



Real News - Review

Religion in the News: International, National, Local

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Commentary and Opinion

RNR columnists share their thoughts on issues pertinent to Christianity today. Page 2 and 3

Succession theology run deep

Since President Obama won re-election, more than 750,000 Americans have petitioned the White House website to let their respective states secede. Page 4.



United Methodist Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño tackles immigration

The first female, hispanic bishop in the nation's 2nd largest denomination fights for the rights of immigrants. Page 5

A rose by any other name

By tradition newly elected popes have the right to choose a name that they will be known by during their administration. Page 6



Justin Welby chosen to lead Church of England

As the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury, Welby becomes spiritual leader to 77 million Anglicans worldwide. Page 7

Research shows most Americans concerned about religious liberty

A recent Barna Group poll reports that over 50% of Americans have serious concerns about infringements on religious liberties in the US. Page 11

Bridges For Youth

The faith-based, after school program reaches hundreds of youth in Springfield and Marshfield Page 12

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ANALYSIS: Supreme Court searches for way around gay marriage

WASHINGTON (RNS) In nearly two hours of arguments on Wednesday (March 27), the Supreme Court heard many of the expected cases for and against recognizing gay marriage: that refusing to do so is blatant discrimination, that gay marriage is a social experiment that the court should not preempt, that Washington has no role in state marriage laws.

Yet it was arcane arguments over matters of legal standing that seemed to most animate the justices, reflecting what seemed to be a desire to find a way for the court to sidestep a definitive up-or-down ruling on one of the most divisive social issues.

In short, the court — particularly its conservative majority — seemed to ask why they should hear a second gay marriage case in as many days, particularly one in which the government supports the lower court's ruling. And the answer to that question will go a long way toward determining the outcome of a spirited national debate.

It's not an insignificant question; the high court in recent years, especially under Chief Justice John Roberts, has used questions of legal standing to bypass de-

finitive rulings on a number of hot-button issues, particularly church-state disputes.

There are three options facing the court in *United States v. Windsor*, a challenge to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act that defined marriage at the federal level as between a man and a woman:

- Uphold DOMA as constitutional
- Strike down the law
- Bypass the debate by saying it lacks jurisdiction, based on the unusual path by which DOMA arrived at the high court

That third option seemed to both intrigue and flummox the justices, who grappled with the Obama administration's decision to stop defending DOMA in federal courts. A bipartisan legal advisory group appointed by the House GOP leaders stepped in to defend the law when the Obama White House stepped out.

The Obama administration has agreed with federal court rulings against DOMA, even as it is charged with supporting and enforcing it. Normally the White House could only punt the case to the Supreme Court by appealing the case against DOMA, but instead it agreed that it is unconstitutional and asked the high



(RNS) Supporters of gay marriage rally outside the U.S. Supreme Court as justices heard a challenge to the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. RNS photo by Kevin Eckstrom

court for a final say.

And that's where the justices got uncomfortable — as if they had just been tasked with caring for someone else's baby.

When and how does the executive branch get to decide which laws to support and which to ignore, Roberts asked. If Obama doesn't support DOMA, he said, he should at least have

"the courage of his convictions" and fight it through the proper legal channels or seek its repeal in Congress.

Justice Antonin Scalia peppered the government's lawyer, Deputy Solicitor General Sri Srinivasan, on why the justices are considering a case when the government agrees with the ruling. He expressed dismay

at this "new world" where the Attorney General seems to be able to pick and choose which laws to enforce.

The court's decisive swing vote, Justice Anthony Kennedy, who has written powerful opinions in favor of gay rights before, nonetheless said he found it "very troubling" how the case arrived

Continued on page 11

Cliff Wagner tribute a success despite weather

BRANSON, MO Dr. Paul Collins, RN-R publisher.

March 24 was a bad weather day in the hills and in "Branson Valley." Most of southwest Missouri was challenged by snow, cold, strong winds with the chill factor, and the possibility of freezing rain. Nonetheless, Branson entertainers braved the weather and brought their talents to the stage of the Hughes Brothers Theater in Branson, MO for the 2nd Annual Cliff Wagner Tribute Show. The fans of the entertainers showed up in ample numbers to make a good audience for the performers and raised money for three food pantries in Taney and Stone Counties. They were all aware (performers and fans alike) that hunger doesn't take a day off just because of the weather. Hunger doesn't observe "snow days!"

The pre-show was a dazzling display of talent by three members of the Underwood family led by magician/juggler/comedian/father Edward Underwood. His lovely wife, Karen, added the dimension of grace and charm. Kevin, the son, showed he was a master of the guitar.

Jason Hughes did his always masterful job as emcee, and blended his talents with that of his four brothers to bring the show to a close after about two hours of variety performances. After the opening by the emcee, Raphael Thompson was an inspiration at the piano as she played and sang.

Dr. Paul Collins, the founder of Acts Ministry, was called by Jason Hughes to take the stage and tell the audience about the man whose name is synonymous with the name of the



LeAnn Kennedy, Acts Ministry President (R) and Randy Plummer (L) the first recipient of the "Cliff Wagner Award" present this year's award to long time entertainer and music teacher Raphael Thompson. She continues to inspire and train young performers as a music instructor for the Hollister Public schools.

show. Dr. Collins recounted the Christian character of Cliff Wagner and his willingness to serve the community all across the Ozarks of Missouri. Wagner was only 47 when he died February 3, 2004 in Branson. He had already made his mark in the entertainment industry as a man of demonstrable Christian character.

Others on the bill were Richard Young, known as "Tiny Doolittle." Recently retired as a street performer at Silver Dollar City, he showed he had not lost his ability to do a comedic routine and delight an audience.

Doug Gabriel, star of his own show in the New Doug Gabriel (located within the Branson Star Theatre complex) and a fan favorite for many years in Branson, sang beautifully (as always) and told a great story about Cliff Wagner's sense of humor being demonstrated when they worked to-

gether years ago. It was a story about Cliff faking "the Rapture" to make Gabriel believe he had been left behind.

Tim Hadler was magnificent! He does a great rendition of Hank Williams' song — styling, and he can do it no matter the type of song. He even resembles Hank! This was Tim's second year to be on the benefit doing his part for the pantries, and he has his own show in the IMAX Theater complex. For Hank Williams fans, it doesn't get any better than to lean back and listen to Tim.

No Branson benefit would be complete without a performance by Randy Plummer, a young "Dean of Branson Performers." Randy was a boy when his family had one of the first theaters on the famous "Branson Strip." The Plummer Family Theater was a part of the music scene for many years. After the family sold the the-

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AA organization wrestles with its spiritual roots



According to AA's General Service Office in NYC there are an estimated 1.4 million members in US and Canada and 2.1 million worldwide as of January 2012. Estimates are used because AA groups do not keep nor do they report membership details or numbers.

BEVERLY, Mass. (RNS) For Alcoholics Anonymous to continue helping addicts find freedom in sobriety, the 75-year-old organization has to reclaim its spiritual roots.

That's the message coming from reformers who say the group has drifted from core principles and is failing addicts who can't save themselves. But what constitutes the heart of AA spirituality is a matter of spirited debate.

Has AA become too God-focused and rigid? Or have groups watered down beliefs

and methods so much that they're now ineffective?

"Some think AA is not strict enough," said Lee Ann Kaskutas, senior scientist at the Public Health Institute's Alcohol Research Group in Emeryville, Calif. "Others think it's too strict, so they want to change AA and make it get with the times."

With more than 100,000 local meetings and an estimated two million members worldwide, AA is grappling with how much diversity it can handle.

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Commentary

Faith and Culture: A Victim of identity theft

Our personal identity is important, not only to us, but to others who need to know us. There are many things that identify us, from our roles in society (minister, newspaper editor, father, husband, etc.) to our social security numbers and fingerprints. Identity theft is big business and a major concern today. However I am not talking about a criminal identity theft – I am talking about a spiritual one.

Over the past few years I have struggled to identify myself within the Christian context. We even planted a church a few years ago and when we moved into a permanent location and bought a sign we struggled with how to identify ourselves to the public. We tried words like “non-denominational,” “Spirit-filled,” “Full Gospel,” etc. We discovered all of the “labels” really didn’t accurately express our identity as a church. (Note: We settled on “A New Testament Fellowship” – although no one really knows what that means.)

As we discussed this issue, I realized that many of the terms I once identified myself with

had been stolen or hijacked. I was the victim of identity theft. In some cases, I had learned some things and then I had moved on in my understanding and experience. In some cases, I stayed stationary as the general populace of the movement moved off in a direction I couldn’t agree with. Either way, those movements and terms no longer accurately identified who and what I was – either to me or to those I was trying to relate to.

Keep in mind, this is my own story and I am painting with some pretty broad strokes. I would not categorically place every person who identifies themselves by a certain label within the same philosophical, political or doctrinal camp (in other words, please drop the stones now and slowly back away). I mean only to relate how I have had to deal with the shifting sands of Christian labels. I fall within the broad strokes of several labels: Religion: Christian; Tradition: Protestant (meaning not Catholic or Orthodox); Denomination: Non; Branch: Pentecostal/Spirit-filled/Charismatic/Etc.



Steve Highlander
Managing Editor RN-R,

The problem is that no one term really identifies me. I am certainly a Christian, but that term means a lot of different things to a lot of people. Ask someone in my church to define a Christian and you will get a very different response than if you ask a Muslim or even the guy next door.

I am a Protestant in that I am not Catholic or Orthodox, but many of the main-line Protestant denominations have moved so far away from their original moorings that it is hard to identify with that group generally.

I would consider myself Evangelical for the most part but, unfortunately that label, of late, has become more closely associated with a right-wing

political movement within the church. Sometimes I am ashamed of the way my “Evangelical” brothers act in public. The anger, fear, mockery and hatred being spewed out in the name of Jesus certainly doesn’t identify me.

I was a Baptist – I am not now and haven’t been for many years. I am “non-denominational” now. It is hard to identify yourself as being “non” anything. Being “non” makes a statement for what you aren’t, not what you are. That doesn’t tell you much about me.

Now we get closer to home. As we struggled to identify our church (and thus for me to identify myself) to the general public we wrestled with terms. While I could be considered under the Pentecostal branch of the Evangelical church, modern Pentecostalism does not define me with its old gospel music and preaching style.

I once considered myself Charismatic; however that term has been hijacked by a movement that tends to the extremes of faith, prosperity and the prophetic. Because the emphasis has changed, it no longer

defines me and I have ceased using the term.

Ah, who could mess with “Spirit-filled?” Spirit-filled used to mean the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and a life empowered by the Spirit of God. Today it has been watered down to a buzz word loosely equated to lively worship and good preaching. We have a lot of “Spirit-filled” people doing a lot of unspiritual things.

And so it goes. Perhaps we place too much emphasis on labels in trying to define people. Perhaps if we made a point of knowing people instead of trying to label people, we wouldn’t have the problem.

Someone stole my identity (several times) and I am still trying to figure out just who and what I am. I guess for now I’ll stick with plain old “Christian,” because that means “little Christ,” and more than anything I just want to follow Him and find my identity in Him, rather than needing to be identified by a larger movement or a doctrine.

Dr. Steve Highlander is a pastor, missionary, author and speaker.

Upstairs Over a Vacant Lot

Volunteers keep the movement moving

Volunteers can be among the greatest. I have no way of knowing how many people in the world are giving their time, talents, and labor to projects on any given day, but the total is probably astounding.

The Springfield, Missouri operations of Acts Ministry are possible because individual volunteers in key positions

perform very important functions. Acts Ministry, Inc. is a not-for-profit religious corporation dedicated to doing Christian work. The effort is pursued according to a mission statement that reads, “Unity, In Christ, Through The Holy Spirit.” Those words can also be a vision statement or a slogan. The motto of Acts Ministry is

“Serving Where Needed.” The volunteers in Springfield and the surrounding area are joined by people in other states and nations giving their time, talent, and work.

As a movement for unity in the body of Christ, Acts ministry makes forward motion because of volunteers. There is no payroll.



Dr. Paul C. Collins
Publisher RN-R

During my many years as an itinerant pastor of churches within a large denomination, it was expected that I be an active participant in community causes. Thus, over those years I held membership in (I think) every secular community service club. Believe me, those clubs can extract a lot of time from people to do volunteer work.

I was so connected to the notion of providing my energy to community causes that I dared to run for election to a school board in 1965. I was elected. A mere seven or so years later, I “took the plunge” again in another town and was elected to serve on their school district’s board. That resulted in becoming the first president of a

regional board of the Missouri School Boards Association. That activity, along with civic club work, evolved into some political activity.

