

Faith Digest

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Who is responsible for tackling poverty? A phone survey of 1,002 adults revealed 66 percent of Americans believe the United States has an obligation to assist poverty-stricken children around the world. [The survey](#) asked respondents whose responsibility it is to provide aid to children in developing nations. Almost three in 10 (29 percent) said international nonprofit organizations should offer relief, followed by the governments where the children live (25 percent) and developed nations such as the United States (19 percent). Faith-based organizations came in last, with only 16 percent of Americans holding them responsible for tackling childhood poverty. The survey had a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

Religious freedom violations reported. The State Department has issued its annual [human rights report](#) on 194 countries, calling 2009 “a year in which ethnic, racial and religious tensions led to violent conflicts and serious human rights violations.” The State Department said “no genuine freedom of religion” exists in North Korea, and Cuban law permits punishment of any unauthorized assembly of more than three people—including religious services in private homes. In Iraq, despite the government’s public calls for tolerance, attacks on places of worship by extremist and insurgent groups limited their ability to practice their faith. In China, repression of Tibetan Buddhists and Muslim Uighurs increased, the report said. Non-Muslims are prohibited from expressing their religion publicly in Saudi Arabia.

Conservative activist resigns. Donald Wildmon, founder and chairman of the Mississippi-based [American Family Association](#), has resigned after months of failing health. “A bite from a mosquito carrying the St. Louis encephalitis virus caused Wildmon’s illness,” the ministry said. “From

August to November of last year, Wildmon spent 121 days in the hospital and rehab.” Wildmon, 72, also was treated for cancer on his left eye. The retired United Methodist minister started the ministry in 1977. It operates 180 radio stations and a monthly magazine, and now employs 175 people with a \$20 million budget. The AFA said Wildmon’s son, Tim, 47, is expected to lead the ministry. AFA has been active in boycotting organizations and companies that embrace policies counter to its conservative Christian views.

Grads take dim view of commandments. College graduates are more likely to consider the Ten Commandments irrelevant and reject the Bible as the word of God than people with no college degree, according to a recent study. A distinct shift occurs after college regarding beliefs and opinion, said Richard Brake, director of university studies at the [Intercollegiate Studies Institute](#). The ISI surveyed 2,508 Americans on questions intended to measure the impact of a college degree on people’s beliefs. The study also found that people with college degrees were more likely to support same-sex marriage, as well as abortion available at any stage of pregnancy and for any reason. The study has an overall margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.