Relief Efforts and a Rumor

Adventist Community Services (ACS) personnel are active in the hard hit areas of the Midwest that have suffered violent weather and flooding. This week ACS served more than 750 people in San Marcos with clothing from the Texas ACS mobile distribution truck. In addition to flood response, ACS volunteers have been operating a donations center in South Dakota in response to needs following a tornado earlier this month. Flooding in Texas spawned a satirical news story and false rumors that this year’s General Conference session had been cancelled. **Donations for ACS efforts can be given online.**
Pray for Two CAA Faculty Members

Your prayers are invited for two faculty members of Columbia Adventist Academy (CAA) who were seriously injured late Wednesday. Larry Hiday, CAA development director and science instructor, and Keith Kerbs, religion and social studies instructor, were struck by a vehicle while riding their bicycles in Battle Ground, Wash., near CAA. Their injuries, while serious, are not reported to be life threatening, yet recovery will undoubtedly take time. Pray for them, their families and the extended CAA family as this school year comes to a close.

WWU Engineers Without Borders Receives Grant

The Boeing Company has granted $3,000 for the Walla Walla University chapter of Engineers Without Borders (EWB-WWU). The grant will go toward the chapter’s water project in Peru. EWB-WWU plans to continue their project this fall in the isolated village of Pampa Chiri in the Andes Mountains. EWB-WWU students will help people in the village to create a much needed sustainable, clean water system. Ian Cooke, EWB-WWU secretary and 2015–2016 president says, “EWB-WWU is very grateful to the Boeing Company for their donation. Donations are what make the work we do possible.” Read more online from WWU.
Christian Colleges Face Religious Liberty Challenges Ahead

Changing norms within our society and subsequent laws are challenging Christian, faith-driven institutions. Recent health care laws are forcing Christian colleges to respond by filing lawsuits against the Department of Health and Human Services, questioning their definition of the type of organization whose religious freedom is considered worthy of protection. However, these are not the only new challenges facing religious higher education institutions. Changing views on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are all threatening Christian liberty. The stakes impact how Christians can legally practice their convictions. To read one perspective on how religious freedom is being challenged at Christian colleges, visit Biola Magazine online.

NW Adventist Education Jobs

K–12 Openings

- Principal/5–8 Teacher, Anchorage Junior Academy, Alaska
- Elementary Teacher, Capital View Christian School, Montana
- Academy Science Teacher, Puget Sound Adventist Academy, Washington
- Head Teacher/Grades 3–8, Mountain View Adventist School, Montana
- 3–5 Teacher, Boise Valley Adventist School, Idaho
- Kindergarten Teacher, La Grande Adventist Christian School, Oregon
• Task Force Assistant Boys' Dean, Mount Ellis Academy, Montana
• Assistant Girls' Dean, Gem State Adventist Academy, Idaho
• Assistant Boys' Dean, Gem State Adventist Academy, Idaho

For more information, visit North American Division Office of Education website.

Walla Walla University Openings

• Faculty Position in Technology: Aviation/Chief Flight Director
• Tenure-track Faculty Position in BSW and MSW Programs
• Tenure-track Library Faculty Position at the School of Nursing’s Library in Portland, Oregon
• Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies

For more information, visit North American Division Office of Education website.

UCC Constituency Session

Upcoming

The Upper Columbia Conference Constituency Session begins Sunday, May 31 at 9:30 a.m. at Upper Columbia Academy. This meeting is open to general church members even if they are not voting delegates. This is the grass roots governing body of the church. Delegates have been selected by each church to participate in decisions that direct the Adventist mission in the conference for the next four years. You can also watch the live stream at uccsda.org.

Watch this creative video of the Sermon on the Mount
UCC Job: Moving Van Driver

The Upper Columbia Conference (UCC) has an opening for a moving van driver. The position is available immediately. For a complete job description please click here. Contact the Upper Columbia Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Human Resources Department for more information. Email athr@uccsda.org or richardp@uccsda.org, or call 509-242-0431. Applications accepted until May 29, 2015.
Get Moving to Prevent Memory Loss

How’s your memory? Want to stay sharp as you age? Most of us think our memory is pretty good — and we want to keep it that way! But we often don’t think about protecting our memory until we notice a problem. Alzheimer’s disease and dementia are on the rise. Fortunately, exercise can help. New research suggests that being active can slow mental decline and even improve brain function. Read more from WellSource.

Do you enjoy GleanerWeekly? Don't keep it to yourself. Forward it to a friend and share!

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- Proving Ourselves Wrong
- Board Affirms Seven Keys to Auburn’s Future
- Extralogical Enlightenment
- Nature Photo Gallery

And More!
Looking Ahead

May

- May 28: PAA Spring Concert, Portland, OR
- May 29: Hood View Church 50th Anniversary Celebration, Boring, OR
- May 31: Upper Columbia Conference Constituency Session, Spangle, WA

More Events Online

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InPrint

June

In this increasingly litigious culture, the Adventist Church must work within careful parameters. In this month’s Gleaner interview, Andre Wang, new legal counsel for the North Pacific Union Conference, shares how the church can carry its legacy of mission and service forward.
in spite of these challenges. Take a moment now to flip through the latest issue at *GleanerNow.com*.
WWU chapter of Engineers Without Borders receives $3000 grant

By: Libby Knapp

The Walla Walla University chapter of Engineers Without Borders recently received a $3,000 grant from Boeing for the EWB-WWU water supply project in Pampa Chiri, Peru.

The grant from Boeing will be combined with additional funds raised by EWB-WWU to continue their work in Pampa Chiri, a small, isolated village in the Andes Mountains of Peru. The village currently depends on a water source that is contaminated and far from where they live. Students involved with EWB-WWU will work alongside people from the village to design and build a sustainable water system that will deliver clean water to the village. Approximately 18 families (50 to 60 people) will be affected by the new water system.

Chris Ghazal, student manager and grant writer for the project, said, “We are planning to travel to Peru and implement this new system in September. We are so grateful and excited to continue with this project. We want to build a relationship with the people of Pampa Chiri so they will learn how to independently maintain their new water system, how to prevent disease, and have access to clean water.”

