



A N N U A L  
R E P O R T  
**2024**

Dear Friends,

The theme of much of our work this year has been “Religious Freedom as a Tool for Peacemaking.” In the October 2024 general conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, President Dallin H. Oaks, first counselor in the First Presidency of the Church, spoke of our political environment, which is characterized by “harsh and hurtful words” and an “atmosphere of enmity.” He called on all of us to avoid contention and to strive to be peacemakers. He quoted from the Savior’s Sermon on the Mount, as recorded in Matthew 5:9: “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”

There are at least three important connections between religious freedom and peacemaking.

First, religious freedom is for all people in all places. Religious freedom gives us the opportunity to stand up for principles and to stand up for (and with) each other when anyone’s religious freedom is under threat or even under assault. This willingness to show up for each other is one of the hallmarks of peacemakers.

Second, religious freedom invites us to live the best version of our own faith. For me as a Latter-day Saint, this means striving to live the restored gospel of Jesus Christ with more faith, joy, and purpose. Church President Russell M. Nelson said:

*Contention reinforces the false notion that confrontation is the way to resolve differences; but it never is. Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice. You have your agency to choose contention or reconciliation. I urge you to choose to be a peacemaker, now and always.* [“Peacemakers Needed,” *Liahona*, May 2023; emphasis in original]

If we each live our own faith tradition to the best of our ability, we will not only model peacemaking but will naturally become advocates for it. When we remember that our principal identity—beyond differences of nationality, race, religion, or anything else—is that we are children of God, this provides an important key to overcoming contention and being peacemakers.

Finally, religious freedom facilitates and supports peacemaking, which allows us to engage in work that lifts our fellow beings throughout



the world. The book of Mosiah in the Book of Mormon records the words of a prophet, Abinadi, who lived before Christ but was burned alive for his testimony of Jesus Christ. While he was testifying before a wicked king’s court, Abinadi spoke movingly of those “who have published peace, who have brought good tidings of good, who have published salvation” (Mosiah 15:14). Abinadi further proclaimed, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of those who shall hereafter publish peace, yea, from this time henceforth and forever!” (Mosiah 15:17). Working at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, we at the International Center for Law and Religion Studies recognize how beautiful are the feet of those who steadfastly proclaim and publish messages of peace. We are grateful for the partnership of many peacemakers in this work.

The year 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the Center. We look forward to celebrating this milestone and continuing our work well into the next 25 years. We recommit to our mission to “help secure the blessings of religious liberty for all” and invite you to continue with us in this vital work.

Gratefully, as always, and with warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brett G. Scharffs".

Brett G. Scharffs  
Director, International Center for Law and Religion Studies  
Rex E. Lee Chair and Professor of Law  
J. Reuben Clark Law School, Brigham Young University

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All communication should be sent to:

International Center for Law and Religion Studies, BYU Law  
452 JRCB, Provo, UT 84602 USA

PHONE: +1 801-422-6842 | EMAIL: [INFO@ICLRS.ORG](mailto:INFO@ICLRS.ORG) | WEB: [ICLRS.ORG](http://ICLRS.ORG)  
X: [@ICLRSORG](https://twitter.com/ICLRSORG) | INSTAGRAM: [@ICLRSBYULAW](https://www.instagram.com/ICLRSBYULAW) | FACEBOOK.COM/[ICLRS.ORG](https://www.facebook.com/ICLRS.ORG)

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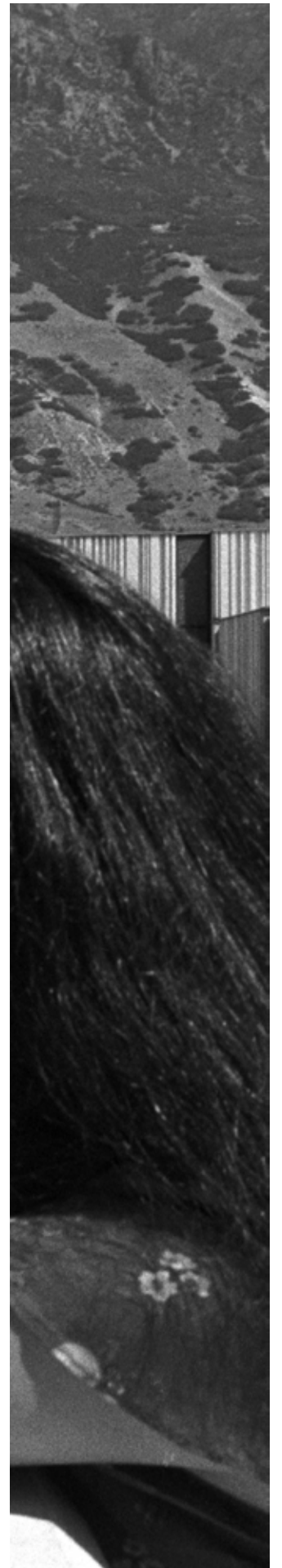
## OUR MISSION

It is the mission of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University to help secure the blessings of freedom of religion and belief for all people by

Expanding, deepening, and disseminating knowledge and expertise regarding the interrelationship of law and religion

Facilitating the growth of networks of scholars, experts, and policymakers involved in the field of religion and law

Contributing to law reform processes and broader implementation of principles of religious freedom worldwide





# Reflections on JOY

By Brett G. Scharffs

*Adapted from remarks given 8 October 2024 at the 31st Annual Law and Religion Symposium.*

For me personally, one of the most sacred passages of scripture—one to which I turn at times of discouragement or melancholy—is section 11 of the Doctrine and Covenants. This is a revelation given by the Lord to my great-great-grandfather Hyrum Smith through his brother Joseph Smith, the Prophet of the Restoration. Verses 12 and 13 read:

*And now, verily, verily, I say unto thee, put your trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good—yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.*

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, I will impart unto you of my Spirit, which shall enlighten your mind, which shall fill your soul with joy.*

I’ve been thinking about what it means to have our minds enlightened and our souls filled with joy. In the Book of Mormon we read, “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.”<sup>1</sup> For years I thought this scripture was talking about the joy that would come to the righteous in the afterlife, after we’ve departed this “vale of tears.”<sup>2</sup> But recently I’ve been thinking about it differently.

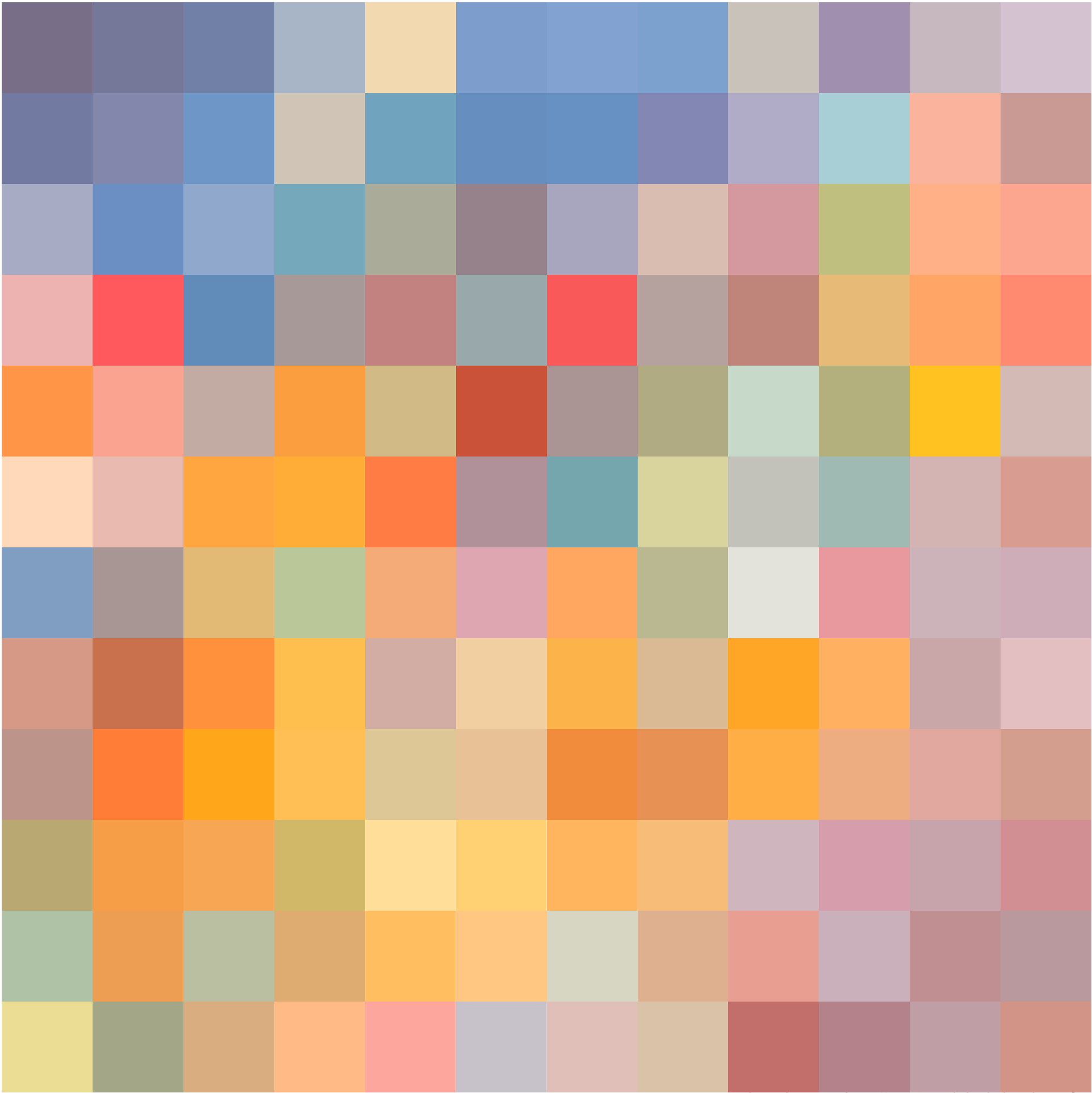
Recall with me the story of Adam and Eve. In a Latter-day Saint scriptural account,

we read that after they transgress and are cast out of the Garden of Eden, they are taught the gospel. Adam says, “Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and *in this life* I shall have joy.”<sup>3</sup>

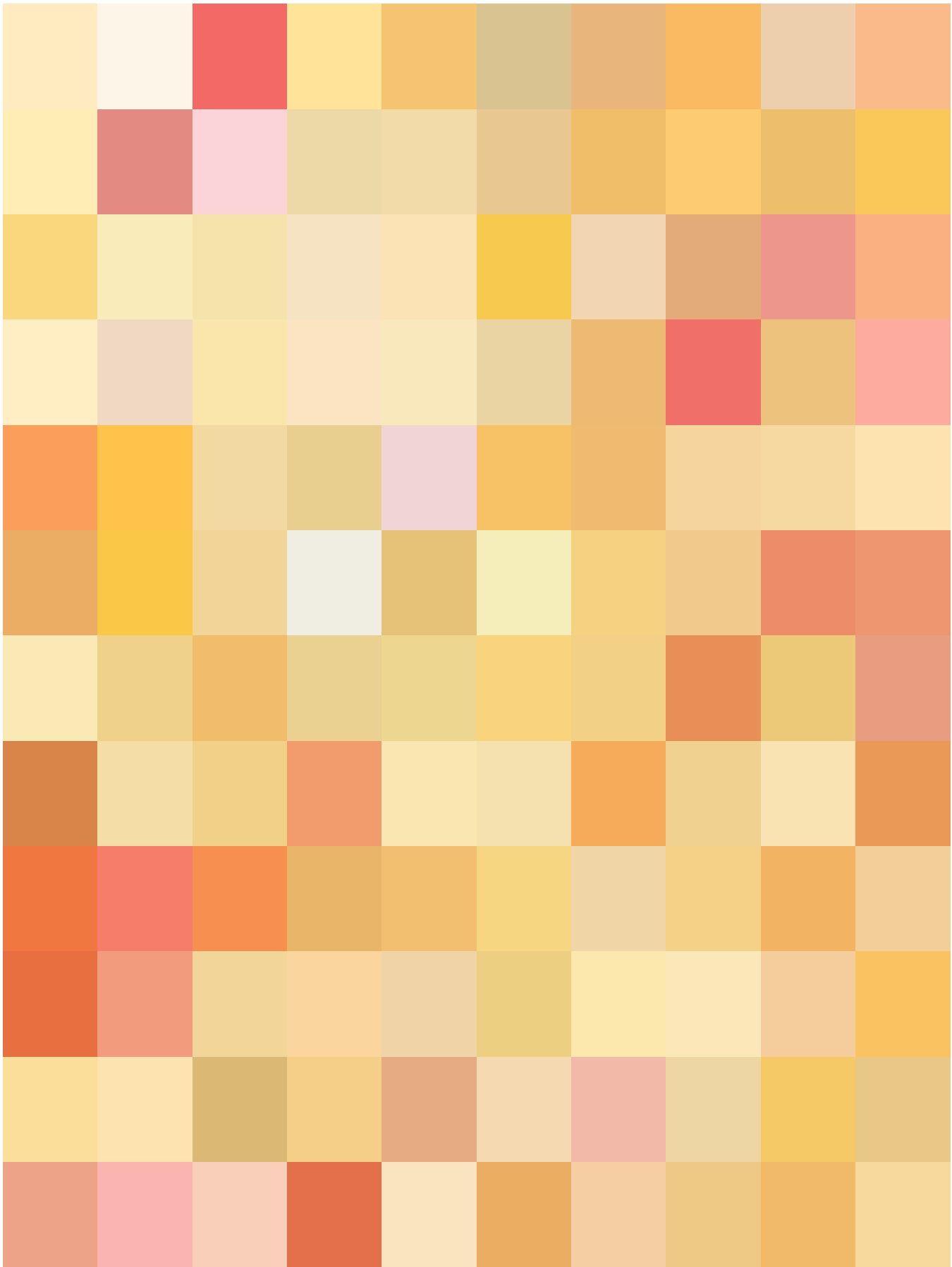
And Eve responds, “Were it not for our transgression we never should have . . . known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient.”<sup>4</sup>

It was only after they had gained a knowledge of good and evil and experienced the entire spectrum of life’s suffering—in other words, only after their “eyes [had been] opened”—that it became possible for Adam and Eve to experience joy in this life as well as in the life to come.

These scriptures teach us that joy is something different from pleasure or even happiness, which I understand to be a state of well-being and contentment. Joy comes in understanding the whole range of human experience—the good and the bad, the happy and the sad, the world’s (and our own) brokenness—and being able to recognize the shared human condition as deeply beautiful. This perspective opens the window to a type of joy that is not possible for those who have not experienced genuine suffering.







## Joy and the Human Experience

This idea of a sublime though hard-earned joy was reinforced in a story I heard about one of the world’s leading producers of classical music, Adam Abeshouse, who was dying of cancer at age 63. Abeshouse had a reputation for being deeply devoted to his clients. As he described it, “I developed this theory that the best thing that I could do for my clients is make them feel safe and loved and create an atmosphere in the recording session to do their best.”

In August 2024, Abeshouse was told by his doctors that he had only a few weeks to live. It was then that one of his clients, the pianist Lara Downes, organized a private concert. In the studio adjacent to his home, Abeshouse listened from a wheelchair as clients and colleagues—who had become his friends—played for him, each embracing him after performing.

Afterward, Abeshouse said: “This is more than I could have ever dreamed. . . . All these musicians are coming to play for me. It’s kind of a miracle.”

Think of the joy described in this story: the joy in friends coming together to console one another and celebrate their gratitude and love. In that moment, joy supplanted pain.<sup>5</sup>

## Joy and Peacemaking

This is the kind of joy that I hope our gathering together to discuss religious freedom and its role in peacemaking can bring to each of us. We cannot erase or eradicate the pain and suffering in the world. But we understand that it is in standing up for each other and standing with each other that peace becomes possible—in our own lives, in our homes and families, in our places of work, in our communities and nations, and even in the world.

Over the past few days I’ve been thinking of some of the concepts that are inextricably linked with joy. These include suffering, patience, empathy, compassion, and love. They also encompass peaceableness and peacemaking, along with concepts such as belonging, covenant community, faith, hope, and charity.

I’ve also been thinking about concepts or ideas that are far removed from joy. These include contention, doubt, fear, anger, and contempt as well as indifference, despair, hopelessness, and nihilism.

If we strive to become peacemakers who exude a deep and abiding joy, we will find ourselves in proximity to things on the first list and we will manage to distance ourselves from things on the second list.

