

Faith Digest: Lutheran publisher announces cutbacks

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Lutheran publisher announces cutbacks. [Augsburg Fortress](#), publishing arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is cutting back operations, closing nine bookstores in the United States, laying off more than 50 employees and declining to publish new books in its consumer-oriented line. The publisher will concentrate on congregational resources and academic texts, said Sheryl Burmaster, Augsburg's director of customer care. The publisher will retain 242 full- and part-time employees, according to the ELCA.

Judge orders Arizona to allow pro-life plates. A federal court has ruled the Arizona License Plate Commission must approve an anti-abortion group's "Choose Life" specialty license plate. The [Arizona Life Coalition](#) applied for the specialty license plate in 2002, but the Arizona License Plate Commission rejected its application. Attorneys with the Alliance Defense Fund and the Center for Arizona Policy filed suit in 2003. Last January, the 9th U.S Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the commission had violated the Arizona Life Coalition's First Amendment right to free speech by rejecting its application. The commission appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court to reverse the decision, but the high court refused to hear the case. U.S. District Judge Paul G. Rosenblatt ordered the commission to convene by Jan. 23 and approve the license plates.

Disney corrupts children, Catholic Brit charges. A top Roman Catholic cleric in England has accused Disney of corrupting children, encouraging greed and turning its make-believe world—as embodied at its theme

parks—into a latter-day pilgrimage site. Christopher Jamison, the abbot of Worth Abbey, in southern England, charges Disney with “exploiting spirituality” and helping to generate a culture of materialism while pretending to provide movie, book and theme park stories with a moral message. Jamison, a candidate to succeed Cardinal Cormac Murphy O’Connor as leader of Catholics in England and Wales, lodged the accusations in his new book, *Finding Happiness*.

Bob Jones University apologizes for racist policies. Bob Jones University, a fundamentalist Christian school in Greenville, S.C., that did not admit African-American students until 1971 and banned interracial dating until 2000, has apologized for its past racial policies. The school posted a statement about race at Bob Jones University on its website, saying the school’s past policies were shaped “for far too long” by “the segregationist ethos of American culture” rather than by biblical principles. “Though no known antagonism toward minorities or expressions of racism on a personal level have ever been tolerated on our campus, we allowed institutional policies to remain in place that were racially hurtful,” the statement said. Five university alumni launched a website, Please-Reconcile.org, to collect signatures for an open letter to Bob Jones leaders saying they were “troubled” by the school’s racist reputation. They collected more than 500 signatures. The statement by the university was released before the group sent its signed open letter to the administration.