The EWB-USA Project Grants Program awarded more than $322,000 to various EWB chapters across the country during the spring grants cycle. These grants support EWB-USA work in developing communities around the world. Projects funded include building an elementary school in Nicaragua and potable water supply projects in Uganda and Peru.

Ian Cooke, EWB-WWU secretary and 2015-2016 president says, “EWB-WWU is very grateful to the Boeing Company for their donation. Donations are what make the work we do possible. Donations such as these not only empower the club to complete humanitarian projects worldwide and benefit those in places of need, they also help
to develop tomorrow’s leaders and ensure that they have an awareness of the greater world around them so that they can one day give back to the global community.”

*Published May 27, 2015.*

<- Back to: News
The Freedom to be a Christian College

As religious convictions are met with new legal challenges, what’s at stake for schools like Biola?

By Brett McCracken

What happens when the Christian conscience conflicts with the laws of the land? The U.S. Constitution protects the free exercise of religion, but what does “exercise” include? Does it encompass the expression of faith in a for-profit business? This was a question raised by *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby*, this summer’s landmark Supreme Court case that examined the scope of religion freedom for closely held for-profit corporations.

What about religious nonprofits? Will relief organizations and Christian colleges maintain the freedom to define their Christian identity broadly – as a communal movement that calls us to live and serve the world for Christ, beyond a private home or a church’s walls? Religious freedom is increasingly a contested issue in our society, and it’s hitting close to home for communities like Biola University.

Yet it’s less about politics than it is about principles. What’s at stake is the freedom to be who we are – to do life together in the manner we believe God has called us.

Challenges to Religious Freedom in Christian Higher Education

For Christian colleges like Biola, religious freedom challenges have legal, financial, philosophical and theological implications.

The key legal question is how shifting cultural norms, and their accompanying legal protections, will interact with religious freedom protections for institutions that hold orthodox Christian beliefs, said Shapri LoMaglio, vice president for government relations and executive programs at the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU).

The question arose in 2010, for example, with the passing of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), which contained a mandate for faith-based employers to offer free access through their group health insurance plans to all government-approved contraceptive drugs — including those that might induce abortions. Biola was among many religious colleges (including schools like the University of Notre Dame, Wheaton College, Catholic University and Dordt College) that responded by filing lawsuits against the Department of Health and Human Services.

Writing in the *National Review* about why Biola filed its HHS lawsuit, President Barry H. Corey said the most unsettling thing about the mandate was its unprecedented narrowing of the type of organization whose religious freedom is considered worthy of protection.

“Biola University is about as faith-driven and religiously oriented as a university can be,” Corey wrote. “So if we don’t fall within the protection of a ‘religious exemption,’ something is fundamentally wrong.”

More recently, the State of California’s Department of Managed Health Care (DMHC) issued a letter on Aug. 22 requiring all health insurance companies doing business in California to include coverage for all abortions, including elective abortions, in all employer-sponsored insurance plans. The letter described abortion as a “basic health care service” and said “all health plans must treat maternity services and legal abortion neutrally.” Although efforts are...
being made to object to this new requirement, there is no provision for a religious exemption and Biola's health insurance providers are now required to include coverage for all abortions.

Other religious freedom challenges facing Christian higher education involve sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

On July 21, President Obama issued an executive order that added sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of classes protected from employment discrimination by federal contractors. This means religious organizations that are considered federal contractors, subcontractors or vendors are now subject to these new nondiscrimination rules. This executive order did not include a religious organization exemption, but it also did not remove the existing religious staffing exemption. This raises some serious concerns. For example, if a religious organization subject to the order does not exclude potential employees based on sexual orientation and yet maintains an employee conduct standard that restricts sexual conduct in accordance with its religious values, the question is raised as to whether it is lawfully exercising its right to consider religion in hiring or, instead, violating the new nondiscrimination requirements.

Much attention was given this summer to Gordon College President Michael Lindsay, who signed a petition — alongside Rick Warren, Gabe Lyons and 11 other religious and political leaders — supporting a religious exemption that balanced the government's interest in protecting "both LGBT Americans, as well as the religious organizations that seek to serve in accordance with their faith and values." Lindsay's stand for religious freedom resulted in accreditation scrutiny by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). Additionally, the nearby city of Salem terminated Gordon's contract to manage the city's historic Old Town Hall, citing a nondiscrimination ordinance. The Lynn public school district also severed an 11-year student volunteer partnership with Gordon, citing the college's opposition to federal hiring protection for gays and lesbians, according to the Boston Globe.

In addition to nondiscriminatory hiring practices, issues involving transgender students have recently posed challenges for CCCU members such as George Fox University and California Baptist University. The George Fox case involved a male-identifying transgender student who filed a complaint with the U.S. Education Department because the school denied the student's request to live in male student housing, instead offering the student a private room. The Education Department responded to the complaint in George Fox's favor, granting the college an exemption to Title IX's prohibitions against discrimination on the basis of gender identity.

The California Baptist case involved a female-identifying transgender student who was admitted with a scholarship in 2011 but whose admission was later rescinded when the university learned that the student had identified as transgender on a reality television program. The student's lawsuit cited the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which prohibits discrimination based on gender identity. This summer, a California Superior Court judge ruled that California Baptist's actions were within its rights, as an organization whose primary mission is "the inculcation of a specific set of moral values." However, the judge also ruled that the university could not bar such individuals from certain publicly accessible places on campus or from its online educational programs, which was seen as a victory by those opposing widespread exceptions to state civil rights laws for religious organizations.

These are just some of the many challenges facing Christian higher education institutions that, in the midst of a quickly changing moral and legal landscape, strive to remain faithful to deeply held Christian convictions. What are the implications of all this? Should Christian colleges be concerned?

What's at Stake?

What's at stake for Christian colleges and universities is our freedom to practice the convictions we hold, living in the way we believe we are called to live, Corey said.

"For us at Biola, freedom of religion means the freedom to live out our faith together in community," Corey said. "Our nation is not made up of 300 million individuals; it's made up of churches and families and corporations and
organizations and schools and universities, each with norms and expectations and types of covenants. We deeply believe in these covenants.”

One of the things that has historically made America attractive as a melting pot refuge is that it values peaceful pluralism — the idea that people can live here with their deeply held convictions and not be subject to the whims of ruling regimes. It’s why America has always allowed groups like Quakers to refrain from fighting, as conscientious objectors, even in times of national war efforts, said Stanley Carlson-Thies, founder of the Institutional Religious Freedom Alliance at the Center for Public Justice.