## Life Is Beautiful

I’ve come to believe that life is beautiful, not because we put on rose-colored glasses but because we see—in the words of Matthew Arnold, the English poet and essayist—as did Sophocles, “who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.”<sup>6</sup>

Joy is possible not because of the absence of pain but because we experience suffering together. Joy can supplant pain when we gather in a spirit of love and listen deeply to each other. But perhaps most important, joy is possible because of the promise of better things to come that is freely offered by Him who is the “high priest of good things to come.”<sup>7</sup>

I take comfort in the injunction to “be still, and know that I am God”<sup>8</sup> made by One who was with His friends when the raging sea threatened to swallow them. In their exceeding fear, He told the sea—as well as His apostles and us—to “be still.” And as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, “The wind ceased, and there was a great calm.”<sup>9</sup>

As we return to our homes, may we go forth with a sense of calm and hope for the future. May we have a renewed resolve to continue the work of peacemaking, buoyed by the confident joy that comes from seeking to understand one another, standing together, and trusting in God.

### NOTES

1. 2 Nephi 2:25.

2. *Vale of tears* is “a Christian phrase referring to the tribulations of life that Christian doctrine says are left behind only when one leaves the world and enters Heaven.” [Wikipedia, s.v. Vale of tears]

3. Moses 5:10; emphasis added.
4. Moses 5:11.

5. See Tom Vitale, “A Beloved Music Producer Is Dying. His Clients Came to His Home for a Farewell Concert,” *All Things Considered*, NPR, 2 October 2024. Transcript available at [npr.org/transcripts/nx-sl-5126485](https://www.npr.org/transcripts/nx-sl-5126485).
6. Matthew Arnold, “To a Friend,” (1849), line 12.

7. Hebrews 9:11; see Jeffrey R. Holland, “An High Priest of Good Things to Come,” *Ensign*, November 1999, 36–38.

8. Psalm 46:10.

9. Mark 4:39; see also verses 37–41.

# SYMPOSIUM







# 31st Annual International Law and Religion Symposium

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AS A TOOL FOR PEACEMAKING

6-8 OCTOBER 2024 | PROVO, UTAH, USA

In 2024 the International Law and Religion Symposium focused on the value religious freedom brings to nations and the world in promoting peace and building cohesive societies. “Religion itself can be deeply ambivalent when it comes to peace,” said symposium chair Elizabeth Clark. “On the one hand, religion is often associated with peace, inspiring reconciliation commissions after conflict or giving space for denominations who in turn act as brokers for peace. Religion, however, can also be a source of inspiration or identification for those hostile to peace.”

The solution to this challenge comes from religious freedom, which brings religion’s social benefits of peace while supporting the needed rule of law and limitations that prevent religion-inspired violence.

During the symposium, speakers from more than 50 countries explored these ideas in both global trends and local experiences. They addressed questions such as: What impact does religious freedom have on establishing peace and good governance? How has religious freedom brought religious groups and benefits into public life that might not otherwise have been accepted? Are there examples of situations in which religious freedom has helped to defuse social conflict along religious lines? Is it appropriate to limit religious freedom during conflict to protect national security?

After three days of meaningful dialogue, symposium delegates summed up their experiences in the closing session. Wilfred

Dimingu, general secretary of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, said, “One of the major takeaways that came clearly to me is that there cannot be durable peace without religious freedom.” He went on to say that he was taking on the assignment to “go and promote interfaith dialogue and initiatives in Zimbabwe and Africa.”

“We have learned so much from each other,” said Bataa Mishig-Ish, chair of the Department of Religious Studies at the Mongolian Academy of Sciences. “We are so diverse in many ways, but we can come together, unified humanity, especially when it comes to peacebuilding, peacekeeping, and promoting peace.”

Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang, a president of the World Council of Churches, reminded all attendees that there was work to do upon returning home from the symposium. “We have big challenges in front of us,” she said, “but I think we all believe that we have hope that we can hold hands together, moving together and strengthening each other, especially in the time of difficulty. I think this is the hope we are going to share with friends wherever we come from.”

WEB EXTRA

Scan the QR code to view sessions from the 31st Annual Symposium as well as other symposiums.





# Understanding Religious Freedom: Why Does It Matter?

Insights from Panelists at the 31st Annual Law and Religion Symposium



## NICHOLAS ARONEY

Professor of Constitutional Law, The University of Queensland

We can ask why religious freedom matters for individuals, why it matters for religious groups, and why it matters for societies. This threefold set of questions gives rise to three key theses about freedom of religion.

First, freedom of religion is *an essential condition of individual human flourishing*. As rational and responsible agents, human beings have an interest in pursuing truths about the world and their place and purpose within it. Human beings can only pursue such truths under conditions of freedom of thought, belief, observance, and practice. When individuals are coerced, their capacity to exercise agency is a fortiori compromised.

Second, freedom of religion is *ordinarily exercised in community with others*. As social and political creatures, our place and purpose

within the world is accordingly communal in nature. We pursue truths about the world and our place and purpose within it in community with others. Religious groups can only do so under conditions of collective freedom of thought, belief, observance, and practice. In this way, religious freedom is an associational and collective right.

Third, *societies benefit from the free exercise of religion*. Societies benefit from the free pursuit of truths about the world and our place and purpose within it. These truths concern our relationships and interactions with one another. The pursuit of these truths thus contributes to how we live together: in families, neighborhoods, villages, towns, cities, and nations.

## JACLYN NEO

Associate Professor, National University of Singapore

Some have questioned whether religion is fundamentally inconsistent with human rights, particularly equal protection for women and minorities. Others question whether religion should even be treated as a special category. For them, there may be good reasons to tolerate limited claims of conscience in general without giving special status to religion.

However, in truth, despite and sometimes due to these challenges, it has become even more critical to strengthen and reclaim the right to religious freedom in this highly fragmented world. In my view, we need a conception of religious freedom that is more pluralistic, more contextualized, and better understood as a common good for all. This goes beyond the conception of religious freedom as an individual right to one that is built on group and community rights.

Religious freedom advocates need to find ways to reach across ideological divides in contestations about the scope of religious freedom. As a starting point, we must avoid a simplistic East-West divide about the nature and importance of religious freedom. The



drafting history of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights itself reflects a mix of ideological motivations and intellectual influences from secular and theological sources, with contributions from multiple sources.

A pluralist account of religious freedom is ultimately a celebration of religious diversity as integral to a shared peace and prosperity of each nation. This is an inclusive, contextualized, and pluralistic idea of religious freedom that seeks to build bridges and cooperation across ideological divides.



## ALWI SHIHAB

Senior Fellow, Leimena Institute; Special Envoy of the Indonesian President to the Middle East and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation

Religious freedom in Indonesia is a complex and nuanced issue. While Indonesia officially promotes religious diversity, and its constitution guarantees the right to worship, unfortunately, the reality on the ground is often more complicated.

The state officially recognizes only six religions: Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Any new religion will face challenges in gaining legal recognition and protection.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim majority, with more than 85 percent of the population adhering to Islam, predominantly Sunni. While there is official tolerance for other religions, including Indigenous religious groups, minority religions sometimes face discrimination, both socially and legally.

The province of Aceh in northern Sumatra has implemented Sharia law for its Muslim citizens, in contrast to the rest of Indonesia that operates under secular legal systems.

Building places of worship for non-Muslim communities, especially Christian churches, can be difficult.

Christian and Ahmadiyya communities have experienced attacks on their places of worship. Similarly, Shia Muslim and Bahá'í adherents face social exclusion and sometimes even violence from radical Sunni groups.

Numerous initiatives for promoting interfaith dialogue and religious tolerance in Indonesia are supported by civil society organizations and moderate religious leaders. The Leimena Institute, in collaboration with many Islamic organizations, established a program of cross-cultural religious literacy in Indonesia. The program aims to educate teachers of Islamic religious schools to know the exact teachings of Islam, which are far from radicalism and intolerance. That is what we hope to do through the Leimena Institute: to create a widening inclusive and tolerant community.





## KATRINA LANTOS SWETT

*President, Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice*

Religious freedom is important, first and foremost, because it is intrinsic to our identity and our dignity as human beings. It also turns out that religious freedom is good social policy for building strong and resilient societies.

In 1685, King Louis XIV of France revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had granted a measure of religious freedom to religious minorities in France, primarily the Huguenots, who were a Protestant sect in an overwhelmingly Catholic nation. Its revocation placed the Huguenots in an excruciating position. They could either convert, face prison, or flee. Some 200,000 of them chose to flee, and many of those refugees came to Berlin.

These Huguenot refugees ended up establishing many of the core industries that became the backbone of the economy in Berlin

and the surrounding areas. The society that had driven them out lost enormously, and the society that welcomed them benefited. A society that encourages and permits a degree of religious freedom is going to prosper.

Indeed, modern research bears this out. Widely known research by the Pew Research Center has shown that societies that robustly protect freedom of religion and belief are more stable, are more prosperous, are likely to be more democratic, are much less likely to become incubators of extremism and violence, and interestingly, are also societies where women overall have a higher socioeconomic status.



## HAMILTON KNOX THAMES

*Senior Fellow, Pepperdine University; Director, Program on Global Faith and Inclusive Societies, Pepperdine University; Senior Visiting Expert, United States Institute of Peace*

There can be no durable peace without religious freedom. There may be the cold peace of a cessation of hostilities. However, lasting peace will not come until people can live together, recognizing the rights of their neighbors to pursue truth as their conscience leads without fear of discrimination or violence. Without religious freedom, individuals will not feel safe to talk about the drivers of conflict, which often orbit issues of religion and belief.

Inclusive religious freedom promotes peace in ways that can encourage healthy dialogue between different religious groups, leading to increased understanding, respect for each other's beliefs, and de-escalation, and helping build stronger, more cohesive communities. Religious freedom matters for peace.

Policymakers will succeed if they take this into consideration and will fail if they do not acknowledge the importance of religion to billions of people. We live in a moment of unprecedented globalization, with people holding different faiths and coming from different ethnicities interacting and living together as never before. As a result, environments become more pluralistic while extremists work to poison the cultural climate against diversity.

Helping students appreciate pluralistic societies and respect human rights is a long-term solution to protect culture from extremist degradation. Encouraging tolerance can safeguard human rights, fight collective amnesia about a country's diverse past, and protect civic space for diversity of beliefs. Changing attitudes by just five degrees can lead an entire nation to a different place within just one generation.

### WEB EXTRA

Scan the QR code to view each panelist's full remarks.





# REGIONAL CONFERENCES







RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
ANNUAL REVIEW

# Becoming Peacemakers Through Supporting Religious Freedom and Pluralism

20 JUNE 2024 | PROVO, UTAH, USA

What does it mean to be a peacemaker in America today? How can one reconcile engagement in the political and public sphere with living a life of faith? Can religious freedom and pluralism form a basis for mutual coexistence and peace? Can they provide a means of healing our divided country or do they simply fracture our communities more? Pundits, scholars, religious leaders, and participants from a variety of religious traditions took on these and similar questions at this year's Religious Freedom Annual Review.

Ryan Burge of Eastern Illinois University set the stage with his keynote address. (Look for his printed speech on page 20 of this annual report or watch the video on the Center's website.) The conference's other plenary sessions looked at finding shared solutions for a more peaceful future and navigating Christian nationalism.

Three sets of breakout sessions continued the dialogue. The Rising Generation breakouts focused on initiatives that help young adults explore peacemaking through religious pluralism and freedom. Attendees heard from civil society, religious, and educational groups that are exploring ways to increase interreligious understanding through educational curricula and dialogue. One session included students from BYU and Fuller Theological Seminary talking about their efforts to build peace and understanding through a series of interfaith dialogues.

In the second set of breakout sessions, presenters introduced practical approaches to help build a more pluralistic and peaceful society. Participants learned from groups such as Braver Angels, Multi-Faith Neighbors Network, and the Utah Governor's Office how to "disagree better" at home, in communities, and in political life.

The third set of breakout sessions focused on legal developments in the area of religious freedom. Experts in First Amendment law discussed recent cases in state and federal courts and assessed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 at 30 years. The Dignity Index, which rates language on an eight-point scale from contempt to dignity, was also introduced.

In the closing session, ICLRS Director Brett G. Scharffs told conference participants, "Your presence here is an affirmation that there is real interest in religious freedom for all people in all places, and that many of us yearn for better ways of thinking . . . about how we can become peacemakers in the various aspects of our lives."

## WEB EXTRA

Scan to view recordings of the 2024 Religious Freedom Annual Review sessions.



**RIISING  
GENERATION**

## A NEW ICLRS INITIATIVE

The ICLRS's newly launched Rising Generation Initiative is designed to empower the next generation of leaders to promote freedom of religion or belief on a global scale. Young adults worldwide of any faith background can sign up to receive invitations for local and global religious freedom, interfaith, and peacebuilding opportunities.

To facilitate the Rising Generation Initiative, the Center appointed several Rising Generation Fellows. This year, fellows have focused on communicating the importance of religious freedom to their peers through social media and have also contributed to major international events such as the G20 Interfaith Forum and the International Religious Freedom Summit.

In 2024 the Rising Generation Initiative was led by fellows Tanner Bean, Anna Bryner, Brady Earley, and Elyse Slabaugh, in collaboration with ICLRS senior fellows Jeff and Janet Nelson and IAC member Jeff Robinson. The initiative provides not only a platform for professional and personal growth but also a significant opportunity to contribute to a global movement dedicated to protecting and advancing the fundamental right to religious freedom.

## WEB EXTRA

Scan here to join the Rising Generation Initiative.







# NO ROOM FOR COMPROMISE

RELIGIOUS  
POLARIZATION IN THE  
UNITED STATES

ILLUSTRATION  
BY ADRIÀ FRUITÓS

**By Ryan P. Burge**

Associate Professor of  
Political Science at Eastern  
Illinois University and  
Former American Baptist Pastor

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*Professor Burge is a leading  
demographer of religion in the  
United States. This article is  
adapted from remarks delivered  
at the 2024 Religious Freedom  
Annual Review; it was originally  
published in the Fall 2024 issue  
of Clark Memorandum.*



What does the future of religion in America look like? In a nutshell, there will be a significant number of very religious, very conservative people on one side of the spectrum, and laying aside doctrinal implications which I will not touch on, a very large, very nonreligious, very liberal group of people on the other side of the spectrum. This will be bad for American society and very bad for religious freedom. We talk a lot in this country about political polarization. We don't talk nearly as much about religious polarization, and it's just as real.

A great book by Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*, explores social contract theory, which suggests that intergroup contact under appropriate conditions can reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. And guess where we find these appropriate conditions? *Houses of worship*, but only if there are both majority and minority group members there—only if there are different kinds of people from different parts of society in the pews. Ideally, religious groups have members who are young and old, white and black, Hispanic and Asian, educated and non-educated, and people who voted for Biden and people who voted for Trump sitting side by side, shoulder to shoulder on a Sunday morning. That is what would make America great again. Why?

Imagine that I go to church on Sunday, and I sit next to Bob. Bob is a good man who loves his family, loves his church, and tries his best. Bob voted for a different political candidate than I voted for, but I still like Bob because I know Bob, I know his character, I know his history, and I know his experience. If I'm not sitting next to people like Bob anymore, I can create the worst version of Bob in my mind and then hate that version of Bob. And that's the problem when religious congregations become politically homogenous. There are no Bobs to get to know who break down prejudices and preconceptions. We too easily imagine those who don't think like we do as an amalgam of the worst impulses we have about people we don't understand. This is bad for American society, and it is very bad for religious freedom.

### The Political Transformation of Evangelicals

First, let's look at evangelicals. In 1972, about 17 percent of Americans were evangelicals, and today about 17 percent of Americans are evangelicals. The number of Americans who are evangelical Christians is the same today as it was 50 years ago. Evangelicals seem to dominate the political conversation when it comes to American Christianity. And most people do not realize how dramatically the political affiliation of evangelicals has changed over the past 15 years. In 2008, the percentage of Southern Baptists (the largest evangelical group in America) who identified as Democrat was 41 percent and the percentage who identified as Republican was 41 percent. Today, 75 percent of Southern Baptists identify as Republican and 20 percent identify as Democrat. That happened in 15 years, not 50 years. To calculate what's called a polarization score for this group of evangelicals, we subtract the share affiliating with one party from the share affiliating with the other party. So a zero score means Republicans and Democrats are represented one to one. For most of evangelical history, polarization scores have been between zero and 10. In 1990 it was less than 10, and by 2022 it was over 40. The political polarization of this group is the highest it's ever been, and the trajectory suggests that white evangelicals will eventually become a political monoculture.

