

# charismanews.com

A news website covering politics, culture, and religion for Pentecostal Christians. The website has published false and misleading claims, including about the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Proceed with caution: This website fails to adhere to several basic journalistic standards.**

**Score: 57/100**

## Ownership and Financing

CharismaNews.com is owned by Plus Communications, Inc., a private company based in Lake Mary, Florida, that operates under the name Charisma Media. The company describes itself as “Christian multi-media company, long recognized as an innovator and known as the leading Charismatic/Pentecostal publisher in the world” on its website.

Along with CharismaNews.com, Charisma Media owns the magazines Charisma, Charisma Leader, Christian Retailing, and the book publisher Charisma House.

CharismaNews.com earns revenue through advertising and from selling Charisma Media’s books and subscriptions to its magazines.

- ✓ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22points)
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)
- ✓ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)
- ✓ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)
- ✓ Reveals who’s in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)
- ✓ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)

## Content

CharismaNews.com says on its About Charisma News Page, “To passionate, Spirit-filled Christians, Charisma News is the most trusted source for credible news and insight from a charismatic perspective.”

The website publishes U.S. and international news that advances conservative views. The About page says that the site “is the voice of the charismatic movement,” referring to Charismatic Christianity, which shares some beliefs and practices with the Pentecostal Movement.

Sections on the site include U.S., World, Politics, Video, Culture, Marketplace, and Opinion. The Magazine section links to the website of Charisma magazine. CharismaNews.com publishes a mix of original interviews and articles, including some written by Charisma Media CEO Stephen Strang, along with articles republished from The Associated Press and other religious news sources, such as the Christian Broadcasting Network and Faithwire.

*Criteria are listed in order of importance.*

[More information.](#)

Typical headlines include “Why Kids Need Vacation Bible School Now More Than Ever;” “Do People Who Commit Suicide Go to Heaven?” and “‘Trump 2024’ Explores What Will Happen if President Isn’t Reelected.”

#### Credibility

CharismaNews.com’s Writers Guidelines page lays out the website’s editorial standards, stating that “all facts and statistics should be checked” in articles. However, articles on the COVID-19 pandemic have included false and misleading health claims.

For example, a March 2020 opinion article, titled “Nutrition Expert Offers Advice for Boosting Your Immunity to COVID-19,” promoted the use of colloidal silver, a liquid substance containing silver particles, to prevent people from contracting the disease.

Saying “a window of weakened immunity could be just the opening that leaves you vulnerable enough to contract COVID-19 or the flu,” the Charisma News article said, “using a bio-active silver hydrosol form of colloidal silver such as Sovereign Silver is a great way to boost immunity.”

The National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, part of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, stated on its website that “scientific evidence doesn’t support the use of colloidal silver dietary supplements for any disease or condition.”

In a February 2020 article by The Associated Press, Helene Langevin, the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health’s director, said, “There are no complementary products, such as colloidal silver or herbal remedies, that have been proven effective in preventing or treating this disease (COVID-19), and colloidal silver can have serious side effects.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued an advisory in October 2009 warning that consuming colloidal silver can cause a condition called argyria, a permanent bluish-gray discoloration of the skin, nails, and gums.

Several Charisma News articles in 2020 also reported on the state of Missouri's lawsuit against televangelist Jim Bakker over his promotion of a colloidal silver product called Silver Solution on his show, without including information about the dangers of the substance or lack of evidence supporting its use. The lawsuit stemmed from a February 2020 segment of The Jim Bakker Show, in which Sherill Sellman, identified as a "natural health expert," praised a colloidal silver product called Silver Solution, which was sold through Bakker's website. "Well, let's say [Silver Solution] hasn't been tested on this strain of the coronavirus, but it's been tested on other strains of the coronavirus and has been able to eliminate it within 12 hours," Sellman said on the show. "Totally eliminate it. Kills it, deactivates it."

A May 2020 CharismaNews.com article, titled "Jim Bakker Attorneys Seek to Dismiss Lawsuit, Cite Religious Freedom," presented a one-sided view of the case, without including Sellman's quotes from the episode. Instead, the article featured several quotes from Bakker's attorney, former Missouri governor Jay Nixon, defending Bakker against the allegations and saying, "This case is about religious freedom."

Another July 2020 article about Bakker, also written by Strang, was titled, "The Truth Behind the Fake News Surrounding Jim Bakker and COVID-19." Strang said of the "Silver Solution" product, "Silver Solution is known to boost immunity, and I've used it myself. Bakker and Sellman began the program that day by saying the product had not yet been tested on this new coronavirus, yet the implication was that it would strengthen your immune system. Somehow that was twisted into accusations that Bakker was selling a cure for coronavirus, and the fake news media went crazy."

Like the previous article on Bakker, the July 2020 story failed to mention the dangers of colloidal silver or lack of evidence supporting its use.

