Best prices anywhere on **Branson show** tickets: look inside this issue or visit actsmediagroup.com



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

Atheists and Humanists launch Freethought **Equity Fund PAC**

Atheists and Humanists hope to increase their influence in politics with the launch of the Freethought Equality Fund, a new political action committee for nonbelievers. Page 4

Commentary: Don't surrender Islam to Islamists



A Muslim doctor encourages Muslims to resist a radical interpretation of Islam. Page 6

Muslimah World Pageant seeks to empower pious Muslim women

A Beauty Pageant exclusively for Muslim women. Page 7

Secular Safe Zones on school campuses



Atheist and Humanist students find a safe place to share non-religious ideas.

Remarriage rates plunge as more couples opt for living together

Remarriage rates have dropped as much as 40% in the past 20 years as blended families cohabitate. Page 9

Rediscovered minister's diary chronicles life in **1600s Massachusetts**



The Rev. Samuel Phillips' diary was lost for nearly 20 years when it was discovered in an old burlap bag. The historic document has now been digitized. Page 11

Oldest Jewish Prayer Book on display Page 12



Volume 1, Issue 8 October 2013

Published monthly in Springfield, MO

Five things we learned about Pope Francis

Pontiff shares his heart on critical issues of faith and practice

(RNS) Pope Francis' comments this week on everything from gays to abortion (less talk, more mercy), the hierarchy (be pastors, not bureaucrats) and religious faith (doubt is part of belief) continue to reverberate through the church and the

Here are five broader insights that this wide-ranging interview revealed about Francis — and why they will be keys to reading his pontificate, and perhaps the future of Catholi-

He is not a hermit, and he reads his own press

The great danger for popes, like presidents and other world leaders, is that they can become isolated from the real lives of ordinary people beyond their gilded bubble. Some pledge to stay connected but ultimately fail, like John Paul II. Some enjoy the isolation, like Benedict XVI, which leads to losing

Francis has done more than any pope to remain "normal," as he puts it — calling friends and

(USA TODAY) Before its

Aug. 20 launch, officials at Al-

Jazeera America emphasized

that, despite its Middle Eastern

roots and ownership, the

fledgling cable news network

would be aimed squarely at a

Guess they weren't kidding.

coverage of the Syria crisis

released found that the new

kid on the block covered the

fast-moving story of President

Obama's threat to strike the

civil war-torn nation much the

The report, released Monday

(Sept. 16) by the Pew Research

Center's Project for Excellence

in Journalism, covers the period

from Aug. 26, when Secretary

of State John Kerry accused

the Syrian government of using

chemical weapons against its

own people, until Aug. 31,

when Obama said he would

BY AMANDA GREEN

(RNS) Citing the need for

transparency in the U.S. record

on human rights, nearly 200

clergy and religious leaders

from North Carolina are

seeking the public release of a

6,000-page Senate intelligence

report on U.S. torture of

terrorism detainees after 9/11.

and released to the media

on Thursday (Sept. 19), was

sent from the North Carolina

Council of Churches in Raleigh

to Sen. Richard Burr, a North

Carolina Republican who sits

on the Senate Select Committee

bishops, including the leaders

of both of the state's Catholic

dioceses, stated that in light of

conflicts in Syria and around

The letter, signed by 18

on Intelligence.

The letter, dated Aug. 27

WILMINGTON,

N.C. clergy seek release of Senate

report on torture

way its cable rivals did.

A new study of cable news

BY REM RIEDER

U.S. audience.

Media Review: Al-Jazeera

unbiased promise in USA

America lives up to its

strangers alike on his personal cellphone, and living in the Vatican guesthouse rather than the "inverted funnel" of the large rooms and small doorways inside the Apostolic Palace, as he said this week. "People can come only in dribs and drabs, and I cannot live without people," he said. "I need to live my life with others."

He also knows what is going on in the church. He noted that he has been "reprimanded" by his right flank for not talking about their favorite issues all the time - and he doesn't care. Indeed, the whole interview was directed as much to his fellow bishops as to the wider church and world, and it revealed some serious political savvy behind the big smile.

"See everything; turn a blind eye to much; correct a little," he said, reviving a favorite phrase of Pope John XXIII.

The point is that he sees everything, and seems determined to maintain his own listening posts.

> He is a Jesuit forever In a blog post that sought

seek congressional approval for

his plans to punish the forces of

on Fox News Channel, CNN,

MSNBC, BBC America and Al-

Jazeera America.

The study looked at coverage

Before Al-Jazeera America

went on the air, it was an open

question as to whether the

network, owned by the oil-rich

Persian Gulf emirate Qatar,

would feature traditional U.S.-

centric news or offer up a more

global perspective along the

lines of the BBC. Al-Jazeera

Arabic, the original Al-Jazeera

outlet, bears little resemble to

an American cable channel

and is widely known for airing

Osama bin Laden "death to

During the first international

megastory since it made its

debut, Al-Jazeera America

resembled U.S. cable content,"

the Middle East, transparency

on U.S. torture practices was

the Muslim world have

deteriorated, and the major

reason is that our credibility

on human rights is under

question," the letter states.

"The U.S. does not condone

torture, but torture has been

done by our citizens and in our

country's name. Our national

security would be improved by

restoring the world's respect for

U.S. integrity on human rights

and adherence to the rule of

the senator had not seen the

letter and could not comment

on the actions of the intelligence

The council's letter referenced

See TORTURE on page 4

Officials at Burr's office said

relations

See AL-JAZEERA on page 9

content

America" videos.

"delivered

needed.

"Our

Syrian leader Bashar Assad.



Pope Francis raised some conservative eyebrows with comments he made during an interview in mid-September, stating his opinion on several important issues. RNS photo

to downplay the significance of Francis' interview, the Rev. John Zuhlsdorf, a conservative commentator popularly known as "Father Z," wrote that Pope Francis is "formerly a Jesuit." Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

Francis — the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio — was ordained a Jesuit priest as a young man, spent his entire adult life immersed in the teachings and dynamic of the order founded by St. Ignatius Loyola, and returns at almost every point in the 12,000-word interview to his Ignatian roots. He even gave the exclusive to a Jesuit journalist from a Jesuit magazine.

Reading the interview is like getting a primer on Ignatian spirituality, on an openness to the world and "finding God in all things." But he boils it down to one word: "Discernment."

"My choices, including those related to the day-to-day aspects of life, like the use of a modest car, are related to a spiritual discernment that responds to a need that arises from looking at things, at people and from reading the signs of the times. Discernment in the Lord guides me in my way of govern-

As the Rev. Thomas Reese,

a Jesuit and an analyst for National Catholic Reporter, put it: "While reading the interview, I felt like I was in a Jesuit living room having a conversation with a brother." Francis is letting everyone else in on those conversations now; listen and you will get a better understanding of where this pontificate is headed.

Authoritarianism is dead, consultation lives

When the cardinals gathered last March to elect a successor to Benedict XVI, many Catholics were praying for a reformer See POPE on page 10

U.S. asks Supreme Court to review Hobby Lobby's birth control mandate challenge

BY SARAH PULLIAMBAILEY (RNS) Federal officials have

asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the government mandate that private companies offer employees birth control coverage despite the business owner's moral objections, with the company at the center of the suit owned by billionaire evangelical Christians.

Hobby Lobby's lawsuit has been one of the most high profile of 60-some cases involving the Obama administration's contraceptive mandate. The arts and crafts chain was founded by David Green, whom Forbes called "the biblical billionaire backing the evangelical movement."

In June, the Obama administration issued final rules for the mandate that requires most employers to provide contraception at no cost. While there are exemptions for religious groups and affiliated institutions, there are no carve-outs for private businesses with religious owners.

Opponents of the mandate say that they will be forced to provide coverage they find morally abhorrent. Alliance Defending Freedom attorneys filed a federal lawsuit against the Obama administration Friday (Sept. 20) on behalf of four Christian universities in Oklahoma, where Hobby Lobby is also based.

Now that two different federal courts have issued contradictory opinions on the mandate, the issue is near certain to be decided by the Supreme Court.

Thursday's (Sept. 19) petition from the Obama administration to the high court raises the issue central in the 1993

David and Barbara Green, founders of Hobby Lobby. As devout Christians, the Green family believes that "it is by God's grace and provision that Hobby Lobby has endured." Therefore, the Greens seek to honor God by "operating their company in a manner consistent with Biblical principles."

Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which says the government "shall not substantially burden a person's exercise of religion" unless that burden is the least restrictive means to further a compelling governmental interest.

The administration is asking the Supreme Court to decide that for-profit corporations cannot deny their employees the health coverage of contraceptives to which the employees are otherwise entitled by federal law, based on the religious objections of the corporation's owners.

"The United States government is taking the remarkable position that private individuals lose their religious freedom when they make a living," said Kyle Duncan, general counsel of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty and lead lawyer for Hobby Lobby.

"We're confident that the Supreme Court will reject the government's extreme position and hold that religious liberty is for everyone - including people who run a business."

In June, a federal court in Oklahoma ruled in Hobby Lob-See HOBBY LOBBY on page 7

ELEVISION NE ANNOUNCING

Acts Ministry, Inc announces the launch of a new Christian TV network. Acts Television Network (ATN) is available now on the Internet. ATN will bring you



some unique programming, including: Christian talk, teaching, Branson entertainment, and locally produced shows not found anywhere

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committee.



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As noted in last month's col-

umn, even in rural areas very

few are directly engaged in

farming though agriculture-

related employment is signifi-

cant. Small towns have been

transformed in recent decades

as downtown retail and other

local merchants have been dis-

placed by big-box retail and an-

tique stores and the like. Much

of the manufacturing that sus-

tained small towns has likewise

departed leaving behind some

lower-wage service jobs and

illicit drug dealing as means

of employment. Many rural

counties are considered to be

centers of "persistent poverty"

as measured over several Cen-

In the 1990s, rural America

There is much confusion

about the so-called "Wall of

Separation" metaphor con-

tained in Thomas Jefferson's

letter to the Danbury Baptist

in 1802. Sadly, American legal

culture has shifted from neu-

trality to hostility towards re-

ligion - something the Found-

ers never intended. The same

Congress that approved the

establishment clause voted to

open its sessions with prayer

by an official chaplain, the day

after the First Amendment

passed the house, members

passed a Resolution calling on

President George Washington

to issue a Thanksgiving Day

Proclamation urging Ameri-

cans to join in a "Day of Public

Thanksgiving and Prayer," that

acknowledged "The many sin-

gle favors of Almighty God."

They even attended church in

the Capitol Building.

was said to be undergoing a "re-

sus cycles.

Down on the farm - part 2

Commentary

Faith and Culture: Reflections over a fire pit

wife bought me a fire pit for my birthday; one of those portable things with a mesh lid that you can put a fire in on your patio.

A cool September evening seemed the perfect time to try out the fire pit; so, being the good Boy Scout that I was, I carefully arranged the wood -smallest to largest, stacked in a perfect teepee -- and poured on a cup of gasoline and tossed in a match. There's nothing like instant fire in my book.

fire that is mesmerizing. As I watched the fire I began to reflect on the very nature of fire

I realized that fire, like many things in life, is a dichotomy

trol and burn a house or 10,000

Fire is not good or bad - fire is fire. It does what fire does; it consumes things, and we need to have a healthy respect for

can bring warmth and cheer. It creates light and heat. It provides protection and allows us to prepare food. Fire is, and always has been, a gathering point of social fellowship. There is that element of fire that is warm and comfortable

standing of fire brings a respectable fear. Fire is something to be careful with. It is not good to be casual with fire. As the old saying goes, "If you

Managing Editor RN-R, A fire, properly respected, play with fire you are likely to

> As I reflected on these things started to think about how many times the Bible refers to God using a metaphor of fire.

