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Supreme Court ruling 50 years ago set modern course for religion in public schools

Ellery Schempp knew he could get into trouble.

But he didn't anticipate that his refusal to take part in a mandatory Bible reading and prayer in his homeroom class would land before the U.S. Supreme Court. Schempp's planned protest would become the basis of a landmark decision, handed down 50 years ago on June 17, that would define how religion could appear in public schools for the next half-century.

The studious 16-year-old wanted to make a point that a Pennsylvania law requiring the morning devotional violated his First Amendment right to religious freedom. So, on a chilly Monday morning in November 1956, as an Abington High School classmate began reading 10 verses from the King James Bible, Schempp quietly read a copy of the Quran he borrowed from a friend. But he didn't catch his teacher's attention until he remained seated while everyone else stood to recite the Lord's Prayer.

"I was a bit naïve," recalls the now-72-year-old retired

physicist. "I thought it was so transparent that these Bible readings and prayers violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment that when we pointed this out, the grown-ups would set it right." But instead of his teacher, principal and guidance counselor, who had Schempp sit outside the office during the morning ritual for the rest of the school year, the grown-ups who addressed the problem were nine high court justices.

Despite a popular perception that the 8-1 decision ripped religion out of public schools by banning the ceremonial reading of Bible verses, prominent First Amendment scholars and educators say Abington v. Schempp marked a rare consensus among conservative and liberal justices that actually provided a framework for allowing religion into the public school curriculum.

Schempp — the shorthand reference to the ruling — clarified that while government can't promote or denigrate religion, the subject of faith and



Even though the law forbids state-mandated or sanctioned religious activities at public schools, it does not forbid student-led religious activities. Programs like After-School Bible Clubs and See You At The Pole -- an annual student-led prayer effort -- are taking root in many schools. Stock Photo.

its role in history, literature and the arts has educational value and can be taught in public schools.

"Schempp became the founding document for teaching about religion in school," said Charles Haynes, a senior scholar at the First Amendment Center and director of the center's Religious Freedom Education Project. "It is a very powerful document ... that we still use today in working out these issues."

Bible riots

Bible reading had stirred controversy in Pennsylvania and other states long before Ellery Schempp decided to take it on, turning his family's home in the community of Roslyn into a target of hate mail, vandalism and cat calls.

In 1844, more than 20 people died in nearby Philadelphia during the infamous Bible riots, sparked by a dispute over which Bible should be read in public schools: the Protes-

tant King James version or the Douay-Rheims version accepted by the growing number of Irish Catholic immigrants.

Reading the Bible without commentary before the school day began was a compromise reached in the early evolution of public education between those who wanted to remove religion from the curriculum and those who didn't. Haynes said supporters wanted to simply read passages, without dis-

Continued on page 12

Feds release first guidelines for confronting a church shooter

By Lauren Markoe
WASHINGTON (RNS)

For the first time, the federal government has issued written guidelines for houses of worship that are confronted with a homicidal gunman.

Vice President Joe Biden released the new rules on Tuesday (June 18), six months after the school shooting in Newtown, Conn., that left 26 dead, including 20 children.

Beyond seeking shelter and waiting for police to arrive, as many Newtown victims did, the new rules also advise adults in congregations to fight back — as a last resort — in a bid to stop the shooter.

The new federal doctrine is "run, fight or hide." After Congress failed to pass a slew of gun safety measures in April, Biden said the executive branch is doing what it can, promising to put gun control legislation back in lawmakers' hands, and pointing to 21 executive actions to beef up gun safety taken by the administration since Newtown.

He also unveiled three new federal guidebooks to keep institutions safe: one for schools, one for colleges and one for houses of worship.

Though shootings at churches and other houses of worship remain relatively rare, they can make inviting targets for shooters — particularly disturbed individuals — who are looking for a highly-visible target to settle a grudge or make a political statement.



Guns in church? What's the world coming to? With the increasing number of random shootings in public places, including churches, church leaders are having to address the issue as they would any other emergency situation. Is your preacher, elder or deacon armed? Stock photo courtesy 123RF.

Last year a gunman killed six people inside a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wis. In 2008, a gunman killed two congregants inside a Unitarian church in Knoxville, Tenn.

In 2007, a gunman killed two people inside the New Life megachurch in Colorado Springs, Colo., before being shot and killed by an armed volunteer.

As federal officials worked with education officials in crafting new school safety rules, they also consulted clergy, Biden told a White House auditorium filled with federal officials who have worked on the issue. "The faith leaders not only want us to talk about making schools safer," Biden

said. "They're worried that their congregations are at risk. So they wanted to know, what should they be thinking about when someone stands up in the middle of the congregation and decides to do something similar as we saw in the schools."

In response to their concerns, Biden said, "We gave concrete direction." The guidelines' basic run-fight-hide advice is similar to that given to schools faced with active shooters: Congregants should first try to flee the scene, taking people with them but not waiting for those who refuse to leave.

If flight is not possible, See cloning page 4

Study: Religious oppression rises despite Arab Spring

By Lauren Markoe

WASHINGTON (RNS) People who hoped the Arab Spring would lead to greater religious freedom across the Middle East have been sorely disappointed, and a new Pew study confirms that the region has grown even more repressive for various religious groups.

"In 2011, when most of the political uprisings known as the Arab Spring occurred, the Middle East and North Africa experienced pronounced increases in social hostilities involving religion, while government restrictions on religion remained exceptionally high," according to the report by the Pew Research Center.

The study shows the number of countries in the Middle East

or North Africa with sectarian or communal violence between religious groups doubled from five to 10 during 2011, a year that coincided with most of the political uprisings of Arab Spring.

Among those groups most adversely affected were Egypt's Coptic Christians, whose churches have been bombed and burned both before and after the February 2011 fall of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Globally, the Pew survey of 198 countries found that the share of countries with high or very high restrictions on religion rose from 37 percent in mid-2010 to 40 percent by the end of 2011.

See Arab Spring on page 7

Pastor Sues Oklahoma over license plates



The artwork depicted on the current Oklahoma license plate is titled "Sacred Rain Arrow." The piece is based on an ancient Chiricahua Apache legend. Photo: State of Oklahoma

(RNS) A Methodist pastor of a suburban Oklahoma City church is suing the state, claiming its license plate image of a Native American shooting an arrow into the sky violates his religious liberty.

Last week, the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals in Denver ruled his suit can proceed.

The pastor, Keith Cressman of St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Bethany, Okla., contends the image of the Native American compels him to be a "mobile billboard" for a pagan

religion.

A trial judge threw out the suit. But on June 11, the appeals court ruled that Judge Joe Heaton should have recognized that Cressman's suit contained a "plausible compelled speech claim."

Cressman, a former lawyer, claims he can't be compelled to use religious speech that violates his own religious beliefs.

Cressman's lawyer, Nathan Kellum of the Center for Religious Expression in Memphis, See LAW SUIT on page 10

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Commentary

Faith and Culture: Turkey Bacon and Christianity

In an effort to promote a healthier lifestyle I occasionally eat turkey bacon. Recently I bought five packages for \$10. As I was cooking breakfast this morning I started thinking about turkey bacon and how it relates to Christianity. I know, I know, you are wondering what type of weird associations I generally make; but give me a fair hearing.

I grew up on a farm and I am most certain bacon comes from pigs -- not turkeys. So I began contemplating, "Why turkey bacon?"

The turkey strips I bought are even designed to look like bacon, with darker and lighter stripes (to resemble the fat I am trying to avoid) and a scalloped edge on one side. Yes, the visual presentation is supposed to help me think that I am, in

fact, eating bacon, even though I know I am not.

Why not just call them "turkey strips?"

I suppose the basic idea is that people want the tradition of bacon without the impact of bacon. We are used to eating four thin strips of fried meat with our eggs and toast.

Traditions and programmed concepts die hard; and it is much easier to substitute something than change a tradition or lifelong habit.

I am sure the folks who make turkey bacon sat in a meeting one day and discussed how to market their new turkey strip.

They realized that getting people to simply replace bacon with turkey was not going to fly (pardon the pun). So at some point the genius of the group suggested that they "slip



Steve Highlander
Managing Editor RN-R,

in the back door" by producing a product that looked a lot like bacon, and tasted somewhat like bacon, and could be called "bacon," but was actually turkey. Viola, turkey bacon became a reality.

You might be asking what this has to do with Christianity. Good question. I think we do the same thing with religion. There is a significant trend in the United States today to substitute when we don't particularly like something.

The idea is that we want the comfortable feeling, but don't want the perceived negatives.

We want something that looks, tastes and feels somewhat like Christianity, but without the substance of Christianity.

We want "Turkey Christianity!" "Christianity Lite:" One-third less spiritual, yet still providing some sense of satisfaction. The apostle Paul said it this way, "They have a form of godliness, but deny its power."

Pardon the comparison, but if real bacon comes from pigs; real Christianity comes from Christ. Real Christianity then, looks like Christ, feels like Christ, and acts like Christ. However, Christ can be somewhat disconcerting, uncomfortable and inconvenient.

He loved everyone, includ-

ing His enemies -- and taught His followers to do the same. He sacrificed His own life in demonstration of the reality of that love. He forgave in the midst of His own suffering. He was committed to a single purpose. He lived for God, not for Himself. He wasn't concerned with wealth or success. There was a substance to Christ that is missing from much of our westernized "gospel."

It is possible that the success-oriented, Americanized version of Christianity that is so often touted today, is a poor substitute for the real thing? Are we settling for "turkey Christianity?"

Dr. Steve Highlander is a pastor, missionary, author and speaker. He holds a doctorate in Pastoral Theology and is a Certified Christian Counselor.

Upstairs Over a Vacant Lot: No place for peace?

The last newspaper column I wrote, "Personal Peace Can Be Priceless" was a small sample of a subject that receives a large amount of attention. My part of America known as the Missouri Ozarks, is no exception to the search for personal peace.

In my role as a clergyman and as an executive with an international ministry, I encounter situations that could steal my peace and set my emotions in the grip of anxiety. Because I don't find anxiety (let alone panic attacks) to be an attractive and positive way to live, I take steps to protect my peace in a private place. That place is within me.

American culture seems

committed to diversions that are most easily identified as sports, movies, and television. The diversions dominate the scene in many American homes as the inhabitants make the momentous decisions whether they will go to the game, watch it on television, or catch a movie.

Sports and sporting events in America attract more money than most of us can count.

Movie moguls report millions of dollars spent by patrons on a weekend on one newly released production. While this is happening, television continues to "grind it out" and generate huge amounts of revenue.

It is true that our fascination

with sports, movies, television, and other forms of ntertainment can have a positive effect on our society. It is also true that these diversions can detract from family life, morals, ethics, and sound education. It is also true that they are not a substitute for ways to find personal peace in a challenging, dangerous, and demanding world.

They are merely temporary escapes from reality.

What about my personal place? I find it before getting out of bed. Yes, that's correct. I take about five minutes to allow myself to be listening to the One who gave me self. I listen for the voice of God. I listen for



Dr. Paul C. Collins
Publisher RN-R

the inner voice that impresses my mind, and my emotions. Does he always speak? I would say the answer is yes. Do I always hear his voice? I would have to say the answer is no. Nonetheless, it is a great way to begin every day.

I have another personal place. It is my recliner, in the family room, just about 10 feet from the television set on the wall. Several times during

the week, I turn off distractive diversions, lean back, and contemplate the wonder of knowing God, in Christ, through the Holy Spirit. One day is very special to me in my recliner personal place, and that day is Wednesday. If you want to know (which you probably don't) what old Dr. Collins is doing between 1:00 and 2:00 on an ordinary Wednesday afternoon, the answer is simple: leaning back in a well-worn recliner thinking about how great it is to know "in whom I have believed."

Dr. Paul Collins is the founder and VP of Operations of Acts Ministry, Inc and Publisher of the Real News - Review. He is an ordained Methodist Minister, Presiding Bishop of Acts Church International and currently serves as senior pastor of Acts Church in Springfield, MO.

