

Faith Digest: Church attendance up

July 15, 2010

Church attendance inches up, Gallup says. A new [Gallup Poll](#) found Americans' self-reported church attendance has increased slightly since 2008. When asked how often they attend church, synagogue or mosque, 43.1 percent of Americans in 2010 said they attended "at least once a week" or "almost every week." That's up a fraction from 42.8 percent in 2009 and 42.1 percent in 2008. Conservatives, non-Hispanic blacks and Republicans demonstrated the highest participation, with 55 percent of each group reporting frequent church attendance. The poll is based on more than 800,000 interviews since February 2008, and has a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percentage point.

Religious groups see slight decrease in giving. Religious organizations reported a 0.7 percent decrease in donations last year, according to a study by [Giving USA Foundation](#), a marked contrast from the 5.5 percent increase in giving reported in 2008. Total donations for all charitable groups in 2009 were down by 3.6 percent. Religious congregations accounted for 33 percent of the total \$303 billion in contributions in 2009. This is the third year in a row religious donations have exceeded \$100 billion. Donations to public organizations fell by \$22.7 billion—a 4.6 percent decline—while international aid organizations received about \$9 billion, a 6 percent increase.

Armed security OK in Louisiana churches. Gov. Bobby Jindal has signed into law a bill that allows guns to be carried into Louisiana houses of worship by members of a congregation's security force. The bill, sponsored by state Rep. Henry Burns, authorizes people with concealed weapons permits to bring firearms to churches, mosques, synagogues or other

houses of worship as part of an approved security force. The pastor or head of the religious institution must announce verbally or in weekly newsletters or bulletins that there will be individuals armed and designated as members of the security force. Participants have to undergo eight hours of tactical training each year. The bill also allows a house of worship to hire off-duty police or security guards to protect congregants. A state Senate committee killed Burns' original bill, but later it was tacked on to a related gun-rights bill. The bill is scheduled to take effect Aug. 15.

Jesus will return by 2050? Four in 10 Americans believe Jesus Christ will return to Earth by 2050, while a slightly larger portion—46 percent—don't believe they'll see a Second Coming by mid-century, according to a new survey. As part of Smithsonian Magazine's [40th anniversary issue](#), 1,546 adults were asked to guess the forecast of war, energy, science and religion in the next 40 years for a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for People & the Press. Evangelicals were most likely (58 percent) to predict a Second Coming, followed by 32 percent of Catholics and 27 percent of mainline Protestants. Fifty-two percent of people living in the South and 59 percent of people without a college degree expected Christ's return more readily than their counterparts, according to the survey. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.