"Our God is a consuming fire," says it clearest. How are we to take this -- in a strictly negative way? I think not. If you reflect fire you see that fire is what it is -- just like God. When properly respected,

and advantage to humanity.

Bible tells us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wis-

dom." Fear meaning awesome

respect - not cringing terror.

As we learn to properly respect God in our individual lives, families and society, the blessings of that respect are dis-

The opposite is true also. When we fail to respect God and treat Him carelessly, we can get burned, and a lot of destruction can come from it. Not so much because God is punishing us, as much as it is the consequences of failure to follow the instructions and warnings of

to some degree, is in how peo-

or. He can be contacted through

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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 to-

day's world. Acts Ministry is

a distinctively Christian or-

ganization seeking to present

the news of all religions in a

professional manner while, at

the same time, maintaining a

Christian perspective.

Associate Editor

and therefore attract urban migrants to their quality of life. Meanwhile, the mainstay of rural life, the local church, has also been undergoing a long transformation. While any reader of rural weeklies knows

Virgil Hill **RN-R Columnist** still serve as the social center of many areas, it is also true that

memberships have declined

A View From Jordan Creek

along with population. The recent closure of the First Christian Church in a thriving nearby town, which was a pillar of that community and home to many generations of members, gives stark evidence that even well-established congregations are subject to significant decline

naissance" because of the rise of and disappearance. the new internet-based econo-In much of rural America, my and the universal availabilchurches are served by biity of phone lines. However, vocational pastors or led by due to the rise of higher-speed elders. Some, especially in the urban/suburban connections, mainline denominations, are viability for rural areas is now served by pastors beginning focused on access to reliable their professional careers before genuine broadband service "moving up" to urban areas. and health care. Some towns Others are served by a series of have thus been able to reinvent "supply preachers" or similarly themselves as creative and/or named figures who come and entrepreneurial communities go quickly. Some years ago, I willingly

filled that role but declined the opportunity to become a "Sunday-only pastor" for such congregations because I found the term to be both an oxymoron and objectionable. One can be that individual congregations

America's Moral Compass

The so-called wall separating church and state

mo the

Dee Wampler

RN-R Columnist

ordered an "accommodation"

between the two, not a total

separation. Don't get con-

fused. Some Liberals want a

religious cleansing and have

a hostility and bigotry to-

ward religion and people of

faith. They want to take Jesus

out of all influence on public

are seen as "religious," and

religious views are to be kept

in church buildings and be-

hind the doors of our homes

day per week but not a pastor Treating rural parishioners in such a second-class manner ought to be unacceptable. Our collective history is

grounded in rural life. As Christians, we claim an agricultural heritage that began in the Garden and was repeatedly reflected in the parables of Jesus. Our charge to be faithful stewards of creation is directly tied to the land. Separately, as Americans, we are the beneficiaries of pioneers and homesteaders who moved across the continent from the original farming settlements of the At-

My own story is principally the result of my French Huguenot, English Baptist and Scots-Irish émigré forebears. All of them were farmers in their native countries and became farmers here, like the majority of Americans during that period. (My Cherokee lineage is obviously a rather different matter.)

For many readers of these words, I'm not just "preaching to the choir" but I'm up in the choir loft with you. I strongly believe that the church must respond to the challenges now uniquely facing rural communities and do so as a priority, not an afterthought.

(To be concluded next month.) Virgil J. Hill is a lifelong Ozarker and activist and is an ordained minister with Acts

the separation of church and

state. They say Christians are

not expected to have any voice

in government. If Christians

speak out today, they are at-

tacked and criticized. The

secular advocates want "viola-

tors" pushed back to the pri-

vate sphere where their ideas

cannot impact anyone, but

coming religion's replacement,

and it is bringing with it a

breakdown of the moral, spiri-

tual, and intellectual fiber that

Christianity has held together

Dee Wampler is an Author,

Defense Attorney, Former

Springfield, MO. He believes

America needs a moral com-

pass and advocates an hon-

est look at America's Christian

for over 200 years.

themselves Secularism is be

FIELD, MO - The Real the same time, maintaining a News-Review newspaper is a part of the global outreach We believe that we can reof a ministry headquartered in Springfield, MO. Begun in

Publisher RN-R SPRING-

Through The Holy Spirit."

The vision of the Real

port the news with accuracy even though we see events 1993, Acts Ministry is a nonthrough our paradigm as profit, trans-denominational Christians independent organization Acts Ministry accepts no using several means to proliability for the accuracy of news received via the wire sermote their mission statement which is, "Unity, In Christ, vices or submitted by others.

Acts Ministry, Inc. and

professional manner while, at

and we cannot he held respon-

sible for any statements made

by reporters whether they are

the Real News-Review

News-Review is to be a newspaper that will bring attention international, national or reto the power and influence of religion in today's world. We While reporting the news, believe this can be accomwe do not want to neglect our plished by utilizing the print opportunity to present Christ to the reader. It is for that media to report religion in the news. Acts Ministry is a reason that you will find referdistinctively Christian organi- ences to Jesus, how to receive zation seeking to present the him as Lord and Savior, and

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 eter-

nal life." (NRSV) The word

"mav" is used twice. If you

believe, you "may" not perish

(in any way) but you "may"

with his teachings. Please take

note of the 3rd chapter of the

Gospel of John. Embedded

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.actsministrv.org

The Evidence of Faith's Substance

How to make sure you don't go to hell

We in America understand the ohrase "Over my dead body." It's an English expression that someone says when they mean there is absolutely no way a person will allow something. It's the same as saying "no

way." This is exactly what God the Father is saying to mankind with the Cross. For anyone to end up in hell, they have to literally trample Christ, God's only Son that He sent to be our Savior in three distinct ways: 1) save us from ourselves - no one can deny they have morally failed at one time and need a solution to save us to a personal relationship with God, who promises of us by wiping away that guilt

has already paid for it. Why do you think Jesus

> But this is America, the land of "I can do anything I put my mind to." How dare Jesus claim only He can 'save' me, that I

not sales?

I can give you trusted, understandable - and FREE* -

goals. Let's talk - I can help you plan for life.

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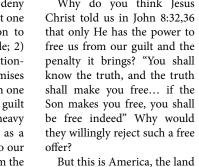
"no way" I'll go there if I allow Him to have any say in my decision. Well, listen to the Bible. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:29)

God says I am "trampling over His body," treating His sacrifice as a "common thing," and "insulting God's grace" when I reject the free gift of Jesus Christ and trust in myself.

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

Prayer does not change God, but it changes him who prays.

over the dead body of Jesus the guilt they carry inside; 2) to completely forgive each one we willingly carry like a heavy weight on our backs, or as a ball and chain shackled to our ankles; and 3) save us from the just punishment we all deserve if we are intent on trusting in ourselves to carrying our guilt and refuse to trust Christ, who



Shouldn't financial guidance

be about

choose hell because Iesus savs

Ed Croteau

Soren Kierkegaard

Upstairs Over a Vacant Lot:

Reading between the lines is where you may find the truth

reader, I have learned to read between the lines to ferret out anything that resembles the truth. I also read news online, and it, too, requires a discerning look into the story behind the story. Sometimes I feel like a mind reader trying to determine the writer's message and its purpose. Was the purpose to report facts, or was the intent to persuade the reader to accept the writer's point of view and opinion?

A lawyer who was my friend, told me something that has stayed with me even after his death nearly 20 years ago. He said that in order to understand completely a document you had to read and define ev-**Seasons of Reflections:**

Have you ever just stopped

everything and gotten very

still? Do you find it hard not to

be doing anything? If you are

able to physically stop moving

for a while, do you find that

your mind races making men-

tal notes of all you need to be

you consciously stop all physi-

Have you stopped long

enough to realize that by not

blessing of peace? "Be still

and know that I am God."

Psalm 64:10 tells us that we

we will be still. Being still is

cal and mental activity?

ery word from the beginning of each sentence until the end; then you needed to start at the end and work your way to the front using the same method of checking. When you believe you have the truth in that one sentence, you need to lift it up and look under it. Extreme? Yes, perhaps. But he made his

associates to be a "stickler" for accurate communication. There is no doubt that misunderstandings are caused by misunderstandings! Clarity in other areas of life and relation- are those made by thinkers.

Being still can lead to a quiet mind and knowing God

LeAnn Kennedy

President, Acts Ministry

more than the ceasing of physi-

cal activity, but mental stillness

is much harder to harder to

achieve. It takes determination

to actively block out messages

A Variety of Gospel Music - Unique Christian Programming - Talk

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Programming You Won't Find Anywhere Else!!

Don't Get Lost

will KNOW that He is God if from the world telling us what

Whether watching the news, magazines, or on the Internet. checking the real message can get you close to the truth. You probably will not get the whole truth, but coming close is better than missing it by a mile. I am not a conspiracy theo-

rist, nor do I look for an enemy I am known by my close about social, political, and economic issues will not solve problems. The sense of being targeted by authorities --- in or out of government --- is the fertile soil for confrontacommunication is a vital part tions that lead to the quagmire of our ability to function ef- of ineffectiveness. The only fectively in business --- or in changes that make a difference

need, and when we need it.

Being still requires us to slow

down. The enemy of our souls

has increased the pace of the

world because he does not want

us to know the Lover of our

souls. "Be still and know that

I am God." I believe that that

KNOWING is a knowing in the

heart, not just a knowing in the

is President of Acts Ministry.

"Filling Your Day

With the Spirit

of God!"

actsmediagroup.com

Internet Radio



Dr. Paul C. Collins Publisher RN-R

Thinkers are people shaped by

communication is via email, it is important to make clarity a priority. Now with texting becoming so prominent, watch your typing finger. One little miscue and the entire message One last thing: if you have a

doesn't make Him happy? NO,

not at all! By using the analogy

of fire to illustrate some charac-

teristics of God the Bible forces

us to compare the two and

that which is not like Him.

When we yield to God, He

purges out of our life and soci-

ety those things which are det-

rimental to us. When we fail to

respect Him, the consequences

can sometimes spin out of our

control and become very de-

structive to us and our society.

tor and author. He holds a doc-

torate in Pastoral Theology and

is a Certified Christian Counsel-

Dr. Steve Highlander is a pas-

God's nature is to consume

phone, use it as a phone --- not as an answering machine. If I call, please answer your phone. Dr. Paul Collins is the founder and Executive Director of

Acts Ministry, Inc and Publish-

er of the Real News - Review. He is an ordained Methodist Minister, Presiding Bishop of Acts Church International and currently serves as senior pastor of Acts Church in Springfield,

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 necessarilv reflect the opinions and beliefs of Acts Ministry, Inc its board or larger body of as-

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

NEED PRAYER?

