

Deaths

News in the [October 2, 2007](#) issue

Claire Randall, 91, a Presbyterian who in 1974 was the first woman elected as general secretary of the National Council of Churches, died September 9 in Sun City, Arizona. Near the end of her 10-year leadership in the post the NCC and the World Council of Churches were the subject of allegations on a 1983 CBS *60 Minutes* program implying that the two councils were leftist organizations that ignored the wishes of their conservative constituencies. The accusations by conservative religious critics resurfaced in 1984 in a *Reader's Digest* article. Randall firmly disputed the charges. She was partially vindicated, said a NCC spokesperson, when retiring *60 Minutes* producer Don Hewitt called that program's report the one show he regretted in his 36-year career. Looking back on those "turbulent" years, NCC president Michael E. Livingston said "her leadership skills and clear vision were those of a woman chosen by God 'for a time such as this.'" Randall, an official with Church Women United before taking the NCC post, also "insisted on a racially and ethnically diverse staff," said Eileen Lindner, an NCC deputy general secretary who was hired by Randall in 1976.

D. James Kennedy, 76, a Florida minister who took to the airwaves and became a force in driving conservative Christians to the polls and into the public square, died September 5 after months of serious illness. He died after suffering complications from a cardiac arrest in late December. He preached his last sermon on Christmas Eve at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale—a congregation of almost 10,000 members that he founded and that affiliated with the conservative Presbyterian Church in America. "He was a giant in the battle to restore traditional values in our nation," said James Dobson, founder and chair of Focus on the Family, a tribute echoed by many other religious right leaders. However, in offering condolences to the Kennedy family, Nancy L. Wilson, moderator of the gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Churches, said that his ministry was harmful in promoting "a narrow view of religious liberty" and political favoritism for Christians while opposing abortion rights for women and civil rights for gay and lesbian people.