

# Group puts Christian spin on Titanic disaster, anniversary

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(ENInews)--Capitalizing on the April 15 centenary of the RMS Titanic's sinking are a spate of books, films, educational and TV programs, and commemorative events around the world. Center-stage is the much-hyped 3-D version of James Cameron's 1997 epic movie "Titanic."

But for one Texas-based Christian ministry, Cameron's film delivers now, as it did 15 years ago, a decidedly un-Christian message: That "class warfare" aboard the doomed ocean liner resulted in the disproportionate deaths of poor, female and young passengers, thus sinking the "Christian doctrine" of "women and children first."

That's why Vision Forum Ministries in San Antonio, Texas and the Christian Boy's and Men's Titanic Society are sponsoring "Titanic 100: An International Centennial Event" from April 12 to 15 in the resort town of Branson, Missouri (where a Titanic museum is also located).

Through drama, music and interactive events, including an "Edwardian Ladies Tea," the aim is to "set the record straight" by disproving Cameron's portrayal of the ship's demise, and to showcase "the legacy of heroism" aboard Titanic, "as men and boys on board the ship gave their lives so women and children might live."

In online statements, Vision Forum Ministries argues that as the ship foundered, the "Darwinian notion of survival of the fittest was rejected in favor of the age-old Christian doctrine that the 'strong sacrifice for the weak.'

"The Christian doctrine of 'women and children first' was firmly upheld."

Doug Phillips, president of Vision Forum, founded the Christian Boy's and Men's Titanic Society in 1997, the year Cameron's movie came out, and each year, the society hosts a gathering on the anniversary of the disaster to commemorate the legacy of "male chivalry" demonstrated while the ship sank.

Cameron's film, which won 11 Academy Awards, advances "a false image of Marxist class-warfare," the ministry claims, "with the rich seeking to bribe their way to freedom, the poor deliberately prevented from reaching safety, and the nobility of Christian sacrifice minimized and ridiculed ... Such depictions are historical nonsense."

The ministry cites Lee Merideth, author of "1912 Facts About Titanic," that of the 706 survivors of the disaster, almost as many Third Class passengers survived (174) as did First Class (202) and crew (212). "Other than 'women and children first,' there wasn't any attempt to save one class of passengers over another," the ministry argues.

The Titanic Historical Society in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts, which bills itself as the world's largest such group, offers a more nuanced view.

According to George Behe, the society's past vice-president, 52 percent of First and Second Class passengers were saved while 26 percent of Third Class passengers survived. In First and Second Class, 94 percent of women and children were rescued, while the rate was 47 percent in Third Class.

Far fewer men did survive than women. The official inquiry into the sinking noted that the overall survival rate for men was 20 percent; for women, 74 percent and for children, 52 percent.