



# Real News - Review

Religion in the News: International, National, Local

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**Feature Story - History of the English Bible**  
Bible Museum features history of the English Bible with over seven thousand Bibles Page 11

**Commentary and Opinion**  
RN-R columnists share their thoughts on issues pertinent to Christianity today. Page 2 and 3

**Religious alternatives to scouting are numerous**  
Over half a dozen alternatives to the Boy Scouts of America have been in existence for year. Recent decisions to allow openly gay members have caused some families to consider these church-based alternatives. Page 4

**‘Nuns on a Bus’ campaign for immigration reform**  
Believing that now is the best time to foster real reform, a group of nuns are travelling across America to raise awareness and lob. Page 4

**Is Pope Francis a heretic?**  
The pope raised eyebrows - and questions - with a comment he made during a chapel service in May. Page 6



**Humanists say ‘I do’ without God**  
More young couples without any religious affiliation are opting for traditional style wedding ceremonies - without any reference to God or the Bible. Page 8

**Church leaders tackle the issue of mental illness**  
As mental health issues continue to plague many Americans, religious leaders must help members cope. Page 9

**Back to Africa**  
An adoptive mother recounts her son's trip back to Malawi. Page 12

**FREE: Compliments of Acts Ministry**

Volume 1, Issue 4 June, 2013

Published monthly in Springfield, MO

## USA global religious freedom report

**ANALYSIS: Does the Religious Freedom Report need more ‘teeth’ to be effective?**

WASHINGTON (RNS) Lauren Markoe

The Obama administration isn't afraid to call out Republicans for playing politics on Capitol Hill, or Wall Street for runaway profits or insurance companies for health care woes.

But why, when it comes to protecting religious freedom abroad, is the State Department so hesitant to name names?

Watchdogs say the State Department missed a key opportunity to put teeth into its annual assessment of global religious freedom, which was released by Secretary of State John Kerry Monday (May 20).

Continuing a pattern begun under President George W. Bush, the report does not include a list of “countries of particular concern,” or “CPCs” — the diplomatic term for countries that either actively suppress religious freedom or don't do enough to protect it.

The list varies little from year to year — North Korea, Iran, China and a handful of others are routinely cited as the worst offenders. But the new report

contains no worst-of-the-worst list that would single out offenders for sanctions or other punishment.

The lack of new CPC designations in the report is a big flaw, according to Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., the dean of religious liberty watchdogs on Capitol Hill.

“As religious freedom conditions continue to deteriorate globally, it is more important than ever that the State Department use this vital tool to press governments to end abuses, protect their citizens and respect this fundamental human right,” said Wolf and two other congressmen who fired off a letter to Kerry on Monday.

Their concern was echoed by others who monitor religious liberty abroad, including the U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom, the independent body created by Congress that each year puts out its own list of worst violators.

Knox Thames, USCIRF's director of policy and research, said the commission believes that the 1998 law that mandates



**At the National Religious Freedom Conference in Washington Thursday (May 30), advocates included, from left, Amardeep Singh, director of programs for the Sikh Coalition; the Rev. Eugene Rivers, pastor of Boston's Azusa Christian Community and senior policy advisor to the presiding bishop to the Church of God in Christ, and Shaykha Reima Yosif, founding president of Al-Rawiya, an organization that advocates for Muslims women. RNS photo by Lauren Markoe**

the State Department report also requires new designations of CPCs annually. The current CPC list dates from 2011.

For years the annual report and the CPC designations were simultaneous; that changed late in the Bush administration and has been continued under Obama, Thames said. But the list of CPCs “is what gave all of this teeth,” he said.

The list prompts “countries

to do things they don't normally want to do.”

But Aaron Jensen, a spokesman for the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor said the CPC designations can be made on a different schedule than the report's release and “at any time as conditions warrant.”

He said he has no information as to when the State Department may release a new

CPC list.

Thames said he's hopeful that the new designations will come out this summer.

They work, he continued, offering Vietnam as an example of a country that bristled at its inclusion on the CPC list. But actual reforms, pressed by U.S. diplomats, resulted in a delisting in 2006.

USCIRF — which generally Continued on page 12

## Harold Camping's ‘end of the world’ predictions spell the end of his radio ministry

(RNS) Adelle M. Banks  
Two years ago, radio evangelist Harold Camping was predicting the end of the world. Now, longtime aides say his false predictions are likely to result in the end of his California-based Family Radio ministry.

The Contra Costa Times reported that the ministry has sold its prominent stations and laid off veteran staffers, with net assets dropping from \$135 million in 2007 to \$29.2 million in 2011, according to tax records.

The newspaper said Family Radio has sold its three largest radio stations, and saw its cash on hand drop from \$1.5 million to \$282,880 in 2011. Since the incorrect prediction, donations have dropped 70 percent, min-

istry insiders told the newspaper. Records indicate the network took out a loan to keep going.

Camping, 91, predicted the Rapture would occur on May 21, 2011. A few days after that date, he said his calculations were off by five months.

In March 2012, he declared that his May prediction was “incorrect and sinful” and pronounced that his ministry would no longer predict when the world would end.

Matt Tuter, a longtime right-hand man to Camping who was fired last year, told the Contra Costa Times that he thinks the selling of the stations is the beginning of the end for the

*Continued on page 5*

## (Presbyterian) Church of Scotland OK's gay ministers

CANTERBURY, England (RNS) The Church of Scotland's General Assembly on Monday (May 20) passed a historic vote to allow actively gay men and lesbians to become ordained ministers.

After more than six hours of debate, more than 700 commissioners attending the Presbyterian church's 2013 General Assembly in Edinburgh voted in favor of gay ministers, but in a mind toward compromise agreed to allow parishes that disagree to opt out of the new rules.

The decision will now need to be endorsed by the church's 48 regional presbyteries and, if it survives the regional ratification, will become official at next year's General Assembly.

Echoing similar controversies that consumed the life of the Presbyterian Church (USA) for more than a decade, the church's new moderator, the Rev. Lorna Hood, said: “This is a massive vote for the peace

and unity of the Church.”

The debate over gay ministers has been simmering in Scotland for years. It exploded in 2009 when the General Assembly voted to uphold the appointment of an openly gay minister, the Rev. Scott Rennie, to Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen. That led two congregations and six ministers to leave the Church of Scotland.

In 2011, the General Assembly agreed to allow openly gay ministers appointed prior to 2009 to remain in their posts but placed a moratorium on further appointments of any gay clergy. Upwards of 60 congregations have already threatened to split from the Church of Scotland.

“This was a major breakthrough for the church but we are conscious that some people remain pained, anxious, worried and hurt,” Hood said. “We continue to pray for the peace and unity of the church.”

## Human cloning breakthrough prompts religious objections

(RNS) News that scientists had for the first time recovered stem cells from cloned human embryos prompted dire warnings from religious leaders who say the research crosses a moral red line and could lead to designer babies.

Boston Cardinal Sean O'Malley, point man for the U.S. Catholic bishops on bioethical issues, said Wednesday (May 15) that “this means of making embryos for research will be taken up by those who want to produce cloned children as copies of other people.”

Human cloning “treats human beings as products,” O'Malley said on behalf of the bishops, “manufactured to order to suit other people's wishes. ... A technical advance in human cloning is not progress for humanity but its opposite.”

Critics argue there are other ethical techniques for creating stem cells that may help cure illnesses like Parkinson's disease and diabetes and that the alternatives do not require cloning human embryos or destroying them. The most popular alternative is harvesting adult stem cells from the same patient.

“Given that science has passed cloning by for stem cell production, this announcement seems simply a justification for making clones, and makes reproductive cloning and birth of human clones more likely,” said David Prentice of the Family Research Council.

The cloning breakthrough was accomplished by scientists at Oregon Health & Science University and was announced Wednesday in the journal Cell. It followed 15 years of failed experiments and the infamous case of fraud when a South Ko-



**Ongoing research into the human genome has produced some incredible advancements in medical science. It is now thought possible to cure or prevent some disease and defects at a molecular level. There has even been discussion of “designer babies” - children whose physical characteristics have been predetermined by the parent. However the moral and ethical questions increase considerably when the discussion turns to human cloning.**

rean biologist falsely claimed to have cloned human embryos.

To achieve their breakthrough, researchers had to refine techniques that had been used on monkey embryos: This time they were able to take DNA from a human patient and splice it into a human egg that had its DNA removed. The egg then grew into an early-stage embryo whose stem cells -- a virtual genetic copy of the original patient -- were then harvested.

Many Christian experts, especially Catholic bioethicists who believe life begins at conception, object to the destruction of human embryos for any purpose.

But they also say the new

technique could lead to the cloning of replica human beings because it is similar to the process used to produce the cloned sheep named Dolly in 1996. That technique has since been used to clone a dozen other animal species.

The lead researcher on the team, Shoukhrat Mitalipov, said he does not believe the new technique could lead to cloned babies, in part because scientists have not yet been able to do that with cloned monkey embryos. The cloned primate embryos do not develop sufficiently to implant into the uterine wall.

But others say the innova-

See cloning page 4



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# Commentary

## Faith and Culture: Tolerating intolerance

Tolerance! It's a word we hear coming from a lot of different sectors lately

Tolerance is a significant concept; one that deserves a fair hearing, contemplation and, to some greater degree, application. For all that, I have to question how some people are trying to apply the principle. For instance when many people throw out the "T" word they are really meaning, "You need to be tolerant of my particular group, practice or experience."

I find it ironic that many times the same people demanding tolerance often do not practice it in return. In fact, they are often intolerant of those they feel are intolerant of them.

First of all, let me state emphatically I am not advocating intolerance in the name of religion. I consider myself a very

tolerant person (except with those that are intolerant of me of course).

I am suggesting that everyone needs to take a serious look at what they mean when they use the term, and if they seek to apply it equally to everyone. Therefore, I think there are two issues that need addressing in this discussion.

In the past several years, I have seen an alarming trend towards intolerance for Christianity in this nation. Unfortunately, it is the intolerance of some Christians that have created the backlash against Christianity. As Christ-followers, we are at all times to demonstrate the character and nature of the one we claim to follow.

I must say -- with considerable regret -- that I have witnessed many things said and done in the name of Jesus that



Steve Highlander  
Managing Editor RN-R,

in no way reflected the character, nature or message of Christ. As Christians, we must own up to this and seek to be more consistent with who Jesus was and how He interacted with the people around Him.

Jesus said many people would come to Him in the Judgment and brag about all the great things they had done in His name. He said He would say to them, "get away from me, I never knew you." They were not doing God's will, they were doing

their own will in God's name. When this happens, it fuels the fires of intolerance towards Christianity.

On the other side of the fence are all the people crying for tolerance but who are unwilling to be tolerant toward a Christian world-view. They want Christians to "keep religion out of the public sector." A little reciprocity is needed here, I think.

We still live in a nation founded on freedom of religion and freedom of speech, but those freedoms are slowly eroding in favor of a culture that is becoming increasingly secular. In some countries, it is already illegal to say what the Bible says. How long before we see that in the United States of America?

The truth is that tolerance is not about who is right or wrong. Tolerance is not agree-

ing with everyone. In fact, for tolerance to even be possible, there must be a level of disagreement. Tolerance is not "wishy-washy." It does not "accept" everything as equal or even right. The tolerant person may hold very strong opinions on multiple subjects. However, the tolerant person allows the other person the freedom to be wrong, if necessary, without trying to control them.

Francois de Fenelon, French archbishop & author (1651 - 1715) said, "It is only imperfection that complains of what is imperfect. The more perfect we are, the more gentle and quiet we become toward the defects of others."

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**The Real News - Review** is published the 1st day of each month in Springfield, MO by Acts Media Group, a subsidiary of Acts Ministry, Inc.

**Circulation**  
**The Real News - Review** distributes 27,000 free copies in the Branson/Springfield area of Southwest Missouri through west-central into the Kansas City, MO area. You can also access the entire digital edition online at [actsmediagroup.com](http://actsmediagroup.com)

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P.O. Box 1945  
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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. Acts Ministry is a distinctively Christian organization seeking to present the news of all religions in a professional manner while, at the same time, maintaining a Christian perspective.

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](mailto:editor@actsmediagroup.com).

