

## ISSUE

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Last month, in a public challenge to church rules, a retired Methodist bishop officiated at a wedding for two men in Alabama.

Board members of the church's Eastern Pennsylvania Conference declined to comment after meeting privately with Schaefer on Thursday at their offices in Norristown, outside Philadelphia. But spokesman John Coleman said Schaefer left officials no choice after defying the order of a religious jury to resign.

"When asked to surrender his credentials as required by the verdict, he refused to do so," Coleman said. "Therefore, because of his decision, the board was compelled by the jury's decision to deem his credentials surrendered."

Schaefer has led a congregation in the town of Lebanon for more than a decade. Earlier this year, a church member filed a complaint over Schaefer performing the 2007 wedding of his gay son in Massachusetts, where same-sex unions are legal.

Last month, a church jury suspended Schaefer for 30 days and said he should use the time to decide whether he could uphold the church's Book of Discipline. If he decided he could not, he was told to resign from the clergy by Thursday.

Schaefer said he told officials Thursday morning that he could not follow a book that he feels is contradictory and biased against gays. He

refused to voluntarily surrender his credentials when asked by the board president.

"To which she said, 'Well, we're taking them.' And that was the end of it," Schaefer said.

Schaefer, making his remarks at a gay-friendly, or "reconciling," Methodist church in Philadelphia, had held out hope as late as Thursday morning that officials would have a change of heart.

"I said to myself, 'You know, I just can't see them taking my credentials.' I mean, what I did was an act of love for my son. And they did anyhow," he said.

The closely watched church decision came down the same day as a flurry of other news demonstrating the societal split on gays and lesbians:

■ New Mexico's highest court declared it unconstitutional to deny marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples. It joins 16 other states and the District of Columbia in allowing gay marriage either through legislation, court rulings or public votes.

■ Olympic figure skating champion Brian Boitano came out as gay two days after he was named to the U.S. delegation for the Olympics in Sochi, Russia, along with openly gay athletes Billie Jean King and Caitlin Cahow.

■ Key supporters came to the defense of "Duck Dynasty" patriarch Phil Robertson, who was suspended Wednesday from the A&E reality series indefinitely after making disparaging remarks about gays.

something that's only in our dreams.

P.S.: I heard from Gator several months ago. He called to say he wasn't homeless any longer.

*Nancy Kennedy is the author of "Move Over, Victoria — I Know the Real Secret," "Girl on a Swing," and her latest book, "Lipstick Grace." She can be reached at 352-564-2927, Monday through Thursday, or via email at nkennedy@chronicleonline.com.*

## GRACE

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and Celtic Woman.

The song "I'll be Home for Christmas" has been recorded by Bing Crosby and Josh Groban, Carrie Underwood and Michael Buble, Blake Shelton and Brad Paisley.

It's the longing of the heart to be home.

The good news is: Jesus himself is our home, our "home for Christmas" and beyond, and not merely

## Archbishop denies touching minor

MINNEAPOLIS — The head of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis is stepping aside from public ministry after an allegation that he touched an underage male.

Archbishop John Nienstedt denies the allegations, but is removing himself from ministry pending an investigation.

The archdiocese says the incident allegedly occurred in 2009 after a confirmation ceremony. Nienstedt is accused of inappropriately touching an underage male on the buttocks during a group photography session. The archdiocese learned of the allegation last week and instructed the person who brought it forward to go to police.

In a letter posted Tuesday on the archdiocese website, Nienstedt says the allegation is "absolutely and entirely false." He says he hopes the investigation will be thorough and quick so he can return to work.

## Doomsday minister Camping dead at 92

OAKLAND, Calif. — Harold Camping, the California preacher who used his radio ministry and thousands of billboards to predict the end of the world and then gave up public prophecy when his

## Religion BRIEFS

doomsdays came and went, has died at age 92.

Family Radio Network marketing manager Nina Romero said Camping died at his home on Sunday.

Camping's most widely spread prediction was that believers would be taken up to heaven on May 21, 2011. His ministry spent millions of dollars — some of it from donations made by followers who quit their jobs and sold all their possessions — to spread the word.

When the Rapture failed to materialize, the preacher revised his prophecy, saying he had been off by five months.

But when the world didn't end in October 2011, Camping acknowledged he had been wrong and posted a letter on his ministry's site telling his followers he had no evidence the end would come anytime soon, and wasn't interested in considering future dates.

## Educators protest Koch gift to university

WASHINGTON — Some Catholic educators are protesting Catholic University of America's recent acceptance of a \$1 million donation from the Charles Koch Foundation, which is affiliated with the libertarian Koch brothers.

The *Washington Post* reported 50 educators signed the protest letter made public Monday. Signers included the Rev. Stephen Privett,

president of the University of San Francisco; Susan Ross, chair of Loyola University Chicago's theology department; and Catholic University theology professor William Barbieri Jr.

The letter said the Koch gift could suggest that what it calls the Koch brothers' "anti-government, Tea Party ideology" has the blessing of Catholic University. The letter said the Koch brothers' advocacy contradicts the church's "traditional social justice teachings."

The university in a letter defended the gift Monday that will support the school of business and economics, saying there were no strings attached.

## Pope shares breakfast with homeless

VATICAN CITY — Four homeless people have helped Pope Francis celebrate his 77th birthday at the Vatican.

They live in the street nearby and were invited to attend the morning Mass which Francis celebrates daily at the Vatican hotel where he lives.

One of the men held his dog as he was presented to Francis after Mass. The Vatican said Francis invited his household help to join him in a "family-like" atmosphere, and he spoke of them one by one during his homily. After Mass, they all ate breakfast with Francis at the hotel.