Acts Ministry will pray for you. We have

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Mind and Spirit: The Passion Ploy

be that passionate? Don't get me wrong: If you get me on the right topic, I can be passionate about it. When I start in about the grace of God, I am passionate! When I talk about what an amazing person my husband is, I am passionate! However, in all honesty, I don't live there. My mundane life doesn't inspire outbursts of emotional ecstasy. I have known people who are energetic, charismatic, passionate people, and you want to be around them, emulate them... catch what they have. But, get real, people- you don't want

wear you OUT! The Bible indicates that the most important command from God is to love Him with all our hearts, mind, soul, and



is to love our neighbor as our text, we would have to assume In fact, I would like to be that even days where I am like that, I can't sustain it, and maybe I

If my husband was that enthusiastic about me, all the time, I would be highly annoyed. I love that he is passionate about me, and thinks I'm lovely, smart, and talented, but I also love those evenings where we just sit together and read, or watch a movie, or

gether. That quiet and abiding love is just as important to memaybe even more importantthat those outbursts of intense love. The fact that I can depend on him to be out there earning a living, meeting the needs of parishioners, turning the other cheek and being kind to even those who annoy him, means more to me than the most romantic of evenings.

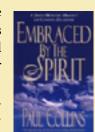
I suspect that God is the same way. Faithfulness, loyalty, responsiveness, a listening ear, giving your neighbor food, visiting a person in jail, responding with grace when someone treats you badly- these are all things that I would be willing to bet that God finds just as appealing in us as those moments when our hearts could

be good at both.

lest we somehow violate cer-The U.S. Supreme Court Help Us Improve the Real News Review

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Please take a couple of minutes and give us your opinions. You could win a free copy of Dr. Paul Collin's Book EM-BRACED BY THE SPIRIT. Just send an e-mail to



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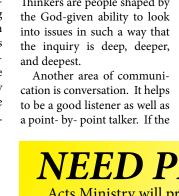












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mind. When God supernaturally translates or moves knowledge from our minds into our about how passionate we are hearts, real freedom and peace about our cause, or our church, or our job, or even "life" in Excerpted from Ms Kennedy's general. Even if we're not rebook Seasons of Reflection pubally passionate about anything, lished by Acts Press. Ms Kennedy we have to pretend to be if we want to get that job position or fit in with the right crowd. Seriously, with as much distraction and just plain busy-ness modern day life throws at us,

who has the energy or time to

to live with them because they



Associate Editor, RN-R

self (Luke 10:27). If we were to interpret that in a modern conthat we thought of nothing else but God, night and day, that we talked of nothing else, that we spent all of our emotional and mental energy furthering His cause and His kingdom, and engaging in intense worship. person! The truth is though, that while I have moments and

just break with love for Him. We need to be passionate about God, and about the life He has given us, but we also have to walk out this life in a gracious and faithful way. Let's

Brooke Highlander is Associate Editor of the Real News - Review. She is an ordained minister, an applied psychologist, and a certified Christian

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Muslims name 37 groups

WASHINGTON (RNS) Groups with a mission to spread prej-

udice and hatred against Muslims are coordinated and well fi-

nanced, according to a report released by the Council on Amer-

The report, titled "Legislating Fear: Islamophobia and its Im-

pact in the United States," was released Thursday (Sept. 19), and

it names 37 individuals and institutions that "were at the center

The report, which found that incidents of hatred against Mus-

lims had decreased slightly, includes a list of 32 other groups that

promote Islamophobic themes as well as a "best list" of organiza-

"American Muslims face discrimination every day," said Ni-

In 2012, CAIR rated Islamophobia as a 5.9 on a scale of one to

10, with one representing an America free of Islamophobia and

10 being the worst possible situation for Muslims. In 2010, CAIR

The nonprofit organizations whose purpose was to besmirch

Islam made more than \$119 million in revenue during 2011-

Awad said these organizations have made "a lucrative profes-

sion out of targeting a religious community." Many of the institu-

tions share founders and funding. During the report's two-year

period, 78 bills "designed to vilify Islamic religious practices"

were introduced in 29 states and Congress. Of these bills, 62 con-

tained language from legislation created by David Yerushalmi of

Awad said the 37 organizations have had a "devastating effect"

on how Muslims are viewed in the United States, resulting in the

"We will continue to be attacked by these individuals and in-

stitutions," Awad said. "Our purpose in publishing this informa-

increase of Islamophobic rhetoric and behavior.

the American Freedom Law Center, one of the institutions listed

had Awad, national executive director of CAIR. "Islamophobia

of promoting Islamophobia in America" during 2011-2012.

tions that have sought to combat Islamophobia

is a threat to the safety of American Muslims.

as part of the "inner core."

rated the state of Islamophobia in America as a 6.4.

ican-Islamic Relations, a Washington-based civil rights group.

that fuel Islamophobia

USA Religion

Atheists and humanists launch Freethought Equality Fund PAC

Atheists and humanists hope to increase their influence in politics with the launch of the Freethought Equality Fund, a new political action committee for nonbelievers.

"When people see respected ethical humanists and atheists serve in public office, this will begin to dispel many myths about nonbelievers," said Bishop McNeill, coordinator of the new PAC that was launched Wednesday (Sept. 18).

The mission of the PAC is to grow the ranks of open humanists and atheists in public office at all levels of government. It will also seek to elect people who support the separation of church and state regardless of their personal beliefs, said Maggie Ardiente, director of development communications Association

On a larger scale, the new PAC reflects a long-term strategy among nonreligious to increase their profile in Washington; last year the Secular Coalition for America hired Edwina Rogers, a veteran Republican lobbyist, as its executive director, in part to open doors on Capitol Hill. by the American Humanist believe in a god, the more we

Association's Center for

Humanist Activism; it's the first

nontheist PAC to have full-time

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Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association and the Center for Humanist Activism speaks at the launch of a new political action committee during a Washington press conference today (Sept. 18). Maggie Ardiente (left), director of development and communications at the American Humanist Association, and Bishop McNeill (right), coordinator for the Freethought Equality Fund PAC, listen on. RNS photo by Katherine Burgess

affiliation, an increase of 5 percentage points during the

"Our patriotism is suspect, our value system is dismissed and the more we come out of the closet in certain communities as people who don't happen to

as people who don't happen to believe in a god, the more we

observe new limitation in our business opportunities and in

public life." ~ Maggie Ardiente, American Humanist Association

business opportunities and

in public life," said Ardiente,

referring to prejudice against

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A 2012 Pew study reported the nonreligious. "Most of all,

that one in five Americans these voters want respect and

equality for nontheists in the United States."

Roy Speckhardt, executive director of the American Humanist Association, called nonreligious Americans "one of the largest minorities in the

"But you'd never know it from our organized numbers

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the theory of intelligent design should be taught in public schools and whether public funds should support religiously "Our patriotism is suspect, our value system is dismissed and affiliated organizations, as well as questions about gay rights the more we come out of the closet in certain communities

and abortion rights. The PAC is currently considering five potential candidates for endorsement congressional candidates Lee Rogers of California and state Sen. Will Brownsberger

Before an endorsement, the

PAC will question candidates

about personal beliefs, whether

observe new limitation in our or political power," he said. "It's time for that lack of Massachusetts, Organizers of the PAC said there are more than incumbent House Democrats

Congress, although freshman Holt of New Jersey and Judy Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, D-Ariz., Chu of California. is the only member of Congress to publicly identify her religion According to an initial PAC

questionnaire and survey, no incumbent Republicans in Congress qualified for support from the Freethought Equality Fund. However, the group's organizers said they hope to find Republicans who support their values.

Candidate support from the PAC includes making contributions of up to \$5,000 per election, making independent expenditures on advertising, and recruiting volunteers and donors for a

"It is long past due for nonbelievers to have a say in who we want to represent us as our elected officials," McNeill said. "Through careful research

(Amanda Greene is the editor of

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of potential candidates, the Freethought Equality Fund seeks to be at the forefront of the battle to erase the negative stigma associated with atheism or humanism by having the ability to influence political

Volume 1, Issue 8 October 2013

Connie Mackey, president of FRC Action, a political action committee affiliated Family Research Council and that supports Republicans, said although she disagrees with the premise of the Freethought Equality Fund, all PACs are welcome

"The vast majority of Americans do believe in God," Mackey said. "They want their elected officials to be held accountable to a higher authority, not just themselves."

Torture Continued from front

a report from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Law School released in January 2012 that alleged a Johnston County airline had participated in transporting possible terror suspects for interrogation and alleged torture overseas.

The council's executive director, the Rev. George second jobs. Reed, said the council sent the letter after learning that the Intelligence Committee could vote soon on releasing the

"If the only reason for not releasing the report is that it might be damaging to our country's image, I would say, our image already has some damage because the world already thinks we've done those things," he said.

Clergy who signed the letter said they wanted to stand against torture both at home "I think this is a very

important issue," said the Rev. Rachel Moser, a United Methodist pastor in Hubert, N.C, "because it is a part of defining who we are as he and who we want to be and what we want to stand for in the

Wilmington (NC) Faith and Values.)

Kansas lawsuit filed to block curriculum

(AP) Topeka, Kan. - An anti-evolution group filed a federal lawsuit Thursday to block Kansas from using new, multistate science standards in its public schools, arguing the guidelines promote atheism and violate students' and parents' religious freedom.

The group, Citizens for Objective Public Education, had criticized the standards developed by Kansas, 25 other states and the National Research Council for treating both evolution and climate change as key scientific concepts to be taught from kindergarten through 12th grade. The Kansas State Board of Education adopted them in June to replace evolution-friendly standards that had been in place since 2007.

Welcome! Try us Once! The Sanctuary of Hope 1790 Bee Creek Road Branson, MO 65616 417-336-4673 Sam Kaunley, Pastor www.thesanctuaryofhope.org Pastor Sam Kaunley

As denominations decline the number of unpaid ministers continues to rise

(RNS) The 50 members of All Saints Episcopal Church in Hitchcock, Texas, are looking forward to December, when Mark Marmon will be ordained their priest.

One reason for the excitement? They won't have to pay

A 57-year-old fly fishing guide, Marmon, whose wife is a lawyer, says he doesn't want or need a church salary. He belongs to a growing breed of mainline Protestant clergy who serve congregations in exchange for little or no compen-

"We're the frontline," Marmon said. "If it weren't for us, these churches would just roll up and die."

Though small evangelical congregations have long relied on unpaid pastors, mainline churches haven't. They've generally paid full-time or nearly full-time salaries, said Scott Thumma, a Hartford Seminary sociologist of religion.

That's changing, however, as churches face declining numbers and look to new ministry models to make ends meet Thumma sees more mainliners cutting back to half-time or one-quarter-time packages for clergy, who increasingly work

The unpaid cleric model is gaining traction among Episcopalians. In the mid-1990s, for example, the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming had few if any unpaid clergy serving its 49 congregations. Now, 20 priests in Wyoming - more than onethird – are unpaid.

Within a few years, the num ber of unpaid clergy is expected to reach 35, according to Lori Modesitt, ministry developer for the Wyoming diocese. All those unpaid clergy are fully ordained.

Modesitt sees unpaid ministry as "the future of the church" empowers laypeople to become priests even if they can't leave other careers, she said. And it ensures that ministry never be-

"What we're talking about is going back to the original

BY OMAR SACIRBEY

was settled out of court.

(RNS) Abercrombie & Fitch

will change its "look policy"

and allow employees to wear

hijabs after a three-year legal

battle with two Muslim women

The settlement requires Ab-

ercrombie to report religious

accommodation requests and

discrimination complaints to

the Equal Employment Op-

portunity Commission for

three years, and includes

\$71,000 in compensation for

The settlement also averts

a Sept. 30 trial. Abercrombie

fired Umme-Hani Khan, a

stockroom worker in its San

Mateo, Calif., store, in 2010 for

refusing to work without her

religious headscarf. Khan, who

had worked at the store for

four months without incident,

filed a religious discrimina-

tion complaint with the EEOC,

which sued the retailer in 2011.

the two women.

active part and used their Godgiven gifts for the betterment of the community," Modesitt said. "This is a way to enliven con-

The unpaid trend isn't confined to remote ranchlands. In the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, which includes Houston about 25 priests serve without pay after having gone through \$2,000-per-year, part-time training at the 9-year-old Iona School for Ministry.