As our society becomes more and more pluralistic, it becomes even more important “to find a way to accommodate these differences and give them space, or else it’s only one group that’s going to feel like they’re at home here,” Carlson-Thies said.

One of the chief values of religious freedom in a pluralistic society is that it serves as a check of the government’s power to define the contours of protected religious exercise.

“If you give to the government the ability to differentiate between what religious convictions are really and truly important or not, then we will wind up with a state-established religion in which the government says, ‘a vague concept of the divine is all that really matters, and all of your particularities can simply be wiped away like a building being plowed away by eminent domain in order to build a new business,’” said Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, at a recent summit for evangelical leaders.

If a Christian college maintains that certain standards of sexual conduct (heterosexual or homosexual) are an essential part of its expression of religious identity, should the government take the college at its word? If it comes down to the freedom of individuals versus the freedom of religious groups and institutions, whose freedom will the courts privilege? These are key questions in the issues facing the CCCU, and depending on how they are answered, the implications for Christian higher education could be costly in more ways than one.

The Practical Costs

If laws and regulations change on these matters so that religious exemptions are narrowed or eliminated, what would be the consequences if a Christian college chose to maintain historical convictions rather than compromise on deeply held principles? The practical consequences would be potentially dire.

One huge impact would be financial, said the CCCU’s LoMaglio. Even though schools like Biola are private institutions, most of their students depend on the school’s eligibility for federal Title IV funds, which include such assistance as Perkins loans and Pell grants. Will any future federal nondiscrimination policies or Title IX amendments apply to Christian institutions’ eligibility for Title IV funding, or will there be religious exemptions? If the former, then tuition-dependent institutions such as Biola will face severe financial challenges as access to federal financial aid disappears for students already burdened by high tuition costs. In Biola’s case, the threat could also come from state laws that put Biola’s eligibility for Cal Grants in jeopardy.

Accreditation is another potential threat. Accreditors are private organizations that aren’t inherently bound to what the government does or doesn’t choose to do. So even if the government chooses to apply religious exemptions generously, accreditors may not. Loss of accreditation would mean loss of credibility as a degree-granting institution, but it would also have bearing on funding. In order to be eligible for Title IV funds, institutions must be fully accredited by an Education Department-recognized accreditor. Thus, if an accrediting agency decides to revoke a school’s accreditation based on what it sees as discriminatory practices, the school would lose access to Title IV funding as well as the legitimacy of its degrees.

The Ideological Costs
In addition to the practical costs of potential lost federal funds and accreditation, there are significant potential ideological costs. Most important, perhaps, is the way that religion and religious expression are being defined ever more narrowly, as encompassing little more than private, individual worship or church attendance. What is being eroded for religious institutions like Biola — which are not churches but are nevertheless defined by and organized around religion — is the conviction that Christianity isn’t just a parcel of identity cordoned off from the rest of an individual’s life, but a holistic and communal way of being in the world.

Writing on his blog in response to his then-employer Wheaton College’s decision to file a lawsuit contesting the HHS contraceptive mandate, Baylor University professor Alan Jacobs said his primary concern was not with contraception but with the government’s move to narrowly define the “religion” part of “free exercise of religion.”

“The government’s position suggests a move to confine freedom of religion to freedom of worship, but all authentic religion is far more than worship: it is also a set of practices in the world, practices which the U.S. government is constitutionally bound to protect,” Jacobs wrote.

The HHS mandate, he wrote, “threatens to confine religion to a disembodied, Gnostic realm of private worship and thought. Even those who support abortion and contraception should not want to see the government defining religion maximally as private thought and belief.”

This definitional narrowing of religious freedom has been at the heart of why Biola filed its lawsuit, arguing that the university is fundamentally religious. Religious freedom should not be confined to what happens on Sunday morning, said Scott Rae, professor of Christian ethics at Biola’s Talbot School of Theology. Genuine Christian faith cannot be privatized because it has “an inescapable social and public dimension to it,” he said.

The HHS mandate’s definition of constitutionally protected religious organizations “truncates genuine Christian faith and relegates it to something that it’s actually not,” Rae said. “Telling someone you have the freedom to practice a truncated faith is like saying there’s no freedom to practice your faith.”

Religious freedom protections should apply not only to individuals but to groups of individuals, such as religious institutions, businesses and nonprofits, said Tom Wilson, associate professor of law, ethics and human resource management at Biola’s Crowell School of Business.

Wilson, a trial lawyer, said that with respect to freedom of religious expression there is no meaningful legal distinction between an individual or a group of individuals who all agree on something.

Both Wilson and Rae were optimistic that the June 30, 2014, Supreme Court ruling in Burwell v. Hobby Lobby could set a positive legal precedent for the application of religious freedom protections not only to individuals but to all sorts of religious organizations, including private businesses but also nonprofits.

The court’s 5–4 decision determined that the government “substantially burdens” religious exercise, in violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), whenever it imposes significant pressure upon an organization to violate its religious convictions, said Gregory Baylor, senior counsel for the Alliance Defending Freedom, the organization representing Biola in its HHS mandate lawsuit.

Baylor said the Hobby Lobby case demonstrates that the Supreme Court is willing to accept what religious organizations say violates their religion, which could have bearing on future cases involving Christian colleges and religious exemptions.

Others, such as Christianity Today executive editor Andy Crouch, believe parts of Burwell v. Hobby Lobby reinforce society’s “truncated” view of religion.

In an editorial titled “Life Together, Again,” Crouch cited Ruth Bader Ginsburg’s dissent in the Hobby Lobby case as a reminder of how “fewer and fewer of our neighbors understand how religious organizations — and all communities
smaller than the state — contribute to human flourishing and the common good."

Crouch noted that in her dissent, Ginsburg espoused narrow views of the goals of for-profit groups: "to make a profit, rather than to perpetuate a religious-values-based mission.

"The words rather than are key," wrote Crouch. "In Justice Ginsburg’s view, it seems, corporations cannot serve — or at least the law cannot recognize that they serve — any god other than Mammon. She articulated an equally small view of nonprofits when she wrote that ‘religious organizations exist to foster the interests of persons subscribing to the same religious faith.’"

