"Some of us need to discover that we will not begin to live more fully until we have the courage to do and see and taste and experience much less than usual... There are times, then, when in order to keep ourselves in existence at all we simply have to sit back for a while and do nothing. And for a man who has let himself be drawn completely out of himself by his activity, nothing is more difficult than to sit still and rest, doing nothing at all. The very act of resting is the hardest and most courageous act he can perform."
~ Thomas Merton

Last week I attended a wedding in a beautiful outdoor setting. The Pastor who performed the ceremony did an excellent job. I did notice that instead of a leather bound Bible, he held an iPad in his hand, although an "iPad boy" did not carry it down the center isle and hand it to him!

It reminded me of a recent clergy conference I attended. I looked down my row of seats at one of the general sessions and there were countless "blue faces" in the darkened room, basking in the glow of our high tech age.

When I was at seminary in 1982 I wrote a paper on "The Positive Use of Television". The premise of the paper was the power of the screen and the need to train ourselves and our children how to best use it. I didn't realize how much of a prophet I was. Almost 30 years later screens are a dominate part of our culture. Ever wonder how much texting and email-checking is going on during your sermon? We look down at our "smart phones" and up at the countdowns, video clips and projected song words in church. Our sermons are visually enhanced by PowerPoint. I am waiting for the day we hand out 3-D glasses.

When does the medium cross the line from enhancing to surpassing the message? When does the use of technology create unrealistic expectations?

Anyone who uses computers, projectors, screens, enhanced audio and theatrical lighting know that it's a myth that technology makes things easier. The fact is the more you use these current communication tools the higher you raise the level of audience expectation.
I must confess to what I call "tech temptation." I love browsing sermonspice.com or faithvisuals.com for the latest countdown or funny video clip. There is nothing more satisfying than a graphically enhanced well designed power point slide, or the amazing movement of the ocean waves on a lyric background slide.

The screen has great power. A video clip I used last week positioned scripture using the world "amazing" against scenes of Christ with an updated version of Amazing Grace. People were visibly moved and commented on how much they were impacted by a six minute visual.

The challenge for all of us who love and use these wonderful tools, is knowing when our worshipers are so overpowered by TECHnique that they miss the teaching.

What do you think? When has the medium surpassed the message? Post comments at our Facebook page.

Reading for Pastors

Seven ways pastors fail when using social media. Quote: "We don't spend a lot of time debating the use of pens. ... Now, what if someone came up to you and said: "Please don't send me any notes or expect me to give you any written information. I'm just not into reading and writing." ... Ridiculous, right? Yet, that's exactly the mindset many Christian leaders have regarding social media websites like Facebook and Twitter." (Thanks, Bob Mason).

According to the WSJ, charitable giving rose last year, though still not to pre-recession levels.

Should politics be religion-neutral? Possibly, but in the US a candidate's faith still counts - a lot.

Fascinating speech by Trevor Phillips, head of Britain's Equality and Human Rights Commission - claiming that Christians have become more militant than Muslims in that country. Quote: "The most likely victim of actual religious discrimination in British society is a Muslim but the person who is most likely to feel slighted because of their religion is an evangelical Christian."

If you had a prominent politician in your congregation, would you still say what you believe? Tim Pawlenty's pastor, Leith Anderson, apparently does.


An atheist's challenge to the Pledge of Allegiance has expired in the Supreme Court. For now, "one nation, under God" stands. For church-state separation proponents, is this a good or bad thing?

France isn't thought of as a particularly pious country - but so many there are embracing the 2012 Mayan apocalypse that a government ministry has warned of the possibility of religious suicides.

To the Point

In honor of Winston Churchill's "Finest Hour" speech in June of 1940, a collection of Churchill quotes:

Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.

A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject.

To build may have to be the slow and laborious task of years. To destroy can be the thoughtless act of a single day.

A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.

True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information.

A man does what he must - in spite of personal consequences, in spite of obstacles and dangers and pressures - and that is the basis of all human morality.

History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.

A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.

I always avoid prophesying beforehand, because it is a much better policy to prophesy after the event has already taken place.

All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.

Although prepared for martyrdom, I preferred that it be postponed.

An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last.

Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfills the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to
an unhealthy state of things.

Eating words has never given me indigestion.

Ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put.

However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.

Too often the strong, silent man is silent only because he does not know what to say, and is reputed strong only because he has remained silent.

**News, Ideas & Reminders**

- **For you Catalyst fans:** Best rates on Catalyst tickets end on Thursday, June 23rd, so register now. Call 888.334.6569 to speak to a Catalyst Concierge, or register online at [www.catalystconference.com](http://www.catalystconference.com). Use Rate Code FOB and receive a ticket price of $199 (savings of $120 off regular prices). Catalyst will sell out, so make sure and register early!

- **Always like to let you know about especially good pastoral communication.** Tony Romeo of Reach NYC has a good short e-letter about urban ministries, always good thoughts and ideas. [Get on it by writing Tony here](mailto:Tony@reachnyc.org).

- **Child evangelism:** Don't forget Real magazine - which now is being used to connect with children of prisoners.

- **Humor:** Who has bewitched you?

- **Previous resource links:**
  - Andrews Study Bible
  - The Hope of Survivors, ministry to victims of pastoral sexual abuse
  - iFollow website
  - Dissertation on house churches from Milton Adams
  - NAD NewsPoints (formerly Friday Fax): by email, or [on a web page](http://www.nad.adventist.org/newspoints).
  - Clouzet - Standish presentation on creation and evolution
  - Back issues of REACH North America News
  - Federal Regulation Forces Crib Replacements in Church Nurseries
  - Special creation-evolution edition of REACH North America News
  - Investigating Faith newsletter - Lee Strobel
  - Babylon Rising from IIW
  - Vibrant Life magazine "Forks Over Knives" edition
  - Clergy sexual abuse awareness day
  - Tony Morgan’s free e-book on big churches getting bigger
  - Adventist Parenting e-newsletter

Got a tool, resource, site, article, idea or seminar that you like a lot? Share it with us at [BestPractices@ameritech.net](mailto:BestPractices@ameritech.net).

**Upcoming NAD Events**

Do you have an event you’d like to invite NAD pastors to? Send details to [BestPractices@Ameritech.net](mailto:BestPractices@ameritech.net).

**PSI International Conference on Philanthropy**. Jun 21, 2011 - Jun 24, 2011, JW Marriott Indianapolis, 10 S West Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204. Planned by and designed for the chief executives and fundraising professionals of Adventist organizations, the conference’s goal is to foster vision. Recognized internationally, Principles & Techniques gives you the foundation and inspiration to lead your nonprofit to its financial goals. It provides you with the framework for operating a successful total development program. Phone: 301-680-6133 or 6134. For more information, email: Chris.Bearce@nad.adventist.org.

**NAD Festival of the Laity, September 7-10, Dallas**

**7th Annual National Conference on Innovation:** where provocative thinkers collide and engage in meaningful, unexpected conversations. October 2-4, 2011, Crowne Plaza - 33 East Fifth Street, Dayton, OH 45402. Presenters Include anna Lappe, Gabe Lyons, Ron Stout, Diana Fleming, Sid Lloyd. [Online registration here](http://www.nad.adventist.org/conferences/innovation/).

**Best Practices** is a Vervent publication of **NAD CHURCH RESOURCE CENTER**. Editor: Loren Seibold, Ohio Conference. E-mail: [BestPractices](mailto:BestPractices@ameritech.net). You are free to republish pieces from Best Practices in your own newsletter or blog, with attribution to the Best Practices newsletter and the author of the piece.
7 WAYS PASTORS FAIL AT SOCIAL MEDIA

PAUL STEINBRUECK | 14 JUNE 2011

Want to know where the people we lead are during the week? Online—Facebook and Twitter, specifically.

These two social media platforms are larger than anyone could have imagined only a few years ago. Consider these facts about Facebook:

- Facebook currently boasts more than 600 million users.
- More than half of all American adults use the site regularly.
- The average Facebook user spends 20 hours a month on the site.
- While Twitter’s numbers are lower, its influence is still massive:
  - Twitter has more than 200 million users.
  - In an average week, 1 billion tweets are posted.
  - Twitter has been cited as inciting protests and revolutions in Egypt, Iran and other places around the world.

It’s clear these platforms are some of the world’s biggest. So why are Christian leaders sometimes so bad at using these powerful tools?

Digital Literacy

We don’t spend a lot of time debating the use of pens. We don’t get concerned when someone starts taking notes during a worship service or a staff meeting. Pencils and paper are scattered everywhere, and we don’t give a second thought to writing things down any time of the day or night—in fact, it’s usually encouraged!

Now, what if someone came up to you and said: “Please don’t send me any notes or expect me to give you any written information. I’m just not into reading and writing.” Or: “Reading and writing? I don’t have time for that!” Or: “I don’t get the whole writing thing. Those little things—letters, yeah, I don’t understand what they mean.”

Ridiculous, right? Yet, that’s exactly the mindset many Christian leaders have regarding social media websites like Facebook and Twitter.

In an always online world, digital literacy matters as much as traditional literacy. Knowing how to use Facebook and Twitter may be as important as knowing how to use a pen.

People often talk about how much time people spend online versus offline, how relationships online compare to those offline, how to communicate with people online versus offline, but I think those are the wrong issues to focus on.
The Internet, communication and social media are ubiquitous. People are always on, always connected. We are well on our way toward a blended reality where there is no longer a line between the online and offline. We can meet with one person via Skype while another is sitting in the same room with us. We see pictures from a co-worker’s vacation on Facebook, and the next day they fill us in on the details at the water cooler.

**7 Ways Leaders Crash and Burn on Facebook and Twitter**

All forms of communication have rules—some explicit, others implicit. Break the rules and you risk alienating yourself from the very people you’re trying to connect with. Writers do this when they use poor grammar and punctuation. Speakers do this when they fail to make eye contact or ramble on endlessly.

Unfortunately, many pastors and Christian leaders don’t understand the unwritten rules of Facebook and Twitter. As a result, they crash and burn. Don’t be that guy (or girl).

The big thing to remember about Facebook and Twitter is it’s all about relationships. It’s not about amassing the most friends or followers. It’s not about getting your message out or promoting your ministry. It’s about loving and caring for people.

Here are seven things you want to avoid doing while on Facebook and Twitter. (Just to be clear, this is regarding your personal Facebook/Twitter profile, not a Facebook page or Twitter profile for your church or ministry.)

**Embarrass yourself.** Many leaders have gotten themselves into trouble by forgetting that what they post to Facebook and Twitter can be seen by everyone. Don’t post when you’re angry or frustrated. Don’t criticize. Don’t post something that might embarrass you, your family or anyone else. Don’t criticize other churches or ministries in your community.

**Only talk about your ministry.** When people “friend” or follow you, it’s because they want to engage with you—a real person—not a spokesperson for your church or ministry.

Only talk about yourself. When you go to a social event, do you like hanging around with people who only talk about themselves and never stop to ask you about you? Don’t be one of those people online either.

**Be unresponsive.** Failing to check phone messages and call people back is rude and damages relationships. The same principle applies to Facebook and Twitter. If you only check your social media accounts once every two weeks, it’s going to hurt your relationships. If you don’t reply to private/direct messages, don’t comment when people post to your Facebook wall and don’t respond (even with something short) when people reply to your Twitter updates, people are going to interact with you less or may even assume you’re ignoring them and take offense.

**Wear a mask.** Christian leaders sometimes think they have to be perfect. The truth is, nobody is perfect, and everyone knows it. If you act like everything is good all the time, you’ll be perceived as inauthentic. If you act as if you never make mistakes and know all the answers, you make it harder for others to talk about their mistakes and be honest when they’re experiencing doubts and uncertainty.
Act like the language/morality police. Your Facebook friends and Twitter followers are not perfect. They are going to swear, post questionable pictures of themselves and share things you don’t agree with. If something is really bad, consider contacting the person privately about it, but don’t call people out publicly for what is, unfortunately, common behavior in our culture.

Debate and divide. Online (and offline) debates rarely cause anyone to shift their position on an issue. Discussion is great, but if things get heated or personal, it’s time to lighten up. Political issues can be particularly divisive. It’s one thing to talk about the way our faith impacts our view of issues, but when discussion drifts toward specific leaders, candidates and parties, you run the risk of alienating half your congregation (not to mention the risk of losing your nonprofit status).

Sound like a virtual minefield? It can be, but remember, relationships have always been risky.

When using Facebook and Twitter, be prepared to make mistakes. Be humble, apologize when you hurt someone and learn from your own successes and failures as well as those of other people.

Want to learn how you can succeed with social media? Read this article in entirety in the June/July 2011 issue of Neue Magazine.

Paul Steinbrueck is co-founder and CEO of OurChurch.com, which provides web design, hosting, search marketing and social media consulting services to Christian organizations. Paul lives in Safety Harbor, FL with his wife and three children.
Charitable Giving Rose Last Year, Still Below Peak

By MELANIE GRAYCE WEST

As the economy regained some momentum in 2010, Americans responded in kind by increasing their charitable giving.

Philanthropic donations from individuals, foundations and corporations increased 3.8% to $290.89 billion in 2010, up from $280.3 billion in 2009, according to the latest Giving USA survey, released Monday.

But with an uptick in 2010, the implications for fund-raising and for charities across the country remain uncertain for now, said Nancy Raybin, a spokeswoman for the Giving USA Foundation and managing partner of Raybin Associates, a New York-based nonprofit consulting firm.

"There was a lot more optimism, all relative, in 2010," said Ms. Raybin. "If giving continues at this two or three percent [growth] level, it's going to take us a while to get back to where we were before."

Still, Ms. Raybin said the results from 2010 are encouraging and show that "people are still generous despite uncertainty, despite not having jobs and despite confusion about what the future holds."

In current dollars, philanthropic giving hit a peak of $310.57 billion in 2007 and then dropped to $299.81 billion in 2008. On average, giving accounts for about 2% of the gross domestic product.

More than a third of all contributions made last year are to religious organizations and giving in that sector remained flat in 2010.

There was an increase of 5.2% for education and of 5.7% for arts, both traditionally popular areas for philanthropy.

Notably, contributions made to international affairs organizations in support of development and relief activities, though only 5% of total giving, increased by 15.3% last year.

The international sector has seen steady increases in giving in the last decade and more than $1.43 billion was given last year in response to the earthquakes in Haiti.

More people who have been creating wealth over the last decade have been part of the international business world and that's increasing the global perspective in philanthropy, said Melissa A. Berman, president and chief executive of Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Ms. Berman believes that many donors who give to international efforts, especially global health and anti-poverty efforts, have also been influenced by Bill Gates and Warren Buffet.

"Many of them have been influenced indirectly by the 'Giving Pledge,' too," said Ms. Berman, referring to the public commitment made by some of the world's wealthiest people to give away the bulk of their wealth. Ms.
Berman added: "It's made people think about how much they want to give and when they want to give it."

Write to Melanie Grayce West at melanie.west@wsj.com
Religion still counts in presidential race

Sunday, June 19, 2011 03:14 AM
BY MEREDITH HEAGNEY
THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

In America, children are told that anyone can grow up to be president.
That may be true, but it's certainly more difficult for some.

When it comes to religion, it's hardest to be Mormon, Muslim or an atheist. Those are the three groups that consistently rank lowest in popularity polls among their fellow Americans.

Despite that, some believe the time for a Mormon president - or at least a presidential nominee - has come. Mitt Romney, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has emerged as an early front-runner among Republican hopefuls.

Members of these minority religions hope that time and visibility will break down barriers to the White House.

"The fact that we've elected an African-American president the last go-round makes me think people are able to look past things like religion and skin color to select the most able leader," said D. Bradley Welling, president of the Columbus stake of the LDS, or Mormon, church.

Most American presidents have been Episcopalian or another type of mainline Protestant. After that, Americans would be most comfortable with a Catholic or Jewish president, according to a poll of nearly 1,950 released this month by the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute.

Sixty-seven percent of those who responded were "entirely" or "somewhat" comfortable with an evangelical Christian president. Next came Mormons (60 percent comfortable), Muslims (38 percent) and atheists (37 percent).

In the same poll, Republican voters were most likely to support Romney, with 25 percent of the 830 GOP respondents saying they support him.

Democrats, women and blacks tend to have less-favorable views of Mormons than do Republicans, men and whites, said Peter Brown, assistant director of the polling institute.

That's partly because of two former Mormon practices: polygamy (abolished in 1890) and the exclusion of blacks from the priesthood (which ended in 1978).

"It would be nay to say that public attitudes toward Mr. Romney's faith are no problem for him," Brown said. "Whether it can be overcome or not, we'll find out."

The hope for a Muslim president seems more remote, acknowledged Adnan Mirza, a spokesman for the Noor Islamic Cultural Center in Hilliard.

He blames political candidates who try to gain favor by bashing Muslims and equating Islam with violence and terrorism.

"With as much fear-mongering and exploitation that goes on in today's political environment, I think it would be very, very difficult for a Muslim to get elected president," Mirza said.

Two U.S. congressmen are Muslim: Andre Carson of Indiana and Keith Ellison of Minnesota. Both are Democrats.

But atheism is the worst "political handicap," Brown said.

That may be because of viewpoints such as the Rev. Mark Fuller's. Pastor of Grove City Church of the Nazarene, an evangelical congregation, Fuller said he would vote for a Mormon or a Muslim before an atheist.

"This nation was built on Christian principles," he said. "With increasing secularism in our culture, we've taken this thing a little too far (in) the other direction."

Americans care about whether their president is religious because we use faith as a stand-in for morals or values, said Mark Caleb Smith, director of the Center for Political Studies at Cedarville University, an evangelical college east of Dayton in Greene County.

Muslims and atheists may face a political barrier, he said, but not necessarily anybody else.

Romney's 2008 candidacy received less support from evangelical Christians because he was competing with Mike Huckabee, Smith said. The former Arkansas governor was also a Southern Baptist pastor.

This time, there's no strong evangelical alternative, and social and values issues won't be of great
importance, Smith said. The focus will be on the economy, health care and jobs.

That should help Romney, but he'll still have to convince voters that, as president, he would make decisions on his own, without the help of church leaders, Smith said.

John F. Kennedy, the nation's only Catholic president, made a similar promise in 1960 during his campaign: He swore he would not take orders from the pope.

Welling, the Mormon leader, said he could vote for a Muslim or even an atheist, although that would be difficult because he believes the country was founded by a "God-fearing people."

Even so, he said, "the primary concern should be how they perform in office."

mheagney@dispatch.com
Christians are more militant than Muslims, says Government's equalities boss

Muslims are integrating into British society better than many Christians, according to the head of the Government's equality watchdog.

Trevor Phillips warned that “an old time religion incompatible with modern society” is driving the revival in the Anglican and Catholic Churches and clashing with mainstream views, especially on homosexuality.

He accused Christians, particularly evangelicals, of being more militant than Muslims in complaining about discrimination, arguing that many of the claims are motivated by a desire for greater political influence.

However the chairman of the Equality and Human Rights Commission expressed concern that people of faith are "under siege" from atheists whom he accused of attempting to "drive religion underground".

In an interview with the Sunday Telegraph ahead of a landmark report on religious discrimination in Britain, he said the Commission wants to protect Christians and Muslims from discrimination, admitting his body had not been seen to stand up for the people discriminated against because of their faith in the past.

In a wide-ranging intervention into the debate over the role of religion in modern Britain, Mr Phillips:
Christians are more militant than Muslims, says Government's equalities...
religion which in my view is incompatible with a modern, multi-ethnic, multicultural society," Phillips said.

"Muslim communities in this country are doing their damnedest to try to come to terms with their neighbours to try to integrate and they're doing their best to try to develop an idea of Islam that is compatible with living in a modern liberal democracy.

"The most likely victim of actual religious discrimination in British society is a Muslim but the person who is most likely to feel slighted because of their religion is an evangelical Christian."

Senior clergy, including Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, have attacked equality laws for eroding Christianity and stifling free speech, but Phillips said many of the legal cases brought by Christians on issues surrounding homosexuality were motivated by an attempt to gain political influence.

"I think for a lot of Christian activists, they want to have a fight and they choose sexual orientation as the ground to fight it on," he said.

"I think the whole argument isn't about the rights of Christians. It's about politics. It's about a group of people who really want to have weight and influence."

He added: "There are a lot of Christian activist voices who appear bent on stressing the kind of persecution that I don't think really exists in this country."

However, Mr Phillips, who is a Salvationist from a strong Christian background, expressed concern over the rise in Britain of anti-religious voices, such as Richard Dawkins, who are intolerant of people of faith.

"I understand why a lot of people in faith groups feel a bit under siege," he said.

"There's no question that there is more anti-religion noise in Britain.

"There's a great deal of polemic which is anti-religious, which is quite fashionable."

Phillips said that the Commission is committed to protecting people of faith against discrimination and also defended the right of religious institutions to be free from Government interference.

The Church of England is under pressure to allow openly gay clergy to be made bishops, while the Catholic Church only permits men to be priests, but the head of the Government-funded equalities watchdog said they are entitled to rule on their own affairs.

"The law doesn't dictate their organisation internally, in the way they appoint their ministers and bishops for example," he said.

"It's perfectly fair that you can't be a Roman Catholic priest unless you're a man. It seems right that the reach of anti-discriminatory law should stop at the door of the church or mosque."
"I'm not keen on the idea of a church run by the state.

"I don't think the law should run to telling churches how they should conduct their own affairs."

The intervention by the Commission comes after criticism of its £70 million annual budget, which is to be cut drastically.

Mr Phillips, a former Labour chairman of the Greater London Assembly and television producer was criticised for his £110,000 a year salary and was accused of "pandering to the right" by Ken Livingstone, the former Labour London mayor, for saying that multiculturalism had failed.
Pawlenty's prominent pastor not a political pawn

JUNE 31, 2011

Categories: Christian, news, politics, RNS

By G. JEFFREY MacDonald

(RNS) When GOP presidential hopeful Tim Pawlenty goes to church, he knows he'll hear a 27-minute sermon — never longer, never shorter. But whether he'll hear a biblical endorsement of the Republican platform is far less certain.

Pawlenty gets his spiritual guidance from Leith Anderson, senior pastor at Wooddale Church in Eden Prairie, Minn., and president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). And while Anderson runs a tight ship as a megachurch pastor, he toes no partisan line — for better or for worse, depending on one's point of view.

"I've never preached a political sermon that says you ought to vote for this party or that candidate, or that we should be taking specific stands on certain legislation," said Anderson, who's been at Wooddale since 1977.

"I'm a pastor who teaches the Bible ... and if it relates to some contemporary issue, it's because it's there — not because I'm driven by some news topic."

Anderson, 66, had already served twice as interim NAE president but became president in 2007, a year after his predecessor, Ted Haggard, resigned in the wake of a gay sex and drug scandal. Around the same time, evangelicals were openly asking whether they'd become too closely aligned with Republican politics and lost their moral authority.

"When a church embraces a political party and becomes politicized, they lose their prophetic voice," said Jo Anne Lyon, general superintendent of the Wesleyan Church, which belongs to the NAE. "There's an enormous trust that people have with (Anderson), and that allows him to lead."

President Obama appointed Anderson to his faith-based advisory council, and on any given Sunday, Anderson's 5,000-member flock includes Fortune 500 CEOs, major league coaches and other Twin Cities leaders.

"I'm not the only one Leith Anderson has inspired; great leaders have many followers," Pawlenty wrote in his 2010 autobiography, "Courage to Stand." "But he'd be the first to underscore that his mission is not about him; it's about drawing others to Jesus."

Anderson isn't shy to discern a political agenda in Scripture. When he reads in Psalms, "I knit you together in your mother's womb," he sees a strong anti-abortion message. He also opposes same-sex marriage on biblical grounds.

Yet on other issues — particularly immigration and the environment — Anderson parts ways with many social conservatives. And that has some conservatives wondering if Anderson's moderate streak could be a political liability for Pawlenty.

When former NAE lobbyist Richard Cizik angered social conservatives by calling for action on climate change, Anderson stood by him and signed a 2006 statement, "Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action." He continues to press the issue as a matter of justice for the poor in the developing world, working behind the scenes to craft an official NAE statement on climate change.

"He was very accepting of what people had to say" when a creation care working group met in March, Lyon said. "But he was immediately coming back with: 'How does Scripture speak to this? What are we called to say?'"

But Erick Erickson, editor of the influential conservative blog Redstate.com, said "there is a real concern" among conservative evangelicals about Anderson's 25-year influence on Pawlenty.

"Some of Pawlenty's critics will attempt to capitalize on some of Leith Anderson's statements and stands, including his position on global warming," Erickson said in an email.

Earlier this year, when Erickson tweeted that "Pawlenty's preacher is going to cause him some problems" on the environment, Salon.com likened Anderson to Jeremiah Wright the outspoken

Pawlenty’s prominent pastor not a political pawn - Beliefnet News
Ruling may put church rentals of schools at risk

Written by
Bob Smietana | The Tennessean
3:17 AM, Jun. 17, 2011

For a few hours on Sunday mornings, the cafeteria at Independence High School in Thompson's Station is transformed into a house of God.

Volunteers haul in sound equipment, set up classrooms to teach kids the Bible and arrange chairs for 200 people at Conduit Church's 10:30 a.m. worship service.

Meeting in a school makes sense for a new church like Conduit, which started a little more than a year ago, said Darren Tyler, the pastor. The church pays $1,400 a month in rent, which is cheaper than buying a place of its own. Members would rather use the Sunday offerings to fund mission work — including the $200,000 orphanage they’re building in Haiti — than to buy a building.

About 50 churches rent space from local schools, paying more than $400,000 in rental fees a year in Davidson, Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson and Sumner counties. But such arrangements have come under scrutiny nationwide after a federal court in New York ruled earlier this month that worship services held in public schools may be unconstitutional, and districts can ban them.

That contradicts past rulings by the Supreme Court, said J. Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty.

“The school can hide the keys on Friday and not open up again until Monday,” Walker said. “But if it does open up to the outside, the school has to treat religion the same as any other group.”

Rob Boston, a spokesman for Americans United for Separation of Church and State, agreed that schools should be allowed to rent to churches as long as the churches are not given preferential treatment.

But in a court dispute between the New York school board and the Bronx Household of Faith, U.S. Circuit Judge Pierre Leval of the U.S. Court of Appeals ruled...
that having a church service in a school changes the nature of the school, at least for a short time.

“The site is no longer simply a room in a school being used temporarily for some activity,” he wrote. “The church has made the school the place for the performance of its rites and might well appear to have established itself there. The place has, at least for a time, become the church.”

Jordan Lorence, a lawyer from the Alliance Defense Fund, which is representing the Bronx Household of Faith, said the church will appeal.

Schools don't profit

About 20 churches meet in Davidson County schools. They follow the same rules as any other group. They have to fill out a request to use space and get it signed by the principal. They also have to prove they have a million dollars’ worth of liability insurance.

Last schoolyear, churches paid $109,187.50 in rental fees. Those fees cover utilities and other costs of opening up the buildings, said Kina Cleveland, a communications assistant for Metro Nashville Public Schools. There’s no profit for the schools in the rentals, she said.

Nine churches paid a total of $96,826.51 to use Williamson County schools from July 2010 to July 2011.

The Wilson County school board rents space to six churches, which pay a total of $8,600 a month in fees. Sumner County schools rents space to nine churches at a rate of $1,633 a week. Rutherford County collects more than $3,000 a month from six churches.

Jonathan Stilts of Mt. Juliet believes renting space to churches is a bad idea for schools.

“In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law intended to erect ‘a wall of separation between church and State,’ ” he said in an email. “In my opinion, the ‘wall,’ in this instance, is any state supported school wall. Renting school space to any church group is not just a bad idea, it is unconstitutional.”

James Evans, a spokesman for the Rutherford County school board, said churches are treated like any other community group when it comes to renting space. The school board will rent space to a group for only three months at a time, and churches must get permission from the

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school principal to renew their rental agreement. Sumner County schools have a similar time limit: Their use of space in schools is reviewed every six months.

Having a time limit keeps churches on their toes. If they cause problems, then they’ll lose the right to rent space.

“If there is a problem, the principal just doesn’t sign off on the renewal,” Evans said.

Evans said that he had heard about the ruling in New York City, but it hasn’t affected the school board’s policies.

“We haven’t had any discussion about it,” he said.

Jeremy Johnson, spokesman for Sumner County Schools, said rentals to churches are designed to be short term.

“They have to have a long-term plan to get a building of their own,” he said.

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High court spurns atheist's 'under God' challenge
Bob Egelko, Chronicle Staff Writer
Wednesday, June 15, 2011

WASHINGTON -- A Sacramento atheist's challenge to the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance, which stirred a legal and political frenzy nearly a decade ago, has quietly expired in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Michael Newdow said Tuesday, however, that he isn't giving up and plans to file one or more lawsuits this year in hopes of winning a favorable ruling that would eventually reach the high court.

The justices denied review Monday, without comment, of Newdow's appeal on behalf of the Freedom From Religion Foundation and a New Hampshire family. They wanted the court to overturn a ruling in November by a federal appeals court in Boston that the daily schoolroom pledge to "one nation under God" was a patriotic exercise, not an endorsement of religion.

Another appeals court in San Francisco reached a similar conclusion in March 2010. In a 2-1 ruling, the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals said the pledge recognized "our founders' political philosophy that a power greater than the government gives the people their inalienable rights."

Newdow, an attorney, filed that suit on behalf of the parent of a Sacramento-area kindergartner. But he withdrew his appeal to the Supreme Court, saying his client was no longer available. The New Hampshire case was his only remaining suit.

"It's a very simple case," Newdow said, citing the language of the pledge before Congress changed it in 1954. "'One nation indivisible,' and then they stuck in words that divide us on the basis of religion."

Newdow first challenged the Pledge of Allegiance in 2000 on behalf of his daughter, then a student in a Sacramento-area elementary school. In 2002, the Ninth Circuit ruled that the addition of "under God" was religiously motivated and sent "a message to unbelievers that they are outsiders," in violation of the constitutional separation of church and state.

Congress reacted furiously, condemning the decision in a resolution that passed with virtually no dissenting votes. The appeals court put its ruling on hold until the case reached the Supreme Court, which sidestepped the constitutional issue and ruled in 2004 that Newdow could not represent his daughter's interests because her mother had legal custody.

A different panel of the appeals court rebuffed his refiled suit last year. The First U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston was also unreceptive to Newdow's arguments on behalf of two New Hampshire parents and three children who described themselves as atheists and agnostics.
The main effect of a New Hampshire law requiring classes to recite the pledge daily, while allowing objectors to remain silent, is "not the advancement of religion, but the advancement of patriotism," the court said in a 3-0 ruling.

"Taken in the context of the whole pledge, the phrase 'under God' does not convey a message of endorsement," the court said.

The Obama administration and conservative organizations filed arguments in support of the New Hampshire law.

*The Supreme Court case is Freedom From Religion Foundation vs. United States, 10-1214.*

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http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2011/06/15/BA261JTO2B.DTL

This article appeared on page C - 3 of the San Francisco Chronicle

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Mass suicide fears as French worry end of world is approaching

• From correspondents in Paris
• From: NewsCore
• June 16, 2011 11:49AM

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SO many people in France believe that the world is about to end that a government agency today alerted the country to the risk of mass suicides by converts to prophesies of imminent Armageddon.

Natural disasters, the internet and French fears of economic doom are lending credence to predictions that the planet will self-destruct on December 21, 2012, said Miviludes, the government body that monitors cults and suspicious spiritual activities.

There have been 183 false predictions of the end of the world since the Roman Empire collapsed and these are multiplying with new technology and a global climate of fear, it added.

In the US, doomsday radio preacher Harold Camping received global publicity by predicting that the Rapture would occur May 21. When the day passed uneventfully, Camping offered a new date, October 21, for the end of the world.

The 2012 prediction, based on the end of the 5000-year Mayan calendar, has taken root around the world but nowhere does it seem to have been as widely embraced as France, The (London) Times reported.

The government is worried about a rush of converts to Bugarach, a hilltop village in the southwest that is destined to survive judgment day, according to internet rumours.

Miviludes chairman Georges Fenech visited the area between Perpignan and Carcassonne last week to be briefed by the police intelligence service and local officials on the gurus, disciples, magicians, healers and others who have arrived to await next year’s expected Apocalypse. The village, which is said to be a haven for UFOs, was besieged by Armageddon tourists on Monday, the Pentecost holiday.

Mr Fenech, a judge and former lawmaker, dismissed the prophesies as a "hodgepodge of bad astrophysics" but added that Apocalypse fever is no laughing matter.

He recalled "the horror of the dramas which cults have caused in recent years with their doctrines that provoke extreme anxiety."

The most recent involving France was a series of 74 suicides in the late 1990s in France, Switzerland and Canada by devotees of the Order of the Solar Temple.
The fascination for Apocalypse theories fits with the mood of gloom that has engulfed France over the past decade. Opinion polls regularly highlight the country as one of the most pessimistic in the world.
Real Magazine Connects With Children of Prisoners

June 14, 2011 By Marci Leave a Comment

“It’s pretty amazing,” recalls Randy Fishell, editor of Real magazine. “One day we got all these cards from prisoners requesting that we send their children Real. We were confused, because we didn’t have a partnership with any prison ministries.”

After some sleuthing, the staff discovered that a Christian tract distributor had been advertising Real in their handouts to prisoners.

“It’s great to know that people have been noticing Real and using it in their outreach ministries,” says Fishell.

Another individual who uses Real is Edith Tucker. For Tucker, Real is one more tool in her arsenal as she ministers to the children of prisoners.

“These children are some of the poorest you can imagine,” she adds. “At Christmas, during our Christmas party, there was a little boy who had no coat. We had asked church members to donate coats, and they had donated above and beyond, so we gave him one. He didn’t want to take the coat off. You would have thought that child had been given a million dollars.”

Since the start of Real at the beginning of 2010, she has subscribed 40 kids to the magazine. “I felt it was worthwhile. As children began to receive the magazine, I saw that there was a real change in their behavior,” Edith attests.

“Our goal is to introduce children to Jesus in any way possible,” says Rachel Whitaker, associate editor of Real. “We want to see these children in heaven.”