

REPORT FROM THE CAPITAL

Magazine of the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty

HOLLY HOLLMAN on Trinity Lutheran Church arguments

Faith leaders stand against pulpit endorsements

AMANDA TYLER on the religious liberty Executive Order

JENNIFER HAWKS discusses the 'New Sanctuary Movement'



PHOTO: BJC General Counsel Holly Hollman speaks to reporters outside the U.S. Supreme Court after the *Trinity Lutheran Church v. Comer* oral argument.

Tell Congress: Don't use our houses of worship for partisan campaigning

People of faith have an opportunity to tell Congress they want to protect houses of worship from the dangers that come with candidate endorsements.

In April, the Baptist Joint Committee led a diverse coalition of 99 national and state religious organizations in asking Congress to keep the law that prevents houses of worship from becoming centers of partisan campaigning. Now Congress needs to hear from you.

Visit Faith-Voices.org to add your name to the growing list of people of faith standing up for the integrity and independence of houses of worship. This letter for individuals is open to all religious leaders, including pastors, deacons, small group leaders, professors, lay leaders and others.

Current law, which can only be changed by an act of Congress, strikes the right balance. It permits pastors to campaign for or against any political candidate of their choosing and it permits our houses of worship to engage in a wide range of issue-based advocacy (including speaking out on political issues, running voter registration drives, encouraging voting and hosting candidate forums). But, it does not permit any 501(c)(3) organization — including houses of worship — from using tax-deductible dollars to tell people who to vote for or against or to contribute to a candidate's campaign. It also protects these organizations from candidates seeking endorsements.

It is vitally important that the entire charitable sector, including our houses of worship, not be reduced to cogs in the political machine. At press time, more than 2,000 people have signed the letter at Faith-Voices.org. Please join us in asking Congress to keep the current law in place. The full text of the letter is to the right.

By Jennifer Hawks

Add your name to this letter at Faith-Voices.org

As a leader in my religious community, I am strongly opposed to any effort to repeal or weaken current law that protects houses of worship from becoming centers of partisan politics. Changing the law would threaten the integrity and independence of houses of worship. We must not allow our sacred spaces to be transformed into spaces used to endorse or oppose political candidates.

Faith leaders are called to speak truth to power, and we cannot do so if we are merely cogs in partisan political machines. The prophetic role of faith communities necessitates that we retain our independent voice. Current law respects this independence and strikes the right balance: houses of worship that enjoy favored tax-exempt status may engage in advocacy to address moral and political issues, but they cannot tell people who to vote for or against. Nothing in current law, however, prohibits me from endorsing or opposing political candidates in my own personal capacity.

Changing the law to repeal or weaken the “Johnson Amendment” — the section of the tax code that prevents tax-exempt nonprofit organizations from endorsing or opposing candidates — would harm houses of worship, which are not identified or divided by partisan lines. Particularly in today's political climate, engaging in partisan politics and issuing endorsements would be highly divisive and have a detrimental impact on congregational unity and civil discourse.

I therefore urge you to oppose any repeal or weakening of the Johnson Amendment, thereby protecting the independence and integrity of houses of worship and other religious organizations in the charitable sector.



FAITH VOICES

In Support Of Keeping Houses Of Worship Nonpartisan

SIGN THE LETTER: Faith-Voices.org >>

Reality over rhetoric

By Amanda Tyler, BJC Executive Director

In a recent White House ceremony, President Donald J. Trump spoke in grandiose terms about religious liberty, harkening back to our founding era and mentioning Thomas Jefferson by name. As he read “religious liberty” in the title of the Executive Order he was about to sign, surrounded by supporters from a few religious groups, the president remarked on our first freedom in his off-the-cuff manner, “That’s as big as it gets.”

On that, we agree. But the rest of the May 4 spectacle gave me a lot to take issue with. Specifically, much of the rhetoric of the day simply didn’t match reality.

The president declared, “Today my administration is leading by example as we take historic steps to protect religious liberty in the United States of America.” But as groups and commentators from across the ideological spectrum looked closely at the Order, most characterized this executive action as far from historic. In our view, it was “largely a symbolic act, voicing concern for religious liberty but offering nothing to advance it.” The conservative *National Review* columnist David French referred to it as “worse than useless” and a “nothing-burger.” The ACLU said it had “no discernible policy outcome” and was “a textbook case of ‘fake news.’”

