out popped Joshua 1: 'Moses my servant is dead. Now arise and take his place.'"

She started another nearby drop in center for teens and continued their House of Magdalene, a residential facility for local street prostitutes. During a midnight outreach to nearby Pasadena Rose Parade revelers four years later, she met the Rev. Ron Radachy. Both now licensed Foursquare ministers, the two married in 1986 and six years later made an offer on their current facility, \$300,000 below an

already reduced price.

In an area where few outreach ministries survive, Oasis has flourished. Reaching gangbangers, prostitutes, homeless alcoholics, single moms and “good” kids with abusive parents, the center offers after-school programs, tutoring, emergency food and shelter for families, and a Sunday evening youth service.

Yet the Radachys believe their most vital program is the Urban School of Evangelism, a one-week mission trip for youth and college-age groups from across the nation. They stay in the center and minister in Hollywood streets, on skid row and on the Santa Monica beach.

“Both of our hearts are not just in sitting in a pew in a blessing club,” Judy Radachy said. “But a world where God is real and people see it because we meet them where they are.”

-ED DONNALLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Hundreds Convene for Reconciliation Meeting Aimed at Praying for Europe

Organizers believe God is positioning the church for ‘a new Europe’ by restoring the continent’s apostolic and prophetic foundations’

A Channel Islander-whose homeland was the only part of the British Isles to be occupied by Nazi forces-found himself praying with a German. He conferred a “blessing” on a nation that his own people had despised as a wartime enemy.

That was just one of the moving scenes at Target Europe-a recent event that drew nearly 400 people from 20 nations to the strategic naval port of Portsmouth, England.

"The last thing I expected was to be praying with a German church leader," said attendee Ray Tostevin, who was born on Guernsey.

Now an idyllic island retreat, Guernsey once was part of Hitler's frontier. Back in the 1940s, swastikas were draped from civic buildings, Jewish businesses had to display a yellow notice and listening to the BBC on a clandestine radio set was punishable by imprisonment.

"My father and grandparents lived through fi ve years of that," Tostevin explained.

"My father might be forgiven for feeling a sense of harshness toward the German people. Far from it.

"It's a real irony that, 60 years on, my father recently found himself in a German hospital being operated on for a serious spinal condition by a German surgeon. The operation was a complete success."

Tostevin, who runs an independent TV company called GRACE Productions, said he participated in the event because he wanted to express his thanks for the way German people cared for his father. He ended up praying with Michael Schiff man, a leading German pastor.

"I didn't realize who this guy was-only that his lapel badge said he was from

Germany,” Tostevin said. “I prayed that God would bless the German people, thanking Michael, as their representative, for the kindness they’d shown toward my dad.”

Tostevin’s personal story summed up the Target Europe event-which was officially opened by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth Jason Fazakerley. Uniting former enemies and praying blessings on one another’s nations was high on the agenda at this conference. “This event is for those following the Spirit,” said speaker and writer Roger Mitchell, who was one of the key facilitators for Target Europe, “as He positions the church for a new Europe.”

Delegates packed out a meeting suite overlooking the English Channel, a narrow stretch of water that separates Great Britain from the rest of Europe. But people were also crossing more symbolic gulfs as they prayed and worshiped together. The event was jointly hosted by a French mission group called Cibler L’Europe, which is translated Target Europe, and an English network dubbed Building Together. The aim was to play their part in “restoring the apostolic and prophetic foundations of our continent.”

That included praying for reconciliation between Europe and Africa-and sending a representative group to attend the Make Poverty History protest event that happened to be under way at the same time in central London.

Among the intercessors at Portsmouth were Dutch intercessory leader Pieter Bos, national coordinator for Holland's City Prayer Movements; and Martin Scott, author of *Gaining Ground*, which discusses prophetic intercession. "We lift up the cross this day into the very heavens above," Scott cried out, "and we thank You that the cross speaks of justice. It speaks for an end-and it speaks for a new beginning."

Mitchell described the effort as "a kind of rallying cry-not an organization." The initiative had resulted from various groups and networks working together. "I see some incredibly exciting new expressions of the body of Christ happening across Europe, with the help of the faith of Africa, South America and Asia," he said. "I see seeds that make me incredibly hopeful." In particular, he believes the spiritual landscape of France has been changing, an observation other Christian leaders have been making recently.

"There is a lot of encouragement in France now, but we sense that the Lord is making a shift," said French Christian leader Samuel Rhein, another Target Europe facilitator. "There's a lot of disappointment at the same time because it's not the breakthrough that we were waiting for. But still we see a lot of changes."

Rhein cited one example as the fact that he had brought 70 French people to the conference. "That's a major thing," he

said with a smile. "I thought I was the only Frenchman in love with England."
CLIVE PRICE IN PORTSMOUTH, ENGLAND

News Briefs

C H A R L E S C O L S O N ' S H O C K E D ' B Y D E E P T H R O A T R E V E L A T I O N

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 SER VICES' 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 AFRICAN 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 HIRE STRANS – 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.