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## Upstairs Over a Vacant Lot: *Personal peace can be priceless*

How do you maintain such a calm attitude while you are in the middle of so much happening at one time? Some form of this question has been asked of me many times in recent months. Those who are closest to me know that I always have more than a full plate of things needing attention.

Because I know how important it is to have peace in the midst of many demands, I also know that I am not alone in facing the challenge of dealing with stress. If you take it seriously, the world is a stressful place. The Bible tells us that

Jesus said there would be wars, rumors of war, earthquakes in many places, lawlessness, famines, pestilences, false prophets, violence, a lack of love for others, and false Christs. You can "read all about it" in Matthew 24. We can see that these things are overtaking our nation and the world.

It is true that we live in a suffering, dangerous, challenging, and insecure world. So, if you have peace of mind, some people will think you are "out of your mind!"

Those who value financial prosperity can be troubled by

the fluctuation in the stock market. If you are paycheck - minded, the price at the gas pumps can be more than a little disconcerting. Grocery prices, taxes, school costs, and everything we need and or value is on an upward climb toward an ever-increasing cost of living.

Family values are under siege. Parental authority is questioned. Celebrities in show business and the world of sports command more attention than real community servants. Many folks seem content to stay in a phony comfort zone. The attitude is "my



Dr. Paul C. Collins  
Publisher RN-R

mind is made up, so don't confuse me with the facts." In my opinion, that attitude is simply that: an attitude! Most of the people who talk with me are actually very insecure, anxious, and somewhat fearful. They are aware of the subtly changing circumstances of their lives. They know that tomorrow may bring troubles of its own.

Where is the "peace that passes understanding?" It would be too glib on my part to offer a simplistic answer. The answer is not simple. Again, in my opinion, every person who desires peace in the midst of confronting the situations that are disturbing must begin with a personal inventory of what is

really important in the larger picture. How much money is enough? How many people do you need to have as friends? How do you fit into your community or your church?

Real peace can be found after an honest inventory. That peace can be found by the honest seeker who discovers the truth in John 14: 27 (NRSV); it quotes Jesus as saying, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."

Peace is not guaranteed by wealth, health, privacy, power, or personal relationships. No preacher, teacher, or politician can put your heart at ease. The temporary "easing of one's mind" is not the same as continual peace that comes from Jesus Christ

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## Seasons of Reflections: *Walking with God on a new Journey*

Has there ever been a time in your life where you have called out with all your might for divine wisdom when faced with making a major decision? You receive a peace, promised by God, that passes all understanding. . . You obediently make that next step of faith. . .

You find yourself on a new journey, passing over (what is to you) uncharted territory. . . You are walking tightly hand in hand with God who has already gone before you into a new land. . . a land He led you into. . .

After we have started the journey we cannot look back—there is no turning back. We are keeping our eye on the goal—the purpose and plan of God for which we cried out for divine wisdom—God's plan that will conform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

Everything God does is a miracle. It is wise to pick up stones of remembrance along the way so that we won't forget the faithfulness of our covenant-keeping God. The stones of remembrance will encourage our faith when we are tempted to doubt while passing by



LeAnn Kennedy  
President, Acts Ministry

scenes that we would rather not have to see.

As we enter the new land, worship God. Trust in his continued deliverance and guidance. He desires relationship; therefore, he will not lead us so far into a new land and leave us alone to "fend" for ourselves.

Along the way, and in hindsight, make note of all of what would seem to be "small" miracles and wonders the Almighty has performed on your behalf. Tell others of his excellent goodness. Praise him for his faithfulness. Pray for grace not to forget his miracles along the way so we won't doubt His ability to also "give us food" even though we have already seen his ability to cause "water

to gush from a rock." We know that he can! We have his word on it. Refreshing living water flows from the rock on which we stand, and he is also the true bread from heaven—Jesus Christ. He is all we need—he is our only need—in any circumstance in which we find ourselves. He has already been provided. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good!

We must believe God. We must hold on to his promise that we will hear his voice saying this is the way walk in it. We must trust in his full deliverance. Because of his miracles and wonders performed on our behalf, we must continue to believe God for complete deliverance. He will never leave us nor forsake us; for he will continue to work in us to will and to act according to his purpose as He works all things together for the good of those who love God and who are called according to his purpose.

*(Excepted from Ms. Kennedy's book, Seasons of Reflections, published by Acts Press.)*

*LeAnn Kennedy is the Chairman of the Board and President of Acts Ministry. She is also a public school teacher.*

## Mind and Spirit: *The last day crazies*

Our world has become a scary place to live. According to a poll conducted by Reuters last year, 15% of people worldwide believe that the world will end in their lifetime. This belief is not just shared by religious fundamentalists, but by people alarmed by world events and political issues. Another poll in Europe found that the majority of young people believe that they will not have the job opportunities or financial security that their parents enjoyed because of the floundering world economy.

People deal with these feeling of impending doom in a variety of ways. Some stockpile food and guns against the day that the economy collapses and have visions of shooting the neighbors who come to take it away from them. Others suffer from depression, which, according to the World Health Organization, will be the leading cause of disability by 2030.

Fortunately for the world, there are also a growing number of citizens who use depressing statistics as a call to be a catalyst for change. Non-profit organizations dedicated to



Dr. Brooke Highlander  
Associate Editor, RN-R

helping others are on the rise. Governments are no longer in the position (if they ever were) to cure the social ills of the world. This is the job for communities, and is a very special opportunity for the professed Christian. What are we to be, if not salt and light? Whether or not we believe in a "Rapture" to take us out of the world, we should be using this time to be messengers of hope, not doom.

There are days that, being an introvert, I find myself wanting to go to a mountain cabin and hide from the world and its ills, as if hiding will shield me from world events. Then I get up the next day, and put one foot in front of the other, and look for a way to make a positive impact on those around me. Putting our heads in the sand will not solve anything, but rather make us a part of the problem. Jesus Himself lived in a bleak time in

history, when poverty was rampant and social justice virtually unknown. Yet, He called us to believe in His and the Father's love for us in such a way that it causes us to be beacons of joy and hope, just as He was.

We cannot get this joy from more stuff, a good job, a favorable government, a great relationship, a guaranteed long life, or any other positive circumstance, because it is not based on external situation, but rather on a belief that I have the God of the universe living in me. This is not just for my own benefit, but that Presence in my life activates me to be able to do the most good for those around me, and at the same time removes the torment that comes from fear. The world and its circumstance no longer drive my actions, my emotions, or my choices.

*Brooke Highlander is Associate Editor of the Real News - Review and mother of five grown children. She is an ordained minister, an applied psychologist, and a certified Christian counselor. Brooke currently works for the State of Missouri with the Developmentally Disabled, is on the worship team at her church, and works with C3M Ministries and the Talk to a Pastor Program. She has taught college courses, both in the classroom and online, worked with missions, and does part-time counseling.*

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# Christian Economic Perspective

## Preparing to endure

In last month's column, I explained the reasons behind and consequences of the prevailing fiscal and monetary policies being pursued by not only the government of the United States but also those of the European Union, Japan, and the People's Republic of China. This month, I want to tell you from a Biblical perspective how to be "one who endures to the end" (Matthew 24:13, NASB)

First, you need to understand the times. Understanding the times means viewing current events through the lens of Scripture, which means that which is written. You need to comprehend clearly what is laid out by Jesus in Matthew 24 (and elsewhere in the Bible ) and view what is occurring in the world based on what God says and not the political pundits and so-called economic gurus.

Second, you need to prepare to "suffer hardship . . . as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3). We are not going to escape the inevitabilities of sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind. The consequences of attempting to re-inflate the housing bubble, along



Oliver Burrows , RN-R Economic Columnist

with the education debt bubble that has to burst at some point and the economic consequences of the Affordable Care Act, will affect all American. In addition, the economic turmoil in the European Union, where unemployment is approaching record levels, and Pacific Rim, will affect American industrial production and financial markets and institutions. The spillover costs of our past and present economic decisions will be enormous and are unavoidable.

Third, you need to get into the ark of safety. Jesus talks about how people will be living just as they did in the time of Noah. Getting into the ark of safety involves at the very least eliminating debt (those financial obligations you cannot pay in full when due) and indebt-

edness (financial obligations you can pay when due) and moving toward operating your household and/or business on a cash basis. As currencies lose both purchasing power and value through inflation, those with great debt may prosper in the short run but will suffer in the long-run when the inevitable economic reset occurs.

Finally, prepare to help others. Set aside material and financial resources to share with those who are unable or even unwilling to prepare for what is coming. This is not only a Biblically mandated responsibility toward other Christians, but it is also a means of opening doors to sharing the gospel with neighbors, colleagues, and even total strangers.

When the hard times come (and they will), we, like Jesus, need to be about our Father's business.

*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](mailto:oliverburrows@economictruth.org) and is available to preach as well as teach seminars on a broad range of subjects.*

# A One Minute Devotional:

## If I think I can, I probably can

There is always something every day. The past two weeks have been occupied with a load of work. Remember the children's story about the little steam engine that could? This little steam engine had an enormous load to pull and he kept saying as he pulled the load, "I think I can, I think I can." He accomplished his goal.

Over the past fifty years, I have made comments that I would do or not do something. Time would pass. I would end up doing otherwise. Time passed, and experience had its reward; I am finally becoming very aware that what is said may result in what is received.

Proverbs 23: 7 says "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Luke 6: 37-38 says that whatever we give out will be multiplied back to us. 2 Corinthians 10: 5b speaks of "taking every thought captive to obey Christ." For example, if a negative thought about your situation comes into your mind, a decision needs to be made; to



Nancy Collins RN-R Devotional Columnist

not decide on something, is to decide. If you make no decision, the thought will eventually grow into some kind of reality; or, you can decide to get rid of the thought and not let it camp out in your mind. If you make a decision to say, decide, and submit to the power, control, and authority of Jesus and His Word, He will eventually win the battle in partnership with you. My experience, together with His Word, has worked together for good for me. Sounds like Romans 8:28.

Now, I want to return to my

thoughts regarding the work load. The work load was short term. The effort and time frame for the work was figured out in several ways for its completion.

Time and circumstance both have a way of sifting the thoughts and feelings of people. There is no overcoming in work or health or anything else that can be accomplished without His help. To go it alone gets very little accomplished. To invite His help is to invite awesome energy and awesome, unspeakable joy. That is exactly what I experienced when working like an energizer bunny. He gave me an energy that only came from Him! He gave me joy I can't adequately express. Go is impartial, and will give to you whatever gift He has given to others. Be blessed!

*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.*

# A View From Jordan Creek

As a young lad of nine or ten, I once set out on a great adventure with the kids next door, led by the intrepid older boy, thirteen or so, and his two sisters. Our destination was about eight blocks from our homes, an objective that simultaneously seemed both closer and farther away. This magic land was a rare thing in the city, a spot of nature verdant and untamed, a free-flowing stream teeming with fish set amidst a small forest. This was Jordan Creek.

At least that's how it was perceived by our band of adventurers at the time. In truth, that stretch of Jordan Creek was an anomaly in that most of its length and breadth inside the city was channelized, often under downtown buildings, and it was little more than a large storm drain or sewer. There were fish, mostly carp, which would have been of dubious safety to catch and consume, and the immediate area was generally treed and natural though it would soon be bulldozed to make way for the expansion of a major thoroughfare.

Our outdoors excursion was a wonderful jaunt filled with fun-until we came home. In our enthusiasm for embarking on our journey we had neglected to inform our parents of our itinerary. Our day of exploration and discovery ended with a rather different discovery upon our triumphant return. Oddly, our parents were none too happy with us and our quest to investigate the natural world. Needless to say, I never did anything like that again but it remains a fond memory of childhood innocence. Today, given the heightened risks, I would be mortified to learn of any youngsters trying something similar.



Virgil Hill RN-R Columnist

I live in that same home and can still see that section of Jordan Creek when I'm on my roof to check its condition or clean gutters. From my front driveway I can easily look to the east and see the Jordan Creek valley, now slowly being restored to a quasi-original state as part of a plan for a large public park called West Meadows.

The proximity of, and my attraction to, Jordan Creek has always served as a reminder of another body of water called Jordan. Sometimes, the two are confused or intertwined, and not just by me. A popular culture myth is that the famous Jordanaires quartet's name was a reference to the Jordan River. In fact, that group, now

disbanded in the wake of the recent death of leader Gordon Stoker, had its roots in Springfield and was named for my beloved Jordan Creek.

