Church builds community housing

St. Matthew’s Anglican Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, had a 12,500-foot sanctuary that could seat 1,200 people—but the congregation numbered about 75. So the members decided to turn the extra space into affordable housing for up to 100 people. The price tag? Almost CAN$5 million. The church will convert a 2,000-square-foot portion of the large sanctuary into a smaller sanctuary, leaving more than 10,000 square feet that will be turned into 24 apartments that will be operated by St. Matthew’s Non-Profit Housing, Inc. Gail Schnabl, a church member who is on the nonprofit’s board of directors, said that “one way of seeing it is that the church is not really the building, . . . The church is a community.”

—Winnipeg Free Press

Churches offer to pay taxes

Jamaican churches may soon be paying property taxes—a plan they themselves have proposed! The offer was made by the Jamaica Umbrella Groups of Churches (JUGC) in response to the island nation’s debt crisis. All churches currently pay tax on all properties except land on which sanctuaries are built. Rennard White, the chairman of the JUGC, said that churches should “pay our fair share like everybody else, and if the Government decides to ask us to pay taxes on property that church buildings are on then so be it.” However, White emphasized that the churches are not willing to pay taxes on weekly offerings.
Member denominations of the JUGC include the Church of God in Jamaica, Jamaica Pentecostal Union, and the Seventh-day Adventist Church.—*Jamaica Observer*

**Kentucky’s dependence on God**

In 2006 Kentucky established an Office of Homeland Security (OHS), and ordered it to post a plaque proclaiming the state’s “dependence on Almighty God.” The slogan was also to be included in the OHS’s training and educational materials. Atheists took the state to court, arguing that the slogan violated the U.S. Constitution’s ban on state-sponsored religion. Following a couple of court battles, the atheists appealed their case to the Kentucky and U.S. Supreme Courts. But both courts refused to consider the case, leaving Kentucky’s enactment in place.—*Louisville Courier-Journal*

**Disconnect on Bible reading**

A recent survey by the American Bible Society and Barna Research found that one in six American adults had purchased a Bible during the previous 12 months, and the average American household has 4.4 Bibles. Sixty-six percent said the Bible contains everything a person needs to know in order to live a meaningful life. Seventy-seven percent also believe that the country’s morals are declining, with the most cited cause being a lack of Bible reading. Fifty-six percent believe the Bible should have a greater role in U.S. society. On the other hand, 57 percent said they read the Bible less than five times a year.—*americanbible.org*

**Percent of Americans who have a college or graduate degree**

- Jews--61%
- Muslims--40%
- Protestants--35%
- Mormons--32%
- Catholics--29%
- All U.S.--29%

Source: *The Muslim West Facts Project, a partnership between Gallup and the Coexist Foundation.*

**New bells at Notre Dame**

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris recently marked its 850th birthday with a set of nine new bells. The combined weight of the bells is 23 tons, with the largest one weighing in at six tons! The nine bells replace four that began ringing in the cathedral’s bell tower in 1856.
They were replaced because four of the bells were made from a poor quality metal, and they were off-key from each other, making their ringing an unpleasant noise. A fifth bell survived the purge. Called “Emmanuel,” it was cast in 1686. It joins the nine new bells in the cathedral's two bell towers, making a total of ten bells. The price tag on the new bells was a little over US$3 million, all of which was provided by private donations.—NPR.org

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**New Books**

The popular 'What We Believe' series continues with Seth's latest title! He takes Revelation and makes it accessible for everyone.

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• As Quoted

“The flight of Christians out of the region is unprecedented, and it’s increasing year by year.”

—The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, commenting on the plight of Christians in the Middle East.—Foxnews.com
This **NEW** addition to the *Signs of the Times*® Life Matters series is just in time to meet the surging interest in healthy living.

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