Now, let me make this point clearly: I am not saying it's bad that white evangelicals are Republicans. But I think it's highly problematic when a religious group is dominated by one political party. Unfortunately, religious groups are increasingly trying to purify themselves by running off anyone who disagrees with them on even secondary theological issues. You're coded immediately and then you're kicked out if you don't belong. For example, if you follow religion in the news even tepidly, you will know that the Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution condemning the use of in vitro fertilization. However, 44 percent of evangelicals have either used in vitro to have a child or know someone who has. And the share of Americans who say in vitro fertilization is a bad thing is 9 percent. This is the future of American Christianity: an ideological chasm.

I grew up going to a Southern Baptist church in Marion County, Illinois, in the 1990s, and there were some Democrats in the pews. Not anymore! My first election was Bush v. Gore, and my county voted 51 percent for Bush and 48 percent for Gore. In 2020 my county voted 75 percent for Trump and 20 percent for Biden. In 20 years, Marion County has become dramatically polarized politically, and that's what is happening to America. The Southern Baptist Church has leaned into that polarity, not away from it.

### The Decline of Mainline Protestantism

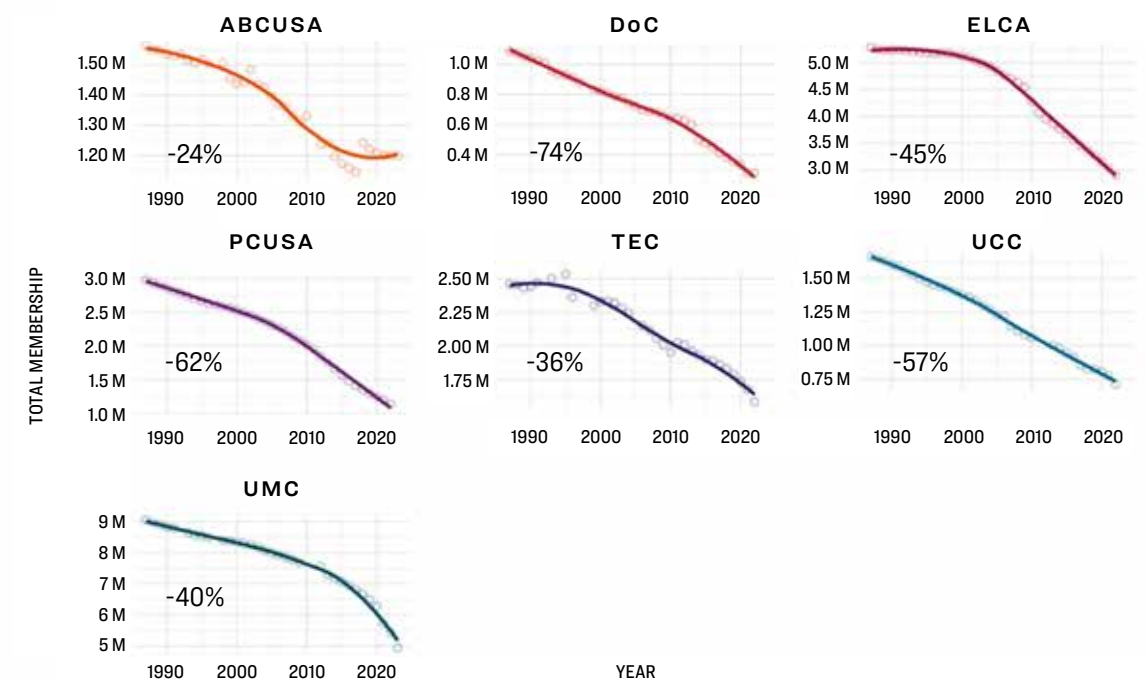
Let's talk about the middle ground of American Christianity, the moderate Protestants. These are the Seven Sisters of American Protestantism—what we call the mainline: the American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA), the Disciples of Christ (DoC), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA), the Episcopal Church (TEC), the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the United Methodist Church (UMC). In the 1950s, over half of all Americans were part

of a moderate mainline denomination. And look what has happened to the Seven Sisters over the last 35 years. Many of these churches have seen their overall membership drop by half. There are less than 400,000 Episcopalians who go to church in this country of 340 million people. The once mighty United Methodist Church is now under 5 million people; it had 11 million members in 1967. Yet evangelical Southern Baptists were at 11 million in 1967 and now exceed 13 million. There is no moderate flavor of Protestant Christianity in America that is doing well right now numerically, and most of them are in freefall. Some denominations are not going to exist in 20 years.

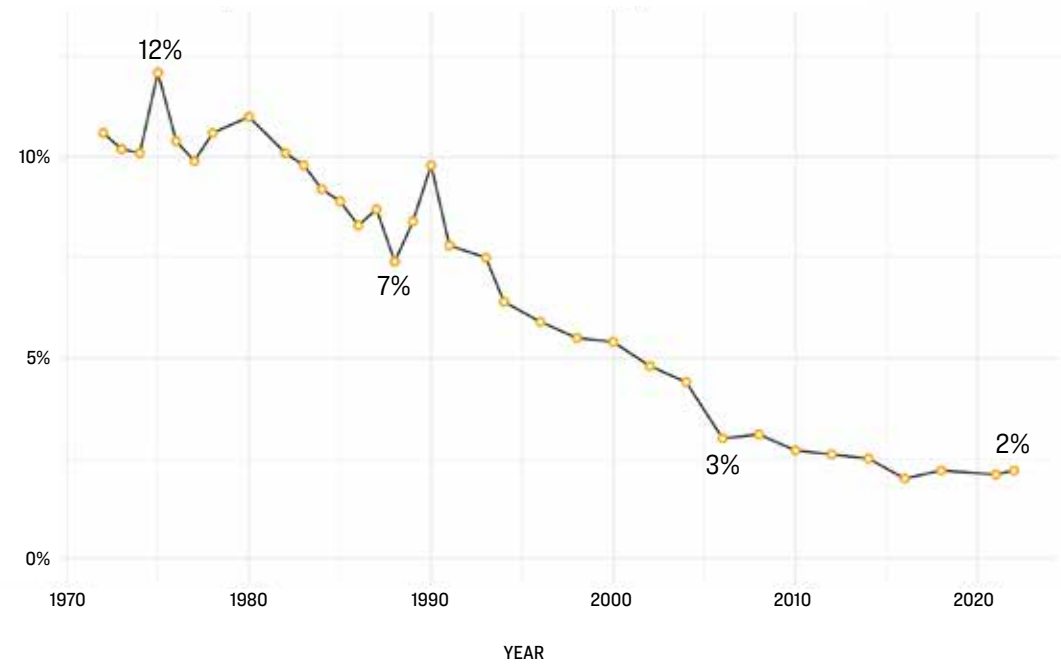
One reason this is happening is that the purification effort in evangelicalism is bleeding over into mainline churches. The recent United Methodist schism, the largest numerical split in the history of American religion, happened when that church repealed its ban on LGBTQ clergy as well as prohibitions on its ministers officiating same-sex marriages. The more-conservative groups in the United Methodist Church opposed the repeal and left. The Methodist Church lost

Source: Denominational Records, 1984-2022, *Graphs About Religion*

Decline in Membership of the Mainline Between 1987 and 2022



Share of the Population That Is Mainline Protestant, Ages 18–40



Source: General Social Survey, 1972–2022, National Opinion Research Center

24 percent of its congregations in 18 months. We’re seeing purification upon purification, where congregants are taking the view “If we don’t agree on every issue, then we agree on no issue and we cannot be in fellowship with each other.”

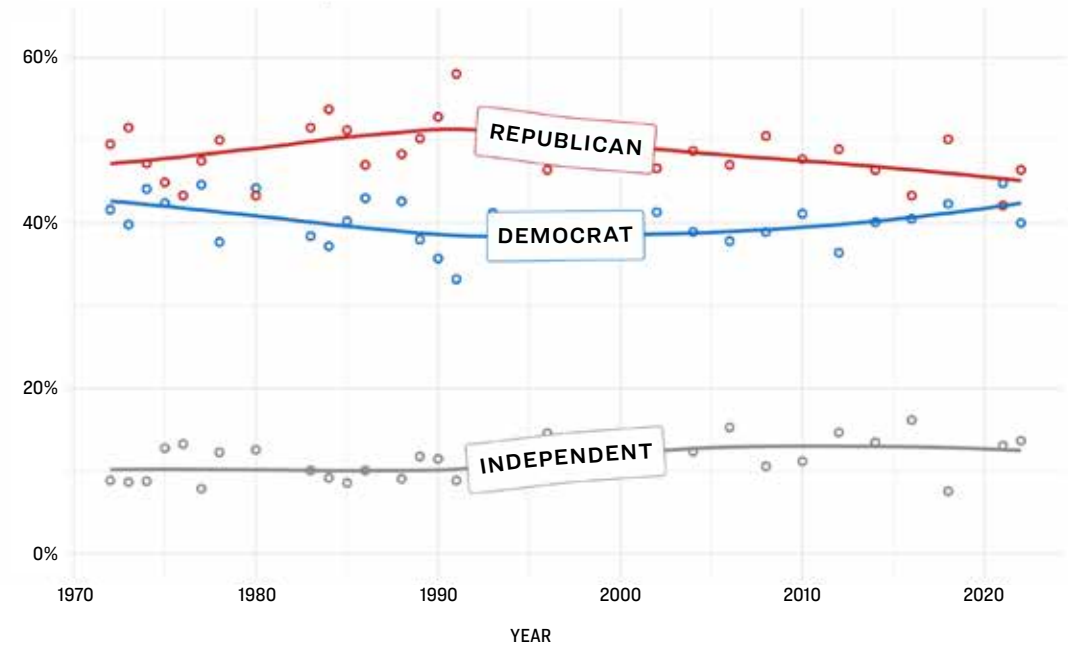
While there are certainly doctrinal reasons for these divisions, there are also consequences to this fracturing that in my view are bad for mainline Christianity, bad for the country, bad for democracy, and really bad for religious freedom. Religion has consistently been a space in which people from different age groups, socioeconomic backgrounds, and political views have rubbed shoulders and built deep relationships. There is a significant amount of social science research that speaks to the impact that these connections have on things like political tolerance, political engagement, and deliberative values. Religion faces headwinds when it is viewed as merely another face for political partisanship.

In 1976, 31 percent of Americans were mainline Protestant. Today, 9 percent of Americans are mainline Protestant, and for

every mainline Protestant, there are two evangelicals. There are non-evangelical Christians out there, but when I say this, my students look at me like I have no idea what I’m talking about. Non-evangelical Christian groups aren’t even on their radar, and they’re not too far off in terms of their own age demographic. Only 2 percent of American adults under age 40 are mainline Protestants.

What does this mean for the future of any mainline denomination? Good luck! They have few young families in their church. Over half of Presbyterian Church USA members have celebrated their 65th birthday. When I say the end is coming for many mainline Christian denominations, I mean soon—like in 20 years. I’m not an actuary, but I know that people die. What are these denominations going to do? Most of them are going to close up shop or merge with another denomination, and they’re going to be a shadow of what they once were in American life. This is a material societal loss because the mainline has always been the moderate, inclusive voice saying, “We believe in Jesus and we

Political Partisanship of Mainline Protestants



Source: General Social Survey, 1972–2022, National Opinion Research Center

believe in the Bible, but if you want to come and doubt the whole time, that’s great. If you want to come and believe none of it, that’s great. If you want to serve in the community, we’re a great place to do that.” There are people from left, right, and center sitting in those pews right now. We are losing this inclusiveness in American Christianity.

If you’re a religious leader, please don’t go on social media and post some nonsense things about politics. You know, Michael Jordan was once asked, “Why don’t you get more political?” And he said, “Because Republicans buy sneakers too.” You get the point here. Why would you say to 30 or 40 percent of your possible constituency, “You don’t belong here; you’re not allowed here”? What are we doing here? I believe that Republicans and Democrats belong in my church. People who disagree with me belong in my church—actually, they especially belong in my church.

This is the partisanship of mainline Protestant Christianity over the last 50 years: That’s a boring graph, isn’t it (shown above)? If you go to the average mainline church in

America, you would be just as likely to sit next to a Democrat as a Republican. If you go to a Southern Baptist Church, good luck finding a Democrat. And if they are there, they surely won’t tell you. And what has happened to denominations that try to stay in the middle of the road? These are declining the fastest. Why?

I’m a mainline pastor in an American Baptist Church, the more-moderate flavor of the Southern Baptist Church that broke away over slavery in 1845. You know what evangelicals tell me every once in a while? “You’re not a real Christian.” And I think that’s highly problematic. People leave the mainline because they are told, “You’re not a real Christian.” Every fiber of my being says that America is better when there’s a group of evangelicals and a group of mainline Protestants, a group of Latter-day Saints and a group of Muslims. America is not better when it’s 30 percent very religious people and 70 percent nones (those who are not affiliated with any religion). It’s not good for religion, and it’s not good for our country.



Christianity and the Political Right

The graph below demonstrates the degree to which white Protestantism has become affiliated with the Republican Party. These are the 20 largest majority-white denominations in America, and this is how they voted in the 2020 presidential election. There is one denomination that is majority Democrat,

and there are some that are 50/50, for example, the American Baptists—that’s me. We pride ourselves on being politically diverse; our numbers are declining every year, but we’re politically diverse while we’re doing it!

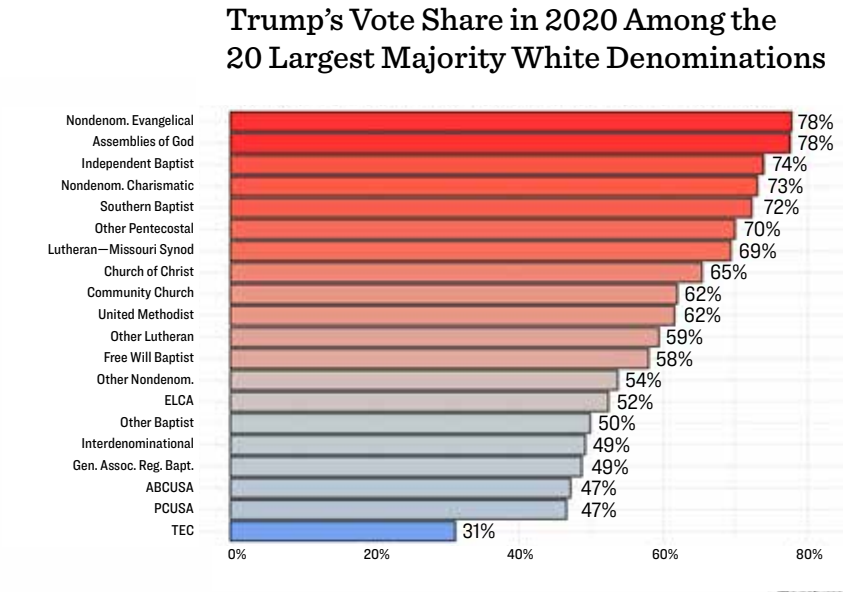
Although Latter-day Saints aren’t featured on the graph, looking at their politics, they’re actually one of the most politically diverse religious groups in America today, especially among younger members. Older Latter-day Saints tend to be about 65 percent Republican and about 30 percent Democrat. Yet, among younger people, the gap is only 10 to 15 points. Now, the question I don’t know the answer to is this: “As younger Latter-day Saints age, will they become more conservative?” I can’t even begin to speculate on what’s going to happen there because everything is changing in America. It used to be the assumption that as people age they became more conservative, but that assumption is not true with Millennials—they’ve actually become more liberal as they’ve aged, and Gen Z is doing the same thing. I will say this: Latter-day Saints are doing better than most religions in terms of political diversity. The only problem is that Latter-day Saints are highly concentrated in one part of the country. So people in Pennsylvania are not really impacted by the moderation and heterogeneity of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Aside from these few exceptions, white Christianity is overwhelmingly conservative. Nearly 80 percent of nondenominational evangelicals voted for Donald Trump. Assemblies of God, which is one of the only denominations growing in America today, is also one of the most Republican denominations in America today. Southern Baptists are 72 percent Republican, and if I took out all of the non-white Southern Baptists, it would be closer to 80 percent. There really is no majority-Democrat white Protestant denomination in America today other than the Episcopalians. White Protestant Christianity has become overwhelmingly Republican.