For many years now, I've had a group of friends, brothers and sisters in Christ, who I consider to be members of the Jordan Creek Gathering, a very informal fellowship. The "gathering" part of that phrase comes from the promise of Jesus that "for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

"When I cross to the other side of Jordan," the song says, and when I hear it I claim the promise therein, holding to a faith in the One who was baptized in that Jordan and eagerly anticipating the day of glad reunion, the greatest gathering of all.

Thus is derived the title of this monthly column, which is, in its own way, a continuation of that journey/adventure/exploration undertaken by a boy nearly fifty years ago.

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

# Acts Ministry, Inc. and the Real News-Review

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

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.

We believe that we can report the news with accuracy even though we see events through our paradigm as Christians.

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

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

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

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

# The Evidence of Faith's Substance

## O.T. Prophecy of Jesus Christ as the Suffering Servant

I'm a mechanical engineer and statistician by trade. When we think of "religious" people, statisticians and engineers are not the first group of people that come to mind. Why? Our society views religion as a "heart" issue, to be kept private, where individual values and meaning are derived. But Science and reason are "brainy", for public consumption in our schools, where "serious academics" take place.

Since I'm now living in the "SHOW ME" state, let's put the Bible under academic scrutiny and see if the facts support its claims. We have no direct evidence to go by, since no one is around who actually witnessed first-hand the events in the Bible, but that shouldn't deter us. We can apply the same 3 types of evidence used in our society today in reaching a verdict on events no one witnessed:

Circumstantial Evidence = it can only infer towards a conclusion, but does not directly support it (example: fingerprints at the scene of a crime). A conclusion based on circumstantial evidence is more valid when the circumstantial evidence mounts, which is the second type of evidence, called...

Corroborating Evidence = multiple pieces of circumstantial evidence all point to the same conclusion.

Forensic Evidence = type of circumstantial evidence that is supplied by an expert witness

Using these three sources of evidence, the two Scientific Methods of Forensics and Probability can be applied to the Bible as our means of investigation. Both sciences are recognized disciplines in our universities, where anyone can earn an advanced degree in an analytical approach to problem solving.

Forensic Science: The word forensic comes from the Latin forensis, meaning "of or before the forum or courts." Forensic



Ed Croteau Guest Columnist

Science is used every day in our legal system to present expert evidence to support or refute events that no one witnessed firsthand. Many of us love this type of sound analytics, as can be attested by the huge popularity of the "CSI" TV shows, which are based on Forensic Science.

Probability Science: It uses data to calculate the chance of a future event occurring. Businesses hire people specializing in this scientific approach: if an opportunity for future gain presents itself, data is analyzed in repeatable tests to calculate the chance of success in pursuing the opportunity.

Now, we validated the trustworthiness of Isaiah and the Old Testament in the last article when we reviewed the Dead Sea Scrolls. Below are 19 more pieces of circumstantial evidence, to add to the 7 pieces from the article, for a total so far of 26, that point to Jesus Christ. We'll apply Probability Science and Forensics next time to demonstrate why its rational that only Christ satisfies all the requirements.

Isaiah 7:14 = Messiah's Virgin Birth - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 1:21-23

Isaiah 9:1-2 = Messiah's is the "Light out of Galilee" - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 4:12-16

Isaiah 9:6 = Messiah's Authority - fulfilled in Jesus = Luke 2:10-11, John 3:16; Mat-

thew 28:18

Isaiah 9:7 = Messiah's Eternal Kingdom - fulfilled in Jesus = Luke 1:31-33

Isaiah 11:1-2 = The Holy Spirit is with Messiah - fulfilled in Jesus = Mark 1:10-11

Isaiah 28:16 = Messiah is our Foundation - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 21:42

Isaiah 29:13 = Messiah is to be worshipped - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 15:7-9

Isaiah 35:4-6 = Messiah's Healing Ministry - fulfilled in Jesus = Luke 7:20-23

Isaiah 40:3-5 = Messiah's forerunner - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 3:1-3

Isaiah 40:10-11 = Messiah's is the "Great Shepherd" - fulfilled in Jesus = John 10:11-14

Isaiah 42:1-4 = Messiah's Meekness - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 12:15-21

Isaiah 42:6-7 = Messiah is the Light to the Gentiles - fulfilled in Jesus = Luke 2:30-32

Isaiah 49:5-6 = Messiah is God's Salvation for man - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 23:37; John 14:6

Isaiah 50:5-7 = Messiah's Obedience - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 26:39,67; John 8:29

Isaiah 52:13-15 = Messiah first humiliated, then exalted - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 27:27-31; Philippians 2:9

Isaiah 55:1-3 = Messiah's plea to come to Him - fulfilled in Jesus = John 7:37-38; Matthew 13:44; Matthew 11:28-29; Acts 13:33-34

Isaiah 59:16-17 = Messiah's Salvation - fulfilled in Jesus = Mark 6:5-6; Ephesians 6:13-17

Isaiah 61:1-2 = Messiah's Mission - fulfilled in Jesus = Luke 4:18-21, Luke 21:20,22,24

Isaiah 61:2-3 = Messiah brings comfort and joy - fulfilled in Jesus = Matthew 5:4; John 15:11

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

# Want to change Muslim attitudes? Get them online, report claims

(RNS) Omar Sacirbey  
Want Muslims to have a better opinion of the United States? Get them on the Internet.

That would seem to be the lesson from an analysis released Friday (May 31) by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life that found that Muslims who use the Internet are much more likely to see similarities between Islam and Christianity, and have favorable views of Western music, film, and television.

But in the survey of roughly 38,000 Muslims in 39 countries and territories, just 18 percent said they used the Internet. Online use was as low as 2 percent in Afghanistan, compared to 56 percent in Kosovo, an autonomous region in Serbia.

The new analysis supplements a larger Pew report on global Muslims released April 30.

Internet users in the countries surveyed tended to be younger, better educated, and male, but even Muslims who were not in these categories were more likely to see Muslim-Christian commonalities and favorably view Western culture if they were online.

On the question of similari-



**Muslim women explore the Internet. A recent report found that Muslim attitudes about America improved when they were exposed to the Internet. Stock photo 123rf**

ties between Islam and Christianity, the differences between Internet users and nonusers was most pronounced in Pakistan, where 35 percent of Internet users saw similarities, compared to only 7 percent of nonusers. The differences were also significant in Iraq (a 19-point spread), Senegal and Niger (both 16 points). The differences were much less significant in other countries, and even inverted in Morocco.

On the question of Western culture, differences in opinion between Muslim Internet users and nonusers were much wider. This is especially true in Kyrgyzstan, where Internet users are 35 percentage points

more likely to have a positive view of Western entertainment, Senegal (32 points), Russia (32 points), Indonesia and Tajikistan (both 31 points).

Yet among Muslims who used the Internet and those who didn't, there was no difference in religious certainty, the analysis said, as majorities in most countries surveyed said there is only one true way to interpret Islam and that only Islam leads to eternal life.

"Internet use does not always mean more openness," said Neha Sahgal, a senior researcher at the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life who drafted the analysis.

## Spiritual Questions?

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# USA Religion

## Church-based programs attract interest as alternatives to BSA

(RNS) They have pledges. They have merit badges. And they may go camping.

But they're not the Boy Scouts.

Across the country, there are decades-old religious alternatives with names like Pathfinders (Seventh-day Adventist), Royal Ambassadors (Southern Baptist) and Royal Rangers (Assemblies of God).

And as the Boy Scouts of America changes its membership policy to admit gay members (but continue its ban on gay leaders), some of these groups are fielding inquiries from people concerned about the action the BSA may take.

Leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's Pathfinders have been asked about their program in light of the pending Boy Scout vote, said James Black, the Adventists' North American director of youth ministries.

"If individuals saw the Pathfinders as a viable option for their children, we would welcome them with open arms," he said.

Some denominational lead-



**The Royal Rangers program, hosted by the Assemblies of God is one alternative to the Boy Scouts of America program. Photo courtesy Assemblies of God Royal Rangers. For more information on the Royal rangers program visit [www.royalrangers.com](http://www.royalrangers.com)**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which hosts more Scouts troops than any other organization, said it is "satisfied that BSA has made a thoughtful, good-faith effort" with the proposed resolution. But Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee,

sions-focused program for elementary school boys, is hosted in about 3,000 churches, most of which are Southern Baptist.

Steve Heartsill, managing editor of the program's curriculum, said there has been "some uptick in phone calls" as the vote approaches.

The Assemblies of God offic-

Corps, said his evangelical organization heard from Scout leaders who had considered leaving the BSA when it appeared the group might approve including gay leaders. The CCC includes Bible lessons in weekly meetings and connects merit badges to Scripture.

"We are very similar in many ways, with the merit badges and rank advancement, uniforms and emphasis on camping," said Broene, whose organization drew 1,200 participants to a 2011 triennial camporee in Michigan. "The difference is we have Christ at the heart of everything we do."

Like the Calvinist Cadet Corps, the CSB (Christian Service Brigade) Ministries is not connected to a particular denomination. It recently moved from Wheaton, Ill., to Hamburg, N.Y., and has fielded inquiries.

"We are difficult to find," said Dale Kinkade, CSB Ministries' Ohio Valley regional director, who is handling Scout-related calls. "Despite that, we have had quite a few inquiries of who and what we are."

Kinkade said his evangelical group is not as outdoors-oriented as the BSA, but it has a "Shape N Race Derby" that resembles the Scouts' Pinewood Derby races. It also features the rank of "Herald of Christ," which is similar to the Boy

Scouts' Eagle Scout.

"Our goal is to go beyond raising up character, and especially in citizenship, but really focuses in on building up a young man who has awareness of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ," he said.

Supporters of OnMyHonor.net, a new organization spearheading efforts to oppose the BSA policy change, said in a May 5 simulcast that some Scout-affiliated church groups are considering pulling out if the vote doesn't go their way. Religious groups charter 70 percent of the Scout-sponsoring organizations.

"That relationship is at risk, as is the future of one of the last nonreligious institutions that has not yielded to political correctness," said a narrator of the simulcast, which was hosted by the Family Research Council.

Boy Scouts officials are quite aware of the potential effect of a gay-related policy change on their local religious units. According to an executive summary on the BSA website, a change in the youth membership policy "would be consistent with the religious beliefs of the BSA's major chartered organizations." A policy change about both leaders and members could cause "membership losses in a range from 100,000 to 350,000."

Some religious Scout leaders said they have not had any inquiries from people wondering about Scouting alternatives.

"We have no plans to offer alternatives," said Larry Coppock, the United Methodist Church's national director of Scouting ministries.

R. Chip Turner, national chairman of the BSA's Religious Relationships Task Force, said he's grateful the Scouts delayed the process about a potential policy change. Now, he said, it's a matter of prayer as the task force gathers at the BSA annual meeting before the vote occurs.

"I have asked several task force members from various faith groups to lead us in a season of prayer for divine guidance in the voting process," he said.

## Christian leaders seek to overcome polarization issues

WASHINGTON (RNS) Twenty-five top Christian leaders gathered in the U.S. city with perhaps the worst reputation for civil discourse Wednesday (May 15) and committed themselves to elevating the level of public conversation.

Meeting in a row house three blocks from the U.S. Capitol, the group spanned the Christian spectrum, and included officials from liberal churches and the most conservative of interest groups.

Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori said she and other council members think such a fund "would encourage coordination and participation of philanthropists, governments and both religious and secular nonprofits to work toward abolishing modern slavery." RNS photo by Adelle M. Banks

"The ground of our spiritual understanding is in treating other people as the image of God, treating people with respect," said Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori.

"Faith leaders have a remarkable opportunity to shift the conversation, but it's very challenging, particularly in a larger society that wants to understand everything as a battle, as engaging the enemy, rather than with someone who might have something to teach us," she said.

Joining Jefferts Schori at the two-day meeting sponsored by the nonprofit Faith & Politics Institute were Kenda Bartlett, the executive director of Concerned Women for America; the Rev. Jeffery Cooper, general secretary of the African Meth-

odist Episcopal Church; Barrett Duke of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; and Sister Marge Clark of NETWORK, a Catholic social justice lobby, among others.

The "Faith, Politics and Our Better Angels: A Christian Dialogue to Promote Civility" forum convened for the first time last year.