Crouch found it sad that Ginsburg seems to have “never met a religious community that takes seriously William Temple’s words that the church ‘exists for the benefit of those who are not its members.’”

**Have We Perpetuated the Problem?**

The narrowing cultural understanding of what constitutes religious identity and expression may be the biggest ideological threat to the future of institutions like Biola, but are Christians partly to blame for perpetuating the problem?

Have Christians in America bought into individualism to such an extent that we’ve downplayed the church’s fundamentally communal identity, both in our practicing and articulating of Christianity? Have we rallied around the banner of “individual rights!” to the extent that we are now in a weak position to claim that some individual rights must be given up for the sake of Christian communal expression? Does the ubiquity of seeker-sensitive, have-it-your-way, just-me-and-Jesus Christianity in America make it hard for us to claim that religious groups and institutions are as (or more) legitimate manifestations of religion than individuals worshiping in their own preferred way?

Perhaps we need to take a closer look at the relationship between individual and group identity, said Carlson-Thies.

Collectivism and individualism are inconsistently adopted by various sides of the political spectrum, Carlson-Thies said. Conservatives are sometimes the loudest advocates for individual rights, but on the issues of LGBT rights, the progressive community is the one appealing to individualism while conservatives uphold the importance of institutions. On other issues, such as poverty and education, progressives employ the values of collective responsibility while conservatives emphasize the importance of individual effort.

Yet everyone inherently recognizes the importance of tribes, said Carlson-Thies. Whether in the gay community, or a sports fan community, or a collection of people with shared religious convictions, individuals find meaning, support and direction in groups.

Carlson-Thies said Christian institutions like Biola must help all of their individual constituents understand the nature and value of the group identity.

“Individual rights are really important, but we wouldn’t be able to form these rights, defend them, talk about them, develop them further, exemplify them, if we couldn’t be a community that lives by different values than many other people around us,” he said.

Christians should also be mindful of not perpetuating the “narrowing definition” of Christian expression by living a “Sunday only” type of faith. If religious faith is more a thing that we say than a fully orbed way that we live, we may inadvertently play into the societal perception that religion is a narrow subset of life that doesn’t need to have bearing on “secular” things like business, employment practices or sexual conduct.

Carlson-Thies said he finds it interesting that most CCCU schools talk a lot about the “integration of faith and learning,” whereas the Wesleyan tradition expands it to the integration of “faith, learning and life.”
“Putting the ‘life’ on there communicates that it’s not just something in your head,” he said. “It makes it clear we’re a community of people that live by certain standards as part of a community covenant.”

What Can We Do?

What can Christian institutions like Biola do to better position themselves for present and future challenges to religious freedom?

1. Defend religious freedom globally

Religious freedom may be an increasing challenge in the U.S. but it has been and continues to be an even more dramatic, life-and-death challenge globally. Christians are being killed for their faith and driven from their homes in Iraq and Syria. In North Korea there are at least 70,000 believers in labor camps. In Egypt, many Christians cannot walk down the street without fearing for their lives.

Junior Mourin Serour knows this firsthand. After growing up outside Cairo, she and her Coptic Christian family fled to America in 2011 after it became too dangerous for them to stay in Egypt. As a Christian woman in a Muslim-majority nation, simply walking in public without wearing a hijab made Serour a target. Her life was threatened on numerous occasions.

Serour said it’s “amazing” to be in a safe Christian environment like Biola, where she is studying biology with hopes of one day returning to Egypt as a dentist, but she does find that many Christians in America don’t fully appreciate the freedom they have.

“The most peaceful walking the street is something Americans take for granted,” she said. “If we step outside of America and see what is going on in the world we should be so thankful.”

On one hand, Christians in America could look at what’s happening around the world and find our religious freedom challenges here almost laughably minor by comparison. But on the other hand, it could give us a view into where we may be headed, said David Curry, president and CEO of Open Doors USA.

“Right now persecution is episodic in the West and it’s not episodic in the Middle East and in North Korea — it’s constant,” said Curry, whose organization aids persecuted Christians around the world. “I think we have to understand that persecution of Christians will be the issue in the next generation and beyond.”

Curry believes that what is happening in small ways with religious freedom in America can give Christians a heightened sensitivity to what is happening to Christians globally. He hopes American Christians will pray for the persecuted church but also help meet their practical needs, like loving and welcoming expatriates and refugees, like Serour, who come to the U.S. to escape persecution.

Judith Rood, professor of history and Middle Eastern studies at Biola, agrees with Curry that a sense of solidarity with persecuted Christians in other cultures is essential.

“We need to pray for [Middle Eastern Christians], but we also need to see these people as part of us,” Rood said. “We have to broaden our idea of what it means to be a Christian, and not just in our American context. I think we need to have a sense that we are the church; we are the movement.”

2. Partner with others to defend religious freedom

The global challenge of religious freedom must be addressed with coordinated partnership rather than unilateral action.

“This issue calls us to come together both to stand our ground and to be the winsome witness that we can...
collectively be,” Corey said. “We have to do this together.”

This means Christians of all stripes — evangelical, Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic — should partner with each other and defend one another’s freedom. But it also means Christians should defend the religious freedom of other religions, too. If Christians want the right to practice their faith and not compromise their convictions, they should also defend Muslim or Jewish communities from being forced to act against their faith.

Christians should embrace this sort of “civic pluralism,” Carlson-Thies said. “It doesn’t mean that we think [all religions] are correct — just that we respect their desire to live true to their conscience, because that’s what we desire ourselves.”

Wilson agreed, noting Christians' best argument for religious freedom may be that in a pluralistic society, we have as much right as any other faith-based group to express our religion freely, without government intrusion.

“If our nation truly welcomes pluralism, then we as Christians are part of that pluralism,” said Wilson, who added that embracing pluralism is not the same thing as “all beliefs are equal” syncretism.

Rather than claiming a privileged place at the table or advancing a sense of exceptionalism, Christians should simply advocate for a level playing field where the gospel can take root, said Corey, who believes Christians should be confident enough in the power of the gospel to be OK with its just being “at the table” in the marketplace of ideas.

