Asia Bibi’s death sentence upheld

In 2009, Asia Bibi, a Pakistani Christian and the mother of five, was accused by fellow field workers of defiling the name of the prophet Muhammad. In November 2010, a Pakistani district court convicted her of blasphemy and sentenced her to death by hanging, and this past October the Lahore High Court upheld the verdict. Pakistanis who supported her sentence claimed that “justice had been done.” However, Bibi’s attorney, Naeem Shakir, plans to appeal the ruling and is confident that Pakistan’s Supreme Court will overturn her sentence. He also fears for his safety, and for good reason. In March 2011, Shahbaz Bhatti, a Christian and Pakistan’s minister for minority affairs, was assassinated by the Pakistani Taliban for recommending Bibi’s release from prison. Two months earlier, the governor of Punjab Province was assassinated for supporting Bibi and speaking out against Pakistan’s blasphemy laws.—CNN News
The Twelve WAYS of Christmas Sharing

It's not too early to begin planning your holiday outreach. Ellen White encouraged members to use the Christmas season as a time to share their faith:

“While urging upon all the duty of first bringing their offerings to God, I would not wholly condemn the practice of making Christmas and New Years gifts to our friends. It is right to bestow upon one another tokens of love and remembrance if we do not in this forget God, our best friend. We should make our gifts such as will prove a real benefit to the receiver. I would recommend such books as will be an aid in understanding the word of God, or that will increase our love for its precepts. Provide something to be read during these long winter evenings.” (Review and Herald, December 26, 1882).

What is your church doing to tell your community about Christ this holiday season? Whatever it is, plan to include a copy of the ASI edition of *The Desire of Ages*. This book is a natural at the season that focuses on Jesus. Here are twelve ideas for using *The Desire of Ages* in your holiday sharing:

1. Encourage your church members to give *The Desire of Ages* to their friends, neighbors, and co-workers.
2. Deliver *The Desire of Ages* to all the homes located near your church.
3. Put a copy of *The Desire of Ages* in each food basket given out by your community services center this holiday season.
4. When your church has caroling bands, hand out *The Desire of Ages* to the homes.
5. Encourage church members who are traveling for the holidays to leave a copy of *The Desire of Ages* in hotel rooms.
6. If you are having a special Christmas program—musical, or school program—give out copies of *The Desire of Ages* to all who attend.
7. Place an advertisement in the local newspaper—“For a FREE copy of the best story of Jesus this holiday season, write or call ______________.” And send respondents a copy of *The Desire of Ages*.

8. Have your local church-school students wrap copies of *The Desire of Ages* in Christmas paper—then deliver “Christmas gifts” to the homes around the school.

9. Order a supply of *The Desire of Ages*. Make a display of them in your church lobby and encourage church members to be creative in distributing them during the holidays.

10. Seminars Unlimited just created a beautiful card that can be mailed to carrier routes and zip codes in your community offering a copy of *The Desire of Ages*. For more information on mailing the card call: 800-982-3344 or 817-641-3643 and ask for Ella.

11. Give a copy of *The Desire of Ages* to each family of church-school children who are not church members.

12. Give a copy of *The Desire of Ages* to each person enrolled in your Discover Bible School.

"God would be pleased to see *The Desire of Ages* in every home. In this book is contained the light He has given upon His word."—EGW, *Letter 75*, 1900.

Pacific Press and ASI have partnered to create a low-cost, attractive, full-text, sharing edition *The Desire of Ages*. And, when ordered by the case of 40, shipping is FREE within the United States.

Available through your ABC.
Call: 1-800-765-6955
Or online:

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Football player penalized for praying

Sam Turner is a senior at Fort Myers High School in Florida. He’s also on the school’s football team. Following a touchdown he caught recently, he knelt in the end zone, raised his hands, and said a quick prayer, thanking God for blessing him with the skill to play the game. It was the first touchdown of his high school football career. However, a referee gave his team a 15-yard penalty for “unsportsmanlike conduct.” Turner was surprised by the penalty, but says that his teammates have given him “tons of support.” “It’s very cool to see how everyone is taking it.” “I use my faith as a platform for my talents.” His team won the game 49 to 0.—Fort Myers News-Press

Muslim police captain in Boston

Haseeb Hosein is the first Muslim to be promoted to captain in Boston’s police force. He will head up the police department in Mattapan, one of Boston’s most violent districts, which by mid-October of last year had had nine homicides. In addition to walking the streets, Hosein wants his officers to walk school hallways. “I want my guys to go into the schools and spend 30 minutes” reading with a child, he said. He also wants his officers to engage with the community, which he says “really works for getting guns off the streets.” He wants the people in Mattapan to see the police as partners, not as an occupying force.—Boston Globe

Religious affiliations in U.S. and Canada

Protestant
U.S. 51.3%
Canada 23.3%
**Catholic**
U.S. 23.9%
Canada 42.6%

**Muslim**
U.S. 0.6%
Canada 1.9%

Source: www.nationmaster.com

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**Obesity rates reach historic highs in more US States**

“Based on Federal data, rates of adult obesity increased in six U.S. states and fell in none last year, and in more states than ever - 20 - at least 30% of adults are obese . . . these numbers suggest the problem may be worsening despite widespread publicity about the nation's obesity epidemic.

. . “-Reuters

To meet this growing crisis Signs of the Times® has prepared a special issue of Life Matters called Lose Weight, Feel Great. It offers advice and encouragement for people who need your help.

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First Nations create own diocese

The idea of an Anglican diocese for First Nations people in Canada began in the 1950s and finally reached fruition this past June. The diocese consists of 26 communities in northwestern Ontario and northern Manitoba. It’s called the Indigenous Spiritual Ministry of Mishamikoweesh (Mishamikoweesh means “Big Beaver House” in the Oji-Cree language). The diocese’s new bishop, Lydia Mamkawa, says that it’s “very important for her people to be able to live out their faith in their own unique way." “We have our own language which is very strong still,” she says, “and we have our identity and our traditions. . . . And having an indigenous church provides an opportunity to put into practice what we were given by our Creator.” The diocese is totally self-governing. It trains its own clergy in a school that conducts classes for two weeks twice a year.—ChristianWeek

Goats on the streets

Goats are sacred animals in Khokana, a small town near Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal. If a goat passes a vegetable stand, it can grab a carrot or a cucumber, and no one will stop it—not even the vendor. It can walk into a bakery and munch on bread, cakes, or cookies, and, if it suddenly feels drowsy while crossing a street, it can flop down and take a nap, leaving it up to the cars, bicycles, and rickshaws to maneuver around it. The town’s 1,000 or so citizens belong to the Newar religion, which is similar to Hinduism, and they consider goats to be the property of the goddess Rudrayani. Female goats are lucky. They can’t be sacrificed. Males can be killed and eaten during festivals.—NPR News

As Quoted
“We believe God looks after them.”

*Ram Maharjan, a Nepali man in Khokana, Nepal, commenting on the sacred goats that roam the streets in the town.*—See news item above