Part of the Order relates to IRS enforcement of the “Johnson Amendment,” the portion of the tax code that prohibits all 501(c)(3) organizations, including most houses of worship, from intervening in partisan candidate campaigns. It directs the Secretary of the Treasury not to take adverse action against houses of worship and others speaking from a religious perspective “to the extent permitted by law” and “where speech of similar character has, consistent with law, not ordinarily been treated as participation or intervention in a political campaign.”

On its face, this action does not appear to be a meaningful change from current IRS practice, and it is a far cry from President Trump’s vow at February’s National Prayer Breakfast to “totally destroy the Johnson Amendment.” But it does signal Trump’s continued fixation on this tax code provision, which he first centered on in the campaign when some of his faith advisers cited it after he asked why they were not endorsing him.

The president, some members of Congress, and the interest groups supporting their bid to change the tax law continue to blur

the lines between being generally “political” – which is permitted – and taking a partisan position for or against a candidate’s campaign for office – which is not. The president stated in the Rose Garden that “if a pastor, priest, or imam speaks about issues of public or political importance, they are threatened with the loss of their tax-exempt status.” Not so. The church has always been political, and nothing in the tax code prevents it, as the church, from speaking to issues, no matter how controversial. Additionally, faith leaders can endorse and oppose candidates in their personal capacity without running afoul of the tax law.

The president also boasted at the signing ceremony, “We’re giving our churches their voices back and we are giving them back in the highest form.” I didn’t know the church had lost its voice. What I have heard when talking with religious leaders is concern that changing the law to encourage partisan campaign involvement by churches would endanger their prophetic voice by tying them too closely to government or a particular officeholder or party. It would also distract them from the work of the church by bringing partisan divisions into their church family. One pastor worried about what this change would do to his congregation, which he called “beautifully diverse.” That concern has been echoed in many similar conversations. Plus, public polling shows us that all religious groups share this same aversion to candidate endorsements in and by the church.

The BJC realized that the faith community’s position was being misrepresented and joined with 98 other religious and denominational organizations to tell Congress that we don’t want and we don’t need a change in the tax law for the church to pursue its mission. We delivered that letter to Congress in April and saw it cited numerous times in press reports on the president’s latest executive action.

Now, the BJC has helped organize an effort for individuals to add their name and their words to this effort (see page 2). Who better than those who minister, either as ordained clergy or laity, to talk about the impact that a change in the law would have on their congregations? I have added my name to this letter, and I hope you will consider doing the same. We need to counter the rhetoric and do our part in this instance to keep “religious liberty” from being used as a misleading sound bite.



Church, state and scrap tires: What's at stake?

By Holly Hollman, BJC General Counsel

From the front row of the lawyers' section in the courtroom, BJC Executive Director Amanda Tyler and I watched and listened as the U.S. Supreme Court probed the scope and application of a state law separating church and state. By the time oral arguments were heard April 19 in *Trinity Lutheran Church of Columbia v. Comer*, we had thoroughly considered the case and were eagerly anticipating the justices' questions.

The parties describe Missouri's decision not to fund capital improvements for a church playground in starkly different terms. From the state's perspective, it was simply keeping its hands off religion, following Missouri's constitution that has banned tax support for churches since 1820. The bright-line rule against state aid to churches keeps the government from having to decide whether any particular part of a church property is sufficiently secular to be funded by the state. From Trinity Lutheran Church's perspective, however, the state should not worry about funding religion — the church playground is barely part of the church, though it is important to the church's weekday preschool ministry. Instead, the church argued that its exclusion from a grant program that encourages the recycling of scrap tires for playground resurfacing is discrimination based on religious status, brimming with hostility to religion, and makes kids playing on church property less safe.

To understand what is truly at stake and to avoid the trap of hysteria, it helps to know a little history.

