Religion in the News

Nashville church fights $425,000 tax bill

A 2,300-member church in south Nashville may have to pony up $425,000 in taxes to pay for its gymnasium, bookstore, and cafe. In 2004 the church requested a building permit to construct a 110,000-foot activities center. The city’s Board of Equalization granted the permit. However, the same board also determines tax exemptions for churches. When the church applied for exemption on its new building, the board demanded that the church pay taxes on a gymnasium, bookstore, and cafe that constituted about 12 percent of the floor space. The board argued that the bookstore and cafe were clearly retail establishments, and the gymnasium charged a fee to join. The church shut down the bookstore and cafe and turned the gymnasium over to the YMCA, but the city still demanded the $425,000 for the time the church used these facilities.

Congregations loose court case

Four congregations in the Vancouver diocese of the Anglican Church of Canada broke with their denomination in 2002 over its decision to authorize a liturgy for blessing same-sex couples. These congregations then demanded that their properties be handed over to them. The diocese, which held the titles to the properties, refused, claiming that ownership of local church properties are held in trust by the denomination. The congregations sued in court to gain control of their properties, but the court sided with the denomination. The estimated value of the four properties is $20 million. One of the congregations, St. John’s Shaughnessy, is considered to be one of the wealthiest parishes in Canada.—Christian Century

Who knows most about religion?

In an odd twist, a recent survey found that, on average, atheists and agnostics know more about religion than do Christians. For example, to the question of which is the first book in the Bible, 66 percent of the Christians surveyed knew that it is Genesis while 71 percent of atheists and agnostics answered correctly. To the question of whether the golden rule (do to others what you would have them do to you) is part of the Ten Commandments, 57 percent of Christians answered correctly that it is not as opposed to 62 percent of atheists and agnostics. And 71 percent of Christians correctly identified Moses as the person who led the Israelites out of Egypt was versus 87 percent of atheists and agnostics.—The Pew Forum

Iranian marble for Israel

Israel forbids almost all trade with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, huge amounts of Iranian marble are getting into Israel, where it is being used for the construction of some of the nation’s most prominent buildings. Iranian marble is some of the most beautiful and durable on the market in the Middle East, and it’s also fairly cheap compared to other sources of the stone. In order to avoid the government’s trade ban, Israeli marble dealers arrange for the stone to be shipped to Turkey, where middlemen repackage it with false certificates of origin. Yali Etzion, general manager of the Ariel Marble company near Tel Aviv, said, “I don’t like to sell it—
they're our enemies—but everyone wants it."—*Wall Street Journal*

Who believes God created human beings in the last 10,000 years?

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<th>Education Level</th>
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<td>High school or less</td>
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<td>60%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attend church seldom</td>
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**New Books**

*Title: Really Living 2*  
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From working with gangs in Greater Los Angeles to drilling wells in Guatemala, and from impoverishment in the Ukraine to luxury yachts in Florida, the people at the center of each story in *Really Living 2* have one thing in common: they have answered God's call to serve.

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**Signs Special Issue**

**2012 Doomsday or Distraction?**

In December 2012, at the winter solstice when the sun and the earth precisely align with the galactic equator, the Mayan Long Count Calendar will come to an end. It's beginning points back to a time five centuries before the pyramids, 1,500 years before the Exodus. The midpoint came around the time Daniel spent a night in the lion's den. Two full millennia have passed since the birth of Christ, and still the long count continues. But now, according to this calendar, the end of this world cycle is in sight.

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As Quoted

“They think a church worships on Sunday and then everybody goes away. Anything else you do is not church.”

Dan Scott, pastor of Christ Church in Nashville, Tennessee, that was recently assessed $425,000 in taxes by the city.—See news note on this page

Pocket Signs

The Final Sign

Luke points to COSMIC SIGNS that will be visible in the sky as the unmistakable sign of the nearness of Christ's coming. In contrast, stands the cry of nearness by false prophets, based on EARTHLY SIGNS.

Increasing calamities are surely precursors to the second advent but it's important for people to understand that false christ's and false prophets will use these same signs to validate their claims.

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Economic Crisis and Your Future

The Great Recession, as it's being dubbed, continues to gnaw at the wallets and psyche of the average American. Times are tough and the outlook for many is anything but bright.

Economic Crisis and Your Future urges people to entrust their well being to Jesus. The day will come when no man can buy or sell and complete dependence on Christ will be the only way to survive. In just a few paragraphs this Pocket Signs brings hope for the future and puts the economic crisis in perspective.

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