As religious leaders, they agreed, they are called to move politicians, congregants and Americans in general to understand that mean-spirited debate makes it all the harder to solve the nation's problems.

Sometimes, they said, that may mean calling out people — including themselves — who debate disrespectfully through name-calling or by questioning the motives of their political opponents.

"Everyone says they're in favor of civil discourse, but the lack of civility seems to win elections," said Ed Stetzer, vice president of research and ministry development at LifeWay Christian Resources.

"You need some voice to say, 'OK, we get that it can win elections, but maybe that's not the best course of action.' Typically, we think of religious leaders as voices of conscience, calling people to a better way. So therein is the hope," Stetzer said.

One idea the group is considering, Cooper said, is a national day of civil discourse — perhaps in January, as people are making New Year's resolutions — when preachers across the country will ask their congregants to make respectful conversation a priority in their lives.

## Faith-based alternatives to the Boy Scouts

### Adventure Corps

Founded by the Salvation Army in the 1980s, Adventure Corps includes about 1,300 units of boys from grades 1-8. The program focuses on teamwork, leadership and Christian fellowship. They do not have to be a member of a Salvation Army congregation. There are about 130 Boy Scout troops affiliated with the Salvation Army.

### Calvinist Cadet Corps

Founded in 1952, Calvinist Cadet Corps includes boys in first grade through high school. This evangelical organization has about 400 U.S. clubs. Its weekly meetings include a Bible lesson.

### Caravan

Founded in 1946, Caravan includes about 600 clubs in U.S. churches affiliated with the Church of the Nazarene. The clubs, which include boys and girls from first through sixth grade, focus on church doctrine. About 150 Nazarene churches have Boy Scout troops.

### CSB (Christian Service Brigade) Ministries

Founded in 1937, CSB includes about 300 units of boys in the first through 12th grades. This evangelical organization aims to build boys' character with an emphasis on the Bible.

### Pathfinders

Dating to the 1920s, this organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church includes more than 2,000 clubs of girls and boys in grades 5-10 in North America. About 60 percent of the members are girls and 40 percent are boys. They do not have to be members of a Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

### Royal Ambassadors

Founded in 1908 and operated by the Woman's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention, Royal Ambassadors includes boys in grades 1 to 6 in about 3,000 churches in the U.S. Some Southern Baptist churches also have Boy Scout troops.

### Royal Rangers

Founded in 1962 by the Assemblies of God, Royal Rangers includes boys in kindergarten through 12th grade in about 4,000 groups in the U.S. Its goal is to provide boys with "Christlike character formation." The Assemblies of God also hosts about 90 Boy Scout troops.

## Cloning

*Continued from front page*

tion opens the door to human cloning scenarios that were once confined to the realm of science fiction.

"The reasons why primate-cloned embryos won't implant are probably just technical barriers," William Hurlbut, a consulting professor at Stanford University and former member of George W. Bush's Presidential Council on Bioethics, told Christianity Today. "Science is clever at figuring out what goes wrong and fixing it."

Hurlbut, who has worked with Mitalipov on developing ethically acceptable adult stem cell techniques, said the breakthrough will "mark the beginning of a whole new chapter of moral scientific controversy."

David Gibson is an award-winning religion journalist, author and filmmaker. He writes for RNS and until recently covered the religion beat for AOL's Politics Daily. He blogs at Commonweal magazine, and has written two books on Catholic topics, the latest a biography of Pope Benedict XVI.

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# ‘Nuns on the Bus’ kick off national immigration tour at Statue of Liberty

JERSEY CITY, N.J. (RNS) With the Statue of Liberty as a backdrop, the “Nuns on the Bus” on Wednesday (May 29) kicked off a national tour for immigration reform aimed at giving a faith-based push to legislation that’s now hanging in the balance in Congress.

“We have got to make this an urgent message of now,” Sister Simone Campbell, head of the social justice lobby Network, which organized the tour, told a rally on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River.

“The next six to eight weeks is going to determine what we can accomplish,” Campbell said as she pointed to nearby Ellis Island, the American gateway for generations of immigrants. “The time is now for immigration reform.”

Champions of immigration reform believe they have their best opportunity to pass a comprehensive overhaul since 2007, when an effort backed by President George W. Bush was thwarted by members of his own party. After Republicans lost the Latino vote in last fall’s elections, GOP leaders said they would be open to an immigration bill that they think could help change that political dynamic.

A bill with bipartisan support is continuing to make its way through the Senate as backers look to win passage this summer before Congress

shifts its focus to budget battles and then the 2014 election season next year. But opponents are going all out to block the bill, and believe they have a good shot to prevail in the House, where conservative Republicans have more influence.

With so much at stake and so little time, Campbell and Network revved up the “Nuns on the Bus” in hopes of replicating the media coverage and public appeal of their first tour last summer, when the sisters traveled 2,700 miles through nine states in a wrapped bus to protest Republican budget plans.

That trip made “Nuns on the Bus” a sensation. Campbell appeared on news shows and “The Colbert Report,” and she was a prime-time speaker at the Democratic National Convention.

This time the bus will travel a total of 6,500 miles over three weeks, stopping in 15 states. Most of them – like Florida, Texas and California – have large Latino populations and are on the front line of the debate about creating a path to citizenship for as many as 11 million undocumented immigrants. The tour is set to conclude on June 18 on Angel Island in San Francisco.

While the Catholic sisters are the face of the tour – seven are traveling on this first leg and total of two dozen will join



Supporters pray during the “Nuns on the Bus” kick-off rally on Wednesday (May 29) at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, N.J. The Catholic sisters believe that a major awareness campaign is needed to push faith-based immigration reform through congress. RNS photo by David Gibson

in at various points – the current immigration push is uniting religious groups across the political and denominational spectrum.

Many religious communities have long backed justice for immigrants as an example of the biblical injunction to “welcome the stranger.”

“God is so happy when God’s children stand together for God and for good,” as Rabbi Rick Jacobs, president of the Union for Reform Judaism, put it Wednesday at the “Nuns on the Bus” send-off. “That’s what we do here today.”

But this time around, many

white evangelical leaders who are often allied with Republicans have been especially vocal in backing reform, and they can point to polls showing majority support for their views from their fellow believers.

Also notable is that the immigration issue could bring the Catholic sisters and the Catholic bishops together after Campbell’s group helped lead the charge for President Obama’s health care reforms, which many bishops opposed.

Last spring’s announcement that the Vatican was investigating the American sisters on charges that they were too

active on social justice issues and insufficiently orthodox on doctrine also soured relations.

But some bishops appear ready to lend support to this “Nuns on the Bus” tour. Speaking at the rally on Wednesday, Monsignor Kevin Sullivan, head of Catholic Charities for the Archdiocese of New York, gave a full-throated endorsement of the work of the American sisters and said they have “widespread support” in their campaign for immigration reform.

“In this country we are a church of immigrants,” Sullivan said in a brief interview before the rally. “To be perfectly honest, we have to stand in solidarity with immigrants.”

But the “Nuns on the Bus” can still irk political conservatives in the Catholic Church.

As the tour left for stops on Thursday in South Jersey and then Washington, Bill Donohue of the Catholic League – which is supported by a number of prominent bishops – put out a statement blasting Network as “a Catholic dissident group” and dismissing “Nuns on the Bus” for never having more than seven sisters at a time on the coach.

## Harold Camping

Continued from front

55-year-old ministry.

“You eliminate those three (FM stations) and, ultimately, the rest of it dies,” he said. “I believe they are killing it off.”

But board member Tom Evans, who has handled operations since Camping had a stroke in June 2011, said the ministry is facing a tough economy like other nonprofits. He said Family Radio is not closing, is not in as dire straits as some allege and has a new mission in mind -- comforting people affected by tragic events, from hurricanes to gun violence.

“We want to be a comfort and reminder of God’s strength and mercy,” Evans told the newspaper. “In the end, our founding mission is to proclaim the word of God.”

I would rather live my life as if there is a God and die to find out there isn’t, than live my life as if there isn’t and die to find out there is.

Albert Camus

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## German family loses U.S. asylum bid

Family sought asylum because Germany doesn’t allow homeschooling

(Editors Note: Last month we ran the story of this family and their attempts to stay in the United State so they could home school their children -- something not allowed in their native Germany.)

(RNS) A German family seeking asylum in the U.S. so they can home-school their children lost their appeal in

disagrees. The U.S. grants safe haven to people who have a well-founded fear of persecution, but not necessarily to those under governments with laws that simply differ from those in the U.S., Judge Jeffrey Sutton wrote in the court’s decision.

“The German authorities have not singled out the

to Tennessee (a sixth child has since been born) in 2008 to escape thousands of dollars in fines and increasing pressure from local police and education officials to enroll their children in school. All German parents are required by law to send their children to a state-recognized school, whether public or private.

The Romeikes are evangelical Christians, and say they should be allowed to keep their children home to teach them Christian values. Before they left Germany, the police forcibly escorted the older Romeike children to school one day. Other German families have lost custody of their children because they persist in home schooling.

An immigration judge in Tennessee granted the Romeikes’ bid in 2010, but the Board of Immigration Appeals tossed that ruling in 2012, arguing that religious homeschoolers don’t face any special consequences that aren’t applied to other families whose children don’t attend school.

The 2012 decision sparked an outpouring of support for the Romeike family among conservative U.S. Christians. More than 120,000 people signed an online petition urging President Obama to let the family stay. Conservative talk show host Glenn Beck de-

scribed the case as evidence of crumbling religious freedom.

The Romeikes’ legal team plans to request an en banc hearing, which would present the case before the 6th Circuit’s entire 15-judge panel. Approval for such a hearing is unlikely, Donnelly said, adding that the Romeikes are already preparing to fight for asylum in the U.S. Supreme Court

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**“As we were confronted with opposition to our choice we began to feel more and more that our faith required us to homeschool our children.”**  
Uwe Romeike

federal court on Tuesday May 14, but their lawyers say they’re prepared to petition the U.S. Supreme Court to take the case.

The German government persecuted the Romeike family for their faith, said Mike Donnelly, a lawyer with the Home School Legal Defense Association, a religious organization that is representing the Romeike family.

“It is treating people who home-school for religious or philosophical reasons differently,” he added.

The Cincinnati-based 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals

## Small town pastor touches over 50,000 people per month with unexpected Internet ministry

Never in his wildest imagination did Pastor Duke Taber of the Vineyard Christian Fellowship of Pine Haven Wyoming think that his personal blog would reach over 500,000 people in it’s first year.

Taber’s Truths started out as an extension of his weekly column in the Moorcroft Wyoming Leader. He had received good reports from the people in his community about what he was writing about and so he took it online. In just a year it has grown to over 50,000 people per month visiting his site.

“First I just published what I was writing for the newspaper,” Pastor Duke as he likes to be called said. “Then I started giving people things that would help them in their faith like lists of Bible verses on popular topics and Christian Quotes from various denominations. Now I have expanded to do Christian News and Commentary, World Missions News, Christian Living, ect. I have ended up with a total Christian News Magazine! I have posted over 300 articles in 1 year.”

Pastor Duke has not had a competitive spirit in this endeavour. He has freely shared

his success with others in the Christian blogging community. He has said time and time again that “my brother is not my competition”. He has shown this by posting articles on how other Christian bloggers can make their blogs a success and has freely allowed them to do guest articles on his website.

Pastor Duke’s Story becomes even more unique when you take into account that He is both single and divorced. He has been a trail blazer for other Christians who want to serve the Lord and the church that

are single and divorced.

Taber’s Truths celebrated it’s first year anniversary on April 12th of this year. To better serve his growing audience, Pastor Taber has revamped his website and upgraded his hosting to handle the traffic. He has started offering subscriptions to a daily digest of articles and stories that are published.

When asked what he thought of all this he replied “This is all way beyond me. They didn’t teach this stuff in Bible college 30 years ago. It has to be a God thing”.

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# World Religion

## Is Pope Francis a heretic?

No, but he has raised questions with recent comments

It might look that way from the eye-catching headlines this week that made it appear everyone was bound for heaven — “even atheists!” — thanks to Jesus’ death on the cross.

The passage that prompted the reports came from Francis’ brief homily at the informal morning Mass that he celebrates in the chapel at the Vatican guesthouse.

Speaking on Wednesday (May 22), Francis said that as human beings created in the image of God, everyone has a “duty to do good.”