Iona has attracted candidates for volunteer or nominally compensated priest positions from Northwest Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Nebraska and

that other dioceses would want to send students to our school? says Mary MacGregor, executive director of the Iona School for Ministry. "That was not even on our radar." So great is the need for un-

paid priests that a new distance education program launched by Iona in 2012 will train those who can't get to Texas 10 times

Participants in the Iona Initiative program keep their day jobs. They gather regularly in their home states with fellow students and mentors. They watch videotaped lectures from the Seminary of the Southwest in Austin. Currently piloted in Oklahoma, Wyoming and Hawaii, the three-year program will soon be available in eight dioceses where churches now wait for priests who won't expect paychecks.

their clergy. Only two percent are unpaid, according to Hartford Seminary's 2010 Faith Communities Today survey. Meanwhile, 30 percent of mainline churches have a part-time paid pastor. The rest have fulltime, paid leaders.

But denominations expect more church leaders in years ahead to earn their livings in secular jobs. The Presbyterian Church (USA), for instance, encourages new seminarians to plan for nonchurch employment so they can serve fledgling congregations that can't afford a full-time salary plus benefits.

Ambercrombie & Fitch to change

ditional hijab -- headscraf.

Photo by Azlan Mohamed,

In its defense, Abercrombie

countered that the headscarves

violated its "look policy,"

which was an important part

of its marketing strategy. Ab-

ercrombie also defended its

"look policy" as "commercial

The EEOC also sued Aber-

crombie in 2010, alleging its

Milpitas, California, store did

not hire Halla Banafa, a Mus-

lim woman who interviewed

there in 2008, because of her

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"look policy," to allow hijabs

With declining congregations and a slowing economy, many pastors are finding themselves having to juggle the ministry with making a living outside the churches they

Forgoing church pay can have benefits for priests. Marmon who now serves as an ordained deacon at All Saints, finds that his parishioners appreciate how he serves the church with no expectation of monetary reward.

"They love me," Marmon said. "They know my degree of dedication is 110 percent." But being unpaid has draw-

backs, too. Modesitt served without a stipend in her rural Wheatland, Wyoming, congregation for 10 years. Now her ministry there is part of her work for the diocese, but conthem and consequently don't always confide in her, she said.

"It's hard for some of them to come to me with a personal issue that they might bring to someone who was paid," Modesitt said. "I am to them still Lori, the person who sat in the pew' until her volunteering came to

Marmon observes that some paid clergy "feel threatened" that Iona-trained priests who minister for free "are going to

trict Court Judge Yvonne Gon-

zalez Rogers agreed with Khan

to revise the policy, while in

April, U.S. District Court Judge

Edward Davila dismissed sev-

eral of Abercrombie's defenses

Khan received \$48,000 in

"People shouldn't have to

choose between their faith and

their paycheck," said Khan.

"I'm happy that the judge saw

on the losing side of a third

EEOC lawsuit, brought on be-

half of another Muslim wom-

an, Samantha Elauf of Tulsa,

Oklahoma, who alleged she

was not hired because of her

headscarf, but has appealed the

case to the 10th U.S. Circuit

Court of Appeals in Denver.

Abercrombie has also been

that I was wronged." A

compensation, and Banafa re-

in the Banafa case.

ceived \$23,000.

ordered Abercrombie

fears are overblown in his view because the unpaid serve a dif-

priests work in a wide range of fields. Their ranks include a hospital administrator, a nurse, a judge, an ExxonMobil executive and an oil industry entrepreneur. Some are also retired,

MacGregor said. Traditional seminaries are adjusting to make sure students can handle the new realities. Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, for instance, is developing an entrepreneurial ministry track for students who

> ment after graduation. "We're encouraging a new form of ministry where students realize they may not go into congregations in traditional buildings that can pay them full-time salaries," said Auburn President Katharine Henderson. "So they have to know how to do ministry in entirely new

plan to do ministry but aren't

counting on church employ-

tion is to empower the people who are concerned about Islamo-

According to a 2011 study by the Public Religion Research Institute, 30 percent of the American public believe American Muslims want to establish Shariah law in the United States. Robert Muise, co-founder and senior counsel at the American

Freedom Law Center, called CAIR's objectives in releasing the report "nefarious," saying the civil rights organization is a "Musim Brotherhood front group.

"CAIR wants to silence speech that sheds light on its illicit objectives by trying to marginalize that speech," said Muise. "By beng named in the report, it is evident that the American Freedom Law Center is having an impact on CAIR's operations, which is good for America and all freedom-loving Americans."

Nonie Darwish, founder of Former Muslims United, another group named to the list, said she took issue with the wording of

"The word 'phobia' refers to people who are afraid without reason," Darwish said. "I would be crazy if I were not afraid of Islam. I have lots of fear of Islam, and rightfully so. Islam is brutal. Islamic law is brutal."

Ten of the groups from the "Islamophobia Network's inner core" are: ACT! for America, American Freedom Defense Initiative, American Freedom Law Center, Atlas Shrugs, Center for Security Policy, David Horowitz Freedom Center, Investigative Project on Terrorism, Jihad Watch, Middle East Forum, The



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World Religion

political brethren — preach in-

tolerance. They seek power by

any means available to make all

others conform to their rules.

They are equally at war with

moderate Muslims and people

of other faiths.

COMMENTARY: Don't surrender Islam to the Islamists

Muslim Doctor encourages Muslims to resist a radical interpretation of Islam

c. 2013 Religion News Service - "The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayo-

This was the Islamist poem quoted by the mayor of Istanbul, Turkey, in December 1997. Charged with using inflamfrom office and sentenced to

cleaving along ancient, sectarian lines. The two main branches matory speech, he was ejected of the faith — Sunni and Shiite - are separating and preparjail by the Ankara High Court. ing for conflict. This is happen-

"Call me an Accidental Zionist, if you must, but Eretz Yisrael is a vital shelter, an only shelter, from lethal, genocidal anti-Semitism... If we care for wider humanity at all, we must all be 'accidental' Zionists and want for the Jews, for the Israelis, what each Muslim already has for themselves: a future, a nation and a faith, secured." ~ Qanta Ahmed ~ 2012 Huffington Post

Today, that mayor, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is prime minister of Turkey. During a decade in office, he has slowly but inexorably pushed secular Turkey, a member of NATO, toward an unabashedly Islamist future.

As a Muslim, I refuse to give up Islam to the Islamists. So should others who believe in a deeply pluralistic Islam of the sort my Indian-born grandparents taught. It is the only path to peaceful resolution of inevitable religious differences, within Islam and with other

Yet today pluralist manifestations of Islam are contracting. Never before has there been a time when Islam has been more threatened from within. That threat today is twofold:

Roman Catholic priest in Zan-

zibar is heightening fears of

increased religious tensions on

the Tanzanian islands, where

Christian clergy, churches and

some Muslim leaders are being

On Sept. 13, the Rev. An-

selm Mwang'amba, 61, suf-

fered burns on his face, chest

and arms when acid was

thrown at him as he left an

Internet cafe. The attack came

barely a month after acid was

thrown on two British teenage

tourists, Kirstie Trup and Katie

not to retaliate," said the Rev.

"We are urging Christians acid.

once-peaceful mixed neighborhoods are reorganizing as Shiite or Sunni enclaves. And it's happening psychologically, as intolerant Islamists on both sides This is giving birth to an

ing physically, as in Iraq, where

unprecedented age of conflict, waged in the name of Islam, by Islamists who corrupt the true

In Syria, Shiite-linked Alawites are pitted against Sunni and Salafi extremists in a war that has killed 100,000 people. Next door, Lebanon car bombs are the latest threat poised to reignite Shiite and Sunni sec-

In Egypt, Islamists, removed from power but still potent, are pitted against secular and mainstream Muslims and "unbelievers." In post-conflict Iraq,

Cosmas Shayo, diocesan chan-

cellor. "We are depending on

the police for security. They

say action has been taken, but

we are not satisfied since the

Fifteen people were arrested

after last week's attack on the

priest, The Associated Press

the Rev. Evarist Mushi, and

In February, gunmen killed

attacks are continuing."

Zanzibar acid attack tied to growing

dominated government tyrannizes the Sunni minority.

In nuclear-armed Pakistan, Sunni Islamist policies infect the constitution, creating a society that legally persecutes minorities. There and in neighboring Afghanistan, iihadists induct ever more children into the service of the Taliban. In the Northwest Frontier and elsewhere, the Pakistani Taliban execute vaccination workers. casting them as soldiers fighting for secularism. One result: Polio, once near eradication, is

again crippling children. Who are these people? All Islamists are Muslims, but most Muslims are not Islamists.

Islamists claim to manifest an official Islam, concealing their totalitarian ideologies in a veil of faith. Though Islamists can be violent or nonviolent, they all wage war from an entrenched position of anti-Western de-secularization. Thev claim ownership of the public space by divine right, suffocating everyone else. Today, whether in Egypt, Iraq or Pakistan, they seek to extinguish the few Christians in their midst. Tomorrow Islamists will turn more of their hatred on non-Islamist Muslims

Unlike other Muslims, Islating the masses, preying on ignorance of Islam and pitching a carefully cultivated populist narrative of virulently anti-Western, anti-Zionist, anti-Semitic, anti-secular propaganda that arouses the uneducated and silences the naive.

In the West, they are unwittingly aided by the political left. Fearful of inducing Islamophobia, it tries to suppress debate about the forces driving the radicalization of Islam.

This has contributed to a decade of warfare waged by America in a vacuum of knowledge about sectarian forces

The result is tragically predictable. The Arab Awakening is on life support because Islamists seized the brief democratic opening that it created before institutions could be

a deeply fragmented, Shiite- built to guarantee pluralism and religious tensions in island country

for contempt of court. The judge's ruling came

which is campaigning for Zanzibar's independence. Mainland Tanganyika and

the islands of Zanzibar united

was wounded in another gun of Zanzibar's majority Muslim attack, around Christmas. In population and its minority November, Zanzibar Mufti Christian residents have intensecretary Sheikh Fadhil Suleisified in recent years. Zanzibar man Seroga was doused with is a semiautonomous part of Tanzania, a nation of a little Zanzibar President Ali more than 48 million people.