Many of you reading this will be able to identify with my efforts to be a good citizen. But for the past 35 plus years, I have spent my time and energy as a worker in the efforts to bring the Kingdom of God into full view of the secular world. The past 20 of the 35 plus years have been dedicated to Acts Ministry and its outreaches around the world.

If you are a church volunteer, I would like very much to receive your thoughts about the values (and the potential pitfalls) of volunteerism in a local congregation or for a stand-alone, independent ministry. I receive mail at Acts Ministry, PO Box 11084, Springfield, Missouri 65808. For your greater convenience, my email address is actsministry@sbc-global.net. It will be a definite joy to hear from you.

Those people who give freely of their time, talents, and energetic work are the real power in the world of today. Even though the profit motive can be seen in “church” circles, many labor without thought of finan-

Psyche: Using grief to grow

Grief can make us or break us. If we cave into it, we can remain in mourning for the rest of our lives, essentially mothballing our effectiveness in life. Alternately, we can go through the process and come out the other end more mature, compassionate, and powerful people.

I talked to a friend today and told her how I have felt distanced from my faith recently. I have not been reading my Bible like I used to, nor have I been praying as often as I was wont. I told her this is because when I do pray, I feel like crying, like I’ve lost something, or someone am experiencing grief, and my prayers felt like they hit a wall. As I was verbally processing this experience with her, I realized that grief is precisely what I was feeling, and that my lack of hope (and consequently faith) in God was a wall that prevented me from seeing the positive outcomes I was looking for.

Strangely enough, my friend knew exactly what I was feeling. She has recently gone through some difficult times and, although I know her to be one of the strongest Christians of my acquaintance, she said that she, too, felt somewhat distant in her faith. Eureka! This was again tied to personal grieving experiences.



Dr. Brooke Highlander
Associate Editor, RN-R

You see, grief is caused by death and loss. It could be the death of a person or the death of a dream, but the consequences are the same, and lead to an inability to hope for the future. Without hope we cannot have faith, and without faith, we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Every person of note in the Bible went through this process, including Jesus. You could say that it is a necessary step to personal and spiritual growth. Like the butterfly who should not be rescued from its cocoon lest it die from lack of strength, we too must fight through our darkness in order to break through with power enough to meet the challenges ahead of us. It is the struggle to get out of the cocoon that gives the butterfly strength for life.

The stages of grief accord-

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The stories and opinions expressed in The Real News - Review do not necessarily reflect the opinions and beliefs of Acts Ministry, Inc, its board or larger body of associates.

To suggest or submit a story or to write the editor contact Steve Highlander at editor@actsmediagroup.com.

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Christian Economic Perspective

Prepare and declare!

When I was a social studies teacher in a public high school from 2000-2003, I encountered many situations that were rather eye-opening. Even though we had four teen-age children at the time, the things I saw and heard left me amazed. Among the more interesting were students whose clothing included remarks such as “I hear voices and none of them likes you”. Sadly, those words were often reflected in the wearer’s personality and behavior.

I am often reminded of those words, and they returned to mind as I considered some of the things that the Lord has shown me over the past five years about the economic events that will characterize the time through which we have lived and in which we are now living and will live in the future. By definition, we are in the “last days” as the apostle Paul described the period from Jesus ascension until His return, and many believe we are in the last of the last days before His return.

Several years ago, during a mid-week service, I prophesied about the need to “prepare and declare”. While that word contained no specific instruction, it did cause me to remember two other words that the Lord had given me in 2008 about getting disconnected from the kingdoms (the cosmos if you will) of this world and getting connected to the kingdom of heaven.

As we have seen periodically throughout history and very clearly over the past century, the kingdoms of this world in general, and the economic system under which they operate are at best very tenuous and prone to severe upturns and downturns. Much of the economic upheaval is related to our monetary systems, all of which are based on what we call fiat currencies.

Fiat currencies, by definition, have nothing of value, such as precious metals or commodities, backing them. Thus, they are based on the faith in and credit of the governments issuing them. Compounding the problem of fiat currency sys-



**Oliver Burrows , RN-R
Economic Columnist**

tems is what is known as fractional reserve banking, whereby only a small portion of the monies deposited in a financial institution are actually available to meet the demands of the institution’s customers. Lord willing, I will address these subjects in much more detail in future columns.

Needless to say, the combination of fiat currencies and fractional reserve banking has led to enormously crushing debt for nations and individuals far beyond their ability to repay. This, along with governmental accounting systems that do not recognize the value of future liabilities such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid in the United States, have pushed our national debt to nominal levels of \$16 trillion, with some estimates of the real debt ranging as high as \$222 trillion.

Regardless of the actual level of debt, given the other issues of fiat currencies and fractional reserve banking (which “creates” money out of nothing but promise to lend and to repay), there are only four alternatives facing the nations of the world, and none of them is good.

First, there will be, as we have already seen in several states at the city and county level, sovereign debt default. Governmental entities, faced with crushing debt and shrinking tax bases and revenues, are filing for bankruptcy, and we have seen examples at the national level involving nations such as Greece. Second, there is formal currency devaluation, either in the form of the recall of existing currencies and issuance of new, devalued currencies or adjusted target prices for currencies in the forex markets.

The third alternative, which we may see in the very near future, is hyperinflation, as we have seen historically in Brazil (100% a year) or Zimbabwe and the Weimar Republic, where eventually the monetary systems of those nations collapsed, making their monies worthless internally and in the world market. Finally, there is debt restructuring, which seems at face value to be a solution to the problem. In reality, however, all debt restructuring does is extend the repayment time period, which costs the borrowers more, decrease the interest rate, which reduces the revenue and asset values of the financial institutions (making them less profitable and potentially unstable), or decrease the value of the assets owned by the borrower, which has the same effects on the financial institutions as reducing the interest rates. If both the interest rate and the asset values are decreased, there is a magnified impact on the financial institutions, which in the end will cause them to either fail or be bailed out by national or international funding which increases the already unsustainable sovereign debt picture.

In the end, none of these alternatives will resolve the problem the nations of this world face. While there are solutions (based on the economics of the kingdom of God and heaven as outlined in the Bible), they will not come without great pain and sacrifice, and for most people, when they “hear voices” of fact and truth, none of them will like those speaking them.

Rev. Oliver K. Burrows III is an ordained minister with Acts Ministry. He hosts three radio programs (Experiencing the Word and Christian Economic Perspective heard on 1230 WX-CO-AM and ESPN Sports Den on Sports Fan 100.5) in Wausau, Wisconsin and across the Internet. Oliver and his wife Donna, who is also an ordained minister, have four adult children and one grandchild. He can be contacted at oliverburrows@economictruth.org and is available for speaking engagements.

A One Minute Devotional: *He is Here*

Nancy Collins, Acts Ministry

I love it when the realization of needing to think much bigger and deeper to get outside my mind’s box explodes into my mind. Yet, all along I thought I was doing fine. It could be said that my thinking was only the size of the universe. This realization came to me that God is bigger. I knew this, but my thinking way down deep did not. I grew more when I realized this. Some chains---the way I thought or how I perceived words, etc. were broken.

In 2 Chronicles 2:6, Solomon was writing about the house he was going to build for God. He said, “But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him?” It has been said that before there was anything, He filled everything. Scientists can see very far out into the universe with telescopes, but they cannot see the end. My mind and its perception saw past the universe.



**Nancy Collins
RN-R Devotional Columnist**

My thought process changed. It was exciting! Our Heavenly Father, in Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit, came before time, created creation and time, and will come to take us out of this creation and time to a home He has been preparing for us for all eternity.

There is no termination or evaporation of His power or Word, His strength, vision, or voice through space, eternity or time, situation, circumstance, need or lack. It has been said that there is no distance in

prayer. Hebrews 13:8 states that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. 1 Peter 1:25 says that “...the word of the Lord endures forever.” Hebrews 4:13 says that “And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account.” It is written in Hebrews 4:12 that “indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

He is. He knows. He sees. He is aware of the seen and unseen. He is very well able to help His children. He is much greater and much more than what we are able to think or imagine. Climb out of your mind’s box and be blessed!

Nancy Collins and her Husband Dr. Paul Collins, co-founded Acts Ministry,

A View From Jordon Creek: *Labeling Odd Ducks*

I’ve been politically active since I was a young man and that activism has not always been met with praise. Whether engaged in overtly partisan campaign work or in various neighborhood and community organizing endeavors, epithets directed at me have been common.

Over the years, the most interesting aspect of the invective has been the range of labels attached to my views and actions. I’ve been called a lover of gays and persons of color, though in much more provocative language, and a homophobe and racist. I’ve been targeted as a Marxist/communist/socialist by some and simultaneously accused of being a right-wing/Tea Party/fascist by others.

In high school I was privileged to attend American Legion Boys State and was nominated as the gubernatorial candidate of my party. I

was considered too liberal to be selected for Boys Nation but prompted an unprecedented third-party challenge on the basis that I was too conservative.

During my undergraduate years there was a prominent local figure who was convinced that I was an agent of the Cuban government. The student government insiders were equally convinced that I was an ultrarightist/fundamentalist.

When I went to seminary I was immediately perceived as an extremist. The peculiar nature of that assumption was that some saw me as a racist/fascist while others viewed me as a person to the left of Marx.

None of this is due to some chameleon-like shaping of my beliefs and actions to please different individuals or groups. I’ve been remarkably consistent over the years. The problem is that I don’t easily fit into the

**Virgil Hill
RN-R Columnist**

boxes others have created.

That problem is simply defined in that my views and my actions, however imperfect, are the result of my daily struggle to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ.

In secular terms, I’m a progressive populist on most economic and foreign policy matters and a traditionalist conservative on many social and cultural issues. At the same time, I do hold to civil equality and both libertarian (i.e. civil liberties) and communitarian (i.e. common good) perspectives in a creative tension and balance.

I am not a centrist nor moderate and fully agree with Jim Hightower’s observation that “there’s nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos.”

Acts Ministry, Inc. and the Real News-Review

SPRINGFIELD, MO Paul Collins, Publisher RN-R The Real News-Review newspaper is a part of the global outreach of a ministry headquartered in Springfield, MO. Begun in 1993, Acts Ministry is a non-profit, trans-denominational independent organization using several means to promote their mission statement which is, “Unity, In Christ, Through The Holy Spirit.”

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Acts Ministry accepts no liability for the accuracy of news received via the wire services or submitted by others, and we cannot be held responsible for any statements made by reporters whether they are international, national or regional.

While reporting the news, we do not want to neglect our opportunity to present Christ to the reader. It is for that reason that you will find references to Jesus, how to receive him as Lord and Savior, and

live your life in accordance with his teachings. Please take note of the 3rd chapter of the Gospel of John. Embedded in the conversation between Nicodemus (a religious man of high standing) and Jesus, you find what may be the best known scripture verse in the Bible, John 3:16. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (NRSV) The word “may” is used twice. If you believe, you “may” not perish (in any way) but you “may” have eternal life.

If you want information about the simple plan of salvation, you can contact Acts Ministry by going to the website at www.actsministry.org. Or, you can call 417-886-0223.

The Evidence of Faith’s Substance

Defining the substance of Christian faith - Part 1

I spend time with teenagers every week, getting the opportunity to have them explain to me and each other how they deal with many of the social and cultural issues going on today. I like to ask them how Jesus Christ is relevant in their lives, or what forms the real substance behind your faith in Him?

I usually use the following illustration to get them thinking: “Have you ever seen someone you didn’t know, who you thought was very attractive, and you wanted to go on a date with that person? But once you spent some time with them, you found there was no substance to them?”

Everyone knows what “substance” I’m talking about – it’s what lies beneath the veneer, and it’s what matters. Is there substance behind your faith in Christ, or is it because, in our church culture, we are comfortable just “having faith”? What is it about Jesus Christ that makes Him attractive enough to you to follow Him?

The Bible defines faith in Hebrews 11:1 - “Faith is the SUBSTANCE of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” The word for faith means a firm conviction in, not just believing; and the object of faith is a Person. It’s not faith in God’s promises, which are the occasions to exercise my faith, but rather in God Himself.

The word for substance is really awesome – it’s the Greek word “hupostasis” that is broken down into two parts: “hupo” means “under”, and “stasis” means “to stand upon”. So the Bible says faith is what I “stand upon, under me”, or “understanding”! Jesus doesn’t want my faith to be how many critics of Christian faith in America would say, “an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable”. That’s not faith – that’s being gullible or naïve – that’s a lack of thinking.

