

THIS WEEK IN CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE

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Friday, April 04, 2025



Top News

- Can MAGA, MAHA and Adventists make America healthy again?
- USCIRF report highlights little progress in religious liberty struggles globally
- The hidden religious divide erupting into politics
- Supreme Court seems ready to let religious groups opt out of unemployment compensation laws

Can MAGA, MAHA and Adventists make America healthy again?

Long before Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was on the scene – much less overseeing health and human services for the United States – Seventh-day Adventists were trying to make Americans healthy again, promoting a plant-based diet and exercise as keys to physical and spiritual wellness.

“Let the diet reform be progressive,” wrote Ellen G. White, a 19th-century Adventist leader, in “Testimonies for the Church.” ... Tell them that the time will soon come when there will be no safety in using eggs, milk, cream, or butter, because disease in animals is increasing in proportion to the increase of wickedness among men. ... God will give His people ability and tact to prepare wholesome food without these things.”

Now a group of Adventists hopes to take advantage of the rise of Kennedy’s “Make America Healthy Again” movement to show how the Bible can solve America’s health problems. “We believe we have a voice,” said Brian Beavers, an Adventist teacher and pastor. “And we can contribute to making America healthy.”

religionnews.com



Promotional material for the "Will You Be Made Whole?" conference. (Screen grab)

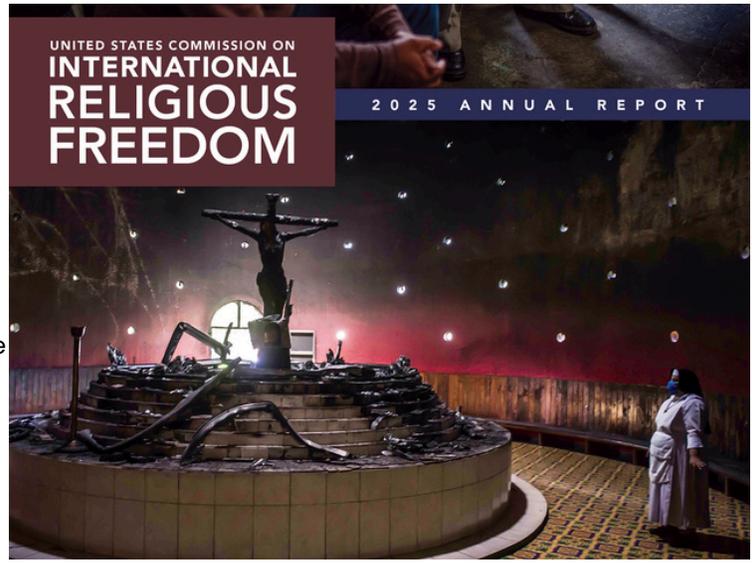
USCIRF report highlights little progress in religious liberty struggles globally

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom has issued its annual list of countries it considers to be the most egregious violators of religious liberty and urged the new Trump administration to appoint a new ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom.

The commission's 2025 report, released on Tuesday (March 25), included a list of countries nearly identical to its 2024 list — a reflection, according to the report, that in most of those countries, things have not improved but often have worsened.

"The administration of President Donald J. Trump faces a complex international environment in which to build on its previous success of centering religious freedom as a cornerstone of foreign policy and global leadership," reads the report. "Confirming this commitment to advancing freedom of religion or belief will require calibration and joint action with like-minded governments."

religionnews.com



The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom 2025 Annual Report cover. (Courtesy image)

The hidden religious divide erupting into politics

Less than a week after becoming vice president, JD Vance, only the second Catholic to hold the office, had a very public break with the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church in America. Without evidence, the second-in-command accused the US Conference of Catholic Bishops of settling "illegal immigrants" in order to access federal funds. Though largely used as fodder for internet "gotchas," the scuffle pointed to a wider trend — one that could remake the country's religious landscape and the fundamental way Americans think about how they believe and where they belong.

Vance is not just a Catholic. He's a very specific type of Catholic, part of a group of young white men who, over the past decade, have found their way (often online) into both increasingly conservative politics and traditional religion — primarily Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, rather than the Protestantism that has been a common cultural feature in America. (For the uninitiated, Eastern Orthodoxy, sometimes called "Greek Orthodox" or "Russian Orthodoxy," is essentially the Eastern equivalent of the Catholic Church, though significant differences have arisen).

One recent study from the Orthodox Studies Institute suggests that conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy has increased 24 percent since 2021. These recent converts tend to be under 40 and single, and the majority are men. There is not a similarly comprehensive study of Catholic conversions, but dioceses are reporting increases in the number of converts anywhere between 30 percent to 70 percent since 2020.

apple.news



Supreme Court seems ready to let religious groups opt out of unemployment compensation laws

The U.S. Supreme Court appeared openly doubtful on Monday about Wisconsin's refusal to exempt Catholic Charities from making payments into the state's mandatory unemployment system.