Seasons of Reflections: More beautiful than the lilies

Fragrance and beauty fill the air as the earth moves us into a position to receive the warmth of the sun. However, before the beauty of summer perennials is seen by the natural eye, much work and growth has already taken place underneath the surface of the soil.

As long as we have natural breath there will be areas in which we are to grow. Incredible, supernatural growth can take place, when we choose to cooperate with God as Holy Spirit even in a seemingly dead state of dormancy. As long as the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, the life-giving blood of Jesus is the sap that will cause us to be spiritual perennials that will always bloom after a time of appoint-



LeAnn Kennedy
President, Acts Ministry

ed rest.

Just as perennials are cut back and enter into a state of dormancy during the winter months and the promise of spring gives hope to future beauty, our spiritual development undergoes times of pruning as the ugliness of flesh and activities not conducive to

sharpening our focus on God's plan for our lives is cut back. Even when it may seem that no growth is taking place, the promise of our God still stands that He continues to work in us to will and to act according to His purpose. In time, the fruit will be evidenced in the natural, a revelation to the garden in which we are planted and to the whole world of the tender loving care of the Gardener, who planted the Seed and watered it with His Word. As the intensity of the rays of the love of His Son is received into the hearts of those who diligently seek Him, the bursting forth of great beauty is inevitable.

Excerpted from Ms Kennedy's book Seasons of Reflection published by Acts Press.

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Mind and Spirit: Ode to contentment

I have been a dreamer since I was very small. In grammar school, I had a certain popularity, because I could make up fantastical stories which my schoolmates and I would act out. Being creative can be a very good thing, but it has its drawbacks. One of them is that I have a very hard time living in the here-and-now. Dreaming about the what-ifs and the might-have-beens and the could-have-beens does not lead to contentment. The Apostle Paul wrote in Philippians that he had "learned to be content, whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11). His circumstances were not ideal, either: At the time he was under house arrest in Rome.

When my husband and I visited a remote village in the Philippines, we were surrounded by a people who lived in huts with no running water, no bathrooms, no vehicles, and who cooked over an open fire. They were content! Not just content, but joyful. This was in spite of their challenging circumstances, not because they didn't realize their lives were challenging. They had not always been so: Up until a few years ago, they were a drunken, warlike people who were not happy. They found the love of Christ and the village was transformed. They retained their simple lifestyle, but gained contentment.

Contentment is not an apathetic acceptance of all that comes your way. Joyce Meyers said it well in the title of one of her books: Enjoy where you are on the way to where you're going. Even Paul did not advocate apathy. He said we are to "run in such a way as to win the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24).



Dr. Brooke Highlander
Associate Editor, RN-R

So then, we are to continue to work towards excellence and to meet important goals and at the same time remaining in a state of "rest", or contentment. Paul also said, "For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

How can we "toil and strive" and at the same time remain content in whatever circumstance we are in? I

definitely comes down to a choice involving our mindset and our attitude. Yes, we can be wonderfully content while lying on a beach in Florida, but in order to be content in every circumstance, we have to choose to make contentment a lifestyle.

For me, it involves finding the things I can be thankful for... and there are always things I can be thankful for.

It involves living in the moment and cherishing the people in my life. It means that when I am feeling unhappy with circumstances in my life, I may wallow in it for a little while, or get tacky and post on Facebook, then I get a grip and change my mind. Literally, I "take my thoughts captive" (2 Cor. 10:4) and choose what I think about, because what I think about directly relates to how I feel.

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ACTS MINISTRY
International Headquarters
Springfield, MO 65808 USA
Phone: 417-886-0223

LeAnn Kennedy,
President & CEO
Dr. Paul Collins
Founder - Vice President
Dr. James (Jim) Wining
VP of Administration
Audrey West
Secretary / Treasurer
Dr. Paul Collins
Publisher
Dr. Steve Highlander
Managing Editor
Dr. Brooke Highlander
Associate Editor

Advertising and Circulation Services
Jackie Scott, Sales Manager
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We believe that we can report the news with accuracy even though we see events through our paradigm as Christians.

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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Lee's Summit students make commercial promoting Branson's "God and Country" Values

By Steve Highlander

LEE'S SUMMIT | BRANSON, MO (RN-R) – Pam Wining's classroom at Trailridge Elementary in Lee's Summit became the set for a new commercial promoting the family-oriented values of Branson, MO.

In a show-and-tell type setting, children are sharing their experiences on their family's summer vacation at Branson.

Branson has long been known for their "God and Country" values, making it a perfect place for a family vacation destination.

The "Talk about Branson" jungle was written and directed by Diana Allyn (president of Diamond Image) and Debi Willis.

Some of the students from Mrs. Wining's class auditioned and were given speaking parts in the commercial. Daniel Blackham, Cooper Hovious and Maddy Kennicutt were chosen for the roles.

The filming of the commercial was organized by Lee's Summit West Broadcasting Department teacher, Karrie Smythia. The lead camera person was Bob Smith.

The plan is to expand this type of commercial into occupational settings.

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Christian Economic Perspective

Preparing to endure

In last month's column, I talked about four ways to be "one who endures to the end" (Matthew 24:13, NASB). The third and fourth ways were getting into the ark of safety and preparing to help others. This month, I want to suggest several ways to achieve these two goals by living from the kingdom of heaven.

The phrase "kingdom of heaven" has two meanings. First, it is a physical place ruled by God the Father and God the Son surrounded by the heavenly host. Second, it is a time period (a dispensation to use a theological term) that began when Jesus ascended into heaven and that will end when Jesus returns to rule and reign. Like all kingdoms, it is ruled by the king, and it is governed by certain laws and statutes.

Underlying the laws and statutes of the kingdom of heaven is a fundamental governing principle found in Galatians 6: 7-8. Here, the principle of sowing and reaping is clearly stated when the apostle Paul says, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the



Oliver Burrows , RN-R Economic Columnist

Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

The principle of sowing and reaping is in direct opposition to the principle of buying and selling, which is the governing principle of the secular (fleshly) economic system. This is why those striving to endure to the end living by secular economic principles will fail in the end. No one can live simultaneously according to the principles of the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of heaven, for no man can serve two masters. (Matthew 6:24) Thus, to live from the kingdom of heaven and for the King, a Christian must understand and embrace the principles and laws of that kingdom. Let me briefly suggest three principles for you to consider.

First, remember that you no longer have the final say over your lives and possessions. In

Galatians 2:20, the apostle Paul wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." He recognized that the ultimate control and direction for his life came from God.

Second, understand that your mission in this world is to represent the kingdom of heaven as an ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). As a result, everything you do must communicate the principles by which your heavenly home operates.

Finally, as the apostle Paul says in Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Your lifestyle choices must reflect the way in which our King lived when He was on this earth.

As the Lord wills, in next month's column, I will begin to address the laws of the kingdom of heaven.

Rev. Oliver K. Burrows III is an ordained minister with Acts Ministry. He hosts two Christian and one sports radio program in Wausau, Wisconsin and across the Internet. Oliver can be contacted via e-mail at oliverburrows@economictruth.org and is available to preach as well as teach seminars on a broad range of subjects.

thief that might have lasted as long as I chose to hold on to disdain tainted by anger (and maybe at least a small amount of hate for the crime and the criminal). That would have been a decision for self instead of forgiving as Jesus has always done. I gave my best pen gladly; only the Holy Spirit knew the lesson behind the gift.

Every day, anyone can be a similar question: do you love Jesus more than "these?" Do you love Jesus more than husband, wife, kids, house, jewelry, car, job, business, money, or? or? or? What will your answer be? Do you love this world and its things more, or do you love Jesus above, and beyond, all else and all other? If you have to think too long, you may already have your answer.

If things are going too wrong too long, check your love life. No matter how much you love Jesus, he loves you more.

Nancy Collins and her Husband Dr. Paul Collins, co-founded Acts Ministry. She is recently retired from Maranatha Village in Springfield, Mo where she was a care plan coordinator.



Nancy Collins RN-R Devotional Columnist

piercing sharpness into my heart of hearts! I suddenly remembered that he gave up everything so that I might have everything. Instantly, two memories came to mind. The first was of "one of a kind" piece of jewelry that was stolen from me many years ago by someone who was supposed to be a friend and was "a shirt tail relative." The second was of me giving a "one of a kind gold ring" in an offering. This is not an apples and oranges comparison. The real question is who or what did I love more? Did I love the jewelry more than I loved Jesus?

I could have kept my gold ring. I would have been the only person that would have known this, except the person of the Holy Spirit. I could have had hard feelings against the

A One Minute Devotional: A Favorite Pen

Several years ago, a memory was made and a lesson was learned. When I was working in the nursing field, I would usually carry several pens while at work in case someone needed to write a note but did not have a pen or pencil.

Is a pen just a pen? They all are very similar, at least. They all do the same function; they make marks on paper. That may not seem to be a big deal. There are different brands, colors, sizes, shapes, points that are fine, medium, or bold. Some pens have rubber grips, and some do not. They are the same. Right? The thing was that one of the pens in my pocket had just the right point on it. It wrote differently, and the way I preferred. It handled the way that suited me better than any other pen in my collection. Obviously, I liked it much better than the others; so I had a decision to make. Which pen was I going to give away? It is interesting how the whole of God's Word comes to bear on a situation in an instant!

Did I love this "special" pen more than I loved Jesus? Wow! The question came to my mind and bounced with

A View From Jordan Creek

I saw it first in the Inbox of my principal email account. Oddly, I had Googled his name just a week or so prior to the announcement to ascertain if I had somehow missed it over the past few months or year.

Will D. Campbell, Baptist, was dead at 88.

Will D. Campbell, native of rural Mississippi, who came to public attention through his advocacy of civil rights at the University of Mississippi and, as representative of the National Council of Churches, as a principal figure in "The Movement" in Nashville and beyond.

Will D. Campbell, the only white person present with Dr. King and his close associates at the creation of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Will D. Campbell, who later enraged many in the civil rights movement by his embrace of members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Will D. Campbell, who detested the word "redneck" and decried the lack of love from some members of the "beloved community" for their equally downtrodden and oppressed opponents.

Will D. Campbell, champion of the grace of God, who often said, "We're all (illegitimate) but God loves us anyway," and "If you're gonna love one, you've got to love 'em all."

Will D. Campbell, who first enunciated that sentiment when confronted with a challenge to his commitment to the universal sufficiency of



Virgil Hill RN-R Columnist

The Cross in the wake of the murder of a close friend in the freedom struggle by a racist thug with a badge.

Will D. Campbell, who believed so strongly in the reconciliation offered by the death of Christ as pronounced in II Corinthians 5:17-20 that he co-founded a journal, "Katallagete," which, in translation, means "be reconciled."

Will D. Campbell, valiant Navy man in the Pacific in World War 2 who was an activist for peace the rest of his life. Will D. Campbell, committed Southern Christian, who paid poignant homage to his best buddy lost in war-a Jew from New York.

Will D. Campbell, who opposed discrimination in all its forms, abortion and capital punishment with equal fervor. Will D. Campbell, apolitical as regards political party disputes but resolutely artisan on the issues to which he gave himself as living testimony to his faith.

Will D. Campbell, who placed his diploma from Yale Divinity School out of public

view but whose Certificate of Ordination from East Fork Baptist Church was prominently displayed.

Will D. Campbell, National Book Awards honoree for "Brother to a Dragonfly" and prolific author of both fiction and non-fiction. Will D. Campbell, who wrote extraordinary books recalling forgotten figures of contemporary history, powerful novels about Anabaptists of centuries ago and the recent past and about the modern corrupted structures of denominations.

Will D. Campbell, Nashville songwriter and friend of and pastor to many significant Country Music figures such as Waylon Jennings, Tom T. Hall and Johnny Cash.

