

Faith Digest

February 16, 2007

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More Americans want less religion in public life. For the third consecutive year, the number of Americans calling for less religious influence in public life exceeded the number of Americans who want more, a new [Gallup poll](#) revealed. Most Americans, however, remain “generally satisfied” with organized religion’s role in the United States, the survey found. About 40 percent of Americans say religion’s level of influence in the nation should not change, 32 percent would like it to have less influence and 27 percent would like it to have more, the survey showed. Weekly churchgoers are much more likely to agree that religion should have greater influence on government and politics than people who go to church less frequently, the survey found. The number of Americans who think religion should have less impact has increased 10 percentage points since 2001, according to Gallup.

American economy linked to spiritual health. Most adults in the United States say the overall health of the nation’s economy is dependent on how spiritual Americans are, a survey by the [Gallup Organization](#) shows. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents said the nation’s economic health depends a “great deal” or to “some” degree on its spiritual health. The survey, called “The Spiritual State of the Union,” was conducted for the Spiritual Enterprise Institute, a West Palm Beach, Fla.-based center that focuses on building understanding of how spiritual values affect economic

life. Of those Americans surveyed, more than half say their religious beliefs greatly affect their feelings about the future, and more than one-third say they affect their relationships at work and how involved they are in volunteer activities. Fourteen percent of those surveyed said they consider a decline in society—ethically, morally or religiously—to be among the top problems facing America today.

Texas Baptist Forum

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Too much like Jesus?

Charles Wade asked if Baptists could be “too much like Jesus” ([Jan. 22](#)). Seven pages later, a story reported “about one-third of a penny” for every dollar of income of the average church member supports “benevolent causes outside the congregation.” Is this “too much like Jesus”?

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

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



"I recognize we are meeting here today to consider a bill to protect chickens. But isn't protecting our nation's young women ... equally, if not more, important than our dinner entree?"

James Sensenbrenner

U.S. congressman, R-Wis., discussing his unsuccessful attempt to add an amendment outlawing taking minors across state lines for an abortion to a bill increasing penalties for transporting animals across state lines for the purposes of fighting (RNS)
"It's not like we're sitting in the pews. It's the honor system plus some third-party oversight."

Nancy Mathis

Internal Revenue Service spokeswoman, speaking about how the agency doesn't launch investigations into churches violating IRS rules about politicking unless it receives a complaint (*USA Today/RNS*)
"My faith explains me. ... We are a nation of faith. It doesn't necessarily have to be mine. But we are a nation that believes that faith is an important part of describing who we are, and our generosity, and our sense of optimism and hope. That does describe me."

Mike Huckabee

Republican presidential candidate, former Arkansas governor and former Baptist pastor (*Meet the Press/ABP*)

Most of us have no desire to really be like the One we call "Lord." We are

too comfortable with our lifestyles and reputations to strive for the changes necessary in our lives and churches to be accused of being like Christ.

To be viewed like Jesus, the church must stop using building programs as a marketing method of excitement or as “upgrades” for the “glory of God.” This is nothing more than materialistic churches choosing to spend their money on themselves. New buildings for nongrowing churches are more for our comfort than “God’s glory.” If God had a vote at most business meetings, he would vote to spend the dollars on the needy instead of on the satisfied.

On the Move

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- **Bob Alber** to Longbranch Community Church in Midlothian as minister to students.
- **Curtis Barrett** to First Church in Muskogee, Okla., as minister of preschool and children from First Church in Lewisville, where he was children’s minister.
- **David Bristow** to New Life Church in Covington as pastor, where he was interim.
- **Dan Bullock** to First Church in Weinert as pastor.

Texas Tidbits

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Texas Tidbits

Howard Payne, DBU honored for community service. The President's Higher Education Community Honor Roll program recently recognized [Howard Payne University](#) and [Dallas Baptist University](#). This year, the program specifically emphasized hurricane relief projects conducted by university students.

