

EDITORIAL: Broad support for a really bad idea

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While he probably meant well, state Rep. Trey Martinez Fischer's ["tax-free gas" proposal](#) represents a troubling tendency. We want to have our cake and eat it too. Or, more specifically, we want to have our gas guzzlers and drive cheaply too.

Reacting to gasoline prices that have been bumping the \$3-per-gallon range, the San Antonio Democrat suggested the state suspend its 20-cents-per-gallon gas tax for 90 days this summer. "My constituents are saying, 'Gas is too high,'" Fischer explained, noting the temporary gas-tax repeal could save a Texas couple about \$100. Those family savings would add up to about \$500 million to \$700 million in lost revenue, set aside for highway construction and public education. Fischer suggested the shortfall could be covered by the state's \$8 billion surplus, which has been earmarked for school property tax cuts and the state's Rainy Day Fund.



Fischer's House colleagues apparently followed his logic. They approved his amendment 118-16. But the measure is not a done deal. It requires Senate approval, and senators seem more inclined to favor property tax breaks than lower numbers at the gas pump.

The "tax-free gas" plan is plain wrong, on several levels. Unfortunately, the proposal:

Faith Digest

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Faith Digest

Christian worship expert Webber dies. Robert Webber, an influential expert on Christian worship, died April 27 in Sawyer, Mich., after suffering from pancreatic cancer. He was 73. Webber, a professor of ministry at Northern Seminary in Lombard, Ill., the last seven years, previously spent 32 years as a professor of theology at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Ill., where he remained professor emeritus. Webber wrote more than 40 books,

including *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, *Worship Is a Verb* and *Ancient-Future Faith*.

Citizenship process delayed for Muslims. U.S. immigration officials discriminate against Muslims when processing citizenship applications, a New York University Law School think tank study reports. Since 9/11, increased security checks of citizenship applications “have illegally delayed the processing of thousands of applications from Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern and South Asian men,” in part because of the perception they are more likely to be terrorists, the report said. A government official took issue. “The allegations are categorically false. We treat every application, every petition the same, and conduct the same background checks regardless of name, ethnicity or religion,” said Christopher Bentley, a spokesman for U.S. Immigration and Citizenship Services.

Does Gore trump Gideons at hotel?

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Does Gore trump Gideons at hotel?

By Charles O'Toole

Religion News Service

SAN FRANCISCO (RNS)—Reports that Al Gore has replaced God—at least in one California hotel—have been greatly exaggerated, the hotel's developer said.

The [Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa](#), located 35 miles north of San Francisco, made headlines after a media report that each of the hotel rooms contained a copy of Gore's environmental book, *An Inconvenient Truth*, but no Gideon Bible.

House extends hate crimes law to include violence against homosexuals

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House extends hate crimes law to include violence against homosexuals

By Philip Turner

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The House of Representatives has voted to extend hate crimes legislation to add protections for homosexuals, bisexuals and people with gender-identity issues in the same way people are protected because of race or creed.

Democratic leaders called it a civil rights victory, but conservatives and some church leaders argued the bill gives gays special rights and threatens the free speech of ministers who preach homosexuality is immoral.

Hispanic population transforming United States' religious landscape

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Hispanic population transforming United States' religious landscape

By Adelle Banks

Religion News Service

ASHINGTON (RNS)—About half the nation's Hispanics—including many who still identify themselves as Roman Catholic—consider themselves

charismatics or Pentecostals, creating a confluence of streams in American Christianity, a new study has revealed.

“Simply put, Latinos are transforming the nation’s religious landscape,” said Roberto Suro, director of the [Pew Hispanic Center](#), one of two organizations that produced the study.

**Among Latino
Christians:**

- 75 percent believe in miracles
- 71 percent say religion is very important
- 70 percent pray every day
- 53 percent believe the Bible is the literal word of God
- 52 percent believe Jesus will return in their lifetime
- 47 percent attend church at least weekly
- 29 percent speak in tongues at least weekly

Texas Baptist Forum

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Texas Baptist Forum

God, by any other name

The *Baptist Standard* is no longer taking a stance for Christ and is backing this left-wing anti-Christian terrorist, Charles Kimball ([March 5](#)). Why else would they give him and his rhetoric the attention they have? I am the Sunday school director for a Baptist church in Texas, but I will be moving towards independent. I will no longer support the Baptist General Convention of Texas or the Southern Baptist Convention. It is apparent the church is being attacked not only by Muslims and our alleged own government but from within also.

• [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

Letters are welcomed. Send them to marvknox@baptiststandard.com; 250 words maximum.

Out (Loud)

“If Christians could stop arguing about things Jesus didn’t mention or value, and if we could turn down our institutional ambitions and pride, we would see that our singular contribution to these difficult times is community.

Not just niceness and smiles, but radically open and transformative community. Jesus said, ‘Be one,’ not ‘be right.’ He said, ‘Love one another,’ not ‘judge one another.’ Our ... world is desperate for authentic community.”

Tom Ehrich

Writer, church consultant and
Episcopal priest (RNS)

“When Jesus said we should love our neighbors as ourselves, he meant we should probably try every means available to stop those neighbors from being killed.”

