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Greg Stielstra, North America's Top Faith-based Marketing Expert, to Headline World Religious Travel Expo

LEXINGTON, Ky. (Aug 31, 2009) – One of North America's top authorities on faith-based marketing and word-of-mouth marketing will address the travel industry, for the first time ever, at the World Religious Travel Expo 2009. The World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) just named Greg Stielstra, the marketing director behind *The Purpose Driven Life*, the fastest-selling hardcover book in American history and a faith-based marketing phenomenon, as the headline speaker at this fall's celebrated event. Stielstra is also best known as the author of *Faith-based Marketing: The Guide to Reaching 140 Million Christian Customers* (HarperCollins, 2005) and *PyroMarketing: The Four Step Strategy to Ignite Customer Evangelists and Keep Them For Life* (Wiley, 2009).

"We hit the jackpot in landing Greg Stielstra as the Sunday luncheon keynoter," said WRTA President Kevin J. Wright. "The most frequently asked question by every travel provider and supplier in relation to the religious market is 'How do we effectively reach pastors and the faith-based consumer?' Greg will share the fascinating marketing principles behind the mega-success of *The Passion of the Christ* movie and *The Purpose Driven Life* book, and how these same principles can and should be applied by each organization in the travel industry."

Stielstra is an innovative thinker, speaker, consultant and author. An expert in word-of-mouth, faith-based, and social network marketing, he speaks regularly at Word of Mouth Marketing Association conference and numerous other events including AdTech New York and the prestigious Forbes CMO Summit. His work has been covered by *The Economist*, *Advertising Age*, *Point Magazine*, *Business Week*, *Forbes*, *Wireless Age*, *Knowledge at Wharton*, the *Wharton Leadership Journal*, and the book *9 Minds on Marketing*.

"People of faith are the largest, most loyal, and highest spending market segment in the United States with 140 million weekly church-goers who spend \$5.1 trillion annually," said Stielstra. "To be successful, you must first understand the religious consumer power niche—and how to effectively reach them. I will help the travel industry understand who makes up the faith community, what they want, and what it takes to appeal to them. We'll also discuss common mistakes marketers make in dealing with the faith-based market; how to serve rather than sell to them; and what works and doesn't work when dealing with pastors and other religious leaders. Above all, I'll provide practical guidance for creating faith-based marketing plans that work."

With one in four Americans expressing interest in taking a faith-based trip, and religious tourism expected to double by 2012, many travel providers and destinations have recently significantly expanded their faith-based marketing efforts including Trafalgar Tours, Globus family of brands, Collette Vacations, CIE Tours, Homeric Tours, TravelBound, Ed-Ventures Worldwide Tours, Carnival Cruise Lines, Costa Cruises, the Jordan Tourist Board, Switzerland Tourism, as well as many Convention and Visitor Bureaus and other suppliers including Passport Health.

WRTA is currently taking registrations for the World Religious Travel Expo & Educational Conference 2009, which will be held November 14-16, 2009, at the Reno-Sparks Convention Center in Reno, Nevada (USA). Serving as the most important meeting and tradeshow in the religious travel and hospitality industry, the event is expected to draw tourism organizations, travel professionals, and group planners from 30-plus countries.

A new highlight for the Expo includes co-locating with the National Tour Association Convention '09, offering members of both associations unprecedented opportunities for business growth, networking and access to new market opportunities.

For more information about attending or exhibiting at the World Religious Travel Expo, contact the World Religious Travel Association at 888-255-WRTA (9782) or +1-859-219-3529 or by email headquarters@WRTAreligioustravel.com. For more information about WRTA and the Expo, visit www.WRTAreligioustravel.com and www.WRTAexpo.com respectively.

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World Religious Travel Association (WRTA):

WRTA is the leading global network for the \$18 billion faith tourism industry. WRTA's primary purpose is to guide, enrich, and expand religious travel and hospitality around the globe via the trade, consumer, and media. Its membership is comprised of tour operators, travel agents, group planners, destinations, DMOs, accommodations, attractions, transportation services, media and other key players in the tourism industry.