“Religious freedom is not ‘We deserve to be treated in a special way,’” said Corey. “It’s recognizing that covenantal communities exist everywhere with certain norms that are tied to deeply held values, and our right to exist according to these norms must be protected.”

### 3. Embrace the communal, voluntary orientation of Christianity

Christianity is a belief system worked out in community and not simply in the private domain of individual preference, untethered to community standards of belief and practice. In a society as thoroughly individualistic as ours, this notion may be quite countercultural. Christian institutions must nevertheless defend it.

A pluralistic society may celebrate diverse communities, but it must also recognize that communities need boundaries in order to survive.

Just as political parties must exclude some policies in order to advance others and families must embrace exclusive vows and bonds of loyalty, wrote Crouch, “Religious communities hold their members to unique and often higher standards than those of the broader society.”

“And here lies the rub: an individualistic world is scandalized by any community whose boundaries threaten the freedom of the individuals within it,” Crouch wrote. “Especially, we are discovering, when those boundaries place restrictions on the choices individuals make about sex.

Christian communities must not shy away from the necessity of boundaries and the importance of holding individual members to the agreed-upon covenant, even while they welcome anyone who agrees to voluntarily join.

The key word is voluntarily. Colleges like Biola are voluntary communities. An individual who does not share the values of a certain community is not obligated to join it.

“Biola is not just an accident of people who happen to be in La Mirada,” said Baylor. “They’re organized around Christian commitments that are articulated in a particular way. If you say that individuals can willy nilly dissent from those commitments, then that’s no longer a defining characteristic of the community. What, then, is the community about?”
4. Show how Christian colleges contribute to the common good

Christian colleges must defend their freedom to be fully Christian, but they must also show why these institutions are worth preserving. What would the nation be like without the common good contributions of Christian colleges?

“Our schools need to tell their stories and tell the good work that they are doing: graduating underrepresented communities, graduating students with below average student debt and low default rates, graduating students who contribute to society broadly and do wonderful things,” LoMaglio said.

President Corey agreed, noting that many graduates of Christian colleges give up high-paying jobs to go into service-minded organizations and industries and global relief and development.

“If suddenly Christian higher education was expunged from our culture, I think there would be a dramatic impact on the way that neighborhoods, school systems, NGOs and nonprofits are able to thrive,” he said. “We don’t need to be known as the anti-this or -that school; we need to do a better job showing how our particular way of doing education produces significant good in the world.”

5. Pray

Though religious freedom challenges are not as dire in the U.S. as they are in other parts of the world, the stakes are still high and the implications troubling. The threat is “existential” for Christian institutions like Biola, Baylor said, due to the potential for lost funding and accreditation.

Will the freedom to be a Christian, in the fullest sense of what that means, survive in America?

“I think knowing where it can lead makes you diligent about even the slightest chipping away of religious freedom,” said Rae. “I don’t think it takes too much imagination to see Christian universities and organizations being put at huge disadvantages in the next decade.”

Perhaps what we need to do most is pray: for the future of religious freedom both domestically and abroad; for a spirit of collaboration and discernment among those whose convictions are under scrutiny; for the courage to respond winsomely and compassionately to accusations that may come; for the freedom, and the courage, to follow Christ in all aspects of life.

Comments

• Duncan Frissell January 8, 2015 at 4:11 PM

Don't forget the option 8 schools have taken in refusing to accept federal funds and thus avoiding the many of
the Spending Power imposed regulations and costs.

- Rafael Castro January 10, 2015 at 11:08 PM

Why would government advocate for one way of philosophy (gay)
And will to shut another (Christianity) who is suffering discrimination here?
Or is the ideology of being gay greater than the ideology of being Christian?
If government allows gays to display in freedom their conduct in public.
So why not let the Christian display our freedom in conduct in public.
Otherwise I say, Yell Discrimination on Christians.
The government always reacts to this word DISCRIMINATION.
I say let them hear it loud!!!
God bless. The Way!

- Rafael Castro January 10, 2015 at 11:40 PM

The argument is the same between the gay and the Christian,
Is a sexual preference, if you allow the gay in order to practice his ideas you should also
Allow the Christian to practice his ideas both affect society, do not shut down
Religious freedom, in public, otherwise let the gay be gay behind doors also.
Discrimination against Christianity.

- Aly January 18, 2015 at 4:12 PM

Your words are hurting so many people. Shame on you.

- Alumnus February 11, 2015 at 8:25 PM

It's about time you came out of the closet, Rafael

- bgwrn March 30, 2015 at 4:18 PM

Do you even go here...

- Mikehorn May 12, 2015 at 4:35 AM

Never mentioned is a vital point about religious freedom that is also part of the First Amendment, though in
this case a restriction. All of these problems described in the article center on government funding,
government subsidies, government contracts. While citizens have freedom of religion protected by
Amendment (a very high bar to get over), the government is equally forbidden to favor one religion over
another (establish). The schools and businesses claim the right to discriminate based on theology, which
surprisingly is protected to a certain extent. But the government cannot do that, cannot fund that, and cannot
officially support that in any way because that would require the government to favor one theology over
another.

If a university wants to take government funds, those funds come with the restrictions on government action.
If you don't like it, don't take the funds. Exist in the free market outside of government support.

- Arbuthnaught May 12, 2015 at 10:25 PM

Mikehorn,
Just because a soup kitchen is run by a religious institution with religious values does not mean that it should
be discriminated against and denied government contracts to provide nutrition. There is not one thing wrong
with using religious service providers to deliver goods and services, perhaps even better than non religious
providers. The government interest is solely was the food provided in a quality manner. Religious institutions of all types delivers social services all over this nation every day in hospitals, clinics, schools, inner city dental services, after school programs, day care, non profit housing corporations and I could go on. These services are open to all and no one is turned away provided slots are open.
Physical Activity Improves Cognitive Function

Get moving to prevent age-related memory loss

How’s your memory? Want to stay sharp as you age? Most of us think our memory is pretty good – and we want to keep it that way! But we often don’t think about protecting our memory until we notice a problem.

Alzheimer’s disease and dementia are on the rise. Fortunately, exercise can help. New research suggests that being active can slow mental decline and even improve brain function.

In a recent study, researchers looked at physical activity and brain function. They followed 170 older adults with minor memory problems. One group received normal care and followed an exercise program. The second group received normal medical care but did not exercise.