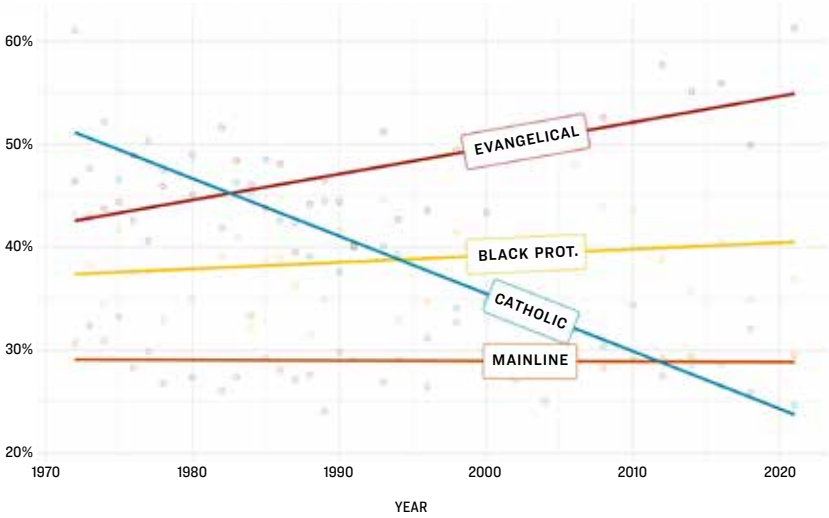
Looming Problems for American Catholicism

What about Catholics? Currently, 62 million Americans are Catholic. It’s the largest religious group by a factor of five compared to the largest Protestant denomination. The

Source: Cooperative Election Study, 2020, YouGov

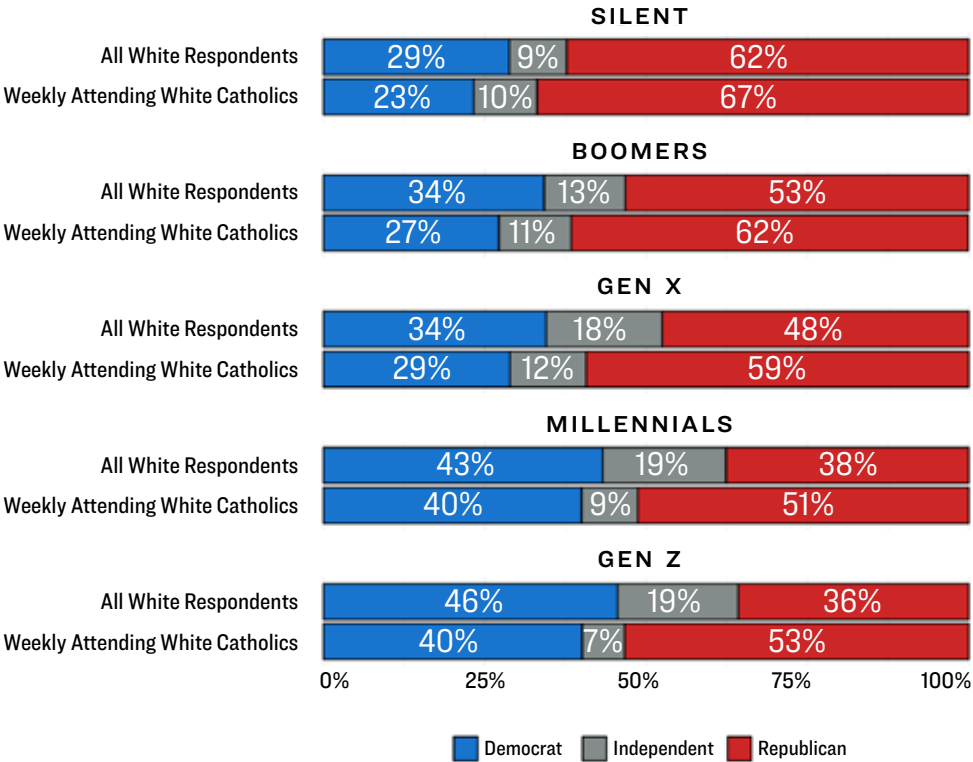


Share Attending Services Nearly Every Week or More



Source: General Social Survey, 1972–2021, National Opinion Research Center

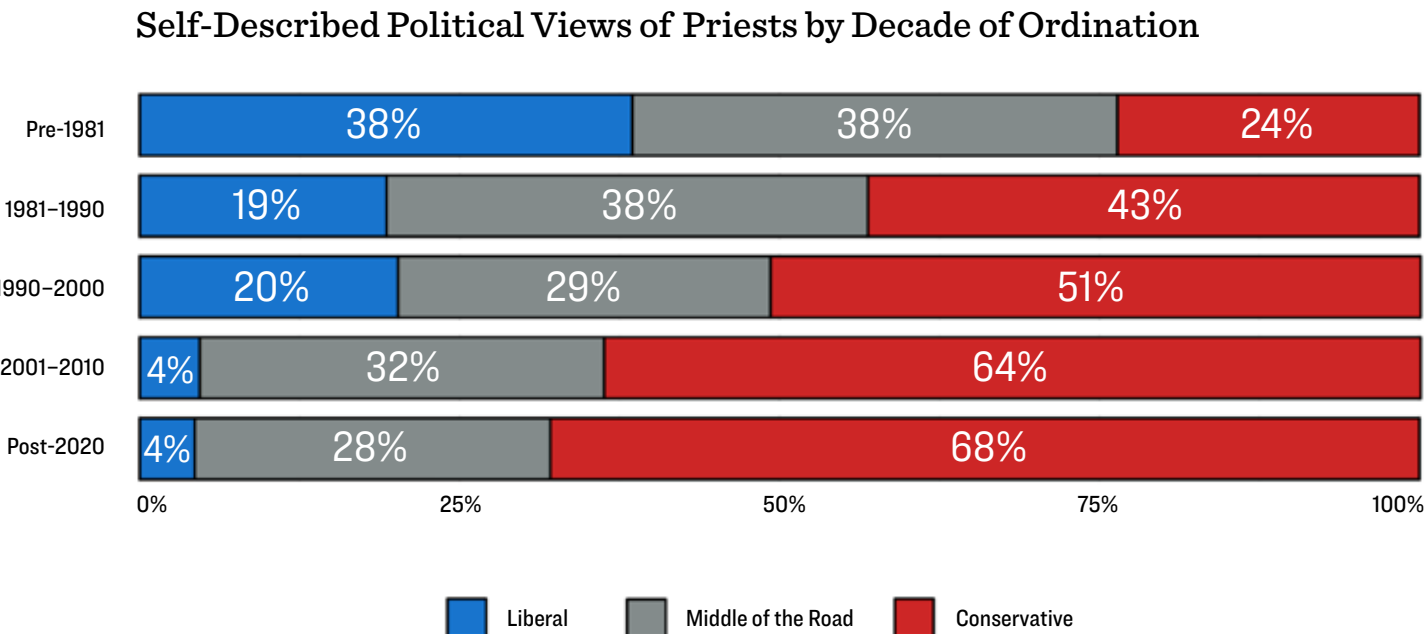
Partisan Composition of Weekly Attending White Catholics



share of Americans who identify as Catholic has been steady for a long time. However, data on American Catholics’ religious attendance paints a different picture. This is the share attending weekly in various religions (opposite page). The share of evangelicals who attend church every week has gone up 15 points in the last 50 years. Black Protestant churches have held steady and so have mainline churches, with about 30 percent of mainline Protestants attending church weekly in 1972 versus about 30 percent today. Those numbers are pretty stable. Look at the Catholic line! Half of American Catholics in 1972 said they went to mass nearly every week, and today it’s 23 percent.

Catholicism is also shifting when you look at members’ politics. According to the 2020 Cooperative Election Study, 60 percent of white Catholics voted for Donald Trump. White Catholics have trended over the last 20 years toward increasing political polarization when compared to white peers, just as white evangelicals have. This is the partisan composition of weekly-attending white Catholics compared to all white respondents, and I broke it down by generation. About 67 percent of the Silent Generation (people born between 1928 and 1945) who are white Catholics and attend mass every week are Republicans versus 62 percent of all white respondents, so

Source: Cooperative Election Study, 2020–2023, YouGov



Source: Survey of American Catholic Priests, 2021, Vermurlen, Cranney, and Regnerus 2021

there is only a 5-point difference politically between attending white Catholics and the rest of their cohort. With the Baby Boomer generation, there is a 9-point difference. But with Generation X the differential leaps to 11 points, with Millennials it’s a 13-point difference, and some 53 percent of white, Gen Z Catholics who attend weekly mass are Republicans, compared to only 36 percent of Gen Z as a whole.

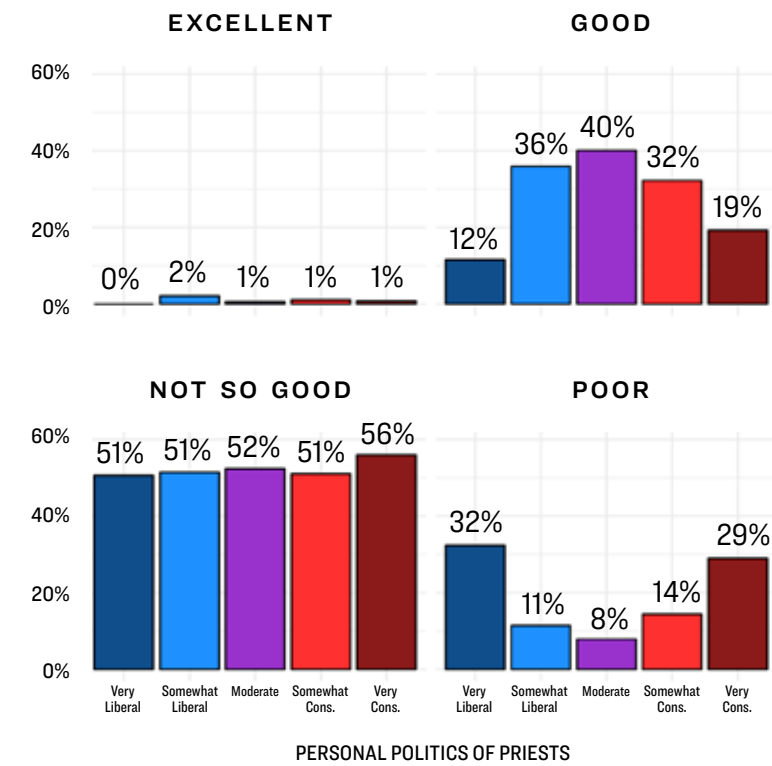
The political gap between Catholic priests and members of their congregations is getting larger over time. That’s bad because conversations between these Catholics and other people of their generation

become more difficult to hold as they grow more disparate—and often more abrasive—in their political views. And how will outsiders perceive the Catholic Church? They’ll say to themselves, “Oh, I know what I’ll get if I go to a Catholic church now. I know what conservative priests are preaching from the pulpit.” And here’s what the data shows. They did surveys of priests, asking them about their politics, and I broke it down by year of ordination. Look how diverse it was before 1981! Relatively even mix of left, right, and center in the priesthood. Fantastic. Now, less than 5 percent of priests who have been ordained in the last 20 years describe

their politics as liberal and two-thirds describe their politics as conservative. And over the next 20 to 40 years, older priests are going to be retiring, and what will the church have left? Republican priests. Again, this is not an indictment against Republicanism or conservatism. *This is an indictment of monoculture and political homogeneity.*

Politically polarized religious leadership are invariably unhappy when church policy and church members do not conform to their views. Catholic priests were asked to rate the Catholic Church in America as excellent, good, not so good, and poor. Which priests were the most likely to rate the Catholic

### Rate the Catholic Church in America

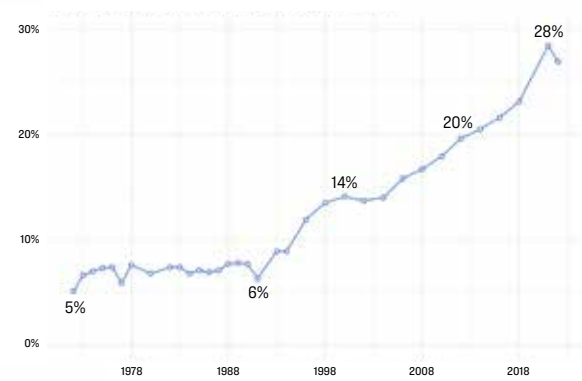


Source: National Study of Catholic Priests, 2022, The Catholic Project

Church as good? Priests who are moderate politically. Which were the most likely to rate the Catholic Church as poor? Priests who are very liberal and priests who are very conservative. The priests on the extremes of the political spectrum say the church is not where they want it to be and therefore the church is in a bad spot. Priests in the middle politically think the church is doing okay. Do you see the point here? Those in the middle think, “It’s great because there are people on the left, right, and center in the pews. That’s fantastic.” And the liberals and the conservatives say, “We have a problem. We should have people like us in those pews.”



Share of Americans with No Religious Affiliation



Source: General Social Survey, 1972–2022, National Opinion Research Center

The Rise of the Nones

We need to talk about the nones—Americans with no religious affiliation. The share of Americans who are nonreligious was 5 percent in 1972, and it was 6 percent in 1991. But by 2000, 14 percent of Americans were nones, 20 percent in 2012, and 28 percent in 2021. If you break it down by generation, this is what you get. Nones comprise 21 percent of the Silent Generation, 28 percent of Baby Boomers, 36 percent of Generation X, and 42 percent of both Millennials and Generation Z. Every successive generation has been less likely to be religious than the generation before them. But every day in America, religion evolves. Old people die and young people become adults—the 21 percent of the Silent Generation who have no religious affiliation is being replaced by the 42 percent of Gen Z who have no religious affiliation. I don’t think America is going to get above 50 percent of the population identifying as nonreligious, at least not for the foreseeable future.

I think one reason the nones are increasing is that mainline churchgoers who disaffiliate have nowhere to go if they don’t want to join an evangelical church. So, they join no church. While evangelicals have been planting churches by the hundreds all over America, mainline churches haven’t. I think mainline moderate churches have to get better at planting new churches or starting something different, because when I walk out of my church on July 21, 2024, that will be our very last service, and we’ve been around since 1868. My church has *eight*

people on an average Sunday. I don’t know where I’m going to go. There is no church for a moderate Protestant like me, unless it’s an evangelical church, and I just can’t join a group moving so monolithically to the right. I grew up that way, and it’s not who I am now. I will have one other option in my county of 40,000 people: the United Methodist Church, which is going through this terrible schism. There are lots of Protestants like me who would choose a moderate church if one existed that met their needs. It doesn’t, hence the further rise of the nones.

Another factor that has contributed to the statistical increase in the nones is the fact that for a long time people lied on surveys. I know you’re shocked by that, right? “Are you religious?” The answer: “Absolutely!” “How often do you go to church?” The answer: “Once a week.” Meanwhile, they haven’t been in a church for three years. People are just more honest on surveys about religious affiliation now than they were before, partly because there is less stigma around being nonreligious today than there was 20 or 50 years ago. There has also been an evolution in polling: it’s now online instead of face to face. When you ask questions of people face to face, they are prone to lie. If you question people online, they are a lot more honest. So, we may be seeing a more accurate picture of what religion in America looks like today than at any point in the history of our country. Perhaps we were never as religious as we thought we were. Perhaps religiosity in America has always been more cultural than we

thought—in the groundwater, not in church attendance. So I think what we are seeing in America today is moderate, marginally attached people who used to say they were Protestants or Catholics who went to church once a year, or once a month, now saying they’re nonreligious. Perhaps nones didn’t change their behavior, they just changed their answers on surveys.

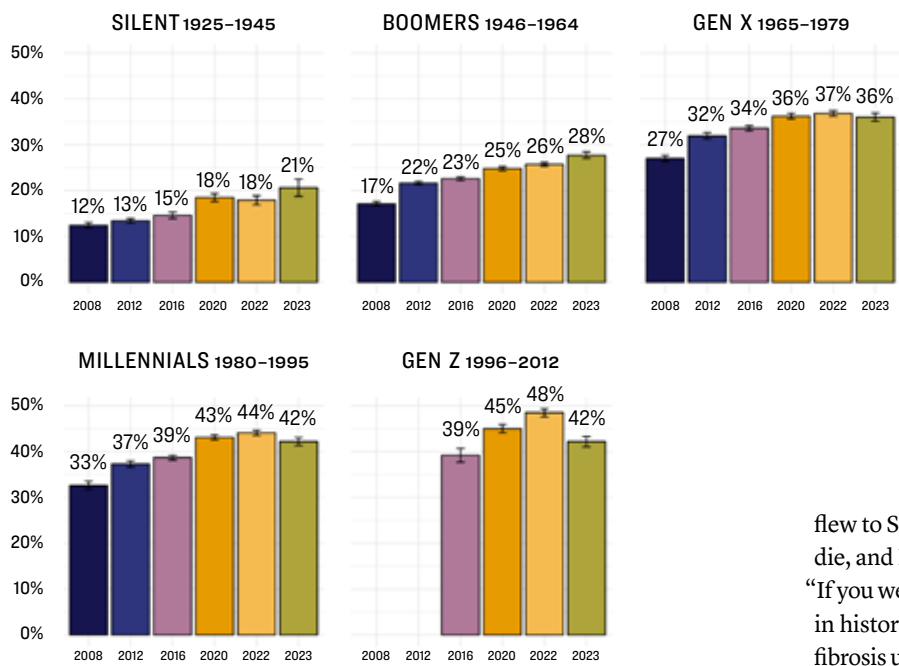
Although there has been a dramatic decline in the number of Americans who affiliate with a religion, 85 percent of Americans still believe in God at some level. We’re still a very believing country. While behavior and belonging have gone by the wayside, belief remains the core of what we are. That gives me great hope.

