

# Should marriage include church, state or both?

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Powell, a team leader in the Justice and Witness division of the United Church of Christ. "A marriage is a legal, civil agreement between two people. The role of the church is to offer blessing to relationships."

Back in 2000, Episcopal Bishop Mary Adelia McLeod of Vermont said the church should relinquish its role in weddings unless it was given equal jurisdiction in granting divorces. "The clergy of our church should be agents of God's blessing," said the now-retired bishop, "and not agents of the state."

In San Francisco, Unitari-

an Universalist the Rev. Margot Campbell Gross recently signed her first marriage license in seven years—to a gay couple—after she joined several dozen UUA ministers in boycotting marriage licenses until gay couples can legally wed.

Just where did this church-state marriage of convenience come from? The answer, it turns out, has been after a tumultuous courtship. Historically, churches did not get into the marriage business until the Middle Ages. But in the 16th century, Protestant reformer Martin Luther argued

against marriage as a church-approved sacrament, and threw it back into the civil sphere.

America's earliest pioneers were church-state purists. The Rev. Peter Gomes, pastor of Harvard University's Memorial Church, noted that the Pilgrims who arrived in 1621 didn't authorize religious marriage until 1692. "The civil law is just that, and the distinction between it and ecclesiastical law is as important as the necessary distinction between church and state," he said in a recent op-ed published in The Boston Globe. Even though the Pilgrims

imported Luther's belief in civil marriage to America, marriage has never been an either/or institution, said John Witte, director of the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Religion at Emory University and author of "From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion and Law in the Western Tradition."

"Marriage is a spiritual association, a natural association, a private contract and a social estate," he said. "Those four corners were considered to be four dimensions of an institution that was multilayered."

Don Browning, who head-

ed the Religion, Culture and Family Project at the University of Chicago's Divinity School, said marriage is inti-

mately tied to notions of sexuality, intimacy, parenthood and mutual support that neither side has considered.

## OBITUARIES OF NOTE

### Activist, environmentalist Thomesina Johnson



Thomesina Johnson

Born October 2, 1918 in Jefferson, S.C., Thomesina Miller Johnson was the daughter of the late Oren and Lucille Miller.

While very young, her family relocated to Charlotte. Thomesina was educated in Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools, and graduated from Second Ward High School.

An active member of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church until her health failed, Thomesina was a Sunday school teacher, member of the missionary circles, and attended all meetings relative to the growth of the church's ministries.

Concerned with the welfare of the community, Thomesina was a member of the Oaklawn Park Neighborhood Association, and the National Council of Negro Women.

Small in stature, but big on getting things done, particularly when it came to giving, our quiet storm was called home to rest, but not before making a difference in the lives of many. After 30 years of working for local domestic and commercial cleaning companies, Thomesina retired and went to work again. This time the work was for the good of all humanity. While working with the cleaning company Thomesina started collecting aluminum cans. When she learned she could get money for them, that's exactly what she did. But not for herself. Thomesina gave the proceeds of her sales to support the homeless shelter so they could help others. For that outstanding deed, in 1990 she was presented the

### Casualties on humanitarian mission

By Emery P. Dalesio  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH — Three Americans killed Monday in northern Iraq were Baptist missionaries on a humanitarian mission — a water purification project for the troubled country, church officials and friends said.

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board identified the victims as Larry T. Elliott, 60, and Jean Dover Elliott, 58, of Cary, N.C.; and Karen Denise Watson, 38, of Bakersfield, Calif.

"They knew going into Iraq, they couldn't really share their Christian faith unless somebody asked them," said Larry Kingsley, a church deacon.

"Environmental Hero Award" at Freedom Parks Earth Ceremony. Her next great work was to help sponsor a little girl from Togo, West Africa by paying for her food and medicine through the Christian Children's Fund. Thomesina lived by this old Chinese Proverb, "He who knows he has enough, is rich."

Surviving are two sons, Robert L. "Bobby" Johnson and Gerald O. Johnson, both of Charlotte; two sisters, Vernell Howard and Mamie

Thompson, both of Charlotte; 7 grandchildren and 10 great-grand children; care giver Dorothy Wright and a host of other relatives and friends. Husband Willie "Bill" Johnson, son Willie "Billy" Johnson Jr., and brother Oren McCollough preceded her in death.

In lieu of flowers, the family request memorials be given in her name to Hospice of Charlotte, or Mt. Carmel Baptist Church Building Fund.

The family thanks every-

one for their support during Mrs. Johnson's illness and their bereavement.

## Obituaries

### A.L. Jinwright

Mrs. Mary Belk at 2143 Lincoln Heights Court died March 9 at the age of 87. Funeral service was held March 12 at 2 pm at A.L. Jinwright Funeral Service Chapel.

Alexander Funeral Home

Annie Bell Clark died March 10 at her residence. Funeral was held March 13 at Greater Mount Sinai Baptist Church. Burial was held at York Memorial Park

Bonnie Lee Smith died March 10 at CMC-University. Funeral was held March 16 at Zechariah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel. Burial was held at Charlotte Memorial Gardens.

