

# Faith Digest

August 10, 2011

**Americans want religious presidents.** A majority of Americans (56 percent) say it's important for a candidate to have strong beliefs, even if those beliefs differ from their own, according to the poll conducted by the [Public Religion Research Institute](#) in partnership with Religion News Service. But the religious groups most firmly behind this point—white evangelicals (73 percent) and ethnic minority Christians (74 percent)—often falter when asked about politicians' religions. For instance, just 44 percent of white evangelicals know Republican Mitt Romney is a Mormon, but more than 8 in 10 evangelicals say Mormon religious beliefs greatly differ from their own. Even fewer ethnic minority Christians (21 percent) knew Romney's religion. The survey was based on telephone interviews of 1,012 U.S. adults between July 14 and 17. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

**SCLC president dies.** Howard Creecy Jr., a Baptist preacher chosen early this year as president of the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#), died suddenly July 28 at age 57 of a suspected heart attack. Creecy, a third-generation preacher, was pastor of The Olivet Church in the Atlanta suburb of Fayetteville, Ga. His death means the civil rights organization founded by the late Martin Luther King Jr. will go through another unexpected transition. Creecy became president after Bernice King, the founder's daughter, decided in January not to assume the presidency, citing a leadership clash. Isaac Newton Farris Jr., King's nephew, will become interim president.

**Thou shalt not hunt on the Sabbath?** Pennsylvania lawmakers this fall face a contentious issue—legalization of hunting on Sunday. The Pennsylvania Farm Bureau supports one of the last remaining blue laws that forbids hunting of most game species on the designated day of rest.

Apart from the religious justification for the ban, Farm Bureau members also claim they want one day free of hunters traipsing across their property. Hikers and bird-watchers have joined the farmers. Challenging that position is the Sunday Hunting Coalition, led by the [National Rifle Association](#) and the National Shooting Sports Foundation. The economic benefit of extending hunting to Sunday would be significant, they say. In an age when most hunters are limited to the weekend to pursue their sport, the change would effectively double the value—not the price—of their hunting license.

**Church attendance by women drops.** Women—long considered the dominant pew-dwellers in the nation's churches—have shown a dramatic drop in attendance in the last two decades, a new survey shows. Since 1991, the percentage of women attending church during a typical week has decreased by 11 percentage points to 44 percent, the [Barna Group](#) reported. Sunday school and volunteering among women also has diminished. The survey also found a marked stepping away from congregations—a 17 percent increase in the number of women who have become "unchurched."

*-Compiled from Religion News Service*