



NEWS & NOTES

On Wednesday, the U.S. Senate confirmed pro-life Attorney General nominee Jeff Sessions, and on Friday they confirmed pro-life Congressman Tom Price as the next secretary of the Health and Human Services department. An orthopedic surgeon by trade, Price was confirmed on a party-line vote over the objections of Planned Parenthood and other abortion advocates. HHS is in charge of spending \$1.1 trillion annually and governs Medicaid, Medicare, and other healthcare-related issues, like the implementation of Obamacare, including the contraceptive mandate during the Obama administration. LifeNews.com, 2/10

Newly released videos reveal Planned Parenthood primarily uses its ultrasound machines for abortions only and its employees even refuse to tell women about their babies' health. Sue Thayer, a former manager of a Planned Parenthood location, said that their 4D ultra-

sound machine was used to help employees perform "webcam abortions," when a doctor who is not present guides a nurse to perform an abortion via a webcam. Another former Planned Parenthood manager explained her clinic was often unable to help women with reproductive health problems because the only ultrasound machines available were the ones at the abortion facilities. "We only do ultrasounds if you're terminating," a Planned Parenthood employee explains in the video.

The Federalist, 1/31

Legislators in at least 15 U.S. states are considering proposals to legalize assisted suicide. In New Mexico, the "End of Life Options Act" (House Bill 171) would allow doctors, nurse practitioners and physician assistants to diagnose terminal illness and prescribe life-ending medication the same day with no second opinion. In all, 36 states and the District of Columbia have considered assisted suicide bills since 1994. BP, 2/7

Family Policy Alliance, with whom The Family Action Council is allied, and radical feminist group Women's Liberation Front (WoLF) have joined together in an amicus brief to oppose Obama's Title IX transgender bathroom mandate that would open all women's restrooms, locker rooms, and showers to men who self-identify as women.

The unlikely pair agrees that the privacy and safety of women are paramount. Said the chair of WoLF's board of directors, Kara Dansky, "If we define sex, under Title IX, to mean gender identity, what we're essentially saying is that 'women and girl' can mean anyone who self-identifies as 'women and girl,' which makes the category 'women and girls' meaningless as a category."

FACT, 2/10

Bills introduced in the Tennessee legislature include: (SB1378, HB 1394) "Right to Die" would allow an adult with a terminal disease to request medication to end life; (SB 1180, HB 1189) "Infants Protection Act" would prohibit abortion of a viable fetus except in a medical emergency and requires testing to determine viability if a woman is at least 20 weeks pregnant; (SB 0155, HB 0271) "Sanctuary Policy" would prohibit local governmental entities from enacting sanctuary policies; (SB 0771, HB 0888) "Bathroom Bill" requires students in public schools and public institutions of higher education to use restrooms and locker rooms consistent with their sex on their birth certificates; (SB 1355, HB 0026) "In God We Trust" requires all license plates to bear the language.

TN Eagle Forum, 2/11; TN General Assembly

Pew's polling shows that 62 percent of Americans say that it is important for their

politicians to have strong religious beliefs. And nearly half of Americans, especially evangelicals, also say they want churches and other houses of worship to speak out on social and political topics, but the other half says no. But there remains a consensus (66 percent) that churches should not endorse specific candidates for public office. Only 33% of Republicans and 26% of Democrats say churches should endorse specific political candidates.

Pew, 2/3

Last May the International Mission Board (IMB) and Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) publicly supporting a Muslim community's right to build a mosque in New Jersey. On New Year's Eve, a judge agreed. Less than a month later, IMB trustee and Tennessee megachurch pastor Dean Haun resigned with a year left on his term. Haun explained, "I love our IMB leadership... [but] I want no part in supporting a false religion, even if it is in the name of religious freedom." An IMB statement read, in part, "A public record by IMB of supporting freedom of religion for all people in the United States—regardless of their beliefs—gives IMB workers overseas a credible foundation from which to advocate for freedom of religious exercise in countries that are hostile to Christianity... IMB's call on

the government of these other countries to support the religious freedom of their citizens will ring hollow if, in the USA, we only support freedom of religion for Christians."