Missouri's constitution, like the constitutions of 38 other states, prohibits state funding of churches. This prohibition, reasonably applied, is a valid and historical way of preventing state-funded religion. As the BJC's brief in support of Missouri explains, such prohibitions on government aid to **churches** are an important part of the hard-won legacy of Baptists and other dissenters who fought against state establishments of religion in the Founding era. Religious dissenters opposed tax support for churches and ministers as an affront to both religious liberty and the voluntary nature of religion. Similar provisions in many state constitutions that prohibit state funding of religious **schools** serve the same purposes but have a more complicated history, partially tied to anti-immigrant sentiments. Voucher proponents that emphasize this regretful (though hardly uniform) history are at a loss to dismiss bans on government funding of churches and the religious liberty concerns that pre-date and have no relation to anti-Catholic bias. Historically, Baptists fought

to ensure the separation embodied in Missouri law, and today we are called to explain that our churches are essential vehicles for religious ministries — playgrounds included.

Given that history, it is hard to imagine the Free Exercise Clause being interpreted to **require** direct government aid for church property improvements. But that's what Trinity Lutheran Church is asking the Court to do. Churches, of course, have broad free exercise and autonomy rights to use their property for activities they deem religious or not. The use of church property as an essential exercise of religion is also recognized by the federal Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act, which applies beyond the church sanctuary, as well as the federal Church Arson Prevention Act, which was applicable in a 2011 case when a mosque's playground was burned. The attack on the playground was seen as an attack on the house of worship.

Perhaps, instead of trying to determine what parts of a church are religious and what parts are secular, the Court will craft a public safety exception to Missouri's no-aid rule. The church claims that the state grant to the church does not aid religion but only makes kids safer. It is true that the government is generally charged with providing for the health, welfare and safety of its citizens. If the Missouri constitution can be used to deny churches access to resurfacing grants, the church and some of its supporters argue with alarm that the state may deny churches access to fire and safety protection. That red herring was easily dismissed at oral argument. Neither the U.S. Constitution's Establishment Clause nor Missouri's more explicit provisions prohibiting state aid to churches threaten such essential services.

In fact, in the first case that applied the federal Establishment Clause to a state program, *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947), the Supreme Court recognized both the importance of separation and its limits. In *Everson*, the Court articulated a vision of the Establishment Clause that avoids state funding of religion, while still upholding a New Jersey law that reimbursed bus fare for students in private schools. It also dismissed the idea that a high wall of separation would prevent fire and safety protection.

Still, Justice Samuel Alito questioned the state's attorney with seeming incredulity about whether the Missouri Constitution mandated the exclusion of churches from a number of grant programs aimed at improving the safety of buildings. Of course, in this case there is no evidence that Missouri has a playground safety crisis,

nor even that Trinity Lutheran Church’s playground was previously dangerous to preschoolers. It is more than a stretch to assume that this limited discretionary grant program must be treated the same as general government programs that provide essential services or that respond to specific threats to churches.

As Justice Elena Kagan noted as she pressed the church’s attorney, finding the precise church/state divide is a hard issue. After commenting that there was “something attractive about having some play in the joints where States can go their own way and make their own choices,” she asked, “And why shouldn’t this be one of those cases?” That’s a good question, and should be a hard one for the Court to answer against Missouri.

Just as we know that states must provide essential government services such as fire and police protection, we also know that churches and other houses of worship are organized for religious purposes and activities, typically and appropriately funded by those that attend them. A win for Missouri in this case does not put church-going Missourians at great risk. Abandoning the state constitution’s prohibition on aid to churches, however, may pose a much greater threat, upending the ability of states to both protect religious liberty and treat churches in distinctively favorable ways.

For more on the case, including a video reflection recorded the day of oral argument, visit BJCOnline.org/TrinityLutheran.

Appeals court upholds decision halting Executive Order on immigration

Arguments focus on Establishment Clause, Trump campaign statements

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the block on President Donald J. Trump’s revised Executive Order regarding immigration and refugee admissions. Finding the primary purpose of the Order to be religious rather than secular, the May 25 decision leaves in place a lower court’s injunction halting the enforcement of the Order’s immigration bans.

Among other provisions, the March 6 Executive Order bars immigration from certain Muslim-majority countries. The court relied on President Trump’s controversial statements as a candidate calling for a ban on Muslim immigration, as well as statements made by his aides, to conclude that the true purpose of the order was to limit the ability of Muslims to enter the United States, rather than the national security rationale offered by the administration.

In the opening paragraph of the majority opinion, the chief judge describes the president’s Order as one which “speaks with vague words of national security” in the text, “but in context drips with religious intolerance, animus, and discrimination.”

