

MORMON MEMBERSHIP CONTINUES TO RISE

According to recent statistics, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints worldwide membership is approaching 13 million. The report containing the figures, which was announced at the church's general conference last April, also indicated "steady growth" of "about a million new members being added every three years or less."

In 2006, there were more than a quarter-million "convert baptisms" to the Mormon faith. An increase of nearly 100,000 "children of record" also was posted during the same time. "Children of record" are those from Mormon families who, upon reaching the age of nine, are baptized into the LDS church.

The report also acknowledged an issue faced in citing statistics of any religious denomination — growth numbers are not always interpreted accurately. The LDS report recognized that the published figures "represent the number of Church members, but they do *not* represent activity rates — that is, the number of members attending their local chapels every Sunday."

Despite that disclaimer, in the United States alone, more than 250 LDS congregations were started in 2006.

—MKG

TAMPA NEWSPAPER SPOTLIGHTS WHITES' EXCESSES

In May, an article in *The Tampa Tribune*, the hometown newspaper of Paula and Randy White, targeted the extravagant lifestyle and perks of the couple. The Whites are the founders and pastors of the Without Walls International Church, which now claims 23,500 members.

The report disclosed, "They travel in a \$1.9 million business jet. They own a home they purchased for \$2.1 million on Bayshore Boulevard and a \$3.5 million Trump Tower condo in New York. Randy rents a waterfront villa in Malibu, Calif." The article also stated that most of "the couple's personal income comes from private businesses, including a real estate company, sales of nutritional supplements, and speaking engagements."

Yet not all is "positive" for the pastoral couple deeply ingrained in the positive confession movement. "In the

past 18 months, more than 60 church associates, some on staff and some unpaid, have left or been 'released' from their jobs," the *Tribune* reported. Also mentioned in the article were several of the legal wranglings the Whites have encountered during the past several years as they "renege on deals and didn't pay their bills."

And the "health" component of their health and wealth gospel was also subject to a realistic investigation. "Both the Whites have undergone cosmetic surgery, seeming to grow younger over the past five years," the newspaper said. And in a more serious concern, last December Randy's eldest daughter from a previous marriage was diagnosed with "an advanced brain tumor."

All of this seems to be taking its toll on both Paula, who hails herself as a "life coach," and Randy. The newspaper indicated that the Whites have "acknowledged rumors have been flying for a long time about their relationship. Randy said the two are best friends and will always remain so. Asked whether they're contemplating divorce, he said, 'No one can predict the future.'"

For more information on the doctrine and practice of the Whites, see "White Lies" in the April-June 2007 issue of *The Quarterly Journal*.

—MKG

CREATION MUSEUM OPENS

What was a dream for more than a dozen years — and six years after ground was broken — became a reality for creationist Ken Ham on Memorial Day as his Creation Museum opened its doors to a capacity crowd of more than 4,000 visitors from over 30 states. The \$27 million, 60,000 square-foot facility is located on a 49-acre parcel just south of Cincinnati in Petersburg, Ky.

Ham heads up the Answers in Genesis ministry, an organization dedicated to using the sciences including biology, geology, anthropology, and astronomy to confirm the biblical account of creation and to challenge evolutionary thought.

The museum contends for creationism in a high-tech, state-of-the-art way. Throughout the tour, visitors will encounter 55 animatronic and static figures (of humans and dinosaurs), see a 30-foot-tall model of Noah's Ark, and embark into a 200-seat, cutting-edge special effects

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