In August 2020, the website published articles quoting Dr. Stella Immanuel, a Texas physician who falsely promoted hydroxychloroquine, a drug used to treat malaria and lupus, as a proven treatment for COVID-

19. In the article, headlined, “Frontline Physician Stella Immanuel: 'I Maintain That There Is a Cure for COVID,’” Immanuel promoted the drug as a proven cure.

“People get all crazy: 'You cannot say it's a cure; there's no cure for COVID,’” Immanuel told Charisma News. “I maintain that there is a cure for COVID. It is hydroxychloroquine; it is zinc and Zithromax. I do not understand why they want Americans to die when it's an effective treatment for COVID.”

In another August 2020 article, titled “EXCLUSIVE: COVID Warrior Dr. Stella Immanuel Deems Hydroxychloroquine Fight a 'Spiritual Battle,’” Immanuel was quoted as saying, “If people get hydroxychloroquine, the schools will be open, people will get back to business, this disease will be stopped in its tracks.”

The Charisma News articles failed to mention that multiple randomized clinical trials have found that hydroxychloroquine failed to provide benefits to COVID-19 patients. In June 2020, U. K. researchers ended the use of hydroxychloroquine in a large trial that had involved 4,600 patients. “We have concluded that there is no beneficial effect of hydroxychloroquine in patients hospitalised with COVID-19,” according to a statement by researchers Martin Landray and Peter Horby of the RECOVERY (Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 Therapy) trial.

Another trial, involving 400 patients, conducted at the University of Minnesota, and published in the Annals of Internal Medicine, found that hydroxychloroquine did not decrease the severity of COVID-19 symptoms over 14 days any better than a placebo in patients who were not hospitalized.

In addition, Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of U.S. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said at a July 2020 congressional hearing, “Any and all of the randomized, placebo-controlled trials — which is the gold standard of determining if something is effective — none of them have found any efficacy for hydroxychloroquine.”

A May 2020 opinion article, titled “Lifting the Veil of Deception Surrounding COVID-19 Conspiracies, Ungodly Agendas,” promoted a debunked conspiracy theory about the COVID-19 virus’ origin. The article stated, “Many speculate that the receptors on the virus were bioengineered and that they used elements of SARS 1 (the chaise) and HIV receptors (the spikes that penetrate the cells) and combined them for SARS 2, or what we call COVID-19. This is why so many Americans are beyond angry.”

There is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus was “bioengineered,” as the article speculated. A March 2020 study published in the journal Nature Medicine concluded that the virus “is not a laboratory construct or a purposefully manipulated virus.” An earlier study, published in February 2020 in the journal Nature, found that the COVID-19 virus is “96% percent identical at the whole-genome level to a bat coronavirus.”

In an April 2020 statement, the U.S. intelligence community said it “concur[s] with the wide scientific consensus that the COVID-19 virus was not manmade or genetically modified.”

The claim that the virus contains elements of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) originated with a study posted in January 2020 on the website BioRxiv.org, which publishes scientific studies before they have undergone peer review. According to a February 2020 article on the fact-checking website HealthFeedback.org, the study’s finding that there is a similarity between the COVID-19 virus and HIV “was detected using extremely short protein sequences, a practice that often gives rise to false positive results.” The authors of the study withdrew it from bioRxiv.org two days after it was published.

CharismaNews.com has also promoted false claims about vaccines. In a July 2020 article titled “How Conventional Medicine Fails Us and Can Lead to Death,” the site quoted Gary Null, a nutritionist and anti-vaccine activist, as saying, “Every vaccine has only toxic ingredients in it from aborted fetal cells to mercury, in some still, and aluminum as an adjuvant.”

Some vaccines, such as those protecting against rubella and chicken pox, are produced using lab-grown cells that are descended from two fetuses that were aborted in the 1960s, according to the Vaccine Education Center at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. However, no cells that came directly from fetuses were required for vaccine production and no actual fetal tissue is present in these vaccines.

The National Catholic Bioethics Center, which consults with the Vatican and Catholics on medical ethics issues and opposes abortion, has stated that "The cells in these lines have gone through multiple divisions before they are used in vaccine manufacture. After manufacture, the vaccines are removed from the cell lines and purified. One cannot accurately say that the vaccines contain any of the cells from the original abortion."

Null appeared to be referring to thimerosal, a mercury-based preservative, in his claim that mercury is a toxic ingredient in vaccines. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization have repeatedly stated there is no evidence to suggest that the thimerosal used in vaccines poses a health risk. The mercury compound in vaccines, called ethylmercury, is different from a separate compound called methylmercury, which is found in certain kinds of fish and can be toxic at high levels. As the CDC explains, ethylmercury from thimerosal is "cleared from the human body more quickly than methylmercury, and is therefore less likely to cause any harm."