At the start of the study, researchers measured the brain function and memory of the participants. In addition to medical care, people in the exercise group walked at least 150 minutes a week. Both groups also tracked their level of activity by wearing a pedometer. After a year and a half, both groups repeated the cognitive tests.

Here is what they found: The exercise group showed improved brain function and memory. The improvement was moderate, but their memory and thinking scores were better than the non-exercise group. Improvement in brain function began within six months for the exercise group. In addition, brain function kept improving throughout the study. The non-exercise group showed no significant improvement in brain function.

These results are encouraging. Prior studies have found that diet is important for brain and overall health. Now we see that exercise can also improve your health, brain function, and memory.

Regular exercise improves circulation. That’s good for your heart and muscles. But it’s also good for the brain. Better circulation helps improve mental function. If you’re not currently active, get started. After just three to four weeks of exercise, researchers found that brain function and memory began to improve.

One other finding from the study was quite interesting. The results suggest that exercise may be better than medication to improve brain health and prevent memory loss. In other words, you can’t afford to be inactive!

Exercise doesn’t have to cost you anything. But it can pay off by protecting your brain as you age.

Source: Journal of the American Medical Association.
An Appeal to the Family

Dan Jackson, North American Division president

I want to ask for a moment of silence. Not in remembrance of someone who is lost, but so that as a church we can take a deep breath and think about Who we serve. Jesus Christ is the head of our church, and we all serve Him. We must also remember that if this is truly His church, then He is in charge, and we must trust Him to lead, for it is His church.

Lately there have been a lot of voices talking about the many "problems" with the church — things like style of worship, who is called to ministry, the education that our pastors receive at our institutions of higher education, even simple things like the outreach methods that are undertaken. As a church, we will always have disagreements. It's a fact of life that is magnified when you have such a diverse body as our world church. Our church is like a family. Actually it is a family, one that has God as its head: our church family.

My concern is that recently the many voices have become very loud. Not just in volume, but in intensity. When families have arguments, things tend to get nasty and heated. That is when bad things happen. Police officers will tell you the one thing they hate to deal with are domestic disturbances or family fights. They never end well, people get hurt, and bad things happen. But our family ministry directors will tell you that when a home has Jesus Christ serving as the head of the house, these conflicts are minimized and end up getting resolved. Why? Because when we focus on Jesus and not on ourselves, the conflicts are truly shown for what they are — not major conflicts, but misunderstandings that can be resolved through prayerful communication.

What does this have to do with the Seventh-day Adventist Church? If we believe that Jesus Christ is the head of our church, then we need to let Him lead. We need to stop our talking, stop trying to run the church our way and just pray for His leading. This is the only way we will survive as a church family. It is the only way to discuss our differences. We must also accept each other for who we are, not for what we aren't. If we believe that all are called to be servants of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:4–9), then we must trust Him to lead in our lives.

I truly believe that God is using each one of us to serve Him. So when we ridicule the efforts of others within our church, we are actually ridiculing God, for He put those people in the positions they are in. He called them to a life of service. We must trust Him to lead the church. We don't lead the church; He does.

For many Seventh-day Adventists, the Great Controversy is a pivotal part of our doctrinal DNA. It helps to explain all of the things that have happened in this world's history and gives us a glimpse of what is to come. Some people are uncomfortable with it, but when we truly understand the battle between good and evil that is taking place all around us, it gives us hope in the future.

But today, many of our members have taken it upon themselves to create their own Great Controversy. They are quick to judge others, condemning them as heretics for what they believe or teach. Voices are quick to proclaim that their way of reading the Bible is better, that they are the "true Adventists." They even proclaim that the church will split and their brothers and sisters in Christ will be lost. Their voices have become very loud lately, and it pains me...
greatly. I also know Jesus Christ is in pain when He hears them as well.

If we truly believe this is the church of Jesus Christ, we must stop the voices and let Him lead. Let Jesus resolve our conflict and heal our family. Let's put aside our differences and support each other. This is the only way that we, as a church, can move forward. If we focus on Jesus and not ourselves or each other, then He will lead us forward.

There is a whole world out there waiting to hear of Jesus and His love. Let's stop being selfish and focus on them and not what are perceived wrongs within our church. Let Jesus heal the church. Let's focus on the mission that He has given all of us. Let's do it as a family. Together.

May 26, 2015 / Editorial
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Dan Jackson
North American Division president
The mission of the Christian church is to prove how right we are … right?

While we would deny this in person, our practices reveal otherwise. Christians love a good social media fight — with someone always managing to gleefully threaten hellfire to those who believe in Darwinism, agnosticism, neo-atheism or any other ism that conflicts with their ism — the whole thing ends up looking like sadism.

Incidentally, I wonder if any Adventist has ever threatened hellfire to those who believe in eternal hellfire (“My hell’s hotter than yours! You’ll see!”).

Christians debating non-Christians is also a favorite pastime in American culture. The world of apologetics has produced an entire industry of books, videos, online courses and even world tours featuring Christianity’s “expert witnesses” (Josh McDowell, William Lane Craig, Ravi Zacharias, etc.) whose important scholarly contributions inadvertently move away from the biblical “eye witness” (1 John 1:1–4).

Within the Adventist tribe, our main method of bringing people into the fold is the multiweek prophecy series — which, if we are honest, is more about Adventist belief as found in Bible prophecy than a systematic study through Daniel and Revelation. Over the course of two to five weeks, pastors and evangelists meticulously prove out from the Bible Adventist doctrine and call those whom the Spirit convicts to make a commitment in baptism and church membership.

Weeks and weeks (and thousands of dollars) are put forward to prove our propositional truth. This is how we carry forth our mission and, according to sage advice, we “keep people how we win them” — meaning if our church life isn’t spent proving out doctrine and eschatology, people lose interest in the faith and drift away. Not only that, but less and less of our postmodern/post-Christian culture responds to this kind approach to truth.

I recently chatted with one of the Pacific Northwest’s successful evangelists who told me after sending out tens of thousands of fliers offering Bible studies, they received only seven positive responses. Even though it’s spun as the “best method” we have, our “best” is increasingly not good enough — and it’s time we recaptured a fundamental
truth about the truth we have.

