

Century Marks

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Neanderthal BeckPat Bagley, Salt Lake Tribune

Tale of two churches: Columnist Nicholas D. Kristof went to southern Sudan to write about its social problems and came away impressed by Catholic workers there. Workers like Father Michael Barton, a priest from Indianapolis, who went to southern Sudan in 1978 and lives 150 miles from the closest paved road. Barton runs four schools for kids whose graduates test at the top of statewide examinations. Kristof also met Cathy Arata, a nun from New Jersey involved in a project that has trained 600 schoolteachers and is setting up a school to train health workers. Wrote Kristof: "There seem to be two Catholic Churches, the old boys' club of the Vatican and the grassroots network of humble priests, nuns and laity in places like Sudan" (*New York Times*, May 2).

What if: Imagine the public's reaction if the Tea Party movement were dominated by blacks. What would happen if hundreds of African Americans rallied a few miles from the Capitol, some of them armed with AK-47s, handguns and ammunition? Imagine angry black protesters surrounding members of Congress, livid at their voting record. Imagine one of those protesters spitting on a congressman. And what would be the reaction if a black talk-show host were to predict a revolution? What would be the reaction if a black radio personality were to claim that rich, white people are destroying the country? (Tim Wise at ephphatha-poetry.blogspot.com).

Taking flight: Though it doesn't take effect until August, the Arizona law that makes it a crime to be undocumented is already having an effect on churches. Eve Núñez reports that more than 120 clergy in Arizona say they are losing as many as 50 families from their churches. The families are moving to Nevada or California. Churches are also concerned that acts of charity could make them vulnerable. "Pastors I've known for 30 years who have been serving the poor, using vans to bring people to church, now could be felons for transporting undocumented immigrants," said Núñez, president of the Arizona Latino Commission and vice president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference in Phoenix (newamericamedia.org, April 30).

Protest movement: Anthea Butler suggests that the immigration law passed in Arizona could have an unintended outcome: it could revive forms of activism, resistance and even civil disobedience. A growing organization called the New Sanctuary Movement was founded in 2006 in support of the refusal of Los Angeles cardinal Roger Mahoney to abide by a proposed law that would have made it a crime to give assistance without checking the immigrant status of recipients. New alliances could also emerge between Hispanic Christians, who tend to be conservative, and progressive Christians. There are already signs of a Hispanic civil rights movement. "For Hispanics, Arizona is Alabama and Maricopa County is Selma," said Antonio Gonzalez, head of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project ([Religion Dispatches](#), May 2).

Prison state? With the state suffering from high unemployment and decreased tax revenues, California's social services are being drastically reduced and thousands of public school teachers laid off. But prison populations and budgets seem to be thriving. The town of Delano, birthplace of the United Farm Workers in 1965, with a population just under 50,000, is the site of two large state prisons, each with over 5,000 inmates. Over 3,000 people in Delano work in the prisons. The combined budgets of the two state prisons is \$294 million. The town's budget is a tenth of that and its schools' budget a twentieth. Almost 30 percent of Delano's residents live under the poverty line (truthout.org, April 27).

Room for improvement: The international response to disasters like the Haiti earthquake has improved markedly in the last decade. The number of emergency aid workers increased 6 percent in that period. The amount of aid given by governments and private donors nearly tripled between 2000 and 2008. The United Nations and the Red Cross have been positioning aid supplies and equipment in

regions particularly susceptible to disaster. Responders have also benefited from the use of GPS devices and a Web site that agencies can use to manage their efforts. Some agencies have also used surveys of aid recipients to see what works. The biggest challenge remains a lack of coordination. Over 900 organizations descended on Haiti, adding to the chaos (*Wired*, May).

A room for grandma? Kenneth Dupin, a Methodist pastor in Salem, Virginia, thinks he has a way to address the needs of an aging population: MEDcottage, a portable dwelling that can be placed in a backyard and equipped with technology to monitor a person's vital signs, filter air and communicate with the outside world. Dupin persuaded the Virginia General Assembly to pass a law that supersedes local zoning laws and permits families to place such structures on single-family properties if they are following doctor's orders. Critics call them "granny pods" and warn that they will create a "not in my backyard" movement (*Washington Post*, May 6).

Ring the bells: A federal court ruled in April that an ordinance in Phoenix limiting the sound of church bells is an unconstitutional infringement on religious expression. Neighbors of Christ the King Cathedral had complained that the church's electronic bells—rung every hour, from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.—violated the city's noise ordinance. A state court limited the chiming to Sundays and designated holidays and set a limit of 60 decibels. The church tried to appease neighbors by putting buffers on its speakers (RNS).

Standing by their men: Nike, the sportswear giant, did not drop golfer Tiger Woods as an endorser of its products, despite Woods's widely publicized philandering. More recently, Nike decided to maintain its relationship with Ben Roethlisberger, even though the Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback had been charged with two counts of sexual assault in less than a year and given a six-day suspension by the National Football League. But Nike did drop former Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick after his dogfighting operation was exposed. (NYTimes.com).

Bedside monitors: Laws that criminalize adultery are still on the books in about two dozen states, and adultery is still a crime in the military. While these laws are seldom enforced, they do enter court proceedings as part of divorce and custody cases and sometimes even disqualify people from serving jury duty. Efforts to eradicate these laws in some states have met resistance, and conservative groups have even attempted to strengthen them. The president of the Minnesota Family Council defended a stronger law than the one on the books, saying: "When you are

dealing with a marriage, it's not just a private activity or a private institution. It's a very public institution. It has enormous consequences for the rest of society" (Jonathan Turley at *USA Today* blog, April 26).