Christianity Today, 2/8

A little over a third of the 85,000 refugees who were admitted into the United States in fiscal 2016 (37%) were religious minorities in their home countries. Of those, 61% were Christians, according to data from the State Department. Muslims, the next largest group, made up 22% of the religious minority refugees (including non-Sunni Muslims from Syria and Somalia) who were admitted to the U.S. The landscape is different when it comes to the two-thirds of refugees who entered the U.S. as religious majorities: Muslim (60%) and Christian (35%). The top five countries of origin were Congo (19%), Syria (15%), Burma (15%), Iraq (12%)

and Somalia (11%). Pew, 2/7

A Michigan federal district court found unconstitutional a Housing Commission policy that allows outside groups to use community rooms in housing projects, except for religious purposes, worship, or activities. The court concluded that "the Housing Commission's policy constitutes impermissible viewpoint discrimination."

Religion Cause, 2/10

A civil rights lawsuit filed in federal court this week charges that California schools discriminate in their portrayal of Hinduism. The suit claims California's history-social science curriculum appears to highlight the positive aspects of other religions, but does not provide the same treatment of Hinduism.

East Bay Times, 2/9

Mississippi remains the most religious state in the U.S., with 59% of its residents in 2016 classified as "very religious," followed by

We believe that all men are created equal because they are created in the image of God. From this faith we will not be moved."

— PRESIDENT HARRY S. TRUMAN

Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were born on the exact same day, Feb. 12, 1809, but their lives had vastly different effects. Darwin's theory of evolution claims that men were not created and that men are not equal. He wrote, "With savages, the weak in body or mind are soon eliminated..." the same idea that was used in the Dred Scott decision. Lincoln's last act in office was to put on all National Coin the motto, "In God We Trust." Karl Marx wrote, "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural selection for the class struggle." "At a very early age, while still a pupil in the ecclesiastical school, Comrade Stalin ...began to read Darwin and became an atheist." Mao Zedong stated, "Chinese socialism is founded upon Darwin and the theory of evolution." During WWII in 1942 Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "The belief in man, created free, in the image of God -- is the crucial difference between ourselves and the enemies we face."

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Alabama (56% very religious) and Utah (54%). Tennessee was raked in eight place with 50 percent classified as "very religious." Vermont is the least religious state; 21% of its residents are classified as very religious. Two other New England states, Maine and Massachusetts, are the second- and third-least religious. Gallup classifies Americans as "very religious," "moderately religious" or "nonreligious" based on their responses to questions about the importance of religion and church attendance. Gallup, 2/8

■ The residents of a small Mississippi town have engaged in rallies and protests after an atheist organization forced the mayor to take down the Christian flag at a local park. The Freedom From Religion Foundation threatened to sue the town of Rienzi for \$500,000, a large amount for the small town. The mayor said that the town has hired an attorney and is discussing what further action can be done. Christian Headlines, 2/6

■ Parents in the UK have won millions in a so-called "wrongful-birth" lawsuit, alleging that they would have aborted their children if they had known of their dis-

abilities while they were in the womb. The couples filing the lawsuit were awarded 87 million dollars of taxpayer money when the "High Court judge ruled that doctors had been negligent in their cases."

Christian Headlines, 2/9

■ A Christian preacher in the U.K. was arrested and accused of a hate crime after he responded to a gay teen's question about homosexuality. "I feel they [the police] try so hard to appear like they are protecting minorities, they go too far the other way. I want to be able to tell people the good word of the Gospel and think I should be free to do so. I wasn't speaking my opinions - I was quoting from the Bible," reports 42-year-old Gordon Larmour. After a prolonged trial, Lamour has been acquitted of all charges.