Walter Yang died March 11 at Elizabeth Place. Funeral was held March 16 at Zechariah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel. Burial was held at the VA Cemetery, Salisbury.

Charles Pruitt died March 7 at his residence. Funeral was held March 13 at Zechariah Alexander Sr. Memorial Chapel. Burial was held at Beaties Ford Memorial Gardens.

Ronnie Cureton died March 6 at Brithaven of Charlotte. Graveside service was held March 12 at Oaklawn Park Cemetery.

Grier Funeral Service

Mr. Sharon Sabb of 3327 N. Davidson Street, died Feb. 21 at Carolinas Medical Center.

Mr. Gary Cathey of 6836 Rain Creek Way died on Feb. 24 at Mercy Hospital. Funeral service was held Feb. 28 at Greater Galilee Baptist Church.

Mrs. Phyllis Fetherson of 2529 Old Steele Creek Road died Feb. 27 at her residence. Funeral service was held March 6 at Shiloh Institutional Baptist Church. Interment followed at York Memorial Park.

Mrs. Georgia Walker of 301 W. Eighth Street, # 206-A, died March 1 at Mercy Hospital. Graveside service was held March 5 at York Memorial Park.

Baby India Alliya Bennett Miller of 4801 Wildwood Avenue died Feb. 13 at Carolinas Medical Center.

Mar. Stephen Jurgen of Brooklyn, NY died March 1 at his residence. Funeral service was held in Linden, N.J.

Mr. Joseph Brown of 2949 Bellaire Drive died March 3 at Presbyterian Hospital. Graveside service was held March 5 at Oaklawn Cemetery.

Mrs. Deborah Jordan of 430-B West Craighhead Road, died March 3 at her residence. Memorial service was held March 6 at Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Mrs. Marjorie Annette Matthews of 1818 McAllister Drive # E, died March at Presbyterian Hospital. Funeral service held March 11 A.S. Grier Memorial Chapel.

Mrs. Lillie M. Hampton of 3709 Hunters Run Lane died March 11 at her residence. Funeral service was held March 15 at Macedonia Baptist Church in Midland. Interment followed in the church cemetery.

Mr. Willie Linton of 316 Skyland Avenue died March 6 at Mercy Hospital. Funeral service was held March 11 in A.S. Grier Memorial Chapel. Interment followed at Bethel Chapel AME Zion Church in Anson County.

Ms. Shannon Davidson of 2128 Wilmore Drive March 6 at Presbyterian Hospital. Funeral service was held March 11 at St. Luke Baptist Church.

Mr. Madroe Woodburn of 2314 English Drive died March 8 at Saturn Nursing home. Funeral service was held March 13 at A.S. Grier Memorial Chapel. Interment followed at Sunset Memory Garden.

Mr. Jordan Lowery 5401 Springset Drive #A died March 10 at Carolinas Medical Center. Funeral service was held March 14 at the Mother House of Prayer. Interment followed at Beaties Ford Memorial Garden.

## Present Day Ministries of Jesus Christ Church

### "Spring Revival"

Sunday, March 28 - Tuesday, March 30, 2004

7pm Nightly

Guest Speaker: *Evangelist, Prophetess & Singer, Mother Margaret Walton*  
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Present Day Ministries of Jesus Christ Church  
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### "GOD REPROBATING A SINNER" - PART EIGHT J M LITTLE - TEACHER

God deals with every sinner under grace or under judgment. Under grace, God is not willing that any should perish (1 Peter 3:9). Under judgment, He that sitteth in the Heavens shall laugh at foolish sinners (Psalms 2, Proverbs 1). Play the fool if you want to but many of you think you can live as you please and God won't send you to hell. You say He is a God of love and would not send anyone to burn in fire forever. My friends, you need to read Numbers 16 and Luke 16 and weep. Is God dealing with you under grace or under judgment? Under judgment God reprobates the sinner. That ought to scare you if you are not saved. It did me when I was under conviction. I was fearful. Will you let me give you a word of personal testimony? When the Lord was dealing with my heart under conviction I was visiting the folks down home (N. C.) and riding with one of the brothers back to the parsonage the brother made a statement that scared me to death: "some of these awakened sinners are coming in here and going right back out into the world." When he made that statement, I like to have died! I did not return a word. I was so afraid. I didn't want to be in the number that was going back into the world. My mind was made up right there, I'm not going back into the world. Of course I never said that to him. And I hope you sinners know that it was the Lord working in me, making up my mind, or giving me grace to not go back into the world, but come on to Christ. Let me quote my old late pastor, L. R. Shelton, right here: "every sinner who ever gets saved can take you back to the time he made up his mind; I'm going to Christ. And every sinner who turns the truth down can take you back to the place he turned the truth down!" That'll hold it and won't leak a drop! Friend, you had better get serious. Christ is Coming soon!

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