“The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. Everyone! ‘Father, the atheists?’ Even the atheists,” he said, answering his own query. “Everyone! And this blood makes us children of God of the first class! We are created children in the likeness of God and the blood of Christ has redeemed us all!”

Cue the jaw dropping and head scratching. Atheists were pleasantly surprised, conservative Catholics were dazed and

confused, and the pope’s comments raced around the Internet; for a while they were the second-most shared piece on Reddit.

So was Francis preaching a form of “universalism”? That is the unorthodox teaching that says, essentially, that all faiths are equal and all are going to heaven, especially if you are nice to people here on earth. It’s also a heresy that Francis’ predecessor, Benedict XVI, spent a career quashing every time he thought he spied a hint of it in some theologian’s writings.

But the short answer to the question is easy: No. Francis was only affirming the doctrine that Christ redeemed the whole world. Whether people accept that belief is another matter.

In fact, popes going back to Leo XIII in 1891 and up through John Paul II – not to mention authoritative texts from the official Catholic Catechism and the Second Vatican Council – have said the exact same thing Francis did.

The Rev. Thomas Rosica, a Vatican spokesman, confirmed



Pope Francis, well known for his informal chapel services and off-the-cuff remarks, raised eyebrows last week with comments made during a morning chapel service about God even saving atheists. The Vatican was quick to respond to questions concerning his meaning, affirming that the Pope was not saying anything new, but was repeating what other church leaders had said. RNS photo

as much in an explanatory note the next day that reiterated these basic points. Even rejecting Christianity, Rosica noted, does not automatically consign someone to hell, because Catholics believe God can save anyone, Christian or atheist or a member of another faith – though always through Jesus.

Also, Francis was speaking

off-the-cuff, as he likes to do, and not in precise formulations that have magisterial, much less infallible, authority.

In fact, the wide attention given to Francis’ remarks may have as much to do with the popular appeal of his approachable, plain-spoken style and his insistence that Catholics not only help the poor but that they also join hands in respect and humility with others, be they believers or atheists.

The retired pope, Benedict XVI, also made an outreach to atheists a signature issue, and he also preached about making common cause with nonbelievers for the sake of the common good. Yet to the wider public he apparently was neither sufficiently kindly nor convincing to make it sound original.

Still, Francis has managed to rattle more than a few cages, especially among Catholic conservatives who were sending “panicky emails” trying to figure out what is going on in Rome.

Indeed, in the two months since Francis was elected, his broadsides against “savage capitalism” (a remark he made the day before his homily on redemption) have repeatedly unsettled economic conservatives, just as his preference for a low-key pontifical style and simple liturgies have appalled many high-church traditionalists.

Francis’ most recent remarks also tapped into a passionate debate in church circles over a new translation of the Mass that was ordered by Benedict XVI. One of the most problematic

aspects of the new translation concerns a crucial Eucharistic prayer in which the priest used to say that Jesus’ blood was “shed for you and for all.” Now the Latin phrase has been translated to read “for you and for many.”

The tweak from “all” to “many” may sound like inside baseball for church geeks, but it actually has profound implications for how Catholics view the nature of salvation, the mission of Jesus and the church’s role in the world.

“Do church leaders want to signal that the grace of Christ is available only to the regular, traditional churchgoer? Is their intention to leave out the rest?” the Rev. Paul Philibert asked in a 2011 essay in America magazine. “More and more it looks as if the covert message beneath the written text is one of effective exclusion rather than antecedent inclusion of all humanity in God’s will for salvation.”

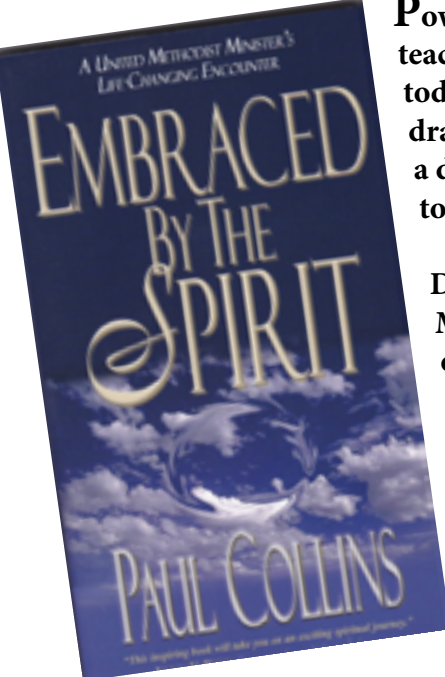
Despite stiff and ongoing resistance from bishops across the English-speaking world, Benedict’s Vatican pushed them to adopt this reformulation as a new orthodoxy. Now Francis seems to have come down on the more expansive side of the debate, giving conservative Catholics another case of agita.

As faux conservative – and genuine Catholic – Stephen Colbert put it in his televised parody of Francis’ recent remarks: “If the Lord redeems atheists all bets are off. What’s next? The Lord redeems Lutherans? It’s madness! ... I’m just so glad Jesus didn’t live to see this.”

It was a funny line on Colbert’s cable show, but some are wondering how far the new pope will take it in real life.

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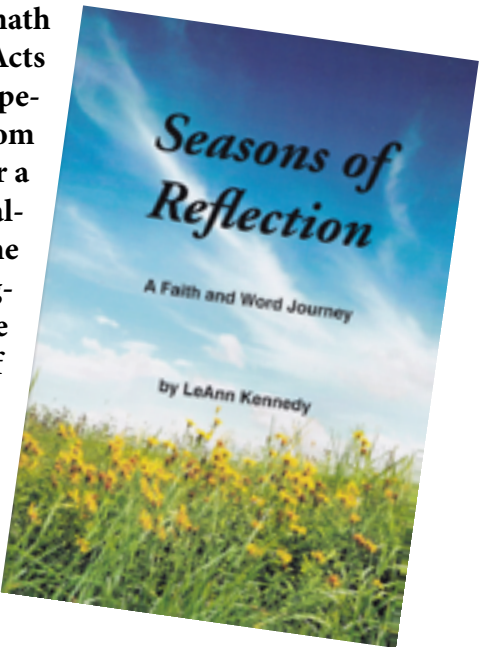
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## British church attendance stabilizes after years of steady decline

CANTERBURY, England (RNS) The number of people attending Sunday services at Britain’s Anglican churches is continuing to drop, but church officials say there are signs that the decline is starting to stabilize.

A spokesperson for the Church of England said Tuesday (May 7) that average weekly attendance at the nation’s 16,247 Anglican parishes was 1.1 million in 2011, representing a drop of just 0.3 percent

from the previous year’s figures.

The annual statistics reveal a substantial increase in attendance at the country’s storied cathedrals: Christmas church-going rose by 14 percent, christenings were up 4.3 percent and adult baptisms were up 5 percent. The number of weddings was down 3.6 percent, to 51,880.

The 1.1 million Britons in church pales in comparison to the estimated 22 million --

about four in 10 Britons -- who are considered official members of the Church of England.

Overall Sunday attendance is down from 1.14 million in 2000, falling about 1 percent a year until 2011.

“The attendance figures are heartening,” said Bishop of Norwich Graham James. “The encouraging news of further growth to come even on these high figures is very welcome and points to a growing trend.”

One worrying statistic: attendance in the Diocese of Canterbury -- home to the spiritual leader of the world’s 77 million Anglicans, Archbishop Justin Welby -- saw the biggest drop in average weekly figures. The diocese had a 9.5 percent drop in weekly church service attendance between 2010 and 2011.

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# More Canadians are turning away from organized religion than ever before

7.8 million Canadians reported they had no religious affiliation at all

TORONTO (RNS) A new national study shows that while Canada remains overwhelmingly Christian, Canadians are turning their backs on organized religion in ever greater numbers.

Results from the 2011 National Household Survey show that more than two-thirds of Canadians, or some 22 million people, said they were affiliated with a Christian denomination.

At 12.7 million, Roman Catholics were the largest single Christian group, representing 38 percent of Canadians; the second largest was the United Church, representing about 6 percent; while Anglicans were third, representing about 5 percent of the population.

Observers noted that among the survey's most striking findings is that one in four Canadians, or 7.8 million people, reported they had no religious affiliation at all. That was up sharply from 16.5 percent from the 2001 census, and 12 percent in 1991.

The Canadian trend seems to mirror but even exceed levels of non-affiliation in the United States. A 2012 survey from the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life pegged the ratio of religiously unaffiliated Americans at just under 20 percent.

But Pew also has found that more than one-quarter of



**While the majority of Canadians still claim affiliations with some Christian denomination a growing number (25%) of our neighbors to the north report no religious affiliation. This trend mirrors those in the United States. This growing group of the religiously unaffiliated are called “Nones” - denoting the option on questionnaires asking about religious affiliation. Photo RNS**

American adults (28 percent) have left the faith in which they were raised in favor of another religion — or no religion at all.

The Canadian study showed that just more than 7 percent of the country was Muslim, Hindu, Sikh or Buddhist, an increase from 5 percent a decade earlier.

The Muslim population exceeded the 1 million mark, according to the survey, almost doubling in size for the third

consecutive decade, and recording the biggest increase in growth of any religion, at 60 percent since 2001.

Muslims now represent 3.2 percent of Canada's population, nudging up from the 2 percent recorded in 2001. Immigration has largely fueled the increase, with the largest share of Muslims coming from Pakistan over the past five years, according to Statistics Canada.

Hindus made up 1.5 percent

of the population (up 51 percent); and Sikhs 1.4 percent (a rise of 54 percent).

Both Christians and Jews declined as a share of the population.

Officials in Ottawa stressed that the NHS results, which also examined trends in immigration and ethnic diversity, could be unreliable. Because it was a voluntary survey, it is “subject to potentially higher non-response error than those derived from the census long form,” Statistics Canada cautioned.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government abolished the long-form census in 2010 as too intrusive.

Reginald Bibby, a sociologist at the University of Lethbridge and one of Canada's foremost trackers and interpreters of religious trends, said the NHS findings “do not point to the demise of religion in Canada. But the findings document the tendency of Canadians to reflect the pattern of people across the planet in variously embracing or rejecting religion.”

# Oldest known Torah scroll discovered in Italy



Scrolls, similar to the one pictured, contained the first written copies of the scriptures. Scrolls were still in use in Jesus' day. A prominent feature of the modern Jewish Synagogue is the Ark that contains the congregation's Torah scrolls.

ROME (RNS) Alessandro Speciale

An Italian university professor on Wednesday (May 29) said he has found what is believed to be world's oldest complete Torah scroll.

Mauro Perani, professor of Hebrew at the University of Bologna, said the scroll originally was believed to be no more than a few hundred years old.

But new studies and carbon dating tests suggest it was written around 850 years ago.

The scroll had been stored for centuries in the university's archives, but had been mislabeled in 1889 as dating from the 17th century.

When Perani re-examined the scroll, he realized that it used a script of the oriental Babylonian tradition, hinting that it must be extremely old.

The professor then had the scroll carbon-dated by laboratories at Italy's University of Salento and at the University of Illinois. Both tests confirmed that the scroll dated from the second half of the 12th century to the first quarter of the 13th century.

“This was a scroll for liturgical use in the synagogue, with just consonants spelled out,” Perani said.

The scroll is made up of 58 sections of soft sheep leather. It is 36 meters long and 64 centimeters wide.

Ancient Torah scrolls are rare because when they are damaged they stop being used for liturgies and are buried.

# Muslims condemn savage attack on British soldier

LONDON (RNS) Leaders of Britain's 2.8 million Muslims reacted with horror and anger following the Wednesday, May 22 slaughter with knives and machetes of an off-duty British soldier in the streets outside the Royal Artillery Barracks in south London.

A statement from the Muslim Council of Britain condemned the slaughter of the soldier by two men – both believed to be Christian converts to Islam – as “a barbaric act that has no basis in Islam and which we condemn unreservedly.”

Abdullah al Andalusi, a spokesman for the Muslim Debate Initiative, which brings together Islamic scholars and researchers in the U.K., said: “These people claimed they killed the soldier in the name of protecting others from UK foreign policy. But if what they claim is true, they have acted no differently from the crimes they claim they wish to see stopped.”

The slain soldier was identified Thursday as 25-year-old Drummer Lee Rigby of the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Every major British newspaper carried graphic photos of one of the suspects, identified as 28-year old Michael Adebolajo, waving a butcher's cleaver, his hands soaked in blood, following the attack.

