



REPORT

from the Capital

Supreme Court endorses robust free exercise rights

The U.S. Supreme Court on Feb. 21 unanimously sided with members of a small New Mexico sect's bid to use hallucinogenic tea in religious rituals.

Chief Justice John Roberts, in his first religious freedom case, said the sect's right to religious expression and practice superseded federal drug control laws that were used to confiscate the tea, known as *hoasca*.

The court's ruling served as a strong endorsement of the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which requires the government to show a "compelling interest" before it can limit religious freedom.

Roberts said the law gives courts the authority to "strike sensible balances" in weighing government regulation and religious expression.

A wide array of religious groups had watched the case closely because they said it had wide implications for the right of all groups to practice their faith without risk of government interference.

The 130-member O Centro Espírita Beneficente União do Vegetal (UDV), says the tea that is brewed in the faith's Brazilian homeland gives members a "heightened spiritual awareness" that allows them to communicate with God.

The tea contains the drug dimethyltryptamine, which is banned under the 1970 Controlled Substances Act and a 1971 international treaty that bans its importation.

Roberts rejected arguments that the use of *hoasca* threatened the drug law and said the "circumscribed, sacramental use" of the drug for religious purposes could be allowed.

Both Roberts and the UDV's lawyers noted that *peyote* has been allowed for years in Native American religious rites.

"If such use is permitted ... for hundreds of thousands of Native Americans practicing their faith, it is difficult to see how those same findings alone can preclude any consideration of a similar exception for the 130 or so American members of the UDV who want to practice theirs," Roberts wrote.

K. Hollyn Hollman, general counsel for the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee, said the decision "is good news for religious freedom and the continuing vitality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act."

Roberts upheld two lower court decisions that said federal agents were wrong to confiscate the tea in 1999 and sent the case back for "further proceedings" that take his opinion into account.

Justice Samuel Alito, the newest member of the court, did not participate in arguments or the court's decision.



Nancy Hollander, attorney for UDV, speaks outside of the Supreme Court following oral arguments on Nov. 1.

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Government's Katrina failure may be faith-based opportunity

As criticism of the government's response to Hurricane Katrina mounts, praise of faith-based groups continues, providing new momentum in the campaign to expand federal funding of religious social services.

Religious groups were some of the first on the scene. Many faith-based groups are still there, taking a high-profile role in rebuilding efforts, which raises the question: should they get government money for their work?

K. Hollyn Hollman of the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee urged caution.

"I think it's very unfortunate that some people would use this tragedy to advance a policy that's been extremely controversial," she said. "I don't think this [Katrina] should be an opportunity to fundamentally change the way we do church-state relations."

President Bush has been implementing his Faith-Based Initiative using changes in government regulations. But the administration has had less success in persuading lawmakers on Capitol Hill to turn the initiative into law.

Both proponents and critics are gearing up for new legislative battles in the weeks ahead.

"I think there's wonderful fertile ground for pushing more of the Faith-Based Initiative and embedding it legislatively," Pam Pryor, vice president of We Care America, said.

An important step in that direction occurred in late December when Bush signed a law allowing private schools—including religious schools—to get federal aid as part of the government's hurricane recovery package.

While the new law applies only to the current school year, opponents fear it could open the door to more widespread voucher programs in the future.

"We need to be careful about creating exceptions that will later be expanded and actually swallow up the rule," Hollman said.

"With regard to education, government's first duty is to fund the public schools, those schools that take all students wherever they are without regard to their financial resources or their religious traditions," she said.

Another controversial question is whether the government should reimburse religious groups for the emergency work they did during Katrina.

Some religious groups, including the Southern Baptist Convention, say they do not want the government money. The SBC had a massive post-Katrina operation that included providing more than 10 million meals.

Rabbi Stan Zane of Beth Shalom Synagogue in Baton Rouge also says he would not take the money.

"I just would be wary of blunting our message or having our work somehow complicated," he said. "And I just don't know if it would be worth it."