Will D. Campbell, whose 40 acres at Mt. Juliet, Tennessee became a place for weddings and baptisms of the famous and unknown and a site of pilgrimage for those captured by his vision of Christianity.

Will D. Campbell, feral Baptist, perhaps the last true Baptist, an inspiration to and powerful influence on many-including me.

Will D. Campbell, remarkable servant of God, who could surely have said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7)

Virgil J. Hill is a lifelong Ozarker and activist and is an ordained minister with Acts Ministry.

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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 nonprofit, trans-denominational independent organization using several means to promote their mission statement which is, "Unity, In Christ, Through The Holy Spirit."

The vision of the Real News-Review is to be a newspaper that will bring attention to the power and influence of religion in today's world. We believe this can be accomplished by utilizing the print media to report religion in the news. Acts Ministry is a distinctively Christian organization seeking to present the news of all

religions in a very professional manner while, at the same time, maintaining a Christian perspective.

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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

Why Believe Jesus is the Messiah, when many have claimed to be?

The common question I get from skeptics is, "History is full of people who've claimed to be God's Messiah. Why believe Jesus Christ is THE Messiah and all the others fakes?" We can study 8 specific texts from the Old Testament that this future Messiah must meet, that only Jesus Christ does. If anyone wants confidence in the claims of Jesus Christ as the true Messiah, the evidence in God's Word will give this to you. Here's an overview of the 8 tests you can apply for authenticating the true Messiah.

The first is that the Messiah must be a Hebrew. God eliminates all other nations in Genesis 22:18. Jesus fulfills test #1 in Matthew 1:1 ("The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham").

The second test is that the Messiah must descend from Isaac. God eliminates 1/2 of Abraham's lineage in Genesis 21:12. Jesus fulfills test #2 in Matthew 1:2 ("Abraham begot Isaac").

The third test is that the Messiah must descend from Jacob. God eliminates 1/2 of Isaac's



Ed Croteau RN-R Columnist

lineage by stating in Numbers 24:17 that Messiah will descend by Jacob, not Esau. Jesus fulfills test #3 in Matthew 1:2 ("Isaac begot Jacob").

The fourth test is that the Messiah must descend from Judah. God eliminates 11/12 of Jacob's lineage by stating in Genesis 49:10 that Messiah will descend by Judah. Jesus fulfills test #4 in Matthew 1:2 ("Jacob begot Judah").

The fifth test is that the Messiah must descend from Jesse. God eliminates all other families of Judah's tribe by stating in Isaiah 11:10 that Messiah will come from Jesse. Jesus fulfills

test #5 in Luke 3:32 ("... Jesus, the son of Jesse").

The sixth test is that the Messiah must descend from David. God eliminates 6/7 of Jesse's lineage by stating in Jeremiah 23:5 that Messiah will be a descendant of David. Jesus fulfills test #6 in Luke 3:31 ("... Jesus, the son of David").

The seventh test is that the Messiah must be born in Bethlehem. God eliminates all other cities in the world in Micah 5:2. Jesus fulfills test #7 in John 7:42 ("... the Christ comes from... the town of Bethlehem, where David was?").

And finally, the eighth test is that the Messiah must arrive before the Temple is destroyed. In Daniel 9:26, God narrows Messiah's arrival before 70 AD, when Titus destroys the temple. Jesus fulfills test #8 in Mark 13:2 ("Jesus said... 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'")

Ed Croteau is a resident of Lee's Summit and hosts a weekly study in Lee's Summit called, "Faith: Substance and Evidence."

America's Moral Compass

What is the true legacy of Christopher Columbus?

Columbus wrote in his diaries that "No one should fear to undertake any task in the name of Our Savior, if it is just and the intention is purely for His Holy Service." In 1492 when Columbus journeyed to the New World His Diaries reported that he was sailing to "spread the advancement of the Christian faith." Columbus wrote in his diary: "It was the Lord who put into my mind the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies. All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because he comforted me with the rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Scriptures." Let the words of Christopher Columbus inspire you. Don't ever fear to undertake any task in the name of the Lord.

In 1607 the Jamestown settlers planted a cross and claimed this land for Jesus Christ. The Pilgrims landed a few years later, John Winthrop telling us we should be as a City Upon a Hill – all of these powerful images. How about that? Our Founding Fathers were not a bunch of deists after all. They were dedicated Christians.

The Pilgrims that landed at Cape Cod, Massachusetts wrote the first contract of government or covenant, the first Constitution of America. It's our birth certificate, known as the Mayflower Compact. It begins with these words: "In the name of God. Amen!" That's where America began.

Ah – but there are those who don't like to hear that, and surely that must have ended with those first Pilgrims. But, my friends, it did not. When finally the New



Christopher Columbus 1451-1506. This print was adapted from a portrait by Girsch & Roehlsr, published in 1892 to mark the quadricentennial of the landing of Columbus in the Americas. Society has mixed opinions of Columbus, however his historic voyages paved the way for worldwide expansion from Europe. Courtesy Library of Congress

England settlements formed their first Bond in what is known as the New England Confederation, they said: ". . . that we all came to this part of America for one and the same end and aim, to advance the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

These were men and woman of conviction, willing to suffer, to be killed and die, all because of the Word of God. They spent hours and hours reading the Bible and searching the scriptures. They truly had the "faith of our Fathers" with true convictions and were willing to give their whole lives.

They drew up the "Birth

Certificate" of the United States (the "May flower Compact") which began: "In the name of God . . . Amen!"



Dee Wampler is an Author, Defense Attorney, Former Prosecutor, and a Native of Springfield, MO. He believes America needs a moral compass and advocates an honest look at America's Christian History.

USA Religion

Atheists unveil public monument

The group American Atheists dedicated the first monument to unbelief on public land in June

(RNS) After years of fights over religious monuments on public land, a county courthouse in Northern Florida will soon be the home of the nation's first monument to atheism on public property.

On June 29, the group American Atheists unveiled a 1,500-pound granite bench engraved with secular-themed quotations from Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and its founder, Madalyn Murray O’Hair, among others, in front of the Bradford County Courthouse in Starke, Fla.

The New Jersey - based group, which has a membership of about 4,000 atheists, humanists and other non-believers, won the right to erect the monument in a settlement reached in March over a six-ton granite display of the Ten Commandments on the same property.

American Atheists sued Bradford County after the erection of that monument last year, claiming its place on the courthouse lawn represented a government endorsement of religion.

Both monuments were paid for by private money. Busi-



The monument to 10 Commandments was erected on the lawn of the Bradford County, Florida courthouse in 2012. Operating with a new strategy, the American Atheists have exercised their right to place their own monument to atheism -- the first of its kind in the United States to be located on public property -- nearby. The monument will be unveiled and dedicated later this month. Photo Courtesy American Atheists.

The dueling monuments illustrate an ongoing battle over public displays of religion across the country that have

Amendment scholar and director of the Newseum’s Religious Freedom Education Project, says atheists are

up to counter them. If the government allows one groups to put up a display, then it must allow others.”

That strategy has been bolstered by Supreme Court rulings that have found private religious expressions on public property do not violate the First Amendment so long as other expressions are equally allowed. In 2005, the court ruled a Ten Commandments monument on the grounds of the Texas state capitol was permitted because it had historical significance, was privately funded and did not promote one religion over others.

Of course, the strategy can be adopted by any group – religious or non-religious. Will Sexton, an attorney for Bradford County, said that since American Atheists announced their monument last month, the county has received requests for monument applications from several groups, though he did not know if they were religious in nature. So far, no additional monuments have been approved.

Guidelines for privately-funded, public monuments on the Bradford County Courthouse lawn require that the

monuments commemorate “people, events and ideas which played a significant role in the development, origins or foundations of United States of America or Florida law, or Bradford County.” Both the Ten Commandments and the atheist monument meet those requirements, Sexton said.

The atheist monument – which looks like a backwards, lower-case letter “h” – is engraved with the words of several Founding Fathers, as well as a quotation from the Treaty of Tripoli, signed by President John Adams in 1797. It reads, “The government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian Religion.”

American Atheists president David Silverman will attend the June 29 unveiling. The monument, he said, is his group’s attempt to assert its equality.

“This is not an attack on religion, but rather religion’s monopoly,” he said. “The words on our monument do not deride or mock, but rather they clarify and correct assertions that Christianity has some kind of special place in America over other religious positions. It does not.”

He added that American Atheists has plans for other monuments in other public places.

“Everywhere a religious monument is displayed, we will attempt to place an equalizer,” Silverman said. “And I would like to encourage all religious groups, sects or cults to follow suit. Everyone has the same rights in America, and those rights are lost if not defended.”

Editor’s note: American Atheists President, David Silverman, announced on Saturday (June 29) at noon, during his monument unveiling speech, that the Bradford County Courthouse atheist monument in Starke, Florida is only the first of many.

“We plan to work with local groups to install a total of fifty monuments nationwide,” Silverman said.

The monuments will be placed on government property in places where religious monuments currently stand.

An anonymous donor is making this possible.

Some quotes from the Florida monument:

“An atheist believes that a hospital should be built instead of a church. An atheist believes that a deed must be done instead of a prayer said. An atheist strives for involvement in life and not escape into death. He wants disease conquered, poverty banished, war eliminated.”

— Madalyn Murray O’Hair

“Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because, if there be one, he must more approve the homage of reason than that of blindfolded fear.”

– Thomas Jefferson

“It will never be pretended that any person employed in that service [writing the Constitution], had interviews with the gods, or were in any degree under the inspiration of Heaven.”

– John Adams

“Where a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, ’tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one.”

– Benjamin Franklin

Church

Continued from front page

hide – the guidelines describe some of the best hiding places.

Fighting back is a last resort. According to the new rules, gathered in a 38-page document called “Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship,” fighting back is advised for “adults in immediate danger,” who should: “Consider trying to disrupt or incapacitate the shooter by using aggressive force and items in their environment, such as fire extinguishers or chairs.

In a study of 41 active shooter events that ended before law enforcement arrived, the potential victims stopped the attacker themselves in 16 instances. In 13 of those cases, they physically subdued the attacker.”

The question of how best to subdue a gunman is likely to rekindle a debate within many churches, particularly in parts of the country where it is common to carry weapons: Should congregants bring guns to church?

“Each house of worship should determine, as part of its planning process, policies on the control and presence of weapons, as permitted by law,” the guidelines say.

It also says that individuals must make their own decisions about how best to respond when confronted by an active shooter.

Though the booklet was unveiled at an event on gun violence, it focuses on emergency preparedness in general, whether for a shooter, an arsonist or a hurricane. A special section focuses on “active shooter situations.”

“Atheists are adopting a new strategy in challenging religion in the public sphere: if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

Charles C. Haynes, a First Amendment scholar and director of the Newseum’s Religious Freedom Education Project

nessman Joe Anderson paid for the Ten Commandments monument through the Christian Men’s Fellowship, a local group, and the atheist monument was paid for by American Atheists with a grant from the Stiefel Freethought Foundation.

gone beyond the annual December dust-ups over creche displays on civic property. Just this year, there have been legal wranglings over Ten Commandment displays in Oklahoma, Pennsylvania and in another Florida county.

Charles C. Haynes, a First

adopting a new strategy in challenging religion in the public sphere: if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em.

“This is a tactic that is becoming more common,” Haynes said. “If we can’t get religious symbols out of public spaces, then we will put ours

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NAACP’s Rev. William Barber emerges as leader of Moral Monday protests in N.C.

By Yonat Shimron
RALEIGH, N.C. (RNS) The throngs of demonstrators who flock to the grassy knoll outside the North Carolina Statehouse each Monday know the drill.

They listen to a fiery speech denouncing the Republican majority’s legislative actions. They sing freedom songs and chant civil rights slogans. Then they march two by two into the legislative building to be handcuffed by police and arrested for failing to obey orders to disperse.