“Surely the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment yet stands as an untiring sentinel for the protection of one of our most cherished founding principles — that government shall not establish any religious orthodoxy, or favor or disfavor one religion over another,” the opinion states.

Several pages of the opinion detailed the president’s campaign statements regarding Muslims. The court emphasized that the statements, along with those of Trump’s representatives, “provide direct, specific evidence of what motivated

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both EO-1 and EO-2: President Trump’s desire to exclude Muslims from the United States. ... We need not probe anyone’s heart of hearts to discover the purpose of EO-2, for President Trump and his aides have explained it on numerous occasions and in no uncertain terms.”

While the president is entitled to deference in matters of immigration policy, the court explained, “Once plaintiffs credibly call into question the political branches’ motives for exercising that power, our reason for deferring is severely undermined.”

It is well-established in church-state law that even when a government action sounds neutral with respect to religion, it might still be deemed unconstitutional if its purpose was to discriminate on the basis of religion. The plaintiffs argued in this case that removing the explicit religious language from the first Executive Order on immigration (which was issued January 27 and revoked by the revised Order issued March 6) does not cure the religious discrimination problem because the revised order remains an attempt to enact Trump’s campaign proposal for a Muslim ban and religious test in immigration policy.

The administration has appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Other similar challenges across the country are winding their way through the court system. Most recently, the 9th Circuit also heard oral arguments in a similar suit challenging President Trump’s revised Executive Order.

By Don Byrd





U.S. commission: Russia a major violator of religious freedom

USCIRF shares concerns about Russia's treatment of Jehovah's Witnesses



The State Department should add Russia to its list of the worst violators of religious freedom, a U.S. commission declared in its annual report.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), founded to advise the federal government on the issue, comes out with its own list of shame each year, citing the most abusive countries in a lineup consistently longer than the State Department's.

This year, the USCIRF report included a dissenting report from its vice chair criticizing the commission for failing to investigate Israel.

On April 26, USCIRF recommended – for the first time – that the U.S. should designate Russia as a “country of particular concern” (CPC) for wielding an anti-extremist law to violate the religious freedom of Muslims and other minorities.

Most recently, Russia banned Jehovah's Witnesses in April, labeling them “extremist” and ordering the state to seize their properties and close their Russian headquarters and local chapters.

“The Russian government views independent religious activity as a major threat to social and political stability,” according to the USCIRF report. “It maintains and frequently updates laws that restrict religious freedom, including a 1997 religion law and a much-amended 2002 law on combating extremism.”

The anti-extremism law “lacks a clear definition of extremism,” and the Ministry of Justice maintains the Federal List of Extremist Materials, which has more than 4,000 items

on it “including many with no apparent connections to militancy,” according to the report.

USCIRF notes that the Russian government claims to have discovered “extremist literature” at official Jehovah's Witnesses religious sites, “including in September 2016, when a surveillance video recorded police planting evidence.”

“They're treating these people like they're terrorists,” said Tom Reese, a Jesuit priest who chairs USCIRF, referring to Russia's treatment of the Witnesses. “They're pacifists, they don't want to be involved in politics and they just want to be left alone. The [Russian] Supreme Court has basically said they're illegal.”

The USCIRF says that Russia is treating the Moscow Patriarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church like a state church. The government is favoring it in areas of state sponsorship, which fosters a climate of hostility toward other religions.

Globally, “the commission has concluded that the state of affairs for international religious freedom is worsening in both the depth and breadth of violations,” Reese said.

USCIRF's list this year differs from its 2016 list with the addition of Russia, but also the dropping of Egypt and Iraq, a move that may surprise some given continuing deadly attacks on Christians in those countries.

But Reese said that while violence against Christians in those nations remains a horrific problem, the commission wanted to highlight the concrete steps that both the Egyptian and Iraqi governments have taken to protect religious minorities.

For example, according to the report section on Egypt, President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi “consistently has made noteworthy public statements and gestures encouraging religious tolerance and moderation, has condemned sectarian attacks and assisted victims, and has urged reform of textbooks and religious discourse in society, an important shift in tone and rhetoric from his predecessors.”

