

Faith Digest

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Christian literature distributors to merge. Two of the world's largest distributors of Christian literature— the Colorado-based [International Bible Society](#) and British-based [Send the Light](#)—have announced their intention to merge. The Bible society, founded in 1809, has been focused on distribution of Bibles, working with partners such as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and Campus Crusade for Christ, as well as churches and individuals who use its Bibles for evangelism. Send the Light, founded in 1957, helps Christian companies in the United States distribute a range of products—including books, music, tracts and home schooling materials—to European and other international locations.

Church of the Nazarene reports growth. Worldwide membership in the [Church of the Nazarene](#) has increased by one-third during the past decade, according to its recently released annual report. The church has 1.6 million members, having gained nearly 700,000 members since 1999. The church's biggest increases have been outside the United States. Last year the church grew by 5.7 percent overseas, while domestic growth was less than 1 percent. The church has experienced a slight decline in service attendance in the United States and Canada, although Sunday school participation has gone up 1 percent. There are nearly 19,000 Church of the Nazarene parishes across the world; about 700 new churches were added in the last year.

Court nixes teachers' scarves. A Bavarian court ruled Muslim teachers in southern Germany may not wear headscarves or any other symbol of their faith that could be construed to clash with Western or Christian values. The Islamic Religious Community of Berlin had filed a lawsuit to protest a Bavarian ban on teachers wearing headscarves. The Bavarian constitution calls for religious freedom, but it also calls for children in public schools to be raised by Christian standards. The court ultimately decided a constitutionally endorsed education was the more important goal, and allowing certain clothes and symbols could endanger the educational system in Bavaria. But the court ruling still means a nun's habit is acceptable garb for a teacher, since that garment adheres to the constitution's Christian standards. The case likely will be appealed to the Federal Constitutional Court.

Muslims disturbed by TV drama's plot. When a terrorist network set off a chain of suicide bombs on the new season of [Fox's hit drama 24](#), the fictional plot line mirrored the nightmares of many American viewers—including American Muslims. The [Council on American-Islamic Relations](#), the largest Islamic civil rights group in the United States, criticized the story line, suggesting it could foster discrimination against American Muslims. The council also expressed concerns the program's impact would help build public support for measures to deny civil liberties to Muslims. Fox responded to the council's concerns by issuing a written statement, noting that past seasons of 24 have portrayed villains such as a "shadowy Anglo businessman, Baltic Europeans, Germans, Russians, Islamic fundamentalists and even the (Anglo-American) president of the United States." The council also protested when Islamic terrorists were portrayed on the show two years ago. To help allay its concerns, Fox ran a commercial reminding viewers that the plot was fictional and not

representative of all Muslims.

Former Salvation Army leader named NAE chief. The [National Association of Evangelicals](#) has chosen Todd Bassett, former national commander of the Salvation Army, as its executive director. His new role will include oversight of the National Association of Evangelicals' administrative, communications and financial activities.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.