Others, stretched to the breaking point by their charitable efforts, would welcome new sources of income.

In Baton Rouge, the Rev. Gregory White and his Beech Grove Baptist Church fed Katrina evacuees in a nearby motel every day for three months. They had to stop when they ran out of money.

"Being people of faith, I would think we're not trying to take anything that is not ours," he said. "We are people who pay taxes everyday. So it's already our money."

Hollman, however, said congregations are able to do effective work precisely because the government stays separate from religion.

"Anytime the government enters into formal kinds of contractual relationships with houses of worship, red flags should go up for people who care about religious liberty," she said. "When religion is funded by government, it tends to be controlled by government. Religious entities start answering to government's concerns instead of matters of its own conscience and religious tradition."

Hollman and the Baptist Joint Committee is promoting private alternatives to government funding, such as the Bush-Clinton Katrina Fund. In December, the fund announced it was giving \$20 million to local faith-based groups.

—Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly

Ohio board of education rejects intelligent design

Veteran Ohio school board member Martha Wise did her math to deep-six a controversial lesson that she and other critics believed would open the door to statewide teaching of intelligent design.

On Feb. 13, the State Board of Education member was not sure she had the votes to get a disputed lesson plan removed from Ohio's science curriculum.

But by the next day, three other board members agreed to vote with her, giving Wise the equation she was looking for.

"I'm ecstatic," Wise declared after the board voted 11-

4 to delete the lesson during its meeting Feb. 14 in Columbus. "It's a win for science, a win for students and a win for the state of Ohio."

The victory represented a stunning turnaround for Wise, a 28-year board veteran who had been on the losing side of the debate for the past four years. In January, a Wise-sponsored motion to delete the disputed lesson plan failed, 9-8. Even with two board members absent, the margin of victory makes the likelihood of the board reversing itself slim.

—RNS

REFLECTIONS

Phil Strickland was a pastoral prophet, a prophetic pastor

Last month James Dunn wrote a guest column lauding the life and ministry of Foy Valentine, the first executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Christian Life Commission. Now I write to extol that of Phil Strickland, the CLC's most recent executive director.

Phil died on February 11 at the age of 64—much too young and before his work was through. Cancer robbed him of his biblical three score and ten. But he accomplished more in his shortened life than most of us get done in a more generous measure of time.

After studying philosophy and law at Baylor and the University of Texas, and with some theological seasoning at Southwestern Seminary, Phil began a law practice in Ft. Worth. But he quickly left to help Texas Baptists fight gambling and never looked back. As a staffer for 13 years and as executive director for 25 at the CLC, Phil did more than oppose gambling. He fought for children, against poverty, for social justice, against hunger, for religious liberty and against disparagers of church-state separation.

Although a Democrat, Phil never let partisanship or disagreement on issues thwart his mission. His pastor and friend, George Mason, in a moving homily at Phil's service, noted that although Phil was a passionate advocate for the "vulnerable, powerless and marginalized in our society," he always loved those on the other side: "Whether liquor lobbyists or gambling interests or those who would balance budgets on the backs of the poor, he treated them with respect even in his strong opposition to their intents. What's more, he enlisted them in his cause whenever they could be so swayed."

As Weston Ware, who worked with Phil at the CLC, said about his capacity to build coalitions: "Phil not only was a political strategist par excellence, but he was also able to win the hearts and minds of diverse groups, often bringing together the most conservative and most liberal advocates to resolve difficult issues, as he did with the [Texas] Religious Freedom Restoration Act."

For me personally, Phil was a friend and a constant encourager. (Yes, prophets can be priests, too.) He served for the past 12 years on the Baptist Joint Committee board and was a member of the search committee that called me to be executive director in 1999. He has helped me raise money—from the cof-

fers of the BGCT, the pockets of individual donors and the treasuries of churches and foundations. He has assisted the BJC in long-range planning and encouraged our capital campaign to fund a Center for Religious Liberty. He has helped plan strategy for educating judges and legislators in Washington as well as in Austin.