It is true, as Null said, that aluminum is used in vaccines as an adjuvant, or an ingredient that strengthens the recipient's immune response to the vaccine. But there is no evidence that it is toxic. According to the CDC's website, aluminum has been safely used as an adjuvant in vaccines since the 1930s, and all vaccines containing adjuvants are tested for safety and efficacy before they are licensed for use. A study conducted by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, which was published in the peer-reviewed journal *Vaccine* in November 2011, concluded

that “episodic exposures to vaccines that contain aluminum adjuvant continue to be extremely low risk to infants” and that “the benefits of using vaccines containing aluminum adjuvant outweigh any theoretical concerns.”

Charisma News has also published misleading claims about mail-in voting. An August 2020 article, titled “Could This Be the Smoking Gun of Election Fraud?” relayed the Facebook posts of a Palm Beach County, Florida, woman who said that a barcode on her mail-in ballot for Florida’s August 2020 primary election contained a “R,” while the ballot for her brother, a Democrat, included a “D.”

The woman, Christine Brown, was quoted as saying, “I put two and two together and realized that now anyone, without opening my ballot, would know from the outside whether the voter was a Republican or a Democrat. All you have to do is lose the 'R's' and suddenly discover the 'D's,' and you can swing the election.”

The Charisma News article continued, “Those perpetuating the fraud weren't planning on anyone checking these barcodes before they reached their destination, but thanks to a regular business owner, Christine Brown, we have the smoking gun that explains the desperate efforts to make sure the post office is funded and properly arranged. The liberal left plans to swing the election using the very post office itself, and this is how they plan to do it.”

Wendy Sartory Link, Palm Beach County’s Supervisor of Elections, explained in an August 2020 statement that while Florida primary election ballots do contain “R” and “D” in bar codes, they are a function of the state’s closed primary system and are not present on general election mail-in ballots.

“Florida is a ‘Closed Primary’ state, meaning voters can only vote for members of their party in a partisan race in the primary election,” Link said. “Because of this, voters are mailed ballots according to their party affiliation.”

Because CharismaNews.com's articles have promoted false and misleading claims, including by omitting scientific evidence in articles about the COVID-19 pandemic, NewsGuard has determined that the site fails to gather and present information responsibly.

Charisma Media managing editor Christine Johnson declined to answer NewsGuard's questions about the website's editorial practices and the examples cited above. "After consultation and with the direction of our publisher, I wanted to let you know that I will not be able to dedicate time to this extensive request," she said in an August 2020 email.

Charisma News provides a link for users to submit requests for corrections at the bottom of its news articles. However, NewsGuard could not find any corrections.

Johnson declined to answer NewsGuard's question about the site's corrections practices in an August 2020 email, and did not provide any examples of corrections. She also did not provide any examples of corrections to NewsGuard in an October 2018 email, but said of the site's approach to corrections, "We make corrections as needed."

The site discloses its religious point of view on its About Charisma News page, which states, "Charisma News is the go-to source for believers who want the latest news delivered with trusted insight from a Spirit-filled perspective."

However, articles that report news often include opinion favoring conservative and Republican politicians and criticizing Democrats and liberals. The site does not disclose a political orientation.

An August 2020 article published in the U.S. section, for example, titled "Why Hillary May Be Back—And the Special Reason She Means Danger for the US," began, "As the possibility—without a miracle—of a Biden-Harris administration grows, in addition to the terror of an administration led by avowed Marxists, the ultimate nightmare has returned," referring to former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Because CharismaNews.com publishes unlabeled opinion that advance politically conservative views, without disclosing a political perspective, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

Johnson declined to answer NewsGuard's questions about the website's politically conservative perspective and its unlabeled opinion in an August 2020 email. Asked about the site's separation of news and opinion in an October 2018 email, Johnson noted, "Many of our Charisma News site articles are marked as opinion... Please note that we have some original content on our sites and some that is aggregated from our content partners, which are bylined."

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#### Transparency

The site discloses its ownership by Charisma Media in its About Charisma Media page. The Charisma Media Editors page provides names and biographical information for editorial leaders. The Contact Us page provides a general email address, mailing address, and phone number.

Most articles written by CharismaNews.com's staff identify the author and provide their biographical information. No contact information is provided.

Advertisements are distinguished from editorial content. Sponsored content is labeled as such.

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#### History

Charisma Media was founded in 1975 when Stephen and Joy Strang launched Charisma magazine, according to the About section of CharismaMedia.com. Before founding the magazine, Stephen Strang worked as a reporter for the Orlando Sentinel, according to a March 2000 Sentinel article.

The domain name CharismaNews.com was registered in May 1998.

*Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on Aug. 27, 2020 to add comment from the website's editor. It was previously updated on Aug. 25, 2020, and its rating was changed, to reflect NewsGuard's determination that CharismaNews.com no longer meets NewsGuard's*

*standard for gathering and presenting information responsibly. The criteria checklist was adjusted accordingly.*

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Send feedback to NewsGuard: [Click Here](#)

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