Harnessing Interfaith Political Common Ground

One of the most beautiful things about America is we believe in political tolerance and religious freedom, which means if you’ve got some crazy, cockamamie idea, you can say it all you want, and I don’t have to agree with it. And if you make a good argument, you can convince people that you are right, and then we can change the law. For instance, in 1815 America, if you had said women should have the right to vote, most people would have thought you were crazy. Then 75 years later, women got the right to vote. This is how change in America works. Nobody has the power to force a change down anybody’s throat. Those in favor of change do it from the bottom up, not the top down. What I worry about is we don’t know enough people who are different from us, and therefore we can’t compromise on opposing ideas.

And yet it is possible to catch a glimpse of a hopeful future for religion and politics because there are religious people who disagree theologically but agree politically who are joining forces to work together toward common goals. As reported by Tom Perkins in the *Guardian* in October 2022, Muslims in Michigan joined the Christian right on the issue of a book ban. My point is not to advocate book bans; my point is that these faith groups basically said, “We don’t agree with each other on anything theological, we don’t even believe in the same God, but you vote the same way we vote, so we are going

Share Who Have No Religious Affiliation by Generation



Source: Cooperative Election Study, 2008–2023, YouGov

to fight together for this one thing.” These groups working together will come to realize that people of other faiths are good people. I’ve seen this happen up close. My wife is Catholic and I am Protestant. My parents begged me, “Please don’t marry a Catholic girl.” And I did. And they now realize after getting to know my wife that Catholics are okay. And this same thing will happen as people with different religious beliefs band together because of their political similarities. Evangelicals and Orthodox Jews are going to realize that Muslims and Latter-day Saints are just fine and that many of them vote for the same candidates. When people are on the same political team, they can forget all the theological stuff for the moment. I am optimistic that we are going to see more and more of these alliances.

One opportunity for this sort of future interfaith cooperation is the ongoing effort to maintain the ministerial exception to the Equality Act, which forbids any organization in America from discriminating based on gender identity or sexual orientation and basically expands the Civil Rights Act to include two more protected classes. But the Equality Act does have a ministerial

exception. Pastors can be fired for any reason, and they have no rights under the law for discrimination. But how broad is the ministerial exception? Defining the boundaries of this exception is the ideal space for those who have different theologies to work together to achieve a common goal. This will be hard work because one side will have atheists arguing that the Equality Act should have no carve outs for religious organizations to discriminate against people, while the other side will have white evangelicals arguing that there is no place for compromise. Those of us in the middle looking for compromise on these issues are not the voices that are being elevated in the media and in the public discourse. When I was in graduate school, we organized a focus group of mainline Protestants. I asked them, “Why don’t you go out and protest?” Their answer was simple: “Moderates don’t march.” But maybe they should.

We Can Do This

We live in the greatest time in the history of the world. When my students come in full of gloom and doom about everything, I say, “I got on an airplane in St. Louis yesterday and

flew to Salt Lake City in four hours, I did not die, and I had Wi-Fi on the plane.” I tell them, “If you were going to get cancer, the best time in history to get cancer is right now.” Cystic fibrosis used to be a death sentence, and now it isn’t. My nephew was born with a congenital heart defect; 30 years ago he would have died at birth, but he’s 11 years old now, running around and having a great time. It’s an amazing time to be alive. We have survived so much as a country: the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War II, and 9/11. We are a nation of great people.

I think it’s time for moderate people of faith to stand up and say, “I understand your position, but we’re not going to get there.” We live in a pragmatic pluralistic democracy, and it’s okay to not get your way all the time. A compromise is not a compromise of your faith. We need to stand up and say these things publicly. Notwithstanding the trend of polarization, I still believe that most people are willing to move this country forward, they’re willing to compromise, they’re willing to find middle ground, they don’t hate the other side, and they really want to see our country flourish. I travel around the country talking about religion and politics. It’s not that hard. It really isn’t. Talk to people! They’re human beings just like you. Cultivate discussion.

Every day I try to find one piece of news that will make me feel better. And every day I can find it. We’ve survived 100 percent of the worst days in the history of our country. And we will survive whatever comes our way. That’s my hope.



RELIGIOUS FREEDOM ALLIANCE COUNCIL

In response to calls from people in the United States who were planning religious freedom events, ICLRS founded the Religious Freedom Alliance Council (RFAC) in 2023 with generous funding from a donor. The goal of RFAC is to bring together people of goodwill to promote religious freedom in local communities around the country. The council strives to enable cooperative engagement across our deepest differences in order to build multifaith relationships and resilient communities.

ICLRS Associate Director Hannah Clayson Smith, who oversees RFAC, says, “There’s a real excitement among members of the Church and people of other faiths to educate themselves, to get involved, to teach their children, and to join forces with those who share the common cause of protecting religion and human dignity.”

In her role, Smith brings together local alliances on regular

collaboration calls and supports their efforts to be bridge builders and peacemakers. In addition, she participates on local planning committees, builds curriculum for Rising Generation seminars, recommends speakers for events, provides resources to local members, and travels around the country to speak at local summits and symposia.

Bill Benac of Dallas, Texas, chairs the Alliance Council. He was instrumental in launching the Dallas Fort Worth Alliance for Religious Freedom and is a member of the executive board of the Center’s International Advisory Council.

If you would like to get involved in RFAC, please contact Smith via [info@iclrs.org](mailto:info@iclrs.org) and use the subject line “Religious Freedom Alliance Council.”

2024 RFAC EVENTS

|   |  |                        |   |  |                           |
|---|--|------------------------|---|--|---------------------------|
| 13 FEBRUARY   |  | CHEYENNE, WYOMING      | 17 SEPTEMBER  |  | CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA |
| J. Reuben Clark Law Society Religious Freedom Conference/Symposium<br><a href="https://jrcls.org/events/details/byu-law-society-university-of-wyoming-presents-religious-freedom-conferencesymposium-in-cheyenne-wyoming/">jrcls.org/events/details/byu-law-society-university-of-wyoming-presents-religious-freedom-conferencesymposium-in-cheyenne-wyoming/</a> |  |                        | “Principles of Religious Freedom,” MeckMIN Faith Leader Lunch<br><a href="https://meckmin.org/event-details/meckmin-faith-leader-lunch-september">meckmin.org/event-details/meckmin-faith-leader-lunch-september</a>                                    |  |                           |
| 10 APRIL  |  | DES MOINES, IOWA       | 17 SEPTEMBER  |  | ORLANDO, FLORIDA          |
| 11th Annual Iowa Religious Freedom Day<br><a href="https://iowareligiousfreedomday.org/">iowareligiousfreedomday.org/</a>   |  |                        | “Religious Freedom for All: Building Bridges and Breaking Bread Together,” Rising Generation event<br><a href="https://religiousfreedomflorida.wordpress.com/events">religiousfreedomflorida.wordpress.com/events</a>                                   |  |                           |
| 12 APRIL  |  | ORANGE, CALIFORNIA     | 21 SEPTEMBER  |  | INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI    |
| 20th Annual Religion and the Law Symposium<br><a href="https://jrcls.org/events/details/byu-law-society-california-orange-county-presents-20th-annual-religion-and-the-law-symposium/">jrcls.org/events/details/byu-law-society-california-orange-county-presents-20th-annual-religion-and-the-law-symposium/</a>   |  |                        | “Building Bridges: Religious Freedom and Community Engagement for Everyday Disciples” Workshop<br><a href="https://iclrs.org/app/uploads/2021/05/Independence-Building-Bridges.pdf">iclrs.org/app/uploads/2021/05/Independence-Building-Bridges.pdf</a> |  |                           |
| 18 APRIL  |  | LAS VEGAS, NEVADA      | 15 OCTOBER  |  | DALLAS, TEXAS             |
| “Finding Common Ground,” Las Vegas Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Symposium 2024<br><a href="https://lvreligiousfreedom.org/recording24">lvreligiousfreedom.org/recording24</a>   |  |                        | “Finding Common Ground,” 7th Annual DFW Summit on Religious Freedom<br><a href="https://dfwreligiousfreedom.org/2024-Summit">dfwreligiousfreedom.org/2024-Summit</a>  |  |                           |
| 18 APRIL  |  | KENNESAW, GEORGIA      | 22–23 NOVEMBER  |  | CACHE VALLEY, UTAH        |
| 3rd Annual Freedom of Religion Roundtable<br><a href="https://thefreedomtoworship.com/">thefreedomtoworship.com/</a>  |  |                        | Cache Valley Interfaith Open House<br><a href="https://cvinterfaith.com">cvinterfaith.com</a>   |  |                           |
| 31 MAY  |  | KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI  |   |  |                           |
| 10th Annual Law and Religious Freedom Conference<br><a href="https://calendar.umkc.edu/law/event/35112-10th-annual-law-religious-freedom-conference-in-person">calendar.umkc.edu/law/event/35112-10th-annual-law-religious-freedom-conference-in-person</a>   |  |                        |   |  |                           |
| 6 SEPTEMBER   |  | BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA |   |  |                           |
| Louisiana Religious Freedom Alliance 2024 Religious Freedom Summit<br><a href="https://louisianareligiousfreedom.weebly.com">louisianareligiousfreedom.weebly.com</a>   |  |                        |   |  |                           |





## INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

PUEBLA, MEXICO | 10–12 APRIL 2024

One hundred participants from a wide spectrum of religious traditions gathered in Puebla, Mexico, to discuss religious freedom in Latin America. During the symposium, each session focused on the theme “Religious Freedom: Promoting Mutual Respect, Human Dignity, and Peace” from the perspective of four particular groups: Indigenous leaders, government leaders, religious leaders, and academics.

The event was cosponsored by the Center and its sister organization, the Interreligious Forum of the Americas (FIDELA), as well as religious liberty organizations Conciencia Nacional por la Libertad Religiosa, Observatorio Internacional de Libertad Religiosa (OLIRE), Centro Internacional de Estudios sobre Libertad y Religión (CIELRE), and Consorcio Latinoamericano de Libertad Religiosa.



## INTERRELIGIOUS FORUM OF THE AMERICAS (FIDELA)

ASUNCIÓN, PARAGUAY | 24–25 JUNE 2024

Under the auspices of FIDELA, the Center held a two-day gathering, “Interreligious Cooperation as a Pathway to Peace,” in Asunción, Paraguay. The event immediately preceded the 54th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), which took place 26–28 June.

On 24 June, FIDELA convened the first-ever meeting of heads of religious affairs for all the governments of Latin America. Government representatives gathered to compare experiences and best practices and to discuss how to better serve religious communities and protect religious minorities. The meeting was cosponsored by the governments of Paraguay and Chile, with FIDELA as the facilitator and organizer.

On 25 June, faith leaders, government leaders, and academics gathered to discuss religion-state relations and opportunities for appropriate collaboration, religious freedom, and the promotion of interreligious harmony while respecting religious differences. Participants included 30 spiritual leaders representing Paraguay’s 19 Indigenous communities.

The event closed with an award reception at which FIDELA honored the partnership of two faith-based relief agencies: HIAS and Islamic Relief USA.





## G20 INTERFAITH FORUM ON RELIGION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

BRASÍLIA, BRAZIL | 19–22 AUGUST 2024

The annual G20 Interfaith Forum (IF20), “Leave No One Behind: The Well-Being of the Planet and Its People,” was a global event with upwards of 400 attendees from countries both inside and outside the G20.

Dedicated to the discussion of ways in which religion contributes to societal well-being, the forum focused on interfaith collaboration, religious freedom, social media, anti-trafficking, peacebuilding, and sustainable development.

W. Cole Durham, Jr., Gary B. Doxey, and other forum organizers had an opportunity to meet with Brazil’s vice president, Geraldo

Alckmin, to discuss the importance of religion and religious communities in achieving sustainable development goals.

The forum was jointly sponsored by the Center, the IF20, the Brazilian Center of Studies in Law and Religion (CEDIRE) at the Federal University of Uberlândia, and the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development (PARSD). The forum in Brasília was not only the annual IF20 Forum but also the annual conference for PARSD and the 2024 Brazilian Symposium on Religious Freedom, which is customarily held annually under the auspices of the Center and CEDIRE.



## 23RD ANNUAL COLLOQUIUM OF THE LATIN AMERICAN CONSORTIUM FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME, SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, USA | 23–25 OCTOBER 2024

The annual colloquium of the Consorcio Latinoamericano de Libertad Religiosa is the foremost gathering of law and religion experts from throughout Latin America. The event, “The Relationship Between Family and Religious Freedom: Overview and Challenges,” focused on the connection between religious freedom and the success of the family as an institution. This was the first time the Consorcio Latinoamericano has dealt with this topic.

The program included presentations on family law and religious freedom issues for each participating country as well as presentations on relevant legal issues for the Organization of American States and the Council of Europe. Conference papers described how family law and religious freedom are intertwined and reported on major challenges and opportunities in each country. Papers will be gathered and published by the Consorcio Latinoamericano.





# Asia/Central Asia

## REGIONAL CONFERENCE



### 1ST ULAANBAATAR INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

23–24 OCTOBER 2024 | ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA

The first Ulaanbaatar Interfaith Dialogue, “Unity, Mutual Understanding, and Religious Freedom,” focused on promoting religious freedom in Mongolia. Day one was hosted by Gandantegchinlen Monastery (Gandan), and guests were welcomed by Khamba Lama of Gandan Monastery and Elizabeth Clark of ICLRS. Day two events took place at Chinggis Khaan National Museum.

Local speakers were leaders and scholars from the Mongolian Academy of Sciences’ Institute of Philosophy and National University of Mongolia’s religious studies program along with interfaith leaders and scholars representing evangelicals, shamanism, Islam, non-Gandan Buddhists, Catholics, Bahá’ís, and The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. International speakers included Susan Kerr, senior advisor on Freedom of Religion or Belief, OSCE ODIHR; Father Indunil Janakaratne Kodithuwakku Kankanamalage, secretary of the Dicastery for Interreligious Dialogue, Vatican; and Elizabeth Clark, ICLRS.

The event was cosponsored by the ICLRS, Gandan Monastery, the Center of Mongolian Buddhists, the Institute of Philosophy of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the Department of Philosophy and Religion Studies of the National University of Mongolia, the International Republican Institute, and the Tritiya Dharmachakra Foundation.







