

# Independent Evangelist

LE it's happening



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Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and never brought to mind?  
Should auld acquaintance be forgot  
and days of auld lang syne?  
For auld lang syne, my dear,  
for auld lang syne,  
we'll take a cup of kindness yet,  
for auld lang syne.

- Robert Burns, Auld Lang Syne

*Happy New Year!*

Welcome to the January issue of the Independent Evangelist. I trust you all had a wonderful and joyous Christmas.



Now it's time to marvel at the turning of the colander, party hardy, sing Auld Lang Syne and make our New Year's Resolutions.

New Year's Resolutions fascinate me. I never announced any resolutions because I always knew I would forget about it in a short while anyway. My short term memory isn't the best and someone would catch me going back on a promise of sorts.

I have witnessed some good ones though. The best one was a guy I knew, resolving never to cheat on his wife again. He said it while partying with his girlfriend and he split for Mexico the next week with her, leaving his wife at home with the kids.

Many have resolved to give up drinking while depositing the remains of the party in the toilet only to chug down a bit of the "hair of the dog" the next morning.

Many have said they will lose weight, quit swearing, gambling and carousing only to bet on the college bowl games the next day while scarfing down a pizza and cussing at the players on the TV. Then, after the game meet with the gang at the bar.

I think New Year's resolutions are made strictly as a form of entertainment. Let's face it; they're hard to remember and harder to keep.

That is due to the fact we make silly resolutions that really don't mean a thing. It's time to change that.

I suggest every Christian make one resolution this year. This is a tough one but it would mean a lot and the benefits would be fantastic.

**Make a resolution to reach out to someone who is lost and needs to find God.** Reach out to that one person in hopes to bring them back inside the doors of a nearby church.

You don't have to be pushy or preachy and you don't even have to be able to quote the Bible or be a church leader. You just have to remind them to take stock of their lives and **seek what's missing.**

I'm reminded of the news of the Chicago Bears defensive lineman, Tank Johnson. Here's a guy who is intimidating as his name but he needed a body guard and a cache of weapons. What did he fear and why?

He can make all the excuses in the world about protecting his family and possessions but he simply needs to let Christ in his life.

*psalm 23*

*4. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou [art] with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

I pray that Tank finds God but I don't know him and it's doubtful I will ever meet the man but I have known others like him that live in fear. There are many among us that lie awake at night feeling stressed and anxious.

If each of us reaches out to just one person that is all tied up in knots for whatever reason, the exponential doubling of church attendance would be more well than I could imagine.

*To love another person is to help them love God.  
Suren Kierkegaard*

Keep it simple. Get to really know someone and reach out. You might not see the results. They might take a while before they enter a church but once they do they will lose the fears that kept them bound in chains.

Just like the song, Amazing Grace says, "**I was lost, but now I'm found**", all of us felt lost at one time. It's time for that to stop.

*Therefore if any man [be] in Christ, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

*2 Corinthians 5:17*

## PC PC PC PC PC PC ... and so on!

I, for one, am sick to death of the paranoia created by the overzealous use of the term and enforcement of political correctness, or PC as every liberal yuppie likes to call it.

Granted, there is a true need for decency towards others and we should all be open to the feelings of all those we call neighbors. However, those on the PC bandwagon have become blind to both sides of each issue filtering into the courts by way of mindless lawsuits.

Here are some excerpts from December news stories that left me shaking my head in disgust.

### Wal-Mart Bans "Merry Christmas" Seeking Protesters!

It's true! Wal-Mart has banned their employees from saying Merry Christmas, unless it has been said to them first.

When the Wal-mart corporate offices answered my call I asked them "Is it true that Wal-mart is restricting the use of the phrase "Merry Christmas" in their stores?" She answered "Yes. We have given notice that the words Happy Holidays should be said in place of Merry Christmas."

I asked "Why would Walmart do this?" She said "Because not everyone celebrates Christmas. We don't want to offend anyone."

### Christmas ban: Sensible or insane?

#### The Red Cross has banned Christmas nativity decorations from its UK charity shops in case they offend customers of other faiths.

One volunteer, Christine Banks, was dismayed to be told to take a nativity scene out of the window of the Kent shop she worked in.

She said it was political correctness gone mad and leading British Muslim Labour peer Lord Ahmed said it was "stupid" to think other faiths would be offended by Christian symbols.

### Plano school bans Christmas Colors

The war on Christmas in public schools gets curiouser and curiouser. School officials in Plano, Texas, not content to neuter Christmas by blotting out angels, Mary, and the Baby Jesus, have now banned the colors red and green. According to the [Alliance Defense Fund](#), Plano Independent School District policy "prohibits students from wearing red and green at their 'winter break' parties because...they are Christmas colors. Even the plates and napkins must be white."

