

# Faith Digest

November 11, 2009

**Faith leaders urged to take lead on environmental issues.** U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told religious leaders they are uniquely equipped to pressure secular leaders to combat climate change. Speaking at a three-day conference on faith and the environment in England, Ban told about 200 leaders representing nine of the world's major religious communities the major faiths have established, run or contribute to more than half of all schools worldwide, compose the third-largest category of investors in the world, and produce more weekly magazines and newspapers than all the secular press in the European Union. "Your potential impact is enormous," he said. "You can—and do—inspire people to change."

**Christian prison proposed in Oklahoma.** A small town in Oklahoma is throwing its support behind a push to build a privately run, faith-based prison that would employ only Christians and attempt to rehabilitate inmates using biblical concepts. Wakita, with 380 residents, hopes to welcome 600 more if the \$42 million proposal is approved by the state Department of Corrections. A 150-acre site near the edge of town has been selected and the appropriate paperwork filed, said Bill Robinson, founder of Corrections Concepts, a Dallas-based nonprofit ministry. The facility would house men who have 12 to 30 months of their sentences remaining. Jerry Massie, spokesman for the Department of Corrections, said the state doesn't have the funds to help support the bond-underwritten proposal, nor is he sure it can succeed if approved. Oklahoma operates three correctional facilities that incorporate faith- and character-based curriculum into their educational programs, he said.

**Missouri taxes yoga studios.** Missouri has begun exacting a 4 percent sales tax on what many see as a spiritual pursuit—the practice of yoga. The

debate between Missouri's yoga community and the state centers on whether yoga is a constitutionally protected spiritual practice that should not be taxed or if it's just exercise—and a new revenue source for the state's cash-strapped budget. South Dakota and West Virginia already enforce a sales tax on yoga studios. Yoga teachers insist the service they provide is not just recreation, but represents a form of physical preparation for meditation, based on ancient Hindu texts, with the ultimate goal of spiritual enlightenment.

**Purpose Driven magazine moves online.** Megachurch pastor Rick Warren and the Reader's Digest Association will stop copublishing their quarterly magazine, the partners announced. Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in southern California, will move the magazine online. The partners unveiled *The Purpose Driven Connection* in January, a slick publication that featured spiritual guidance from Warren and a DVD for small-group discussions. "Our biggest discovery was learning that people prefer reading our content online rather than in print, because it is more convenient and accessible," Warren said. The last print edition of the magazine will be published in mid-November.