Mohamed Shein announced a \$6,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of

group known as "Awakening,"

in 1964 to become Tanzania. Tensions between sections

Mwang'amba's attacker. Religious leaders link the attacks to the Islamist radical

keep the woman quiet, Italian newspapers reported Tuesday

The reports say the rela-

racket that cost the priest at

reported to have handed over his entire monthly stipend to the woman, as well as an inheritance he received years

The woman, now 32 and identified in reports only by her first name, Ramona, has been detained by authorities

on charges of extortion. The case was revealed after the priest filed a complaint detailing threats he received and the

Dr. Qanta A. Ahmed is a Muslim British physician specializing in sleep disorders. She is also an author and a newspaper columnist. As a Muslim she supports a pluralistic view of Islam as a peaceful religion. She is also pro-Israel and opposes the pressure to force Israel to give up land. Photo Courtesy http://www.qantaahmed.com

protection of minorities, which any successful democracy requires. They won't change their stripes, so democracy will fail unless Islamism is castrated. I don't know of any country in the region calling for a secular democracy, which is every

lamism of every stripe. There is only one way to reverse this trend. Moderate Muslims have to reclaim the dialogue and articulate the narrative honestly: Islamism is not just a regionalized, totalitarian

Muslim's best hope against Is-

threat. It is universal and must must be disarmed from within Our confrontation with the beast starts by naming its ori-

gins truthfully as from within us - our confrontation with Islamism by confronting our-If anti-Islamist Muslims do not rise to the urgent chal-

lenge, it is not only minorities

who risk extinction, but Islam

itself. Failing to act now invites

Islamists ever inward, and one

day we will find our mosques have become their barracks, our minarets remade into their bayonets, and our fellow believers, no longer true Muslims, molded into brainwashed Islamist soldiers.

(Qanta Ahmed, author of In the Land of Invisible Women: A Female Doctor's Journey in the Saudi Kingdom, is a Templeton-Cambridge Journalism Fellow in Science and Religion. Follow her on Twitter @Miss-

"Given the ever-increasing

diversity of society in England

and Wales, this is a question

which may be expected to arise

more and more frequently and

to which an answer must be

provided," Murphy said in his

ruling. "The niqab has become

the elephant in the courtroom."

hope that Parliament or a high-

er court will review this ques-

tion sooner rather than later

and provide a definitive state-

ment of the law to trial judges."

Conservative Parliament

Member Philip Hollobone ac-

cused Murphy of "pandering'

"I am disgusted that the

judge is bending over back-

wards to accommodate some-

to the Muslim defendant.

He added: "I express the

England debates full-face veils in courtrooms

Opponents claim jurors should be able to see facial expressions

days after Birmingham Met-

ropolitan College overturned

its ruling that students, staff

and visitors must remove face

coverings. The ruling followed

protests by Muslims who

launched a petition against

the college decision, attracting

8,000 signatures in less than 48

These two cases indicate

that a national debate on veils,

particularly the nigab, which

covers all but the eyes, is long

It is an issue that has already

prompted legislation in conti-

nental Europe, most notably in

France, where full facial veils

were banned in public places

CANTERBURY, England (RNS) A senior judge, leading members of Parliament and human rights activists are calling for an urgent debate on the explosive issue of whether Muslim women should be al-

lowed to wear veils when they

testify in court. The call for national debate follows Judge Peter Murphy's Sept. 16 ruling that a 22-yearold Muslim woman standing trial on charges of intimidating a witness at a north London mosque must remove her facial veil, called a niqab, when

testifying so the jury can better evaluate her facial expressions. If she refuses, the woman —

known only as Defendant D — could face a prison sentence

France has an estimated Muslim population of six mil-

one who clearly does not want lion. In Britain there are roughto stick to the rules like everyone else," he said.

Italy Shocked by Affair between young Gypsy and old Priest

relationship that began in the confessional between an elderly Italian priest and a Gypsy woman from Romania nearly 50 years his junior resulted in more than \$460,000 in blackmail payments to

tionship started four years ago with shared personal revelations in the confessional before evolving into a sexual

The payments reportedly began with the aim of helping the family of the cash-strapped woman but were soon made in order to prevent her from re-

vealing evidence of the affair.

financial burden he suffered.

A person who answered the phone at the church where the affair started, the historic Santuario della Consolata in Turin, declined to comment. Law enforcement officials in Turin also refused to com-

The woman is believed to be a Gypsy, also known as Roma,

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Muslimah Word Pageant seeks to empower pious Muslim women

Opposition to the Miss World content creates a different pageant bases on different criteria - - including faith

the Miss World contest now being staged in Muslimmajority Indonesia, a rival World Muslimah beauty contest exclusively for Muslim women will announce its winner on Wednesday (Sept. 18) in the capital of Jakarta, though the U.S. candidate suddenly dropped out.

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"Muslimah World is a beauty pageant, but the requirements are very different from Miss World," the pageant's founder Eka Shanti told Agence France-Presse. "You have to be pious, be

a positive role model and show how you balance a life of spirituality in today's modernized world," she said. The better-known Miss

World contest opened on Indonesia's only Hindu-majority island, Bali, on Sept. 8, but faced angry protests by Islamists who said the pageant violates their religion and must be stopped. In response, the govern-

ment said Miss World's final round to announce the winner on Sept. 28 would move from its original location near Jakarta to Bali where there is much less chance of confrontation with Islamists.

World Muslimah's 20 finalists appear on the organization's website, which allows viewers to cast their ballots by clicking a "Vote me" box under each person's photo-"We don't just want to

our children they have choices. Do you want to be like the women in Miss World? Or like those in Muslimah World?"

said Shanti. "We'd rather show

The event's contestants were chosen for their religious abilities, including memorization of the Quran and also public speaking, beauty, style, and fashion modeling. Fourteen of the 20 finalists

are Indonesian, and others come from Brunei, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Iran and Nigeria. On Sept. 13, World Muslimah announced that the only U.S. finalist, Ainee Fatima from Chicago, had withdrawn from the competition.

"My father's health has not been well," Fatima wrote in a letter posted on the contest's

Fatima's reason was "correct" because she followed Islamic tradition, the contest

In addition, she said she wasn't feeling well and apparently was unable to bring a male relative, known as a "mahram," with her.

A mahram is a description for a male relative who must travel with a Muslim female to protect her chastity. The World Muslimah pag-

eant is a global charity event, part of World Muslimah Foundation programs to benefit hunger relief, war conflict and natural disaster, its web-

The final ceremony and announcement of a winner was broadcast live on Indonesia's

Hobby Lobby

by's favor, saying that corporations have free exercise rights, and that the contraceptive coverage mandate substantially burdened those rights without a compelling governmental in-

In a separate case earlier this month, a federal court in Colorado also granted a preliminary injunction to a for-profit corporation and an evangelical owner who have religious objections to contraceptives they believe cause abortions.

In the Colorado case, Briscoe v. Sebelius, the court had initially refused to grant a temporary restraining order in the case but issued a new decision after the Oklahoma court decided the Hobby Lobby case.

The government's petition to the Supreme Court came the same day as a petition in another case involving a challenge to the HHS mandate involving a family-owned woodworking

The Philadelphia-based 3rd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected the business's challenge in July, ruling that a business organized to earn a profit cannot exercise religion, so the business cannot claim religious

"The chances are strong that the Court will agree to rule on one or more of the challenges, since federal appeals courts are now split on the question," Su-

preme Court watcher Lyle Denniston wrote on Scotusblog.

If the Supreme Court grants a petition to hear the case, the case would be argued and decided before the end of the court's term in June 2014.

The Hobby Lobby Story

Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc began out of founder David Green's garage and has grown from one 300-squarefoot store to more than 500 stores in 41 states, becoming one of the nation's leadi arts and crafts retailers.

Believing their employees should have the opportunity to spend Sundays with their families, the company is closed on Sundays and only operates 66 hours per week. Indeed, the Greens strive to apply the Christian teachings on respect and fairness to their employees, increasing the pay of Hobby Lobby's full- and part-time hourly workers for four years in a row. Full-time hourly workers now start at 80-percent above the federal minimum wage.

The Hobby Lobby success story is a true example of the American dream. (Excerpted from www. becketfund,org/hobbylobby.)

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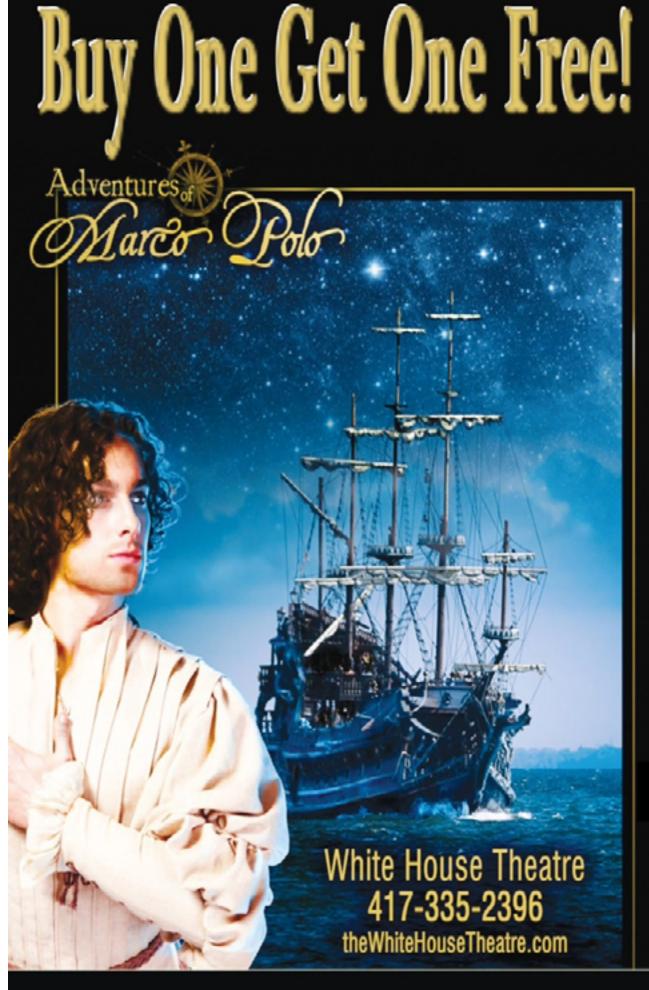
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Aishah Ajibola took home the crown at this year's contest, which took place in Jakarta, Indonesia on Sept. 18, 2013. The annual pageant, hosted in response to the Miss World contest in Bali, seeks to empower Muslim women. Photo Source: https://www.facebook.com/WorldMuslimahFoundation/photos_stream



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Religion and Life

'Secular safe zones' offer campus shelter to atheist students Some students, feeling threatened for lack of religious faith on campus, look for safe places to share views

(RNS) The small sticker on Professor Robert Schmidt's office door isn't just a decoration — it's a beacon of safety for students who feel they are being singled out for their lack of religious beliefs.

The blue, green, yellow and pink rectangle signals that Schmidt's office at Utah State University is a "Secular Safe Zone" — a place where students who are atheists, agnostics or just questioning their faith can go for advice about dealing with bullying, discrimination and other forms of aggression.

spaces in which secular students can question, criticize, and discuss topics and issues important to them' feels right to me," Schmidt said from his Logan office, quoting the goals of the Secular Safe Zone program. "All students should feel safe on

The Secular Safe Zone program kicked off this fall after two years of planning by the Secular Student Alliance, a national organization for nontheistic students The program enlists "allies" like Schmidt among faculty, administrators, counselor and others on college and high school campuses who are trained in the needs of nonreligious — or "secular" students

So far, there are Secular Safe Zone allies at 26 college and high school campuses in 14 states, including California, Nevada, Ohio, Utah, Illinois, Florida and New York. The program is pat-

terned on similar safe zones for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students now found on many college campuses.

gious students need a similar program was heightened by the high-profile case of Jessica

Ahlquist, a Rhode Island student who faced death threats and public ridicule after asking that a prayer banner be removed from her public high

"We heard too many stories of bullying and barassment from our students and looked around for something to do," said Jesse Galef, SSA's communications director. "This seemed like the logical next step, and it seemed like there is a lot we can learn from what the LGBT community has done."

