

not recant her Muslim faith by March 31, 2009. "I believe that Islam and Christianity have enough differences to make it impossible to adhere to them both with integrity," Wolf said. (RNS 10/22/08)

Pastors Test Free Speech in Pulpits

❖ Pastors of at least seven Southern Baptist congregations participated in "Pulpit Freedom Sunday," a September 28 free-speech initiative to test the 54-year-old Supreme Court ruling that forbids the endorsement of political candidates from the pulpit. "Pastors have a right to speak about biblical truths from the pulpit without fear of punishment," Erik Stanley, senior legal counsel for the Alliance Defense Fund (ADF), said in a news release. "No one should be able to use the government to intimidate pastors into giving up their constitutional rights."

The ADF pledged to watch for Internal Revenue Service investigations arising from the event and to oppose efforts to remove the tax-exempt status of 33 congregations whose pastors endorsed candidates from the pulpit.

The day after the free-speech demonstrations, Americans United for Separation of Church and State filed complaints against six churches where pastors participated in the event. (BP 10/03)

Giving to Missions Down

❖ Americans spent nearly twice as much on first-day sales of the video game "Grand Theft Auto IV" as would be needed by the Southern Baptist Convention to share the gospel with all the world's "unreached people groups" by 2010, according to a new report on church giving. The annual report, by the Illinois-based group empty tomb inc., found a general downward trend in church-member giving through 2006.

Even Southern Baptists, a group highlighted as a "denomination that takes this religious task seriously," have not launched an aggressive campaign to fund the estimated additional 2,800 missionaries that would be needed to

"engage" unreached groups by 2010. Empty tomb estimated that it would cost about \$11 per Southern Baptist to fund those extra missionaries; instead, the denomination's 2008 goal of \$170 million to support existing missionaries is the equivalent of asking each Southern Baptist to donate just 31 cents more than last year.

By contrast, Americans spent \$310 million in first-day sales for "Grand Theft Auto IV." "The total portion of per capita income given to churches in 2006 was lower than in the worst year of the Great Depression," the study found. (RNS 10/15/08)

Philippine Catholics Battle "Contraceptive Mentality"

❖ Philippine Roman Catholic leaders have pledged to battle what they call a creeping "contraceptive mentality" as they seek to combat provisions of a proposed law in the lower chamber of the National Congress aimed at controlling the country's burgeoning population, which stands at about 96 million. "All parishes are now being oriented on the sinister provisions of the Reproductive Health and Population Development Bill, which is actually pushing a 'contraceptive mentality' in which people can have sex without any responsibility and morality," Bishop Carlito Cenzon of the diocese of Baguio in the northern Philippines told ENI. (ENI 10/14/08)

Sterilization Offer Blasted

❖ Louisiana Rep. John LaBruzzo (R-Metairie) received an onslaught of criticism for seeking to address the problem of "generational welfare" by recommending that poor women be paid \$1,000 apiece to undergo voluntary sterilization, Cybercast News Service reported. Alveda King, niece of the late Martin Luther King, Jr., and a spokeswoman for Priests for Life, was among those who decried the state lawmaker's proposal as a form of eugenics. "Sterilizing the poor is fighting economic poverty with moral bankruptcy," King said in a written statement.

Roman Catholic Archbishop Alfred Hughes (New Orleans) also

denounced LaBruzzo's proposal as "an egregious affront to those targeted, and blatantly anti-life." The lawmaker said he is also considering whether to propose tax incentives for college-educated people to have more children. (BP 10/17/08; RNS 10/01/08)

School Kids Taken to "Gay Wedding"

❖ A San Francisco first-grade class was taken on a field trip to city hall to help celebrate a lesbian wedding. The 18 first-graders—from Creative Arts Charter School, a public school—went on the field trip to surprise their teacher, Erin Carder, who had just "married" her partner, Kerri McCoy, the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported. Following the ceremony, the children tossed pink rose petals and blew bubbles on the women, the newspaper said. San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom officiated. (BP 10/14/08)

Burger Boycott Well Done

❖ The American Family Association (AFA) on October 9 announced an end to the boycott it had organized against McDonald's, citing the restaurant chain's willingness to now "remain neutral in the culture war regarding homosexual marriage." "McDonald's said McDonald's Vice President Richard Ellis has resigned his position on the board [of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (NGLCC)] and that his seat on the board will not be replaced," AFA founder and chairman Don Wildmon wrote in an email alert to the pro-family organization's 2.4 million supporters. "McDonald's also said that the company has no plans to renew their membership in NGLCC when it expires in December." (BP 10/10/08) ♦

Abbreviations for Sources:

BP: Baptist Press

ENI: Ecumenical News International

RNS: Religion News Service

RW: Religion Watch

ZE: Zenit

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