

THIS WEEK IN CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE

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Friday, December 19, 2025



Top News

- **Why Do Some Americans Leave Their Religion While Others Stay?**
- **Growing shares say the Trump administration is doing 'too much' to deport immigrants in the U.S. illegally**
- **White Christian clergy running for Congress as Democrats face skeptics in their own party**
- **The Bondi Beach Hanukkah shooting was an attack on Judaism**
- **Trump attacks on political opponents spur a surge of threats, NBC News review finds**

Why Do Some Americans Leave Their Religion While Others Stay?

Many U.S. adults (35%) have moved on from the religion of their youth. Yet most Americans have not, including a majority – 56% – who still identify with their childhood religion. Another 9% weren't raised in a religion and still don't have one today.

This Pew Research Center report looks at the choices behind these decisions: why some people continue to identify with their childhood religion, why others have decided to leave it, and why others don't identify with any religion at all.

The findings about how many people switch religions come from our U.S. Religious Landscape Study (RLS) conducted in 2023-24. But to dig deeper into the reasons people give for switching or staying, we conducted a follow-up survey in May 2025.

The follow-up survey shows that most U.S. adults who still identify with their childhood religion credit the following as extremely or very important reasons:

- They believe the religion's teachings (64% of adults who identify with their childhood religion say this).
- Their religion fulfills their spiritual needs (61%).
- Their religion gives their life meaning (56%).

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Growing shares say the Trump administration is doing 'too much' to deport immigrants in the U.S. illegally

As the Trump administration escalates its immigration enforcement efforts, 53% of Americans say it is doing "too much" when it comes to deporting immigrants who are living in the United States illegally. That share is up from 44% in March.

At the same time, a large majority continue to say at least some of these immigrants should be deported, according to a Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 6-16, 2025.

Overall, 50% of adults disapprove of the Trump administration's approach to immigration, including 36% who strongly disapprove. A smaller share (39%) approve, including 24% who strongly approve.

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U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents stand guard near an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) facility in Broadview, Illinois, on Oct. 3, 2025. (Octavio Jones/AFP via Getty Images)

White Christian clergy running for Congress as Democrats face skeptics in their own party

The Rev. Sarah Trone Garriott, a Lutheran minister and Democratic state senator in Iowa, has beaten Republican candidates in three state senate races going back to 2020. Next fall, she hopes to unseat GOP Congressman Zach Nunn in national midterm elections, too.

Garriott said she is motivated by the needs she sees in her district, but also a desire to reclaim what it means to be a follower of Jesus in politics.

"Faith has something to say to politics. And what we are seeing labeled as the faith perspective is not faithful to me," Garriott said. "It does not reflect the teachings in the Scriptures that I read. It does not reflect my values. This is a really important moment for people of faith to be engaged in the public realm."

When she first ran for state office, Garriott was something of a rarity as a white clergy person seeking office as a Democrat. She will be more rare if she wins next November: Since the 1970s, only three white clergy have been elected as Democrats, two of them Catholic priests: The Revs. Robert Drinan, who represented Massachusetts from 1971-81, and Robert John Cornell (Wisconsin, 1975-79). Bob Edgar, a United Methodist minister, represented Pennsylvania from 1975 to 1987. Since then, all white ordained members of Congress have been Republicans.

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Sarah Trone Garriott. (Photo courtesy of Sarah for Iowa)

The Bondi Beach Hanukkah shooting was an attack on Judaism



A woman places an Israeli flag over flowers outside Bondi Pavilion at Sydney's Bondi Beach, Monday, Dec. 15, 2025, a day after a shooting. (AP Photo/Mark Baker)

The savage shooting at a Hanukkah celebration on Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, is the deadliest attack on Diaspora Jews in recent memory. Fifteen people were killed after two gunmen opened fire on Sunday (Dec. 14), according to police, with the death toll surpassing the 11 people killed at the Tree of Life Synagogue on Shabbat in Pittsburgh in 2018. Those killed included a Chabad rabbi, Eli Schlanger.

The heart has four chambers, mine all holding different emotions after the shooting.

In one chamber of my heart, there is profound sorrow — for those who were killed, their loved ones, the Jewish community of Sydney, Australia itself, the Jewish people and this broken world.

In another chamber, there is profound anger at those who minimize the meaning of the phrase “globalize the intifada.” “Intifada” comes from the Arabic root “nafad,” meaning “to shake off.”

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Trump attacks on political opponents spur a surge of threats, NBC News review finds

President Donald Trump’s heated rhetoric against his perceived political enemies has resulted in a blizzard of threats against at least 22 officials on both sides of the aisle in recent weeks, according to an NBC News tally.