In November at the Texas Baptists Committed breakfast meeting in Austin, Phil was slated to give a speech titled "Where Have All the Prophets Gone?" He was too sick to come so George Mason delivered it for him.

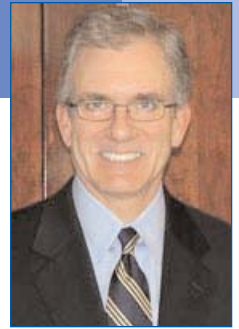
Phil convicted us all. Have prophets disappeared? Not at all, Phil contended. They are all around us. But they are not doing their job. Preachers would rather pastor than prophesy; denominations shirk their prophetic role fearing financial loss; church-state advocates often are quick to find common ground instead of confronting the powers that violate conscience. In 20 minutes, Phil decried the idolatries of nationalism and materialism. He called for a "theology of enough" that would encourage us to buy and use what we need, not just what we want, and to share generously with others.

What is required to be a prophet nowadays, according to Phil? He gave us this wise counsel:

Prophesy requires the capacity to grieve about injustice, to quit pretending that things are all right, to imagine that things could be different and courageously to say so to the people, risking the consequences. It requires confronting the principalities and the powers. For compassion to move to action requires an alliance of love, power, and justice. ... [T]he prophet must be imaginative. One does not prophesy about what is but what ought to be.

Phil's last hurrah was a recap of his first salvo and everything in between. He was at once a prophet and a pastor. A pastoral prophet, a prophetic pastor. He encouraged and challenged, inspired and perspired, thought and acted.

There are still prophets around, but one fewer. But his legacy lives on in all of us.



J. Brent Walker
Executive Director



Phil Strickland
(1941 - 2006)

Air Force issues revised guidelines on religion

The Air Force issued revised guidelines on religious expression Feb. 9, reiterating its official neutrality on matters of belief but making subtle changes in language that drew both criticism and praise from disparate groups.

Religious activists gave diverse interpretations of whether and how the guidelines address some of the most controversial issues, such as whether Christian chaplains can evangelize and say public prayers "in Jesus' name," as many are accustomed to doing.

"We will respect the rights of chaplains to adhere to the tenets of their religious faiths and they will not be required to participate in religious activities, including public prayer, inconsistent with their faiths," the new document reads.

Reduced from four pages to one, the latest interim guidelines were released after the Air Force received feedback on a previous version issued in August. Air Force officials said they heard from religious groups, members of Congress and others and interviewed 500 Air Force personnel.

Jennifer Stephens, an Air Force spokeswoman, said it is likely that Air Force officials will make the latest guidelines the permanent ones, but she said the service branch "will need experience with how the guidelines work in practice before deciding on the finalization date."

Immediate reaction to the guidelines was unusual in that some groups were in agreement with organizations they normally oppose. Critics of the latest version range from the head of an evangelical organization that endorses chaplains to Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

On the other hand, Focus on the Family, a conservative Christian group, and a more liberal Reform Jewish organization praised the changes.

"It is subtle language and it does not answer the question, 'Can a chaplain pray in the name of his Lord in a public ceremony?'" said the Rev. Billy Baugham, executive director of the International Conference of Evangelical Chaplain Endorsers in Greenville, S.C.

Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Washington-based Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, said he thinks the latest language permits chaplains to pray naming the divinity of their choice, "but they're not going to be invited to do that with broad, inclusive groups."

He said that achieves an "appropriate balance" for those in the military service, protecting the free exercise rights of both chaplains and the men and women in the Air Force.

But the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Washington-based Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the newest guidelines no longer address the rights of people of



Chaplain (Capt.) James Janecek (right), Chaplain (Capt.) Regina Samuel and Col. Gerard Joliette listen to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. 2006 Commemorative Service at the Freedom Chapel at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Captains Janecek and Samuel are chaplains with the 37th Training Wing. Colonel Joliette is the commander of the 37th Technical Training Group. (U.S. Air Force photo by Tech. Sgt. Larry A. Simmons)

minority faiths or of nonbelievers.

