

# CULTURE SHIFT

What's New, Near or Next



**Holy Texting.** This fall, students Rob Foster and Chris Deutsch began an inspirational text message service called "I Live Inspired," which sends daily text messages with spiritual themes to help subscribers conquer the pain and stress of life. Who knew a costly cell phone bill could help you achieve Nirvana?

**Serious Coverage.** A Bible publisher in Taiwan sold 3,000 Bibles in one month after covering them in denim, army fatigues and Louis Vuitton. Though some dub it blasphemy, the fashionable Bibles are all the rage with students. Perhaps this is what it means to preach the Word "in season and out of season."



**Family First.** In response to the question, "What makes you happy?" 20% of people ages 13-24 said spending time with family

was their top answer, according to a recent survey conducted by MTV and The Associated Press. Looks like partying is out—family game night is in.



**Better Bling.** Consumers now have ecologically and socially responsible alternatives to traditional jewelry, thanks to greenKarat, an organization that offers engagement rings and other custom pieces made from recycled gold and platinum to help protect laborers and the Earth. Now diamond grading systems need a fifth "c": conservation.

—Andrea Bailey



## LIVING WATERS

For members of Th3 Waters ([th3waters.org](http://th3waters.org)) in Florence, Ky., going organic means going to Starbucks, Hooters restaurants and local pubs. This emerging United Methodist church meets at different times and places in small gatherings of eight to 10 to share, study the Bible and meet new people while gathered in public places.

"I wanted to know what would happen if we built a church based on the natural relationships Christians had with their friends, family and officemates," says

D. G. Hollums, pastor and founder of Th3 Waters. Begun in 2006, the church has grown to more than 90 people gathering in eight different small groups. The casual nature of their meetings—often held over venti lattes or pints of beer—sets newcomers at ease, says Hollums.

"I invited a barista named Sean [who didn't know Christ] to a meeting," Hollums says. "Today, he leads an organic gathering of his own. He is just one of the many people coming to Christ through relationships."

—J.C.



## Peace Pathway

Circular pathways for walking, labyrinths look like mazes but have only one path leading from the outer edge into the center of the circle and back out again. First United Methodist Church in San Diego, Calif., ([fumcsd.org](http://fumcsd.org); FUMCSD) hopes that its prayer labyrinth also provides a path to God.

Built in 2005, the 24-foot labyrinth rests at the southwest corner of FUMCSD's chapel and is open 24 hours a day, allowing the public to walk the labyrinth as an aid to prayer, meditation and spiritual renewal.

"People, Christian or not, want a place in the midst of the busyness of life to find a time of devotion," says Molly Vetter, FUMCSD's outreach pastor. "The labyrinth gives people a way of connecting with God."

The church also has a portable labyrinth 24 feet in diameter painted onto a drop cloth that's often used throughout the city as an educational tool for youth camps and retreat centers. FUMCSD volunteers deliver the labyrinth, give a brief presentation about its history and teach participants how to walk it while praying.

"Each person's journey and experience in the labyrinth is distinct both in length and purpose, but everyone leaves feeling spiritually uplifted," says Gary Krueger, a church member who helped construct the labyrinth. "You only need an open mind to walk the labyrinth."

—Kim James