The nonreligious and LGBT campus communities have Members of both may be closeted and want to "come out." Both may feel cut off from family and friends because of their identities. Both groups face stigma and discrimination within the broader culture.

Phil Zuckerman, a Pitzer College professor of sociology and secular studies, said pro-

secular

student

alliance

Andy Cheadle-Ford, Secular Safe Zone Co-

ordinator instructs seminar attendees on

the philosophy of Secular Safe Zones. Pho-

viding nonreligious students

with a safe place to express

themselves is vital, especially

on campuses where religion is

"Unfortunately, many Amer-

icans fallaciously think that

being secular is the same thing

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to: Compliments Secular Safe Zones.

can," he said. "So there is a lot of negative stereotyping that often emerges, and this can sometimes create an uncomfortable environment for secular stu-At Utah State, where Schmidt

teaches, many students are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

"They have many shared experiences and traditions," Schmidt said of the Mormon students. "I have heard from some students, certainly a minority, that they feel left out because they are not LDS, that conform, and they are left feelabout their own spiritual foun-

gious and nonreligious students are "my students" and he feels protective of both. As an ally, he said, "I don't preach, I don't denigrate others, and I don't

promote one worldview over another." That is a core directive of the

program, said Lori Fazzino, a graduate student instructor and secular ally at the University of religious doubters. Nevada, Las Vegas.

views, not just the

ones I or SSA would

agree with. We have

to be all inclusive to

be really and truly

This is not the first

time nonreligious

groups have piggybacked on

lessons learned in the gay com-

munity. In 2011, "We Are Athe-

ism," a video campaign aimed

at letting closeted atheists know

they are not alone was launched,

inspired in part by the "It Gets

Galef said SSA started the "We are not tryprogram after polling its meming to turn students bers across their 393 chapters off of religion," she said. "It is important to be neutral so they feel safe expressing all their

campuses nationwide about the in 2010 for closeted and bullied impact of bullying.

ular discussion is encouraged and a lack of religious faith is okay.

Nor is it the only refuge for No one has reported anyone using a Secular Safe Zone those who question their faith. Earlier this year, Recovering yet; the program is only a few from Religion, an international weeks old. But Sarah Henry, support group for former bea 17-year-old high school selievers, launched a 24-hour nior in Indiana, said her school hotline staffed by volunteers for would benefit from one. When she and other students formed a club for nonreligious students, they were bullied, threat-

Singer said.

titled

ished,

"It is incredibly hard for stu-

dents to feel safe and comfortable about coming out to their friends about their lack of religious beliefs in a place where that is unusual," she said, "The Secular Safe Zone allows them to have peers and authority who know what they're going through and can help them even if they just need someone

Religious leaders denounce child marriage in joint video in Nepal

In a June report

riage and Violations

of Girls' Rights," the

New York-based Hu-

man Rights Watch

recommended that

marriage be set at 18,

which it suggested is

the emerging consen-

sus of international

human rights conven-

Rights Watch said.

Child marriage "af-

land-locked

"Child Mar-

ened, shunned and their club's

SECULAR

The Secular Safe Zone Logo, alerting students to areas on school campuses where sec-

afezone

(RNS) Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim leaders are denouncing child marriage in a new audio-video broadcast for radio, TV and Internet in

Hindu-majority Nepal. The broadcast, launched this week in the Nepali language with English subtitles, was created by three United Nations

"Let's end child marriage," said Hindu priest Chintamani Yogi, standing amid Hindu pagoda shrines in the two-minute

In Nepal, 11 percent of girls under the age of 14 and 29 Nepal is among the percent of girls aged 15-19 are world's worst "top 20 Young Nepalese girls like this one are married. Seven percent of boys are married before they turn 18, according to Hanaa Singer, Nepal's representative for the United Nations Children's

During the production's launch on Sept. 15, the spiritual leaders attended a discussion at a hotel in Kathmandu, Nepal's capital. Norway's ambassador to Nepal, Alf Arne Ramslien, nization's report said.

was the main guest and introduced the production and discus-

"This goes against all the conventions of hu-

too often, their lack of educa-

marriage," Human Peter van der Sluijs, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

hot spots of child often taken in marriage. Photo by

fects girls more frequently and often coincides with other rights violations, including but not limited to domestic violence and impeded access to reproductive health care and education," the orga-

In Nepal, 11 percent of girls under the age of 14 and 29 percent of girls aged 15-19 are married.

man rights and international treaties, which directly or indirectly forbid the degrading and mistreatment of girls inherent

Girls who marry "struggle with the health effects of getting pregnant too young and

tion and economic independence, domestic violence, and marital rape."

They also suffer a high death rate during childbirth "due largely to girls' physical immaturity where the pelvis and birth canal are not fully developed," the organization said.

In the video, Buddhist Bhikkhu Dharma Murti, wearing a maroon robe, says couples should be "developed physically and mentally" and "become mature" before their wedding.

Inside a church, Pastor K.B. Rokaya said: "Child marriage is never mentioned in the Bible. All religions should work together to end child marriage."

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Second marriages have dropped as much as 40 percent for some age groups as couples choose to cohabitate rather than marry

(RNS) The invitations are in the mail. Jennifer Beltz and T.J. Gurski of Commerce Township, Mich., are defying the odds — they're taking the plunge a second time.

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"When I got divorced, I said, 'I'm never getting married again," says Beltz, 41, who works in marketing.

That sentiment seems to be quite common among those jaded by a failed first union: A new analysis of federal data provided exclusively to USA TODAY shows the USA's remarriage rate has dropped 40 percent over the past 20 years.

"Pretty much everyone, regardless of age, is less likely to get remarried than in the past," said sociologist Susan Brown, lead author of the analysis, by the National Center for Family & Marriage Research at Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. The analysis of data compar-

ing 2011 with 1990 shows that in 2011, just 29 of every 1,000 divorced or widowed Americans remarried, down from 50 per 1,000 in 1990; 2011 was the most recent year available for the review.

The remarriage rate has dipped for all ages, with the greatest drops among those younger than 35: a 54 percent decline among ages 20-24, and 40 percent for ages 25-34. Much of the drop is due to the rise of cohabitation and older ages for first marriage - almost age 27 for women and almost 29 for men. "Cohabitation has opened

up options for people that weren't there 20 years ago," Brown said. "It affords the benefits of marriage without the

Continued from front page

Research Center's associate

director. "The coverage was

from the U.S. perspective, (and)

appeared tailored to the U.S.

As it analyzed the coverage,

PEI examined stories from a

was the frame or focus (for

example, should the U.S. get

involved militarily)? What

dateline? What was the format

— edit packages vs. interviews?

There were some small

differences between Al-Jazeera

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Was it reporting or opinion?

"Marriage wasn't even in the



Many divorced couples are choosing to blend their families outside of the confines of a traditional marriage. Studies show that remarriage has dropped significantly in the past few years. One survey of 50,000 couples taking a class on remarriage, indicated that two-thirds were over 41 and half said they were currently living together. Stock

tion was often called "living in sin," but that social taboo has faded. Unmarried couples of all ages are moving in together — 7.8 million, according to 2012 Census data. And 37 percent of cohabiters have been married before. Between 1990 and 2012, the percentage of unmarried couples living together more than doubled. from 5.1 percent to 11.3 per-

Even so, it's not as if everyone previously married is forgoing the institution; almost one-third of all marriages in 2010 were remarriages, according to an earlier analysis by the Bowling Green center. Many divorced people are

of its U.S. competitors. For

example, while they represented

a small amount of its overall

reporting, the upstart channel

framed more of its stories

around the humanitarian crisis

stemming from the Syrian civil

war. And it aired more stories

from Middle Eastern countries.

not including Syria itself, than

was the message? Who were of the situation, Al-Jazeera empire of more than 60

coverage of the crisis on Al-

Jazeera America was devoted

to the question of whether the

hesitant to risk tying another

But on important aspects has access to the Al-Jazeera

discussion," said David Smith, cione, whose two sons are 18 58, who works in Internet marand 21. "We decided to live keting and Web design. He and together and the boys live with partner Sue Stebbins, a busius and we were content to stay ness consultant, have lived together in Norwalk, Conn., for But earlier this year, they five years. Both are divorced; started "talking about it back

and forth" and decided to take

the leap. Her sons will escort

her down the aisle at the coun-

ty courthouse; they'll have a

the odds of a successful remar-

riage, but long-term data is rel-

atively non-existent because of

federal cutbacks that stopped

data collection. "There is no

good, recent data on divorce

among remarried couples that

I know of," said marriage re-

searcher Andrew Cherlin of

Johns Hopkins University in

Al-Jazeera America is the

successor to Current TV, the

little-watched, liberal-leaning

cable network that Oatar

purchased from Al Gore

in January for about \$500

million. It's available in about

its profile and see if it can

politicians.

Some couples worry about

party to celebrate Nov. 16.

"We really wanted to be liberated from anything that reminded us of our past," she said. "Rather than something outside of you giving you that commitment, it's a choice daily to form that commitment."

he has three grown kids.

The decision to remarry isn't an easy one, but after 11 years of living together, Kathye Guccione, 50, of Ontario, Calif., and her fiance Larry Lindsley, 46, are getting married on Nov.

"We actually didn't want to

same was true on CNN, Fox

opposition among the public

to military action, the message

most frequently conveyed in

coverage of Syria on Al-Jazeera

America, Fox, CNN and BBC

* While Al-Jazeera America

international correspondents,

76 percent of its coverage

emanated from Washington,

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should let the missiles fly.

Despite widespread

divorced once are less likely to stay in an unsatisfying marriage a second time.

suggest those who have been

"It's not that the couples are less happy with each other and it's not that they're fighting more than first-married couples," said psychologist Sarah Whitton of the University of Cincinnati. "It seems that if a relationship starts deteriorating, they're quicker to move towards divorce?

Her study of 1,931 married individuals was published this spring in the Journal of Marriage and Family.

Remarriage is "difficult and different" from first marriage, said relationship expert Maggie Scarf, a Yale University fellow who outlines the hazards in her new book, "The Remarriage Blueprint." Scarf conducted lengthy, face-to-face interviews with 80 remarried individuals to see how their marriages fared.

"In the first marriage, the couple has time alone to set up their own culture - the way they do things," Scarf said. "But in the second marriage, you have a single parent who has been living alone with his

or her children and they are deeply, deeply bonded and have a culture of their own. The stepparent walks into that and doesn't know the first thing about it."

Krissy and David Coleman of Lebanon, Va., ages 37 and 38, were well aware of the relationship troubles that can happen because of the kids. That's why before they married recently - both for the second time - the five kids they have between them, ages 7 to 18, were an integral part of the

"We dated the kids, too," she said. "When we went out, our children went with us. It was body was going to be in my life, they have to accept my children."