Although the one-page document refers to respect for chaplains' religious rights, Lynn said "it is shocking that there is no similar provision for regular Air Force personnel who do not wish to participate in prayer or other religious activities."

Tom Minnery, senior vice president of government and public policy for Focus on the Family, applauded the latest rules, saying they would "bring an end to the frontal assault on the Air Force by secularists who would make the military a wasteland of relativism."

His organization is based in Colorado Springs, Colo., the home of the Air Force Academy.

"We particularly thank the Air Force for specifically recognizing that 'voluntary participation in worship, prayer, study and discussion is integral to the free exercise of religion,'" Minnery added.

—RNS



REVISED INTERIM GUIDELINES CONCERNING FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION IN THE AIR FORCE

WE ARE SWORN TO SUPPORT AND DEFEND THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES. IN TAKING OUR OATH WE PLEDGE OUR PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION'S PROTECTIONS FOR FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION AND ITS PROHIBITION AGAINST GOVERNMENT ESTABLISHMENT OF RELIGION.

WE WILL REMAIN OFFICIALLY NEUTRAL REGARDING RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, NEITHER OFFICIALLY ENDORSING NOR DISAPPROVING ANY FAITH BELIEF OR ABSENCE OF BELIEF. WE WILL ACCOMMODATE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION AND OTHER PERSONAL BELIEFS, AS WELL AS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, EXCEPT AS MUST BE LIMITED BY COMPELLING MILITARY NECESSITY (WITH SUCH LIMITATIONS BEING IMPOSED IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE MANNER FEASIBLE). COMMANDERS SHOULD ENSURE THAT REQUESTS FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION ARE WELCOMED AND DEALT WITH AS FAIRLY AND CONSISTENTLY AS PRACTICABLE THROUGHOUT THEIR COMMANDS. THEY SHOULD BE APPROVED UNLESS APPROVAL WOULD HAVE A REAL, NOT HYPOTHETICAL, ADVERSE IMPACT ON MILITARY READINESS, UNIT COHESION, STANDARDS, OR DISCIPLINE. AVOIDANCE OF SCHEDULE CONFLICTS BETWEEN OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES AND RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES CAN ENHANCE UNIT EFFECTIVENESS AND DEMONSTRATE MUTUAL RESPECT.

CHAPLAIN SERVICE PROGRAMS ARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMANDERS. CHAPLAINS IMPARTIALLY ADVISE COMMANDERS IN REGARD TO FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION, AND IMPLEMENT PROGRAMS OF RELIGIOUS SUPPORT AND PASTORAL CARE TO HELP COMMANDERS CARE FOR ALL THEIR PEOPLE, INCLUDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FREE EXERCISE OF INDIVIDUAL BELIEFS. WE WILL RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF CHAPLAINS TO ADHERE TO THE TENETS OF THEIR RELIGIOUS FAITHS AND THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO PARTICIPATE IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING PUBLIC PRAYER, INCONSISTENT WITH THEIR FAITHS.

LEADERS AT EVERY LEVEL BEAR A SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THEIR WORDS AND ACTIONS CANNOT REASONABLY BE CONSTRUED TO BE OFFICIALLY ENDORSING NOR DISAPPROVING ANY FAITH BELIEF OR ABSENCE OF BELIEF. IN OFFICIAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR WHEN SUPERIOR/SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS ARE INVOLVED, SUPERIORS NEED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE POTENTIAL THAT PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS MAY APPEAR TO BE OFFICIAL, OR HAVE UNDUE INFLUENCE ON THEIR SUBORDINATES. SUBJECT TO THESE SENSITIVITIES, SUPERIORS ENJOY THE SAME FREE EXERCISE RIGHTS AS ALL OTHER AIRMEN.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP, PRAYER, STUDY, AND DISCUSSION IS INTEGRAL TO THE FREE EXERCISE OF RELIGION. NOTHING IN THIS GUIDANCE SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD TO LIMIT THE SUBSTANCE OF VOLUNTARY DISCUSSIONS OF RELIGION, OR THE EXERCISE OF FREE SPEECH, WHERE IT IS REASONABLY CLEAR THAT THE DISCUSSIONS ARE PERSONAL, NOT OFFICIAL, AND THEY CAN BE REASONABLY FREE OF THE POTENTIAL FOR, OR APPEARANCE OF, COERCION.

