

Beginning in June 1995, the leadership of the Pensacola church has claimed an unplanned, last-days revival and outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Since that time, more than 2 million people have attended the revival services and it is claimed that more than 120,000 people have made decisions for Christ. The newspaper contends, however, that the revival is not the result of an extemporaneous move of God, but was carefully planned and orchestrated by the church's leadership.

The *News Journal* further showed that claims by the church's staff were fabricated and falsified to enhance the revival's reputation, an allegation leveled by apologetic ministries such as PFO. Also documented were embellishments by the church's evangelist, Stephen Hill, as to his own personal conversion to the Christian faith as detailed in his biographical volume, *Stone Cold Heart*.

The newspaper traced the by-products of the enormous money trail generated by the revival through its donations and sale of books, audio and video tapes, and other revival materials. Each of the key leaders of the revival has independent ministries established apart from the church that acquire hundreds of thousands of dollars from resource and literature sales.

The paper also showed the considerable effect the pecuniary windfall has had for the church's pastor, John Kilpatrick. Despite Kilpatrick's claim that, "I have always strived to set an example by not living above the means of my people," it was documented that the pastor is currently building a \$340,000 luxury home across the Alabama state line and his ministry recently purchased a \$310,000 motor coach in which to chauffeur him around. Also, Hill's ministry has spent nearly \$900,000 on property and buildings, including a home for the evangelist in Alabama.

Other fiscal discrepancies also plagued the church as its claimed expenditures on missions failed to add up. Hill told the newspaper that his ministry had given over \$600,000 to foreign and domestic mission work. The paper showed his ministry's IRS return reported only \$102,212 outgoing donations for mission work. Only 2.2% of the church's \$6.6 million budget is devoted to assist missions, the paper said. Brownsville's Associate Pastor Carey Robertson told the *News Journal*, "If you wonder where the money is going, then don't give it. ... once it becomes a gift, it is ours to use. It is nobody's business how we use it."

The paper also describes how its city's Social Services have been overburdened primarily because of the influx of needy people coming into the area unrealistically thinking the church would miraculously change their circumstances and because of the church's lack of response to social concerns.

The church's leadership responded by taking a near two-page advertisement in the paper the Sunday follow-

ing the series of articles. The church's Web site also posted the response. The ad charged that newspaper reporters had fabricated stories and twisted facts, not the church and that statements, such as the one attributed to Robertson, were lifted from its context.

Yet, despite the church's attempt to state the "facts" and deny the newspaper's charges, its efforts were, at best, evasive. *World* magazine "tried to obtain from the church more information that would refute the press accusations, but without success." The Christian magazine was told that "Church officials have declared there will be no further statements to the press beyond what appears on the Web site." The weekly periodical spotlighted the newspaper's accusations in its Dec. 20, 1997, issue.

—MKG

## NEW AGE LEADER DISCLOSES AILMENT

Elizabeth Clare Prophet, New Age guru and former president of the Church Universal and Triumphant, recently revealed that she is suffering from a neurological disorder and epilepsy. The 58-year-old Prophet told followers of her condition at a church conference in Texas. The church, headquartered in Corwin Springs, Mont., also released a statement concerning her ailments.

According to the Associated Press, church spokesman Chris Kelly expressed "confidence in her ability to continue to lead the church." Prophet's physician, Dr. Ilo Leppik, indicated that her ailment "is characterized by memory loss that inhibits her ability to accurately recall past and recent events and interferes with new learning."

The Church Universal and Triumphant was founded in 1958 by Mark L. Prophet. In 1961, he was joined by Elizabeth, whom he later married. She assumed command and leadership of the sect following his death in 1973. The church's teachings reflect an amalgamation of Christian, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. It claims 230 congregations in 30 countries.

—MKG

## CHURCH OF SATAN FOUNDER DIES

The man who founded the Church of Satan and played the devil in the 1968 occult movie classic, "Rosemary's Baby," is dead. Anton Szandor LaVey died Oct. 29 of pulmonary edema following years of heart problems. He was 67. The onetime lion trainer and professional organist began his church in 1966, gaining national attention when he performed a satanic wedding and baptized his first daughter in the church. His appetite for

entertainment remained throughout his years as head of the Church of Satan, playing bizarre organ music for hours each day and, for a time, keeping a lion as a pet.