Media reports indicate his Nigerian-born parents moved him to London at age 15 to get him away from Islamic fundamentalists; a report in Thursday's London Evening Standard said that he had been raised as a Christian but had converted to Islam.

“They have done a cowardly, barbaric act,” said Imam Ajmal Masroor of the Islamic Society of Britain. “They have insulted God and Islam. They are low vile scum. We, the British, will

is nothing in Islam that justified this dreadful act.”

A prominent Muslim in the city of Leicester told Religion News Service that he and his community are “extremely worried” about right-wing reaction to the slaughter in London.

“This could fuel the anger of organizations like the English Defence League and the British National Party,” he said, requesting anonymity because he feared for his safety. “The EDL last night had over 250 of its supporters wearing white balaclavas near the scene of the murder. They were shouting anti-Islamic slogans.”

EDL leader Tommy Robinson told reporters: “They've cut off one of our army's (soldier's) heads in the streets of London. Our next generation are being taught in schools that Islam is a religion of peace. It never has been. What you saw today is Islam.”

***“They have done a cowardly, barbaric act,” said Imam Ajmal Masroor of the Islamic Society of Britain. “They have insulted God and Islam.”***

remain together resolute and strong.”

Prime Minister David Cameron, who cut short a visit to Paris when he heard the news of the horrendous slaughter, said the nation remains “resolute” in the face of the attacks but also tried to prevent a backlash of anti-Muslim violence that has already resulted in attacks on at least two mosques.

“We will never give in to terrorism in any of its forms,” he said. “This was not just an attack on Britain and on the British way of life. It was also a betrayal of Islam and of the Muslim communities who give so much to this country. There

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# Religion and Life

## Beneath stereotypes, preachers’ kids have a tougher time of it

(RNS) The day Franklin Graham was born, he received a telegram.

“Welcome to this sin-sick world,” the Western Union message said, “and to the challenge you have to walk in your daddy’s footsteps.”

It didn’t take long for Graham, the son of famed evangelist Billy Graham, to realize that being a preacher’s kid would be both a blessing and a burden.

“I love my parents,” Graham said in a recent interview, “but there came a time where I couldn’t let my parents live my life.”

After a rebellious youth, Graham found a straight and narrow path that took him to the pulpit and the helm of his father’s Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

But for every Franklin Graham, there’s a Friedrich Nietzsche, the atheist philosopher whose father was a Lutheran minister. For every Condoleezza Rice, there’s an Alice Cooper, the heavy-metal singing, fake-blood spouting son of a preacher man.

Beneath the stereotypes of preacher’s kids as either goody two-shoes or devilish hellions lies a tense and sometimes taxing reality, the children of clergy say. Studies show that many PK’s, as the lingo goes, struggle with issues of identity, privacy and morality. There’s even a support group, Preacher’s Kids International, dedicated to the “celebration and recovery of those who grew up in the parsonage.”

It’s unclear how the pressures of life as a prominent pastor’s child affected Matthew Warren, who took his own life on April 5. Warren was the son of mega-church pastor Rick Warren.

Warren and leaders of his

Saddleback Church in Orange County, Calif., declined to comment on Matthew, who was 27 when he died. After his son’s death, Warren said in a statement that Matthew had “struggled from birth from mental illness, dark holes of depression.”

If Matthew Warren also battled with his role as the son of a world famous pastor and bestselling author, Rick Warren did not mention it in his brief statement.

Still, after Matthew Warren’s death, several pastors and children of clergy stepped forward to offer empathy.

Jay Bakker, the son of televangelists Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, said he identifies with Matthew Warren as a fellow PK and as someone who has also suffered from depression.

“It’s especially hard because his dad wrote the book ‘The Purpose Driven Life,’ which has this incredibly optimistic tone,” Bakker said. “My parents wrote the same kind of books, and it was like, ‘Things are good for everyone else. What’s wrong with me?’ I can’t imagine the pressure he must have felt.”

Preacher’s kids are often considered an extension of their parents’ ministry, Bakker said, and are expected to put on a happy face, even during tough times.

At the height of the Bakker’s success during the 1980s, before their fall from grace, they sent thousands of copies of Jay’s school photos to loyal viewers of their show “PTL.”

“You start to feel like you’re a prop,” Bakker said, “because you know that, behind the scenes, mom and dad fought on the way to church.”

Baptist pastor Corey Hodges said Matthew Warren’s death

prompted him to reflect on the lives of his own three boys.

“A pastor’s family has to share him or her with church-members,” Hodges wrote in his hometown paper, The Salt Lake Tribune. When tragedy strikes, pastors are expected to counsel their congregation, even if it means missing their children’s basketball games and school plays.

“My boys masked their disappointment, but being a child of a pastor myself, I understood how much it hurt them,” Hodges wrote.

The children of non-Christian clergy struggle with similar issues, writes Israel N. Levitz in “A Practical Guide to Rabbinic Counseling.”

“It is well known,” Levitz writes, “that the higher expectations placed upon children of clergy create for them inordinate difficulties in growing up.” As Levitz notes, many rebel against those expectations, acting out to gain attention from their parents and to assert their own identity.

For Franklin Graham, his crusading father was often away from home, schoolmates tested his toughness and his behavior was scrutinized for chinks in the Graham family honor. He struggled to forge his own identity while remaining true to his father’s evangelical ideals. He didn’t always succeed: he fought, drank, smoked and got kicked out of college.

“It wasn’t that I wanted to rebel against God or my parents,” Graham said, “I just wanted to live my own life. But the more I thought I was going to have fun and show my independence, the more miserable I became.”

A similar battle between piety and promiscuity, between



**Franklin Graham, son of “America’s Pastor,” Billy Graham, found that growing up as a “preacher’s kid” wasn’t all that much fun. He and many other “PKs” experienced additional pressures not faced by other kids. Some rebelled against their parent’s faith and then came home, others have not. Photo source: Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.**

rebellion and obedience, takes center stage in the Lifetime series “Preachers’ Daughters.” Three teen girls test the boundaries of PK life --- and their parents’ patience --- mainly by showing an avid interest in boys.

“It is so much harder to be a preacher’s kid,” said Kolby Koloff, 16, one of the daughters featured in the show. “Preachers in general are held up to a high standard, and their kids are held to an even higher standard because we are a reflection of them.”

“The things that I do,” said Taylor Coleman, 18, another star of in the reality show, “a lot of people make a bigger deal of, only because I am a preacher’s

daughter.”

In one episode, Coleman nearly gives her Pentecostal father a heart attack by joking that if she wasn’t a preacher’s kid, she’d be a porn star.

The show has drawn criticism for focusing almost exclusively on sexual temptation, though one daughter has also struggled with drinking and drug use.

“The parents on this show treat their daughters less like full human beings to be loved and cherished and more like walking libidos that have to be suppressed at any cost,” writes Amanda Marcotte in Slate magazine.

Others argue that “Preachers’

Daughters” shows only a narrow slice of Christianity (all the families are evangelical) and exploits common teenage troubles to drum up dramatic plots.

After a series of its own dramatic twists, Jay Bakker’s life has arrived fairly close to where it began. Like his infamous father, he’s a pastor. The first service at his new Revolution Church in Minneapolis will be on May 12.

Bakker is married, but has doesn’t have children of his own yet. When he does start a family, he’s sure of at least one thing.

“I wouldn’t use my kids in my ministry,” he said. “I’ll probably be a stay-at-home dad.”

## Humanists say ‘I do’ without God

WILMINGTON, N.C. (RNS) Amanda Holowaty didn’t need God to get married. She just needed her husband Mike.

When the Wilmington atheist couple decided to join their lives a year ago, they knew they wanted a secular wedding celebrant, but their families weren’t so sure.

Her family is Methodist and his is “generally spiritual.” And they worried about even telling Mike’s grandmother, who is Eastern Orthodox.

So they found a wedding celebrant ordained through the Humanist Society, Han Hills, who allowed their family members to read a spiritual poem.

“Nobody seemed to notice that we didn’t mention God,” Holowaty said. “People came up afterward and said it was one of the best weddings they’d seen.”

With the rise of the “nones” -- the 20 percent of Americans without a religious affiliation -- more couples are looking for wedding celebrants who don’t mind skipping God’s blessing of the ceremony altogether.

More national atheist and humanist agencies such as the Humanist Society and the Center for Inquiry are developing ordaining programs to establish nontheist ministers in most states to perform weddings and funerals. CFI began its certification program in 2009.

There are currently 138 celebrants listed as ordained through the Humanist Society, and some perform weddings in multiple states. The Center for Inquiry has 23 celebrants.

Because of the demand she’s seeing for marriage and funeral celebrants, Florida humanist writer and blogger Jennifer Hancock is considering writing a book about the secular approach to marriage.

What’s missing, she says, is advertising for leaders in the humanist community who can fulfill ceremonies for life cycle events. Only a handful of the ordained celebrants listed on the society’s website also advertise their services on a personal page.

Former Army medic Richard Cotter advertises his services in and around New York at [humanistcelebrations.com](http://humanistcelebrations.com). California Humanist minister William Rausch advertises his memorial, baby naming and wedding services at [ebcelebrant.com](http://ebcelebrant.com).

“As soon as you do the advertising, people are like yeah, I want that. When I got married, I was worried. I didn’t want any religious references in my wedding because I didn’t want to start out the most important relationship of my life with a lie,” Hancock said.

“Some of my most popular posts are about grief, marriage relationships and parenting. That’s all stuff that a traditional minister would help you with.”

The creative elements of a humanist wedding don’t differ much from a religious one. There are sand-mixing ceremonies, candle-lighting ceremonies and walking down an aisle in a white dress. Vows are typically written by the couples themselves, said Hills, whose company is called Leap of Humanity.

Hills already has eight weddings booked this year across North Carolina and is starting to book weddings for 2014. And he’s only been formally advertising his services for a few months.

“You need a certain personality to do this. If you’re mousy, and you can’t think in a crisis, this isn’t for you,” he said, laughing. “It’s the only job where you can look out and if you see old ladies crying, then you’re doing a good job. It’s an honor to be given this place of reverence.”

North Carolina’s celebrant numbers have grown to seven, while New York and California have the most, at about 20 each. But there are some states without any Humanist celebrants listed, such as Wyoming, West Virginia or Wisconsin.

Humanist Society program coordinator Sad Rothman said she gets at least two requests for Humanist celebrant applica-



**More and more young couples, without religious affiliation, are opting for formal wedding ceremonies sans God. The “nones,” as they are called, would include atheists, humanists, agnostics and others who simply don’t factor God into their lives. Trying to be intellectually honest, some think it would be hypocritical to ask a God they do not believe in to bless their marriage. Others simply believe God does not exist so there is no need. Stock photo 123RF.**

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# Church leaders tackle the stigma of mental illness among congregates

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (USA Today) The Rev. Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, was getting ready to work in the yard in the fall of 2009 when the phone rang. His daughter was on the line.

Daddy, I love you, she said. Tell Mama and the girls I love them, too.

Then she was gone. Melissa Page Strange, 32, took her own life just after hanging up the phone with her dad.

"I do not want you to imagine what that is like," he said.

For years, Page did not share the painful details of Melissa's death, fearing that some Christians might speak ill of her if they knew. Mental illness and suicide were taboo topics for many churches, seen as a kind of spiritual failure.

But that may be starting to change.

Page and several other Baptist leaders plan to meet in Dallas this spring to address

better help those dealing with mental illness in their congregations.

Page, now president of the convention's Nashville-based executive committee, is telling his daughter's story in a forthcoming book called "Melissa."

He hopes the book will help other families who are grieving from suicide. He also hopes to take away some of the stigma and shame that surrounds mental illness.

"There is a sense that everything you have tried has failed," he said.

The Rev. Bill Ritter, author of "Take the Dimness of My Soul Away: Healing After a Loved One's Suicide," said people affected by mental illness often steer clear of church. Some feel ashamed and others are just overwhelmed.

"For as much as we talk about the church as the place you turn when life is falling apart -- the reality is that people often stay away from church when life is falling apart," he



**One in four adults—approximately 57.7 million Americans—experience a mental health disorder in a given year. One in 17 lives with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression or bipolar disorder and about one in 10 children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder.** Stock photo, Adam McGregor, 123RF

tal illness had affected their own families, he said. "You can't heal what you can't name," he said.