PUBLIC PRAYER SHOULD NOT IMPLY GOVERNMENT ENDORSEMENT OF RELIGION AND SHOULD NOT USUALLY BE A PART OF ROUTINE OFFICIAL BUSINESS. MUTUAL RESPECT AND COMMON SENSE SHOULD ALWAYS BE APPLIED, INCLUDING CONSIDERATION OF UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE NEEDS OF THE COMMAND. FURTHER, NON-DENOMINATIONAL, INCLUSIVE PRAYER OR A MOMENT OF SILENCE MAY BE APPROPRIATE FOR MILITARY CEREMONIES OR EVENTS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE WHEN ITS PRIMARY PURPOSE IS NOT THE ADVANCEMENT OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. MILITARY CHAPLAINS ARE TRAINED IN THESE MATTERS.

GENERAL RULES REGARDING USE OF GOVERNMENT COMPUTERS APPLY TO PERSONAL RELIGIOUS MATTERS AS THEY DO FOR OTHER PERSONAL MATTERS. CHAPLAIN PROGRAMS WILL RECEIVE COMMUNICATIONS SUPPORT AS WOULD COMPARABLE STAFF ACTIVITIES.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF COMMANDERS TO MAINTAIN GOOD ORDER AND DISCIPLINE, AND ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE *CORE VALUES OF THE AIR FORCE: INTEGRITY FIRST; SERVICE BEFORE SELF; AND EXCELLENCE IN ALL WE DO.*

9 Feb 06



K. Hollyn Hollman
General Counsel

No religious test for government-funded jobs

Of all the challenges the BJC faces, none is as far-reaching and problematic as government attempts to fund pervasively religious entities (including houses of worship) without constitutional safeguards. The BJC has monitored such efforts since “charitable choice” was in its infancy. We continue to oppose the Faith-Based Initiative as the “wrong way to do right,” while affirming the many right ways religious entities can work with government to meet needs.

Our concerns focus on threats to religious liberty and to the integrity of religious institutions. Information about the actual distribution of funding is hard to come by. What we know is that the administration is aggressively promoting the initiative through revised regulations and public relations efforts. When crucial questions are raised, they cast critics as extreme secularists. Meanwhile, a legislative impasse on Capitol Hill reveals just how far off-course the

initiative has veered.

Working through the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination, the BJC and its allies have successfully prevented legislation that would expand the Faith-Based Initiative throughout the federal government. We continue, however, to combat new attempts to advance the initiative through piecemeal legislation. The most recent battleground involves Head Start, the popular early education program that serves disadvantaged preschool children.

Like other federally funded programs, Head Start prohibits providers, including houses of worship that host the program, from discriminating in hiring on the basis of religion and from proselytizing with government funds. No doubt, these provisions have been a significant safeguard and benefited students and parents, many of whom serve in Head Start programs as teachers, staff and volunteers. These requirements have enjoyed bipartisan support for more than three decades.

Under the guise of the administration’s Faith-Based Initiative, some members of Congress are intent on amending Head Start to allow religious discrimination in government-funded positions. In September 2005, Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio,

then chairman of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, led such an effort from the floor of the House of Representatives. The amendment, which repealed an existing nondiscrimination provision, destroyed the bipartisanship that had allowed the bill to be voted out of committee unanimously. After a contentious fight, the House narrowly approved the religious discrimination amendment and the reauthorization bill, as amended.

