



NEWS & NOTES

President Trump vowed in his first National Prayer Breakfast as chief executive to make good on a campaign promise to repeal the law that restricts political speech from the pulpit. "I will get rid of, totally destroy the Johnson Amendment and allow our representatives of faith to speak freely and without fear," he said on Thursday (Feb. 2) to a gathering of 3,500 faith leaders, politicians and other dignitaries from around the world, including King Abdullah of Jordan. The Amendment prohibits tax-exempt houses of worship from endorsing or opposing candidates or political parties without risking their tax-exempt status.

Christian Headlines, 2/3

On Wednesday, Sen. James Lankford (R-OK) introduced into the Senate the Free Speech Fairness Act, which would address the Johnson Amendment to the Internal Revenue Code by restoring to nonprofits and houses of worship the free-

dom to speak about electoral activity without putting their charitable tax status in jeopardy. House Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-LA) is sponsor of the companion House bill.

FACT, 2/3

The President, Vice President, along with a few of their family members, as well the wife and son of the deceased conservative Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, prayed with Judge Neil Gorsuch before his nomination to the nation's highest court. Many conservatives and Christians praised Trump's nomination of Gorsuch, who is seen as a Constitutional originalist and will, they believe, uphold conservative values. He is deeply interested in matters of life, death and fundamental moral principles. In 2006—the year he joined the Tenth Circuit—he published a book called *The Future of Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia*, outlining the moral, legal, and logistical challenges that emerge at the end of life. He has not come out as a clear abortion opponent but has given some deference to the opinion that abortion is a "unique" issue.

Christian Headlines, 2/2; The Atlantic, 2/1

Pro-life leaders say a nationwide surge in optimism is driving the wave of pro-life bills already introduced in the first few weeks of this year's state legislative sessions. The nearly 50 new bills include bans on dismemberment abortions and

any procedure after 20 weeks gestation, fetal burial requirements, and bills that would defund Planned Parenthood. Last year, lawmakers approved 60 new pro-life laws across the country, and leaders expect more of the same focus this year, simply with more energy. So much pro-life momentum is especially remarkable after last year's U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, which struck down a Texas law requiring abortion centers to meet ambulatory surgical center standards and abortionists to have hospital admitting privileges. Meanwhile, Sen. Marco Rubio has introduced the in the U.S. Senate that would prohibit underage girls from getting abortions without parental consent.

World News Service, 1/27; Christian Headlines, 2/3

Tennessee's Shelby County commissioners refused to approve \$115,000 in grant money to Planned Parenthood and is under fire from the Tennessee Health Department. The funds would reportedly go to the organization to be used for condom distribution in order to prevent the spread of HIV and STD's. Brian Harris of Tennessee Right to Life noted that the grant money could be given to other organizations which provide protection against HIV and STD's, instead of the controversial Planned Parenthood.

Christian Headlines, 2/3

Though hundreds of

thousands gathered for the March for Life last weekend in Washington, D.C., and Vice President Mike Pence even spoke at the event, major secular media outlets offered far less coverage of this annual event than they did of the Women's March the previous weekend. In fact, combined coverage from ABC, CBS, and NBC, though better for this year's March for Life than last year's, was still only about one-third the coverage of the Women's March.

FACT, 2/3

As of January 2017, 625,000 Americans were enrolled in a Christian health-care sharing ministry such as Christian Healthcare Ministries, Medi-Share, or Samaritan Ministries. That number is more than triple what it was at the beginning of the Obamacare rollout in 2010. The possible repeal of the Affordable Care Act raises the question of what will happen to Christian health-care ministries and if there will still be a need for them.

Christian Headlines, 2/2

Although President Trump has been working to undo much of the policies put in place by President Obama and his administration, he will reportedly leave in place a policy meant to protect LGBTQ people in the workplace. A statement released by the White House on Tuesday said President Trump "is determined to protect the rights of all Americans, including the

LGBTQ community" and that he "continues to be respectful and supportive of LGBTQ rights, just as he was throughout the election." The Independent Journal Review even notes that Trump will be the first president of either party to support gay marriage from the beginning of his candidacy.