Faith is a reasoning trust. Scripture’s argument is that since people are different than animals, people should behave differently (Psalm 32:9 “Do not be like the horse or like the mule, which have no understanding...”). God expects us to use our minds to understand His character and the promises



**Ed Croteau
Guest Columnist**

He makes to us. As Hebrews 11:1 says, it is this reasoning conviction in my mind and my heart that defines my future hope and assurance that He will keep His promises

So what exactly is the substance behind Jesus Christ? He tells us there’s a lot more to Him than His physical appearance – listen to the evidence, in His own words, where He: claims to be the only way for you or me to go to heaven: “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6) claims to be God: “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58), and claims to have come to serve you and me, by paying with His life for the sins you and I have committed that separate us from Him: “...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

When you look beyond what people say about Jesus, and check out the evidence for yourself, there is unparalleled substance to Him, that make Him worthy of your trust. He asks you four questions in the Bible for your benefit, not His, so you can gage very easily where He stands with you: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15)

“I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me, though he die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?”

“Do you love Me?” (John 21:17)

“Will you lay down your life for My sake?” (John 13:38)

In the next article, we’ll begin looking at the overwhelming

evidence for the life of Jesus Christ and the multiple claims He made as the Messiah of the Old Testament, to be God who came to live among us. You can evaluate for yourself the overwhelming evidence that Jesus Christ is the only person in history who meets the requirements laid out in the Bible for Messiah. Stay tuned.

Ed Croteau hosts a weekly study in Lees Summit, MO called “Faith: Substance and Evidence”, with Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/#/pages/Faith-Substance-and-Evidence/37339129607296>

Christian Mother and Seven Children Sentenced to Prison in Egypt

Nadia Mohammed Ali and her seven children were all sentenced to 15 years in prison by a court in Beni Suef recently, after being convicted of apostasy.

Nadia had converted from Christianity to Islam 23 years ago to marry a Muslim man. But when he died in 1991, Nadia returned to Christianity and gave her children Christian names.

With the help of seven registry officials, Nadia also changed the religion on her ID card and her children’s ID cards to Christianity. The registry officials all received five-year prison sentences for facilitating the change of religion on the family’s ID cards.

The names of Nadia’s children are Mohab, Maged, Sherif, Amira, Amir, Nancy and Ahmed. The registry officials’ names are Nabil, Ayyad, Hany, Amgad, Shehata, Mohammed and Dr. Abd El Fattah. Voice of the Martyrs, a Christian organization supporting persecuted Christians around the world, has issued a prayer alert request for this family. You can follow this story and other or learn more about Voice of the Martyrs at www.persecution.com.

“The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us.”
- C. S. Lewis

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USA Religion

Secession theology runs deep in United States religious and political history

G. Jeffrey MacDonald (RNS) Corruption has gone too far. The righteous must break away. Hope now rests with a holy remnant that will honor foundational texts.

The message sounds familiar. A church schism? No, mounting calls for secession from the United States.

Since President Obama won re-election, more than 750,000 Americans have petitioned the White House website to let their respective states secede, from Alaska to Iowa to Maryland and Vermont. Those leading the charge are framing it, observers say, in terms that suggest a deep-seated religious impulse for purity-through-separation is flaring up once again.

But this time, it's playing out on a political stage.

"Today's secessionist movements are just the latest example of a long parade of breakaway groups (in American history) seeking to restore some lost ideal," said Peter J. Thuesen, professor of religious studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. "The problem is that the ideal is invariably a mirage."

Seeking purity through separation has marked American religious history since the Puritans sailed from Holland to establish a holy beacon in the New World. It helps explain why Baptists, Presbyterians and others have splintered into countless subgroups over the years, and why the Episcopal Diocese of South Carolina disaffiliated from the Episcopal Church this fall.

The pattern commonly involves one group breaking off to re-establish a holy community by living in fresh accord with sacred texts. Religious



This painting by John Trumbull commissioned in 1817 hangs in the rotunda of the capitol building. It depicts the presentation of the Declaration of Independence to John Hancock, President of the Continental Congress. Photo source: Public domain.

purists have the Bible to guide their quest; secessionists look to the Constitution and Declaration of Independence. Both insist these centers of authority have suffered neglect and must be restored.

"That's a persistent line of thought," said Alan Wolfe, director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. "There are people who are disappointed with the direction the United States has taken. ... It's primarily political and economic, and then they just find a religious cover for it (as) they tap into pre-existent religious language."

Dismissing the United States as hopelessly corrupt, secessionists are picking up the breakaway-for-purity motif and running with it. Radio host Alex Jones, whose show airs in 60 markets, alleged on Nov. 15 that "foreign megabanks have

hijacked the government" and have made secession necessary.

"We do not want to secede from the Union to destroy the republic, but to restore it," Jones said. "Go to the White House website. Do your own petitions to reinstall the Declaration of Independence. ... It's now time to launch the second American Revolution."

Secessionists, such as Russell Longcore of Marietta, Ga., take inspiration from history. He sees secession as pursuit of God-given liberty, such as when American colonies seceded from Britain in 1776, when Southern states left the Union in the 1860s and when the Soviet Union dissolved into 15 separate states two decades ago.

In his view, petitioning the federal government is "silly" because states don't need permission to secede, but he regards the petitioners' goal as

nonetheless serious and moral in nature.

"The moral decay comes from the fact that Washington, D.C., has summarily ignored the Constitution," said Longcore, an insurance claims consultant who blogs at dumpdc.com. He offered the example of unsanctioned wars.

"Article One, Section Eight (of the Constitution) says Congress should have authority to declare war and to prosecute a war," Longcore said. "There

hasn't been a declared war since World War II, but we've been in an awful lot of wars."

Other narratives help secessionists, as well as religious isolationists, understand their efforts as part of a noble tapestry. Evangelical groups have for years supported Christians in South Sudan, which broke off from Sudan last year after persistent clashes with Muslims in the north. Some now laud how Sudanese Christians separated and hope American Christians would do similarly by withdrawing at least culturally, if not legally.

Those inspired by such examples include Jim Rawles, an evangelical blogger and novelist who teaches survival skills for the coming day when America's economy collapses. He sees no point in seceding, since the federal government would "hammer" such efforts anyway.

Instead, he's getting more response these days, he says, to his call for Bible-believing Christians, Orthodox Jews and Messianic Jews to relocate to what he calls the American Redoubt: Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, eastern Washington and eastern Oregon.

One reason he gives on his website for separation: "Even if God has withdrawn his blessings from our nation as a whole, he will continue to provide for

and to protect his remnant."

"It's time to distance ourselves from the vile corruptness that we see inside the Washington, D.C., Beltway," said Rawles, who blogs at survivalblog.com. "It is analogous to the Puritan exodus (from Europe). They couldn't fit in and said, 'We're going to move to completely virgin territory and start afresh.' ... In effect, we're becoming pistol-packing Amish."

Some scholars still aren't buying it. As Wolfe sees it, calls for secession and cultural withdrawal are just sour grapes.

"It's not religious in inspiration at all," Wolfe says. "It's like in the Old South, where if you gave (secession) a religious cover, you made it sound better. But it's just people who basically have difficulty accepting that we have a two-party system. One party wins. One party loses."

But separatists insist the impulse to flee corruption and live rightly before God is genuine. And if that means clustering in ever more secluded enclaves, then so be it.

"The Bible teaches that the remnant will be small," Rawles said. "People who recognize that they are of the remnant, that they are God's elect, will in increasing numbers choose to vote with their feet."

Melissa Rogers appointed new head of White House faith-based office

(RNS) Church-state expert Melissa Rogers will be the new director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Rogers succeeds Joshua DuBois, who left the office in February after serving throughout President Obama's first term.

"I'm honored to be able to serve President Obama by forging and promoting a wide range of effective partnerships with faith-based and secular nonprofits that help people in need," Rogers said in a statement on Wednesday (March 13).

Rogers is already well-acquainted with the office she will direct. She chaired the office's first advisory council and spearheaded its work to reform the office. In 2010, President Obama signed an executive order reflecting recommendations from the council that called for greater transparency and clearer rules for religious groups that receive federal grants.

"Melissa has been a stalwart advocate for religious freedom," said DuBois, who noted her key roles in the creation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act and the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, prominent religious freedom statutes.

DuBois, who served as a spiritual as well as political adviser to President Obama, noted Rogers' Baptist ties and roles as a laywoman in her local congregation volunteering in its food pantry and nursery.

Colleagues from a range of religious organizations wel-



Church-state expert Melissa Rogers will be the new director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Photo by Ken Bennett ©2004 Wake Forest University Office of Creative Services.

comed Rogers' appointment.

"Melissa has a sincere sensitivity to the different beliefs and points of view that people or entire communities may hold on delicate and, frankly, 'hot button,' issues," said Nathan Diamant, executive director of public policy for the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, who served on the advisory council with Rogers.

Shaun Casey, an ethics professor at Wesley Theological Seminary and former faith adviser to President Obama's campaign, said he expects Rogers' expertise could help the White House address the ongoing concerns of critics about faith-based organizations receiving government funding and hiring staffers based on religion.

"It's logical to assume it will be on her radar screen," he said.

Rogers comes to the post after serving in several positions at the intersection of religion and public policy. Most recently she has directed Wake Forest Divinity School's Center for Religion and Public Affairs and been a nonresident senior fellow at Washington's Brookings Institution.

She previously was executive director of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, a board member of Public Religion Research Institute and the gen-

eral counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

J. Brent Walker, director of the Baptist Joint Committee, called her a "perfect choice" for the position.

"Melissa is an honest broker, a consensus-builder, and a problem-solver," added Joel Hunter, a Florida evangelical leader, and Rabbi David Saperstein, a Reform Jewish official, in a joint column in Washington Post's "On Faith."

Hunter and Saperstein, who served on the advisory council with Rogers, noted that she has been "a key leader in countless common ground projects," including a recent document on public religious expression whose drafters had worked from a range of perspectives — from the conservative American Center for Law and Justice to the liberal American Civil Liberties Union.

The Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, president of the Interfaith Alliance and a longtime critic of the faith-based office, expressed confidence in Rogers' ability to tackle thorny issues, including the debate on hiring.

"I know of no individual better suited to oversee this important endeavor, with sensitivity to the competing views and priorities at play, and with great integrity, than Melissa Rogers," Gaddy said.

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Methodist bishop Minerva Carcaño on front lines of immigration battle

PASADENA, Calif. (RNS) When United Methodist Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño talks about tussling with political bigwigs on the topic of immigration reform, she is poised, yet forceful.

As the first female Hispanic bishop elected in the nation's second-largest Protestant denomination, Carcaño has had a lot of practice keeping her cool, especially when it comes to discussing divisive politics.

"Immigrants can stay as long as they don't ask for more than we want to give them, and as long they keep serving our needs at whatever pittance of a pay we want to extend to them," Carcaño said in an interview in her office here.

"When people begin to say that's not fair, that's not just, then that ruffles feathers."

Carcaño has emerged as a key religious player on the hot-button political debate over immigration reform. On Friday (March 8), Carcaño was among 14 religious leader who met with President Obama at the White House, where she was tasked with reaching out to Republican congressmen who may be reluctant to tackle the issue.

AN IMMIGRANT SUCCESS STORY

Carcaño, 59, grew up in Edinburg, Texas, not far from the U.S.-Mexico border. Her maternal grandmother was the first Protestant in the family.

The oldest of seven children, Carcaño felt an early call to ministry. But when at age 14 she confessed to her parents she was contemplating life in the church, her mother cried. Her father's reaction wasn't much better, commanding her, in a fit of anger, to go back to doing the dishes, Carcaño recalls.

Her father, however, also deeply influenced Cacaño's views on immigration. Although he initially came to the United States from Mexico in the 1940s under the Bracero Program that allowed the importation of temporary workers, he crossed the border illegally after the program ended because of financial hardship.

He was, Carcaño explained, detained, threatened and accused of dealing drugs.

"He would say to us, 'I've never even taken an aspirin. I didn't know what a pill looked like or a drug looked liked,'" Carcaño said. "The experience



Bishop Minerva Carcano from the Desert Southwest Conference of the United Methodist Church is among the marchers going to the Senate office buildings in support of the DREAM Act. Photo by Samuel Ahn, courtesy United Methodist News Service.

zona who were unaccustomed to living in a state that for decades had welcomed immigrants.

Traveling with other religious leaders, Carcaño says she also angered Arizona Sen. John McCain when she confronted him about the state's get-tough 2010 immigration bill, which allows police officers to check the immigration status of anyone they stop.

"A senator can be biting your head off," she said, "but you have to stand by your principles."

‘LOVE THEM AS YOURSELF’

Carcaño says she owes her work on immigration issues to her upbringing but also to Scripture and church teaching. She points, for example, to Leviticus 19, where God tells the Israelites that "the foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself."

Some, such as Harriett Jane Olson, chief executive officer of the 800,000-member United Methodist Women, praise Carcaño for "really boundary-breaking leadership that she has exercised in a region of the country where it hasn't always gone smoothly."