Experts say the two biggest factors complicating remarriage are money and children - even if the kids

"It's much, much harder than a first marriage," said David Olson of Minneapolis, a professor emeritus of family social science at the University of Minnesota. "You see this cobweb of relationships. Just one little decision impacts that whole system. It's not only more people, but it's more decisions, and they're more difficult. People are bringing a lot of bad history with

Olson is co-author of the 2011 book "The Re marriage Checkup," which surveyed 50,000 couples taking a class to prepare for remarriage. Two-thirds were age 41 and older, and half said they were living

"Cohabiting isn't going to make it easier," Olsor savs. "In many ways, i makes it more complicated. It doesn't signal to the kids 'this is permanent.'" Sending that signal is one

reason Amber Fortune, 25, of Logan, Utah, says she and fiance Dixon Buttars are getting married this fall. Buttars, 28, was married for a year and had no children. Fortune separated af-

ter five years and divorced her daughter from that marriage just turned 4. "I want her to know that no matter what, we're promising to stick it out, she said. "When you prom-

(Sharon Jayson writes for

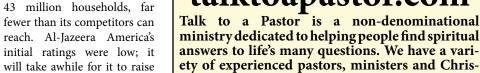
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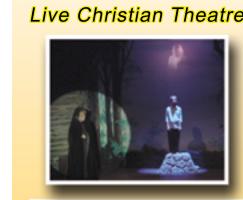
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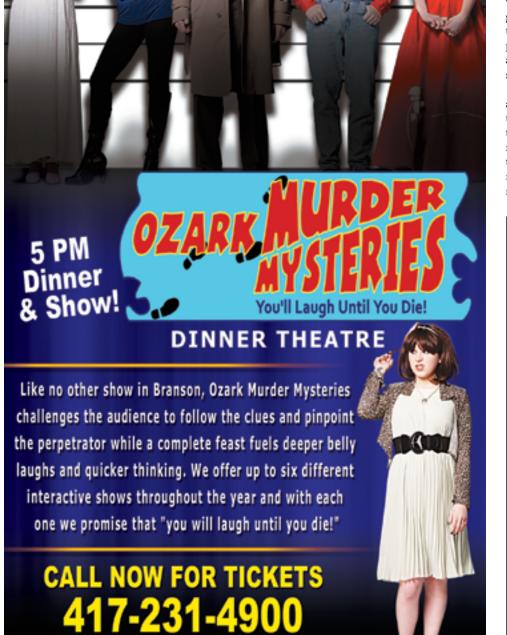


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Religion in Society

Congolese nun teaches refugees: wins award

(RNS) Angélique Namaika, a bicycle on the rutted roads of the Democratic Republic of Congo's northeastern province of Orientale, which is plagued by rebel violence.

On these same roads, the Lord's Resistance Army, a Christian rebel group led by Joseph Kony, a self-proclaimed prophet of God, has been killing, abducting and mutilating women and children.

But none of that has deterred Sister Namaika from helping displaced women learn trades, start small businesses and go to school.

For her fearlessness and dedication, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees last week awarded her the 2013 Nansen Refugee Award. attacks.

The award, established in 1954, recognizes extraordinary humanitarian work on behalf of refugees, internally displaced or stateless people. It comes with a commemorative medal and \$100,000, which she will receive Sept. 30 in Geneva She meets with Pope Francis in Rome two

days later. Through her organization, the Centre for Reintegration and Development, Namaika has changed the lives of more than 2,000 women and girls forced from their homes and abused by the LRA. Many of those she helps recount stories of abduction, forced labor, beatings, murder, rape and

Namaika teaches them cooking, baking and sewing.

"Only 48 Scenic Miles

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other human rights abuses.

on a communally-owned field. "When they work together on the fields, they are able to

She also instructs women and children in the less tangible but equally as important skills of negotiation and mar-

"I teach them how to communicate in the local language so that they can be able to sell their products in the markets," she said. "If their cooking is good, they can find jobs in local restaurants. If they can bake every day they can have a consistent income."

Namaika was herself displaced by the violence in 2009. She had been living in Dungu in the province of Orientale but was forced to flee to the camps by the LRA's persistent

The LRA got its start in northern Uganda, but it has been pushed out and now straddles a remote and dense ly forested border region of Congo, the Central African Republic and South Sudan.

Some of its captives escaped to find refuge in the villages or in towns like Dungu. Many of the traumatized survivors, who need support and skills to start a new life, have turned to the 46-year-old nun who came to the region in 2003 from the capital, Kinshasa.

The announcement of the 2013 Nansen prize coincided with the release of a report about life for those displaced by LRA violence. According to the report,

since 2008, more than 320,000 people have been forced to flee the province of Orientale

 in some cases several times. The report says LRA violence has created severe and longstay together," she said. lasting trauma for both the abductees and those who fled, many who are still too afraid

to return home.

Namaika said she is looking forward to meeting Pope

"I will ask him to help bring peace in my country," she said. "I want him to talk to leaders here so that they commit to peace. I am going to ask him to pray for Kony, so that he confesses his sins, gives up the violence and goes back to his community.

With the prize money, Namaika hopes to develop a semi-industrial bakery for the women, which will supply its goods in Dungu and the surrounding areas. She also hopes to acquire more land so each woman can farm her



This year's Nansen Award winner Sister Angélique Namaika (standing, in black) assists women with the clothes they are making at the Maison de La Femme in the town of Dungu, Orientale Province, Democratic Republic of Congo on 1 August, 2013. Sewing is one of several income-generating skills that Sister Angélique teaches to women in order to help them to become more financially self-sufficient. Photo by Brian Sokol,

Five Things we learned about the Pope

who would tilt the church toward the progressive side of the spectrum. The cardinals, and many other bishops, were mainly concerned with getting a pope who would get the Roman Curia off their backs and maybe even listen to their concerns once in a while

Both prayers may have been answered, but the most significant development may be Francis' vow to have a "real, not ceremonial consultation" in which he hears all points of view and where everyone can

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"Pope Francis is comfortable with gray"

Religion, and especially Catholicism, is widely associated with certitude and doctrinal pronouncements that draw rigid lines designed to show who's in and who's out who's right

Francis wants to consult with the bishops, but it doesn't stop there: He wants the bishops to consult with their people. to "support the movements of God among their people with patience." The point is that the nstitutional church needs to

He expressed that most provocatively in highlighting that all Catholics — rather than the pope alone — "are infallible in matters of belief."

account for the beliefs of the

"people of God."

sultation comes from reflecting on his past mistakes, when he vaulted to a senior leadership position in the Jesuits at the age of 36 and alienated many with his "authoritarian way of making decisions." The church, too, has been guilty of that fault, he says, and he wants to change

This pope has a different

"Pope Francis is comfortable with gray," writes the Rev. James Martin, a Jesuit at America magazine, which published the papal exclusive. Francis says those frightened "disciplinarians" who desire "an exaggerated doctrinal security" are missing the Christian message.

Indeed, Francis says: "If a person says that he met God with total certainty and is not touched by a margin of uncertainty, then this is not good. .. If one has the answers to all the questions — that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet

using religion for himself." The point is to have a church that is a big, messy, welcoming family, "not a small chapel that can hold only a small group of selected people. We must not reduce the bosom of the universal church to a nest protect-

ing our mediocrity." All of these points add up to the biggest takeaway, namely ... Change is good

and precepts that were once effective, but now they have lost value or meaning. The view of the church's teaching as a monolith to defend without nuance or different understandings is wrong," Francis says.

Instead, he continues, the church "must better understand how human beings understand themselves today, in order to develop and deepen the Church's teaching" and to "grow in the understanding of the truth" and "mature in her own judgment."

In his comments, the pope seems to echo the 19th-century English convert, Cardinal John Henry Newman, who has been both celebrated and condemned for his writings on how doctrine evolves over time. It was Newman who famously said: "To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed

It is unclear how long any changes might take under Francis, or exactly what form they will take. But after this week's developments, it seems inevitable that change is coming, and Francis won't be deterred by

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From burlap sack to digital makeover; historic records saved Rev. Samuel Phillips chronicled life in 1600s America in his diary that was recently rediscovered

BOSTON (RNS) Six years ago, the people of First Congre-Massachusetts were convinced they'd lost their treasure. A 17th-century minister's 664page diary, and its rare detailed account of community life in early America, had been missing for nearly two decades.

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Then the phone rang. A local bank was cleaning out its vaults when a staffer opened a burlap sack marked "dimes" and found an old leather-bound book with strange handwriting inside.

Sure enough, it was the long-lost diary of the late Rev. Samuel Phillips, whose keen observations of conflicts and concerns in the 1600s have now been digitized to ensure they're

Rowley's brush with disaster points to an all-too-common problem, historians say. Irreplaceable documents from colonial Massachusetts, where churches kept better records than in other colonies, aren't protected online or in climatecontrolled stacks.

Original copies are routinely squirreled away in Congrega tional church storage rooms or attics of parishioners' homes, where fire, flood or other mishaps could steal history forever

"These are national treasures that speak to the founding generations of America," said James "Jeff" Cooper, an Oklahoma State University historian and director of the 2-year-old New England's Hidden Histories project. "The people of Massachusetts themselves don't understand how important and how rare these records are."

Preservationists are working to digitize and otherwise

ROME (RNS) Wading into

ongoing debates over religion

and politics, Pope Francis

on Sunday (Sept. 15) gently

chided Christians to pray for

politicians, saying "a Christian

who does not pray for his

leaders is not a good Christian."

two-hour closed-door meeting

of Roman clergy did not touch

on more controversial issues like the separation between

church and state, abortion,

or refusing Communion to

Catholic politicians who are not

Instead, Francis quoted St.

Paul, who urged prayer "for

positions, that we may lead a

in sync with church teachings.

The pope's remarks during a

from 200 to 300 Massachusetts churches before turning to oth-The effort, in partnership with Yale University's Jonathan Edwards Center and benefactors who have provided small grants, has already brought rich

troves to light.

For example, First Congregational Church of Middleboro has produced more than 300 "relations," or prospective church members' personal narratives of saving grace. It's the largest known collection of New England Puritan relations, according to Cooper.

rest with Massachusetts Con-

gregationalists, whose churches

were the center of community

life in colonial days. But the

work is progressing slowly, at

a rate of about one church per

month, as the cash-strapped

project tries to win trust from

wary church members who've

guarded the collections for gen-

erations. (The Colonial Society

of Massachusetts has provided

a \$14,000 grant for transcribing

the Phillips diary.)

The cache is precious in part because churches generally kept ministers' notes on testimonies, but seldom saved individuals accounts in their own words. Together with Middleboro's set

Pope Francis: A 'good Christian'

Francis said Christians

should not refrain from

praying for leaders they do not

agree with: "Pray for him, pray

for her, that they can govern

well," the pontiff said, adding:

"A Christian who does not pray

for his leaders is not a good

The pope's remarks were

notable for the divisive issues

XVI, tended to take a more

political priorities and hot-

The pope's relative silence

on cultural issues has upset some conservatives in the

U.S. church, including Bishop

prays for bad politicians

Christian."

of penned confessions of sin. the relations offer a rare window into American Puritanism

heir own government."

"They're just suspicious Yankees," said Margaret Bendroth, executive director of Boston's Congregational Library, which oversees the project. "You could not just knock on the door of the church and say, 'I'd love to Launched in 2011, New England's Hidden Histories project

has created electronic copies from 22 churches, most of which have also given originals to Boston's Congregational Library for safekeeping. The goal is to digitize the best records

in Oklahoma most of the year.

He's proposed a three-year, \$1 million budget to establish local staffing and accelerate the project, which could require millions more to complete. Finding funding for this work can be challenging, he notes, because some foundations are reluctant to sponsor churchrelated research, even when the goal is a nonreligious one.