Swedish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard articulates the issue nicely: "Christianity is no doctrine … . What modern philosophy understands by faith is really what is called having an opinion or what in everyday language some people call 'to believe.' Christianity is made into a teaching; this teaching is then proclaimed to a person, and he believes that it is as this teaching says. Then the next stage is to 'comprehend' this teaching, and this philosophy does. All of this would be entirely proper if Christianity were a teaching, but since it is not, all this is totally wrong."1

In Kierkegaard’s words, we “didactize”2 Christianity through the way we teach and defend our doctrine. The result is Christianity becomes about “what” instead of “Who.”

When Saul of Tarsus was confronted by the risen Savior, the Lord asked him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” (Acts 9:4). Jesus did not say why are you hating on my teachings, my worldview, my church (though Jesus closely identifies with His bride) — the issue was the person Jesus, the who not the what. Throughout the Gospels, people trying to follow God frequently missed the Who that the Scriptures and traditions pointed to (see John 5:39–40 and Luke 24:13–35).

After the Enlightenment, Christianity has tried to keep step with the postpositivism (rational proving) employed by the sciences. One author writes, "The driving need to prove the scientific viability of Christian beliefs, the rational superiority of the Christian worldview, or the so-called case for Christianity signals an underlying preoccupation with mastery and control through rational dominance and a conviction that modern systematic theology done well yields the most enlightened form of the Christian faith."3

Penner goes on to point out that modern apologists and atheists share a fundamental agreement on ideology and methodology4 and that the “bottom line” for apologetics has become the “justification of belief … rather than on the personal edification of those we encounter.”5

Is this the way we are to share Jesus with other complex human beings? Is the essence of the faith just a set of teachings we can rationally prove? Have we forgotten that people are more than, in the words of Descartes, “things that think”? I believe the way forward in our witness is less “proving” and more “living” out the incarnated Christ within our hearts.

Ellen White says, "No argument can melt hearts … . The gospel is effective only as it is proclaimed by hearts made warm and lips made eloquent by a living knowledge of Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life."6

This is more than simply a shallow appeal to be more practical or some oblique anti-intellectual philosophy. No, this is the art and science of being in the faith instead of just studying it, or teaching it, as an outsider.

This requires no less intellect — but it will require more courage, less control and more faith. Let’s stop proving ourselves wrong by inadvertently reducing Christianity to a set of teachings and instead demonstrate its true power by being in Christ while being in the world we have been called to witness to.

2. Ibid., 64.
4. Ibid., 59.
5. Ibid., 87.

May 26, 2015 / Perspective
Board Affirms Seven Keys to Auburn's Future

AAA board of trustees members

As Auburn Adventist Academy marks its 95th year, the school faces a series of challenges that must be addressed to secure a sustainable and vibrant future.

The board of trustees and staff representatives met over eight weeks for four key sessions to frame the issues, define vision drivers, draft a vision and finalize the vision to set the school on a solid course for long-term sustainability. This vision takes seriously the challenges they face and the opportunities that are present at this unique moment in the school's history.

The group believes Spirit-led strategic planning allows them to be stewards of God's school as they develop a strategic plan to achieve the mission as a discipling school for Adventist young people.

1. A Vision for Excellence

The school’s brand promise is to provide an excellent, Christ-centered, Seventh-day Adventist educational experience that prepares the whole person for success in college, life and eternity. The vision is to educate students to fulfill their God-given potential academically, physically, emotionally and spiritually.

2. A Reinvigorated Teaching Staff

This vision is built on a teaching staff that is qualified, experienced and motivated to deliver an outstanding curriculum with excellence.

3. Stability, Experience and Innovation in Leadership

The vision requires leadership excellence and a governing structure that supports and facilitates the success of the vision.

4. A Christ-Centered Culture of Open Communication, Mutual Support and Trust at All Levels

The vision is for a school environment to be permeated with the presence of the Holy Spirit. This will be evidenced by high levels of trust, genuine support, encouragement and clear communication in all directions.

5. An Intentional Marketing, Recruiting and Customer Relations Program
To achieve this vision, the school will complete a rebranding process focused on the vision elements to serve as a foundation for a marketing, communications and recruiting program.

6. A Short-Term and Long-Term Financial Plan

A short-term and long-term financial plan will demonstrate the ability of the school to operate in the black with a boarding component. The vision will be supported by a 24-month transitional financial plan to fund the turnaround.

7. A Facility Master Plan That Supports the Vision

The governing group will develop a facility master plan that best supports the vision.

They believe this vision is compelling and worthy of the school community's wholehearted commitment. Most importantly, they believe this will provide a path to a stable future that will enable the academy to prepare young people to know God and transform their community as disciples of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Please join the vision as everyone works together to grow Auburn Adventist Academy.
Extralogical Enlightenment

How can we trust and obey an invisible, inaudible God? Can we even know what He wants from us?

“That’s simple,” someone says. “Read the Bible.”

OK, but how did we get our Bibles? Did God send 66 emails from heaven to an early church General Conference in session?

Actually, our Bibles are the result of an intriguing and unexplainable process of divine guidance. To select the books that now comprise the Bible, church councils had to reject dozens of competing epistles and other documents, finally emerging with the compilation of sacred Scriptures for which millions through the centuries have lived and died.

Despite their amazing internal consistency, the 66 books of Scripture cannot be “proven” as inspired by mere objective evidence. Archeological discoveries, for example, may endorse the historicity of 1 Samuel but cannot explain why it should be included in the Bible. Nobody can prove, historically or logically, that God intended our eclectic collection of narrative, prophecy, precept, proverb and poetry to be compiled into what we embrace as the Holy Bible.

Well then, what did the books chosen for the Bible possess that other documents lacked? In a word, illumination. Church leaders perceived that these books were “luminous” in a way that other good books were not. With some variances among religious groups, a basic consensus eventually emerged about the sacred “canon,” or collection.

Even for you and me today, enlightenment about Scripture comes through perception more than logical persuasion. Yes, there are established and essential principles of interpretation (known as “hermeneutics”), but ultimately the authority of Scripture is how it enlightens our souls. Many supposed problems with the Bible vanish when we submit our minds and hearts to God, so we can “taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8). Then we value Scripture not for what it proves logically but for what it reveals to our perception.

