

Eye on the World

March 20–21, 2010

This collection of short news items is from the "Eye on the World" section of the Church of God Big Sandy's Web site, churchofgodbigandy.com. It was posted for the weekend of March 20–21, 2010.

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An AP story in the Las Vegas Sun titled "Putin: Iran's Nuclear Plant Launch Set for Summer" was printed on March 18, 2010.

The story said: "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin says that Iran's first, Russian-built nuclear power plant is set to be launched this summer. Putin spoke at Thursday's meeting with nuclear officials. He didn't mention an exact launch date or add any other details."



United Press International posted "EU Foreign Policy Chief Visits Gaza" at its site (upi.com) on March 18, 2010.

"EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton arrived in Gaza Thursday in the first trip of such a high-ranking Western official there since Hamas took over in 2007."



"Rocket Kills One in Israel as EU Envoy Visits Gaza," by Nidal al-Mughrabi, was a Reuters story published by alertnet.org on March 18, 2010.

"Palestinian militants launched their first deadly rocket attack on Israel in over a year, killing a Thai worker on Thursday in a strike that challenged Gaza's Hamas rulers and prompted Israel to threaten a powerful response."

The article continued: "The attack was launched a day before the international Quartet of Middle East mediators was to meet in Moscow to discuss ways to revive peace talks frozen since December 2008."



An article by Bob Unruh under the "Faith Under Fire" section of WorldNetDaily.com was posted March 17, 2010. It was headlined "AGAIN! City Orders Bible Study Closed. Municipal Rule Also Says Praying Family Could Be Banned 'Church' Meeting."

"A Southern California city has ordered a Friday-night Bible study involving about a dozen people to shut down its meetings by Good Friday or members could face financial sanctions," Mr. Unruh began.

"Or they could apply to purchase an expensive permit from the city government.

"The new case is similar to two other disputes that have been in the headlines in recent months, including one last week in Gilbert, Ariz., and another in 2009 in San Diego County, Calif.

"However, in the case involving Rancho Cucamonga, legal experts who have come in to help Bible-study members say the city knows it's targeting for banishment a Bible study and they are 'not budging.'

"In the previous cases, San Diego County officials apologized after a code-enforcement officer tried to shut down a Bible study, and, in Gilbert, officials told WND last week that they were working on a change in a zoning requirement that had been interpreted by staff members to ban Bible studies from residences.

"The new case is alarming because of the apparent intentional decision by the city to pursue the closure of the Bible study, according to Brad Dacus, whose Pacific Justice Institute (PJI) is working on the case.

" 'The city's stance has similarities to, but is perhaps even harsher than, a pending situation in Gilbert, Ariz., and a flare-up last year over a home Bible study in San Diego County,' his organization confirmed.

"Rancho Cucamonga officials are demanding that the small home Bible-study group stop meeting—or apply to purchase a Conditional Use Permit, which also would be required for a full church operation.

"Dacus said the study group has been meeting on Friday nights and averages about 15 people. Members are affiliated with Shiloh Tabernacle, which rents a community center for Sunday services.

"The city recently dispatched a letter to the homeowner insisting the study is not allowed because it is a 'church,' Dacus said. In the city, churches are required to obtain a 'Conditional Use Permit' [CUP] in residential areas.

" 'The city has also indicated that no CUP would be granted and the gatherings must cease by Good Friday, April 2,' PJI said.

"Senior counsel Michael Peffer, who heads the organization's Southern California office, represents the homeowner where the Bible study meets and is contesting the orders.

" 'Imposing a CUP requirement on a home Bible study is manifestly absurd and unjust,' Dacus said. 'I don't know of a single court in America that would approve their actions.'

"His organization previously has guided churches through the CUP process, which requires public hearings, traffic studies, architectural-design reviews and even seismic retrofits—a process that can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

" 'We will give the city a chance to rescind its letter without litigation, but we are fully prepared to take this as far as is necessary to defend this Bible-study group—and countless others like it,' he said.

"Multiple WND messages left with members of the city's building department as well as other city officials seeking comment were not returned.

"But Dacus said it's a significant problem because the city's definition of a church is so broad.

" 'According to their definition, a family praying over their dinner would qualify as a church,' he told WND.

"The precedent that would be created should the rule stand, he said, should alarm religious people across the nation.

" 'When you step back and look at communist China, home churches are being persecuted there. This isn't any different. And this isn't even a church, just a Bible study, facing the same ultimatums, the same demands as in communist China.

" 'Make no mistake, if we let the city of Rancho Cucamonga get away with this, it will be a green light to every other city in the U.S,' he said.

" 'This is no misunderstanding,' he said. "In this case the city knows exactly what they're doing, exactly what the facts are, and they're not budging.'

"The city, however, has no similar restrictions for Monday-night football parties or various other events that would be held in homes, PJI confirmed."