Leading them in this weekly rite of nonviolent civil disobedience is the Rev. William J. Barber II, president of the state’s NAACP chapter. Since assuming the state presidency eight years ago, he has waged numerous battles challenging local and state governments to extend educational opportunities, broaden the voting base, provide health care and more generally lift up the poor.

At a time when the country is becoming less religious and liberal politicians shy away from faith-based rhetoric, this Disciples of Christ minister, steeped in the activist traditions of the black church, has emerged as a galvanizing force in North Carolina’s pushback against the Republican-dominated legislature.

And with his bear-like stature and thundery oratory, he has towered over his secular political counterparts.

Over the course of nearly two months, he has prodded 480 North Carolinians to get arrested during weekly “Moral Monday” demonstrations.

At Monday’s (June 24) demonstration, Barber expected nearly 300 more at what is billed “Mass Moral Monday.”

“He communicates the message of the South with a power I had heard only in recordings of Dr. Martin Luther King,” said Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, a Christian writer and activist in Durham who has known the preacher since he was in high school.

With Barber steering the opposition to cuts in unemployment benefits, health care funding, voting rights and environment regulations, the movement has taken on the feel of a church revival. Each demonstration begins with a call to join hands and pray. Barber’s speech is inflected with biblical references to Pharaoh, Goliath, good and evil. Then there are the folksy civil rights refrains: “Woke up this morning with my mind set on justice,” and “Ain’t gonna let nobody turn me around.”

With his photo in the newspapers and on TV, the 49-year-old Barber has become as well known as Gov. Pat McCrory and Republican leaders of the House and Senate.

At a Durham coffee shop last week, web developer Jim McManus walked up to Barber to say, “Thank you for all you’re doing with Moral Monday.”

“I’m really alarmed at what’s happening,” said McManus, of Durham. Barber encouraged his visitor to attend Moral Mondays and stop by and say hello.

To outsiders, North Carolina is often indistinguishable



Two clergy members march against cuts to education during the seventh Moral Monday protest on June 17 in Raleigh, N.C. Photo by Anna Scott

from a host of Southern states with equally conservative social and fiscal agendas. But in fact, it has long been a moderate state in which Democrats controlled the governor’s office for 20 years, and until last year, controlled at least one body of the legislature since the 1800s.

No one knows this better than Barber, an avid student of the state’s history. Barber talks incessantly of his vision for “fusion politics” modeled after a period in the late 19th century when the state’s Populist and Republican parties, blacks and whites, joined forces to govern the state.

He points out he’s not wedded to the Democratic Party but rather to coalitions that are willing to fight for just

causes.

“Narrow-minded, isolated agendas aren’t going to hold themselves up as meaningful in the changing demographics of our country,” he said. “A regressive agenda doesn’t fit.”

To that end, he rises at 6 a.m. each day and spends countless hours crisscrossing the state in a black GMC Yukon, meeting with various constituencies and building an ever-growing coalition.

After speaking to a conference of United Church of Christ ministers, he climbed into his car, got on his cell phone and joined a conference call with ministers, rabbis and academics. By 10 p.m., he set off for the 90-minute commute back to Goldsboro where he lives with his wife and five children.

The feverish activism is something he learned from his father. Barber was born in Indianapolis on Aug. 30, 1963 — two days after the Rev. Martin Luther King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. His father, William, a minister and an ac-

tivist, was so swept up by the civil rights movement, he decided to move his family back to North Carolina and enroll his only son in a segregated school.

North Carolina’s public school began to desegregate in the early 1970s, and Barber’s parents helped lead the charge.

Barber picked up the mantle early. He was elected president of the NAACP’s youth council at age 15, president of his high school’s student body at 17, and student government president at North Carolina Central University at 19.

He worked for the Rev. Jesse Jackson’s failed 1984 presidential bid, and succeeded in opening a voting precinct on campus.

After completing a master’s at Duke Divinity School, he settled into the life of a pastor but very quickly found himself fighting on behalf of his congregants for clean water or the right of labor groups to organize.

“There’s no one who works harder,” said Rob Stephens,

the field secretary for the NAACP chapter. “You can never do as much as what he’s going to do.”

All that activism hasn’t won him many friends among Republicans in Raleigh, some of whom have dubbed the protests “Moron Mondays” and labeled the demonstrators “mostly white, angry, aged former hippies.”

“They’re counterproductive,” said Rep. Craig Horn, a Republican who represents Union County outside Charlotte, referring to the demonstrations. “I appreciate the concerns many people are voicing, and the desire to be heard on a number of issues. But the way they’re going about it serves no good purpose. It’s all show and no go.”

There’s no question Barber is a polarizing figure to some, and that may be the reason there haven’t been any serious face-to-face conversations between the lawmakers and the demonstrators.

“I think intelligent black men scare people,” said the Rev. Nancy Petty, pastor of Raleigh’s Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, a liberal congregation active on many social justice issues.

Barber, too, may recognize there’s little maneuvering space with the current legislature. He’s focused on legal challenges and voter registration drives intended to stop the government’s actions in its tracks.

“We may not sprint forward,” he acknowledged, “but there’s a resistance to going backward.” That’s why he’s picked the slogan for his campaign: “Forward together. Not one step back.”

And then there are the arrests. On Monday morning, Barber was in court to challenge them on constitutional grounds. But on Monday night, many will proudly wear a gray and white pin. It reads: “I went to jail with Rev. Barber.”

New Gettysburg museum explores the role faith played in the Civil War

By G. Jeffery MacDonald (RNS)

When Confederate soldiers bore down on Gettysburg, Pa., in 1863, a quiet seminary building atop a ridge was transformed — first into a Union lookout, then a field hospital for 600 wounded soldiers.

Now the structure that stood at the center of the Civil War’s bloodiest and most pivotal battle is being transformed once again.

On July 1, marking the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Get-

ting floors where wounded soldiers built back strength over a course of months. They ponder how soldiers suffered and how they made sense of it.

“Here were these young men, caught up in these events, and trying to be as faithful as they could be as good Christians,” said Maria Erling, professor of church history at the seminary. “They were consoled by those faith commitments.”

In interactive exhibits, visitors grapple with mid-19th cen-

but survived.

“The fact that he carried this Bible with him tells me a lot about him and his purpose,” said Coates’ great-granddaughter, Jean Smith of Kansas City, who donated the Bible to the seminary. “If there hadn’t been some sort of a religious context for him, he wouldn’t have carried it.”

The museum, which cost \$15 million to develop, popularizes new insights from recent scholarship, including how clergy on both sides were physically attacked for taking unpopular stands on slavery.

“It’s really a war of words that precedes the war of sabers and guns,” Franco said. “The slavery debate is very influenced by biblical passages to support one side or the other.”

As it turned out, both sides came to interpret Scripture in ways that would support their views on slavery, with literal interpretations hardening in the South and figurative ones gaining favor in the North.

Those interpretive principles still hold sway, Erling added, as the regions differ on social issues from women’s ordination to homosexuality.

“The North had its own agenda, its own reasons for reading the Bible the way it did,” Erling said. “And the South had its own reasons for reading the Bible the way it did. ... That’s how we have a Bible Belt.”



Schmucker Hall, on the grounds of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, as it might have appeared to advancing Confederate troops in summer of 1863. Photo compliments Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg

tysburg, Schmucker Hall, located on the campus of Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, reopened as a museum reflecting on the epic battle, the costly war and the complex role of faith.

Seminary Ridge Museum will take visitors into the minds of those who fought and explore their conflicting ideas of freedom.

Some 750,000 soldiers died during the Civil War and many of them carried and quoted from the Bible. But they read it in divergent ways that still reverberate in a polarized America.

“People have found it comfortable to find a way to think about the Civil War in terms of valor and heroism,” said Barbara Franco, executive director of the museum. “We want to really look at these other parts of it — causes, consequences — and leave people thinking there’s more to this than just the simple answers.”

Visitors begin with a big view of the battlefields. They gaze out from the cupola where Union General John Buford viewed advancing Confederate brigades. They walk the creak-

tury moral dilemmas: Would you harbor a fugitive slave if it meant you could go to prison? What motivated nurses, such as the Catholic Daughters of Charity, to tend to the injured on both sides?

Exhibits also showcase religious belongings of soldiers who fought at Gettysburg. Example: a 3-inch-by-2-inch Bible carried by Jefferson Coates. A member of Wisconsin’s 7th Regiment and recipient of the Medal of Honor, he was blinded on the Gettysburg battlefield

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World Religion

Quebec Soccer Federation lifts turban ban

However, allegations of religious intolerance and racism still linger

By Ron Csillag

TORONTO (RNS) – Quebec’s much-criticized ban on turbans on soccer fields ended this weekend after the game’s world governing body ruled Sikh headgear permissible.

The Quebec Soccer Federation lifted the ban Saturday (June 15), a day after the Canadian Soccer Association sent out word that FIFA, the international governing body, approved the headgear. But allegations of religious intolerance and racism still linger.

“It’s unfortunate that it took this long and this much effort for the QSF to realize that Sikh children should be allowed to play,” said Prem Singh Vinning, president of the World Sikh Organization of Canada.

In April, the Canadian association urged provincial counterparts to allow turbans, but Quebec refused. Authorities cited safety concerns and pointed to ambiguous rules from FIFA.

As a result of the ban, the association suspended the province on June 10. The move risked turning Quebec into a soccer pariah, preventing its teams from participating in or hosting interprovin-



Turbans, called patkas or keskis, like the one pictured above, are traditional headgear for those in the Sikh religion. Among the Sikhs, the turban is an article of faith that represents honour, self-respect, courage, spirituality, and piety. Many Sikhs consider the turban an important part of the unique Sikh identity. Photo: Courtesy Wikimedia

cial matches and national and international competitions.

Saturday, the Canadian association quickly confirmed the suspension was over, adding it was “pleased that both organizations could come to a timely resolution on this im-

portant matter.”

But the lifting of the ban did not come soon enough to prevent 20 teams from Ontario from pulling out of a tournament in Quebec this weekend.

The Quebec federation’s executive director, Brigitte Frot, who had initially said that Sikh children “can play in their backyard,” said on Saturday that it “has been our intention from the onset to get a confirmation that the FIFA allowed wearing of tur-

bans, patkas or keskis.

“We are very happy that the FIFA has responded to our request and by the same token dispelled the ambiguities created by a lack of clarification,” she added.

With accusations of intolerance and pettiness leveled at Quebec, the ban quickly became a political hot potato. The province’s separatist premier scolded the Canadian Soccer Association for interfering in Quebec’s affairs.

“I believe the Quebec fed-

eration has the right to make its own rules,” said Premier Pauline Marois. “It’s not bound by the Canadian federation.”

She said media coverage of the issue that painted Quebecers as racist and intolerant was “disgraceful.”

Balpreet Singh of the World Sikh Organization of Canada cited a bright spot in the episode.

“The Sikh community gained a lot of friends,” he said. “A lot of people across Canada – including Quebec – sent us a lot of messages of solidarity, and it was an opportunity for the Sikh community to maybe educate people about who we are and on the significance of the turban.”

(EDITOR’S NOTE: The Sikh religion originated in India. The term “Sikh” means disciple or student. The Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak. The essence of Sikh teaching is summed up by Nanak in these words: “Realization of Truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living”. Sikh teaching emphasizes the principle of equality of all humans and rejects discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, and gender. Most male Sikhs have Singh (lion) as their last name and most female Sikhs have Kaur (princess) as their last name. Information was condensed from Wikidedia.com. See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikh> for more information.

Timbuktu artifacts destroyed

Omar Sacirbey

(RNS) Fighting in Mali has destroyed or damaged many religious artifacts and buildings in Timbuktu, an ancient Islamic learning center, local experts and a United Nations team have reported.

“The destruction caused to Timbuktu’s heritage is even more alarming than we thought,” said Lazare Eloundou Assomo of UNESCO’s World Heritage Centre, the cultural agency that surveyed the historic city May 28 – June 3.