William B. Lawrence, dean of her alma mater at Perkins School of Theology, says Carcaño holds church members accountable for ministry for "those persons who live at the margins of society."

Others, however, say that Carcaño's views represent only a minority of the church. Mark Tooley, president of the conservative Washington-based Institute on Religion & Democracy, said Methodists are already defecting at an alarming rate, and the liberal teaching embodied by Carcaño and others is a main reason.

A 2010 survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found that white mainline Protestants (which includes, but isn't limited to, United Methodists) lean conservative on immigration reform: 40 percent want tighter border security as the top priority, compared to 17 percent who want a path to legal citizenship. The wide middle of the church — 40 percent — wants both.

When she was appointed president of the UMC's Western Jurisdiction College of Bishops, Carcaño promised to "challenge statements or actions that offend, denigrate, or exclude any person because of the color of their skin, their economic circumstance, their political persuasion, their gender or their sexual orientation."

Tooley said Carcaño's opinions on immigration align with the church's official positions. He says her opposition to the church's teaching against gay marriage and gay ministers does not.

But for Carcaño, it's all part of her belief in an egalitarian view of God's grace that should always be shared with those on the margins — of society or church life.

"It does me no good, it does the world no good if I'm a good Christian in a corner, in my bedroom, but do nothing to spread holiness out into the world," Carcaño said.

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Carcaño says she owes her work on immigration issues to her upbringing but also to Scripture and church teaching.

While Friday's meeting left the bishop with a sense that "immigration reform is indeed a very high priority for the president," she doesn't shy away from voicing her own critiques. For example, that there is still too much emphasis on securing the border, she says.

Carcaño believes immigration reform needs to include a way to reunite families that have been separated because of U.S. policies, and while Obama speaks of cracking down on employers who hire undocumented workers, she believes the labor rights of immigrants need to be respected.

In addition to her role as immigration spokesperson for the United Methodists' Council of Bishops, Carcaño leads the church's California-Pacific Conference, an area that covers much of Southern California, Hawaii and U.S. territories in the Pacific Ocean, such as Guam.

on the border really left him scarred for life."

After graduating from the University of Texas-Pan American in 1975, Carcaño earned a master's in the theology from Perkins School of Theology of Southern Methodist University in Dallas in 1979.

She has served churches across much of the American West, including Oregon and New Mexico, but she says her most challenging role came after she was elected bishop in 2004, when she presided over the church's Phoenix-based Desert Southwest Conference, an area that includes parts of Arizona, Nevada and California.

Phoenix proved to be a difficult place for Carcaño to practice what she refers to as contextualized ministry, or ministering to people based on their immediate needs. Carcaño says she immediately received enormous pushback from recent transplants to Ari-

Muslims embracing atheism often face a lonely journey

NEW YORK (RNS) There was a time in his life when Ibrahim Abdallah thought he was the only Muslim-turned-atheist in the world. Then, at a party, he met a fellow Egyptian and former Muslim, and while the other guests danced, they sat and talked.

And talked and talked. "I was so happy, and so shocked," Abdallah, 33, said. "We both felt, 'I am not the only one.' It was huge."

Now, several years later, Abdallah is on a mission to create the kind of safe space for questioning Islam and all matters of faith that he wishes he could have had.

Last May, he founded "Muslim-ish," a support group for questioning and former Muslims that meets under the auspices of Manhattan's Center For Inquiry, a humanist organization. The group has about 50 members, both cradle Muslims and converts, and meets twice a month in a secret location.

"Most of these people never saw another ex-Muslim before," Abdallah said near his Midtown office; bringing a reporter to a meeting was considered too dangerous for some members. "These are people who don't believe anymore and who have no support."

It's support they very much need, Abdallah said, because

Muslims who abandon their faith face challenges not faced by those who leave other religions. Divorce and disowning are common, as is the threat of physical violence. Some more conservative Muslims believe Islam sanctions the killing of apostates (those who abandon the faith) and blasphemers (those who belittle Islam, the Prophet Muhammad or other Muslims).

The argument for the death penalty is usually based on a section of the hadith, the collected sayings of Muhammad. One hadith states, "The Prophet said: whoever discards his religion, kill him." But some Islamic scholars vehemently disagree, and point to the Quran itself, which says, "For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."

There are currently eight countries that punish apostasy with the death penalty, including Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan and Iran. And while the U.S. protects freedom of conscience and religion, some Muslims who emigrate from countries with no similar guarantees discriminate against, or seek to punish, the atheists in their communities.

There have been several high-profile incidents targeting atheists in the Islamic world. In 2010, Walid Husayin was ar-

rested by Palestinian police after posting anti-Islamic statements on his "Proud Atheist" blog. He spent 10 months in jail after his family turned him in. Indonesian atheist Alexander Aan remains in jail after he was attacked by a mob for writing "God does not exist" on his Facebook page.

Still, Muslims who have become atheists are beginning to speak out. In 2007, the Council of Ex-Muslims was established in England to support those leaving Islam. It encourages ex-Muslims to go public to lessen the stigma of unbelief, and works to educate local police and social welfare workers about the threats they face. There are similar groups in Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany.

Muslim-ish is growing beyond its New York birthplace. A new group was recently established in Dearborn, Mich. — home to the largest population of Muslims in the U.S. — and other groups are forming in Chicago and Washington, D.C. An online version now meets via Google+ and is drawing people from Alabama, Florida and overseas.

"They are having the kinds of conversations that I would have liked to have had," Abdallah said.

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World Religion

A rose by any other name ...

Tradition allows the new pope to choose a name

By CALEB BELL c. 2013 Religion News Service

One of the first responsibilities of a new pope is to decide on a name for himself. Choosing a new moniker is a decision that's tied up in history, tradition and more than a little symbolic value.

In papal tradition, newly-elected pontiffs choose a name to identify themselves during their reigns. The tradition has been around for centuries, even though no law or rule requires that a pope pick a new name.

Chester Gillis, a professor of theology at Georgetown University, said that the pope's choice of name offers an early indicator of what his papacy might be like.

"The pope's choice will reflect his own personal spirituality, but he knows it will send a political message," Gillis said.

Gillis said the pope's new

name could also indicate the theological direction he wants to take during his reign. Popes usually choose names to honor a predecessor or to symbolically link their reigns with that of a past pontiff.

"Whatever name is chosen, there will be spiritual logic to it," said Michele Dillon, a Catholic scholar at the University of New Hampshire. "There's a pattern whereby the pope takes the name of someone who was spiritually significant to that person."

Though no one knows for sure, Dillon said there are a few names that may or may not be likely for the next pope.

Benedict XVII is an unlikely choice because it could cause confusion between the current pope and the pope emeritus, Benedict XVI.

There is a chance the new pope could adopt the name John XXIV due to the Catholic Church's emphasis on "new evangelization." Pope John XXIII is already on the path to sainthood, is known as "Good Pope John" and was a revolutionary figure who convened the Second Vatican Council



Newly elected Pope Francis appears on the central balcony of St. Peter's Basilica on Wednesday, (March 13) in Vatican City, Vatican. RNS photo by Andrea Sabbadini

(1962-1965) that modernized the church.

Benedict XVI took the name of Benedict XV, who guided the Catholic Church through World War I. "Treading in his footsteps, I would like to place my ministry at the service of reconciliation and harmony between persons and peoples," Benedict XVI said in his first general audience.

Benedict XVI also sought to honor St. Benedict, a major influence in early European Christianity.

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla became John Paul II in 1978 to honor his short-lived predecessor John Paul I, who had picked

his name from his two immediate predecessors, John XXIII and Paul VI.

Adopting a papal name became common in the 10th century, though there are examples of popes changing their names centuries before.

John II was the first pope to change his name, in 533. His birth name was Mercury, but in order to avoid naming a pagan god the head of the Holy See, he changed it.

The last pope to use his own birth name was Marcellus II in 1555.

One name, however, is off-limits: Peter is considered sacrosanct in honor of the first pope, who tradition holds was also the longest-serving.

Papal names are a long-standing tradition

The 10 most popular Papal names

1. John (23)
2. Benedict (16)
3. Gregory (16)
4. Clement (14)
5. Leo (13)
6. Innocent (13)
7. Pius (12)
8. Stephen (9, although some debate 10)
9. Boniface (9)
10. Alexander and Urban (tied at 8 each)

The 10 most unique Papal names

1. Telesphorus (c. 125-136 A.D.)
2. Eleutherius (c. 174-189 A.D.)
3. Zephyrinus (198-217 A.D.)
4. Eutychian (275-283 A.D.)
5. Miltiades (311-314 A.D.)
6. Hormisdas (514-523 A.D.)

Jews worldwide see an ally in Pope Francis

By LAUREN MARKOE c. 2013 Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS) Jews worldwide welcomed newly elected Pope Francis as a friend on Wednesday (March 13), and pointed in particular to his sympathetic and strong reaction to the 1994 bombing of a Jewish center in his native Argentina -- the deadliest bombing in the country's history.

"As far as I have heard and read in the few minutes since he was elected pope, he has shown deep signs of respect and friendship towards the Jews," said Riccardo Di Segni, the chief rabbi of Rome. "It's a good starting point."

As Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, Francis "has had a warm relationship with the Jewish community of Argentina, and enjoyed close friendships with many prominent rabbis," said Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee.

Bergoglio's statements after the Buenos Aires bombing still

resonate 20 years later with Jews in Argentina and beyond, in part because the crime remains under what many consider a purposefully thwarted investigation, and continues to make headlines in Argentina, Israel and the Jewish press.

When Islamic militants -- widely thought to be from Iranian-backed Hezbollah -- attacked the Jewish center, Bergoglio "was forthright not only in his condemnation of the act but in his solidarity with the Jewish community," said Rosen.

Just two months ago, the government of Argentina announced a joint Argentinian-Iranian commission to investigate the nearly 20-year-old suicide bombing, which killed 85 and wounded 300.

Rosen said he is unaware of any statement Bergoglio made regarding the new commission, which strikes many Jews as allowing the criminals to investigate the crime.

But "I am told that he is not popular with the present government because he takes strong, principled stands on many issues," Rosen said.

Jewish-Catholic relations

have improved markedly since the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), when the church took a firm stance against anti-Semitism and the age-old teaching that Jews were responsible for the death of Christ.

Relations suffered a few bruises, however, under Pope Benedict XVI, especially when he allowed expanded use of the old Latin Mass, which includes a Good Friday prayer that the "veil" be lifted from Jewish hearts. After Jews complained, Benedict tweaked the prayer.

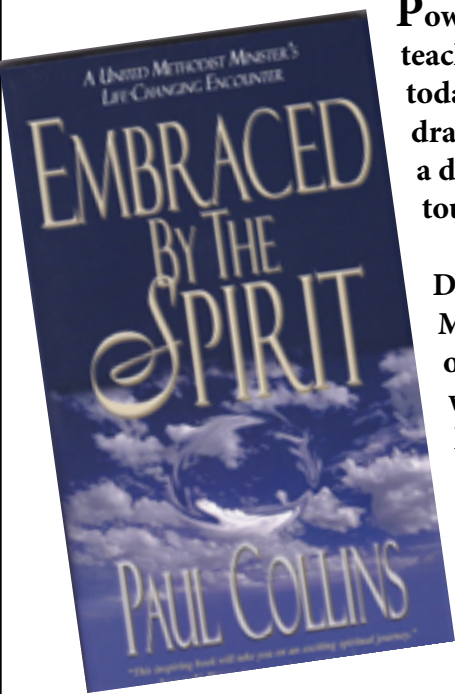
Benedict was also widely criticized when he lifted the excommunications of four break-away traditionalist bishops, including one, Richard Williamson, who turned out to be a vocal Holocaust denier. Benedict later admitted an Internet search could have turned up Williamson's background.

Benedict resigned on Feb. 28, citing his failing health.

"We welcome Pope Francis I to his new role as leader of the Catholic Church," B'nai Brith International President Allan

Continued on page 7
See Jews see ally

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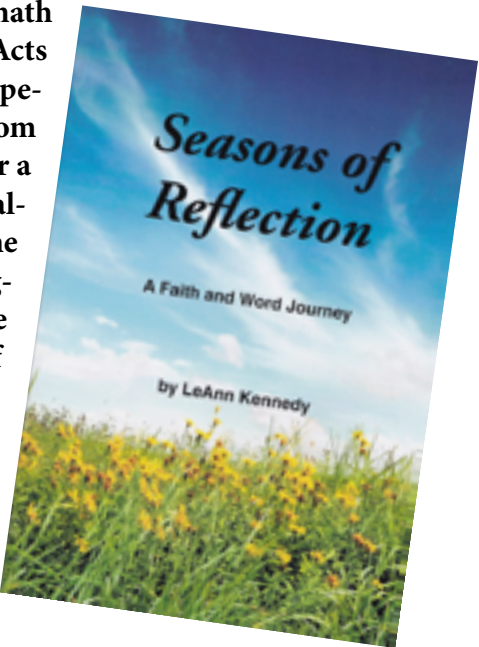
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Justin Welby: new archbishop of Canterbury

As the 105 archbishop of the Church of England, he will become spiritual leader of 77 million Anglicans worldwide

By TREVOR GRUNDY c. 2013 Religion News Service
CANTERBURY, England (RNS) Justin Welby, the 57-year old former oil executive who quit the world of high finance in 1992 to become a priest, was enthroned Thursday (March 21) as the 105th archbishop of Canterbury and spiritual leader of the world's 77 million Anglicans.

