

# Faith Digest: Census won't count Mormon missionaries overseas

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**Overseas Mormon missionaries won't count.** Mormon missionaries serving abroad will not be counted in the 2010 U.S. census, despite the hopes of Utah congressmen that the missionaries would be included, the Census Bureau said. Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah, has led efforts by fellow members of Congress from the state dominated by Mormons to get missionaries included in the count. They have argued that if missionaries were included in the 2000 census, the state would have received a fourth seat in the House of Representatives. Instead, that seat went to North Carolina. "Past experiments, including in 1960 and 1970, have demonstrated the difficulty of getting anywhere near a complete and accurate count of private citizens living overseas," said Shelly Lowe, a spokeswoman for the Census Bureau.

**Focus on the Family staff cuts go deeper.** Focus on the Family announced additional layoffs, cutting its staff by 8 percent to a total of 860 people. The 75 layoffs are augmented by a decision not to fill 57 vacancies as the prominent evangelical ministry in Colorado Springs, Colo., addresses a 5 percent shortfall in its budget. Focus spokeswoman Lisa Anderson said the shortfall in the \$138 million budget was due mostly to a decrease in giving from large donors affected by the economic downturn. The latest layoffs come less than a year after the ministry laid off 200 employees in November 2008. Economic conditions also were cited for those layoffs. At its peak, Focus on the Family, founded by religious broadcaster James Dobson, had 1,400 staffers.

**Council urges Pakistan to repeal blasphemy law.** The World Council of Churches is calling on Pakistan to repeal the mandatory death penalty for blasphemy against the Prophet Muhammad. The ecumenical council's governing body issued a statement urging Pakistan to "guarantee the rights of all religious minorities in the country." The church council said the blasphemy law has become "a major source of victimization and persecution" of religious minorities who are living "in a state of fear and terror." Since Pakistan's penal code was amended in 1986, Christians particularly have become targets of harassments and persecution, the World Council of Churches noted.

**Zondervan to publish updated NIV.** The copyright holder of the New International Version announced plans to release an updated version of the popular Bible translation in 2011. The NIV was created by the Committee on Biblical Translation, which began its work in 1965. Published by Zondervan, it has more than 300 million copies in print worldwide. Previous versions of the NIV were published in 1978 and 1984. A decade later, an updated version known as Today's New International Version divided the evangelical community over its use of gender-inclusive language. Douglas Moo, chairman of the Committee on Bible Translation, said the new edition will include a "complete review of every gender-related change since the publication of the 1984 edition."