The bill then moved to the Senate, where again it is being held up for reasons having nothing to do with fighting poverty or promoting early childhood education. The proposed discrimination amendment to Head Start is unnecessary. More than five percent of Head Start programs are administered by religious entities, including houses of worship, operating with constitutional and anti-discrimination safeguards that protect the religious liberty of beneficiaries and employees. Because Head Start prohibits religious programming or proselytizing, it makes no sense to argue that participating religious entities must be allowed to hire based on religion in the government-funded positions.

Statements by former White House Faith-Based Office staffer David Kuo reflect a growing concern that the politics of the Faith-Based Initiative, as opposed to substantive goals, dominate. At a hearing on the initiative, Kuo reported that he often heard, “We don’t need more funds; all we really need to do is make sure that we have a huge political fight over religious charities’ right to hire and fire based on their own faith. That way Republicans will be seen as fighting for religion and Democrats will be seen as fighting against it.”

As we continue to fight efforts that damage religious freedom, we must affirm the principle that you should not have to pass a religious test to get a government-funded job. If you know of anyone who works in Head Start that should be involved in this issue, let us know. If you are a social service provider or member of the clergy, join our grassroots effort to prevent government-funded discrimination. Go to www.stopreligiousdiscrimination.org where social service providers and clergy can register their opposition to government-funded religious discrimination.

As we continue to fight efforts that damage religious freedom, we must affirm the principle that you should not have to pass a religious test to get a government-funded job.

BJC mourns passing of J. Wesley Forsline

Avid BJC supporter and former board chair, J. Wesley "Wes" Forsline, passed away on Feb. 20 in Bloomington, Minn. He was 77. A graduate of Bethel University with roots in the Baptist General Conference, Forsline pastored churches in Duluth and Minneapolis and was executive minister of American Baptist Churches of Minn., Iowa and N.D.



J. Wesley Forsline

He chaired the BJC board of directors from 1983-86. The BJC named him the fourth recipient of the J.M. Dawson Religious Liberty Award in 1993.

Former BJC executive director James Dunn noted that "Wes was a gentle giant. His quiet, irenic spirit covered beautifully an inner strength and passionate dedication to soul freedom."

Forsline is survived by his wife, Gwen, and children, Heidi, Tami and Ladd.

Ohio faith group pushes for IRS probe of megachurch politics

Religious leaders who recently accused two central Ohio evangelical ministers of using their pulpits to promote conservative politics are vowing to keep pushing their claims.

"This is a public concern that affects everyone around the state of Ohio, so I think it needs to remain a public conversation," the Rev. Eric Williams, senior pastor of North

Congregational United Church of Christ, said at a Jan. 25 news conference from the North Broadway United Methodist Church in Columbus.

Williams is one of 31 religious leaders who signed a complaint asking the Internal Revenue Service to investigate the World Harvest and Fairfield Christian megachurches and their affiliated organizations.

Their complaint, filed Jan. 15, accused the churches' leaders—the Revs. Rod Parsley and Russell Johnson, respectively—of breaking the separation between church and state by using their organizations to promote conservative officeholders, especially Ken Blackwell, the Ohio secretary of state and candidate for governor.

The Rev. Jack Seville Jr. of the United Church of Christ in Columbus said, "I signed the document because I'm very concerned when we and religious

"I signed the document because I'm very concerned when we and religious organizations step across the lines that have been honored historically to separate church and state."

— The Rev. Jack Seville Jr. of the United Church of Christ in Columbus, Ohio, on why he signed a complaint asking the IRS to investigate two local churches

organizations step across the lines that have been honored historically to separate church and state."

Seville and the others tried to lessen the volley of rhetoric between their group and Parsley and Johnson by stressing that their complaint is not a personal attack. It is meant to get a clarification from the federal government that will benefit all.