LaVey's version of Satanism was more contempt for Christianity, rather than the typically accepted traditions of human and animal sacrifice associated by some with devil worship. "My father was considered by some as the world's most dangerous man, but he would never hurt a living thing. My father loved animals and children," his daughter, Karla LaVey, told the Associated Press.

In 1969, he published *The Satanic Bible*, a work that sold briskly in secular bookshops for many years. He wrote and published three other volumes, with a fifth book to be published posthumously this year. LaVey's family stated they "will continue in his footsteps to do as he directed to keep the Church of Satan going and keep it strong."

—MKG

## INTERNATIONAL CHURCH OF CHRIST SCORES PARTIAL VICTORY

The International Church of Christ's Singapore congregation, Central Christian Church, prevailed on one of five points in defamation suits filed against *The New Paper*; the Chinese-language evening paper, *Lianhe Wanbao*; and the Christian magazine, *Impact*.

In a Nov. 23, 1991, report, the newspapers called the group a cult. The CCC sought damages totaling \$3.25 million (Singapore): \$2.25 million from the editors of the two newspapers and \$1 million from the magazine's editor. *Impact* was named in the suit because it was used as a source by the two newspapers.

Justice Warren Khoo, who presided over the 18-day trial last July, threw out four of the five suits, saying the publications had been fair in their report. However, he said a front-page headline in *The New Paper* that read "2 Cults Exposed" amounted to sensationalism. He issued his ruling last November.

Khoo said that the defendants had failed to establish a basis for calling the CCC a cult. He said he found no evidence that the sect was a "half-crazed people" or a "secret organisation run by persons with an agenda" and that its members are permitted to leave the group if they desire.

The ICC had never sued one of its critics before. One ICC public document says: "How do you respond to critics who equate discipling with 'mind control' or 'brain washing'? We try to respond with forbearance and love, for Christians have always been misunderstood and persecuted" (*Media and Law*, August 1, 1994).

Adrian van Leen, director of Concerned Christians Growth Ministries in Australia, was an expert witness called by the defense. Gordon Melton of The Institute for the Study of American Religion was the expert witness for the plaintiffs. Melton said the ICC is not a cult and further declined to label groups such as the People's Temple (Jim Jones), the Church of Scientology, Japan's Sum Supreme Truth, and several other sects as cults.

The amount for settlement of the defamatory headline will be determined later in a separate hearing.

—MKG

## RUSSIAN LDS VIDEO AVAILABLE

After several years in production, a Russian language version of Personal Freedom Outreach's video presentation, *Mormonism: The Christian View*, is now available. The production was a joint effort between PFO and the Jesus Film Project.

Following the decline of communism, the opportunity to take the Gospel to the people in the former block of Soviet Union countries became a reachable goal. Unfortunately, freedom for cults to preach a false gospel also availed. In an attempt to minimize the Latter-day Saint church's influence in this new territory on the foreign mission field, the Jesus Film Project contacted PFO about revising and translating its video for the Russian speaking people. Late last year the undertaking became a reality.

The video is available in both PAL and VHS formats. The cost is \$19.95 per copy (plus \$1.50 postage). Contact PFO Saint Louis for more information or to order.

—MKG

## MASS SUICIDE PLOT FOILED

In what could have been called "Heaven's Gate II," police in Spain prevented a plan in which cult leader Heide Fittkau-Garthe orchestrated the mass suicide of herself and 32 of her followers. The 57-year-old Fittkau-Garthe, a German psychologist, was charged Jan. 10 with attempted murder and ordered held without bail. She was arrested Jan. 7 at her chalet on the Spanish resort island of Tenerife during what police described as the group's "last supper."

Officials stated they were alerted to the suicide pact by the cult leader's brother, a businessman from Düesseldorf. Police said they discovered poisonous chemicals at her home.

According to a Reuters News Service report, Fittkau-Garthe and her followers believed that a UFO "would