With Prince Charles and Camilla the Duchess of Cornwall looking on, Welby struck his pastoral staff three times on the door of the ancient Canterbury Cathedral, seeking admission to assume his throne in a ceremony that mixed age-old pageantry with contemporary praise and worship songs.

"Who are you and why do you request entry?" a young woman from the congregation asked, greeting Welby at the door.

"I am Justin, a servant of Jesus Christ, and I come as one seeking the grace of God, to travel with you in his service together," he responded.

Welby was led up to the altar where the Church of England's No. 2 official, Ugandan-born Archbishop of York John Sentamu, asked Welby to swear an oath of faithfulness to the Church of England and to its supreme governor, Queen Elizabeth II.

The cathedral's dean then presented Welby with the Canterbury Gospels, brought to England by St. Augustine on the orders of Pope Gregory the Great in 597 A.D. He bent low and kissed the ancient book in

reverence.
Welby was then enthroned on two seats: the diocesan throne as head of the Diocese of Canterbury, and then the upright stone chair of St. Augustine to signify his position of "Primate of All England."

Welby, a married father of five, had been a bishop in Durham for only a year when he was tapped to succeed Rowan Williams as Britain's top churchman. He inherits a church wracked by internal divisions over the ordination of women bishops and continuing strains within the larger Anglican Communion over divisive issues of sexuality.

Welby made no specific mention in his sermon of the challenges that await him, but spoke in his sermon of not being afraid of new things, fresh challenges.

"Fear imprisons us and stops us being fully human," he said, adding: "The present challenges of environment and economy can only be faced with extraordinary courage."

He said that the church transforms itself "when it takes the risks of renewal in prayer, of reconciliation and of confident declaration of the good news of Jesus Christ."

Thursday's ceremony marked the second major transfer of power this week, coming two days after Pope Francis was formally installed at the Vatican. The men sent greetings to each other.

The new archbishop smiled and occasionally laughed as he watched African Anglicans



With Prince Charles and Camilla the Duchess of Cornwall looking on, Justin Welby struck his pastoral staff three times on the door of the ancient Canterbury Cathedral, seeking admission to assume his throne in a ceremony that mixed age-old pageantry with contemporary praise and worship songs. Photo courtesy Anglican Communion News Service/The Press Association

dance and sing. Another group from India read poetry and a Christian group from Burundi in central Africa blessed the new church leader. Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori, the only woman to lead a national branch of the Anglican Communion, also attended.

Many in the British press

Did “Atheist” shoes suffer persecution?

As the less hip among you may not know, there is an über-cool company in Berlin that specializes in neo-Bauhaus footwear with names like Kit-ten Testicle Grey, Ocean Fish, Höllenfeuer (Hellfire) Red, and Naughty Schnitzel Pilz. They come with either the Darwin Love Sole or the Ich Bin Atheist Sole. For under \$200 you can get yourself a pair. The company? ATHEIST SHOES, of course.

It will astonish no one who's been following the rise of the Nones that sales in the U.S. have been pretty darn brisk, but last year word reached the company that packages were taking longer to arrive than they should. Sometimes they didn't arrive at all. American customers began suspecting that the problem was that ATHEIST-branded packing tape. Could it be that the U.S. Postal Service was holding up the merchandise because of its manifest godlessness?

Good Germans that they are, the company decided to conduct A Serious Empirical Experiment. They sent 2 packages to each of 89 customers in 49 states, one sealed with the branded tape and the other with neutral. Sure enough, the ATHEIST-taped packages took an average of three days longer to arrive, and of 10 that didn't arrive at all, nine were ATHEIST-taped.

speculated over the role of a woman, Archdeacon Sheila Watson, in formally installing Welby in the Canterbury throne. Cathedral spokesman Christopher Robinson said there's no larger message to read into Watson's role. "The Archdeacon of Canterbury has always fulfilled this part of the ceremony," he said. "At this enthronement, the person involved simply happens to be a woman."

Welby's friends say he is a skilled negotiator who is able to change his mind easily on explosive subjects, and a man who brings a businessman's eye and fiscal savvy at a time when the church is facing big financial challenges.

Williams, who left the post to return to teaching at Oxford, had said his predecessor would need "the constitution of an ox and the skin of a rhinoceros."

While he remains opposed

to a new British law that would sanction same-sex marriage, Welby surprised the church's pro-gay lobby by telling a reporter from the BBC that some gay couples have loving, stable and monogamous relationships of "stunning" quality.

Despite his closeness to the British establishment and his considerable personal wealth, he is regarded as a "man of the people." Soon after being appointed, Welby annoyed senior politicians by speaking out against enormous salaries and

bonuses paid to bankers. He has also condemned proposed cuts to the government's welfare program.

While some observers see him trying to position the church as a kind of "unofficial opposition" to the center-right government led by Prime Minister David Cameron, Welby said he only seeks to "be clear about what Christian values are. Being political is necessary. Being party political is something you avoid."

Jews see ally in pope Francis

continued from page 6

J. Jacobs said in a statement. "Catholic-Jewish relations had remained a focus of Pope Benedict XVI and we look forward to continuing the solid foundation that already exists for interfaith dialogue."

Other Jewish leaders and scholars noted that Francis' relatively advanced age -- 76 -- is important to the Jewish community, in that the Holocaust happened during his lifetime and can conjure memories for him of the horrors to which anti-Semitism can lead.

"There were many people who said that after Benedict that there would not be a pope who lived through the Second World War," said Rosen of the AJC.

David Novak, a professor of Jewish Studies and philosophy at the University of Toronto, said he hopes Francis improves on his predecessor's prioritization of Jewish-Catholic relations.

Benedict does not have a bad record with the Jews, Novak said, but he didn't give it as much attention as Pope John Paul II, who called Jews the "elder brethren" of faith.

"I would like to see a kind of renewal of Jewish-Catholic relations which I think reached a high point during the pontificate of John Paul II," said No-

vak, who has written extensively on the relationship between the two faiths.

Among other overtures to the Jews under John Paul, the Holy See recognized the State of Israel in 1997. He was the first pope to visit Auschwitz, to bless Israel, and to apologize for Christian acts against Jews.

"If the Catholics don't canonize him," Novak said, "the Jews should."

Jewish groups also said Francis would pay close attention to social justice issues on which Jews and Catholics can work together.

"We look forward to our ongoing partnership with the Catholic church in combating poverty, a great legacy of the Pope during his tenure as Cardinal of Buenos Aires," said Rabbi Steve Gutow, president of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, in a statement.

"In a world so awfully divided by wealth and opportunity, may his teaching and example help to heal our broken world and bring us closer to a time when no person goes to bed hungry."

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Religion and Life

Delayed marriage fallout: More unwed births, report says

By KIM PAINTER c. 2013 Religion News Service

First comes baby, then comes marriage? That is the new norm for many middle-class young Americans -- and they and their children are paying a price, says a new report.

With 48 percent of first births now outside of marriage, "today's unmarried twenty-something moms are the new teen mothers," says the report, released today by the National Marriage Project, the Relate Institute and the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy.

The report says reviving cultural support for earlier marriage may be part of the solution, but some experts question

says Bradford Wilcox, the sociologist who directs the project.

Among young women with high school diplomas, 58 percent of first births are now outside marriage, the report says. For high-school dropouts it's 83 percent; for college-educated women it's 12 percent. The report notes that 54 percent of young women are high school graduates; 37 percent are college graduates.

Overall, the median marriage age is now 27 for women, 29 for men. But the median age at which a woman has her first baby is 26, the report says.

Young people delay marriage to finish their educations, launch their careers and try to achieve economic security.

married have more life satisfaction."

For children, the cost of having unmarried parents can be instability. According to the report: 39 percent of young unmarried parents who start out living together break up before their child is 5 years old; just 13 percent of married parents split so soon. Such upheaval hurts children, many studies have found.

The report suggests several remedies, including economic and education policy shifts that will make financial stability attainable for more young people. But it also says some who might otherwise marry are now being discouraged by parents, friends and popular culture.

"The broader culture should respect the choice of twenty-somethings to marry, especially those who have reached their mid-twenties, provided that they are in a good relationship," the report says.

But marriage "may not be such a good deal" for less-educated couples, says Susan Brown, co-director of the National Center for Family and Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University. "We do know that people with lower levels of education who get married are more likely to get divorced."

Brown, who did some of the research cited in the report but did not help write it, adds that



By the beginning of the last decade, a majority of births to unmarried women were to mothers who were living with the child's father. Just two decades earlier, only a third of those births were to cohabiting couples. Some studies indicate that living together before marriage does not improve the chances that a marriage will last.

Among women with high school diplomas, 58 percent of first births are now outside marriage, the report says. For high-school dropouts it's 83 percent; for college-educated women it's 12 %.

that approach.

The National Marriage Project, based at the University of Virginia, has been sounding alarms about the growing disconnect between marriage and parenthood for a while. But the report is the first to make clear that a "tipping point" has been reached for many Americans in the middle class -- those who have at least a high school education but no college degree,

Marriage is "something they do after they have all their other ducks in a row," according to the report. In general, the delay works out well for college-educated young people who also delay having children, it adds.

The benefits of delayed marriage can include higher incomes for women and lower divorce rates, it notes. But there also are costs for young people, says Wilcox: "The ones who are

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AA's Spiritual Roots continued from front page

Over the past two years, umbrella organizations in Indianapolis and Toronto have delisted groups that replaced AA's 12 steps to recovery with secular alternatives. More than 90 unofficial, self-described "agnostic AA" groups now meet regularly in the United States.

dict whose 2012 memoir, "The Privileged Addict," has an entire chapter on "Watered Down AA."

For Peabody and many addicts he's sponsored, the key to becoming "a free man" has been rigorous and urgent application of the 12 steps, from

committed to service.

Spiritual practices aren't always necessary for recovery, research suggests, but they can help.

"Prayer and meditation increase as a function of AA participation," said John Kelly, associate director of the Center

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“This is the solution? I just keep coming, drinking crappy coffee and listening to people bitch and moan? I knew that wasn’t going to work.”

Charles Peabody, a 35-year-old former alcoholic and drug addict who says spirituality is key to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Faith language in AA goes back to the group's founders, Bill Wilson and Robert Holbrook Smith. Six of the 12 steps, as prescribed in the original 1939 "Big Book," refer to God either explicitly or implicitly. Step three, for example, cites "a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

Now some worry the founders' efforts to be as inclusive as possible are being undermined by attempts to ensure, as one Indianapolis AA newsletter put it, that "AA remains undiluted."

"In the past, there was a great deal of elasticity and tolerance in terms of different views," said Roger C., a Toronto agnostic whose book "The Little Book: A Collection of Alternative 12 Steps" came out in January, and who doesn't use his last name to protect his privacy. "But there's been an increasingly rigidity from those who say, 'It's got to be this way and only this way.' That has alienated a great number of people."

But others argue that AA seldom offers the tough love that alcoholics need. Too many meetings ignore the 12 steps posted on their walls, said Charles Peabody, a 35-year-old former alcoholic and drug ad-

taking fearless moral inventory to making painful amends. Yet mainstream AA meetings routinely do a "disservice," he argues, by leading attendees to believe that meetings and sponsors -- rather than God and concrete action steps -- are what they need most in recovery.

"In mainstream AA, you hear either the war stories or the sob stories," said Peabody, who lives in Beverly, Mass. "This is the solution? I just keep coming, drinking crappy coffee and listening to people bitch and moan? I knew that wasn't going to work."

Research suggests other factors can be more important than vigorous application of the 12 steps. Kaskutas says the strongest predictors of sustained sobriety through AA are whether a person has a sponsor, has a social network that consists of non-drinkers and is

he says, surrender to God is an indispensable step.

"People [at AA meetings] are like, 'We don't need God in here, leave God out of it,'" Smith said. "But the truth is, AA is a religious program... It's Christian principles, the whole book. So it's like, if you guys want to go to meetings and leave God out of it, then go ahead. But don't call it AA because it's not."

