

Faith Digest: Faith leaders wrestle with legal marijuana

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Faith leaders wrestle over growing support for marijuana. As public opinion has shifted in support of legalized marijuana, religious leaders are wrestling over the issue. According to a 2013 survey from the [Public Religion Research Institute](#), 58 percent of white mainline Protestants and 54 percent of black Protestants favor legalizing the use of marijuana. On the other side, 69 percent of white evangelical Protestants oppose it. Catholics appear to be the most divided Christian group, with 48 percent favoring legalization and 50 percent opposing it. Opinion on how states should handle those who possess or sell marijuana varies among Christian leaders. Overall, a majority of Americans now favor legalizing the use of marijuana, according to the most recent polling from the Pew Research Center. In 2013, 52 percent said that the use of marijuana should be made legal while 45 percent said it should not. Among millennials—adults born after 1980—65 percent favor legalizing marijuana use, up from just 36 percent in 2008.

Obama highlights religious freedom in speech. President Obama devoted most of his National Prayer Breakfast address to religious freedom, naming people imprisoned for their beliefs and calling out specific nations.

✘ Kenneth Bae Promoting religious freedom is a key objective of U.S. foreign policy, Obama said. Obama announced he is looking to fill the religious freedom ambassador position, which Suzan Johnson Cook left last fall. He noted the names of two Christians imprisoned for their beliefs—Kenneth Bae, a missionary held in North Korea for 15 months and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor, and Saeed Abedini, a pastor held in Iran for more than 18 months, sentenced to eight years in prison on

charges relating to his Christian beliefs. Obama also criticized blasphemy and defamation laws that have been used to suppress religious minorities.

UN panel criticizes Vatican sex abuse policies. A United Nations panel blasted the Vatican for protecting itself rather than victims of sexual abuse, and it called on the Roman Catholic Church to create what it called an “independent mechanism” to investigate new charges of abuse. The 16-page report from the Committee on the Rights of the Child accused the Vatican of “systematically” adopting policies that allowed priests to rape and molest thousands of young people over a span of decades. It also calls on the church to remove known or suspected abusers from its ranks immediately. While the U.N. has no ability to enforce its findings or recommendations on the Vatican, as a signer of the 1990 U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Holy See is obligated to meet the treaty obligations, according to Katherine Gallagher, a senior staff attorney at the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. The panel asked the Vatican to report back in 2017.