The team found that 14 mausoleums, including some listed among UNESCO’s World Heritage sites, were completely destroyed, while parts of the Djingareyber Mosque, built around 1327 with straw, wood and limestone, were also destroyed.

More than 4,200 historic manuscripts were lost from the Ahmed Baba Institute, named after one of Timbuktu’s most revered scholars, while another 300,000 were evacuated, mostly to Bamako, and “are in urgent need of conservation,” according to Eloundou Assomo.

Founded in the 5th century along the southern edge of the Sahara Desert, Timbuktu grew into a major intellectual and Islamic learning center that once had 11 universities.

“They’re important because they help document a sophisticated, educated civilization that existed,” said Okolo Rashid, executive director of the International Museum of Muslim Cultures in Jackson, Miss. which has a permanent collection of Timbuktu manuscripts and artifacts.

Jewish federations support egalitarian space at Western Wall

The plan will allow the Western Wall to “become a spiritual center for all Jews.”

By David Herrera

JERUSALEM (RNS) – The Jewish Federations of North America announced Monday (June 3) that its trustees had passed a resolution in favor of a nonsegregated place where men and women can pray and read from the Torah at the Western Wall, the Jewish holy site.

Worshippers at the Western Wall now have two options: separate men’s and women’s sections, both under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs,

an Orthodox institution.

The egalitarian plan will allow the Western Wall to “become a spiritual center for all Jews and a symbol of unity for the entire Jewish community world-wide,” the federation statement said.

The plan is the result of months of negotiations between Jewish Agency Chairman Natan Sharansky and the heads of the non-Orthodox movements in the U.S. and Israel. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked Sharansky to find a way to accommodate

both Orthodox and non-Orthodox prayer at the wall, which operates as a de facto Orthodox synagogue.

In May, just days after a court ruled that the feminist prayer group Women of the Wall can legally pray at the wall wearing traditional prayer shawls, thousands of ultra-Orthodox Jews tried to stop the activists, some by throwing rocks and spitting.

The Netanyahu government responded to escalating tensions by reaching out to North American Jews.

“By issuing this resolution, the Jewish Federations are giving voice to the strong desire across our community to resolve this critical issue and ensure that all Jews can experience the most spiritually powerful place in Judaism,” Jerry Silverman, JFNA’s president and CEO, said in the statement.

The plan still faces a long road to implementation. Recently, archaeologists said the place earmarked for the egalitarian section contains ancient artifacts that cannot be disturbed.

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Schedule

Thursday 18th

10 AM - Noon: Reports from ministries and churches
Noon - 1:30 PM: Lunch on your own
1:30 - 2 PM: Special presentation by Brandon Mabe, Emcee and performer for the BaldKnobbers
2:00 - 4 PM: Special presentations by the people associated with Acts Media Group on The Real News-Review newspaper, Acts Ministry Radio and Acts Ministry TV.
4:00 - 4:15: Acts Ministry World-Wide Prayer Ministry
4:15 - 4:30: Acts Ministry University
4:30 PM: Dinner on your own
5:30 PM: Leave for Branson to see the Baldknobbers (Special \$12 ticket prices for ActsFest attendees.)

Friday 19th

10 AM - Noon: Special Community panel presentation and discussion on meeting community needs
Noon - 1:30 PM: Lunch on your own
1:30 - 2:30 PM: Special presentation by Rev. Randall Christy, CEO of The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs
7:00 - 8 PM: Songfest At Maranatha Village Chapel
8:00 PM Holy Spirit Victory Celebration and Healing Service at The Chapel at Maranatha Village

Saturday 20th

10 AM - 2:00 PM: Ladies only Program at the Maranatha Village Community Center
5:30 - 9:00 PM: Annual Awards and Recognition Banquet (advanced reservations required)

Sunday 21st

2:00 PM: Worship, Communion and Ordination Service in the Chapel at Maranatha Village

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British scouts to welcome atheists

The U.K.'s scouting program to offer an atheist version on the oath without reference to God

CANTERBURY, England (RNS) – The British scouting movement will soon welcome atheists who are reluctant to join the worldwide organization because they must take an oath to serve God.

Trustees from the Scouting Association — whose patron is Queen Elizabeth II — are preparing to meet next week to approve a new scouting oath for atheists — thus putting them on par with Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus.

While those with religious affiliations will continue to promise to do their duty to both God and the queen, the new “Atheist Promise” (as it’s being called here) will say something different — although the exact words have not yet been released.

This comes only a week after Girl Guides announced that they would give up their promise to “love my God.” Beginning in September, the 500,000 Brownies and Guides will instead promise to be “true to myself and develop my beliefs.”

The British wing of the scouting organization founded by Lord Robert Baden-Powell in 1907 at Brownsea Island in southern England has agreed to bow to pressure from an increasing number of atheists. It comes at a time when British scouting has experienced buoyant growth — membership increased to 525,000 last year, up from 445,000 in 2005.

Alternative versions of the words “duty to God” have existed for different religious



Young British boys enjoy a version of Boy Scouting similar to the Boy Scouts of America. In recent years the programs have made an effort to include an increasing number of immigrants. The youth pictured here is wearing a traditional British Scouting uniform.

groups for more than 40 years. But this is the first time the British scouting leaders have consulted on an alternative version to accommodate the wishes of nonbelievers.

“We do not plan to change the core promise but to offer an option for those who are without faith but who wish to be part of the Scout Movement and are keen to support the movement’s values and developmental work with young people who are drawn from the widest range of cultures, belief systems and communities,” said Chris Foster, media relations officer for the Scouting Association in

London.

The original oath is: On my honour, I promise that I will do my best. To do my duty to God and the Queen. To help other people. And to obey the Scout Law.

In recent years, scouting groups have reached out to young men and women in new immigrant communities. Today, dozens of troops are made up mainly of Muslims, Hindus or Sikhs.

The new wording for atheists will be devised by the trustees of the Scouting Association and approved by the worldwide movement before they are announced.

Oppression

Continued from page 1

And because some of the most restrictive countries are very populous, more than 5.1 billion people (74 percent of the world’s population) were living in 2011 in countries “with high government restrictions on religion or high social hostilities involving religion, the brunt of which often falls on religious minorities,” the study’s authors report.

The report also tracked the proportion of the world’s nations where religious groups suffered persecution:

Christians were harassed in the largest share of nations – 105, but down from 111 in the previous year.

Muslims were persecuted in 101 countries in 2011, up from 90 countries the year before.

Jews were harassed in 69 countries, about the same as the year before (68 countries).

Pope creates commission to review scandal-plagued Vatican bank

BY Alessandro Speciale VATICAN CITY (RNS) Pope Francis on Wednesday (June 26) set up a commission to review the activities of the scandal-plagued Vatican Bank to ensure it works in harmony with the mission of the Roman Catholic Church.

The move comes only a few days after he appointed a trusted cleric as the bank’s overseeing prelate, a position that had been vacant for years. The appointment indicates Francis’ resolve in tackling one of the most embarrassing issues left behind by Pope Benedict XVI when he resigned in February.

The Vatican Bank, formally known as the Institute for the Works of Religion (IOR), has a long history of secrecy and scandals. It has reportedly been involved in several shady operations in past years and has been accused of having ties to the Mafia.

Most recently, top bank officials have been put under investigation by Italian magistrates

for alleged money laundering.

The new commission created by Francis will have the power to access the bank’s data and documents, trumping the secrecy that historically shrouded

started adopting international financial transparency standards, setting up an independent financial watchdog.

While a European monitoring authority has issued a positive review of the Vatican’s efforts, it stressed that more needed to be done, especially about the bank.

In recent weeks, Ernst von Freyberg, the bank’s president – appointed during Benedict’s pontificate – said the IOR needed to address its tarnished reputation.

Francis was elected with a clear mandate to reform the Curia, the Vatican’s central administration, after years of scandals and reports of infighting and lack of internal collaboration.

Speaking at his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square on Wednesday, he stressed that in the church no one is superior to anyone else: “We are all equal in the eyes of God. But, one of you might say, ‘Mr. Pope, sir, you are not equal to us.’ But I am just like each of you. We are all equal.”

its operations.

The five-member commission includes among its members two cardinals and the former U.S. ambassador to the Holy See, Harvard professor Mary Ann Glendon.

The Vatican’s chief spokesman, the Rev. Federico Lombardi, said Francis wants to “reform the bank to make it more pertinent to the church’s needs.”

Under Benedict, the Vatican

Top bank officials have been put under investigation by Italian magistrates for alleged money laundering.

Pope Francis: Christianity is incompatible with anti-Semitism

VATICAN CITY (RNS) In his first official meeting with a Jewish delegation, Pope Francis on Monday (June 24) reaffirmed the Catholic Church’s condemnation of anti-Semitism and vowed to further deepen Catholic-Jewish relations.

“Due to our common roots, a Christian cannot be anti-Semitic!” he told a delegation of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, the Vatican’s official partner for interfaith dialogue with the world’s Jews.

In his speech, Francis stated that the church condemns “hate, persecution, and all manifestations of anti-Semitism.”

He also reiterated that the Second Vatican Council’s 1965 declaration “Nostra Aetate” remains the key point of reference for Catholic-Jewish relations.

The document had received renewed attention in recent years as Pope Benedict XVI tried to reconcile the church with a traditionalist breakaway group that refused the modernizing reforms of Vatican II, including dialogue with the Jews.

Benedict’s relations with Jews had been also fraught with controversy over a revived Good Friday prayer that called for Jews’ conversion and the progress toward beatification of Pope Pius XII, whom Jews accuse of having remained silent during the Holocaust.

Francis himself is no stranger to Jewish-Catholic dialogue. In his native Argentina, then-Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio had strong ties to the local Jewish community and wrote a book-length interview with Rabbi Abraham Skorka.

When terrorists killed 85 and wounded 300 in a 1994 bombing at a Jewish center in Buenos Aires, Bergoglio expressed solidarity with the local Jewish community. On the day after his election, he personally invited Rome’s chief rabbi to his inauguration Mass at the Vatican.

“Pope Francis is a very good friend of the Jewish people and we rejoice in the fact that he will continue to advance the path of his predecessors in deepening the Catholic-Jewish relationship even further,” said Rabbi David Rosen, director of international interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, after meeting with Francis.

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld, executive vice president of the Conservative movement’s Rabbinical Assembly, described the meeting with the pope as “very positive” and “familiar.”

“You could see that he had ties with Jews back home,” she said.

In her brief conversation with Francis, Schonfeld said she praised the work of American nuns in combating human trafficking, and hoped for enhanced Catholic-Jewish cooperation on the issue.

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Religion and Life

ACLJ files federal lawsuit Against IRS on behalf of 41 conservative groups IRS admits targeting conservative groups

(Washington, DC) - The American Center for Law and Justice filed an amended lawsuit in federal court in Washington, D.C. – adding an additional 16 Tea Party and conservative organizations, including a pro-life group, to the complaint – bringing to 41 the total number of organizations represented in the court challenge.

On May 29, 2013, the ACLJ filed the initial lawsuit on behalf of 25 organizations arguing top Obama Administration officials – including those at the Internal Revenue Service – violated the constitutional rights of the groups by secretly targeting these organizations because of their political beliefs.

“The floodgates opened after we filed our initial lawsuit,” said Jay Sekulow, Chief Counsel of the ACLJ. “We have been contacted by many additional organizations that have been unlawfully targeted by the IRS – revealing that this unconstitutional scheme was pervasive and damaging to our clients. As Congress continues its investigation, and as we expand our federal lawsuit, we’re confident that the truth will be revealed and important questions answered: How did this targeting scheme begin? Who ordered it? How could the White House counsel and White House chief of staff know about this tactic but the President did not? We remain dedicated to ensuring that those responsible for this unconscionable scheme are held accountable.”