Despite hurdles, the proj ect is making progress as local church gatekeepers are per suaded to loosen their grips. When Cooper visited Old

"We have this picture of the Puritans where we know what the ministers thought, because we have their sermons," Bendroth said. "These records are unique because they tell about ordinary people having disputes ... and having a voice in

Beyond the ins and outs of church life, the records hold keys to understanding how the first experiment with government by consent of the governed played out. Readers hear ordinary people claiming particular rights for the first time and laying foundations for the country's democratic experi-

The centuries-old originals are sent away to a specialist shop in Rhode Island, where the digitization process can

Reassuring churchgoers to part with records, temporarily or permanently, requires personal relationships and faceto-face meetings, Cooper said. Those can be difficult since he's

Thomas Tobin of Providence,

R.I., who said he has been "a

little bit disappointed in Pope

Francis" for not speaking out

The remarks come at an

important time for Italy, which

is in the midst of a political

crisis between those who

support three-time Prime

for tax fraud.

Indians belonging to Notick Since the year 5725.

Unno 1722 March. 30 Christian Burnfretowin Gold Thomas Bill Samuel Oumfretownin's Wife 31 John Jeens Chill Go Rochel Reegun. Sam Oumfretownin- 33 Goducks Child 70 Bellind Thomas M. Change Wife 32 Thomas Child 738 Moler Speen's Wife 34 Han: Wehmer hill John Georges (hil) 72 9: Cookucke Wife 36 In Thomas aged 110 74 Hir Speens Chile Isaar Speen's daughter Elia Robbins 75 Elia Speen 76 Ja Goodmaki (hill 7 Man: Topomfo poleph Sphraims daughter 35 one more Bake Steen 39 fran 99 abigail 40 fol: Thomas 10 Kannah Will 78 allie freen 45 Ruth Abraham 79 Base Monguagin ss (a/s: Waban 42 Jam: Abra: Chil 80 for freen Wife 1725) 44 two hileren 50 fa freens Wife of Joseph Howarn 4, Wife w Comache 45 Nat Cochucks & Wife 52 Hour; Ishraim 50/5 Rumnemarthes 7735. 735 172.15 Thomas's (Rid 14 two Children 19 (Boenham 51 The Begun Just Wife 12. Nat Cochucks Chied Stope Themos Dans 16 Ther daughter July 3 fumpetowins as for Jungs of July 1729 (Brooke Bills 87 film Topomfe 57 fame, Broke While 89 Samfor Sectione 58 for Brook another this 91 Two thillower beknes 19 Benj: Tray this S. Jam Abrahlmi spun Pul

A Gelors of those that have died of the

A 17th-century minister's 664-page diary, and its rare detailed account of community life in early America. This page records Natick (with names of Native American members). Photo courtesy Congregational Library

Scholars hope the most

detailed of Congregational

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in 2012, a team of five from the church met him, spread their documents on a table and invited him to look, but not take.

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"It was an awesome sight," said Cooper. "But they made clear that those records would never leave the church (permanently). Possibly they would gregations to participate. let them out for digitization. That's how difficult and how

After hearing Cooper explain for an hour what Old North's records mean for American history, church leaders agreed to have them digitized and stored at the Congregational Library in Boston.

Church records from every New England state will eventually be digitized, transcribed and made searchable online. Some local churchgoers are trying to rally peers in area con-

"What we're afraid of is (records) are either going to disappear or get ruined," said David Irving, a First Congregational Church of Rowley member who's been urging other churches to safeguard and digitize their records.

A cache of records found at Natick, where Congregation-

WHERE WILL YOU /LEED TONICHT?

WILL YOU CO TO BED HUNCBY?

alists established an Indian church, might show how Christianity spread to Native Americans on the early frontier. The diary of Phillips, whose 45-year tenure in Rowley spanned the Salem Witch Trials era, could shed unique light on how witch hysteria swept the region in anxious times.

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"This is going to be a major boon for early New England studies," said Cooper, "because we're going to be throwing tens of thousands of pages of fresh primary sources - and the best primary sources - out into the digital world for scholars to





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Pakistan's blasphemy laws to require death sentence for false accusers Pakistan is an overwhelm-

(RNS) Pakistan's constitutionally mandated Council of Islamic Ideology told the government anyone who wrongly accuses a person of blasphemy - a measure intended to protect innocent people who are often killed by mobs.

The CII demanded the measure after endorsing Pakistan's blasphemy laws, which allow a death sentence for people found guilty of desecrating the Quran, the Prophet Muhammad, mosques or Islamic be-

Charges of blasphemy are sometimes leveled to settle scores or acquire property, a Pakistan Today editorial said

"Once a person is arrested it takes years, sometimes eight to 10 years, to prove his or her innocence in courts. Even if honorably acquitted, the innocent victim is not safe" and sometimes "killed inside the jail or after they were released," the editorial said.

on Friday (Sept. 20).

The CII's demand to amend the laws is being presented as a way to stop people from accusing others of blasphemy without evidence.

Former Punjab Governor

Salman Taseer and former Minorities Minister Shahbaz Bhatti were assassinated in 2011 for demanding the blasphemy laws be reformed to remove the option of execution and retain only the existing punishments of imprisonment

The CII announced the demand on Sept. 18 in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, after the council decided that falsely accusing someone of blasphemy "is totally un-Islamic in nature and is also tantamount to blasphemy," the Pakistan Tribune reported.

CII member Allama Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said the amendment would ensure "nobody dares to use religion to settle personal scores," and "will also silence critics of the blasphemy laws," Pakistan's Nation newspaper reported.

"I dedicate this effort to all those, including Salman Taseer and Shahbaz Bhatti, who have fought for righteousness," Ashrafi said after the CII announced its decision, according to the Union of Catholic Asian

The CII is a constitutional body that advises the legislature on whether a certain law is repugnant to Islam. It is also tasked with ensur-

ing compliance of state laws with principles of Islam.

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Bhatti said.

Corporation.

More than 30 people ac-

cused of blasphemy have been

killed by mobs during the past

few decades, though no one

has been executed after being

found guilty in court, according to the British Broadcasting

102 S. Bus. Hwy 65 Branson, MO 65616 HISTORIC DOWNTOWN BRANSON

Judy Dees (417) 336-5735 Page 12 The Real News - Review Volume 1, Issue 8 October 2013

The wonderful world of exotic cage birds Hobbyists young and old enjoy keeping, raising and showing exotic birds

BY PAUL COLLINS JR.

Little known is the fact that many, many people are involved in the hobby of keeping and enjoying exotic birds from faraway coun-

Most people are aware of the occasional parrots they see on television commercials or in a pet shop. The hobbies about birds goes much deeper than that, and the world of keeping birds gets very colorful. Bird enthusiasts range from young to old and cover many walks of life.

The bird culture includes a unique group of people who communicate in many different ways to stay up to date on events, ideas, and other news about their hobby. The Internet has proven to be a great way for locating the right bird or birds to add to one's collection. They also use it to communicate about specific problems with breeding or diet.

The knowledge and skill needed to keep these exotic birds can range from simple to extremely difficult. The hobby can be quite challenging.

The common American Parakeet is a good starter bird and relatively easy to

On the other hand, some exotics require very special diets, special housing, and special (specific) room temperatures. Many fanciers (bird keepers) have only one cage in their home, but the birds bring them great joy with their songs. Others have complete "bird rooms" set up with the lighting on timers, and temperature and humidity controls. They go to great lengths to provide the birds with the proper diet for each season of the year. Most of these folks are breeders or serious collectors and the sky is the limit on how much they invest in their birds and their sup-

Everyone is familiar with seeing birds for sale in pet shops, and most people probably started their hobby by purchasing a bird from one of these retail establishments.

The serious fanciers and collectors attend bird fairs. These events are held all over the country throughout the year. The bird fairs can be small -- with only a few dozen exhibitors, or can be very large with over a hundred vendors. A variety of these exhibitors and vendors will set up booths at the fairs and offer cages, feed, seed, medications for the birds, and, of course, the breeders will be offering their stock to be viewed or purchased.

The tables (booth spaces) are rented. Some of the displays are very elaborate. Of course, everyone has business cards to be passed out and circulated.

The one-time small inter-



Paul Collins Jr. on right and Joe Bedwell on the left at the Tulsa, Oklahoma Bird Fair. Joe Bedwell is a well known Gouldian finch breeder from Tulsa and a retired high school science teacher. Joe's other hobby is raising orchids and he is also well known for that. Joe is responsible for breeding a very special orchid and it bears his name. He has supplied orchids to lots of famous people over the years including the actor Raymond Burr. Raymond flew into Tulsa and came to Joe's home in a limo just to purchase one very special orchid to take back to his private island. The bird fair in Tulsa is a very large event and brings people in from all across the country.

est in exotic birds has now become a very large, time consuming hobby for the serious fancier. The breeders continually focus on better and better birds with brighter and sharper colors than the year before.

As time goes on, the breeders get to know one another because of attending fairs together. Phone numbers are exchanged, and soon the customers are referred in the right direction to find that one very special bird they want or need.

The serious fancier or breeder cannot be faint at heart when it comes to work! There is plenty of work that must be done on a regular daily basis!

The bird rooms must be cared for at least twice each day. If you are a vendor at fairs, your trailer must be packed up, re-stocked, and prepared. You may be faced with driving hundreds of miles to set up for the next fair the very next weekend.

The Bird Fairs generally have a small admission

charge of \$5.00 or less, and they offer a wonderful experience for individuals or families. At a fair featuring the wonderful world of exotic cage birds you will meet some exceptionally interesting people. And, who knows, you may be a candidate to become engaged in this life-transforming and emotionally gratifying

(Paul Collins, Jr. is the son of Dr. Paul Collins, and an avid bird enthusiast. His interests range from exotic cage birds to Racing Pigeons.)

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AUSTIN, Texas (RNS) Evangelical businessman Steve Green on Thursday (Oct. 26) unveiled what he called "the

oldest Jewish prayer book ever found" and will add it to the collection of religious artifacts that will form the core of the Bible museum he is building in Washington, D.C.

The artifact, dating from 840 A.D., is written in Hebrew on parchment and shows Babylonian vowel marks. Green said it was purchased less than a year ago from a private collection and is of Middle Eastern origin. But he declined to name the seller or how much he paid for it.

About the size of a large smartphone, and 50 pages long, the seller likely knew the book was special but did not realize its significance, said Jerry Pattengale, executive director of the Green Scholars Initiative, the research arm of The Green Collection.

The prayer book — a rare complete codex in its original tan-colored binding — includes a listing of the 100 Benedictions, or blessings that some observant Jews say daily.

It may well be the "earliest

Thursday, October 31st - 9 am

(Conference will conclude around Noon)



Likely the oldest Jewish prayer book ever found, dated by both scholars and Carbon-14 tests to circa 840 C.E. Photo courtesy Green Scholars Initiative

connection today's practicing Jews have to the roots of their modern-day rabbinic liturgy," Green said.

Green, whose billionaire family owns the Oklahomabased Hobby Lobby chain of more then 550 craft stores made the announcement at the annual meeting of the Religion Newswriters Association.

Green has made headlines recently for his lawsuit against a federal mandate that would require most employers to provide free birth control and the so-called morning-after pill in their health insurance plans. The case appears headed to the Supreme Court.

In 2009, he founded The Green Collection, which now includes more than 40,000 ancient artifacts. They will be housed in a Bible museum planned for a site just south of the U.S. Capitol, slated to open in 2017.

Green reiterated his belief that the Bible is a foundation of the nation's success — 94 percent of U.S. households have at least one Bible, he said, despite a tremendous "brain drain" of biblical knowledge.

"Our desire is to have a nonsectarian museum that tells this book's story and let you decide what you do with it," he said of his yet-to-be-named museum.

more information call (417) 443-1592.



