

Faith Digest: American Christians dabble in New Age

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Nearly one-fourth of the self-identified Christians in the United States delve into a range of Eastern or New Age beliefs, a new study shows. Asked about their supernatural experiences, significant minorities of American Christian respondents said they believe in astrology (23 percent), reincarnation (22 percent), spiritual energy in physical things like trees or crystals (23 percent) and yoga as a spiritual practice (21 percent). The survey by the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#) found Christians are about as likely as Americans overall to say they have been in touch with the dead (29 percent), had an experience with a ghost (17 percent) or consulted a psychic (14 percent). The results of the survey, taken by phone and involving a nationwide sample of 4,013 adults, have a margin of error of plus or minus 2.0 percentage points.

Nazarene membership approaches 2 million mark. The Church of the Nazarene reported a total worldwide membership of 1.9 million after adding more than 165,000 new members in 2009. The denomination has 24,285 congregations, and the number of self-sustaining churches increased by 1,178 to 17,277.

Mississippi leads U.S. in religious devotion. Residents of Mississippi ranked first among Americans in all four measures of religious commitment in a survey by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, with 82 percent saying religion is very important in their lives. Six in ten of Mississippi residents said they attend religious services at least once a week; 77 percent of Mississippians said they pray at least once a day; and 91 percent of Mississippians say they believe in God with absolute certainty. The findings, published online by the Pew Forum and drawn from data from its

2007 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, mirror earlier results released by the Gallup Poll in January 2009, which also found Mississippi to be the most religious state.

Court rules against 9/11 families' burial claims. A federal appeals court has rejected the claims of families who wanted the unidentified remains of relatives killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks to be given a proper burial according to their religious beliefs. A three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled against a group called [World Trade Center Families for a Proper Burial](#), which sued New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and other city officials. The families had sought the burial of the residue from the debris of the World Trade Center, located at the city's Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island, in a cemetery. The suit turned in part on a novel legal claim—that the families' inability to bury their loved ones according to the tenets of their faith violated their First Amendment right of free religious exercise. The families appealed a lower court decision, arguing it wrongly concluded their First Amendment rights had not been violated. The judges of the higher court upheld the lower court ruling against the families, agreeing city officials “did not target religious beliefs” in their recovery procedures.

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