Still, Egypt and Iraq are on USCIRF’s list of “Tier 2” countries, which are considered violators of religious freedom, but not as problematic as the CPCs.

On the same day of the report’s release, one commissioner, Arab-American and Democratic Party activist James Zogby, held a news conference to discuss his dissent to the report, in which he criticizes the commission’s refusal to investigate Israel.

Zogby, flanked by sympathetic Christians in a Lutheran church on Capitol Hill, said Israel discriminates against Muslims, Christians and non-Orthodox Jews but gets a free pass from the commission.

“I did not look for this issue, it came to us,” said Zogby, who cited a lengthy study from young lawyers in the West Bank — occupied by Israel — that concluded that Israel fails to meet international standards on religious freedom on which other nations are judged.

Other commissioners, Zogby said, were “bullied” to oppose an investigation. Those petitioning for an investigation were often dismissed as anti-Semites and some commissioners feared the commission would lose congressional support

for investigating Israel, he said.

Joining Zogby was the Rev. Aundrea Alexander, associate general secretary of the National Council of Churches; the Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, general secretary emeritus of the Reformed Church in America; and the Rev. Drew Christiansen of Georgetown University’s Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs.

Reese said many groups and people, including Zogby, propose that USCIRF launch investigations, but without a majority vote of the commission, those investigations don’t go forward.

“Jim proposed it but he didn’t get a majority,” said Reese, who added that USCIRF reports often include dissents.

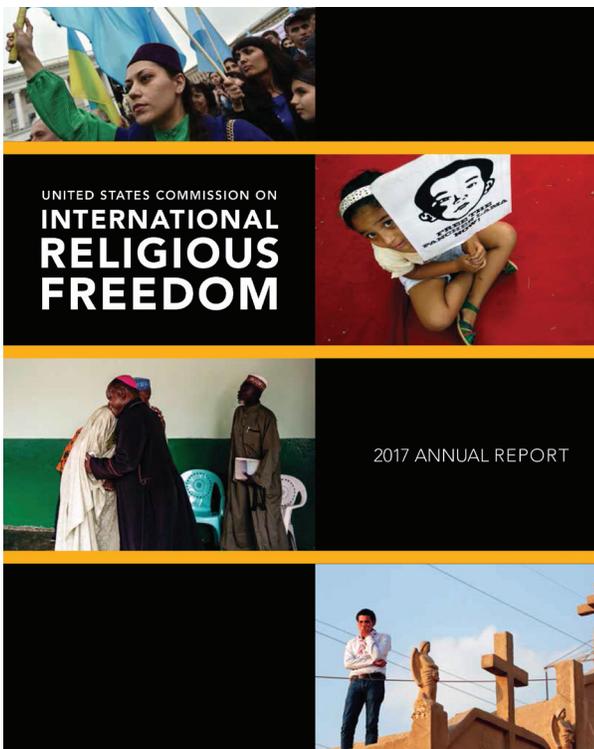
The USCIRF is not formally part of any branch of the federal government. Created by Congress in 1998, the agency has nine commissioners (appointed by the president and the Congressional leadership of both parties) and more than a dozen full-time staff members. Each commissioner is appointed for a two-year term but can be re-appointed.


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TOM REESE
USCIRF CHAIR

By Lauren Markoe, Religion News Service,
with BJC Staff Reports

2017 USCIRF Annual Report



**USCIRF says the following should be designated
“countries of particular concern”**

Countries in italics are currently on the State Department’s CPC list

- Burma
- Central African Republic
- China*
- Eritrea*
- Iran*
- Nigeria
- North Korea
- Pakistan
- Russia
- Saudi Arabia*
- Sudan*
- Syria
- Tajikistan*
- Turkmenistan*
- Uzbekistan*
- Vietnam

Bring your group to the Baptist Joint Committee

We host groups of any size or background in our Center for Religious Liberty to talk about our work on Capitol Hill, our Baptist heritage and how religious liberty is legally protected. Whether you are coming to Washington as part of a mission trip, leadership

program or academic curriculum, contact us and we can tailor our educational presentation for your group.

For more details about bringing a group to our offices, visit BJCOnline.org/visit-the-bjc.