## REGIONAL SOUTHEAST ASIA HUMAN DIGNITY CONFERENCE 2024

6-7 AUGUST 2024 | KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA

The Southeast Asia regional conference, “Dignity for Everyone, Everywhere: Best Practices and Success Stories for Building Inclusive Societies,” brought together 25 delegates from Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, the United Kingdom, and the United States to discuss human dignity and its influence on religious freedom. His Royal Highness Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah, delivered the keynote address, and W. Cole Durham, Jr., Brett G. Scharffs, and Hannah Clayson Smith participated on panels. Other participants included high-ranking Islamic leaders, several muftis who guide the interpretation of Islamic law in Malaysia, and opinion leaders from law, business, education, and

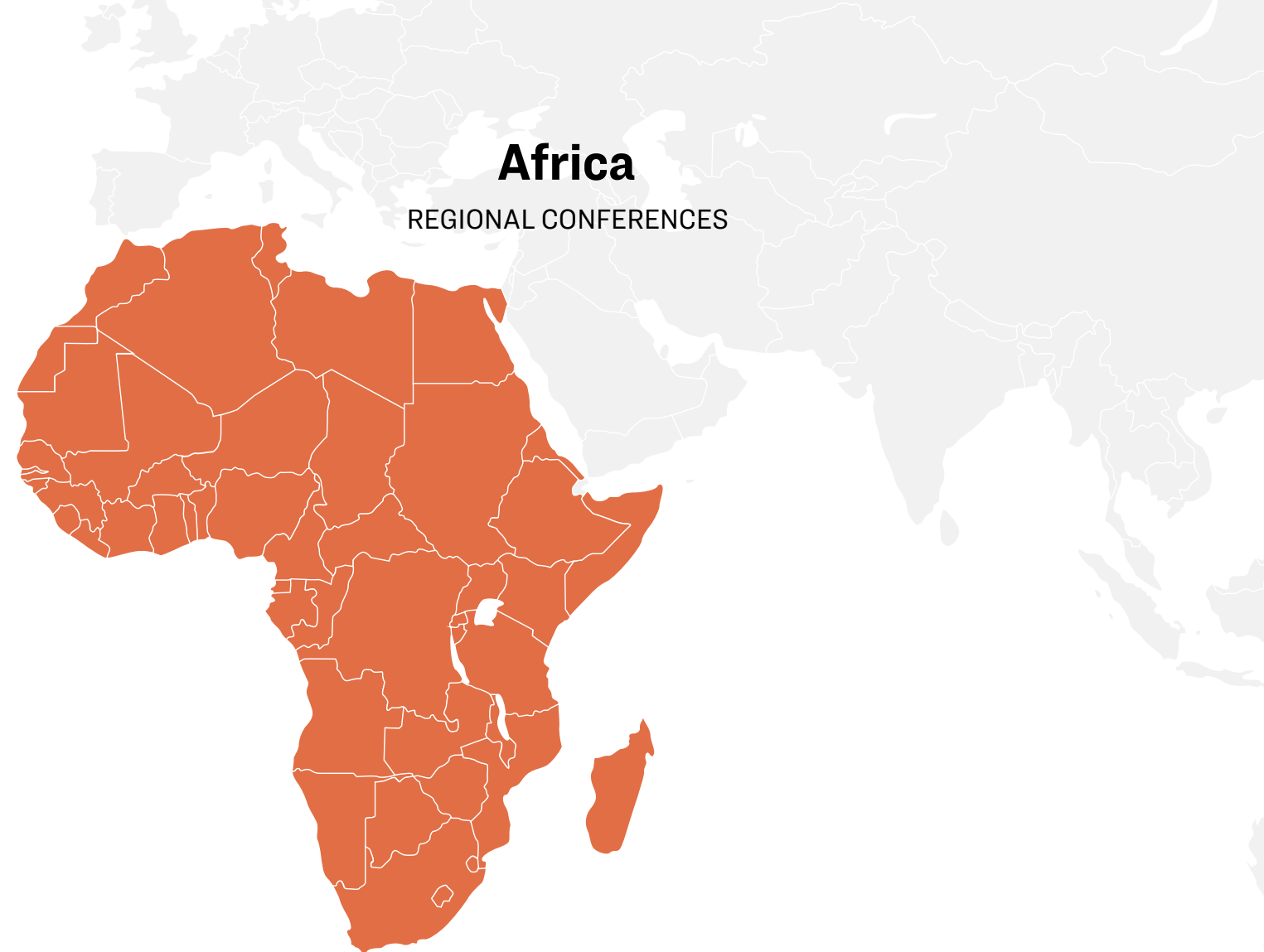
religious studies.

Panel discussions focused on lessons from global engagements on human dignity; human dignity, human rights, and constitutions; human dignity for peaceful coexistence; human dignity in social-economic life; public-private partnerships for human dignity; and human dignity in education.

The event was cosponsored by the Religious Freedom Institute, the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, Seminari Theologi Malaysia, and the Center.







## 11TH ANNUAL AFRICAN CONSORTIUM FOR LAW AND RELIGION STUDIES CONFERENCE

19–21 MAY 2024 | VICTORIA FALLS, ZIMBABWE

The annual conference of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ACLARS) is designed to cultivate a community of scholars who study law and religion issues relevant to Africa. For the 2024 conference, “Law, Religion, and Leadership in Africa,” hundreds of abstracts were submitted for consideration, and 90 scholars representing 22 African countries were selected to speak at the event.

Speakers focused on how law and religion shape the understanding and practice of leadership in diverse African contexts. Emphases included areas of cooperation or conflict between political, legal, and religious leaders on issues such as violent extremism, economic instability, and environmental and public health crises as well as peacebuilding, human rights, education,

gender balance, and youth empowerment. Speakers also highlighted the role of leadership and governance in the promotion and protection of freedom of religion and belief and addressed questions about human rights and human dignity from various African perspectives.

The conference included a book launch for *African Conceptions of Human Dignity*, which was released in December 2023. Copies of the book were provided to all participants and several professors received copies to take home to their university libraries.

The event was cosponsored by ICLRS, ACLARS, the West African Regional Center for Law and Religion Studies, and Great Zimbabwe University. Selected papers will be published in an upcoming book.







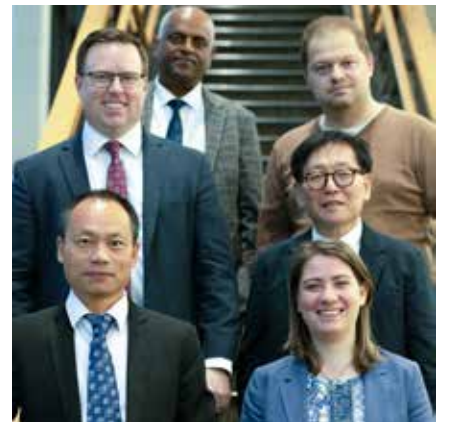
## 7TH INTERNATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR LAW AND RELIGION STUDIES CONFERENCE

21-23 OCTOBER 2024 | UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME LAW SCHOOL, SOUTH BEND, INDIANA, USA

The biennial conference of the International Consortium for Law and Religion Studies (ICLARS) convened at the University of Notre Dame with approximately 180 participants. The 2024 theme was “The Accommodation of Religion or Belief in the Public Sphere: Undeserved Privilege or Fundamental Right?” The ICLARS conference serves as a forum where information, data, and opinions can be readily exchanged and then made available to the broader community, often in the form of a book that is published by Routledge.

John Witte Jr., faculty director of the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University, was recognized at a gala dinner and presented with a Festschrift published by Brill Publishers.

The conference was planned and organized by ICLARS, the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, and the Religious Liberty Initiative and the events staff at the University of Notre Dame Law School. W. Cole Durham, Jr. was one of the founders of ICLARS, so the Center has been a key supporter of the organization for nearly 20 years.



## YOUNG SCHOLARS FELLOWSHIP ON RELIGION AND THE RULE OF LAW

CHRIST CHURCH, OXFORD, UNITED KINGDOM | 15 JULY-2 AUGUST 2024

The 2024 Young Scholars Fellowship on Religion and the Rule of Law hosted 16 scholars from Argentina, Australia, Bulgaria, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Poland, the United Kingdom, and Uruguay.

Coursework for this annual program centered on the casebook *Law and Religion: National, International, and Comparative Perspectives* (2nd edition), which was written by W. Cole Durham, Jr. and Brett G. Scharffs. Scholars had the opportunity to attend lectures by international leaders in the field of freedom of religion or belief. Additionally, each scholar was assigned a writing instructor with whom they worked individually in Oxford-style tutorials to prepare an article for publication in an English-language law or academic journal. This year’s writing instructors were Jane Wise and Mary Jensen, former BYU Law legal writing professors, and Jacqueline Carney of the legal writing program at Notre Dame Law School.

While in Oxford, scholars presented their research to their peers and attended ICLRS-sponsored side events. They participated in

a day trip to London where they toured the UK Supreme Court; received a guided tour of Temple Church by the Reverend Robin Griffith-Jones; met with Julie Jones, director of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief; had lunch and a question-and-answer session with Archbishop Angaelos, the first Coptic Orthodox archbishop of London; and had dinner at the Inner Temple with Judge Ann Power-Forde, former judge of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Young Scholars program is designed for early-career academic professionals interested in the field of religion and the rule of law from an international and human rights perspective. ICLRS established the program in 2018 to identify and train the next generation of scholars in the field of law and religion. Applications for the next year’s program are open from December to January on [iclrs-ox.org](https://iclrs-ox.org).



2024 Oxford Conferences

LAW AND RELIGION PEDAGOGY WORKSHOP

17–18 JULY 2024

In summer 2024, the ICLRS held a law and religion pedagogy workshop at Christ Church, University of Oxford. Day one focused on sharing best teaching practices in the field of law and religion. Day two focused on discussing updates to the forthcoming third edition of the casebook *Law and Religion: National, International, and Comparative Perspectives*, written by W. Cole Durham, Jr., Brett G. Scharffs, and their longtime colleague Renáta Uitz of Central European University, who joined as coauthor for the third edition.

Workshop participants included Young Scholars alumni who teach law and religion in their home countries as well as ICLRS associates who have translated the casebook into Burmese, Bahasa Indonesian, Hebrew, Russian, and Spanish. Also in attendance were leaders from the Institute for Global Engagement who coordinate the ICLRS’s certificate training programs in Myanmar, Vietnam, and elsewhere.



AI AND HUMAN DIGNITY WORKSHOP

“Exploring Implications for Faith, Freedom, Fairness, and Flourishing”

22–23 JULY 2024

During a workshop at Christ Church, experts explored the intersection of AI, human dignity, and faith from various religious and regional perspectives and in various spheres, such as social media and app development, healthcare and bioethics, international development, and human rights, including the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Workshop cosponsors were the ICLRS, Globethics, Baylor University’s Ethics Initiative, the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies at Indonesia’s Gadjah Mada University, and *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*. Papers presented at the workshop will be published in a special 2025 issue of *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*.



ABRAHAMIC FAITHS WORKSHOP

“Multi-Faith Partnerships of Muslims, Jews, and Christians”

31 JULY–1 AUGUST 2024

The Center and Multi-Faith Neighbors Network cosponsored a workshop featuring five multifaith partnerships of Muslims, Jews, and Christians that have worked together on pressing issues in different countries and regions. The featured partnerships were Comparative Religious Law: Judaism, Christianity, Islam (United Kingdom); Multi-Faith Neighbors Network (United States); Search for Common Ground (Israel and Gaza); A Bioethical Framework of Monotheistic Religions on the Occasion of COVID-19 (Argentina); and Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy (Indonesia).

Muslim, Jewish, and Christian representatives of each partnership participated in a moderated panel discussion

that centered on the challenges faced and the lessons learned from working together, as well as the organizations’ plans for future collaboration.

The first day of the workshop was held at Christ Church, University of Oxford; day two was hosted by the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and featured a tour of its impressive building, library, and grounds that was led by Dr. Afifi al-Akiti, the Centre’s Kuwait Fellow in Islamic Studies.

Plans are underway to continue the workshop’s conversation about multifaith collaboration through a larger conference, a blog series, and/or a publication that will inform and encourage future multifaith efforts.







## 2ND ANNUAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND HUMAN DIGNITY CONFERENCE

23–25 APRIL 2024 | BYU–HAWAII, LAIE, HAWAII, USA

Twenty-three delegates from Oceania, including scholars, government officials, clergy, civil society leaders, and members of the media, gathered in Laie, Hawaii, for the 2024 Pacific regional conference, “Oceanian Perspectives on Human Dignity.” Participants represented the Cook Islands, Fiji, Guam, Hawaii, Micronesia, New Zealand, Samoa, and Tonga. The Honorable Robert J. Torres Jr., chief justice of the Supreme Court of Guam, delivered the keynote address.

Delegates examined the ways in which different thought systems view human dignity and discussed Oceania’s various cultural

and societal perspectives on the topic. A recurring theme of the presentations was the importance of communal perspectives on human dignity.

In addition, the conference included a panel of student fellows of the BYU–Hawaii Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative, each of whom presented their research on religious freedom and human dignity in their home countries.

This is the second conference held at BYU–Hawaii and cosponsored by the university’s Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Initiative.







# STUDENTS







SUMMER RESEARCH FELLOWS

Each summer a group of students who have completed their first year of law school are selected to participate in an international externship at the Office of General Counsel at either the headquarters of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City or one of the eight area legal counsel offices of the Church in countries around the world. After completing their training with the Church’s legal counsel offices, fellows spend the rest of the summer doing research projects with the Center and assisting with conferences and other projects. Summer fellows gain practical experience while also providing valuable contributions to the Center’s work.

- Elena Balkova**  
*Manila, Philippines*

**Mary Bowers**  
*Tokyo, Japan*

**Joseph Celaya**  
*London, United Kingdom*

**Taylor Crofts**  
*Frankfurt, Germany*

**Jenna Crowther**  
*Auckland, New Zealand*
- Dallin Everton**  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

**Abigail Kime**  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

**Ashley Leptich**  
*Hong Kong, China*

**Joe Sorensen**  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

**Seth Van Duzor**  
*University of Idaho College of Law*

**Wendy Neeley**  
*Syracuse University College of Law*
- Fellows not assigned to an office but who assisted in Center projects:*
- Jessica Jackson**  
*Quinnipiac University School of Law*
- Seth Van Duzor**  
*University of Idaho College of Law*



Working with the Center has helped me find a passion for religious freedom that I didn't know was there before. It was an incredible experience to interact with people at the international symposium who were all united in promoting human dignity.

—Dallin Everton



MASTER OF LAWS (LLM) STUDENTS

Each fall, BYU Law welcomes a group of international LLM students. These students are usually lawyers and judges in their own countries, and they come to BYU to gain experience in US law, broaden their skills, and further their influence at home. Some of these LLM students volunteer with the Center on various projects. We thank the Stirling Foundation, the Sorenson Legacy Foundation, the Gary and Lynn Anderson LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund, the Martin and Allyson Egbert LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund, the Neil and Denise Lindberg LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund, and the David A. and Linda C. Nearon LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund for their sponsorship of the LLM program.

- Anderson Fellow*

**Dana De León**  
*Mexico*

*Egbert / Nearon Fellow*

**Eduardo Pires**  
*Brazil/Germany*

*Stirling Foundation Fellows*

**Rodrigo Cardoso Senatore**  
*Brazil*
- Other Fellows*

**Mohamed Alabahre**  
*Jordan*

**Razan AlShafei**  
*Jordan*

**Andrea Arce Munguía**  
*Costa Rica*

**Jesús Alberto Mejia**  
*Honduras*

**Walter Sachún Salazar**  
*Peru*



At the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, I felt truly blessed to work alongside such dedicated professionals and scholars who inspired me to approach legal challenges with a commitment to fostering dialogue and understanding.

—Dana De León

SYMPOSIUM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Under the direction of Elizabeth Clark, the Symposium Executive Committee spent weeks planning and coordinating logistical aspects of the 2024 Annual International Law and Religion Symposium. During the symposium, students assisted delegates, coordinated volunteers, and managed travel to and from the event, among other tasks. Their work and dedication were key to the successful execution of the symposium.

- Master Schedule*

**Maddie Seegmiller**  
**Kailey Ballstaedt**

*Concierge*

**Elena Balkova**, lead  
**Sophia Chima**  
**Dulce Garcia**  
**Ifeanyi Obi**

*Documents, Interpretation, and Media*

**Blamo Kofa**, lead  
**Alexandra Brown**  
**Julie Khouri**  
**Songfeng Li**  
**Braden Rivers**

*Hosting*

**Jenna Crowther**, lead  
**Joe Sorensen**  
**Annarose Hayata**
- Recruiting/Volunteers*

**Dallin Everton**, co-lead  
**Mary Ann Ojeda**, co-lead  
**Natalie Gunn**

*Transportation*

**Joseph Celaya**, lead  
**Julio Policarpo Cruz**  
**Damian Rosas**

*BYU-Hawaii Volunteers*

**Valerie Joy Agustin**  
**Isabel Contreras-Spencer**  
**Ayu Ningtyas Kartika Sari**  
**Samantha Rasmussen**  
**Joseph Sant**  
**Lance Ivan Santiago**





OUTSTANDING STUDENT AWARDS

The ICLRS recognized graduating BYU Law students who gave the Center their time and talents in significant ways throughout their time at BYU Law.

- Camille Anjewierden
- Ryan Cheney
- Juliette Green
- Rachel Howden
- Paige Skousen
- Jorden Truman
- Lydia Vergara



STUDENT MANAGEMENT BOARD

Student Management Board members were chosen based on their interest in law and religion and their skills in writing, research, editing, and languages. Throughout the school year, board members participated in research, writing, and editing projects; conferences; and other assignments with the Center.

- |                     |                  |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Camille Anjewierden | Sarah Johns      |
| Chloe Atkins        | Allie King       |
| Brooklyn Bird       | McKell McIntyre  |
| Anna Bryner         | Dailyah Rudek    |
| Tate Frodsham       | Elyse Slabaugh   |
| Juliette Green      | Jennifer Trogden |
| Connor Hansen       | Jorden Truman    |
| Taylor Jeanfreau    | Clayton Varvel   |



I absolutely loved traveling with the Center. I was able to meet and interact with the most incredible people. I built lasting connections with a group of Brazilian law students that I remain in contact with today and consider dear friends.

—Gianna Patchett



COOPER DOUGLASS WINS VISUAL MEDIA AWARD

At the Center, we have the opportunity not only to work with very talented law students, but with exceptional undergraduate students as well. Cooper Douglass, who works as a videographer and photographer for the Center, attended the 2024 AMAR Windsor Dialogues and was tasked with documenting the event. Since 2024 marked the 10th anniversary of the ISIL/Daesh invasion of Sinjar and the genocide of the Yazidi people, a key theme of the 2024 Windsor Dialogues was empowering the Yazidi community to rebuild and preserve their heritage, especially as many of their refugee camps were scheduled to close in 2024.