**Also banned:** Candy canes and pencils with religious messages on them, reindeer symbols, and **writing "Merry Christmas" on greeting cards to U.S. soldiers.** Parents involved in school activities must also toe the secularist line: District policy bars them from exchanging "religious" Christmas items with other parents.

**It only gets more bizarre! Read on.**

### Town Bans Christmas—Declares Holiday "Sell-a-Bration" Instead



One Northern California town wants to get back to what Christmas really stands for: shopping. Religious symbolism "gets in the way" of business, says one proponent of the Christmas ban. No talk of Christ in this town by the bay

MARINDELL, CA—Drop by one of the stores that sells baggy linen separates or raw milk cheese in Marin dell's exclusive downtown and there are two words you won't hear these days: "Merry Christmas." Shopkeepers have been banned from uttering the holiday greeting, and both of the local churches have been asked to dismantle their nativity crèches.

Instead, Marin dell officials are asking residents and local businesses to come together in the spirit of what they're calling a holiday "Sell-a-Bration." The goal of the seasonal switch: to return to what officials says is the real meaning behind the Christmas holiday—shopping.

October 26, 2005

#### Covered By Muslim Group CAIR - HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY (FLORIDA) SCHOOL BOARD BANS CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS (And Good Friday And 'Easter' And Yom Kippur)

Those were a few excerpts from more stories than I care to think about that came out of this time of year that Christians hold dear. Political correctness has gone way too far. It seems that nobody cares about insulting Christians.

Here are a few thoughts about these bans;

The phrase "**separation of church and state**" is not in the **U.S. Constitution**, but because of the fear, intimidation, and disinformation groups like the ACLU (and CAIR) promote, many public officials and educational leaders mistakenly believe it is their duty to silence Christian religious expression.

**Christmas has historically been one of the most celebrated holidays of the American people. 96% of all Americans celebrate Christmas.** Yet, because of **political correctness**, the words Merry Christmas have become increasingly absent from our Christmas season traditions. Misconceptions and controversy about the so-called "separation of church and state" has led many public officials to "remove Christ from Christmas."

This was not the intent of the founding fathers. In addition, no court has ever ruled that the Constitution requires government officials to censor Christmas carols, eliminate all references to Christmas, or silence those who celebrate Christ's birth.

For 2007, please take a stand to **put Christ back in Christmas!**

*And blessed is [he], whosoever shall not be offended in me.  
Matthew 11:6*

## *What Price Freedom...*

I held off all news stories in December to make that newsletter more of a Christmas card but during the month I read some heart breaking stories. Here is one that hit me hardest.

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### CHRISTIAN WORLD NEWS

Religion Roundup

#### Witnesses Say Iraqi Christians Are Being Terrorized

CAPITOL HILL (AP) - As Christmas approaches, a Republican congressman says Iraqi Christians are being terrorized.

At a House hearing, New Jersey Congressman Chris Smith said, "There have been **beheadings**, churches have been destroyed, and young people have been killed."

Nina Shea who heads the Freedom House Center for Religious Freedom, testified that in recent months, seven clergymen have been kidnapped and two of them were murdered.

She says there also have been reports of children being **crucified** when ransoms weren't paid.

Shea says many churches have stopped holding worship services as almost half of Iraqi Christians have fled to escape Muslim militias and insurgents.

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I remember Bin Laden saying, immediately after 9-11, that this is WW III. Whether or not that is true, Christianity has been taking a beating around the world, in the courts as well as through outward physical violence.

How much could any of you as individuals endure if told to give up Christ? I guarantee you could take more than you know.

I've mentioned in previous letters about my friend in prison, Saul. He went in as an average "Joe" and gave his life to Christ while behind bars. Many other prisoners tried to dissuade him in ways that would make most of us go underground, as it were. He stood strong and found others to stand by him.

***Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast [some] of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.***  
*Revelation 2:10*

Similarly, when I was in Vietnam, I was briefly the guest of the Viet Cong. They beat the daylights out of me when they found a cross around my neck. If I had died, I believed I would be in a much better place. I was nothing less than a nightmare for those Cong for

my beliefs gave me strength. I still have that cross; they don't.

***Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty.***  
*2 Corinthians 3:17*

Our two stories are **nothing** compared to those living under constant fear of torture or death simply because they believe in Christ. When you hear about life in countries where Christians are a minority, it tears your heart out.

