

# Faith Digest

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**Judge allows clergy housing tax case to proceed.** A federal judge has rejected a motion filed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to dismiss [a California lawsuit](#) that challenges tax breaks ministers can receive on housing. Section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code allows housing-related tax breaks for clergy. The tax write-offs have been permitted for ministers of all faiths since the 1950s. But U.S. District Judge William Shubb stated plaintiffs have alleged sufficient facts that could leave open the possibility Section 107 “goes too far in aiding and subsidizing religion by providing ministers and churches with tangible financial benefits not allowed secular employers and employees.”

**Opposition to gay marriage shows slight decrease.** A majority of Americans continue to oppose same-sex marriage, but their opposition has decreased in recent years, according to [a new Gallup Poll](#). Fifty-three percent of Americans polled oppose legalizing same-sex marriage, compared to 44 percent who favor it. But the opposition tied with the lowest rate ever measured by Gallup, from 2007. In 1996, when Gallup first asked about the legality of gay marriage, 68 percent of Americans were opposed and 27 percent supported it. In the most recent poll, Americans who said religion is “very important” in their lives opposed legal same sex marriage by 70 percent to 27 percent. Americans who said religion was not important supported gay marriage by a similar margin, 71 percent to 27 percent.

**Building management takes dim view of nun’s birthday.** In a bid to honor what would have been [Mother Teresa’s](#) 100th birthday Aug. 26, the New York-based Catholic League has gathered more than 24,000 signatures to light the iconic spire of the Empire State Building in blue and white. But Jeff Field, a spokesman for the Catholic League said the group’s

application was denied without explanation a few weeks ago. Representatives from the Empire State Building declined to comment. In the last two years, the Empire State Building has been specially lighted to celebrate the career of pop star Mariah Carey, the fifth anniversary of the Broadway musical “Wicked” and the founding of communist China. Mother Teresa received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 for her more than four decades of service among the poor, sick, orphaned and dying in India.

**Arizona tax-tuition program goes to Supreme Court.** The U.S. Supreme Court will review the constitutionality of an Arizona program that provides state tax breaks for donations to private-school scholarship programs. As part of the 13-year-old tax-tuition program, taxpayers receive a dollar-for-dollar reduction in state income taxes for donations to not-for-profit school-tuition organizations. Last year, 91.5 percent of the \$52 million collected in Arizona reportedly went to religious schools. Opponents, including the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State, argue the program violates the First Amendment, which prohibits government establishment of religion.