Upon returning to BYU, Douglass entered a few of his photographs from the event in the College of Fine Arts and Communications Creative Works Contest and took first place in the Visual Media category.

“This experience pushed me to expand my skills behind the camera and explore new ways of capturing the essence of these remarkable individuals. Through interviews, portraits, and meaningful interactions with the attendees, I gained a deeper understanding of our shared humanity—as children of God, as brothers and sisters, and as bearers of each other’s burdens,” Douglass says. “I was surrounded by influential political and religious figures from around the world. Their examples have inspired me to use my talents to serve others and to listen to the stories of those who might otherwise go unheard.”



To see more of Douglass’s photos, visit [cfac.byu.edu/experience-cfac-winners/cooper-douglass/](https://cfac.byu.edu/experience-cfac-winners/cooper-douglass/).



# INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL







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**Bryce Wade**  
**Athelia Woolley**  
**Ken Woolley**

We are grateful for the support of the members of the International Advisory Council (IAC). Their contributions of time, talents, and other resources are critical to the success of the Center in promoting freedom of religion or belief worldwide.

IAC MEMBERS

- Allen and Denise Alexander**  
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**Scott and Jesselie Anderson**  
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**Jennifer Wilcox**  
**Gerald and Claudia Williams**  
**Kim Wilson and Gail Miller**  
**Larry and Lynda Wilson**  
**Mark and Carol Wolfert**  
**Ken and Athelia Woolley**  
**Tim and Teresa Wright**  
**Koo and Patricia Yuen**



# 2024 IAC Study Tour

From 5-20 September, members of the International Advisory Council participated in a study tour of Indonesia. In addition to touring renowned sites, IAC members attended events at Gadjah Mada University, Muham-madiyah University of Yogyakarta, and Udayana University.







ENDOWMENTS

Endowments—together with generous support from Brigham Young University, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and individual members of the International Advisory Council—provide the financial means for the Center to accomplish its work. Unlike other methods of funding, endowments are long-term financial tools that assist the Center in planning for the future. The individuals who create endowments for the Center establish a family legacy supporting religious freedom, and they can direct the focus of the Center’s work to global areas that are of particular interest to them.

Many of the endowments were created as a base for others to contribute to areas of special interest, and the Center hopes to establish endowments in more areas. Please contact Sandy Stephenson if you would like to discuss personal options.

CURRENT ENDOWMENTS

The **International Advisory Council Cornerstone Endowment** (2000) was the first endowment to fund the Center and its ongoing work.

*Founding Contributors:*

**David S. and Mary L. Christensen**  
**Richard P. and Christena Huntsman Durham**  
**Duane L. and Erlyn G. Madsen**  
**David A. and Linda C. Nearon**

The **David S. and Mary L. Christensen Endowed Fund for International Law and Religion Studies** (2014) provides for the work of the Center in the UK, with a focus on growing the connections between the Center and Oxford.

The **W. George and Helen Lowe Johnson Research Fellowship** (2014) focuses on legal scholarship, with an emphasis on freedom of religion and belief.

The **Edward Joseph Leon and Helen Hall Leon Endowed Fund for Law and Religion Studies** (2014) supports the work of the Center in the Middle East.

The **Jean & Frank, Barbara & Wayne Friendship FORB Endowed Fund for the International Center for Law and Religion Studies** (2016) supports the work of the Center in Europe.

The **Gregory P. and Julie L. Cook Endowed Fund for International Law and Religion Studies** (2017) supports the critical work of the Center in China.

The **Andrus African Endowed Fund for International Law and Religion Studies** (2018) provides for the critical work of the Center in Africa, including support of the growing number of religious liberty scholars in the region.

*Founding Contributors:*

**Brent and Cheri Andrus**

The **Gary and Lynn Anderson LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund** (2018) provides learning opportunities to enhance BYU Law students’ experiences as they work with the Center.

The **Southeast Asia Endowed Fund** (2018)

*Founding Contributors:*

**Milton and Heidi Shipp**

The **Latin American Religious Freedom Endowed Fund** (2020)

*Founding Contributors:*

**James F. and Allyson L. Larkins**

The **Sterling and Eleanor Colton Chair in Law and Religion** (2008) provides support for a wide range of the Center’s work, including supplemental support for BYU Law faculty. The chair is currently held by David H. Moore, dean of BYU Law and a former associate director of the Center.

The **S. David and Julie Colton Endowed Fund for International Law and Religion Studies** (2013) supports the work of the Center in Europe.

The **H. Brent and Bonnie Jean Beesley Oxford Young Scholars Endowed Fund** (2020) provides support and funding for Oxford programs and participants.

The **William and Barbara Benac DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Endowed Fund** (2021) offers funding and support for the establishment and operation of US religious freedom alliances.

The **Martin and Allyson Egbert, Allymar Pay It Forward LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund** (2021) helps to pay expenses of international students to earn a master of laws degree at BYU in comparative and US law.

The **Mark and Christi Jensen DFW Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Endowed Fund** (2021) offers funding and support for the establishment and operation of US religious freedom alliances.

The **Neil and Denise Lindberg LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund** (2021) helps to pay expenses of international students to earn a master of laws degree at BYU in comparative and US law.

The **David A. and Linda C. Nearon LLM Center Student Fellows Endowed Fund** (2021) helps to pay expenses of international students to earn a master of laws degree at BYU in comparative and US law.

The **Gene and Martha Schaerr Endowed Fund for Religious Freedom Advocacy** (2022) is used for purposes relating to religious freedom advocacy of the Center.

The **Lee Family Brazil Religious Freedom Endowed Fund** (2023) provides support for the Center’s work in Brazil.

*Founding Contributors:*

**Justin and Tahna Lee**

The **Gregory J. Drennan and Monica L. Drennan ICLRS Oxford Endowed Fund** (2024) supports the work of the Center in Oxford.



# “Live Your Faith”

## Latter-day Saint Perspectives on Peacemaking

By Brett G. Scharffs

*This address is adapted from remarks delivered at the 2024 Religious Freedom Annual Review held 20 June 2024.*

Not long after becoming director of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies, I spent considerable time reflecting, pondering, praying, and meditating about the question “What is the most important thing I can do to promote religious freedom?”

I thought deeply about a variety of projects and undertakings. And then I experienced a sudden insight—what I would describe as personal revelation—that completely changed my thinking.

It came in three words spoken to my mind with bright clarity: “Live your faith.”

To me, as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, this means striving to live the restored gospel of Jesus Christ more fully, more faithfully, more joyfully, more purposefully, more peaceably, and more conspicuously. Latter-day Saints are deeply committed to religious freedom, but I believe that religious freedom will not save us. What will save us is partaking fully in the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Just as the most important thing I can do to promote religious freedom is to live the best version of my faith, it is the very same thing—living the best version of my faith—that will most effectively empower me to become a peacemaker.

I’ve been thinking lately about some of the distinctive perspectives on peacemaking that Latter-day Saints can contribute to the global discourse. From a list of more than 50 ideas, I’ve distilled what I’d like to share into seven items.

First, Latter-day Saints believe God is the Father of our spirits, a person with “a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.”<sup>1</sup> Our understanding of what it means to be created in the image of God suggests that God is more like us than we may realize and that humans have the potential to become more like Him than we may realize.<sup>2</sup>

In our striving to become peacemakers, this means that we, as children of God, have an obligation to treat others as brothers and sisters who are also created in the image of God. C. S. Lewis said, “It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you can talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship.”<sup>3</sup>

Second, the Latter-day Saint conception of the Godhead, comprised of God the Father, our Savior Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost—three individuals united in purpose—gives us a perspective on the meaning of unity that is quite powerful. Jesus, in choosing to subject Himself to the will of the Father, chose unity. In His great Intercessory Prayer in John 17, Jesus prayed that we may be one, even as He and God the Father are one.<sup>4</sup>

Third, Latter-day Saints believe in a premortal life, during which God’s plan (which included moral agency, the certainty of sin, and the need for a Savior) was pitted against Satan’s plan (which would have denied moral agency and involved coercion and Satan seizing power and glory for himself).<sup>5</sup> The premortal







life teaches us that conflict is an eternal reality that we must learn to live with and overcome.

Fourth, Latter-day Saints perceive a distinction between conflict and contention. As Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf has said, “Conflict is inevitable. It is a condition of mortality. It is part of our test. Contention, however, is a choice. It is one way that some people choose to respond to conflict.” He further explained, “Our Lord Jesus Christ—our model of perfection—did not live a life free of conflict. He was opposed throughout His ministry, and in His final hours He was betrayed by a friend, accused by false witnesses, slandered, beaten, bloodied, and crucified. . . . As others contended with Him, He stood in His place—trusting in His Father, calm in His testimony, and firm in the truth.”<sup>6</sup>

Fifth, the Book of Mormon is in large measure the story of a family torn asunder by conflict and contention. Lately I’ve read the Book of Mormon with this question in mind: What can I learn about how to deal with conflict, and what does it teach me about being a peacemaker?

Sixth, members of the Church live in wards and branches not determined by our choice of a congregation we like but based upon geography, which typically brings into close contact people from very different social and economic backgrounds. This is a laboratory where the skills of peacemaking should be cultivated and developed.

Finally, the historical experience of the Church in dealing with persecution and conflict contributes to the Latter-day Saint perspective on peacemaking. Some of my favorite chapters in our scriptural canon are Joseph Smith’s prison revelations, recorded in sections 121 through 123 of the Doctrine and Covenants. These sections can be ranked with the greatest prison literature of all time.

In late 1838, shortly after an extermination order was issued against members of the Church in Missouri, Joseph was taken prisoner and summarily sentenced to be shot. Joseph and his companions were shuttled from place to place, finally spending six months in Liberty Jail.

In a letter to the Church toward the end of his captivity, Joseph cried out to God, “Let thine anger be kindled against our enemies;



and, in the fury of thine heart, with thy sword avenge us of our wrongs.”<sup>7</sup> In response, God taught Joseph one of the most profound lessons about peacemaking that we can find in holy writ, or indeed the history of conflict. Joseph was taught that God’s kingdom is ruled by a type of authority that is noncoercive: “by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness, and by love unfeigned.”<sup>8</sup> He was entreated to have “charity towards all men.”<sup>9</sup>

Joseph was then promised, “The doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven. . . . Thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever.”<sup>10</sup> God’s kingdom is a kingdom without compulsion.

In these ways and more, my perspective and experiences as a Latter-day Saint have lent me a deeper understanding of peacemaking principles. May we all consider the ways our diverse faith traditions can strengthen and refine peacemaking efforts.



## NOTES

1. Doctrine and Covenants 130:22.

2. See Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 82:6; Romans 8:16–17; Doctrine and Covenants 132:20; see also “Becoming Like God,” Gospel Topics essays, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/becoming-like-god](https://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/study/manual/gospel-topics-essays/becoming-like-god).

3. C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory,” in *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, (Macmillan, 1949), 14–15.

4. See John 17:11, 20–23.

5. See Moses 4:1–4; see also Revelation 12:7–11.

6. Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Five Messages That All of God’s Children Need to Hear,” BYU Education Week address, 17 August 2021, [speeches.byu.edu/talks/dieter-f-uchtdorf/five-messages-that-all-of-gods-children-need-to-hear/](https://speeches.byu.edu/talks/dieter-f-uchtdorf/five-messages-that-all-of-gods-children-need-to-hear/).

7. Doctrine and Covenants 121:5.

8. Doctrine and Covenants 121:41.

9. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45.

10. Doctrine and Covenants 121:45–46.



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**Donlu DeWitt Thayer**



**Patrick J. Thurston**





JEFF AND JANET NELSON

# Two Years of Inspiring Service

The Center is blessed with many volunteers who help make our work possible. From July 2022 to June 2024, two of these, **Jeff and Janet Nelson**, devoted themselves full-time to the Center, and in the process, lifted everyone they came in contact with.

Jeff, former senior counsel for the Office of General Counsel of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and Janet, a former high school math teacher, worked tirelessly on Center efforts. They were invaluable in planning and carrying out international and regional conferences and many other events, including inviting participants to attend. Many of our partners came to know and love the Nelsons as they worked with them on organizing committees and as the Nelsons traveled to multiple events.

Of their service, ICLRS Associate Director Amy Andrus says, “The Nelsons were a literal heaven-sent gift to the ICLRS. The Center benefited from Jeff’s wry intelligence and ability to examine issues and challenges from his uniquely insightful point of view. Janet blessed the Center with her unflagging energy, can-do attitude, and math-teacher gift for problem solving. Both possess a sharp intellect, a delightful sense of humor, and a Christlike ability to connect with and serve the one.”

Marianna Richardson, director of communications for the G20 Interfaith Forum, says, “Their willingness to serve—no matter the circumstances and no matter the time pressure—is and remains a great inspiration to me of the way service should be given. I never saw them complain. I only saw them cheerfully serve!”

Janet comments that the best part of the two years, besides working side-by-side with her husband, was the people she met. She says that many of the people she interacted with became friends, and she was blessed to have many meaningful and respectful conversations about faith.

Jeff says, “We believe we were instruments—not only in God’s hands but in yours—in advancing the vital work that promotes and defends freedom of religion or belief. Instruments, no matter how well played, produce something more majestic and beautiful when played in harmony with other well-tuned instruments—meaning each of you—and we are grateful to have been a part, however small and temporary, of this orchestra.”

We at the Center thank the Nelsons for their efforts over the last two years. They will continue to participate in ICLRS as members of the International Advisory Council and as senior fellows.



**Brett G. Scharffs**  
*Director*



**W. Cole Durham, Jr.**  
*Founding Director*



**Amy Lynn Andrus**  
*Associate Director*



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**Sandy L. Stephenson**  
*International Advisory Council Liaison*



**Milton P. Shipp**  
*International Advisory Council Chair*





# 2024 Center Achievements

## MEDIA

**Lutforahman Saeed** was interviewed on the *In Good Faith* podcast on BYU Radio regarding his move from Kabul , Afghanistan, to Salt Lake City, Utah.

## APPOINTMENTS

**Elizabeth Clark** served as a civil society member for the Kazakh-us Intergovernmental Working Group on Religious Freedom, as the 2024 chair of the Law and Religion Section of the Association of American Law Schools, and as a member of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

**Gary Doxey** served as a member of the Utah Independent Executive Branch Ethics Commission.

**Paul Kerry** was elected as one of the first two Honorary Fellows of the Woolf Institute. Kerry is a former visiting fellow of the Woolf Institute and now supports its Summer School on Religion and Society from the Medieval to the Modern. He recently worked on the Woolf Institute research project *A Documentary History of Jewish-Christian Relations: From Antiquity to the Present Day*, which was published by Cambridge University Press in October 2024.

**Hannah Clayson Smith** served as a member of the board of directors for two organizations: the Religious Freedom Institute and International Religious Freedom Summit.

## LAW REFORM

**Elizabeth Clark** and **Hannah Clayson Smith** drafted a model religion law that was proposed to the government of Cambodia.

### Elizabeth Clark

- Was involved in efforts to alert key people to damaging new draft legal provisions in Kazakhstan. Through connections built over the years with significant players in Kazakhstan, she was able to get relevant information quickly and provide information and analysis to the State Department and the us Commission on International Religious Freedom, resulting in the Kazakhstan

government withdrawing and disavowing the amendments.

- Authored pro bono expert opinions in religious asylum cases.
- Briefed the Kazakh-us Intergovernmental Working Group on Religious Freedom and took part in briefings on religious freedom in Ukraine for the UK Parliament, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, the us State Department, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office.

### Gary Doxey

- Provided technical advice on a legislative bill regarding religious freedom and religious organizations in Queensland, Australia.
- At the invitation of the government of Paraguay, advised on amendments to regulations regarding religious organizations.
- Advised a group of religious organizations on proposed changes to the Constitution of Chile, a project that extends back over three years.
- Advised a coalition of legal counsels for religious organizations regarding proposed legislation on religious freedom and religious organizations in the Dominican Republic.
- Engaged in discussions with an organization of Latin American parliamentarians regarding a potential model law for Latin America on religious freedom and the regulation of religious organizations.
- Headed the cultural/religious track of a Utah delegation to Uzbekistan on 22-26 April 2024. The delegation met with leaders of the Uzbek parliament, presidential advisors, several government ministers, and other Uzbek religious and civic leaders.