Foundation awards challenge grant to Howard Payne. [Howard Payne University](#) has received a \$750,000 challenge grant from the J.E. and L.E. Mabee Foundation of Tulsa, Okla., to support the university's Sharing the Vision Capital Campaign. To qualify for the grant, Howard Payne must raise the balance needed for the total group of projects by January 2008. The total cost of the projects is \$7,625,000. More than \$5.2 million has been raised to date. Adding the anticipated \$750,000 from the foundation, a balance of about \$1.6 million remains to be raised. The Mabee grant and additional funding will be used toward renovation of existing buildings to create an art program facility, a Faith and Life Leadership Center and the welcome center, as well as creating endowments and scholarships.

TOGETHER: Matters of nature; matters of prayer

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TOGETHER: Matters of nature; matters of prayer

God's creation amazes us. The natural world in which we live and breathe sustains physical life and, at times, sends blatant reminders of its power.

In New Orleans this month, we have been reminded again of nature's power, as tornadoes struck an already-damaged city. And in Texas, we have been reminded we have a stewardship of creation none of us can ignore.

David Crosby, pastor of [First Baptist Church in New Orleans](#), said in the latest storm's aftermath: "It's like the picture you see of a severely beaten man who is on his knees, bleeding, and then he takes another blow. You wonder if this is the point where the poor fellow will just fall over and lie still."



In the midst of the trauma, First Baptist in New Orleans is reaching out to help the people of the city. "We took water, food, chainsaws and other clean-up supplies to the debris-strewn areas," he reported. "It was another opportunity to share the love of Christ."

Cybercolumn by Berry D. Simpson: Predictable

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CYBER COLUMN: Predictable

By Berry D. Simpson

I walked up to the counter at the fast-food restaurant at 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning, and the woman with the bright smile and twinkling eyes and pulled-back hair said in her deep voice, "Here you are."

She was pushing a tray with a large drink cup and a serving of hotcakes (no

sausage), along with all the accessories. She was clearly proud of herself for having my order ready before I actually ordered it—in fact, before I said even one word.

Berry D. Simpson

Lebanese, Palestinian Baptists ask for prayer amid strife

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Lebanese, Palestinian Baptists ask for prayer amid strife

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

BEIRUT (ABP)—Amid continuing strife in their areas, Baptists in Lebanon and the Gaza Strip requested prayers from their brothers and sisters around the world.

Young Baptist leaders address social justice at Current retreat

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Young Baptist leaders address social justice at Current retreat

By Patricia Heys

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

AUSTIN (ABP)—More than 100 leaders from the [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship](#) gathered a few blocks from the Texas state capital to discuss social justice.

Current, the fellowship's network for young leaders, hosted its eighth annual retreat at [First Baptist Church in Austin, Texas](#).

RIGHT or WRONG?

Homosexuals in the church

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RIGHT or WRONG?

Homosexuals in the church

Please help our congregation answer a couple of questions we have been discussing: "To what degree should homosexuals be accepted in church? And what role(s) should they be allowed to take in church?"

BaptistWay Bible Series for February 25: Jesus still seeks followers

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BaptistWay Bible Series for February25

Jesus still seeks followers

• John 21:15-23

By David Wilkinson

Explore the Bible Series for February 25: God never abandons his people

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Explore the Bible Series for February 25

God never abandons his people

• Esther 8:3, 6-8, 11; 9:1-2, 20-22

By Howard Anderson

Diversified Spiritual Associates, San Antonio

It was customary for convicted criminals to have their property confiscated. The signet ring given to Mordecai signified his exaltation to Haman's prime ministership.

Bible Studies for Life Series for February 25: Sometimes it takes faith to find the proof

February 16, 2007

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Bible Studies for Life Series for February 25

Sometimes it takes faith to find the proof

• John 6:30-31,35-36,41-47,66-69

By Kenneth Lyle