

stroys the character of their neighborhood. The village, nestled between the Manhattan and Brooklyn Bridges, features cobblestone streets framed by two of the most famous bridges in the United States. The local community was united and relentless in its opposition. Residents sent city council members 1,500 signed postcards, 400 signed petitions, and thousands of e-mail messages.

The Watchtower's current plan calls for a complex consisting of four towers, the tallest of which will be 20 stories high. Another will rise 18 stories. The two other towers will be nine stories high. Originally, the Watchtower proposed all four towers to be 14 stories or higher. The new complex will be a residence for another 1,600 Jehovah's Witnesses who move to Brooklyn to work at the sect's international headquarters. According to one report, the organization currently has about 3,500 members living and working in DUMBO. The buildings will also contain a welcome center, a dining hall, a 1,100-car underground garage, and a three-story auditorium or Kingdom Hall.

According to the Watchtower's proposal, the city will benefit from the development. The sect says it will renovate two neighborhood parks adjacent to the new campus and will install security cameras at a nearby subway station. The zoning subcommittee voted 15-1 in favor of the Watchtower's plan. Charles Barron, the dissenting committee member, cited his opposition to all developments that disregard community concerns. Likewise, residents say the development will make traffic more dangerous and its new residents won't support or add to the local economy. The 51-member City Council's vote weighed in with three dissenting votes: Barron and two council members whose districts overlap the Watchtower's project.

Construction could begin as early as this year.

—MKG

BAD, BAD CLINT BROWN

The pastor who inherited the Orlando Christian Center, the Florida-based church founded and built by faith healer Benny Hinn, has had his "lavish lifestyle" exposed by a local television news report. Citing financial records stemming from their divorce transcripts, WFTV Channel 9-TV revealed that the Rev. Clint Brown and his wife Angie utilized large amounts of church money to finance their extravagant lifestyle.

According to the news report, the \$1.4 million home in which Brown and his estranged wife lived carries a \$7,000 a month mortgage paid by the church. Utilities, lawn care, and pool maintenance are also underwritten by Faith World. The home is in Alaqua, the same gated community where Hinn lived. Angie is said to drive a \$95,000 Mercedes-Benz paid for with church funds. In addition, the couple reportedly spent hundreds of

thousands of dollars of church donations during exorbitant shopping sprees at Neiman Marcus and other exclusive stores.

Atop of all the "fringe benefits," Brown is reported to have received a salary of more than \$500,000 last year from the church.

And it's not just the Browns who profit from the generosity of Faith World members. According to the divorce records, Brown purchased more than \$70,000 of merchandise from women's clothing stores during a twelve-month period and it was paid for by the church. Brown's attorney told WFTV news that the money was spent by Brown on gifts for women ministers at various churches where he appears as a guest.

Brown moved to Central Florida in 1993, after being a music minister for Rod Parsley in Columbus, Ohio. He started and was pastor of Faith World, a church first located in a strip mall. In 1999, Hinn pulled up his Florida roots to move his ministry to Texas, following his personal move to California. Brown and his Faith World congregation merged with Hinn's church, then known as World Outreach Church. Brown and Faith World received Hinn's WOC facilities on 30 acres of property and assumed a near \$6 million debt. Some contend that Brown "bought" the congregation and property from Hinn, but both say they "loathe" the suggestion that Hinn "sold" his congregation to Brown.

—MKG

ATHEIST FLEW ADMITS A CREATOR

Antony Flew, the British author of *Atheistic Humanism*, *Darwinian Evolution*, and *A Rational Animal*, and an avowed atheist for over 50 years, has acknowledged he has reconsidered his former philosophy and has moved toward a theistic belief. Flew is a former professor at Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele, and Reading universities in England. The 82-year-old professor now says that scientific evidence has led him to a belief in God.