Still, **Christians exist in places we least expect**. I marvel at that fact and it should serve as a reminder to all of us how important freedom of religion is. The founders of our country died to give us that right and no coward like Bin Laden will ever make us deny our love for Christ. **Freedom of religion is all it's cracked up to be.**

***Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.***  
*1 Corinthians 15:58*

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### US News

#### Mourners Pay Respect to President Ford

CBN News  
December 27, 2006



CBNNews.com -- THE WHITE HOUSE -- President Ford passed away at his Rancho Mirage California home at 6:45 Tuesday night.

A family representative said memorials will begin Friday in California and last until Wednesday, when Ford will be interred in a hillside tomb near his presidential museum in his home state of Michigan.

On Saturday, Ford's body will be flown to Washington pausing at the World War II memorial in joint tribute to the wartime Navy reserve veteran and his comrades in uniform.

The state funeral will be conducted in the Capitol Rotunda that evening and after that, the public will be able to file in to pay last respects. Ford was expected to lie in state until Tuesday morning.

In a departure from tradition meant to highlight Ford's long service in Congress, his body will lie in repose outside the main door of the House and, later, outside the main doors of the Senate chamber.

Last seen before the nation in April, Ford had suffered from years of declining health.

As word of his death spread to his home state of Michigan, mourners began to pay their respects at his presidential library in Grand Rapids.

**"A gentleman who loved God, loved his country, loved his family, and had integrity."**

Ford was the first president in history to occupy the Oval Office without having been elected as president or vice president.

But he'll likely most be remembered for his controversial pardon of Richard Nixon a little less than a month after Nixon resigned the presidency over the Watergate scandal. As Ford took power, he promised to put Watergate behind the nation.

"Our long national nightmare is over," Ford said.

But his pardon of Nixon probably ended any chance Ford had of winning the presidency in his own right.

He lost to Jimmy Carter by two percentage points during the 1976 election.

Ford was born in Omaha, Nebraska July 14, 1913. **He became an Eagle Scout** and captain of his high school football team in Grand Rapids, and turned down offers by the Detroit Lions and Green Bay Packers to turn pro.

**He served in the South Pacific during World War II**, then headed to Congress as a conservative Republican, where he was elected House minority leader in the mid-60s.

Now the nation lowers its flags to half-staff as it begins to mourn the passing of its 38th president -- a controversial figure, but he was **considered by all who knew him as a good and decent man.**

*Do not fear death so much, but rather the **inadequate life.***

*Bertolt Brecht, The Mother, 1932*

Yes, we should fear the inadequate life. This next story illustrates that quite well.

## US News

### Murders Up in New York, Other Big Cities

Associated Press  
December 27, 2006



CBNNews.com -- NEW YORK -- After many years of decline, the number of murders climbed this year in New York and many other major U.S. cities, reaching their highest levels in a decade in some places.

**Among the reasons given: gangs**, the easy availability of illegal guns, and a disturbing **tendency among young people to pull guns** when they do not get the **respect they demand.**

In New York, where the city reported 579 homicides through Dec. 24 - a nearly 10 percent increase from the year before -

the spike is mostly the result of an unusually large number of "reclassified homicides," or those involving victims who were shot or stabbed years ago but did not die until this year. Thirty-five such deaths have been added to this year's toll, compared with an annual average of about a dozen.

At the same time, Police Department spokesman Paul Browne noted that this year's total is only slightly higher than last year's 539 homicides - the city's lowest death toll in more than 40 years.

Browne blamed the rise in part on the availability of guns, particularly weapons from out of state. The city this year sued dozens of out-of-state gun shops that it says are responsible for many of the illegal weapons on the streets of New York.

In Chicago, homicides through the first 11 months of the year were up 3.3 percent compared with the same period in 2005, reversing a four-year decline. A police spokeswoman said gang violence has been a contributing factor.

In New Haven, Conn., there were 23 homicides as of Tuesday, compared with 15 in 2004 and in 2005. Police Chief Francisco Ortiz said that about half of this year's killings involve young people settling disputes with guns instead of fists.

**"They're all struggling with this thing about respect and pride,"** Ortiz said. "It's about respect. It's about revenge. It's about having a reputation. It's about turf and it's about girls."

Some cities, like Cincinnati - which has had 83 homicides so far, up from 79 in 2005 - posted their highest numbers ever. Others saw their highest death tolls in years.

Oakland, Calif., had 148 homicides as of Wednesday, up 57 percent from last year and the highest in more than a decade. Philadelphia's 2006 homicide total was 403 as of Wednesday, the first time the number has topped 400 in nearly a decade. There were 380 killings in all of 2005.

