
News Updates

PFO NAMES TWO NEW DIRECTORS

Personal Freedom Outreach recently added two new members to its staff. In April, Dr. James Bjornstad and Mr. Philip Cetnar were appointed to PFO's Board of Directors.

James Bjornstad is professor of philosophy at Cedarville College in Cedarville, Ohio. He is a recognized scholar and author in the field of cults, the occult and apologetics. Bjornstad has spent nearly 40 years in religious research. In addition to his proficiency in the field of alternate religions, he has been a pastor, an academic dean and college president. He has been on PFO's Board of Reference for the past 10 years.

Also named to PFO's Board is Philip Cetnar. He is the director of PFO's Philadelphia area office and the son of directors Joan and the late Bill Cetnar. He co-founded a local training and witnessing counter-cult ministry and is responsible for maintaining PFO's web site. Cetnar, his wife, Priscilla, and two children live in Mount Laurel, N.J.

Also in April, PFO accepted and announced the resignation of Edgar L. Havaich from its Board. Havaich resigned as director because of time constraints. He faithfully served on PFO's Board since his appointment in 1989.

—MKG

NEW NAME FOR RLDS CHURCH

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (RLDS) has adopted a new name: "Community of Christ."

RLDS delegates met in April at the church's world conference in Independence, Mo., to discuss a name change for the denomination. While "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints" will remain the denomination's legal name, the new name by which they will be identified, Community of Christ, will be instituted after the end of the year. The two-thirds majority vote needed to approve the change was easily surpassed; 1,979 (77%) voted for and 561 voted against.

Among the issues discussed was the church's problem with frequently being mistaken for the Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Mark A. Scherer, world church historian, told the *Kansas City Star*:

"Primary to the existence of the reorganization was the desire to distance the church from the Utah Mormons for a variety of reasons, including the fact that the Utah Mormons were practicing polygamy, which the reorganized church membership felt was heresy."

The RLDS church is only one of more than 100 groups that splintered from the church founded by Joseph Smith Jr. after his death in 1844. While Brigham Young led the majority of Smith's followers to Utah, others believed that a descendant of Smith should head the church as prophet. In 1860, Smith's son Joseph Smith III, was accepted and installed as president of the church. During the rest of the 19th century, the sect moved its headquarters around Illinois. In the early 1900s, the church established its formal headquarters in Independence.

The RLDS denomination has a membership of less than 250,000 and is the second-largest of the Mormon sects. The Utah-based Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints counts more than 10 million members.

—AMG

FOUR DIE AT HINN'S KENYA CRUSADE

Four people, including two young children, died while attending healing evangelist Benny Hinn's crusade in Nairobi, Kenya, last May. The report from the Reuters news service said police told a local newspaper, the *Kenya Times*, that "the four had been released from a hospital to be cured at Benny Hinn's 'Miracle Crusade.'"

In addition to the four deaths, it was reported that "Ten other people suffered serious injuries including broken jaws after falling from trees they climbed to get a view of the American preacher."

An earlier news article, which appeared in the *Daily Nation*, identified one of the deceased as Clondin Adhiambo, "an ailing four-month-old baby." The infant was taken to Hinn's meeting by her mother. The newspaper reported that according to police, "the baby's condition worsened at the prayer venue and she was taken to MP Shah Hospital where she was pronounced dead on arrival."

The Reuters story noted that faith healing in Kenya has become a well-received enterprise. "Preachers promising miracle cures from ailments ranging from AIDS to blindness have become increasingly popular in recent years in Kenya, a country where health care is out of the

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the terrain's unhealthy. You sort of know the terrain. ... there's a certain weird comfort and safety factor even in insane places if you know how it all works. ... Because to be on terrain they don't know is very, very fearful" (G. Richard Fisher, *Getting Out - Getting On*, cassette tape).

As difficult as it may appear and as hard as it is to try, one *must* go on — and above all, stop drinking from the contaminated well and be committed to the antidote. Life and habits will have to be reorganized. And you must remember: You can't change the past. Dr. Jay Adams zeros in on the debilitating effects of dwelling on the past:

"Some persons focus on the past. So long as they do, change will not be possible, since no one can change the past. It is not the past that needs to be dealt with; actually the past no longer exists. It is not his *past* that needs changing; it is the counselee *himself as he now is* who must change. Counselors must help the counselee to refocus from the past to its effects upon the present. They must explain that the past is present in the life patterns of the counselee himself and in the present effects of past activities. Just as those who focus on the future (which does not exist) in worry do not change, so too those who expend their energies and concern upon the past (which does not exist) find that they are unable to make the required adjustments" (Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Manual*, pp. 172-173, italics in original).

The Apostle Paul offered this example and advice to the believers at Philippi:

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14).

Paul left his impressive-sounding Jewish pedigree behind. As Jesus said, "the Truth will make you free" (John 8:32); He has the power to set you completely free (8:36). The unhealthy doctrine and practice of false teachers and aberrant churches must be left behind. The healthy discipline of being in a well-balanced church family with worship, Bible study, service, and fellowship must be established and continued. It will be just what the doctor ordered! A caring body of true believers is also needed for support in the fearful times.

God is bigger than your fear, God is bigger than your afflictions, God is bigger than your hurt. He will see you through — His Word guarantees it:

"I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are things I will do; I will not forsake them" (Isaiah 42:16).

—MKG

reach of many ordinary people and living standards have been gradually falling for years," the report stated.

Before the Kenya services, Hinn took publicity of his crusades to a new level. On several television broadcasts, he suggested that Jesus Christ would personally and physically appear at the Kenya meetings. However, such purported appearances apparently are not unheard of among Kenyans. The *Kenya Times* reported in its June 22, 1988, edition that about 6,000 worshipers at a Muslim village in Nairobi believed they saw Jesus Christ in broad daylight.

The newspaper described that a tall, white-robed, barefoot and bearded figure appeared at the Church of Bethlehem during a miracle prayer meeting conducted by spiritual healer Mary Sinaida Akatsa. The man believed to be Jesus left the meeting by car, but the driver later claimed he was instructed to stop the car at a bus terminal where the man got out "walked a few paces beside the road and simply vanished into thin air." The *Times* article also identified the person claiming to be Jesus Christ as the Lord Maitreya. New Age guru Benjamin Creme stated that "Maitreya's appearance was in keeping with the crowd's expectations, as Jesus Christ, hence his bearded face and biblical robes."

Despite Hinn's hype of the crusade in early May, media coverage of the event was sparse. The limited coverage by the secular media appears to be a strategy orchestrated by Hinn's ministry to control and filter crusade details. A reporter for the *Daily Nation News* told PFO that "there was minimal coverage as the local press were prevented from entering the crusade compounds."

A freelance news writer in the United States told PFO that while Hinn's organization permitted her to attend the Philadelphia Miracle Crusade (which was held a few weeks after the Kenya meetings), no cameras were allowed. The reporter was further instructed that she was forbidden to speak directly to anyone presented onstage as healed. Any details of those claiming to be healed were to come solely from Hinn's crusade representatives.

—MKG

A HEAVYWEIGHT DIVORCE SETTLEMENT

Three-time heavyweight boxing champion Evander Holyfield and his second wife, Janice, reached an out-of-court divorce settlement in March. The agreement, which ended the couple's 3½-year marriage and full year of divorce proceedings, precluded what could have been a very messy split, including the incarceration of Holyfield's pastor, the Rev. Creflo Dollar, for refusing to give a deposition in the case.