For many years, Flew had ongoing public debates with Christian apologist Gary Habermas on topics such as the existence of God and the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their 1985 debate on the resurrection was published in book form, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* Habermas is currently the chairman of the department of philosophy and theology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Habermas, who has remained friends with Flew throughout the years, told the Baptist Press that Flew told him he was "really rethinking theism" and considering arguments from the "intelligent design" movement. "He was going back and forth as to whether he should

be a theist or not," Habermas said. "By early 2004," according to the news service, "Flew completed his transition to theism and indicated his change of mind to Habermas in a telephone conversation."

Flew admits he can now best be described as a deist. A deist is one who believes in a God who created the universe, but maintains that this Deity is not actively involved in the lives and subsistence of His creation. Flew also states it is doubtful that he would ever embrace the Christian faith, citing the problem of evil as his primary contention with the God of Christianity.

—MKG

CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL CONDUCTOR KILLS SELF

A holiday celebration turned tragic for the Rev. Robert Schuller and his Crystal Cathedral. Rather than kicking off its annual nativity pageant, "The Glory of Christmas," the church found itself with a nine-hour standoff between police and its longtime musical conductor who eventually barricaded himself in a church bathroom and committed suicide.

Two hours before the start of its Christmas show on Dec. 16, Johnnie Carl reportedly got into an argument with another church employee, then went to his office, retrieved a handgun, and fired four shots. A police

SWAT team was called to the Garden Grove, Calif., church complex and began searching its offices for Carl. Police initially made contact with Carl by phone, but later lost communication. The church was evacuated and electrical power to the building was cut off. About 100 members of the show's cast were already at the church preparing for the first of the day's two presentations.

Schuller came to the church in an effort to help persuade Carl to surrender. Schuller taped a personal message to Carl, but the police were not able to play the minister's plea or another message recorded by Carl's wife.

As the SWAT team approached the office where Carl was holed up, he escaped to one of the church's restrooms where he shot and killed himself. Authorities indicated that Carl had struggled with depression for a number of years.

Carl had been the musical conductor at the Crystal Cathedral for nearly three decades and had arranged or recorded music for such renowned artists as John Tesh and Celine Dion. Schuller issued a statement saying, "Johnnie was a beloved member of our church family and a close personal friend."

Although the Christmas program for Thursday evening was canceled while police attempted to resolve the situation, the holiday show was performed as scheduled the following day.

—MKG

PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH — STATEMENT OF BELIEF

- I. THE BIBLE AS THE DIVINELY INSPIRED, INERRANT WORD OF GOD: IT IS IN ITS ENTIRETY THE SOLE AUTHORITY FOR ALL MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN BELIEF AND PRACTICE.
- II. THE ONE TRUE GOD. IN THE ONE TRUE GOD THERE EXIST THREE PERSONS, BEING: THE FATHER, THE SON JESUS CHRIST, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- III. JESUS CHRIST: HIS DEITY, HUMANITY, VIRGIN BIRTH, SINLESSNESS, DEATH AND BODILY RESURRECTION; WHO WILL PERSONALLY AND VISIBLY RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH.
- IV. THE PERSONALITY AND DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.
- V. THE EXISTENCE AND PERSONALITY OF SATAN, HIS TOTAL OPPOSITION TO GOD, AND HIS POWER OVER THE UNREGENERATE.
- VI. THE COMPLETE AND TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF ALL MEN WHICH MAKES THEM HOPELESSLY LOST WITHOUT THE NEW BIRTH OBTAINABLE THROUGH FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.
- VII. THE FINAL ESTATE OF MAN: FOR THE SAVED, EVERLASTING LIFE IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND FOR THE UNSAVED, EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT BECAUSE OF THEIR UNBELIEF.
- VIII. THE GOSPEL BY WHICH WE ARE SAVED BEING SUMMED IN THE DEATH, BURIAL, AND RESURRECTION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.
- IX. THE CHURCH BEING THE BODY OF CHRIST, UNITED IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, CONSISTING OF THOSE WHO HAVE RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR. A LOCAL CHURCH IS AN ORGANIZED ASSEMBLY OF BELIEVERS UNITED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST.
- X. THE GREAT COMMISSION OF CHRIST BEING TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL MEN, BAPTIZING AND DISCIPLING THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED.