Inspirational Quote

The game of life is the game of boomerangs. Our thoughts, deeds and words return to us sooner or later, with astounding accuracy.

- Florence Shinn

Those who guard their mouths and their tongues keep themselves from calamity.
Proverbs 21: 22-24

Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent, and discerning if they hold their tongues.
Proverbs 17: 27-28

Ministry Opening

Student Missionary in Yunnan, China: Pastor Shim (PMM Missionary of NSD) at Yunnan, China is looking for a student missionary who would like to engage in mission work in China by teaching English for a year at Yunnan, China. More Info: Contact Pastor Shim

University Chaplin: This is a full time University Chaplin position offered through Student Life Division at Andrews University. More info: Visit Andrews

Youth Worker: Looking for a Task Force youth worker for next year (Approx. Sept - May) at the church in Kirkland, Washington. Close to graduating from undergrad or a seminary student preferred. More Info: Contact Tim Peterson

Youth Pastor: Looking for a youth pastor to lead and organize an effective youth program in Fresno, California. A Bachelor's degree, theological education, and experience working with teens required. More Info: Contact Rod Turley

English Ministry Pastor: The Dallas/Ft. Worth Korean SDA church is looking for a bilingual (Korean/English) EM pastor to lead a congregation of 30-40 members. More Info: Contact Michael Chong

Missionary in South Korea: Seize the opportunity to do missions to youth & young adults through teaching English, and at the same time earn income. More Info: Contact Justin Yang

Adventist Resources

Just "Click" to share your beliefs: Did you know you can start your life over again? Fundamental Beliefs video #15 from My Way to Jesus The Fundamental Beliefs videos and other updates are shared on the My Way to Jesus Facebook page and from there onto the NAD Facebook page. More Info: Visit My way to Jesus
General Conference Shares New Resources: Ambassadors, the Senior Youth Ministry Handbook, and Steps to Discipleship. These resources will be of great help for local church youth ministry. More Info: Visit Dropbox To receive a monthly newsletter contact Erica Jones.

Week Of Prayer: Titled "KINGDOM OF GOD...eternity starts now" Please click on the link below to access the PDF of the Senior Youth Week of Prayer, and the updated file of the Junior Youth readings. More Info: Visit GCMinistries or Contact Maria Dunchie.

Adventist Ministry Professionals (AMP): This is a new organization established in 2013 to support Adventist Academy chaplains, Bible teachers and campus pastors to be more effective with their ministry rolls. More Info: Contact Stephanie Johnson - President. Sponsored by CYE.

Living It High School Outreach: Youth leaders of all kinds can find encouragement and support for working with public high school students. Living It is all about people getting connected to Jesus and Living it with Him every day, everywhere. More Info: Visit LivingIt Sponsored by NAD Youth Ministries.

Lifeline Newsletter: Find out who's left the Church and who's doing something to bring them back. More Info: Visit involveyouth Sponsored by NAD Youth Ministries.

Adventist National / International Events


Adventist Christian Fellowship Institute For public college/university schools ministry leaders. 2014 May 16-25, Location TBA More Info: Contact Ron Picknell or Visit acfi2014 Sponsored by NAD.

Forever Faithful International Camporee Walk-Around April 22, 2014 Oshkosh, Wisconsin from 9:00AM - 5:00 PM everyone is welcome. More Info: and to RSVP for a "free lunch" Contact Vern Byrd.

Children's Leadership Conference: March 28-30, 2014 Andrews University More Info: Contact Walter Rogers or Visit CYE.org Sponsored by NAD / CYE / LUC

Cruise with a Mission: A young adult annual event set for December 14-21, 2014 More Info: Contact Richard Parke or Visit CruiseWithaMission Sponsored by CYE.

Non-Denominational Events


Pathfinder Camporee


FFIC Nighttime Program Input dinner meeting Wednesday, February 19, 2014 only for Conference/Union/Division Youth Directors and Associates at the Rioja Grill located at the...
Double Tree Convention Center 711 N. W. 72nd Avenue Miami, FL 33126 from 5:00 - 6:30 PM. RSVP required More Info: Contact Vern Byrd

**Research & Survey - Sponsored by ICM**

**Barna Update Get to know Millennials:** Over the past 10 years, Barna Group has interviewed 27,140 Millennials in 206 studies. Each month, they are adding to this body of knowledge in order to bring you the latest knowledge and research on teenagers and young adults. More Info: Visit Barna

**Which Christians Actually Evangelize?** Study Says Millennials Most, Middle Class Least Among 'born-again' Christians, Barna finds divide between theory and practice differs by demographic. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**A Growing Gap:** How Black and White Christians Now Think About Race New findings from major study on religion and race show who thinks 'separate but equal' is sufficient, and who wants to stop talking about race altogether. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**New Research:** Americans Prefer In-Person Preaching to Video New Life Way Research Survey reveals preaching preferences of church visitors. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**Miscellaneous**

**Should Pastors Perform Marriages for Cohabitating Couples?**
Observers weigh in. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**Why a Lesbian Lawmaker Voted Against Hawaii's Same-Sex Marriage Bill:** With 1 in 3 states soon allowing gays and lesbians to wed, religious freedom protections get unexpected advocate. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**The Surprise Inside Church Bankruptcies:** It’s not that they owe more than they own, says Pamela Foohey. It’s a leadership failure. Read Full Article by Christianity Today

**Pastors / Taxes & Their Homes:** The parsonage exemption was ruled unconstitutional by a U.S. federal judge. The ruling was the result of a suit, which advocates for the separation of church and state. More Info: Visit NADNewsPoints Sponsored by North American Division

**Watch this video if you need a smile:** Click on this link or watch the video!
Which Christians Actually Evangelize? Study Says Millennials Most, Middle Class Least

Among 'born-again' Christians, Barna finds divide between theory and practice differs by demographic.

Kate Tracy
[ posted 12/20/2013 12:30PM ]

Despite worries that millennials have given up on Christianity, or that they're too focused on social justice campaigns, young adults are sharing their faith the most frequently. By contrast, evangelism is fading fastest among the middle class.

At least, according to a new survey from Barna Group. "Is Evangelism Going Out of Style?" explores habits among "born-again" Christians who believe in evangelism—but may or may not actually do it. (See infographics below.)

"When asked if they have a personal responsibility to share their faith with others, 73% of born again Christians said yes," Barna states. "When this conviction is put into practice, however, the numbers shift downward. Only half (52%) of born again Christians say they actually did share the Gospel at least once this past year to someone with different beliefs, in the hope that they might accept Jesus Christ as their Savior."

Based on Barna's definitions of religious groups, evangelicals are most likely to believe evangelism is their personal responsibility (100%), but also have the highest rate of failure to follow through (31% did not evangelize in the past year). By contrast, Catholics are the least likely to believe evangelism is their personal responsibility (34%), but have the highest success rate (33% did evangelize in the past year).

Surprisingly, millennials are the one generation of "born-again" Christians where "the practice of evangelism is notably on the rise."
Despite being known as the "social justice" generation—alleged to be trading spiritual causes for physical ones—evangelism among millennials increased nine percent in recent years, according to Barna. Other generations either stayed the same or declined in their evangelism practices.

Millennials' evangelism has increased from 56 percent in 2010 to 65 percent in 2013, in contrast to the national average of 52 percent among "born-again" Christians. Among two other generations, evangelism has declined: Busters (who are in their 30s and 40s) went from 63 percent in 1998 to 48 percent in 2013, and Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) decreased by 16 percent since 2007. But Elders (ages 68 and older) remained consistent in their evangelism at just above the national average (53%).

David Kinnaman, president of Barna, said this rise in evangelism among millennials should be encouraging to Christian leaders:

One way to understand this trend is that there are proportionally fewer born again and evangelical Christians among Millennials than is true among older generations. So part of the explanation may be that those who remain committed to these theological perspectives are all the more motivated to make a 'case' for their faith among their peers. In other words, in the middle of a generation defined by their religious indifference, these Millennial evangelists stand in stark contrast.

Another surprising finding from the study: middle-class "born-again" Christians have the lowest rate of evangelism among other household income groups.

Notes Barna:

This is particularly paradoxical since born again, middle-income adults are the most likely out of all income groups to affirm their personal responsibility to evangelize—76% do so. Yet only 37% of those adults have shared their faith this past year. Furthermore, born again, middle-income adults are evangelizing less and less. For example, from 2010 to today alone, their outreach efforts dropped from 51% to 37%.

In contrast, "born-again" Christians who make the least amount of money ($39,000 per year or less) evangelize the most (57 percent), followed by upper-income Christians (52 percent).
“Of, personally, have a responsibility to tell other people my religious beliefs.”

ADULTS WHO AGREE:

- 100% Evangelical*
- 54% Mainline
- 71% Non-mainline
- 34% Catholic
- 64% Protestant

ONE HUNDRED % EVANGELICAL*

* Barna defines evangelicals as those who affirm nine distinct theological principles, including one's personal responsibility to share the Gospel with others.

Barna Group

This report is based on a telephone and online survey of 2,000 random U.S. adults, conducted from January 16-23, 2013. The sampling error is estimated to be within +/-1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For more information on how Barna defines denominational demographics, please see barna.org/definitions

HOW EVANGELISM IS PRACTICED ACROSS GENERATIONS

Overall, the practice of evangelism has either remained the same or declined among different generations of born-again Christians—except for one...

FOR MILLENNIALS, THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM IS NOTABLY ON THE RISE.
THE ECONOMICS OF EVANGELISM

The practice of evangelism looks different for born again adults depending on their household income.

NATIONAL AVERAGE:
FIFTY TWO PERCENT

Born again adults who evangelized in the last year:

- Low income: 57%
- Middle income: 37%
- Upper income: 52%

WHAT INCOME BRACKET SHARES THEIR FAITH THE MOST?

THOSE WHO MAKE $39K OR LESS ANNUALLY

WHAT'S MORE, EVANGELISM AMONG...
MIDDLE INCOME ADULTS HAS SHARPLY DECLINED IN THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS:

Barna Group  
barna.org

This report is based on a telephone and online survey of 2,083 random U.S. adults, conducted from January 18-23, 2013. The sampling error is estimated to be within ±1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For more information on how Barna defines denominational demographics, please see barna.org/definitions.
A Growing Gap: How Black and White Christians Now Think About Race

New findings from major study on religion and race show who thinks 'separate but equal' is sufficient, and who wants to stop talking about race altogether.

Kate Tracy
[ posted 12/23/2013 12:51PM ]

The latest findings from a significant ongoing study of religion and race in America suggest that divergent perceptions on race among black and white Christians have continued to widen since 2006.

"The new findings ... lay bare the dramatic and growing gap in racial attitudes and experiences in America," writes David Briggs in releasing the second wave of results from the Portraits of American Life Study (led by Michael Emerson of Rice University and David Sikkink of Notre Dame) via the Association of Religion Data Archives. "We do not live in a post-racial nation, the [new 2012 results] suggests, but in a land of two Americas divided by race, and less willing than ever to find a common ground of understanding."

Briggs's analysis of how the "vast gap in perspectives on race" increased from 2006 to 2012 is worth reading. Key findings reviewed by CT directly include:

1) More evangelicals and Catholics have come to believe that "one of the most effective ways to improve race relations is to stop talking about race." In 2012, 64 percent of evangelicals and 59 percent of Catholics agreed with this statement, up from 48 percent and 44 percent respectively in 2006.

The increases—driven by whites in both groups—were the only statistically significant changes among religious groups studied (apart from "other" Protestants: 56 percent agreed in 2012 vs. 41 percent in 2006). By comparison, 44 percent of black Protestants agreed in 2012 (vs. 37 percent in 2006), as did 52 percent of mainline Protestants (vs. 46 percent in 2006).

Among black evangelicals, 34 percent agreed in 2012, vs. 24 percent in 2006. Both findings were less than half the rate of white evangelicals (69 percent in 2012 vs. 51 percent in 2006).

2) More evangelicals now agree that "it is okay for the races to be separate, as long as they have equal opportunity." In 2012, 30 percent of all evangelicals agreed, up from 19 percent who said the same in 2006.

This increase was the only statistically significant change among religious groups studied, and occurred among white evangelicals (20 percent in 2006 vs. 34 percent in 2012), not black evangelicals (19 percent in 2006 vs. 16 percent in 2012).

By comparison, 30 percent of black Protestants agreed with the "separate but equal" idea in 2012, as did 24 percent of mainline Protestants, 20 percent of Catholics, and 24 percent of "other" Protestants.

3) On the question of whether the government "should do more to help minorities increase their standard of living," whites are no longer divided along religious lines the way they were six years earlier.

In 2006, more than 4 in 10 white non-evangelical Protestants agreed that the government should do more, versus only 3 in 10 white evangelicals and white Catholics. But in 2012, researchers found that "the religion effect disappeared" thanks to "substantial declining support" among white mainline Protestants (dropping from 42 percent to 21 percent) and white "other" Protestants (42 percent to 20 percent). Thus, "regardless of religious affiliation, whites were statistically identical to each other" by 2012.

In contrast, black Protestants saw a statistically significant increase in agreement that the government should do more: 68 percent agreed in 2006, while 84 percent agreed in 2012. (By comparison, 73 percent of black evangelicals said the same in 2006, declining to 69 percent in 2012.)

4) In 2012, 41 percent of black evangelicals said they think about their race daily, an increase from 36 percent in 2006. Meanwhile, 13 percent of white evangelicals said the same in 2012 (vs. 11 percent in 2006). By comparison, 48 percent of all blacks and 10 percent of all whites said the same in 2012 (vs. 42 percent and 10 percent, respectively, in 2006).
However, the only statistically significant change from 2006 to 2012 was a decrease among Hispanics: 54 percent said they thought about their race daily in 2006, but only 42 percent said the same in 2012.

5) More Americans now say they have been "treated unfairly" because of their race. And moreover, the increase from 2006 to 2012 was statistically significant for all groups: blacks (36% to 46%); Hispanics (17% to 36%); Asians (16% to 31%); whites (8% to 14%); as well as all Americans (13% to 21%).

Among religious groups, the only statistically significant change occurred among Catholics: 23 percent said they had experienced racial prejudice in 2012, up from 12 percent in 2006. By comparison, 43 percent of black evangelicals said the same in 2012 (up from 30 percent in 2006), as did 16 percent of white evangelicals (up from 11 percent in 2006).
New Research: Americans Prefer In-Person Preaching to Video

*New LifeWay Research Survey reveals preaching preferences of church visitors.*

**Ed Stetzer** [posted 12/17/2013]

Recently, LifeWay Research conducted a study on video venue/multisite churches. I have always been interested in this technology and the phenomenon of live-streamed sermons in churches in place of a present, physical preaching pastor. I have written about multisite churches before here, here, here, and other places as well.

In addition to this research, I have reached out to Bob Hyatt and Geoff Surrat, two pastors who have helpful, however differing, views on multisite churches and their use of video preaching. Be sure to read both of their articles and learn from what each one of them thinks about video venues.

Multisite video venues are not going anywhere anytime soon as many of the largest churches in the country use this technology, so it was fascinating to see what our respondents thought about watching a pastor preach via video versus in-person.

Here is an excerpt from the release by Bob Smietana:

About a third (35 percent) say they will only visit churches with a live sermon.

Three in 10 say a video sermon won’t keep them from a church, but they still prefer live preaching. The same number say live or video sermons are fine.

Less than one percent prefer to watch a video sermon.

"I don’t think anyone gets up on a Sunday morning saying, 'Boy, I’d really like to watch a video sermon,' " said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research and author of *Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement’s Next Generation.* "But the fact that many churches utilize video sermons means other factors such as relationships, preaching approach, music, relevance, and location can be more important."

The sermon question was part of a telephone survey of 1,001 Americans, conducted September 6-10, 2013.

Video sermons are mostly used by multi-site churches, which hold services in more than one location, often called a campus. Those campuses frequently have live music, prayers, and a local pastor, who does everything but preach.

About half of the estimated 5,000 multi-site churches in the U.S. use video teaching, said Jim Tomberlin of the consulting firm MultiSite Solutions.

Tomberlin said larger churches are more likely to use video sermons.

Many large churches already project an image of their preacher on a big screen during the sermon. So when they open a new
In-person vs. Video Sermons

65% would choose an in-person sermon over a video sermon

LifeWay Research
LifeWayResearch.com

Other highlights from the research include:

- Self-identified born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian are more likely to prefer sermon preached in-person (37% to 27%)
- Americans who Never attend (47%) are most likely to say it would not matter
- Americans age 18-29 (37%) are more likely to say it would not matter than those age 45-54 (24%) and 65+ (26%)

You can see the full research PDF here.
American Views on Video and In-Person Sermons

Survey of 1,001 American Adults
Methodology

- The telephone survey of adult Americans was conducted September 6-10, 2013.
- Interviews were conducted in either English or Spanish.
- Both listed and unlisted numbers were called and approximately 20% of the sample was reached by cell phone.
- Responses were weighted by age, gender, education, race/Hispanic ethnicity, region and CBSA market size to more accurately reflect the population.
Methodology  Continued

- The completed sample is 1,001 phone surveys
- The sample provides 95% confidence that the sampling error does not exceed $\pm 3.1$ percentage points.
- Margins of error are higher in sub-groups
Americans strongly prefer churches where the sermon is preached in person.

- I would only visit a church in which the sermon is preached in-person: 35%
- I would prefer to visit a church in which the sermon is preached in-person: 30%
- It would not matter: 30%
- I would prefer to visit a church in which the sermon is delivered by video: 0%
- I would only visit a church in which the sermon is delivered by video: 0%

5% Don’t know / Not sure

Q: “Some churches show a video sermon from another location and/or time, while still having live music, prayers, a live local pastor, and personal interaction among the congregation. If you were considering visiting a church, would it matter if the sermon was preached on a video screen or in-person?”
Significant Differences

Region
Age
Gender
Education Level
Church Attendance
Born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian
Significant Statistical Differences

- Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences among region of the country, age, gender, and education level. Each category was divided into four groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>18-29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>No College Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>30-44</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>College Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
Region is defined by US Census locations
Significant Statistical Differences

Comparisons were made to determine if there are any significant statistical differences in church attendance and whether they consider themselves a born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Attendance</th>
<th>Born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than once a week, About once a week</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once or twice a month</td>
<td>No, Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only on religious holidays</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“Some churches show a video sermon from another location and/or time, while still having live music, prayers, a live local pastor, and personal interaction among the congregation. If you were considering visiting a church, would it matter if the sermon was preached on a video screen or in-person?”

• Americans in the Northeast are the most likely to say it would not matter (40%) and the least likely to only visit if sermon is preached in-person (23%)
• Americans age 18-29 (37%) are more likely to say it would not matter than those age 45-54 (24%) and 65+ (26%)
• Americans with a college degree are
  • More likely to prefer a church with the sermon preached in-person (41% to 28%)
  • Less likely to only visit if sermon is preached in-person (26% to 37%)
• Americans who Never attend (47%) are most likely to say it would not matter
• Self-identified born-again, evangelical, or fundamentalist Christian are more likely to prefer sermon preached in-person (37% to 27%)
American Views on Video and In-Person Sermons

Survey of 1,001 American Adults
A recent poll conducted by LifeWay Research found that 58 percent of Protestant pastors would perform marriage ceremonies for cohabitating couples; 31 percent would not, and 10 percent were not sure.

"If I believed them to be in sin, why wouldn't I help get them out? The apostle Paul addresses that; if you're having trouble keeping your hands to yourself, then marry her. Basically, I think it's over-scrupulous—overly pietistic—to refuse to perform a ceremony that gets someone from a morally questionable situation into an honorable estate."

Douglas Wilson, minister, Christ Church, Moscow, Idaho

"I will most likely officiate at a wedding for a couple who has been living together. The arms of the church need to be open, giving them an opportunity to know the grace of Christ and hopefully to become a part of the congregation. What I do with people is that when they come with a situation where they've been living together before they get married, I talk with them about engaging with the church. There are a lot of issues that we could worry about in the world. For me, that's just not one that's high on the list for me. I just want to have the arms of the church embrace them and I want them to sense the grace of God."

Kurt Fredrickson, associate dean, Fuller Theological Seminary

"Under most state law, cohabitating couples have no legal protection from such things as abandonment, adultery, property protection, or financial support, so marriage is clearly the best legal option to protect the person you love. So if a pastor refuses to marry the couple based on moral grounds, the couple is robbed of the benefits of marriage in a sense. However, social science research shows that cohabitating couples actually sabotage their chances for a lifetime of happiness by their premarital cohabitation. So if a pastor marries the couple based on the fact that marriage is a better (both legally and spiritually) union for the couple without explaining these facts, the couple is robbed of the understanding of how cohabitation sabotages a marriage. The benefits of doing things in the proper order cannot be underestimated and ought to be explained. When couples understand the implications of their actions, in choices of marriage or cohabitation, they can make better decisions for themselves and their partner. Pastors can come alongside and bring wisdom and counsel to the couples' decision, and use the question 'Should I perform your marriage?' as an entrée to leading them and their future together closer to the foot of the cross, where their marriage will thrive permanently."

Lynne Marie Kohm, John Brown McCarty Professor of Family Law, Regent University School of Law

"While we are always attracted to cut-and-dried answers, it's important to carefully consider the situation and makeup of those to whom we minister before giving counsel. Imagine you are a pastor to a community that lives in poverty and are counseling a couple that has lived together for ten years, has several children, and live on food stamps. Asking them to separate would mean separating a household, at least temporarily, and asking the family to, in effect, endure the stresses and dangers of divorce when this family does not have the resources to withstand it. On the other hand, imagine a pastor sitting with two college students who have been living together for six weeks, are caught up in the excitement of romance, and 'want to make it permanent.' Very likely they need to separate and find help developing a more realistic view of themselves and setting the relationship on a much more certain foundation. In other words, knowing that a couple is cohabitating doesn't really tell you all you need to know to love them well. The goal is to help cohabitating couples understand what they must know and do to live in the pattern of covenant faithfulness that God has given us. The pathway there is one that must be discerned with wisdom and care."

Winston Smith, faculty, Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation

"I require cohabitating couples to separate during the engagement. The ultimate goal is for them to separate—abstinence before marriage, you know. And to the world it just seems trite that, 'Okay, we've been having sex for three years, we want to get married, and now you're telling us we can't have sex for eight weeks?' Yes, that's exactly right. I ask cohabitating couples who attend our church, 'Do you want to start this marriage off right?' If we get to the point of marrying cohabitating couples without asking them to separate or practice abstinence before marriage, we're really starting to move away from being a church that honors marriage and becoming a justice of the peace. The bigger question is: 'What's your value of marriage? Is marrying a cohabiting couple honoring marriage?'"

Ted Cunningham, author, Young and in Love

"Couples who cohabit and then marry are 61 percent more likely to divorce than those who remain apart before the wedding—because sin
leads to sin leads to sin. We need to do everything we can to help couples build relationships that are likely to endure. And a better way to prepare couples for marriage is to actually encourage that couple to move apart and prepare for marriage by taking a premarital inventory, and discussing the issues it surfaces with a trained mentor couple. If a pastor doesn't bring up the cohabitation issue, they're acting irresponsibly. They're neither being biblical nor practical in helping that couple."

Mike McManus, president, Marriage Savers

"Pastors are stewards of a biblical understanding of sexuality. Marrying cohabiters miscommunicates the teaching function of marriage. I would only marry couples that were repentant, had forsaken the sin of cohabiting, and sought the remedy of marriage. Marriage does not simply validate the long-term commitment of a couple whose relationship has been based upon cohabitation. There's another problem, which has to do with the fact that pastors are not the only stewards of marriage. In other words, marriage is accessible to persons outside the church. So when the church allows a marriage to take place within its life, it should be validating this in a way that goes beyond marriage as a creation institution and gets to what marriage is teaching in the ceremony of the church and the church's stewardship of marriage."

R. Albert Mohler Jr, president, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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With 1 in 3 states soon allowing gays and lesbians to wed, religious freedom protections get unexpected advocate.

Kate Tracy
[ posted 11/14/2013 09:42AM ]

Hawaii overtook Illinois yesterday as the latest American state to legalize same-sex marriage (raising the total to nearly 1 in 3 states). But more unexpectedly, given that Hawaii was one of the first states where the issue surfaced, a Hawaii state representative has caused waves for becoming the first openly gay lawmaker to vote against a state's same-sex marriage bill.

Rep. Jo Jordan voted against SB1 because she said its exemptions were "too narrow," especially regarding religious freedom.

"It wasn't protective enough for everybody," Jordan told Honolulu Magazine, later noting, "I'm not here to protect the big churches or the little churches, I'm saying we can't erode what's currently out there. We don't want to scratch at the religious protections at all, because if we don't create a measure that's bulletproof, or as close to bulletproof as possible, then the measure will go to the courts."

The final bill was passed Tuesday on a 19-4 Senate vote after 55 hours of public testimony and two day-long sessions in the House, where it passed with a 30-19 vote. NBC News reports:
House lawmakers tacked on exemptions to the bill allowing religious groups and affiliated nonprofits to be exempt from having to provide goods, services or facilities for the solemnization or celebration of same-sex marriages. They will be immune from legal liability, too. The exemptions were modeled after similar language in Connecticut's gay-marriage law.

Gov. Neil Abercrombie signed the measure Wednesday, making Hawaii the 15th state to legalize same-sex marriage, effective December 2. Illinois also recently voted to legalize same-sex marriage, but Gov. Pat Quinn will not sign the measure until November 20.

The Hawaii bill now states it will protect religious freedom by:

(A) Ensuring that any clergy, minister, priest, rabbi, officer of any religious denomination or society, or religious society not having clergy but providing solemnizations that is authorized to perform solemnizations shall not be required to solemnize any marriage or civil union that is against their religious beliefs or faith, in accordance with the Hawaii state constitution and the United States Constitution; and

(B) Clarifying that a religious organization or nonprofit organization operated, supervised, or controlled by a religious organization shall not be required to provide goods, services, or its facilities or grounds for the solemnization or celebration of a marriage or civil union that is in violation of its religious beliefs or faith.

By contrast, the Illinois bill states:

Nothing in this Act shall interfere with or regulate the religious practice of any religious denomination or Indian Nation....

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require any religious denomination or Indian Nation ... or any minister, clergy, or officiant acting as a representative of a religious denomination or Indian Nation ... to solemnize any marriage. Instead [it is] ... free to choose which marriages it will solemnize. Notwithstanding any other law to the contrary, a refusal by a religious denomination or Indian Nation..., or any minister, clergy, or officiant ... to solemnize any marriage under this Act shall not create or be the basis for any civil, administrative, or criminal penalty, claim, or cause of action.

No church, mosque, synagogue, temple, nondenominational ministry, interdenominational or ecumenical organization, mission organization, or other organization whose principal purpose is the study, practice, or advancement of religion is required to provide religious facilities for the solemnization ceremony or celebration associated with the solemnization ceremony of a marriage if the ... ceremony or celebration ... is in violation of its religious beliefs. [Such] entity ... shall be immune from any civil, administrative, criminal penalty, claim, or cause of action based on its refusal to provide religious facilities .... As used in this subsection..., "religious facilities" means sanctuaries, parish halls, fellowship halls, and similar facilities. "Religious facilities" does not include facilities such as businesses, health care facilities, educational facilities, or social service agencies.

The legislation ends a decades-long debate in Hawaii, starting in 1990 when two women launched a court battle over their right to marry. The controversy led to Congress's Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. Last year, a federal court upheld Hawaii's ban on same-sex marriages as constitutional. But a wave of new legalization efforts is now afoot.

CT has noted the increasing number of states legalizing same-sex marriage, as well as the increasing emphasis on the legal language of conscience protections.
The Surprise Inside Church Bankruptcies

After its revenues plunged from $55 million to $25 million over three years, in 2010 the Crystal Cathedral filed for protection under Chapter 11 of the federal bankruptcy code. They weren't alone: nearly 500 others did over a five-year period. University of Illinois law professor Pamela Foohey took a closer look at church bankruptcy filings from 2006-11 and continues to track them. Her study, "Bankrupting the Faith," is forthcoming in the Missouri Law Review.) She was interviewed by Ken Walker, who wrote today's article on the effects of so many church bankruptcies.

What motivated you to take a closer look at church filings?

I decided to hone in on religious organizations' use of bankruptcy law. They occupy a distinct place in our society and have a distinct mission, which I thought would be useful to explore.

You mention religious organizations and small businesses have some of the same vulnerabilities. Are there any ways churches use Chapter 11 differently?

They're much different when they enter Chapter 11. They come into bankruptcy owning a larger church building, but the amount outstanding on the mortgage is less than the building's value. The fact that they have a significant asset and own part of it makes them distinct from small businesses.

You say that leadership helps determine the viability of a financially troubled church. Is that any different than a small business?

Many times churches using Chapter 11 are only going to succeed if a dynamic leader is part of the church and does what he does to make the church a viable business—to revitalize the membership or work to change what the church is doing so there is a better revenue stream. So in that way they're very similar.

Did you observe any structural weaknesses of churches?

That has to do with why they're in bankruptcy—the church purchased a building that only looked like a good deal. The structural weakness might be looking ahead enough at how the church and its members are going to pay the mortgage. That's what I call a leadership failure in terms of not looking into the future about what is, essentially, the church's business model.

Any particular findings that surprised you?

What surprised me the most was that churches entered bankruptcy saying they owned a building that was worth significantly more than
they owed on it: an "equity cushion." Most businesses that enter Chapter 11 are hopelessly insolvent; they have debts three times what they own. Churches look a lot different. I was surprised to find that so many churches had a healthy asset vs. debt profile. Because of that, I was also surprised that they were in Chapter 11. I would have thought that there would be an incentive on the part of the mortgage holders, the banks, to try to come to a deal.

You say that 72 percent of church filers were balance-sheet solvent, but there is often a major difference between total assets and liquidity. That's part of why I was surprised they were filing. Balance sheet solvent means a church that is filing may be saying say its church is going to be worth $2 million if they sold it at market value. But the minute you try to sell a church at an auction, the value drops a lot. So the usefulness of the code is to allow the church to hang on and realize the market value of the property (and) the plan is confirmed by the bank. And obviously leaders and members are happy they get to stay in the place where they've been worshiping.

Overall Chapter 11 filings peaked in 2009, two years before religious organizations. Why did churches have a tougher time recovering?

My best guess at this point is that there's a lag in how churches are dealing with the economic downturn, so people keep giving money and then they stop, waiting for their life to get better and they just haven't quite gotten better yet. Or that there's some kind of social network norm going on, where churches slowly are realizing this is a way to deal with their financial issues in a way that can be useful.

In the conclusion you say that it can be productive to allow a church to remain in place while it tries to revive, but at what point do members need to wake up?

I was asking, "When is Chapter 11 going to be useful?" Probably in situations where a church has significant equity in a building. And they have members and a leader who are committed to making sure that they're going to be able to pay back the rest of that mortgage. On the flip side, if there's a church building that might be hard to sell on the market and isn't worth as much as the mortgage, that church may need to think about trying to close what they're doing right now. Focus on creating a new ministry.

What's next with your ongoing study?

There are a couple things. I've been reaching out to pastors and attorneys involved in these cases to learn more about what they were thinking when they filed for bankruptcy. And from that, I will be tailoring suggestions for how attorneys can help churches through bankruptcy more effectively. I would like to continue reaching out to the communities and creditors, including letting religious leaders know this is something you can turn to when things go very poorly; it can help you with your ultimate mission. Bankruptcy is an opportunity that might be overlooked when things kind of go bad.

Sounds like you have a book brewing.

I hope. It would be awesome to do something on all the non-profits. The New York City Opera just filed Chapter 11 (Oct. 1) and that's a whole different ballgame. It would be really interesting to write something about non-profits' use of bankruptcy. But clearly half the book will be about churches.
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists® : 11-27-13 U.S. federal judge strikes down law giving clergy tax-free housing allowance

A United States federal judge last week ruled that the clergy exemption for paying taxes on income designated for housing is unconstitutional, a ruling that if upheld could affect the compensation package of tens of thousands of clergy in the country.

In her decision, U.S. District Court Judge Barbara Crabb said the law, known as the “parsonage exemption,” benefits “religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise.”

The exemption for clergy, she wrote, violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, which prohibits Congress from making a law “respecting an establishment of religion.”

Crabb said her ruling would not be enforced pending appeal.

Her decision is the result of a suit brought by the Wisconsin-based Freedom From Religion Foundation, which advocates for the separation of church and state. The foundation sued the U.S. Treasury secretary and Internal Revenue Service commissioner over the exemption, which was passed by Congress in 1954. Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code permits a “minister of the gospel” to designate some compensation as a housing allowance and exempt it from income tax.

“This ruling is a huge deal because it would have a dramatic impact in how the church compensates its ministers,” said Tom Wetmore, associate general counsel for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. “We have long depended on this tax benefit for the compensation package for our clergy in North America.”
The after-tax benefit to Adventist ministers is estimated between 5 and 10 percent of their total compensation package, he said.

Wetmore said the ruling also raises questions about other aspects of the tax status of ministers and other unique tax rules for churches, such as exemptions from reporting revenue activities and church benefit plans.

The case is expected to be appealed to the 7th U.S Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago. If so, Wetmore said the Adventist Church would likely file an amicus brief (friend of the court) or join an amicus brief brought by other groups.

------ Author: Ansel Oliver Adventist News Network Silver Spring, Maryland November 26, 2013