BJC intern reflection: Visiting the U.S. Supreme Court

By Richard Chung, Spring 2017 BJC intern

As an intern for the Baptist Joint Committee, I was able to learn more about religious freedom and meaningfully contribute to our mission to protect religious liberty for all. In addition to assisting with the everyday operation of the BJC, I had the opportunity to hand-deliver letters opposing the politicization of churches to members of Congress and sit in on a congressional hearing about school vouchers. I also had the chance to attend Supreme Court oral arguments in person, which was especially exciting since I start law school in the fall.

The courtroom, imposing and ornate, was smaller than I imagined, and it had seating for perhaps a couple hundred at most. I was led to the left side of the courtroom to chairs placed between massive pillars. Finally, after a short wait, we heard the marshal of the court announce “Oyez,” and we stood as the justices took their seats to hear two cases that day.

As the first case began, I realized what a privilege it was to observe the Court in action. While I could get a sense of a justice’s personality by reading his or her opinions, it was a completely different experience seeing them participate in oral arguments. Everything from their body language to their tone to the questions they asked and hypotheticals they posed gave insight into the personalities behind the highest court in the land. For instance, Justice Clarence Thomas often leaned back in his chair and never said a

Richard Chung (right) and BJC Education and Outreach Specialist Charles Watson Jr.



word, while Justice Stephen Breyer, sitting next to him, at times seemed to lecture the attorneys in addition to posing questions.

After getting over my initial excitement, I was able to focus on the arguments themselves. The oral arguments contained demonstrations of brilliant intellect, such as when justices debated the rules of statutory interpretation, and moments of levity, as justices attempted to understand the ever-changing technology of social media in one case. Justice Elena Kagan had the punchline of the day when she asked, “There’s a constitutional right to use Snapchat, but not to use Twitter?”

Although the oral arguments lasted over two hours, the time flew by. It was a dream come true and a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I left even more inspired to pursue a career in law and advocate for the public interest.

A 2016 graduate of Yale University, Chung will attend the NYU School of Law this fall.

Interested in being an intern at the Baptist Joint Committee? The program provides a stipend and housing in D.C., and it is open to undergraduates and graduates. The deadline to apply for the fall semester is June 30. Visit BJCOnline.org/internships for details.



Churches and the ‘New Sanctuary Movement’

By Jennifer Hawks
BJC Associate General Counsel

My mother’s family hails from rural Arkansas. For decades we had a family reunion every Easter weekend where my family and those of my grandfather’s 21 brothers, sisters and half-siblings would return to the family farm to play games, crack jokes and enjoy an old-fashioned potluck. Despite the many differences in hometowns, able-bodiedness and personalities, we were united by our family ties.

These family reunions remind me of a fundamental aspect of the Church. Despite differences within the Church, we are united by our spiritual kinship. The Apostle Paul’s famous recitation of unity in Galatians 3:28 begins with “There is neither Jew nor Gentile ...” Thus, from the earliest days of Christianity, people who could have been divided by national origin, ethnic or racial distinctions were instead grafted into one family tree. In our nation of immigrants, numerous American congregations continue to emphasize this aspect of biblical teaching.

Many of our immigrant brothers and sisters today are experiencing a heightened sense of vulnerability. Despite the broken immigration system, faith-based organizations are doing important work in the immigrant community, including with undocumented immigrants. Many churches are also engaged in this ministry and are discerning how they should minister to their congregants and neighbors who may be at risk of deportation. They recognize that a religious conviction to provide sanctuary as part of their religious exercise may run afoul of federal immigration law and related state or local laws. Some congregations are choosing different ways besides sanctuary to minister to undocumented immigrants and their families.

“Sanctuary” literally means “refuge.” Throughout human history, there have been communities willing to provide sanctuary, or physical refuge, to people who were in violation of the law. The Bible records that in setting up the Kingdom of Israel, certain cities were designated as sanctuary cities with specified rules for claiming sanctuary. Perhaps the two most famous historical examples of people providing sanctuary for their neighbors are the American households who sheltered runaway slaves during the Underground Railroad and the European families who safeguarded Jews during the Holocaust.

The modern-day American sanctuary movement began in 1982 when six congregations in California and Arizona offered to protect undocumented Central American immigrants who were fleeing their war-torn

countries. Providing shelter, material support and advocacy, hundreds of congregations quickly joined them in what is now known as the “Sanctuary Movement.” When President Barack Obama increased deportations, this movement saw a resurgence as the “New Sanctuary Movement,” and it continues to attract new congregations from across the country and religious spectrum.