Bob Edgar

General secretary of the National
Council of Churches, addressing
Berkshire Hathaway stockholders on
“socially responsible investing”
(Ekklesia/RNS)

“Many evangelicals are boarding a new train. It runs along tracks defined by the broad demands of their faith, not by some party’s political agenda.”

E.J. Dionne

Washington Post columnist, on how
some American evangelicals are in the
midst of a “New Reformation” that
separates them from partisan politics
(RNS)

I will do my part to expose your efforts to fuel this intended means for a one-world religion, which is exactly what [Kimball's message](#) is. Read your Bible to find that there will be no peace between Muslim and Christian/Jews until the return of Christ. You are either for Christ or against him. Our God is a jealous god who shares his glory with no other. What an example you at the Baptist Standard set. But for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Someone needs to see to it that Kimball is deported to the Middle East along with every so-called Baptist that supports his ideology. The Bible tells us people like him are coming. Look up!

On the Move

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On the Move

- **Cindy Addy** to First Church in Paris as director of children and preschool ministries, where she had been interim.
- **James Aldridge** to New Horizon Church in Lubbock as pastor from Northwestern Church in Midland.
- **Phil Barton** to First Church in Denison as minister of prayer and discipleship.
- **Jay Beerly** to First Church of Wake Village in Texarkana as youth

minister.

What people don't know about religion can hurt them

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What people don't know about religion can hurt them

By Nancy Haught

Religion News Service

BOSTON (RNS)—What Americans don't know about religion is sometimes funny. For instance, when Jay Leno interviewed people on the street recently, someone told him God made Eve out of an apple.

Americans' ignorance also makes for some astonishing statistics. Ten percent believe Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Seventy-five percent are certain the Bible says, "God helps those who help themselves." Even evangelical Christians have lapses: 20 percent say they believe in reincarnation.

Churches pressure travel industry on sex trafficking

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Churches pressure travel industry on sex trafficking

By Melissa Stee

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Faith groups are using their collective influence and financial wherewithal to press the travel and hospitality industry to take greater steps to protect children from sex trafficking.

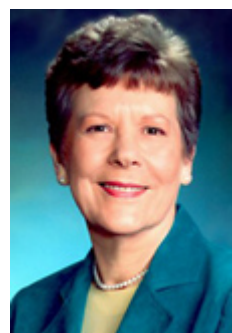
Increasing numbers of church groups and other religious bodies say it's not only a moral imperative to guard against sex trafficking, but also makes good business sense for hotels, airlines and cruise companies.

Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits



Joy Fenner

BGCT VP receives Truett Award. Joy Fenner, first vice president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was slated to receive the George W. Truett Distinguished Church Service Award at [Baylor University's commencement](#), May 12. Fenner served as executive director of Woman's Missionary Union of Texas for two decades. In the 1960s, she served as director of the Girls Auxiliary of Texas WMU. She later was appointed as a missionary by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, serving 13 years in Fukuoka, Japan.

Fletcher named Elder Statesman. Jesse Fletcher, president-emeritus of Hardin-Simmons University, will receive the Texas Baptist Elder Statesman award during a June 3 service at Independence Baptist Church, near Brenham. Fletcher was president of Hardin-Simmons University from 1977 to 1991, and he served as chancellor from 1991 to 2001. The program

begins with a 10 a.m. Bible study and 11:10 a.m. worship service, followed by a covered-dish picnic on the grounds of the historic church. The Elder Statesman Award recipient is selected by the officers of Independence Association to honor individuals who have made significant contributions to Baptist education in Texas.

TOGETHER: Missions strategy that will 'get 'er done'

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TOGETHER: Missions strategy that will 'get 'er done'

In a world that is increasingly difficult to understand, where terrors and threats fill every newscast, how do we become more effective bearers of good news in our mission endeavors? How do we become friends to the friendless? How do we become powerful and winsome witnesses to the saving grace of Jesus Christ?

These are critical questions facing Texas Baptists, and we are seeking answers.



Executive Director
BGCT Executive
Board

Bill O'Brien, in his important monograph [*Challenges Confronting Baptist Missions*](#), says the lingering impact of the enlightenment, slavery, colonialism and racism reflected in the attitudes that still shape so much of western Christianity affects negatively our ability to think in new ways about how we are to do missions in this century. The truth continues to be that “the past is not over.”

Recognizing what is behind, we move forward with grace and faith, insight and hope. We find ways to offer our enormous spiritual, human and financial resources to God in a humble and generous way. A missions strategy that will impact the future will be:

Dallas church teams with

Buckner to help AIDS orphans in Kenya

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Nurse practitioner Nancy Stretch leads a group of Buckner orphans down a path from the child development center just opened in Busia, Kenya, as part of the multi-year partnership between Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas and Buckner International.

Dallas church teams with Buckner to help AIDS orphans in Kenya

By Mark Wingfield

Wilshire Baptist Church

USIA, Kenya—Sixty Kenyan 4- and 5-year-olds started school for the first time recently, thanks to the missions effort of [Wilshire Baptist Church](#) in Dallas and Buckner International.