


Faith Digest : Family planning

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Evangelicals back family planning. A coalition of evangelicals is calling on fellow Christians to support access to family planning across the world, saying it does not conflict with evangelical opposition to abortion. The [New Evangelical Partnership for the Common Good](#) released a 15-page document calling for "common ground" support of family planning and the health of mothers and children. The document emphasizes access to contraception prevents unintended pregnancies and reduces abortion, and it stresses the need to avoid "confusion of family planning with abortion" that has led some religious groups to oppose both.

Bhutan bans religious activity temporarily. Political leaders in  Bhutan announced a temporary ban on all public religious activities ahead of the upcoming elections, citing the Himalayan nation's constitution. A notification by the Election Commission of Bhutan states religious institutions and clergy "shall not hold, conduct, organize or host" any public activity from Jan. 1 until the June election. Around 75 percent of the Bhutanese are Buddhist. Another 22 percent are Hindus, the only other officially recognized religion. Christians make up less than 2 percent of the country.

Young evangelicals at odds with their political parties. Most young evangelicals see a conflict between their faith and their political party, according to a snapshot survey from Sojourners, the progressive Christian group, which asked evangelicals under the age of 35 about their political views and civic engagement. The survey—of mostly single, college-educated evangelicals—showed 54 percent identified as Republicans, 26 percent as Democrats and 20 percent as Independents or something else. Of the Republicans, 65 percent said their faith convictions frequently or

sometimes conflict with the positions taken by the political party they usually support. That was true of 83 percent of Democrats. Because the survey was based on only 161 respondents, [Sojourners](#) acknowledged the survey gives more of an impression of the group than solid scientific data. The margin of error of the survey is a relatively high plus or minus 8 percentage points.

Scientologist dentist fined. State labor officials in Oregon ordered a dentist to pay nearly \$348,000 to settle allegations he threatened to fire a dental assistant unless she attended a Scientology-related training session. The [Bureau of Labor and Industries](#) contends Andrew Engel repeatedly "badgered" Susan Muhleman about the three-day conference, despite her concerns it would conflict with her Christian beliefs. He also turned down her request to attend secular training instead, investigators said. So, Muhleman quit AWE Dental Spa weeks before the conference and moved out of state to find a job. Muhleman said she was opposed to going to the Scientology conference but worried about losing her job at the height of the recession, when the local jobless rate was about 15 percent. Labor Commissioner Brad Avakian said the penalty will cover the woman's lost wages and damages as well as moving expenses and emotional distress.

—Compiled from Religion News Service