Roger C. brings a different concern. Those who insist on doing the original 12 steps, he says, are apt to alienate nonbelievers, who might never get the help they need.

Some get turned off "when someone comes up to you as a new member of AA and tells you, 'if you don't find God, you're going to die a drunk,'" Roger C. says. "That rigidity is very religious, very intolerant and very hurtful to a number of recovering alcoholics who are looking for an avenue to get sober."

Offering multiple pathways to recovery bodes well for alcoholics, Kaskutas says, because what works for one person doesn't always work for someone else.

"Because there's this ethic of take what you need and leave the rest, it puts the attendee in a position of being able to form a program that is palatable to them," Kaskutas says. "AA is doing just fine."

This story originally appeared in USA Today.

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For Hollywood couple, “The Bible” miniseries is a ‘labor of love’

LOS ANGELES (RNS) Before actress Roma Downey met her husband, her “Touched by an Angel” co-star Della Reese had a bit of advice.

“Baby, you need to pray that God will choose a partner for you,” Downey recalled Reese telling her. “Maybe in the past you didn’t choose so well and you have to let God choose for you. And let your prayer be that you will know him when he gets here.”

So when Downey first spotted Emmy Award-winning producer Mark Burnett in a salon -- he was getting a hair cut, she was getting a pedicure -- it was a bit more than love at first sight.

“When I met Mark, I had an inner-knowing,” Downey said. “There have been times since then that I can’t help but wonder, if it were for such a time, as this, that we met.”

As they approach their sixth wedding anniversary, the Hollywood heavyweights are sharing their faith with the world in a 10-hour docudrama, “The Bible,” which will air on the History Channel on Sunday nights, starting March 3 through Easter.

The project has received rave early reviews from evan-

gelicals, who are a key part of the film’s marketing plan. Starting with Noah telling the story of creation aboard his ark, the film weaves through biblical epics and the life of Christ and the early apostles.

The series has the special effects Cecil B. DeMille could have only dreamed of when he cast Charlton Heston as Moses in 1956. And it is a decidedly softer, gentler depiction of Christian history than Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of the Christ.”

While they describe “The Bible” as a “love story” between God and mankind, the project is also rooted in their own love story.

Downey has made a number of made-for-TV movies since “Touched by an Angel” wrapped in 2003, and Burnett is an executive producer whose credits include “Survivor,” “Celebrity Apprentice” and “The Voice.” That success has allowed the two to take on “The Bible” project as a personal passion.

“It certainly felt like more of a mission for them than a business opportunity,” said Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family and an adviser on the series. “They’re doing this as a labor of love.”



Actress Roma Downey and husband, producer Mark Burnett pose with cast members of the “The Bible” miniseries that aired on the History Channel during the Easter season. The miniseries gave the couple the opportunity to “share their faith with the world.” Photo Courtesy The History Channel.

Downey, who plays Jesus’ mother Mary in “The Bible,” is better known for her faith than her husband. She grew up Catholic in a divided Northern Ireland, raised by a devout father after her mother died.

Her performance as the angel Monica on “Touched by an Angel” was genuine, according to Lisa Dolab, who became friends with Downey on the sets of the show. “Roma’s deep faith and love for God shined through her portrayal of Mon-

ica,” she said.

“I have tried throughout my career to make choices that are pleasing to God,” said Downey, who attends Mass at Our Lady of Malibu, a Catholic parish. “It probably began in my childhood, wanting to make choices in my life that were pleasing to my own father and by extension to my heavenly Father.”

After “Touched by an Angel,” Downey produced a faith-based DVD and book series for children called “Little Angels.” She also earned a master’s degree in spiritual psychology from University of Santa Monica.

“My whole life I’ve been interested in human behavior,” she said. “I think that perhaps it’s one of the reason I became an actor-to have an opportunity

to explore why we do what we do.”

Burnett’s reality television work might be considered a study in human behavior of a different sort. He had been nervous, he said, about how his secular work would be received in churches as the couple traveled around the country to promote “The Bible.” But he found that Christians were excited to talk about his shows.

Entertainment has the power to add or diminish value-or like Burnett’s work, it can be neutral, family-friendly entertainment, Downey said. “I don’t think either one of us have ever been a part of anything that had that negativity.”

In the Bible, Burnett most relates to the Apostle Paul. “I feel like Paul was warrior-like

and the least likely person, in many ways, to be called, and it took a person like Paul to go 5,000 miles” to spread the gospel, he said.

During a webinar with church leaders, Burnett urged his fellow Christians to be more like Paul and more aggressive with their message. “This is our story and we have to make some noise,” he said. “If we don’t make some noise, I have news for you: television networks aren’t going to come seeking this kind of programming.”

Burnett hasn’t always shared his wife’s understanding of the Bible. He grew up in England with a Presbyterian mother and Catholic father, and felt “like the stories in the Bible were very rule-based and probably a little threatening.” With age and Downey’s influence, he has come to see the Bible as a story that shows God’s love for humanity.

“Imagine, I married Roma Downey, I married an angel,” he laughed. “You know Roma, and Roma is so gentle and so full of love and kindness and faith.”

They were both previously married-Downey has a daughter and Burnett has two sons from their previous relationships. In 2007, they were married by Reese, who is also a minister. “The Bible” project has spanned three and a half of their six years of marriage.

“Working on this project together,” she said, “has deepened our marriage, our love and our faith.”

North Dakota Bills Restrict Abortion and Create Personhood Amendment

Oliver Burrowsm RN-R correspondent. On arch 26th, North Dakota Governor Jack Dalrymple signed three bills which create the most far-reaching abortion restrictions in the country and present a legal challenge to the United States Supreme Court decision in Roe v. Wade legalizing abortion. These laws come shortly after the state of Arkansas adopted what was then the most stringent abortion limits, banning the procedure at 12 weeks of pregnancy.

In addition to signing the law banning abortions after a fetal heartbeat is detectable (which can be as early as six weeks into a pregnancy), Dalrymple signed two other laws requiring

doctors performing abortions to have admitting privileges at a local hospital and preventing abortions in cases of gender preference and genetic abnormality.

The signing of these three laws comes one week after the North Dakota legislature approved an amendment to amend the state’s constitution to state that life begins at conception, a move that would give the pre-born the rights of a person and effectively outlawing virtually all abortions. This amendment asserts that “the inalienable right to life of every human being at any stage of development must be recognized and defended” and will be on the 2014 ballot. Similar amendments in

Mississippi and Colorado were voted down.

Dalrymple signed the three bills less than 24 hours after they reached his desk. Other states considering such legislation include Kansas and Ohio. Opponents of the bills predict that they will be invalidated by the Supreme Court. The bills are scheduled to take effect August 1, and the governor has asked the legislature to appropriate the monies needed to defend the legislation against the expected court challenges.

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Religion in Society

Opponents of gay marriage say they’re no bigots

WASHINGTON Richard Wolf, USA Today

They are moms and dads, authors and activists, a former police officer and a former single mom. They're black and white and Hispanic. One's a Roman Catholic archbishop, another an evangelical minister. Many have large families -- including gay members.

They are among the leading opponents of gay marriage, or as they prefer to be called, defenders of traditional marriage. And they're trying to stop an increasingly popular movement as it approaches two dates with history this week at the Supreme Court.

At times, it can seem a lonely battle. Outspent and lately out-hustled by highly organized gay rights organizations, opponents have struggled to get their story out. They're portrayed as bigots, likened to the racists and sexists of yesteryear. Some have been compared with hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

For men of the cloth such as Roman Catholic Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone, nothing could be further from the truth. "Those who believe that every human society since the beginning of the human race has believed about marriage, and is clearly the case from nature itself, will be regarded, and treated, as the next class of big-ots," he said. "That's untrue, and it's not kind, and it doesn't seem to lead to a live and let live plu-

One of the nation's leading female opponents is Penny Nance, president of Concerned Women for America, founded in 1979 by Beverly LaHaye. Fighting gay marriage is the hardest issue for the group because it's so "complicated and deeply personal," she said, but adds, "We believe that we must stand for truth no matter who it offends."

Leading a group of conservative black pastors is the Rev. William Owens of Memphis, Tenn., whose eight children range from age 50 to 4 months. For him, opposing same-sex marriage is part of the battle to rebuild African-American families after decades of absentee fathers. "We already have enough problems," he said.

New York state Sen. Ruben Diaz, one of the nation's most prominent Hispanic opponents of gay marriage, is used to tilting at windmills. An evangelical minister who has compared abortion with the Holocaust, he was the lone Senate Democrat to oppose the gay marriage law signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo in 2011.

What ties this diverse group together is a belief that legalizing more same-sex marriages will harm the family, particularly children, while encouraging homosexuality and infringing on educational and religious liberty.

Their battle will culminate Tuesday (March 26) with a

ence as the Catholic bishops, and Cordileone is their point man. He's a baby boomer from Southern California who takes the assignment seriously.

To Cordileone, 56, the effort combines a respect for ancient civilizations as well as an understanding of modern families. He's aware many of his flock disagree with the church's teachings on the issue, particularly in San Francisco, but he sees no conflict.

"My job as an archbishop is to teach the truths of our faith and the truths of the natural moral law, and whatever challenges that entails, I embrace with enthusiasm," he said.

The modern-day version of that history lesson, Cordileone said, could be seen from his cathedral residence overlooking Lake Merritt when he served as bishop of Oakland.

"It's very beautiful," he recalls. "But across the lake, as the streets go from 1st Avenue to the city limits at 100th Avenue, those 100 blocks consist entirely of inner-city neighborhoods plagued by fatherlessness and all the suffering it produces: youth violence, poverty, drugs, crime, gangs, school dropout and incredibly high murder rates.

"Walk those blocks and you can see with your own eyes: a society that is careless about getting fathers and mothers together to raise their children in one loving family is causing



Jim Rowe of Nottingham, Pa., listens to speeches at the March for Marriage rally on the National Mall after opponents of same-sex marriage marched to the Supreme Court. Throngs of supporters and opponents gathered outside the high court as it considered cases about same-sex marriage. RNS photo by Adelle M. Banks

Diaz: 'This is what I preach'

In some respects, Owens and Diaz defy the common perception that African-Americans and Hispanics are overwhelmingly liberal. It's a perception these men dispute.

The 74-year-old Owens, president of the Coalition of African-American Pastors, a Co-sponsor of Tuesday's march, contends blacks always have been "conservative Christians."

"I go from a biblical standpoint and a social standpoint, knowing the damage that has already been done to the black family," he said. The threat of same-sex marriage, he added, represents "another nail in the coffin for black families."

Once divorced himself, Owens acknowledges that legalizing gay marriage won't directly affect him. Still, he says, "We just don't know where it's going."

Diaz, an ordained minister in the Church of God who chairs the New York Hispanic Clergy Organization, is bringing 25 to 30 buses with gay marriage opponents to Washington for Tuesday's rally. Four years ago, he assembled a crowd of 20,000 to protest New York's burgeoning gay marriage movement.

"The Hispanic community is more conservative than what people think," he says. "Call it whatever you want -- it's a conservative religious movement."

Diaz says he has received death threats because of his stance against same-sex marriage, but he proudly refers to his efforts as "a calling." Despite those efforts, the conservative Democrat says he gets along just fine with his gay brother, nephew and granddaughter.

"We have a very loving family," he says. "I love them. They love me. We help each other. They know that this is the Bible -- this is what I preach."

Perkins: 'Collateral damage to other freedoms'

For a man who just turned

50, Perkins has been a conservative warrior most of his adult life. The issue of gay marriage is just the latest battle.

A former Louisiana politician, police officer and TV reporter, Perkins lost a race for the U.S. Senate in 2002. He became president of the Family Research Council the following year.

In 2008, Perkins called California's Proposition 8 more important than the presidential election. In 2010, he opposed doing away with the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Last year, a man upset by the council's stance on gay rights issues shot an employee there before being restrained. Perkins is accustomed to controversy in the name of conservative causes.

As Perkins sees it, "there will be collateral damage to other freedoms" if gay marriage becomes more common. He cites recent cases involving parents who don't want their children to learn about same-sex marriage in school and photographers who don't want to work at same-sex weddings.

Like Perkins, Nance graduated from Liberty University, an evangelical Christian school in Lynchburg, Va., and has roots in religious conservatism. Like him, she bemoans federal data showing 42 percent of children are born to unmarried women.

And like single parents, gay couples offer only one side of the gender equation, she said. "If this new union is to be treated in the same way as marriage, ignoring what the social data says, then you must teach it in the same manner in schools," Nance said. "And to say that children do not need a mother and a father is simply a lie."

