

CHRISTIAN CHURCHES TOGETHER

Unity group broadest in U.S. history

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA—Leaders of 34 church groups have set aside years of differences over theology and other issues to create the broadest Christian unity organization in U.S. history.

Christian Churches Together in the USA brings together Roman Catholics, evangelicals, Pentecostals, mainline Protestants, historically black churches and Orthodox Christians.

The group announced its formation March 31 at the end of an Atlanta meeting and said its mission is to "strengthen our Christian witness in the world." Leaders of the new organization will focus in the coming year

on fighting poverty in the United States.

Among the current members are the historically black National Baptist Convention, U.S.A.; the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; the Salvation Army; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; the International Pentecostal Holiness Church and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Organizers of Christian Churches Together say at least eight other groups are seriously considering membership and they have invited any other interested denominations to join.

The 16.3 million-member Southern Baptist Convention, the nation's largest

Protestant group, has not affiliated with the group.

Existing U.S. ecumenical groups include the National Council of Churches, whose members are mainline Protestants and Orthodox Christian, but not Roman

Catholic. The National Association of Evangelicals represents conservative Protestants.

On the Net:
www.christianchurchestogether.org/

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Ousted 'American Idol' contestant is not advocate for gays

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Is ousted "American Idol" contestant Mandisa anti-gay?

The 29-year-old soul singer and outspoken Christian, who was voted off the hit Fox show Wednesday, says she would not perform at an event held in support of the gay community.

Mandisa, a native of Antioch, Tennessee, tells Advocate magazine, "Based on what I believe, I'm not an advocate for (being gay), so it's nothing I would take part in."

Still, she says in an interview in the magazine's Web site, she's "really upset" by speculation she endorses the ex-gay movement—a collection of Christian groups that seek to alter sexual orientation. The speculation stemmed from comments she made on the "American Idol" Web site praising author and speaker Beth Moore, of Living Proof Ministries. Moore's Web site has links to groups

such as Exodus International that discourage homosexuality.

"It broke my heart," Mandisa says. "I live my life by the value system that you treat others the way you want to be treated. I let love be my guide. I absolutely hate no one."

Long a favorite of "Idol" judges, she says her views "could have contributed" to her surprising elimination. "Idol" contestants are trimmed weekly based on fan voting.

"Honestly, I'm not sure," she says. "I've heard a lot of different theories about what could have happened, and all of 'em sound pretty decent to me."

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"Today Thou Shalt Be With Me in Paradise..." Luke 23: 43

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"Thirst..." John 19: 28

Sixth Word: Dr. J. Elvin Sadler, Pastor
Clinton Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church
"It Is Finished..." John 19: 30

Seventh Word: Dr. Norman H. Hicklin, Pastor
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