Philadelphia officials have struggled all year to reduce the violence. In July, Mayor John F. Street gave a televised address in which pleaded with young people: **"Lay down your weapons. Do it now. Choose education over violence."**

What "respect" do gang bangers deserve when they turn their backs to school and church and tuck guns in the waist band of their big baggy "clown" pants? They lack courage and mistake the fear they see in their victims' eyes as some sort of respect.

***Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.***  
*Anais Nin, US (French-born) author & diarist (1903 - 1977)*

I dare them all to show enough courage to give their lives to Christ. **A life without Christ is the inadequate life they should fear.** Perhaps there will be a day when they lay down their guns for a crucifix.

***Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.***  
*Matthew 26:52*

Usually, I like to review a movie or book, but I came across this story on [cbn.com](http://cbn.com) and thought it well worth passing on.

## Sylvester Stallone on Faith, Integrity, and Rocky Balboa

By *The 700 Club*



### CBN.com – ROCKY: A MOVIE ABOUT FAITH?

From the very first shot of *Rocky*, a painting of Jesus overlooks the determined but worn boxer. He's sparring in a converted church-turned-gym and the viewer notes that these smartly placed spiritual references demonstrate the Hand of Providence throughout his life. Writer, Director and Actor Sylvester Stallone says, "The character of Rocky was built on the idea that he was chosen to do something. That's why the first image in *Rocky* is the picture of Christ."

**But what does a movie about a boxer have to do with Christianity?** "This is a story of faith, integrity and victory. Jesus is the inspiration for anyone to go the distance," commented Stallone. You could compare his courage to that of David, who as the epic underdog, defeated the giant Goliath in battle or look at his integrity in comparison to Esther, whose uncle asked, "And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?" (Esther 4:14). No matter which way you look at it, it is easy to find similar themes between the *Rocky* movies and stories throughout the Bible.

### ABOUT THE MOVIE

**Rocky Balboa**, the popular boxing character created by Sylvester Stallone, returns to the ring in the *Rocky* film for the fight of his life! Against incredible odds, and with courage, integrity and faith, Rocky gives a powerful example of faith.

*Rocky Balboa*, which opens in theaters nationwide on December 20, is the latest installment in MGM's *Rocky* film series. Rocky now owns Adrian's, an Italian restaurant named for his beloved wife who has passed away. His grief heavy, the retired boxer struggles to connect with his son, Robert, and fills his lonely hours with his brother-in-law, reminiscing about the glory days.

When ESPN broadcasts a computer-simulated fight and declares Rocky the victor over the current heavyweight champion, his passion re-ignites and the aging Rocky is eager to return to the ring.

### STALLONE'S REAWAKENING

Stallone says that in the past, his ego and worldly temptation's took over in his life and he went spiraling out of control. Rather than living like Rocky with some sense of ideal, he didn't. "I thought I was entitled to things. You're not entitled to anything," Stallone says. "You are what you leave behind." Stallone says the more he goes to church, and the more he turns himself over to the process of believing in Jesus and listening to his Word and helping him guide his hand, he feels as though the pressure is off himself.

(Movie critics gave the movie 3 ½ stars.)

My faith grew in an old fashioned Lutheran church and I still like the old ways but as I said before, today's contemporary style of worship will be tomorrow's traditional services. Here's another church to illustrate that idea.

## Church Acts in Faith

By David Sisson and Gorman Woodfin  
*The 700 Club*

CBN.com – Hope Community Church of Raleigh, North Carolina, uses stage and screen to present the good news of the gospel in a dynamic and creative way.

"We use sound and light and music and drama and video to try to maintain the message that people can relate to, that will keep their attention and hold it," executive pastor Dave Patchin explains. **"When Jesus used parables, He set His message in a context that related to everyday life for the average person. And we try to do that with the Gospel and the Gospel message here at Hope."**

Hope Community uses drama as a key element in their Sunday services.

Debbie Dodson, who heads up the drama ministry, says, "We do dramas to ask questions. The teaching pastor can come forward and from God's Word give us the answer. The actors enjoy playing such a significant part in the morning service."

One of those actors is Siobhan Moraski. **"There are so many lost people out there. I was lost for a long time myself, so I know where they're coming from.** And to be that on stage and have a resolution at the end is just- it's a wonderful way that I've been blessed personally," he notes.

The congregation has also been touched by the powerful dramas.

"A lot of times Christians tend to not want to fess-up for their real lives," says Donnie Darr. "But when you see yourself up on stage through somebody else, [it] becomes real."