Christian Headlines, 2/6

■ After years of fruitless searches for further Dead Sea scrolls in caves on the cliffs near the historic body of water, archeologists on Wednesday found a 12th cave, which once held hidden scrolls from the Second Temple period. However, after excavating the ancient hollow, located near the sea's northwestern shore, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem researchers concluded

that the additional scrolls were looted by Beduin in the middle of the last century. "Numerous storage jars and lids from the Second Temple period... were all broken and their contents removed, and the discovery toward the end of the excavation of a pair of iron pickax heads from the 1950s, stored within the tunnel for later use, proves the cave was looted." "The important discovery of another scroll cave attests to the fact that a lot of work remains to be done in the Judean Desert - and finds of huge importance are still waiting to be discovered," said Israel Hasson, director-general of the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Jerusalem Post, 2/8

■ A 70-year-old Christian man in Pakistan was jailed on blasphemy charges on the same day 106 Muslims accused in a 2013 attack on a Christian colony were acquitted. After being accused on Jan. 28 of writing two letters containing derogatory remarks about the Koran, police raided Masih's house and took his entire family into custody. A source said the charges against Masih were fabricated by local Muslims seeking to seize his property. Also on Jan. 28, an Anti-Terrorism Court in Lahore acquitted 106 Muslims accused of a massive attack on Joseph Colony, which saw the torching of three church buildings, several shops and a number of vehicles. The riot was sparked by a blasphemy accusation against a man that has been sentenced to death. BP, 2/7

A SPIRITUAL BATTLE FOR ALL BELIEVERS

Persecution and 'Evil in the Heavenly Realms'

by Eric Metaxas

In America, increasing numbers of people in our colleges and in the media are worried about various "micro-aggressions" and "insensitivities." So those who find themselves so offended by the words of others can repair to a designated "safe space," where they can work out their distress with hugs and perhaps coloring books. They probably never heard that saying about sticks and stones.

Meanwhile, these delicate flowers are missing out on the biggest story of injustice in the world. According to multiple agencies, adherents of Christianity—supposedly the religion of the powerful—face far more persecution than followers of any other religion.

Let me give you a few data points about what this means for our brothers and sisters worldwide before telling you what it all means for us. For the second straight year, according to a study from the Italian-based Center for Studies on New Religions, up to 600 million followers of Jesus worldwide are being prevented from practicing their faith, with untold numbers paying the price of martyrdom. While much of the persecution comes from the Islamic State and similar radical Muslim groups, Christians face discrimination from many sources. The Pew Research Center counts 145 countries where Christians face harassment or worse—145!

In Iraq, with the breakdown in order since the Gulf War, the number of Christians has evaporated from about 1.5 million in 2003 to somewhere around 275,000 today. Many were killed; many more have been driven out as refugees. In Pakistan, India, and Myanmar, nationalist religious movements—whether Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist—have falsely tagged Christians as agents of Western powers and seek to restrict their freedoms.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom notes that China has increased its level of persecution against Christians. Many church buildings have been bulldozed. Pastor Bao Guohua and his wife were

sentenced to 14 and 12 years in prison for opposing a government campaign to remove crosses from churches.

It's no wonder that Robert Nicholson of the Philos Project says, "There are many places on earth where being a Christian is the most dangerous thing you can be."

We know that the default setting for the daily lives of many fellow believers around the world is not power, but persecution. But what does this mean for those of us here in the still relatively protected West? Well, of course first and foremost we should pray for our persecuted brethren. And yes, we should speak up for them, with our government, in the media, with our neighbors, and we should support organizations that aid the persecuted. We know that when one member of the Body suffers, we all suffer.

But let me also suggest that a focus on persecuted Christians helps us develop a biblical worldview and a solid Christian discipleship. The Bible says that we battle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Eph 6:12), and that our adversary, the devil, goes about like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8). Persecution reminds us we are in a spiritual battle—all of us—and that we all must face the possibility that standing for Jesus could prove costly indeed.

Persecution, as the struggles of our fellow believers attest, is a normal part of the Christian life. 1 Timothy 3:12 reminds us that all who want to live a godly life for Jesus will face it. There are no "safe spaces" for Christ-followers in this world. Martyrdom can be expected. The church historian Eusebius said that the early martyrs "wove a crown to offer to the Father; ... and having triumphed gloriously should win the mighty crown of immortality."

A Christian worldview reminds us we are in a spiritual battle, one that requires courage—and not safe spaces. Are we ready to don the full armor of God?

ENTERTAINMENT NOTES

★★NEW MOVIES

	Quality	Moral	Age
<i>The Lego Batman Movie</i>	PG	+4	+1 All
<i>John Wick: Chapter Two</i>	R	+4	-3 OT/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