

# Faith Digest

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**Sour economy pushes offerings down.** One year after a majority of Americans said they hoped the economy wouldn't affect their church giving, three in 10 Americans now say they are putting less in the offering plate, a [Barna Group](#) study shows. Compared to a similar study Barna conducted at the end of 2008, the percentage of Americans who have reduced their donations has increased by a staggering 45 percent. Almost one-quarter of church donors cut their contributions by at least 20 percent. The Barna study was based on telephone interviews in January and early February with a nationwide sample of 1,008 adults; it has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.2 percentage points. A year ago, a separate survey of U.S. donors by Cygnus Applied Research found more than half of actively religious donors planned to give the same or more to charitable causes in 2009 as the year before. In addition, that survey also found 43 percent of actively religious respondents remained "seriously committed" to giving in the face of economic uncertainty, compared to 23 percent of those who were not religious at all.

**Bible Belt lives up to its reputation.** At 68 percent, Mississippi had the highest percentage of weekly church-goers in 2009, a new [Gallup Poll](#) showed. Vermont remained the least church-going state, with only 23 percent regularly attending. The top and bottom rankings remained unchanged from last year. Out of the top 10 states, nine are in the South. Utah's large Mormon population boosts it to the top as well, making it the odd state in the West. States in the West and all of New England were among the least church-going. In addition to Mississippi and Utah, the most church-going states are South Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Arkansas, North Carolina, Georgia and Texas. The lowest church-attending states were reported in New Hampshire, Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island,

Connecticut, Nevada, Hawaii, Oregon, Alaska and Washington. The poll's margin of error is plus or minus 1 percentage point. Nationally, 41.6 percent of Americans reported attending church at least once a week in 2009.

**Anglican archbishop laments 'chaos' over women, gays.** Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams warned Anglican clergy that their debate about female and gay bishops is causing "chaos" that must be resolved if the Church of England is to be unified. Williams pleaded with the General Synod—the church's parliament—to start listening to each other and stop pursuing a "zero-sum, self-congratulating" course. Otherwise, he said, "the present effect is chaos." The archbishop added, in an apparent reference to the Episcopal Church, that "certain decisions made by some provinces impact so heavily on the conscience and mission of others that fellowship is strained or shattered and trust destroyed." In December, the Episcopal Church, which is the U.S. branch of the Anglican Communion, elected an open lesbian as an assistant bishop in Los Angeles. The 2004 consecration of an openly gay priest as bishop of New Hampshire has caused deep dissent within the Anglican Communion.

*-Compiled from Religion News Service*