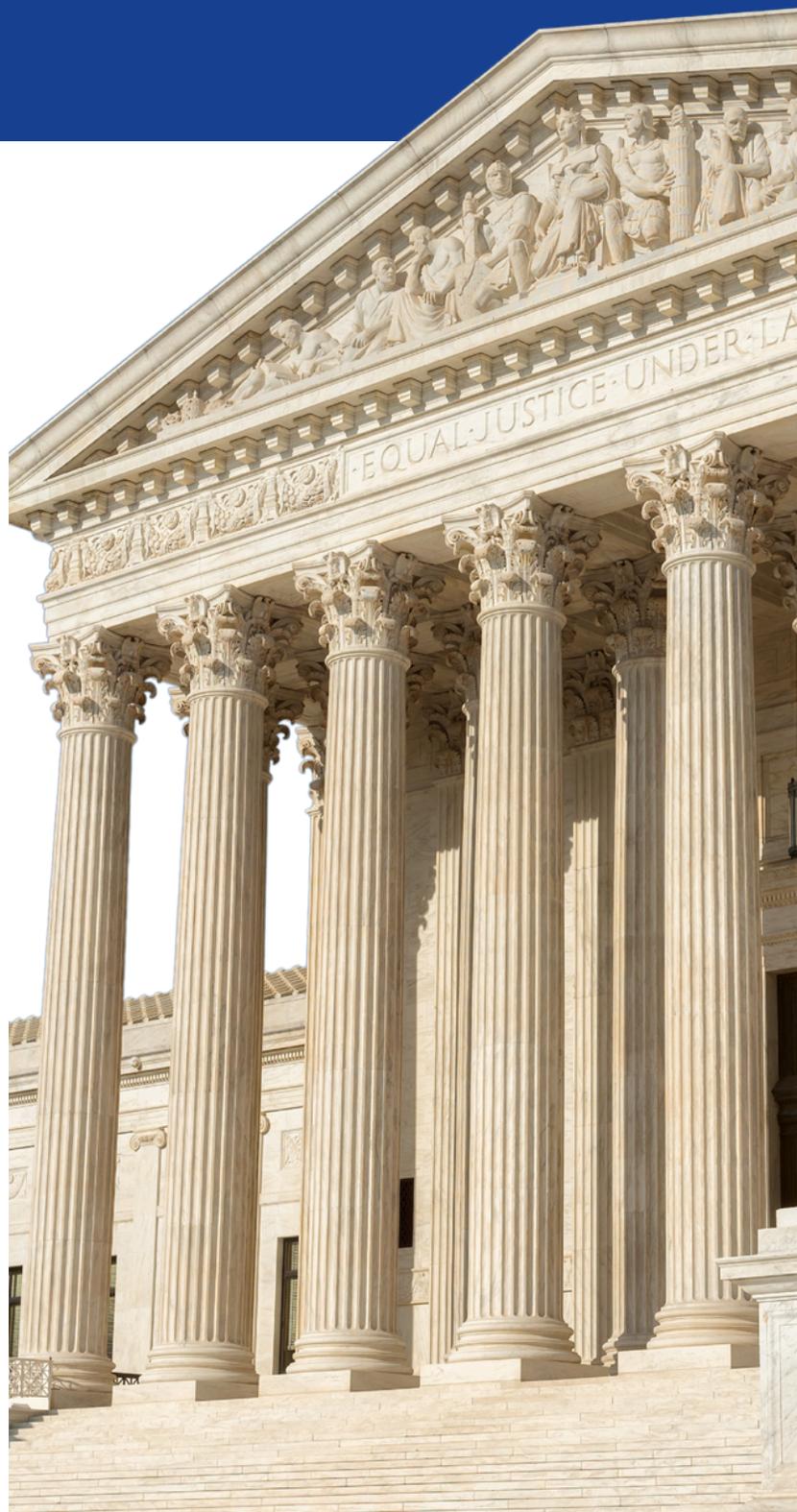
Monday's case was brought by a single chapter of Catholic Charities in northern Wisconsin, which claims that it should be able to opt out of the mandatory state unemployment compensation system and instead join an alternative church system, which is cheaper.

The state, however, refused to grant Catholic Charities a religious exemption from paying into the state system. The state said that Catholic Charities functions the same way as other non-profits, including Catholic hospitals, and is required to participate in the state unemployment tax system, as it has done for decades.