Ed Stetzer, president of Nashville-based LifeWay Research, wants to see more churches discuss mental illness openly. A longtime friend of Warren's and Page's, he knew of Matthew Warren's struggles with depression, which resisted treatment.

In a blog post after learning of Matthew's suicide, Stetzer wrote about how mental illness has affected his own family. Several of his relatives have taken their lives, as did a parishioner in a church that he served as a young pastor.

"We need to stop hiding mental illness," Stetzer said.

Stetzer said some evangeli-

cal Christians think that if they pray enough or become more spiritual, then their mental illness will go away. But they don't look at other health issues the same way.

"People who become a Christian and have a broken leg will still have a broken leg," he said. "We tend to think that Jesus fixes what is in our heads, and medicine fixes what is in our body. Sometimes what is in our heads needs medicine."

David McKnight agrees.

A physician by trade, McKnight leads the Celebrate Recovery support group at Belle Aire Baptist Church in Murfreesboro, Tenn. The group, which is about 10 years old, draws between 35 and 60 people to the church on Tuesday nights.

The program is part of a national movement, first started at Warren's Saddleback Church. Some members are dealing with addiction, while others have depression or other mental illness. Some had been told that faith could solve their problems, said McKnight -- but it's not that easy.

"We would never tell someone who is nearsighted that it's because they don't have enough faith," he said. "We do that with people who deal with depression."

McKnight helped start Celebrate Recovery at his church because of a personal meltdown about 10 years ago. At first he was resistant, thinking his troubles weren't as bad as those of people dealing with drug addiction or other issues.

Then the light bulb came on, he said, and he realized that he, too, had struggles and it was OK to admit to them. McKnight said that growing up in church, he'd learned to keep up appearances, even when life was difficult.

"Too often in churches there is this belief that you have to be perfect -- that you have to keep a smile on your face when your world is falling apart," he said.

David Thomas, director of men's and boys' counseling for Daystar Counseling Ministries in Nashville, hopes churches will discuss the issue in church services as well as support groups. He said many churches have started talking about finances in recent years because of the economic downturn. Thomas thinks churches need to do the same for mental illness.

"We have very defined resources for families that are struggling financially," he said. "We don't have defined resources for families who are struggling emotionally -- and we need them."

Bob Smietana writes for USA Today and The Tennessean.

***"Daddy, I love you," she said. "Tell Mama and the girls I love them, too." Then she was gone.***

mental illness. The meeting was prompted by the Newtown, Conn., school shooting and has gained more urgency since the suicide of Matthew Warren, 27-year-old son of California megachurch pastor Rick Warren.

Matthew Warren's suicide last month has prompted a number of evangelical leaders to talk about how churches can

said.

Ritter was pastor of First United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Mich., in the early 1990s when his 27-year-old son, Bill, took his own life. A few weeks after the funeral, Ritter talked about his son's struggles in a sermon.

Sharing his story made it easier for other people in the church to talk about how men-

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# Religion in Society

## Southern Baptist leadership changes

### Richard Land passes baton to Russell Moore

WASHINGTON (RNS) Adelle M. Banks

In a generational changing of the guard, Southern Baptists are gaining a new advocate for their values in Washington and around the country as Russell Moore, a media-savvy theologian, takes the helm of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission.

The ERLC is the public policy arm for the Southern Baptist Convention, and Moore is taking over from Richard Land, who headed the ERLC since 1988 and used it as a platform to rally social conservatives in the nation's culture wars.

Like Land, Moore is an abortion opponent, a believer in an errorless Bible and a fan of Coke Zero.

But even though both men assumed the ERLC post at age 41, it's clear that Moore is part of a new era. While Land, 66, has been computer-averse, Moore is a frequent blogger and can tweet more than a dozen times a day. Moore, a Mississippi native, is a fan of country music and Christian hip-hop; Land, a sixth-generation Texan, favors Elvis and the Beatles.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said Moore — who had been head of the seminary's theology school — is “unabashedly committed to the same convictions” as Land but uses newer cultural skills — including Twitter.

“It's the difference between ‘Mad Men’ and ‘The Office,’” said Mohler, who has known Land for 30 years and Moore,



The Moore family (from left): Timothy, Samuel, Russell, Taylor, Maria, Jonah and Benjamin. Photo by Emil Handke, courtesy Southern Baptist Press

a Southern Seminary alumnus, for at least half as long.

Land, for his part, said he has no plans to join the Twitterverse but he does have a copy of “iPad for Dummies” and will teach an online class in his new job as the head of Southern Evangelical Seminary near Charlotte, N.C.

While the audience is different — the interdenominational seminary has just 350 resident and online students — Land's mission will be much the same as he aims to create, in his words, “green berets and paratroopers of God's army.”

The difference in language and tone between the two men is significant.

Citing Jesus' “calm tranquility,” Moore likes to speak of

the need to defend Southern Baptist ideals by using “convictional kindness” rather than the stern moralism that propelled the previous Moral Majority generation.

“Jesus is convictional,” Moore said in an interview as he began to adjust to his Washington office just off Capitol Hill. (He officially starts on June 1 and will split time between Washington and Nashville, Tenn.) “He speaks clearly about sin, righteousness and judgment but Jesus is not panicked or outraged.”

Moore, who was registered as an Independent in Kentucky but admired former President George W. Bush's “compassionate conservatism,” supports what he calls “engaged com-

munitarianism” — a middle ground between the evangelical extremes of triumphalism and cultural separation.

No matter how the Supreme Court rules in June on same-sex marriage, he thinks evangelicals need to rethink marriage by affirming the roles of men and women and moving away from the notion of clergy as the “marrying parson” who willingly weds “unbelievers.”

“The church is not some sort of justice of the peace with a prayer book,” he said.

Jonathan Akin, a director of Baptist21, a group of younger Southern Baptists, hopes Moore will expand the agency's portfolio to also address issues like adoption, justice, poverty, and sex trafficking. Adoption is already something of a personal crusade for Moore, the father of five sons, including two adopted from Russia.

“He's going to help the church think through issues that the church doesn't usually stop and think through,” said Akin.

David Key, director of Baptist studies at Emory University's Candler School of Theology, said he expects Moore to engage people with whom he disagrees.

“Richard came of age during the time the religious right was at its strength; Russell is coming at a time when the religious right is at its weakness,” said Key, a Facebook friend of Moore's who calls himself a “dissenting Southern Baptist.”

“Russell cannot be as combative as Richard was because Southern Baptists are in a decline at the moment.”

Land said the ethics job deals with the personal as well as the political. He once took a call from a pastor in the emergency room as he visited the ailing pregnant wife of his head deacon. If she kept the baby, she'd lose her life, the doctor told them. Land advised: “It's permissible to take life in defense of life.”

But it was the political that earned Land notoriety, and trouble.

Last year, Land was embroiled in a controversy about racial comments he made about the Trayvon Martin case, an ironic turn of events given that Land is credited for pushing Southern Baptists to apologize for their Civil-war-era defense of slavery in 1995. The incident — along with accusations that Land lifted writings from others for his radio show — came shortly before the ERLC moved in a different direction.

Fred Luter, who was elected as the SBC's first African-American president last year, said he

was concerned when Land announced his retirement: “One thing about Richard: You never had to guess what he stood for.”

But he's pleased with the selection of Moore, who was one of the earliest supporters of Luter's historic presidency. With connections to older Southern Baptists and social media outreach to younger ones, Luter said, “He's going to be a great, great fit.”

In an interview, Land didn't seem concerned about how he'd be viewed in light of the scandals that overshadowed his final year in office: “My legacy will be decided long after I'm gone.”

But as he heads to Charlotte with his wife of almost 42 years, his German shepherd and his 36,000 books, Land seemed to relish his changing role.

“Before I was head of the ERLC, I used to enjoy the Southern Baptist Convention,” he said of the annual gatherings each June. “For the last 25 years, it's been work. Now it'll be fun again.”

### Evangelicals launch \$250,000 immigration campaign

(USA TODAY) During the last attempt to overhaul the nation's immigration laws in 2007, the Southern Baptist Convention never fully embraced a bipartisan bill that died in the face of conservative opposition.

But in a sign of how differently the 2013 immigration debate is playing out, the convention is joining other evangelical organizations in a \$250,000 media blitz to push members of Congress to pass a bill.

The ad buy will feature radio ads and billboards in 13 states featuring pastors urging people to support the ongoing efforts in Congress to pass an immigration bill that would allow the nation's 11 million unauthorized immigrants to apply for U.S. citizenship, strengthen border security and revamp the legal immigration system.

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# Bible Museum traces history of the English Bible

Seven thousand Bibles in over 600 languages await visitors at the Great Passion Play Bible Museum

EUREKA SPRINGS, AR  
Steve Highlander, Managing  
Editor

The Bible! It is still the most popular book in the world with an estimated combined printing of 6,001,500,000 as of April 28, 2013. Every year it tops the best seller list. The Bible's impact on the world is undeniable. Yet for all that many people take for granted that the Bible, so readily available today in dozens of translations and packed with a variety of study material, was not available to the average person for the first 1500 years of Christian history. Fewer know the epic story of how our English Bible came to be and the people who lived and died to make an English Bible a reality.

The Bible Museum on the grounds of the Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, Arkansas is truly an amazing archive of biblical texts, with 7000 bibles in over 600 languages. The museum also features historic documents, original hymnals and other resources.

The main focus of the Bible museum is to highlight the story of the struggle to get the Bible into the hands of the common people. For well over 1000 years the Bible was the private possession of the Latin-speaking clergy. The average person had no ability to own a Bible or even read it if they could buy one.

Bill Brooks, one of the museum's docents for the past seven years, is an amateur historian of British history. "The history of the English Bible is, in a large part, the history of Britain," He said.

Much of the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England had to do with the translation and publication of the Bible into the common language.

Visitors to the museum are often amazed with the significance of the history in their midst. According to Brooks a feeling of awe is the most common reaction. "Many people are overwhelmed by the fact that they are standing in the midst of so many Bibles, especially when they hear the story of the sacrifices it actually took to get the Bible into the English language." Visitors gain a fresh perspective on the book they have tended to take for granted.

The guided tour starts with a 20 minute video of the History of the English Bible that gives the visitors the basic story of how the English Bible came into being. (An expanded 40 minute version is available for purchase from the gift store.) With that foundation the visitors are ready to see the actual Bibles and documents on display.

The first display features information on the Hebrew Old Testament. This display features a 10th century Masoretic text on vellum (typically calf-skin). Other scrolls in the collection come from the 11th, 16th and 17th centuries.

The second display covers the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947 in Israel. It includes a facsimile of a 4,000 year old "Flood Tablet," Cuneiform Tablets from the Sumerian era (about 2100 BC), clay cylinders from 1200 BC, fragments of papyrus and other artifacts dating from 2450 BC – 1500 BC.

The third display tells the story of translating the Old Testament from Hebrew into Greek around 300 B.C. This translation, called the Septuagint, was the version Jesus

or the official Bible of the Roman Catholic Church for 10 centuries. The 4th display features the oldest complete Bible in the museum's collection – a Latin Vulgate printed in 1512. This case also features splendid examples of “illumination,” or the artistic embellishment of gold leaf or other hand-colored artwork on the pages.

The next display covers the translation of the Latin Bible into English. John Wycliffe, with the aid of over 100 young priests, produced the first English Bible in 1380. Classified as an act of heresy, many of the priests were burned at the stake for their part in the translation work – often with their personal copy of the Bible tied around their neck. This display features an original page from one of those hand-written Bibles that cost the lives of so many.

1450 proved to be another significant year in the Biblical journey. It was then that Johannes Gutenberg invented the first printing press with moveable type. His first print project was the Book of Psalms in 1450 and a complete Bible in 1452. The display has one original vellum page and a



An original 1st printing, first edition of the King James Bible dated 1611. The first edition had an printing error in Exodus chapter 14 - 3 lines were repeated. The first printing of the first edition also had a printing error in the book of Ruth where the "s" was left off "she." It has been called "The Great He Bible." Not bad for such a huge undertaking of composition by hand with no spell checker. Photo courtesy of The Great Passion Play.

would have been familiar with. The display features several Greek Bibles from the 1500s.