Mary Ann Sibley, who was raised as a Buddhist, recalls just how much these stage actors have influenced her faith. "When I came, I came totally as an unbeliever and not knowing what church was about," she says. "I saw a drama ministry come and do a drama, and they actually made me realize these people can be like me. They have troubles like me. They made me laugh. They have a sense of humor. So they weren't these weird church people that I had this preconceived notion about."

Pastor Patchin has great expectations for his church's creative venture.

**"We hope that they come away with a sense that life change really is possible, that Christ is real, and He can really make a difference in their day-to-day existence,"** he says. "It's not this far-away spirituality, but it's a spirituality that can change their lives every day."

*But grow in grace, and [in] the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him [be] glory both now and for ever. Amen.*

*2 Peter 3:18*

## AWOL

I had a reputation for going AWOL when I was in the Army. That simply means I left without permission. It was a punishable offense and I was fined at times and lost rank once. It was worth it.

One time it gave me the experience of a lifetime and I still can't get over this one.

I was going through medic training at Ft. Sam Houston, in Texas. I had orders for Vietnam and after the last week of training, I took off in a jeep with no concerns about where I was heading. After all, if I was arrested, it would only delay my departure.

I drove aimlessly through desert roads and hadn't seen anyone for a long time before I came into a Navajo reservation. I pulled up to a bar, not caring about the stares I was getting from everyone. It wasn't every day that a soldier in fatigues, driving a stolen jeep walks into a Navajo bar.



Once inside I started to notice that it got very quiet and maybe this wasn't a good idea. Just as I was approached by some tough looking guys who didn't want me in their bar, a man at a table in the corner spoke out.

He was an old man with nearly white hair and leathery skin and he said in a firm voice, "Come and sit. I've been waiting for you". With that, everyone backed off and resumed their drinking.

Curiosity got the best of me and I spent the rest of the afternoon with the old man. We drank some beer as he told me of a vision he had.

In this vision, he saw a soldier (me) that was going into a long tour of combat. His Spirit Guide, a coyote, told him we would meet and it was his duty to **set me back on my chosen path.**

Just the fact that this old man was waiting with confidence that I would be there at that exact time made me want to listen to him. Besides, what else did I have to do? I was in no hurry to go anywhere.

After a few beers, I drove the man to a campsite he had set up at the top of a hill in the middle of nowhere. We made a fire and had something to eat. I didn't ask what it was because I didn't want to be impolite. It was okay but I wouldn't go out of my way to have it again.

As the night wore on, he told some great stories of his youth and we ate some salty stuff with some strangdrink and smoked something rather pungent.

In a very short time, I was having visions of my own like never before or since. I remember parts of it and it had to do with Vietnam. I didn't remember a lot of details but I remember sweating like I had a fever.

When I woke up, the camp was empty and there was no sign of a campfire or anything. I was sitting in my jeep feeling groggy and somewhat hungry but otherwise, okay.

I was wearing a strange necklace I remember the old man gave me during the night. He said I would be safe as long as I wore it. It was a small stone-like item shaped almost like an animal tooth. If it wasn't for the necklace, I would have thought I dreamt the whole night.

I decided to go back to Ft. Sam but first, I would drive back to the bar and say goodbye to the old man. When I got there nobody would tell me where he was, so I left.

True to form, I was fined for going AWOL but medics were in high demand in Nam so the Army figured it would be best to send me on my way to Nam.

The brass never bothered me about the necklace but a chaplain asked me about it. I told him the story of the old man and he told me a quote he remembered from a story about a Native American Chief, "**Trouble no one about their religion; respect others in their view and demand that they respect yours. ~Chief Tecumseh~**" (Tecumseh was a Christian)

The chaplain said I should wear the gift and remember the experience fondly. He did give me a pocket Bible and a prayer book, however and asked that I **remember my roots.**

During my first six months over there, I saw an awful lot of combat and had a lot of close calls. I never thought much about the necklace but I wore it with my dog tags anyway. I read the Bible and the prayer book every night **and that was my source of comfort.**

However, while surfing in the South China Sea during a well earned R&R the necklace broke and in the same instant, I was stung by a jelly fish.

A series of horrible mishaps came my way for many years after. I came home and drank my way through a whole decade.

I never lost my faith through all of it but I never said, 'it's just a coincidence' ever again. **Everything happens for a reason.**

*That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

1 Peter 1:7



Sometimes we feel like doing something we'll regret



Yeah, life can be rough

Trust in the Lord ...



FunnyFree.Net

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Sometimes the ride ain't so smooth



Sometimes we feel all caged up



Life will be a breeze