— From wire reports

## NOTES

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■ The Men's Club of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church on U.S. 41 in Dunnellon **play horseshoes** at 9 a.m. Wednesdays. Horseshoes are provided to anyone needing them along with instructions in pitching, scoring and court maintenance. Women, children and persons who have never pitched horseshoes before are invited to attend and share in the fun and fellowship. Call 352-489-5954.

■ A Christian Bible-based **spiritual recovery group** meets from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesdays at Living Water Ministry Complex, 1 Beverly Hills Blvd., Beverly Hills. Call Meg at 352-527-2443.

■ All Citrus County musicians are invited to join in the **community jam sessions** at 7 p.m. Wednesdays in Hilton Hall at Floral City United Methodist Church. Bring your instruments/voices and join in

the fun. Call 352-344-1771.

■ The Saturday night **Gospel Jubilee** takes place the last Saturday night monthly at First Church of God 5510 Jasmine Lane, Inverness. Everyone is invited to come to enjoy or come and participate. Prepare a number, bring your instrument if you have one and join in this full-filled evening. Great music, fun, food, fellowship and never a charge. Call 352-344-3700.

■ **Helping Hands Thrift Store**, a ministry of Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church, is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday at 604 U.S. 41 S. Proceeds fund the food pantry. The store accepts donations of household items, clothing and small appliances. Call 352-726-1707.

### Study & support

■ **The Genesis Project**, an in-depth analysis and discussion of the text of Genesis, is conducted from 7 to 8 p.m.

Mondays at Congregation Beth Shalom, 102 Civic Circle, Beverly Hills. A class on the **Hebrew alphabet** is also offered from 8:15 to 9:15 p.m. Mondays. Both classes are taught by Hazzan Mordecai Kamlot. Call 352-643-0995.

■ St. Paul's Lutheran Church, at 6150 N. Lecanto Highway in Beverly Hills, continues its weekly **"Bible Information Class"** conducted by the Rev. Mark Gabb for anyone in the community at 8:30 a.m. Thursdays in the fellowship room. Call 352-489-3027.

■ The public is welcome to **Zen meditation sessions** at 2:45 p.m. Sundays at Unity Church, 2628 W. Woodview Lane, Lecanto (off County Road 491). Call 352-464-4955.

■ The ladies of Lecanto Church of Christ meet for **Bible study** at 10 a.m. the second Tuesday monthly. Bible study is followed by a

luncheon. Studies have included such subjects as prayer, love and patience. All ladies are invited to attend and enjoy Christian fellowship.

■ All widows in the community are invited to join the **Widows Ministry Group** from 4 to 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays at Cornerstone Baptist Church, 1100 W. Highland Blvd., Inverness. "God isn't finished with us yet!" Call Darla at 352-270-8115.

■ Ladies, come to **"The Well"** for refreshment and prophetic prayer ministry at 7 p.m. the first Friday monthly at FreshHope Ministries, 2991 E. Thomas St., Inverness. If you are hurting, need to hear a word from God, and/or spiritual growth and strength, then this is the night just for you. Come comfortable and come expecting to receive. You will not leave the same way you came in. Call 352-341-4011 or visit [www.freshopeministries.com](http://www.freshopeministries.com).

 **Homosassa First United Methodist Church**  
8831 W. Bradshaw St.  
Homosassa, FL 34448

## Christmas Eve Services

**Tuesday, December 24th**

**Candlelight Service**

**5:00 pm**

**Candlelight Communion Service**

**7:00 pm**

*Everyone Becoming a Disciple of Christ*  
**Rev. Kip Younger, Senior Pastor**  
Learn More: 352-628-4083 • [www.1umc.org](http://www.1umc.org)

 **Come Celebrate Christmas With Us**  
**SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
**Christmas Services**

<b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b> <b>10:30 PM</b> <i>Festival Holy Eucharist</i>	<b>CHRISTMAS DAY</b> <b>9:00 AM</b> <i>Holy Eucharist with Carols</i>
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 2540 W. Norvell Bryant Hwy. (CR 486)  
Lecanto, Florida  
(4/10 mile east of CR 491)  
352-527-0052

**HAVE A BLESSED CHRISTMAS FROM THE CHURCH ON THE HILL**

 **We need your information**

As our community grows, it becomes even more important that we know how to keep in touch with each other. The Chronicle's annual publication of *Our Home Citrus* is the best and most complete resource for all those important organizations, clubs, hobby groups, and other ways we make friends, share pastimes and help each other out.

If you would like your group to be listed in this publication please fill out the following form and mail or deliver by **January 3, 2014** to:

Citrus County Chronicle  
Attention: Our Home Citrus  
1624 N. Meadowcrest Blvd.  
Crystal River, FL 34429

NAME OF ORGANIZATION: (must be non-profit) \_\_\_\_\_  
ORGANIZATION WEB PAGE: \_\_\_\_\_  
MEETING PLACE: Specific building designation  
(Elks Lodge, Resource Center, Town Restaurant, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
Street address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_  
MEETING TIME: \_\_\_\_\_  
MEETING DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
Day of the week (every Monday, third Monday of the week) \_\_\_\_\_  
CONTACT:  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please check the category which best describes your organization — only one category, please:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Animals	<input type="checkbox"/> Food Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Seniors
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Crafts	<input type="checkbox"/> Fraternal	<input type="checkbox"/> Service Clubs
<input type="checkbox"/> Civic	<input type="checkbox"/> Gardening	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Computers	<input type="checkbox"/> Hobbies	<input type="checkbox"/> Support Groups
<input type="checkbox"/> Cultural and Heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Vehicles
<input type="checkbox"/> Education and Youth	<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation Groups	<input type="checkbox"/> Weight Control
		<input type="checkbox"/> Women's Clubs