Despite her beliefs, Nance -- like all the other opponents -- has gay friends and family. "We feel for them, and we care deeply about their well-being," she said, yet she worries that government acceptance will boost their numbers.

"When the law rewards something through licensing or benefits, there is always increased activity," Nance says. "We see this with marijuana in California, or gambling, prostitution, abortion or any vice that is legalized. Government endorsement lures people who would abstain otherwise."

Brown: 'The people are definitely on our side'

The group responsible for coordinating these and other opponents is the National Organization for Marriage, led originally by Gallagher and

now by Brown.

Compared with the gay rights movement, the group is dwarfed. It spent just \$150,000 lobbying in the past two years, according to the nonpartisan Center for Responsive Politics, compared with \$3 million by the Human Rights Campaign and \$650,000 by the group Freedom to Marry.

Even so, Brown notes, opponents helped to pass laws and voter initiatives against gay marriage in 38 states. Nine states and the District of Columbia allow same-sex marriage -- including three states where voters approved it last fall.

"The people are definitely on our side," Brown says. "The fight is not over. We have not lost the Supreme Court."

Since the Family Research Council shooting, Brown's organization has hired an armed guard in its Washington office, and hecklers are a common problem. Brown, however, says he's not intimidated.

He says he's been influenced by preachers of equality such as Martin Luther King Jr. and believes in "the profound worth of every human being." But he's had trouble maintaining past friendships with gays who don't agree with his position on the issue.

"It's definitely put a strain on the relationships," he said. "Those friendships are not the same as they were before."

Gallagher came to the issue from an unusual starting point -- as a single mother of a child born out of wedlock.

"I didn't really see why you had to be married," she says of her college years and early adulthood. What she found was that "it's extremely difficult to be an unwed mother, which is not news now."

Like Brown, she remains optimistic about banning gay marriage in the states and the courts. But even in defeat, she says, the opposition will grow stronger, much like the abortion opposition after the Supreme Court's 1973 ruling that legalized abortion.

"I don't believe in inevitability," Gallagher said. "We make the future happen, and we're in the process of making a decision."

(Richard Wolf writes for USA Today.)

Presidents Obama's Easter message to the nation

"This weekend, Michelle and I join our fellow Christians here at home and around the world in marking Good Friday and celebrating Easter. These Holy Days are a time to reflect on the momentous sacrifice that Jesus Christ made for each of us, and to celebrate the triumph of the Resurrection and His gift of grace. It is a time for renewed hope amidst continued challenges. It's also a time to ponder the common values that unite us -- to have compassion for all and to treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves. As we embrace our loved ones and give thanks for our blessings, we wish all who celebrate with us a blessed Easter."

They're portrayed as bigots, likened to the racists and sexists of yesteryear. Some have been compared with hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. "That's untrue, and it's not kind, and it doesn't seem to lead to a 'live and let live' pluralism."

Roman Catholic Archbishop Salvatore Cordileone

ralism."

From his new post in San Francisco, a bastion of gay and lesbian activism, Cordileone chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' committee on the defense of marriage. He's one of the nation's leading opponents of gay marriage and is buttressed by a diverse crowd:

At the tip of the spear is the National Organization for Marriage, led by Brian Brown, a father of eight who travels the nation speaking at rallies opposing gay marriage. He succeeded Maggie Gallagher, a renowned conservative writer and speaker who warns about "losing American civilization."

The Family Research Council, headed by Tony Perkins, has been labeled a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center for "defaming gays and lesbians." Perkins, a father of five, authored the nation's first "covenant marriage" bill as a Louisiana state legislator in an effort to combat no-fault divorces.

"March for Marriage" in the nation's capital, the same day the Supreme Court kicks off two days of oral arguments that could change the face of marriage in America. California's Proposition 8 ban on gay marriage will be addressed first in a case that could affect other states as well, followed by the federal Defense of Marriage Act's denial of government benefits to same-sex spouses.

As polls show larger and larger majorities of Americans favoring gay marriage, the opponents recognize they might be losing the battle of public opinion.

"Are we bucking the tide when it comes to cultural elites?" Brown says, before answering his own question. "Of course. We know that."

Cordileone: A bitterly polarized country

No group opposing gay marriage carries as much influ-

enormous heartache."

Ask this San Diego native if he has gay friends and the answer is, "Of course!" His views on gay marriage don't cause heartache in those relationships, he said, because his friends know him.

"It's a lot harder to be hateful or prejudiced against a person, or group of people, that one knows personally," he said. "When there is personal knowledge and human interaction, the barriers of prejudice and preconceived ideas come down."

Regardless of what rulings the Supreme Court hands down this summer, Cordileone warns that the debate is not over.

"Just as Roe v. Wade did not end the conversation about abortion, so a ruling that tries to import same-sex marriage into our Constitution is not going to end the marriage debate, but intensify it," he said. "We will have a bitterly polarized country divided on the marriage issue for years if not generations to come."

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Barna Group Research shows most Americans are concerned about restrictions in religious freedom

Over 50% of adults surveyed expressed concern over the state of religious freedom in the next five years.

January 18, 2013 – From Louie Giglio’s withdrawal from the Inauguration Day prayer, to Hobby Lobby’s refusal to pay for health insurance that covers potentially abortion-inducing medicines, to President Obama’s newly decreed January 16 as “Religious Freedom Day,” the question of religious liberty and just how far it stretches and how much it covers is a media topic du jour.

A new study conducted by Barna Group shows millions of adults—particularly active Protestants—are concerned religious liberties are under threat. The research, conducted in partnership with Clapham Group, included 1,008 adults from across the religious spectrum, representing the nation’s population from the most active to the most skeptical. Here are five observations about the findings:

First, Americans have a relatively gloomy view of religious freedom in the U.S.

Many Americans express significant angst over the state of religious freedom in the U.S. Slightly more than half of adults say they are very (29%) or somewhat (22%) concerned that religious freedom in the

10 Americans (31%) say, “the gay and lesbian community is the most active group trying to remove Christian values from the country.” This perception is embraced by half of practicing Protestants (42%), one-third of practicing Catholics (32%), and three-quarters of evangelicals (72%). By comparison, people of a faith other than Christianity (16%) and religiously unaffiliated adults (11%) were much less likely to embrace this viewpoint.

Fourth, there is a substantial difference of opinion about which values should dominate the nation’s vision for the future. Though most Americans agree religious freedoms should be granted to people of all faiths, there are still a significant number of people (23%) who believe traditional Judeo-Christian values should be given preference in the public square. The majority, though, would disagree: two-thirds of Americans (66%) say there’s no one set of values that should dominate the country and another 11% of adults declined or gave another response. Practicing Catholics (24%) are about on par with the national average, while practicing Protes-

older Christians. Only 19% of younger Christians are very concerned about religious freedoms becoming more restricted and just 12% firmly contend that gay and lesbian advocates have been the most active group trying to remove Christian values. These proportions are half the level of that among older Christians. Further, only one-quarter of Christian Millennials believe that Judeo-Christian values should be given preference, which compares to one-third of older believers.

Comments on the Findings

David Kinnaman, president of Barna Group, offered the following observations about the research:

First, the simple fact is that America is becoming more religiously diverse. This trend includes growth of faiths other than Christianity, increasing expressions of Christianity beyond white Protestantism, and the growth of the no-faith segment—the so-called religiously unaffiliated. These social changes create increasing tension about how something everyone essentially agrees on—freedom of religion—ought to



As American society continues to secularize, many Americans are concerned that religious liberties will be limited as a result of a more liberal view of personal rights. Can religious liberty and social justice co-exist? a recent poll showed most Americans believe gay marriage is inevitable, regardless if they support it or not.

ments and strategies than has been effective in the past. For Millennials, the most religiously diverse generation in U.S. history, it is critical to answer why religious liberty matters and how it ought to work in a pluralistic society.

About Barna Group

Barna Group (which includes its research division, the Barna Research Group) is a private, non-partisan, for-

profit organization under the umbrella of the Issachar Companies. It conducts primary research, produces media resources pertaining to spiritual development, and facilitates the healthy spiritual growth of leaders, children, families and Christian ministries.

Located in Ventura, California, Barna Group has been conducting and analyzing primary research to understand cultural

trends related to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors since 1984. If you would like to receive free e-mail notification of the release of each update on the latest research findings from Barna Group, you may subscribe to this free service at the Barna website (www.barna.org). Additional research-based resources are also available through this website.

Gay marriage debate

Continued from the front page

at his doorstep.

The court’s liberal wing, meanwhile, had its own questions about whether House Republicans have legal standing to defend the law. “From where do they derive the right, the statutory right, to take on the power of representing the House in items outside of the House,” Justice Sonia Sotomayor wanted to know, calling it “sort of unheard of.”

Kennedy, too, had questions. Why did the House get to defend DOMA, and not the Senate?

If the justices decide that they have grounds to decide the case, they will be have to decide the degree of legal scrutiny to give DOMA. If a law fails to advance a government interest on a “rational basis,” opponents argue, it must be struck down. And if a law targets a minority — in this case, gays and lesbians — it must face an even higher level of judicial scrutiny.

Paul Clement, arguing for DOMA on behalf of congressional Republicans, said Congress was only interested in clarifying the federal definition of marriage as states began debates over gay marriage. The idea, he said, was to “stick with what we’ve always had” so there would be no confusion.

In essence, he said, early efforts to allow gay marriage

in the mid-1990s “forced Congress to choose between its historic practice of deferring to the states (on marriage law) and its historic practice of preferring uniformity.” Nothing more, nothing less.

But the practical result, Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg said, was two kinds of marriage: full marriage for some, and a less satisfying “sort of skim milk” marriage for others. The day-to-day results of a “skim milk” marriage, she said, were “pervasive” when it comes to hospital visitation, inheritance and Social Security benefits.

Justice Elena Kagan pounced, in one of the most dramatic exchanges of the day, pointing to a House report that accompanied DOMA’s passage that said “Congress decided to reflect and honor a collective moral judgment and to express moral disapproval of homosexuality.” Is that what happened in 1996?

Clement appeared caught off guard as the packed courtroom gasped. “Does the House report say that? Of course, the House report says that,” Clement conceded. “And if that’s enough to invalidate the statute, then you should invalidate the statute.”

At the same time, Roberts seemed to doubt that gays and lesbians are a targeted

political class deserving of greater protection. Politicians have been “falling all over themselves” to support marriage equality, he noted, and conveyed his dim view of the idea that the 84 senators who voted for DOMA in 1996 were motivated by “animus.”

Appearing to speak directly to Roberts and his desire to find a way around an up-or-down decision on gay marriage, Clement said this was a question for voters and lawmakers, not the court:

“You have to persuade somebody you’re right. You don’t label them a bigot. You don’t label them as motivated by animus,” he said. “You persuade them you are right. That’s going on across the country

Obama Speaks at Holocaust memorial

ISRAEL President Obama visited Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial to pay respects to Israeli heroes and Holocaust victims, while affirming Israel’s right to exist as a state.

The President said, “For us, in our time, this means confronting bigotry and hatred in all of its forms, racism, especially anti-Semitism. ... And let us never forget the link between the two. For our sons and daughters are not born to hate, they are taught to hate.”

The simple fact is that America is becoming more religiously diverse....These social changes create increasing tension about how something everyone essentially agrees on—freedom of religion—ought to work itself out in the real world where people find themselves disagreeing on important matters.

U.S. will become more restricted in the next five years. As might be expected, those who are religious are more concerned than those who aren’t—particularly Christians more so than those adherents to other faiths. Practicing Protestants (46% very concerned) are more worried about this prospect than others; yet, 30% of practicing Catholics are also concerned. Barna-defined evangelicals, who meet a series of nine theological criteria, are among the most likely to be concerned about such restrictions (71%).

Not only are most Americans worried about the future of religious freedom, many feel the restraints have already started. One-third of adults believe religious freedoms have grown worse in the last decade. Among practicing Protestants, nearly half (48%) say they perceive freedom of religion to have grown worse in recent years. Three out of five evangelicals (60%) perceive religious freedoms to have grown worse.

Second, there seems to be widespread agreement on what “religious freedom” means, in principle.

While there may not be total agreement on how or when to apply religious freedoms, there does seem to be a commonly accepted definition for the term. Nine out of 10 Americans (90%) agreed with the statement, “True religious freedom means all citizens must have freedom of conscience, which means being able to believe and practice the core commitments and values of your faith.” Practicing Protestants are (97%) are most likely to express strong agreement, followed by practicing Catholics (90%) and adherents of other faiths (89%). Even among religiously unaffiliated Americans, or skeptics, 91% agreed with this description of religious freedom.

Yet, many controversial aspects of religious liberty are bubbling over, with most Americans subscribing to us-versus-them narratives.