The amended complaint, which adds 16 organizations to the original list of 25 groups, argues that IRS officials “work-

ing in offices from California to Washington, D.C., pulled applications from conservative organizations, delayed processing those applications for sometimes well over a year, then made probing and unconstitutional requests for additional information that often required applicants to disclose, among other things, donor lists, direct and indirect communications with members of legislative bodies, Internet passwords and usernames, copies of social media and other Internet postings, and even the political and charitable activities of family members.”

Among the organizations added to the complaint is a pro-life group singled out because of its opposition to abortion.

The ACLJ contends the group, AMEN (Abortion Must End Now) – based in Yuma, AZ – was singled out because of its name and because the group is “focused on defending the Sanctity of Life and to put an end to abortion once and for all” and intends to “provide education . . . about the effects of abortion and to present pro-life brochures.” The group applied for 501(c)(3) status in 2010 and its application is still pending.

In a letter dated October 20, 2010 to AMEN, an IRS specialist in the Cincinnati office questioned the appropriateness of the organization’s goal to provide education and awareness about its beliefs that human life must be protected. In fact, the letter stated that IRS policy draws a bright line – classifying certain activities as political rather than educational – even questioning the

organization’s communication strategy and content.

The IRS letter to the pro-life group stated that the communication method used by the group “will not be considered educational . . . if it fails to provide a development from the relevant facts that would materially aid a listener or reader in a learning process.” The IRS letter also cautioned against using what it termed as “strong emotional feelings” in an organization’s messaging.

“This is outrageous,” said Sekulow. “Now we have evidence that the IRS is somehow uniquely qualified to make a determination about content and regulate how a pro-life organization can explain its mission and beliefs. Imagine the outcry if Planned Parenthood or NARAL was subjected to this abuse. This is another blatant example of an IRS out of control – an agency that embraces unlawful and unconstitutional conduct.”

The ACLJ also argues that another organization – the Arlington Tea Party of Arlington, TX – received harassing and invasive questions from the IRS. In a letter dated February 16, 2012, an IRS specialist demanded that the group provide “a temporary Username and Password that we could use to review your organization’s website.” The IRS also demanded “hardcopy printouts” of its social media pages, copies of all solicitations and documents concerning the organization’s fundraising activities “in an election year and non-election year,” and “copies of handouts to the audience” and “workshop materials that instructors



Jordon Sekulow, Policy and International Operations Director for the America Center for Law and Justice, speaks at a press conference announcing the lawsuit against the IRS for targeting conservative groups. Photo courtesy C-SPAN

will use” at the organization’s public events. The Arlington Tea Party applied for 501(c)(4) status in 2011 and the case is still pending.

The amended lawsuit, posted here, urges the court to find that the Obama Administration overstepped its authority and violated the First and Fifth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution, the Administrative Procedure Act, as well as the IRS’s own rules and regulations. The lawsuit requests a declaratory judgment that the Defendants unlawfully delayed and obstructed the organizations’ applications for a determination of tax-exempt status by means of conduct that was based on unconstitutional criteria and impermissibly disparate treatment of the groups.

The suit also seeks injunctive relief to protect our clients – and their officers and directors – from further IRS abuse or retaliation. Further, the lawsuit seeks compensatory and punitive monetary damages to

be determined at trial at a later date.

According to the complaint: “The IRS scheme had a dramatic impact on targeted groups, causing many to curtail lawful activities, expend considerable unnecessary funds, lose donor support, and devote countless hours of time to responding to onerous and targeted IRS information requests that were outside the scope of legitimate inquiry.”

The ACLJ now represents a total of 41 organizations in 22 states in the lawsuit. The names of the organizations represented are available here. Of the 41 groups, 19 organizations received tax-exempt status after lengthy delays, 17 are still pending, and 5 withdrew applications because of frustration with the IRS process.

The IRS contends that the targeting scheme originated with a couple of rogue IRS agents out of the Cincinnati, Ohio office and contends the abusive conduct has been

halted. However, the ACLJ has correspondence showing this tactic was used not only in the Cincinnati office, but also from two offices in California – El Monte and Laguna Niguel – as well as the national office in Washington, D.C. In fact, the Washington office sent a letter to one of our clients as recently as April 2013.

Furthermore, the ACLJ has letters signed by Lois Lerner, Director of Exempt Organizations, suggesting her personal involvement in sending invasive questionnaires to 15 of our clients in March 2012 - some nine months after she was told about the scheme and promised to stop it.

The ACLJ has heard from nearly 120,000 Americans calling on President Obama and members of Congress to end the IRS abuse.

Led by Chief Counsel Jay Sekulow, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLIJ), focusing on constitutional law, is based in Washington, D.C.

D.C. Imam provides, counseling, weddings and prayer space for gay Muslims

By Krista Kapralos
RNS) Imam Dayaiee Abdullah never knows how many people are going to show up for Friday prayers.

Some weeks, nearly a dozen men and women gather at a Quaker hall in northwest Washington, D.C., where they kneel on prayer rugs laid out to transform the room into a Muslim place of worship.

Other weeks, Abdullah, a convert to Islam, sits alone.

He may be the only openly gay imam in the world, and he formed Light of Reform mosque more than two years ago so people like himself could worship without fear.

The mosque is one of just a few in the world where openly gay Muslims are welcome, but even there, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people fear harassment, and often stay away.

“There’s been a lot of hate speech,” Abdullah said. “I’m doing the

work they refuse to do,” he added, referring to other imams.

Life is changing for gay Muslims, even if the changes seem infinitesimally small. A gay-friendly mosque opened near Paris last year. A lesbian Muslim couple from Pakistan married in a civil service this year in England.

Western Muslims are leading the push for inclusiveness, said Ani Zonneveld, president of Muslims for Progressive Values, for which Abdullah serves as director of LGBT outreach.

Abdullah provides wedding ceremonies for gay Muslims and interfaith couples. He also offers counseling (available via Skype for gay Muslims living in countries where homosexuality is not tolerated), and weekly prayer services where men and women kneel side by side.

But while Abdullah calls his mosque “progressive,” Imam Muzammil Siddiqi, a prominent Muslim leader based at California’s Islamic Society of Orange County calls it “unacceptable.”

No legitimate imam will officiate at a same-sex wedding, Siddiqi said.

“Anyone who has an inclination that is not acceptable, they have to control themselves,” he added. “If someone has an inclination to commit adultery or an inclination to drink alcohol or a great desire to eat pork, I would say the same thing: Control yourselves.”

Muslim leaders in the D.C. area don’t like to talk about Abdullah’s mosque or the weddings he celebrates. Most publicly oppose gay unions.

Across the nation, some have begun to speak out. U.S. Rep. Keith Ellison, D-Minn., and Rep. Andre Carson, D-Ind., both Muslims, advocate for gay rights.

Word of Abdullah’s mosque has spread quickly in recent months. He’s given interviews to newspapers, magazines and television programs around

couples shared their stories. But now, he said, they avoid the limelight.

“They’ve been asked too many times,” Abdullah said.

There are about 2.6 million Muslims in the U.S., according to a 2010 Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life poll, but it’s not clear how many are gay. Eight in 10 homosexuals say Islam is one of two religions most unfriendly toward them (the other is Mormonism), reports the Pew Research Center.

Abdullah was 8 years old when he told his Southern Baptist parents he didn’t want to attend their church. It was the early 1960s, and his parents encouraged open discussions about religion and civil rights.

He spent his childhood pursuing Boy Scout merit badges and studying various religions, he said.

He converted to Islam when he was 29. He was in China studying Mandarin when he met Uighur Muslims

who taught him about Islam. Uighurs have long faced persecution in China for their religion.

“I asked them, is it haram to be Muslim and gay?” he said, using the Islamic reference for “forbidden.” “They said no.”

Abdullah said he’s in a long-term relationship and doesn’t have any immediate plans to marry.

It’s significant that Abdullah was born in the U.S., said Scott Kugle, a gay Muslim and a religion professor at Emory University. Culturally, Western countries allow more questioning of sexuality than do others, he said. “That doesn’t mean that people from other cultures and regions aren’t questioning it,” he said. “They just do so quietly.”

Abdullah sees his role as that of a pioneer, especially as more people hear about his work and seek him out.

“The mission I have to accomplish has taken on a greater value, both personally and spiritually,” he said. “Not because of the publicity, but because of the responses.”

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Lifetree Cafes: casual discussions about God and life

Nationwide ministry creates seeker-friendly environment for non-churchgoers

WATERBURY, Conn. (RNS) On a recent Monday evening, a room inside Christ Community Church was transformed into a coffeehouse with fresh-brewed coffee, plenty of popped kettle corn and the thorny subject of racism on the table.

For an hour, about 20 people gathered around tables, shared personal experiences about racism, watched a short documentary and answered questions meant to stimulate conversation.

The event is called Lifetree Cafe, and it's a new evangelical tool gaining popularity with churches reaching out to potential members.

Lifetree Cafes are a fairly recent venture by Group Publishing, a Colorado-based Christian publishing company that is tapping into people's yearning for community and face-to-face connection.

"There's a cry out there," said Craig Cable, a Lifetree Cafe representative. "People are looking for hope and meaning. Lifetree Cafes create a safe place where people from all walks of life can have a conversation and talk about the struggles we deal with."

Group Publishing tested the



Lifetree Cafes are springing up and growing all over the United State. Weekly discussion groups, like the one pictured above, are open to everyone, "just as you are." Relevant and sometimes controversial topics come up. By creating and maintaining a safe environment for discussion and even differences of opinion, everyone grows from the experience. Photo courtesy Life Tree Cafes and Group Publishing

to host a weekly conversation cafe. Churches are given videos, scripted questions, name tags for attendees, and marketing and promotion tools to promote the event. Churches pay \$300-\$400 a month, Cable said.

Lifetree Cafes are open to

include atheism, gun violence, domestic abuse and marijuana use. Cable said the topics appeal to all denominations. They do have a Christian message, but they don't "feel preachy" or draw conclusions.

Deric Mendes, an atheist blogger in California, said he couldn't resist attending a Lifetree Cafe in a local church when he saw one advertised earlier this year — especially since the week's topic was atheism.

Mendes wrote about his experience on his blog Vicarious Redemption. Besides some criticism of the video shown at the event, Mendes said he enjoyed the experience and found the people friendly and welcoming.

But there was something strained about the evening, he said.

"It felt like a bunch of white neighbors in the 1960s discussing the black family who had just moved into the neighborhood," Mendes said.

Casey Sabella, pastor of

Christ Community Church and the weekly host of its Lifetree Cafe, said he offers the program to get his congregation talking about subjects not generally discussed during church services.

"There's no altar call, no passing of the plate to collect offerings," Sabella said. "The cafe is where people can come together to have a conversation."

While the recent Lifetree Cafe at Sabella's Connecticut church attracted only members of his congregation, he hopes to reach out to the greater community and invite people to join in the conversation every week. A schedule of future Lifetree Cafe topics can be found on the church's website.

Bill Tooker, a Christ Community Church member, said he found the racism discussion helpful.

"When people start talking about something," he said, "change happens."

Redeemer Lutheran Church in Springfield hosts a Lifetree Cafe

By Steve Highlander, RN-R Editor (SPRINGFIELD, MO) – Every Sunday evening at 6:00 P.M. an eclectic group of people meet at the Brown Egg Coffee Shop on the corner of Kinbrough and Madison in Springfield to drink coffee and discuss life -- and God.

Welcome to Lifetree Cafe, hosted by Redeemer Lutheran Church of Springfield. As you enter you are greeted by several people, offered refreshments and encouraged to take part in the interactive discussions.

According to LuAnn Kisse, Director of Redeemers' Lifetree Cafe, "Lifetree Cafe is a great place to relax and get in on some good, relevant discussion in a non-threatening environment."

The Springfield branch of Lifetree Cafe, like all other branches, follow a weekly guide for discussion of current topics. Lifetree Cafes (a subsidiary of Group Publishing) provides the materials, including a weekly video story and discussion questions to facilitate each weekly gathering.