A logician might protest, “Perception can’t be a basis for faith because it is subjective — just inner feelings.” An enlightened Christian might reply, “Yes and no. Yes, perception is subjective, but no, it’s not based on feelings.” Perception is more than emotion — it’s inner knowledge as certain to you as anything else you know. But you can’t prove it to anyone else.

It’s like knowing you want a bagel rather than a cookie. You can’t prove your preference by what you put on your plate. Who knows — you might be on some kind of restrictive diet. But within ourselves, each of us knows the truth about our tastes — as surely as we know anything else that can be scientifically proven.
Consider romance. You can know you are in love and later invent all kinds of logical arguments to defend that relationship to your prospective parents-in-law. But logic cannot prove you are in love any more than logic made you fall in love. Romance is a subjective experience attested not just by feelings but by perception — inner knowledge. And that intellectually mysterious reality should be more important in your life than anything you can prove.

Which brings us back to faith in God. Spiritual seeking blossoms into belief when we supernaturally perceive unprovable value in Jesus. Such inner knowledge not only facilitates faith in God but also reveals to us His will.

In the heyday of Soviet Communism, a young Russian novelist, Andre Bitov, lived in a secure cocoon of atheism until God broke through and got his attention. He was riding the Leningrad subway when, inexplicably, he felt overwhelmed with intense hopelessness. He saw no future beyond this life and no meaning in the present. Suddenly, vividly, a new realization enlightened his soul: “Without God life makes no sense.” He immediately perceived this statement as true. Afterward he recalled, “Repeating it in astonishment, I rode the phrase up like a moving staircase, got out of the metro and walked into God’s light.”1

In a moment, a lifetime of logical arguments against faith vanished. The Soviet’s conversion was based not on objective fact but personal perception. This reflects the statement of the 17th-century French philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal: “It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is.”2 Pascal also famously observed, “The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing.”3 He even said, “Faith embraces many truths which seem to contradict each other.”4

The noteworthy word there is “seem.” Faith is ultimately harmonious, having a subterranean harmony beneath the landscape of logic. Although faith needs more than logic, it isn’t actually illogical. A better word might be “extralogical.”


3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

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Martin Weber

Adventist product manager for Faithlife, maker of Logos Bible Software

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- Website

Martin Weber, DMin, served as pastor, editor, author, evangelist and police chaplain across North America and taught pastors on five continents with the General Conference Ministerial Association.
Images of Creation 2015

February 6, 2015: Mountain Lion, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell


February 20, 2015: Red Foxes at Play, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell

February 27, 2015: Dew Drops in Suspension. More Information Credit: Jeffry Seldomridge

March 6, 2015: Mt. Hood Orchard. More Information Credit: Christina G. Angquico

March 13, 2015: Fairy slippers had touch of snow, Credit: Jeff A. Whiteouse


March 27, 2015: Lavender’s Sweet Descent, Hulda Klager Lilac Garden, Woodland WA More Information Credit: Renae E. Smith

April 3, 2015: Once Upon a Time, More Information Credit: Christina G. Angquico

April 10, 2015: Mine!, Vancouver, Wash. Credit: Lynne McClure

April 17, 2015: Spring Rain, Vancouver, Wash. Credit: Lynne McClure

April 24, 2015: Fox kits at play, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell

May 8, 2015: Emerging Signs of Spring, More Information Credit: Jeffry Seldomridge

May 15, 2015: Hummingbird, Gresham, Ore. Credit: John L. Corban

May 22, 2015: Pretty in Pink, Vancouver, Wash. Credit: Lynne McClure


June 5, 2015: Cape Kiwanda, More Information Credit: Christina G. Angquico


June 26, 2015: Eunice Lake, Eunice Lake, Wash. Credit: Ulrich Tutsch


July 17, 2015: St. Mary’s Lake Sunrise, St. Mary’s Lake, Mont. Credit: Mary Lane Anderson


July 31, 2015: Hydrangea with Frog, Vancouver, Wash. Credit: Lynne McClure

August 7, 2015: Ladybug With Morning Dew, Vancouver, Wash. Credit: Lynne McClure


August 21, 2015: Heron With Fish, Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge, near Rickreall, Ore. More
August 28, 2015: Charity, Swan Island Dahlia Farm, Canby, Ore. More Information Credit: Renae E. Smith
September 4, 2015: Vista House  
More Information  
Credit: Christina G. Angquico

September 11, 2015: Bald Eagle, Alaska  
Credit: Cherelyn Y. Strickland

September 18, 2015: Face Rock, Bandon, Ore.  
More Information  
Credit: Cindy A. Kassab

September 25, 2015: Canola Road, Eastern Washington  
More Information  
Credit: Cindy A. Kassab

October 2, 2015: Two great horned owelets, Washington  
More Information  
Credit: Cindy A. Kassab

October 9, 2015: Egret in the Sun, Ridgefield, Wash.  
Credit: Lynne McClure

October 16, 2015: Harbor Seal, Alaska  
Credit: Cherelyn Y. Strickland

October 30, 2015: Mt. Rainier Bench Lake, Mt. Rainier Bench Lake, Wash. Credit: Gene Heinrich

November 6, 2015: , Boardman, Ore. Credit: Mary Lane Anderson

November 13, 2015: Visitor from the North, Ocean Shores, Wash. More Information Credit: Cindy A. Kassab


November 27, 2015: Sunset Afterglow, Oregon Credit: Mary Lane Anderson

December 4, 2015: His Eye is on the Sparrow, Credit: Jeff A. Whiteouse
December 11, 2015: Glowing Maple, Japanese Gardens, Portland, Ore.  Credit: Scott Swetnam
December 18, 2015: Mt. Adams,  More Information Credit: Christina G. Angquico

December 25, 2015: Bobcat, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell
January 1, 2016: One Cone, Andies Prairie, Tollgate, Ore.  Credit: Curtis R. Lund

January 8, 2016: Mountain Lion, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell


February 5, 2016: Red Fox, Kalispell, Mont. More Information Credit: Adam Cornwell
Each year, the *Gleaner* holds a photo contest. This year's 2015 winners for the online *Photo of the Week* are included in this gallery.

January 12, 2015