Recently, we have received some inquiries from churches about this movement as they evaluate whether or not to participate, including how free exercise of religion concerns may be weighed against the federal immigration law. “Sanctuary” is not a legal term and provides no legal protection for the institution. A “sanctuary church” intentionally ministers to the undocumented community, which may include providing physical shelter for those facing detention or deportation. If a congregation determines that providing sanctuary is consistent with its theology and ministry, there are numerous practical and legal issues to consider. For an introduction to the basic questions, visit our new resource page at BJCOnline.org/SanctuaryMovement.

If your church is considering becoming a sanctuary church, here are four basic guidelines to keep in mind:

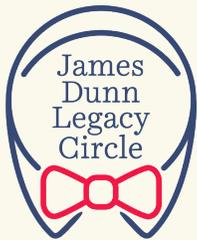
- 1) Consult a local attorney familiar with federal immigration law and related state and local laws. These laws vary by jurisdiction and may penalize additional activities related to providing care for undocumented persons.
- 2) Learn what services are needed in your community by reaching out to other community groups.
- 3) If providing shelter, inform the undocumented immigrant that staying at the church does not give any special legal protection against detention or deportation.
- 4) Ensure that any staff, church members or other volunteers involved in sheltering or transporting undocumented immigrants are properly trained and aware of the potential legal consequences.

Immigrants, regardless of legal status, are undoubtedly part of American churches. Their full engagement in the life of congregations enriches churches while offering an opportunity for others to spiritually and emotionally support them in difficult times. How individual churches respond to these vulnerable brothers and sisters will differ from congregation to congregation, but all members of our spiritual family have a place at the table.

Join the James Dunn Legacy Circle



Members of the James Dunn Legacy Circle at the 2016 Religious Liberty Council Luncheon included William Genet, Kent Brown, Ann Brown, Aubrey Ducker, Nancy Walker, Brent Walker, Penny Jenkins, Woody Jenkins, Carter McNeese, Carole White and Clement White.



Those who create an estate gift to the Baptist Joint Committee automatically become members of the James Dunn Legacy Circle. We named our planned giving program after James Dunn to recognize his important role in our history. Dunn was the executive director of the BJC from 1981-1999, remaining steadfast in his defense of religious liberty while leading the organization through a crucial period in Baptist life.

If you have included the BJC in your estate plans or would like more information about naming us as a beneficiary of a will or retirement plan, please contact Taryn Deaton at 202-544-4226 or legacycircle@BJCOnline.org. More information is also available at BJCOnline.org/planned-giving.

Members of the James Dunn Legacy Circle

Patricia Shield Ayres
Martin and Ruth Bradley*
Rosemary Brevard
Kent and Ann Brown
C. S. Burgess, Jr.* and Wilma B. Burgess*
William and Betty L. Byrd
Rev. Steven C. Case* and Mrs. Diane Case
Hardy Clemons
Reba S. Cobb
Grady C. Cothen*
Anita Snell Daniels
Kenneth V. and Sally Lewis Dodgson
Aubrey Ducker and Laurie Weatherford
Dr. James M.* and Mrs. Marilyn Dunn
Sue and Lloyd Elder
Rev. J. Wesley* and Mrs. Gwen Forsline
Bob and Anne Fowler
David and Stephanie Garrard
William R. Genet
Susan E. Gillies
Susan and Hugh Greene
Todd Heifner
Katherine A. Howell
Robert R. Hudson

Jim and Linda Huff
Barbara Humphrys
Dr. Lynwood B. and Mrs. Virginia P. Jenkins
Dwight and Karin Jessup
Hershel and Elizabeth Johnson
Joseph M. and Frances E. Jones
A. Moncrief (Monty)* and Diane Owen Jordan
Warren R. Magnuson*
Madison R. McClendon
Reggie and Joan McDonough
S. Carter and Audrey L. McNeese
Dr. Richard V. and Mrs. Charlene B. Pierard
Ella Wall Prichard
J. George and Susan Evans Reed
Pauletta R. Reeves
Marylee C. Sturgis*
Carol Franklin Sutton
James R. Thomason
Brent and Nancy Walker
Gary Walker
Clement H. and Carole G. White
Rev. Hays Wiltshire

**deceased*

Baptist Joint Committee welcomes summer interns

The Baptist Joint Committee is pleased to welcome two summer semester interns working with our staff in Washington, D.C.