The hour-long discussion group starts with a few thoughts on-screen to welcome everyone and set the stage for the evening's discussion. "You are welcome just as you are." "Your thoughts are welcome." "Your doubts are welcome." "We're in this together." "God is here to connect with you in a fresh way."

"Lifetree Cafe is a 'conversation cafe,'" Kisse said. "Each week we hear real-life stories and consider some thought-provoking questions." Everyone is encouraged to participate and no one's opinion is exalted or squelched.

The stories are human stories: Things people can relate to, either in their own lives, their family or someone they know. According to Kisse the topics can be controversial and challenging. They are designed to make you think and challenge you to consider alternative viewpoints. The staff is often amazed at how their weekly topic material, prepared well beforehand, fits in with something that has happened that very week.

The Springfield branch has been active for about a year and a half. "Our group usually runs 15-20 people," Kisse said, "but we regularly have new visitors."

The responses are almost always positive. The group asks for feedback weekly. "We call them 'God stories' -- testimonies from people who were impacted in some way by evening's discussion," Kisse said.

The group would like to invite you to join them on a Sunday evening for refreshments, discussion and human interaction. Everyone is welcome -- "just as you are!"

"There's a cry out there. People are looking for hope and meaning. Lifetree Cafes create a safe place where people from all walks of life can have a conversation and talk about the struggles we deal with."

Craig Cable, a Lifetree Cafe representative.

first Lifetree Cafe in 2007 and began licensing the program in 2010. Since then, some 350 churches have purchased the program, recently at a rate of one a week.

When churches sign on, Lifetree Cafe provides them with all the materials they need

the public and held in churches, community centers, hotels and coffee shops throughout the country. (A Lifetree Cafe in Loveland, Co., is held at a homeless shelter.)

The same topic is discussed at each cafe and sessions last one hour. Past and future topics

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Volume 1, Issue 5 July, 2013

Religion in Society

Rick Santorum: From politics to Hollywood Santorun named CEO of innovative faith-based film studio

By Kevin McDermott
ST. LOUIS (St. Louis Post Dispatch) – It’s not the message you might expect to hear from Rick Santorum, the Christian-conservative former presidential candidate: Faith-based films tend to be lousy, and Christians should quit trying to lock modern popular culture out of their lives. Instead, Santorum says, Christian conservatives should acknowledge that modern popular culture is here to stay, and use that platform to produce Christian-themed films that will also have quality and popular appeal. It’s a strategy he says he intends to pursue in his new role as CEO of a ground-breaking faith-based film studio. In an interview here, Santorum also stood by his strong views against same-sex marriage, citing the necessity to adhere to religious teachings — but then disputed his own religion’s leaders on the issue of immigration. Santorum, a former U.S. senator from Pennsylvania and darling of the religious right in the crowded GOP field for the 2012 presidential nomination, was in St. Louis Monday (June 24) to promote his own foray into popular culture. He has been named CEO of EchoLight Studios, which bills itself as “the first movie company to produce, finance, market and distribute faith-based, family films across all releasing platforms.” “For a long time, Christians have decided that the best way to fight the popular culture is to keep it at bay, to lock it out of their home. ... That’s a losing battle,” Santorum said in an interview at America’s Center Convention



Rick Santorum speaking at the 2013 CPAC in Washington D.C. on March 15, 2013.
Photo Gage Skidmore, Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Complex, where he was attending the International Christian Retail Show. With “the pervasiveness of (media) right now, the content just seeps through. The only option is to go out into that arena and try to shape the culture, too.” Santorum said one problem with Christian-themed films was that they’ve traditionally been aimed at just

Christian audiences, rather than attempting to appeal to audiences that don’t necessarily share the movie’s messaging going in. He blamed that limited appeal on what he said were often the “hokey” and “cheesy” feel of such films, with all the filmmakers’ attention focused on the message and not enough on artistic quality. “Quality,

Quality acting, quality directing, quality scriptwriting. That is going to be a watchword for me,” Santorum said at a news conference talking about the studio’s pending projects. He said the goal was to produce movies “that rival any good Hollywood film.” Dallas-based EchoLight’s first theatrical release, “The Redemption of Henry Myers,” is slated for release in the fall. Promotional material describes it as a Western about a bank robber who

finds redemption from a widow and her children who take him in after he’s wounded. Santorum’s St. Louis visit came as the nation awaits a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on the Defense of Marriage Act, which denies federal marital benefits to same-sex couples. It also comes as the national immigration debate heats up in Congress. Santorum dismissed the suggestion from some Republicans that the GOP should soften its official opposition to gay marriage rights to widen its appeal to young people. Among his reasoning is that a federal stamp of approval on gay marriage would be a direct affront to religious teachings and would hurt religious institutions. “The destruction of the institution of marriage and a redefinition of it will not only harm the family but will do incredible damage to the church” by labeling church teachings as outside the mainstream, said Santorum, who is Roman Catholic. “It’s going to do great damage to the church and its ministries, and I think, therefore, the country.” But on the issue of immigration, Santorum himself voiced opposition to his own church’s position. He stood by his hard-line view against federal legislation that some conservatives claim provides amnesty for unauthorized immigrants, even as Catholic leaders embrace it as a humanitarian approach. “Certainly, the Catholic bishops have a very different point of view than I do” on the immigration bill, Santorum said. “I think it’s wrong, I think it’s short-sighted. Every country has a right to protect its border. (The bishops) don’t see that right as legitimate.” (Kevin McDermott writes for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.)

Law Suit

Continued from front

Tenn., said the First Amendment not only guarantees freedom of expression and religion, it also guarantees that people cannot be forced to say things with which they do not agree. “My client does not believe he should be compelled to display an image that communicates a pagan practice, that of shooting an arrow into the sky to draw rain from a ‘rain god,’” Kellum said.

The image is a reproduction of a sculpture by master sculptor Allan Houser, a version of which is owned by the Smithsonian Institution. Titled “Sacred Rain Arrow,” the piece is based on an ancient Chiricahua Apache legend about a warrior who had his bow and arrow blessed by a medicine man for the purpose of ending a drought.

A committee chose the image because it is very well known in Oklahoma and sits in front of Tulsa’s Thomas Gilcrease Museum.

The appeals court ruled that Cressman had presented enough evidence to establish that the message on the license plate is a “particularized claim” that others would recognize.

Diane Clay, a spokeswoman for the Oklahoma Attorney General’s Office, said the 10th Circuit is well known for its tendency to err on the side of freedom of speech.

The state could allow the trial to return to Heaton’s court, file a petition for rehearing before the entire appellate court or petition to be heard before the U.S. Supreme Court.

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Couple walks across America for Jesus

Joshua Acosta and Kerri Hegarty dedicate three summers to walk from coast to coast praying for people they meet

By **Steve Highlander**, Editor, Real News - Review

NEVADA, MO – One of the metaphors the Bible uses for the lifestyle of the Christian is a “walk,” indicating that the Christian life is not a destination, but a journey. For one couple, Joshua Acosta and Kerri Hegarty, the concept has a much more literal meaning.

A typical day finds Josh and Kerri walking down the side of a road wearing backpacks and pushing a pet stroller. In the stroller -- Skitch, -- their half-Dachshund, half-Yorkie puppy. Often confused for a homeless family with a baby, passersby stop to ask if they need help; or on occasion, reprimand them for hitchhiking with a baby – neither of which they are doing. Josh and Kerri set out in May 2012 to walk across America for Jesus.

Josh and Kerri, both 22, met in college. “We met in 2010,” Kerri said, “but we didn’t really connect as friends until November of 2011.” Kerri graduated this past semester with a dual degree in Deaf Education and Elementary Education, and is headed to Las Vegas to start a new job in the fall. Josh is headed back to school for the fall semester to finish his degree in Biology and Pre-Med, with a minor in Chemistry.

The idea to walk across the country first came to Josh in 2009. He shares his motivation on his website, joshwalksamERICA.com. “I’ve made a commitment to myself to backpack across the country. The idea first formulated itself about four years ago, and I had initially intended to use my travels as a way to reach people through a sort of ‘hitchhiking-truck-stop ministry.’”

Through prayer and fasting however, I have come to the understanding that I am to simply walk the land and go where [God] will lead me. I have decided not to do this for any financial gain or for publicity; neither am I affiliated with any charity or non-profit organization. My intent is just to walk the span of the country to reach people for Christ. I also really hope to make many friends along the way!”

Their walk is a three-year commitment. They started from Cape Henlopen, DE in the summer of 2012 and reached Sedalia, MO by the time they had to stop to head back to college for fall classes. The couple picked up the journey this spring in Sedalia, right where they left off last year. “We hope to make it to Colorado or farther this summer,” Josh said. The goal is to start again next spring where they will end this fall, and make it to San Francisco in the fall of 2014.

To prepare for the physical part of the trip, Josh and Kerri would get up and meet at the gym by 6 am and work out for an hour and a half, before heading to class. An illness put Josh in bed for about two months before the walk started in the spring of 2012, and he ended up losing much of the strength and endurance he had gained. It did give him a chance to work on his spiritual life though, and it was during this time that he felt God gave him some different direction. Instead of something Josh was going to do for God, the walk was to be something God was going to do through Josh.

When asked what difficulties they experience on the road, the couple looked at each for a bit and replied, “We really don’t have any.”

This seemed kind of strange after having to sit out the storms

in West Central Missouri for a few days.

Josh and Kerri typically sleep in a tent and carry only the supplies they can get in their backpacks and the stroller.

Those supplies include: soup, beef jerky, cheese, peanut butter, trail mix, tuna, pop tarts, dried fruit, and Chef Boyardee – all typical foods found in a college dorm. (A complete list of items can be found on their website, along with a whole lot of other fun facts about the trip.)

Because they are not doing this to raise money, they have never asked anyone for anything -- including a ride. “We set out to walk across America,” Josh said. “We don’t accept rides and if someone does pick us up to take us to dinner or give us a place to stay for the night, they take us back to where they picked us up and drop us off. We want to maintain the integrity of the vision to walk across America for Jesus.”

When asked what has changed most in their lives, Josh was quick to say his ‘attitude toward people.’ “I have a greater respect of all of God’s people. It’s easy to assume people are self-centered, or have it all together and don’t need anything,” he said, “but when you meet people and get the full story of what has happened, or is happening, in their lives, it really causes you to see the individual and have a greater sense of understanding. Prayer is needed everywhere!”

Josh also said he has gained a great respect for God’s creation. Most people pass by nature at 60 or 70 miles an hour. Josh



Often mistaken for a homeless couple with a baby, Joshua Acosta and Kerri Hegarty (and their puppy Skitch) have committed three summers to walk across America from coast to coast and to pray for the people they meet along the way. Photo: Steve Highlander, Real News - Review

told a story of something that had happened the day before. They were three miles east of the small town of Walker, MO when a lady in a car stopped to check on them, and then went on. Two miles later, as they approached town, it was 8:00 pm and they quickly needed a place to set up their tent, and make camp for the

night before it got dark. Kerri prayed for a safe place to make camp. At the same instant a car stopped. The man was the nephew of the lady who had talked to them earlier. His house was just up the road in the direction they were headed and he invited them to stay with him for the evening.

Josh told a story about a divine encounter. The story starts two days before the encounter itself. According to Josh, “We had stayed with a married couple a few towns back. John, the husband, related to me the amazing experiences and divine connections he received when he participated in his church’s annual Emmaus Walk.

He gave me the necklace he received from being a participant. It was a silver cross necklace with special designations on it. He told me that it’s purpose is that it is to be passed on

from person to person, when the current wearer feels that

another person needs it more than they do. When he gave it to me, I asked him, “Who do I give it to?” He told me that ‘I would just know.’”

The story picks up two days later. Josh and Kerri found themselves in a very small town at the end of a 19-mile day.

