

West Virginia Lawmakers Consider Marriage Protection Amendment

☒ While California remains embroiled in controversy over Proposition 8, West Virginia lawmakers are moving to ink a marriage protection law.

A bipartisan coalition of lawmakers will introduce and sponsor a Marriage Protection Amendment to the West Virginia state constitution during the upcoming legislative session. The lawmakers are introducing the bill for the sixth straight year.

Are Charismatics Finding a Place in Congress?

☒ An analysis of the religious composition of the new U.S. Congress offers an interesting revelation about the Christians makeup.

Like the U.S. population, elected leaders are less affiliated with mainline protestant churches than ever before, according to a survey from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life.

The study shows that 97 members of Congress were Methodists in 1961, making up 18.2 percent of the legislative body. In the current Congress, the figure has shrunk to 50 members making up 9.5 percent.

Other mainline churches show similar declines, dropping from

73 to 45 members for Presbyterians and 66 to 41 members for Episcopalians over the same period. Most dramatically, Congregationalists have dropped from 27 members of Congress to only four.

Faith Leaders Call On Congress to Halt 'Toxic Rhetoric'

Are you weary of hearing the debates between the left and the right about who's to blame for the Tucson shootings? You are not alone.

Now, more than 50 high-profile faith leaders—including T.J. Jakes, Joel Hunter and Sam Rodriguez—are taking action.

Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders have banded together to pen an open letter to Congress. The letter calls for national "soul searching" and praying for members of Congress after Saturday's shooting spree in Arizona, which left six people dead and Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords critically injured.

The open letter is signed by more than 50 prominent national religious leaders, including heads of evangelical, mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim denominations, congregations, and organizations. The signers urge members of Congress to reject vitriolic and rancorous rhetoric, consider the consequences of their words, and engage political adversaries in a spirit of shared American values of civility and cooperation.

Empowered21 Global Council Heads to LA

✘ Jack Hayford and Billy Wilson, co-chairs of Empowered21, held a two-day Global Council meeting in Los Angeles this week. The council discussed and offered oversight to a series of 11 regional leadership teams forming to focus on critical issues Spirit-filled churches are facing around the world.

The Council also adopted vision and purpose statements for the Empowered21 effort. The focus of Empowered21 remains finding ways to help every generation be empowered by the Holy Spirit for effective Christian living.

“Human history stands embedded with social, economic, and political movements. The 21st century world will witness a fresh movement with far greater outcomes,” says Samuel Rodriguez, president of The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference and Empowered21 Global Council attendee. “This is a fresh movement of God’s Holy Spirit. Movements liberate and empower. Via Empowered21 the world will experience a movement that will usher in Holiness, spiritual freedom and demonstrate the power of Christ.”

Missions Group Equips Haiti

Natives to Preach Gospel to Nation

✘ The best way to reach Haiti's indigenous population with the Gospel is to equip other Haitians to do the work of an evangelist.

That's Rae Burnett's strategy.

Burnett is Christian Aid Mission's Haiti Director. She directed emergency response to last year's deadly earthquake and is in regular touch with indigenous missions there.

As Burnett sees it, millions of dollars poured in, and foreigners flooded the country—but humanitarian aid alone will never solve the problems of Haiti. Only the Gospel can bring lasting change.

"As Christian Aid's Director for Africa, I have seen it over and over," Burnett says. "A native takes the gospel to a previously unreached area. Villagers respond, and a church is planted. Little by little, as the light of Christ permeates their lives, they change. Their spiritual life affects their physical life, and conditions are transformed. Christ does it through them. It is not imposed on them from the outside."

Burnett says Christian Aid Mission's job is to provide the financial means for local ministry workers to do the restoration and building they need to fulfill what the Lord has called them to do in their country. That work then opens the door to the Gospel.

"I knew that Haiti was settled by African slaves, but even I was shocked to see the similarities. Little has changed but the location. The culture and mentality is 100 percent African," Burnett says. "Voodoo, brought from the homeland and mixed with Roman Catholicism, assures the place of darkness,

fear, and hopelessness. The Gospel is the only answer, and it comes most effectively by far through native missionaries.”

Bob Finley founded Christian Aid Mission in 1953. The organization currently assists 796 indigenous missions that deploy 80,000 native missionaries working among 3,000 tribes and nations.

Vanderbilt Backs Down on Forced Abortion Participation

✘ Earlier this week, Charisma reported that Vanderbilt University was forcing nurse residency applicants to pledge that they will participate in abortion procedures. The Alliance Defense Fund (ADF) has succeeded in getting the university to back off.

Vanderbilt announced in an e-mail to applicants that it had modified its policy a day after the ADF filed a complaint with the Department of Health and Human Services. The e-mail read:

“While Vanderbilt expects all health care providers, including nurses who participate in the Nurse Residency Program’s Women’s Health Track, to provide compassionate care to all patients, no health care provider is required to participate in a procedure terminating a pregnancy if such participation would be contrary to an individual’s religious beliefs or moral convictions... Attached to this communication is an information sheet that replaces the Women’s Health Acknowledgment form that accompanied the application packet.”

Haiti Permanent Housing Efforts Bearing Fruit

- ✘ Massive tent camps. Rampant cholera outbreaks. Civil unrest.

Despite the many obstacles to rebuilding Haiti after last year's massive earthquake, seeds of hope in the form of permanent housing are starting to sprout up.

Fifteen families have been able to move out of the tent camps, away from disease and destruction, into simple decent solid homes through the work of the Fuller Center, a non-profit ecumenical Christian housing ministry working to eliminate poverty housing worldwide.

"It's been devastating to see the suffering and destruction," says Heather Nozea who's been on the ground in Haiti with her husband, Gerson, helping build homes with The Fuller Center. "But I feel great joy that we've been able to help these families and plans are underway to help many more families in the future."

Nine of the 15 Fuller Center homes were built in Leogane, four in Saint Ard, and another two in Bellanton. The homes were built using earthquake- and hurricane-resistant techniques.

Youssef Calls on Clinton to Confront Egyptian Government

✘ As news reports reveal that 23 people were killed and more than 90 injured in the New Year's Day attack on Egyptian Christians, some leaders are looking to the U.S. government to step in.

Indeed, Michael Youssef, founder and president of "Leading The Way," a weekly television broadcast that airs in more than 200 countries in 20 languages, is asking U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to pressure the Egyptian Government to bring back law and order, and to grant Christians the same liberties as Muslims.

Are Mysterious Bird and Fish Deaths Prophetic?

✘ If the bird and fish deaths in Arkansas weren't spooky enough, millions more dead fish have turned up in Maryland. And the United Kingdom and Italy are also reporting unusual animal deaths. What's going on?

It all started on New Year's Eve when reports came in that 5,000 blackbirds dropped out of the sky in Beebe, Ark. The next day, about 100,000 dead drum fish floated to the shore of the Arkansas River.

If that's where it ended, it might not have gained national attention. But a few days later, about 2 million juvenile spot fish were dead in the Chesapeake Bay.

Christian Songwriters Commemorate Haiti Earthquake Anniversary

☒ Christian recording artists Moses and Erica Lugemye are commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Haiti earthquake with the release of their new song “Alive.”

All proceeds from sales of the song will benefit the Youth With A Mission (YWAM) Haiti Homes of Hope program, which provides concrete houses for homeless people in Haiti.