Among those who’ve been targeted with threats after being mentioned in social media posts by the president are numerous Democrats, including Sens. Chuck Schumer of New York and Elissa Slotkin of Michigan — but even more Republicans, including Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia and over a dozen Indiana state lawmakers.

Three of the members of Congress that Trump accused of sedition, meanwhile, have filed complaints against him with the U.S. Capitol Police. The Capitol Police declined to comment on the complaints, saying in a statement, “For safety reasons, we cannot discuss any potential investigations.”

The threats come amid an ugly spike in political violence, including the November shooting of two National Guard members in Washington, D.C. One, Sarah Beckstrom, died.



Sen. Elissa Slotkin, D-Mich., and Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, R-Ga. Tom Williams / Getty Images

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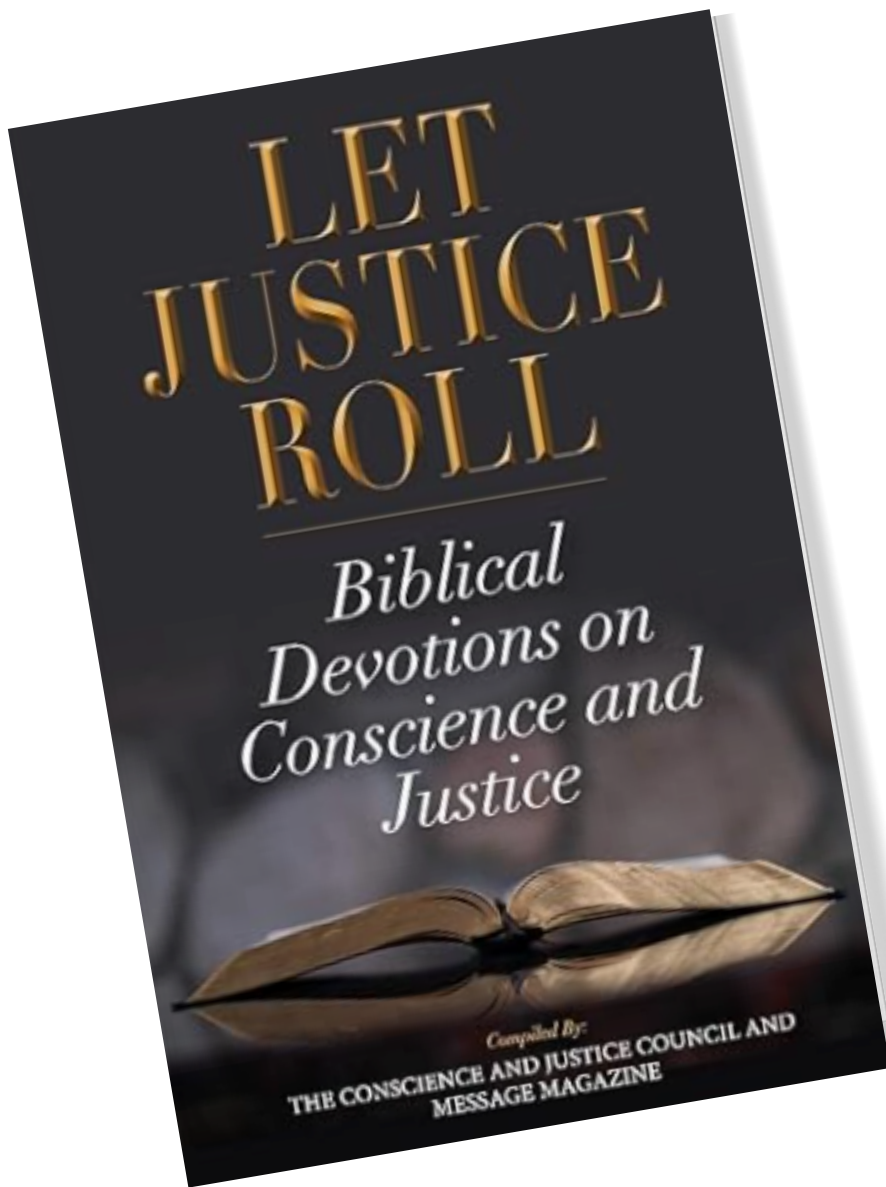
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Let Justice Roll: Biblical Devotions on Conscience and Justice

"Let Justice Roll" is a compelling devotional that walks the reader through 365 days of biblical insights in freedom of conscience, and social justice. This compilation of articles represents the work of a nationwide network of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) advocates and other connected community activists.

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OUR PURPOSE

This newsletter aims to highlight news articles relating to religious liberty, civil rights, and social justice. The Conscience & Justice Council desires to be attuned with society so that we may change the nation by impacting one community at a time. Articles linked above are meant to provoke thought and discussion on important topics, and do not always express options or views endorsed by the CJC.

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