“We stumbled into a small diner and had a much needed meal, taken care of (unknownst to us) by the man we sat next to and talked with, who left before we even knew.”

As they were leaving the diner, “a young man bursts into the

diner with reckless abandon.”

Josh continued the story. “We said our apologies for almost running into each other, and Kerri and I walked outside.

Less than a minute later, he comes back outside and kind of sarcastically asks, “Hey, are you guys walking?” Josh replied that yes, in fact, we were.

He was flabbergasted. I guess he asked the question jokingly.

We explained to him what we were doing and why we were doing it.”

“He just broke down to me and started telling me all about his current struggles and spiritual plights. He told me all about his home life and upbringing and his parents’ battle with drugs, the trailer park life, him having two children and another on the way. He shared about all the different women he had been with and all of this in spite of the fact that he was only 20 years old.”

Josh and Cameron talked for almost an hour in front of the diner. As they were talking Josh began to see a change in him. One of hope.

Cameron related how he had asked God to save him a few years back at a youth camp, but hasn’t done much for God since.

“I could just tell that he had been spiritually edified and uplifted and changed,” Josh shared. “I reached in my pack and pulled out a spare Bible that had been given to me and highlighted some passages and gave him the Bible to keep.”

Cameron was in awe. No one had ever given him anything before.

Josh went on, “It was then that John’s words, from two days earlier, resonated in my head. I took off the Emmaus Walk necklace and put it on Cameron.”

“He fell on his knees and began crying. It was both heart-wrenching and beautiful at the same time. I could just feel God in the atmosphere”

Cameron rededicated his life to Christ on the street in front of the diner in that moment.

“I’ve always believed in God, but I never really relied on Him in my life. I am learning to trust God for everything; and that God can be trusted with everything.”

~Kerri Hegerty

and Kerri pass by at about 15 miles a day. “We have time to see nature. We hear the birds sing and see the plants and animals -- and feel the bugs,” he added.

“We meet lots of great people along the way,” Kerri said. “Some people will invite us to dinner or to stay at their home or at least pitch our tent on their property. We always take this opportunity to get to know people and see if we can minister to their needs through prayer.” According to Josh, “Just loving on people is what we do.”

Kerri shared how the trip has impacted her personally. “I’ve always believed in God, but I never really relied on Him in my life,” she said. “I am learning to trust God for everything; and that God can be trusted with everything.”

When asked to illustrate, she



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1950's Supreme Court Decision on Religion in Schools

Continued from front page

cussion, to send a message to an influx of immigrants about what it meant to be an American.

He said the public school was understood as a place where students were “Americanized,” and many members of the majority mainline Protestant faiths believed the moral underpinnings of their country were found in scripture.

“It wasn’t so much that Protestants wanted their Bible read as it was that Americans believed public schools were the most Americanizing influence and would prevent all kinds of things that would happen” if the influx of Roman Catholics and other immigrants introduced differing viewpoints, he said.

The private Catholic school system was born out of this conflict. But as immigration continued to diversify the nation’s religious landscape over the ensuing decades, the practice of Bible reading in schools continued to cause controversy

a defining characteristic of what it meant to be American. “One nation under God” was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, “In God We Trust” was adopted as the nation’s motto and a National Day of Prayer was enacted.

In this climate, Schempp and a few of his classmates met weekly at each other’s homes to discuss things that were important to them, from dating to social issues. The gatherings were initiated by an English teacher, whom Schempp credits with getting him to think critically about conscience and ethics.

At one of the sessions, Schempp sparked a lively discussion when he brought up how the mandatory daily Bible reading and prayer bothered him and appeared a clear violation of the First Amendment’s establishment clause, which prohibits government endorsement of a religion.

“Some defended it on the basis of tradition and that society evolved from Christianity.

“The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind,”
~Justice Tom C. Clark

and was either dropped by public school officials or banned by state courts that ruled in favor of minority communities that challenged the policies.

“If people want to know when religion left the public schools, it wasn’t through these (post-World War II Supreme Court) decisions. It was a long time ago when people couldn’t agree on sectarian teaching,” Haynes said.

Still, a few states like Pennsylvania preserved the symbolic practice of Bible reading and prayer by making it the law.

The protest

In the 1950s, during the era of McCarthyism and the Cold War, religion became for many



The issue of prayer and religion in school is not just about Christianity. Approximately 95 million US citizens are not affiliated with the Christian religion. Today, state-sponsored religion would also mean that Buddhist, Islamic, Jewish and other prayers would be mandated as a matter of equal rights. Stock photo

once reading a suggestive section of the Song of Solomon.

“What started to bother me is it took on a kind of silliness,” he said.

After he learned his friends were also troubled by the practice, Schempp and about four of his classmates decided they would protest by not standing up for the Lord’s Prayer during the morning ritual. It was Schempp’s idea to bring the Quran, which belonged to the father of one of the boys, to make a point that he believed the Bible was not the only source of religious inspiration. “I knew absolutely nothing about Islam ... I had never met a Muslim. So, it was purely by accident,” he said of picking Islam’s holy book.

Raised a Unitarian, Schempp was taught to embrace a diversity of religious thought and resisted the idea of a single source of truth.

“That clearly influenced me,” said Schempp, who is now an atheist and attends the First Parrish Unitarian Universalist church in Bedford, Mass. “Unitarians have a long history of standing up for individual conscience.”

But one by one, his Jewish, Catholic and Protestant friends backed out of their plan as their parents advised them against it. Schempp’s parents, however, were more supportive when he expressed his concerns to them the day before his protest on the drive home from a long Thanksgiving weekend at his grandmother’s house.

And after the protest, when Schempp told his parents during dinner that he had been sent to the principal’s office for not participating in the Lord’s Prayer, his dad suggested he write to the American Civil Liberties Union to request its help and advice.

Ellery Schempp grabbed a piece of his father’s company letterhead, on which he typed out a brief request that the Philadelphia office of the ACLU challenge the constitutionality of the law.

“I thank you for any help you might offer in freeing American youth in Pennsylvania from this gross violation of their religious rights as guaranteed in the first and foremost amendment in our United States constitution,” Schempp confidently concluded his letter.

Consensus decision

The ACLU took up the case, winning at district court level, and eventually the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the decision.

Stephen D. Solomon, an attorney and media law professor at New York University who wrote a book about the Schempp decision, “Ellery’s Protest,” said that in his research he pored over memos and minutes of the justices’ deliberations on the case, learning there was overwhelming agreement among the justices on the issue and the decision was written by one of the four conservatives on the court.

“There was broad judicial consensus that state-sponsored prayer and Bible reading was a violation of First Amendment,” Solomon said. “It was an easy decision for them.”

But the ruling was difficult for the public to accept. It came a year after the court’s landmark school prayer case, Engel v. Vitale, in which it found that forcing students in New York to recite a state-composed prayer violated the First Amendment’s establishment clause.

Both rulings stoked a culture war between religious conservatives and liberal secularists who both overstated that the court had banned religion from public schools.

“Both extremes had the incentive to overstate it. Militant folks were happy to say that it drove religion out of the schools. Meanwhile, the other side had incentive to make it look as bad as possible to allow Congress to do something to reverse it,” said Michael McConnell, director of the Constitutional Law Center at Stanford Law School.

Solomon wrote that 146 resolutions were introduced in Congress within two years of the Schempp decision, proposing constitutional amendments that would overturn the decision. School districts, primarily in the South, ignored the ruling and continued religious devotionals in public schools.

While Pennsylvania stopped the practice immediately after the ruling, the Bible reading law remained on the books. Schempp was notified earlier this month that a Pennsylvania lawmaker plans to introduce legislation to repeal the unconstitutional and unenforceable state law.

Although the Schempp and Engel decisions banned ceremonial prayer and scriptural readings, First Amendment scholars point out that the court didn’t ban religion from public schools. The rulings simply clarified government’s role as a neutral player that should not be in the business of composing prayers or mandating students to read sacred texts without a non-religious purpose.

“The place of religion in our society is an exalted one, achieved through a long tradition of reliance on the home, the church and the inviolable citadel of the individual heart and mind,” Justice Tom C. Clark wrote for the majority in the Schempp case. “We have come to recognize through bitter experience that it is not within the power of government to invade that citadel, whether its purpose or effect be to aid or oppose, to advance or retard.”

In his concurring opinion,

Justice Arthur Goldberg, one of five liberals on the court, warned against an extreme interpretation of government neutrality on religion becoming a “brooding and pervasive devotion to the secular and a passive, or even active, hostility to the religious.”

In fact, the court said the teaching and study of religious history, comparative religion or the Bible as literature can be valuable. “Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment,” Clark wrote.

Religious curriculum

Haynes said that language triggered a movement in the 1970s and 1980s that actually infused religious studies into the curriculum of public schools and universities.

“Before then, the curriculum was devoid of religion,” he said.

The movement has since died down as the focus has turned toward students’ rights of religious expression in class, athletic events and graduations.

Haynes and others contend the lack of religious literacy in public schools is one reason for the tensions, prejudice and violence toward faith minorities in the United States.

But introducing religion into the curriculum of public schools isn’t easy, and consequently some educators would prefer to avoid it and the controversy it can attract.

“It really goes to people’s core values,” said David Doty, superintendent of the Canyons School District in Sandy, Utah. “People are very protective of the religious values taught to children. They can get strident and emotional about it.”

Haynes said those feelings get to the core of the severe reaction to the Schempp decision.

“The backdrop to the Schempp decision is a very difficult history of America defining itself through its public schools and battling over what messages we give to kids about what kind of country we are,” he said. “It’s not just about religion but religion seen as an integral part of our self-definition.”

Doty said the key to navigating through this emotional terrain is to have policies that accommodate all sides, secular and religious, so that students’ and parents’ rights are protected.

Doty, who has helped craft such policies on the district level, said it takes extra effort to give students alternatives to opt out of a class on the Bible as literature or a choral group that is performing a religious composition and take another comparable course.

But the effort is worth it.

“I have always felt that being able to include religion in the appropriate context and parameters in public schools is critical to saving public schools,” Doty said. “More students are fleeing public schools for private schools, home schools and charter schools because of values differences. I think if public schools persist in a hard, thick wall of separation of church and state, it does send the wrong message.”

Acts Ministry announces annual ActsFest conference in Springfield, July 18-21

By Steve Highlander (RN-R)

SPRINGFIELD, MO – Dr. Paul Collins, founder of Acts Ministry, Inc has announced plans for the 2013 ActsFest conference in Springfield, MO, from July 18th to the 21st.

“ActsFest is a time for churches, ministries and friends associated with Acts Ministry to come together for fellowship, encouragement, teaching, worship, prayer and communion,” Collins said.

Thursday’s agenda includes a variety of day sessions including special presentations from Brandon Mabe, emcee of

the Baldknobbers Jamboree in Branson. Other sessions will include various presentations on Acts Ministry affiliates including: The Real News-Review newspaper, Acts Internet Radio and the Acts Ministry Internet Television Channel.

Friday morning’s session will include a panel of community leaders discussing meeting real needs in the community.

The afternoon session will include a special presentation by Rev. Randall Christie, CEO of The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, AR.

Friday evening will feature

the annual Songfest starting at 7 PM and the Holy Spirit Victory Celebration and Healing Service at 8 PM.

All sessions and services will be held at the Maranatha Village Chapel or Community Center at 233 E Norton Rd in Springfield.

Saturday is a special day for the ladies with a special program and luncheon from 10 AM until 2 PM at the community center.

Saturday evening will feature the Annual Acts Ministry, Inc Awards and Recognition Banquet with special entertainment. Advance Reservations are required and limited to the first 100 guests.

The annual event wraps up with an Sunday afternoon service starting at 2 PM in the chapel. Worship, communion and an ordination service are the focus of the special service.

For more information please contact Dr. Collins at 417-886-0223 or actsministry@sbcglobal.com

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