If most Americans agree religious liberties are being restricted, there is much less consensus on why that shift is taking place. More than half of Americans (57%) believe “religious freedom has become more restricted in the U.S. because some groups have actively tried to move society away from traditional Christian values.” As might be expected, this opinion is again more common among practicing Catholics (62%) and Protestants (76%) and is nearly a universal perception among evangelicals (97%).

Specifically, about three in

10 Americans (31%) say, “the gay and lesbian community is the most active group trying to remove Christian values from the country.” This perception is embraced by half of practicing Protestants (42%), one-third of practicing Catholics (32%), and three-quarters of evangelicals (72%).

To further explore this, the research asked respondents what type of organization they would be most likely to support. The most common preference was one that protects the religious liberties of all religions (65%). This is the predominant choice of all faith segments, from Catholics (69%), Protestants (68%), adherents to other faiths (56%) and religiously unaffiliated (58%).

One-third of evangelicals say they would support an organization that protects the rights of those who practice the same religion (33%)—and they are the group most likely to select this alternative. Still, half of evangelicals (48%) prefer an organization that protects the rights of all religions. Interestingly, 15% of evangelicals said they would support neither type of organization, perhaps reflecting an inherent skepticism among evangelicals about these kinds of issues.

The third option provided to respondents was an organization that keeps America secular. In total, 16% of Americans selected this option as the likely beneficiary of their support. Interestingly, religiously unaffiliated adults (29%) are less likely to select this option than are those who affiliate with a non-Christian religion (39%). As expected, this is not a popular alternative among practicing Protestants (8%) or Catholics (14%).

Fifth, younger Americans, in general, are much less concerned about religious liberty issues. The younger you are, the less it would seem you worry about your religious freedoms. The Boomer and Elder generations are much more pessimistic about religious liberty in America when compared to the Buster and Mosaic generations (often referred to as Gen X and Millennials, respectively). Younger adults are less likely to believe religious freedom has gotten worse in recent years; less likely to think some groups have actively tried to move society away from religious freedom; less likely to assert gays and lesbians have been part of this effort; and more likely to believe no one set of values should dominate the country.

Among practicing Christians, the major differences emerge among the Millennials. This younger cohort of Christians, ages 18- to 28-years-old, similar to their peers, is less concerned about issues of religious liberty than are

work itself out in the real world where people find themselves disagreeing on important matters.

Within this context, the research raises the question as to why Christians are so much more concerned about religious freedom than any other group—even adherents of other faiths? What is it Christians are trying to protect and why do they feel under threat? Is this an example of a historically privileged group losing some of their privileges? Is it possible that evangelicals are interpreting a loss of religious privilege as loss of religious freedom? Or is there something significant at stake that evangelicals are more tuned into than most? True religious freedom is much more than permission to put up nativities—or for that matter it is more than invitations to pray at public events. Protestants and Catholics, who represent nearly three-quarters of Americans, must discern a path that takes seriously the increasing religious diversity of the nation and how religious freedom in America affects freedoms in other countries. By any measure, matters of religious freedom are likely to be an area of significant struggle in the years to come.

Kinnaman, the author of the book unChristian, suggested that evangelicals have to be careful of embracing a double standard: to call for religious freedoms, but then desire the dominant religious influence to be Judeo-Christian. They cannot have it both ways. This does not mean putting Judeo-Christian values aside, but it will require a renegotiation of those values in the public square, as America increasingly becomes a multi-faith nation.

Finally, there is a significant generational divide on the issue of religious freedoms. Younger generations are generally less concerned about religious liberties and their restrictions. They don’t see the threat as urgent, nor are they as interested in organizations that uphold the values of favored faiths. They aren’t as worried about whether or not Judeo-Christian values dominate the public square and don’t believe religious liberties are threatened as a result of the removal of Christian values. This divide between generations could lead to significant disagreement or more conviction by younger Christians that the church is too wrapped up in politics. Organizations have to come to realize that enrolling younger Christians on these issues will require a different set of argu-

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At the IMAX in Branson

Bridges For Youth impacts Kids

After school Ministry features 5 locations in Springfield, one in Marshfield and a new location set to open in August

SPRINGFIELD MO, RN-R Steve Highlander, managing editor with Steve Hare.

Bridges For Youth is a Christian organization providing after-school environments for at-risk children. Founder Steve Hare launched the idea in 1994 when he started meeting with 18 middle school students and challenging them to live by faith. Four years later on October 29, 1998 the first BFY Center was opened at 834 N. National Ave. in Springfield. The ministry now has 6 locations, including one in Marshfield. A seventh location was recently donated and Hare hopes to have it operational for the start of the school year in August 2013.

According to Steve Hare, "Bridges For Youth's passion for kids has taken us to the inner city of Springfield and to a location in the of town Marshfield. There, off the beaten path, amongst the hundreds of kids who live in a single neighborhood or community, you will find those who have become invisible and forgotten by so many, but certainly not by God."

There is an emptiness, and yes, even anger in the 7 year old boys eyes, because his dad is in prison, and he feels helpless and alone, uncertain of the future. The loud 12 year old girl acts tough, but on the inside she is a mess because of a parent who is held captive by drugs. The 9 year old girl who was happy yesterday, has a long face today because mom and dad said they may not have a place to live tomorrow. The 11 year old boy carries the embarrassment inside of being bullied and breaks down in tears as he tells you what's going on. Three kids from the same family are being torn apart by their parent's divorce. Welcome to a Bridges



Children and youth from ages 6-18 find fun activities and a faith-filled environment at Bridges For Youth after-school youth centers. Operating during the school year, Bridges For Youth draws hundreds of kids every afternoon after school. Photo Courtesy BFY.

For Youth Center "Where the Good News comes to life after school."

Hare continued the story, "As I awoke today, thoughts of kids and all the encounters from the previous day flooded my mind. Always one of the first ones there, the 12 year old girl greets all the staff by name as she comes in the door. She comes up to me and makes certain I know that she is wearing no make-up today. I had told her a few days ago that she didn't need make up at her age, only the beauty God had already given her. The 10 year old boy at the snack bar counter is also a daily fixture, and is delighted to see we have the popular spider in the jar candy for sale.

The children rush to the centers after school. Once inside the line is long to sign in, so they spend their time having fragmented discussions about everything from spending the night together to who can be the funniest without getting into trouble. A 13 year old boy signs in his little 6 year old brother and protects him as though he were a fragile crystal vase. The same young man

asks if he can help pour the drinks for snack time today. He loves to help.

In the very back of the center a 9 year old girl sits reading a book. Although it's noisy in the center she somehow can close it out and experience the book as though she is in another world. It's devotion time and 44 kids find a seat at the booths, futons, and tables. The devotion is about David and Goliath. Mr. Hare stands on a chair to try and describe how huge the giant was. There is a young man there who is 6 foot 3, and reminds you of 'Andre the Giant'. Mr. Hare has him stand in front of the kids and tell the kids that Goliath was 3 feet taller. All this to say that, our faith in God can take down giants.

Prayer time is a very moving time at Bridges. The kids really pray what is on their heart. There are some things that us adults consider kind of silly for them to pray about, but let's face it God tells us to cast all our cares on him. A little 8 year old guy prays for his new pet, a crab, and a 9 year old girl prays for a great birthday party. Two girls sitting next to each other from different families pray for

their Grandma who has cancer. An 8 year old boy asks for prayer for his hurt knee. Several kids pray for the uncle of one of our young ladies who is in the hospital. A boy asks for prayer for another young man from school who was hit on his bike. A 7 year old boy implores us to pray that he gets to see his mom this weekend. Something like 10 kids pray for Bridges to get more donations, and one little guy asks that God provide a donation of \$500 the next day.

It's a beautiful day, so everyone goes outside to enjoy the new play set that was just finished at this Bridges location. Everyone grabs a snack and a drink as they go out the door. The snacks are on the counter and one 5 year old has to climb on the stool to get her snack. As she gets down she is precariously holding her two cookies and Kool-aid, heading for a picnic table to enjoy her treat.

Steve continues the story, "I have barely gotten outside and a 9 year old girl blocks my path. She is grinning from ear to ear and will not let me pass without first hearing her say the memory verse for the

day. There are footballs flying, kids coming down the slide and loud activity all around, but she proceeds to complete the whole verse and proudly stands waiting for positive reinforcement. The encouragement comes easy, because this young lady tends to memorize the Bible verse every day."

An 11 year boy and his two friends are trying to make 50-60 foot shots with the basketball. Amazingly the 11 year old boy makes quite a few, and his buddies hardly any. He has found something he is better at than anyone else, and that's pretty cool. Several kids are under the play set playing with the little blocks of lumber that were left over from the construction of the play set. One young lady comes complaining that a boy knocked down her building and Steve stops to set some boundaries on messing other kids creations up.

The day comes to an end with numerous conversations with parents as they come and pick up their kids.

Bridges For Youth attracted 23,388 students during the past school year. The BFY centers open on the first day of school and operate until the last day of school each year. For the 2011-2012 school year 343 kids, ages 6-18 registered to attend the three centers in Springfield and 125 children registered in Marshfield.

Current locations include: 834 N. National Ave., The Nichols Center at 1039 W. Nichols, which now houses the organization's main office, 2236 S. Ingram Mill Road., 2143 W. High and 302 S. Clay in Marshfield, Mo. The newest center is located at 1230 W. Madison in West Central Springfield and is currently in the late phases of remodeling. Hare is hoping to be open for kids in August 2013.

Bridges For Youth needs your support. BFY is a 501c3 organization and your gifts are tax deductible. They are privately funded through donations. Donate at www.bridgesforyouth.net or by mail at: Bridges For Youth, 1039 W. Nichols, Springfield, Mo. 65802 864-4167.

2nd annual Cliff Wagner Tribute Show

Continued from the front

ater, Randy stayed on as a performer at other shows. He is a Branson fixture as a singer, musician, songwriter, and storyteller. He regaled the audience at the benefit with his original composition called "Branson." He sang four of the ten verses, and joked about not knowing all the words to all the verses of his own song. He followed with a song of inspiration that was enthusiastically received.

As he tried to leave the stage, Jason Hughes called him back to participate in the presentation of the 2nd Annual Cliff Wagner Tribute Award. Randy had received the plaque last year for service in the community as a performer who demonstrated the qualities of Cliff Wagner. Joining Randy on stage for this year's presentation was Ms. LeAnn Kennedy, the president of Acts Ministry. The award is Acts Ministry recognition of Christian service. Ms. Kennedy told about the award and its significance, and she asked Randy to read the name on the plaque. Just as last year, the recipient was unknown to anyone other than three committee members who kept the honoree secret. The award was presented to a genuinely surprised Ms. Raphael Thompson. She was one of the performers for the benefit, a long time friend of Cliff Wagner, and a Branson theater performer for several years. She currently teaches music in the Hollister, MO school system.

We were treated with two great songs by Kathy Lennon, one of the famous Lennon Sisters who were an integral part of the Lawrence Welk television show. The sisters usually sing together, but most of their fans know that each one has a great voice as a soloist. That fact was very evident when Kathy sang. She was very gracious in her words about the benefit, obviously a lady of taste and style, and her voice was beautiful. The audience was greatly moved and wonderfully blessed.

One of the great, new acts in town (and new to the benefit) was The Voices of Glory. Two brothers and a sister - brothers are 20 and 17 years old, and the sister is 14 - were among the top finishers of "America's Got Talent," a popular network television show. They are now doing their own show Ayo" at the Hughes Brothers Theatre and it is "It is a show you must see when you are in Branson." The trio is gifted, talented, personable, and able to entertain with a very unique style all their own. Words cannot adequately describe the joy of seeing and hearing the harmony of three siblings who honor their parents, their audiences, and God.

The curtain could not come down until we had received a "taste" of the talents of the Hughes family. The five brothers gave a splendid performance that was enough to make the members of the audience who had not heard them fans for life. Then one of the brothers introduced their sons --- singers and dancers in a "Newsies" routine. They boys ended by taking copies of the Real News-Review newspaper (published by Acts Ministry) into the audience for a surprise giveaway. The Hughes Family show is "IT." "IT" is something to see! "IT" is something to hear! "IT" is something to experience! Fifty plus members of the Hughes family will be on stage at the conclusion of "IT." Other than the babies, they all sing, dance, and play musical instruments. Everything they do is the ultimate in professionalism, and an awesome display of talent. The music, songs, and skits cover a wide range of musical styles. They perform in their theatre on "The Strip."



Have Food and Fun at the Steiff Trunk Show Event with Dick Frantz.
April 27, starting at 11:00 AM
2 Meal Choices at \$7.⁹⁹ and a great exhibit for \$5.⁰⁰



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