## TALK ABOUT: LAW AND RELIGION

Blog of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies

The Center’s blog, *Talk About: Law and Religion*, now wrapping up its fifth year, continues to feature diverse academic voices on current issues related to law and religion. The blog serves as a forum for prominent and upcoming academics from around the globe to offer their views and/or current research on timely topics, either in stand-alone posts or in conversation with one another. “Conversations” are special series featuring posts from multiple authors with distinct viewpoints on a single topic. In 2024 the blog featured conversations on issues such as conscientious objection, historical perspectives on the journey from persecution to inclusion

of religious minorities, the Catholic Church’s Dignitas Infinita, the 2024 report of the UN special rapporteur on FORB, and the roles of colonialism and decolonization in the interaction of law and religion. In total, the blog featured 74 posts, which included video and print interviews with prominent scholars.

*Talk About* is edited by **Dmytro Vovk**, an alum of the Center’s Young Scholars Fellowship at Oxford and a Ukrainian law and religion professor currently teaching at the Cardozo School of Law in New York City. Coeditor is ICLRS Associate Director **Amy Lynn Andrus**.

## TALK ABOUT: FORB

Podcast of the International Center for Law and Religion Studies

In 2024 the Center launched a new podcast, which is an extension of the Center’s blog, *Talk About: Law and Religion*. Hosts **Dmytro Vovk** and **Merilin Kiviorg**, both professors of law and alums of the Young Scholars Fellowship at Oxford, discuss topical issues related to religious freedom, church-state relations, and religion and politics with experts in the field. Episodes can be found on the *Talk About: Law and Religion* blog, the Center’s YouTube channel, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

## HEADLINES

The Center continues to compile daily lists of headlines related to law and religion that are searchable by country and by topic. A digest of top headlines, curated by **Jordan Pendergrass**, is sent via email to subscribers, who currently number more than 9,800. These headlines average almost 7,000 daily views. Headline digests are also shared on X @headlines\_iclrs. To subscribe to headlines emails or to see daily headlines, visit [religlaw.org/headlines](http://religlaw.org/headlines).

## PUBLICATIONS

**Clark, Elizabeth A.** “The Impact of Religion and Religious Organizations.” *BYU Law Review* 49, no. 1 (30 November 2023): article 6. [digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/lawreview/vol49/iss1/1](http://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/lawreview/vol49/iss1/1).

**Clark, Elizabeth A.** and **Dmytro Vovk**. “Ukraine: Law Banning Ukrainian Orthodox Church About to Enter Force.” Forum 18 News Service, 17 September 2024. [forum18.org/archive.php?article\\_id=2932](http://forum18.org/archive.php?article_id=2932).

**Clark, Elizabeth A.** “Religious Organizations and Legal Entity Status in the United States.” In *Contemporary State-Ecclesiastical Law: Comparative Legal Challenges and National Perspectives*. Edited by Vladimir Đurić and Dalibor Đukić. Belgrade, Serbia: Institute of Comparative Law, 2023.

**Clark, Elizabeth A., Brett G. Scharffs, and Amy Lynn Andrus.** *Religion and Law in the United States*. 2nd ed. Wolters Kluwer, 2024.

**Doxey, Gary B.** “The Regulation of Marriage in the United States of America.” In *Nuevas afectividades, ¿nuevos derechos en América?* Volume 19 (2024) of *Derecho y Religión*. Delta Publicaciones y el Instituto Metodológico de Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado. [endialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9695442](http://endialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9695442).

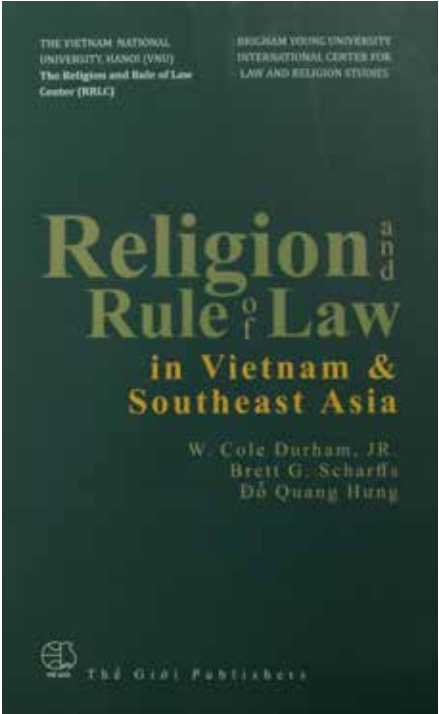
**Kerry, Paul.** “From the Reformation to the Enlightenment: The Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century.” In *A Documentary History of Jewish-Christian Relations: From Antiquity to the Present Day*. Edited by Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn. Cambridge University Press, 2024.

**Bossche, Chris Ramon Vanden, Paul E. Kerry, and Marylu Hill,** eds. *Essays on German Literature and Culture, Part I*. The Norman and Charlotte Strouse Edition of the Writings of Thomas Carlyle. University of California Press, 2024.

**Scharffs, Brett G., Andrea Pin, and Dmytro Vovk,** eds. *Human Dignity, Judicial Reasoning, and the Law: Comparative Perspectives on a Key Constitutional Concept*. Routledge, 2024.

**Scharffs, Brett G.** “Building Bridges Between Freedom of Religion and Belief and Other Fundamental Human Rights.” In *Fundamental Rights, Religion and Human Dignity: A Constitutional Journey*. Edited by Javier Martínez-Torrón and Li-ann Thio. Routledge, 2024.





AWARDS

The book *Religion and Rule of Law in Vietnam and Southeast Asia* was honored at the 10th National External Information Service Awards. The ceremony recognized outstanding contributions in external information and was organized by the Central Committee for External Relations, Communist Party of Vietnam. Authored by **W. Cole Durham, Jr.**, **Brett G. Scharffs**, and **Đỗ Quang Hùng** and published by Giới Publishers, the book is the only scientific research work awarded this year and the first book published in English to be awarded this prize in Vietnam. Scharffs and Hùng attended the award ceremony on 3 December 2024 at the Hanoi Opera House. The Center and Hùng have collaborated for more than 20 years.

In January 2024, **Brett Scharffs** received an Outstanding Service Award from Summit Global Investments. David Harden, company founder and president, presented the award and recognized Scharffs for his work in the field of religious freedom and human dignity.



DENISE LINDBERG HONORED WITH J. CLIFFORD WALLACE AWARD

**Denise Posse-Blanco Lindberg**, an ICLRS senior fellow, was honored in 2024 with the J. Clifford Wallace Award. Named after the most senior Latter-day Saint judge in the United States, the award recognizes those who have made significant contributions to advancing the rule of law, particularly on an international scale. Judge Wallace is renowned for his dedication to strengthening judicial systems worldwide, a legacy this award celebrates.

For Lindberg, receiving the award “is a huge honor. Judge Wallace is incredibly well regarded, and he has huge shoes to fill. Being recognized for some of the work I’ve done internationally is gratifying, to say the least.”

Lindberg’s career has been defined by a commitment to serving and supporting judiciaries across the globe, particularly in Latin America. “When they told me about the award, I reflected on why I do this work,” she says. “You go and do these things because you believe in helping other judiciaries, in giving back. . . . I can’t think of anything I would rather be doing.”



COLE DURHAM RECEIVES INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY’S DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

**W. Cole Durham, Jr.** was the 2024 recipient of the International Society’s Distinguished Service Award. This award is presented each year to an individual who has made far-reaching contributions to the world.

David Kirkham, president of the International Society, presented the award to Durham at a luncheon during the International Society’s 34th annual conference. “W. Cole Durham, Jr. has been a pioneer in protecting and promoting freedom of religion and belief throughout the world,” Kirkham said. “He is widely recognized by leaders of church, state, and academia for the remarkable leadership he shows in this arena.”

Reflecting on the many years he has known Durham, Kirkham said, “I used to think greatness was just about having vision and the power to recruit others to a good cause . . . and Cole is all those things. But my association with Cole tells me it’s also about someone who walks fast, sleeps little, is willing to apologize when necessary, and truly sees the dignity of humanity everywhere he goes.”



JANUARY

**19** J. Reuben Clark Law Society (JRCLS) Annual Fireside, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

**22–23** Visit of Uzbek Ambassador to the UN, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

**25** “Freedom of Religion and New Technologies,” International Consortium of Law and Religion (ICLARS) Webinar

**29** International Religious Freedom (IRF) Roundtable, Washington, DC, USA

**29–31** IRF Summit, Washington, DC, USA

FEBRUARY

**13** JRCLS Religious Freedom Conference/ Symposium, Cheyenne, Wyoming, USA

**25** “Freedom of Religion and New Technologies,” ICLARS Webinar

MARCH

**8** Spotlight Initiative launch ceremony, Maputo, Mozambique

**12–19** Interfaith Dialogue and Training Seminar for Religious Leaders and Government Officials, Nampula, Chimoio, and Ponta de Ouro, Mozambique

**13** “Freedom of Religion or Belief and Women,” keynote address, All-Party Parliamentary Groups Freedom of Religion or Belief Event, Parliament, Westminster, London, United Kingdom

**13–14** Annual Meeting of the International Religious Freedom or Belief Alliance (IFRBA) (Article 18 Alliance) and Council of Experts and Country Presentations, Council of Experts, Geneva, Switzerland

**21–23** “Freedom of Religion: A Universal Right and Our Responsibility to Defend It Universally,” panel discussion, JRCLS National Conference, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

APRIL

**4–5** International Advisory Coucil (IAC) Annual Spring Meeting, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

**8** “War, Diplomacy, and the Human Rights Dialogue: New Approaches for Latter-day Saint Professionals” and “New Approaches in Respecting Human Dignity,” panels at International Society Conference, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA

**10** 11th Annual Iowa Religious Freedom Day, Des Moines, Iowa, USA

**10–12** Latin America Regional Conference I, Puebla, Mexico. See page 34.

**11–12** Indian delegation visit sponsored by the US State Department, Provo, Utah, USA

**12** 20th Annual Religion and the Law Symposium, Orange, California, USA

**13** Law School Seminar and Signing of Memorandum of Understanding, Addis Ababa University School of Law, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**15–16** Celebration of 2024 Golden Rule Day and Commemorating World Interfaith Harmony Week, G20 Interfaith Forum event, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

**18** “Finding Common Ground,” 2nd Annual Las Vegas Alliance for Religious Freedom and Human Dignity Symposium, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA

**18** 3rd Annual Freedom of Religion Roundtable, Kennesaw, Georgia, USA

**19** IFRBA Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue, Vienna, Austria

**21–28** Trade/Philanthropic/Interfaith Mission to Uzbekistan

**23–25** Pacific Regional Conference, BYU–Hawaii, Laie, Hawaii, USA. See page 48.

**30** Religious Roundtable, Association of Religious Organizations of Kazakhstan, Astana, Kazakhstan

MAY

**1–3** Baku Intercultural Dialogue Forum, sponsored by Sheikh Ul-Islam and Baku Multicultural Center, Baku, Azerbaijan

**5–6** “Building Bridges in a Divided World: Diplomacy of the Heart Through

Dialogue and Understanding,” sponsored by Baskerville Forum, Foundation for Religious Diplomacy, Tbilisi, Georgia

**7–8** “Family Structure in Light of Changing World: Religious Perspectives on Integration of Families, Faith, Values, and Education,” 15th Doha Conference on Interfaith Dialogue, Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, Doha, Qatar

**14** “Understanding Anti-Christian Hate Crimes and Addressing the Security Needs of Christian Communities: A Practical Guide,” Consultation Meeting with Representatives of Civil Society and Christian Communities in the North American Context, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Ottawa, Canada

**14–16** International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) Global Dialogue Forum and signing ceremony for Memorandum of Understanding between KAICIID and ICLRS, Lisbon, Portugal

**19–21** Africa Regional Conference, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. See page 42.

**31** 10th Annual Law and Religious Freedom Conference, University of Missouri, Kansas City School of Law, Kansas City, Missouri, USA

JUNE

**5** Law and Religion Conference, “Freedom of Religion and Integral Human Development,” Atlantic Council, Rome, Italy

**12–14** “Indigenous Peoples, Communities of African Descent, and Group Rights: Perspectives on Religious Freedom and Brazilian Priorities during Brazil’s G20 Year,” organized by G20 Interfaith Forum, International Religious Liberty Institute, Brazilian Center for Studies in Law and Religion at the Federal University of Uberlândia, Belém, Brazil

**17–19** “Women on the Worldstage” Black Women in Ministry Conference, Palm Beach, Florida, USA

**17–21** “Environment, Sustainable Development, and Religious Engagement,” organized by G20 Interfaith Forum and Brazilian Center for Studies in Law and Religion at Federal University of Uberlândia, Manaus, Brazil

**20** Religious Freedom Annual Review, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA. See page 18.

**23–25** “The Journey from Outside to Inside,” AMAR Windsor Dialogue, Windsor Castle and London, United Kingdom

**24–25** Latin America Regional Conference II, Asunción, Paraguay. See page 35.

**26–28** Organization of American States General Assembly, Asunción, Paraguay

**June 29–August 10** “Lecture Series on Faith and Resilience in Conflict,” sponsored by Kachin State Comprehensive University, Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), and ICLRS, Laiza, Myanmar

JULY

**3–6** Religion and Rule of Law Certificate Training Program, Da Lat, Vietnam

**9–11** “The State of Ukrainian Religious Freedom: Then and Now,” presentation at Notre Dame Religious Liberty Summit 2024, South Bend, Indiana, USA

**10–11** “Multi-Faith Collaborations in an Inclusive Society,” International Conference on Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy, sponsored by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Leimena Institute, Jakarta, Indonesia

**July 15–August 2** Young Scholars Fellowship on Religion and the Rule of Law, Christ Church, Oxford, United Kingdom

**17–18** Law and Religion Pedagogy Workshop, Christ Church, Oxford, United Kingdom

**22–23** “Exploring Implications for Faith, Freedom, Fairness, and Flourishing,” AI and Human Dignity Workshop, Christ Church, Oxford, United Kingdom

**24–25** “The Impact of Emergency Rules on Religious Freedom, with Special Regard to

Religious Minorities,” University of Messina, Messina, Italy

**July 31–August 1** “Multi-Faith Partnerships of Muslims, Jews, and Christians,” Abrahamic Faiths Workshop, Christ Church and Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford, United Kingdom

AUGUST

**6–7** Southeast Asia Regional Conference, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. See page 40.

**14–15** National Seminar on Law and Religion Studies and Legal Education in Nigeria for the Deans of Faculties of Law of Nigerian Universities, Abuja, Nigeria

**19–22** Latin America Regional Conference III, Brasília, Brazil. See page 36.

**21** “Answering Questions About Religious Freedom: A Guide,” presentation at BYU Education Week, Provo, Utah, USA

**22** “Building Peace Through the Protection of Religious Freedom,” International Forum on Law and Religion, University of the Philippines, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig, Philippines

SEPTEMBER

**1** Islamic Society of North America Interfaith Banquet, Dallas, Texas, USA

**6** Louisiana Religious Freedom Alliance 2024 Religious Freedom Summit, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, USA

**6–20** IAC Study Tour, Indonesia

**17** “Principles of Religious Freedom,” MeckMIN Faith Leader Lunch, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

**17** “Religious Freedom for All: Building Bridges and Breaking Bread Together,” Valencia College West, Orlando, Florida, USA

**21** “Building Bridges: Religious Freedom and Community Engagement for Everyday Disciples,” Independence, Missouri, USA

**24–25** “Practicing What We Preach,” Faith and Freedom Summit IV, Latin American Parliament, Panama City, Panama

OCTOBER

**6–8** 31st Annual International Law and Religion Symposium, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, USA. See page 10.

**10–11** International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Berlin, Germany

**15** “Finding Common Ground,” 7th Annual DFW Summit on Religious Freedom, Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum, Dallas, Texas, USA

**21–23** 7th ICLARS Conference, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA. See page 44.

**23–24** “Unity, Mutual Understanding, and Religious Freedom,” 1st Ulaanbaatar Interfaith Dialogue, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

**23–25** Latin America Regional Conference IV, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana, USA. See page 37.

**28** Interfaith Forum on Women, Peace, and Security, sponsored by ICLRS, Philippine Center for Islam and Democracy, Uniharmony Partners Manila, and Religions for Peace Philippines, Manila, Philippines

NOVEMBER

**5** “Which Belief, Whose Freedom?” Oslo Coalition on Freedom of Religion or Belief’s 25th Anniversary Conference, Oslo, Norway

**8** 12th World Urban Forum, Cairo, Egypt

**22–23** Cache Valley Interfaith Open House, Logan, Utah, USA

DECEMBER

**14–16** Governing Religion in the Context of Socio-Political Transformation: Germany, Northern Ireland, the Baltic States, and Ukraine, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Cambridge, United Kingdom









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