—RNS

Study: Grants to faith-based groups increase; total funding declines

A newly released study of federal funding of faith-based groups shows a slight increase in the percentage of grants given to religious charities but a decline in the total funding they received.

The study by the Roundtable on Religion & Social Welfare Policy looked at more than 28,000 grants awarded by nine federal agencies between 2002 and 2004. A White House official criticized its methodology, adding that it put President Bush's Faith-Based Initiative in a bad light.

"Even with less money being allocated to these social service grant programs, faith-based organizations are getting their piece of the pie."

Overall, researchers found that faith-based organizations received 11.6 percent of the grants in 2002. That figure grew to 12.8 percent in 2004. A total of 3,526 grants were made to 1,146 faith-based groups, accounting for about 17 percent of the total funds awarded during each of the three years studied.

— From a report released Feb. 14 by the Roundtable on Religion & Social Welfare Policy

But despite the increase in the portion of awards granted, the total dollar amount received declined from \$670 million in 2002 to \$626 million in 2004.

"Even with less money being allocated to these social service grant programs, faith-based organizations are getting their piece of the pie," concluded Lisa M. Montiel and David J. Wright, co-authors of the report released by the Albany, N.Y.-based roundtable Feb. 14.

It did not include some of the new programs under Bush's Faith-Based Initiative, including prisoner re-entry programs, or money disbursed through federal block grants by state and local governments.

That brought harsh criticism from Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, who called the findings "inaccurate" and "misleading."

He said the report excluded significant grant programs, such as Department of Health and Human Services grants to religious charities of \$300 million in Head Start dollars in 2003, a figure he said has grown through 2005.

Towey said his office will announce its own research on "roughly three times" the number of grants that the roundtable study considered at a March 9 conference.

—RNS



BJC releases DVD to highlight campaign

To spotlight 70 years of “defending and extending” religious liberty for all and to set the stage for even greater years ahead in establishing the Center for Religious Liberty on Capitol Hill, the Baptist Joint Committee has released a nearly eight-minute DVD presentation.

The video features compelling interviews with Executive Director J. Brent Walker and explains the BJC’s mission and work.

The BJC is raising \$5 million to purchase and renovate property for the Center, which will be a state-of-the-art education and training center in the heart of Washington, D.C.

To obtain a copy of the DVD, additional information on the campaign or to make a donation, please call (202) 544-4226 or write to us at bjc@BJCOnline.org. Campaign information is also available on our Web site at www.bjcconline.org/support/capitalcampaign/

Located within a few blocks of the U. S. Capitol, the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court, the Center for Religious Liberty will

♦ serve as the nerve center for the Baptist Joint Committee’s activities in Washington.

- ♦ provide a highly visible education space for those who cherish religious liberty.
- ♦ serve as a “monument” to the principle of religious liberty as the BJC ensures this precious freedom is protected for our children and grandchildren.

♦ provide an office suite for visiting board members, leaders of member bodies and for faculty and administrators of partnering schools on sabbatical, on official business, or exploring independent research.

♦ serve as a training center for youth, pastors, laity and others who actively advocate and advance religious liberty in their local commu-

nities.

♦ provide an extraordinary historical setting for meetings, receptions and events near the Capitol.

Programs of the Center and the BJC will help to broaden the constituency among Baptists and others who share a similar mission, provide an opportunity to develop new creative partnerships and appeals to youth, promote scholarly research, conduct on-site as well as teleconferencing discussions and seminars, and reach out to diverse groups across the country.



Baptist Joint Committee Supporting Bodies

- Alliance of Baptists
- American Baptist Churches USA
- Baptist General Association of Virginia
- Baptist General Conference
- Baptist General Convention of Texas
- Baptist State Convention of North Carolina
- Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- National Baptist Convention of America
- National Baptist Convention U.S.A. Inc.
- National Missionary Baptist Convention
- North American Baptist Conference
- Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc.
- Religious Liberty Council
- Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

REPORT from the Capital

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