Artist of the Gospels

Tim Schmalz grew up in Elmira, Ontario, Canada, and by the age of 18 he was creating sculptures about secular themes. However, today his passion is biblical art. "I wake up each morning wrestling with the Gospel," he says. "I find myself asking questions like, how can I represent this? How can I visualize the stories of 2,000 years ago?" At any given time he’s usually working on seven or eight pieces. He creates his sculptures in clay, then flies them to a bronze foundry in Beijing, China, which has some of the world’s best craftsmen for casting clay molds into bronze. One of his pieces, called First From the Flames, shows firefighters rescuing a chaplain from the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001. —ChristianWeek

Christians persecuted in Britain

George Carey, the archbishop of Canterbury from 1991 to 2002, has protested to the European Court of Human Rights that Christians in Great Britain are being persecuted and driven underground, and the courts have failed to protect their religious values. A number of Christians have been fired for refusing to remove or hide their cross necklaces; a marriage counselor was relieved of his job for refusing to give sex therapy to gay people; and a Christian government registrar was disciplined for refusing to conduct civil partnership ceremonies. Carey said that there is a “drive to remove Judeo-Christian values from the public square,” and the British courts have “consistently applied equality law to discriminate against Christians.” He is appealing to the European Court of Human Rights to correct the imbalance.—The Guardian

Bible in the classroom

Jan Brewer, the governor of Arizona, signed a bill on April 17, 2012, that allows public and charter high schools to offer elective classes on the Bible. The classes will teach students how the Old and New Testaments have influenced laws, literature, art, moral values, and culture. Joseph Conn, a spokesperson for Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, criticized the bill, claiming that it “is not about improving academic achievement; it’s about introducing religious indoctrination into the schools.” Acknowledging that the Bible has played an important role in history, Conn said that Bible classes in public schools would be difficult because of the wide variety of versions and the many theological interpretations about what the Bible means.—Christian Post

Out-of-wedlock births on the rise

The National Center for Health Statistics reports that the number of births to unmarried heterosexual couples rose from 14 percent in 2002 to 23 percent in 2010. Karen Benjamin Guzzo, a sociology professor at Bowling
Green State University in Ohio, suggested that “in a perfect world, [couples] would prefer to be married, but where the economy is now, they’re not going to be able to get married, and they don’t want to wait to have kids.” Brad Wilcox, director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, points out that the children of cohabiting parents are three times more likely to experience their parents’ breakup by the age of five than children whose parents are married.—Baptist Press

Christian gets six years in prison

Abd Al Hameed, an Egyptian Muslim, told Makarem Diab, a Coptic Christian, that Jesus had sex with at least ten women who were forbidden Him under Islamic law. Diab stated that there is no biblical or historical record for such a claim and pointed out that the prophet Muhammad had four wives. Eleven days later Al Hameed reported Diab’s words to a court, and police arrested Diab on a charge of “insulting the prophet.” In a ten-minute court hearing, a judge sentenced him to six years in prison. At an appeal hearing, Al Hameed instigated a massive riot outside the courthouse by a mob of Muslim attorneys, who became so enraged that they burst into the courtroom and assaulted Diab’s attorneys. The judge upheld the six-year sentence, then scheduled another appeal hearing. Diab’s attorney claimed that the judge upheld the sentence out of fear.—Compass Direct News

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