The next step in the journey was to translate the Greek Septuagint into Latin around 200 AD. This progression ultimately produced the Latin “Vulgate”

complete facsimile Bible for  
the era.

Around 1515, Erasmus, a Greek scholar, consolidated the various Greek versions into one text called The Textus Receptus -- or The Received Text. This work became the



A portion of the Bible museum on the campus of The Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, AR. The glass display cases tell the story of the Bible from the ancient Hebrew texts through the various language translations to the first printing of the King James Version in 1611. Thousands of Bibles, documents, artifacts and facsimiles are archived in the museum. Visitors are treated to a 20-minute video, "The History of the English Bible" and a guided tour with explanations by one of two museum guides.

foundation of both the English and German translations which were soon to come. The display boasts a rare copy dated 1551.

The year 1517 is hailed as the official beginning of the Protestant Reformation sparked, among others, by the German Priest Martin Luther. This display features an original page in German from the 1st edition printing of 1534 and a complete German Bible dated 1599.

The “Flour Sack Bible,” as it was called, was the first Bible translated from Greek into English. It was called the “Flour Sack Bible,” because William Tyndale smuggled hundreds of copies of his new English Bible into England in sacks of flour. Several other English versions were published around this time. The case features a Thomas Matthew Bible printed in 1543 and a second edition of The Great Bible printed in 1539. The Great Bible was the first machine-printed Bible, and the only Bible ever authorized by signature in the history of the Church of England. The Pu-

ritan branch of the Church of England produced the Geneva Bible in 1560. This display features a first edition Quattro dated 1561.

The final display of historical Bibles brings the visitor to the Authorized King James version. Due to the controversy over Bible versions and the cost of expensive and ornate Bibles, King James dictated that a new translation be created that would truly be the common man's Bible. This translation effort produced the King James Version of 1611. Museum guests can see an original 1st printing, 1st edition of the most famous Bible in the world. Other old King James Bibles are also on display in this section.

Other displays feature a collection of original hymnals, including the first printing of the hymn *Amazing Grace* by John Newton in 1784 and 14th – 16th century Gregorian chants on vellum and parchment.

The tour is rounded out with a display of military bibles and



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# Finding hope and wholeness in my son’s return to Afrca

BLANTYRE, Malawi (RNS) Look for a billboard on the right and a sign on your left. There’s a dirt road. Turn there.

In this part of the world, most of the streets have no names. So the directions we were given to find the new compound where my son’s Malawian relatives relocated a few months earlier were pretty specific given the circumstances.

We had hoped to be able to visit with Vasco’s 16-year-old half-brother, Juma, his Aunt Esme and a handful of cousins and other relations for a couple of hours. By the time we found the family’s new compound, we had less than an hour before we had to get back on the road, meet the rest of our traveling companions and head north before the sun fell.

I was heartbroken. But when we pulled up in our van, Vasco’s relatives were so happy to see us (and vice versa) that even the woefully short visit felt richly blessed. It had been three years since we’d seen each other. The last time was in May 2010 when Vasco, my husband and I traveled from California to Blantyre for our adoption hearing. We spent a month in Blantyre and were able to get to know Vasco’s extended family (or, sadly, what remains of it) and begin piecing together our son’s complicated biography.

Since our last visit, Vasco, now 13, has grown about a foot and then some. He’s also traded his close-cropped “Obama cut” for Bob Marley-esque locks. Vasco wasn’t the only one who’d changed – visibly and otherwise.

Malawi is one of the poorest countries on the planet, with more than 9 million people living on about \$1.25 a day. HIV/AIDS, which we believe claimed the lives of Vasco’s birth parents before he would have entered kindergarten, remains a critical health issue. Among 15- to 49-year-olds, the HIV/AIDS rate hovers

above 10 percent despite widespread efforts to combat the fully preventable disease.

Malaria, tuberculosis and diarrhea-related fatalities remain high in Malawi. So does unemployment, particularly among younger workers in urban areas such as Blantyre, where it is approximately 70 percent.

But numbers neither tell the whole story, nor individual stories, with any eloquence at all.

Vasco’s extended family – his Aunt Esme, her husband and their children and grand-

**Malawi is one of the poorest countries on the planet, with more than 9 million people living on about \$1.25 a day.**

children – moved from the clutch of mud-and-wattle huts a few kilometers away because the bore hole that provided potable water to their community dried up.

Where they now live has ample water and appears to be much “nicer,” to use a wholly American term and perspective. Our visit fell on a Saturday, and many of the adult men and older boys were away working – a great sign that the economy, even for pieceworkers and subsistence farmers, has improved since 2010.

Esme, a woman in her early 40s with eight children and many grandchildren, looked healthier than when I saw her last. She’d put on some weight, her skin was glowing and she smiled far more easily. The new family compound has bigger, tidy homes made of brick and offered more land to farm.

Hunger remains a serious issue in Malawi, but for the time being at least, Vasco’s relatives have enough to eat and water for both drinking and crops. Esme proudly showed me the vegetables she’d recently planted and a mango sapling she was tending just outside her front door.

Juma had been at a nearby market when we arrived, and we worried we would have to go hunt for him. But then Juma bounded around a stand of tall grass and embraced his younger half-brother. (I’ve never been so happy to see anyone in my life.)

He is growing into a strapping young man with a huge smile and dynamism we hadn’t noticed on our last visit. He’s enrolled in school now (another indication that the family is doing well financially) and was able to communicate with Vasco in English – something they’d been unable to do in 2010.

Vasco is a few hairs taller than his older brother now, which took both of them by surprise. Vasco was living on the streets when we first met him in 2007, and it was clear to all that Vasco is healthy – the result of his heart operation in Chicago in 2009 and four years of living with good medicine, nutrition and a loving, stable family.

What I found most interesting about our visit was that – to a person – each adult, including the headman of Vasco’s ancestral tribe who had given us permission to adopt Vasco in 2009, asked about his education.

“How is Vasco faring in

## U.S. missionary doctor in Kenya suspended after challenging cardinal, nuns

NAIROBI, Kenya (RNS) An American missionary priest who is entangled in a dispute with the country’s top Catholic cleric and a group of nuns in Kenya over the ownership of two mission hospitals has been suspended from the priesthood by his order.

The New York-based Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers sus-

pended the Rev. Dr. William Charles Fryda after he refused to drop a case he filed three years ago against Cardinal John Njue and Sister Marie Therese Gachambi, the mother superior of Assumption Sisters of Nairobi.

Fryda alleges that the cardinal and the nuns were attempting to seize control of St. Mary’s Mission Hospital, which has branches in Nairobi and Kenya’s third-largest city, Nakuru.

Fryda left his home in the U.S. to work and live in Tanzania and Kenya in 1980. Having trained as a doctor, the missionary wanted to help poor Kenyans access medical services. Many could not afford services in private and government-run hospitals.

Within 15 years, he has built two hospitals, one in Nairobi and the other in Nakuru, about 150 kilometers north of Nairobi.

Because he was a foreigner, Fryda enlisted the help of the nuns to register the land on which the hospitals were built. The agreement with the nuns was that the hospital would later be transferred to a new company, known as St. Mary’s Mission Hospital Limited. The attempt to put the institutions under the new company sparked the dispute.

By then, the priest was attempting to build a similar hospital under the same name in central Kenya, when the nuns branded him a trespasser and asked him to move off their land.

The Maryknoll order asked Fryda to drop his suit, and many missionaries say the suit paints them and the Kenyan Catholic Church in a bad light, according to one Maryknoll priest who did not want to be named.

Last year Njue asked the court to refer the suit for arbitration within the Catholic Church. His lawyers argued the case could be resolved through the church’s internal canon law, but Fryda’s lawyers argued the case should remain in civil courts.

He later filed a constitutional petition seeking to stop the cardinal and the Maryknoll Society and its regional superior, the Rev. Lance Nadeau, from interfering with his rights.

Nadeau then circulated a May 1 letter that said, “With exception of the sacrament of penance in danger of death, Father Fryda is suspended from exercising any public priestly ministry or governance in the church.”

Fryda’s lawyers said the priest declined to comment on the case.

## Special Report ... Study suggests bad experiences in World War II led vets to church more often



(RNS) A new study has found that American veterans who had a negative experience serving during World War II attend church more frequently today than those who were less troubled by their service.

The study also found that when service members were fearful in combat, they reported prayer was a better motivator for getting them through it than several other factors, including the broader goals of the war.

Researchers say the study, which will be published in a future edition of the Journal of Religion and Health, has implications for health professionals, counselors and clergy who work with veterans with more recent service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“The most important thing is that the more veterans disliked the war, the more religious they were 50 years later,” said Craig Wansink, a professor of religious studies at Virginia Wesleyan College and co-author of the study with his brother, Brian Wansink, a professor of consumer behavior at Cornell University.

“And the takeaway is that for people who work with combat veterans, if veterans have had a bad experience, it is clear that one alternative that has helped people understand the world or find a common community has been religion.”

The study, titled “Are There Atheists in Foxholes? Combat Intensity and Religious Behavior,” also found that:

As combat became more frightening, the percentage of soldiers who reported praying rose from 42 percent to 72 percent.

After the war, soldiers who faced heavy combat attended church 21 percent more often if they felt their war experience was negative; soldiers who described their war experience as positive attended 26 percent less often.

In general, religious behavior was high among all World War II veterans surveyed — approximately 69 percent were church members and reported attending services slightly more than three times per month.

The study was conducted with both old and new data, including data collected from U.S. Army service members in the Pacific in 1944 and from surveys the authors sent to surviving veterans more than 50 years later.

Brian Wansink said that while it is not surprising that service members in the heat of battle prayed — World War II journalist Ernie Pyle made the famous quip about atheists in foxholes that’s in the study’s name — it is important that those who work with veterans not overlook the impact of faith during and after combat.

“Religious involvement could help these people,” he said. “One reason it may have been so effective in the past is that religion is a very social experience, and that might be healing of itself because these are people who developed strong social bonds with their units and strong commitments to their comrades. That might be missing from current strategies in helping recent soldiers cope with stress.”

The authors spent 12 years working on the study — three times as long as the U.S. involvement in World War II — and were influenced by respect for their father, a member of the so-called “Greatest Generation” who fought in the war.

“The takeaway for us is that the best thing you can do on Memorial Day is call that father or great uncle who is a veteran and wish him a happy Memorial Day,” Brian Wansink said.

## Religious freedom report Continued from page 1

pushes the State Department to be more aggressive in insisting on religious freedom reforms in its diplomacy — in April recommended that all eight countries on the State Department’s current CPC list be redesignated: Myanmar, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Uzbekistan.

USCIRF also wants an additional seven countries added to the CPC list: Egypt, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Vietnam.

It’s true, said Paul Marshall, a senior fellow with the Washington-based Hudson Institute who specializes in religious freedom, that the State Department’s CPC list has been “very stable for a long time.”

And there are certainly some entrenched, authoritarian governments, such as North Korea’s, that don’t care if they make the list or not. But that doesn’t mean the CPC list and the report in general are not valuable, Marshall said.

Take CPC-designated Saudi Arabia, he said, where non-Muslim religious practice is still officially forbidden. The U.S. has pressed Saudi officials on the topic, and in recent years, the Saudis have said that they are not going out of their way to root out non-Muslim observances, though they still prosecute them when they see them.

And in Myanmar, a longstanding member of the CPC club, the religious freedom

situation has been fluid, and is something we want our government to keep track of, Marshall said. So “the list is a good thing.”

Jamsheed K. Choksy, a professor of Central Eurasian Studies at Indiana University and an incoming USCIRF fellow, said the problem is actually larger than the report or whether the CPCs are included.

“What needs to happen is that the government of the United States needs to take these reports and make them central aspects of American policy and foreign relations,” he said.

Retired Ambassador Randolph Bell, who runs the First Freedom Center, a Virginia-based religious freedom watchdog group, took a similar view. The lack or inclusion of new CPCs isn’t as crucial as whether U.S. foreign policy is going to act on the information gathered by its own staff, and make religious freedom an organizing principle for U.S. bilateral and multilateral relations.

But in any case, Bell said, the U.S. needs to keep churning these reports out to keep attention focused on the cause of the repressed faithful.

“If they’re not there,” Bell said of the reports, “then wouldn’t people who are focused entirely on U.S. trade and economics, or people focused on some other aspect of global affairs, say climate change, just go about their business?”

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