KYLE DIPRE of Solon, Ohio, is a 2015 graduate of Hope College in Holland, Michigan, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Religious Studies and elective coursework in Political Science and History. Dipre is currently a Master of Divinity candidate and Seminary Fellow at Princeton Theological Seminary, where he focuses his coursework and research on church-state relations within American religious history. The son of John and Pam Dipre, he intends to pursue a law degree after graduation.

LEGRAND NORTHCUTT of Longview, Texas, graduated from Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, in May with a Bachelor of Arts in English and a minor in Poverty and Human Capability Studies. Northcutt served on leadership with Intervarsity Christian Fellowship and is a former camp counselor at Kanakuk Kamps and The Cabbage Patch Settlement House. He is the son of Ginia and Gordon Northcutt; Gordon worked for the BJC from 1988 – 1993. Northcutt will attend the University of Richmond Law School this fall.

Department of Defense expands its list of recognized religions



The Department of Defense announced a near doubling of its list of recognized religions. It will now formally recognize humanism and other minority faiths among members of the armed forces.

The move, which came at the end of March but was made public in late April, means servicemen and women who are adherents of small faith groups are now guaranteed the same rights, privileges and protections granted to their peers who are members of larger faith groups.

Previously, the U.S. military recognized just over 100 religions. The new list has grown to 221 to include the earth-based faiths, such as heathens and Asatru, and an additional eight Protestant groups, including the International Communion of the Charismatic Christian Church.

Jewish servicemen and women may now choose among Orthodox, Conservative and Reform instead of just “Jewish.”

The move was lauded by humanist organizations, which have been pushing for full recognition, including their own chaplains, for 10 years.

The move also means the Department of Defense will now have more accurate counts of each recognized religious group, which varies widely depending on who’s counting.

Humanism was recognized by the Army in 2014, but this new order expands that to all branches of the military.

By Kimberly Winston, Religion News Service, with BJC Staff Reports



Federal appropriations law includes funds for D.C. vouchers, international religious freedom

Congress passed and President Donald J. Trump signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2017 into law on May 5, funding the government through September to avoid a budget impasse and government shutdown. Included in the deal were some funding provisions of religious liberty interest.

The law includes \$45 million to continue the D.C. school voucher program. President Trump celebrated the voucher funding by making an unscheduled appearance at a White House event for D.C. students hosted by Education Secretary Betsy DeVos.

Like other school voucher programs, the D.C. scholarships initiative sends taxpayer funds to pay for tuition at private schools, including religious schools. Parents have the right to choose a religious education for their children, but religious teachings should be funded by voluntary contributions,

not through compulsory taxation.

The new law also includes funding for international religious freedom efforts, including:

- \$10 million from the Human Rights and Democracy Fund, to be allocated in consultation with the yet-to-be-named Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom
- \$10 million from the Economic Support Fund to “protect vulnerable and persecuted religious minorities”
- \$5 million to implement “a plan for transitional justice, reconciliation, and reintegration programs for vulnerable and persecuted religious minorities” in Iraq and Syria

Plus, the law contains additional funding authorization for the development of an

“international religious freedom curriculum,” for “humanitarian assistance for vulnerable and persecuted religious minorities, including victims of genocide designated by the Secretary of State and other groups that have suffered crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing” and for international broadcasting on “the condition of vulnerable and persecuted religious groups.”

The president is also required to “review and identify non-state actors” in countries that have “engaged in particularly severe violations of religious freedom.”

See Division E, Title IV in the Act for details on the school voucher program; Division J, Title VII, Section 7033 has more on the funding for international religious freedom programs.

By Don Byrd



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The Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty defends religious liberty for all people and protects the institutional separation of church and state in the historic Baptist tradition. Based in Washington, D.C., we work through education, litigation and legislation, often combining our efforts with a wide range of groups to provide education about and advocacy for religious liberty.

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Plan to join us at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago for a lecture series on religious liberty October 26-27. Details available at BJCOnline.org/Lectures.