Christian Headlines, 1/31

California state Sen. Toni Atkins introduced a bill that would offer a third gender option on state-issued identification documents including state driver's licenses, birth certificates, identity cards, and gender change court orders. Atkins, who identifies as a "transgender," wanted a non-binary gender option on these official documents. California Family Council CEO Jonathan Keller responded to the bill by saying, "While we are sympathetic to the difficulties facing those experiencing gender dysphoria, we believe government documents need to reflect biological facts for identification and medical purposes."

FACT, 2/3

When a set of parents at Fox Ridge Middle School in the Denver area accidentally logged into the school's controversial sex education website while trying to update their child's password information, they not only discovered highly pornographic material, but they were also chastised by the school for "breaking school policy" because the website is password-protected to allow access for students only. Students "are now being given access to extremely graphic sexual and homosexual pornography, material encouraging them to become sexually and homosexually active, descriptions of 'sex toys,' and much more." Outraged parents said, "We will attend every school board meeting in perpetuity until this stuff is taken off."

FACT, 2/3

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) announced on Monday they will now allow girls who identify as boys to participate in its boys-only programs. Since the organization was created more

An enforced uniformity of religion throughout a nation or civil state, confounds the civil and religious, denies the principles of Christianity and civility, and that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."

— ROGER WILLIAMS

Fleeing religious persecution in England, Williams arrived in New England on this day, February 5, 1631, a day remembered by many as "Freedom's Cause Day." The Puritans rejected his insistence that the government of the colony had no right to set up a "civil power and officers to judge the convictions of men's souls..." He left and founded Providence in what he later chartered as the colony of Rhode Island, purchasing, rather than taking, his land from the Indians. In 1644 he wrote a defense of religious freedom. In 1802, Jefferson referred to Roger Williams' "wall of separation" in his letter to the Danbury Baptists.

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than a century ago, the Boy Scouts has relied on the information on an individual's birth certificate to determine eligibility for their single-gender programs. But the organization announced that they "will accept and register youth in the Cub and Boy Scout programs based on the gender identity indicated on the application." This latest policy change follows a 2013 decision by the BSA to permit openly homosexual scouts and a 2015 change that approved the inclusion of openly gay and bisexual adults as unit leaders and employees. "Now we see once again that the Boy Scouts really is committed to a gender-theory culture war that evangelical Christians and many other Americans just can't accept," ERLC president Russell Moore told the New York Times. Research studies have shown that up to 93 percent of children referred for gender dysphoria grow out of it naturally by the time they reach adolescence or adulthood. But many Christians fear that BSA's decision will reinforce the gender dysphoria.

The Weekly, 2/3

■ Religious organizations are providing more than half (58 percent) of the emergency shelter beds for home-

less people in major cities across the country, a new Baylor University study shows. The report found that cities with higher participation by religious groups had lower percentages of unsheltered homeless people. Researchers also estimated that there was a three-year total in 11 major cities of \$119 million in taxpayer savings connected to faith-based organizations that provided transitional housing programs in those cities, which provide longer lengths of stay and include mentoring and rehabilitation.

RNS, 2/1

■ As the new administration reviews U.S. policies on the detainment and interrogation of terrorism suspects, the public is divided over whether it is ever acceptable for the country to use torture in anti-terror efforts, according to a recent Pew Research poll. Overall, 48% say there are some circumstances under which the use of torture is acceptable in U.S. anti-terrorism efforts; about as many (49%) say there are no circumstances under which the use of torture is acceptable. Trump has said he personally believes torture works, but that he will confer with his Cabinet before considering any changes to

U.S. policy. The use of torture by the military and all other government agencies is currently banned under U.S. law.

Pew, 1/26

■ A group of some 70 evangelicals met with U.S. Ambassador to Israel nominee David Friedman to discuss the U.S.-Israeli relationship. The pro-Israel leaders reaffirmed their support of Friedman and issued a letter to President Trump, which includes their support of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The letter stated in part: "Our support for Israel is first and foremost rooted in the Bible, in which it is clearly established that God gave the land of Israel, with Jerusalem as its capital, to the Jewish people as an eternal covenant."