Catholic Charities counters that its mission is to carry out the gospel of the church to help people, and that it is thus entitled to a religious exemption from the mandatory state tax system. If it wins this case, the decision could—potentially at least—lead to a major exodus from the state system in Wisconsin and from similar state programs in 46 other states. And that, in turn, could destabilize the joint federal-state unemployment compensation program that has existed for decades.

Monday morning's argument started out with some hard questions for Catholic Charities. Justice Elena Kagan asked, "Are you saying ... that a group that comes in and says, 'We are a religious group doing religious activities for religious purposes,' qualifies no matter what? That there's no looking behind that at all?"

[npr.org](https://www.npr.org)



Supreme Court

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25-28 SEPT.

CJC 2025 ANNUAL CONVENTION

OVERCOMING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION

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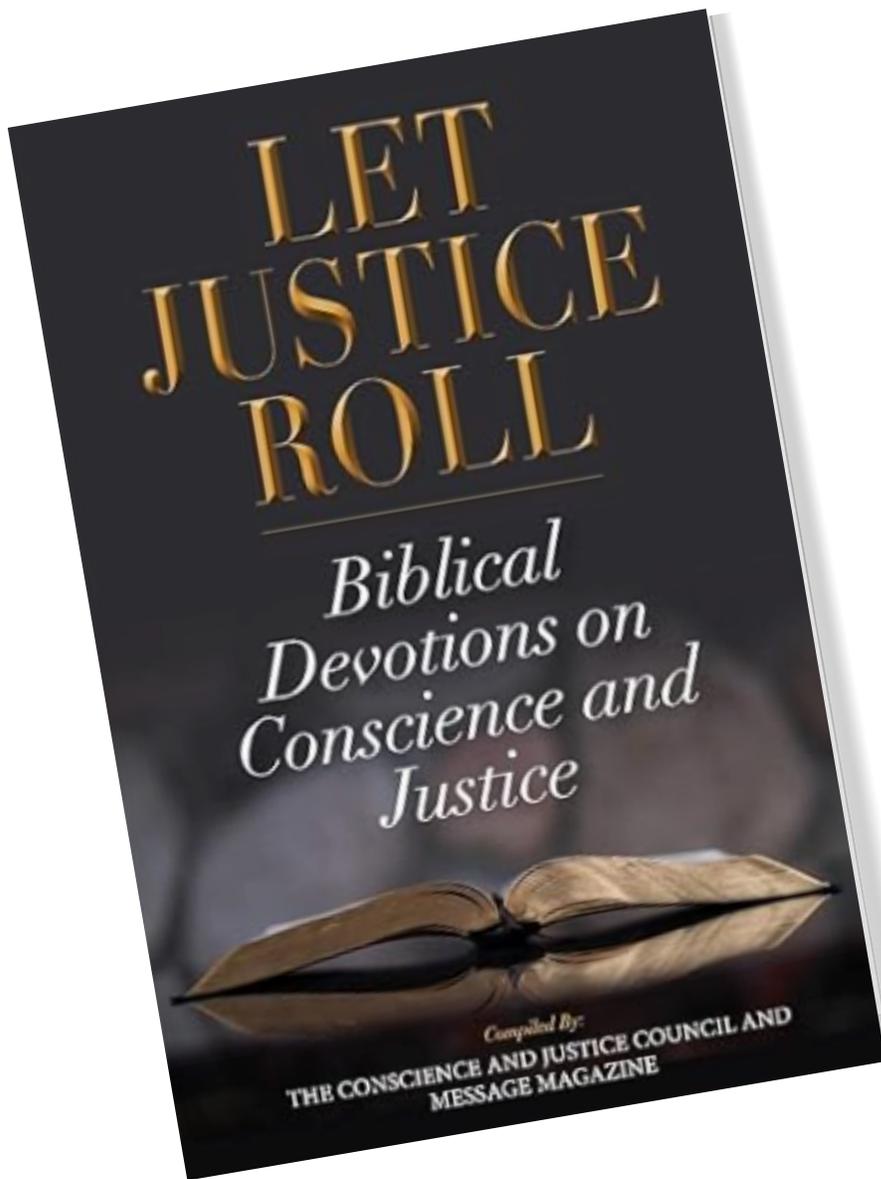


<https://register.adventsourceevents.org/2025CJCConvention>

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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.

The components of conscience and justice ministry include conscience, discipleship, engagement, fellowship, the power of the Holy Spirit, love, and prophecy. This is a must-read book for all followers of Christ and those who seek spiritual growth. Get ready to explore the profound biblical insights in this masterful book.

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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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