Christian Headlines, 2/2

■ Christians in Somalia face severe persecution, with reports surfacing that when there is even a suspicion that someone is a Christian, they are immediately executed. On this year's recently released 2017 World Watch list from Christian persecution charity Open Doors, Somalia ranks as the second worst country for Christian persecution, only behind North Korea. Despite these severe dangers Christians face in Somalia, there are also reports of many Muslims converting to Christianity. Greg Musselman of the Voice of the Martyrs said, "we do hear these many stories of Muslims having visions and dreams of Jesus." Christian Headlines, 1/27

REFUGEES, NATIONAL SECURITY AND A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW

The Executive Order

by John Stonestreet

How should we as Christians think about President Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees?

Biblical clarity in this cultural moment. That's central to the mission of the Colson Center. And after the release of President Trump's executive order on immigration and refugees, and the resulting chaos of misinformation, this is a moment when we need clarity. So here's a framework for thinking Christianly about the intertwined issues of refugees, immigrants, and national security.

Let's start with clarity about what the order says. First, contrary to media, protesters, and Hollywood actors, the executive order was not a ban on Muslims, or on immigration, nor was it a radical break from U. S. policy. The order temporarily bans entry for those holding passports from seven nations previously identified by the Obama Administration as "countries of concern." The order also directs administration officials to develop a plan for uniform screening, it suspends the refugee program for four months and bars refugees from Syria indefinitely.

In addition, the order caps the number of refugees this year at 50,000, which, as David French noted in the National Review, is roughly in between what President Bush and President Obama would allow in a year. In fact, in 2011, President Obama himself suspended admitting Iraqi refugees for six months.

The order also prioritizes refugee status for persecuted religious minorities, which President Trump admitted is designed to give priority to persecuted Christians, and it allows for case-by-case waivers.

So, that's what the order says. But how was it implemented? By all accounts, not well. There was initial confusion over whether green card holders—that is, permanent residents of the U. S.—would be allowed to return from overseas travel. Some legal residents were detained before Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly stated Sunday they'd be eligible for re-entry. And lawmakers on both sides of the aisle la-

mented the confusion and uncertainty, calling for better coordination between government agencies and Congress. Even now, things seem to be changing by the moment.

So which key biblical worldview principles can we bring to bear on all of this?

First and foremost, every human being is made in the image of God. Christians must start here, and therefore may never write off or refuse to care about the plight of whole peoples on any basis, and that includes being Syrian.

Second, as Jesus said, the two greatest commands are to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves. And Jesus told a parable about who is our neighbor. While ensuring America has uniform and effective standards for screening is both wise and necessary, shutting down the refugee program—for however long—should cause us grave concern. Lives are at stake.

Third, we cannot ignore Jesus' parable about the sheep and the goats where he said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me." American churches have a long history of loving Christ by showing love to refugees. And in this climate, we must ramp up our efforts toward these communities around us.

Fourth, as Chuck Colson often said, government has a biblical mandate "to promote justice and restrain evil." To restrain evil, a government must, justly, defend its nation's borders and determine who gets to cross them, and who doesn't. This requires distinguishing between tourists and immigrants on one hand, and refugees on the other.

Finally, we cherish religious liberty, but not just for ourselves, for members of every faith. If the President's order turns out to be a first step in fulfilling his campaign promise to ban all Muslim immigration, Christians must protest vigorously.

I'll have more to say as things clear up. But until then, let's strive to see this through the mind of Christ. Pray for our leaders and for those in need, remembering that Jesus is both our savior and our judge.

Breatpoint Commentary, 1/31/2017

ENTERTAINMENT NOTES

★★NEW MOVIES

	Quality	Moral	Age
<i>The Space Between Us</i>	PG-13	+3	-2 T/A
<i>Rings</i>	PG-13	+2	-3 T/A
<i>The Comedian</i>	R	+2	-3 A

A- Adult, T-Teen, OT- Older Teen

Film "Quality" is an estimate (+1 to +4) of appeal for the intended audience or age group. "Moral" rating ranges from extremely objectionable (-4) to very good (+4). movieguide.org; pluggedin.com