

# THIS WEEK IN CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE

[WWW.CJCOUNCIL.ORG](http://WWW.CJCOUNCIL.ORG)



Friday, May 9, 2025



## Pope Leo XIV calls Church 'a beacon to illuminate dark nights' in first mass

The new Pope, Leo XIV, has called for the Catholic Church to "desperately" counter a lack of faith in his first mass at the Vatican.

Speaking the day after he was elected as the 267th Pope and first US leader of the Church, he warned that people were turning away from faith and instead to "technology, money, success, power, or pleasure".

Leo said he had been elected to be a "faithful administrator" of a Church that would act as a "beacon that illuminates the dark nights of this world".

The ascension of Robert Francis Prevost has been celebrated by the world's 1.4 billion Catholics, with joyous outbursts in his US homeland and in Peru, where he served for 20 years.

In his sermon on Friday, the new Pope said there were many settings where the Christian faith was considered "absurd" - with power, wealth, and technology dominating - but it was precisely there that missionary outreach was needed.

See more: [bbc.com](http://bbc.com)

## Top News

- Pope Leo XIV calls Church 'a beacon to illuminate dark nights' in first mass
- Trump signs executive order creating Religious Liberty Commission
- To put pressure on Trump, Democrats turn to religion – and religious activists
- Federal court rules Rūmeysa Öztürk must be transferred to detention in Vermont
- The story behind Asian Pacific American Heritage, and why it's celebrated in May



Formerly Cardinal Robert F. Prevost and newly appointed Pope Leo XIV

# Trump signs executive order creating Religious Liberty Commission

Surrounded by faith leaders singing praise songs like “Amazing Grace” and “Great Are You Lord,” President Donald Trump presided over a National Day of Prayer ceremony at the White House on Thursday (May 1), which culminated with the president signing an executive order establishing a new national Religious Liberty Commission.

Led by Chairman Dan Patrick, the Republican lieutenant governor of Texas, and Vice Chair Ben Carson, a popular author, surgeon and former Trump administration official, the 13-member commission is charged with creating a report on the “foundations of religious liberty in America” and the impact of religious liberty on American culture. It is also intended to detail “current threats to domestic religious liberty” and create programs to celebrate religious pluralism.

Among the commission’s members are Trump allies, including White House faith adviser Paula White, talk show host and author Eric Metaxas and evangelist Franklin Graham, head of Samaritan’s Purse, along with other faith leaders like Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, Minnesota Bishop Robert Barron of the popular Word on Fire media ministry, Rabbi Meir Soloveichik of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York and talk show host Phil McGraw.

See more: [religionnews.com](https://religionnews.com)



President Donald Trump and other religious leaders listen to a musical performance before Trump signs an executive order during a National Day of Prayer event in the Rose Garden of the White House, Thursday, May 1, 2025, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)

## To put pressure on Trump, Democrats turn to religion — and religious activists

As the sun rose over the U.S. Capitol on the last Sunday in April, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, wearing a gold cross necklace, sat next to Sen. Cory Booker on the building’s stone steps. The two looked around quietly for a moment, awaiting confirmation that the livestream of their “sit-in” — a daylong effort designed to push back against the Republican-led budget proposal and actions by President Donald Trump’s administration — had begun.

After someone off-camera informed them the broadcast was live, both men immediately bowed their heads in prayer.

“Father God, we humble ourselves before you and before all who may watch today,” said Booker, the New Jersey Democrat who attends a Baptist church in Newark. After asking the Almighty for strength, he prayed that his words might “be of service at this crisis moment in American history.”

It was a preview of the next 12 hours, as the two prominent Democratic lawmakers and a slew of guests outlined a decidedly faith-forward argument against Republican leaders and the Trump administration. The pair discussed their own religious backgrounds, referred to liberation theology, read from the Bible and lauded what Booker called the transformative power of “faith traditions” — a phrase that came up no fewer than 45 times during the broadcast.



The U.S. Supreme Court

See more: [religionnews.com](https://religionnews.com)



# Federal court rules Rümeysa Öztürk must be transferred to detention in Vermont



People take part in a rally and a protest in solidarity with Rümeysa Öztürk and Mohsen Mahdawi outside New York Federal Court as the court hears the U.S. government request to appeal the decisions in their cases in New York, United States on May 06, 2025. Mostafa Bassim/Anadolu via Getty Images

A federal appeals court in New York Wednesday ordered the Trump administration to transfer Rümeysa Öztürk, a Tufts University doctoral student, from Louisiana to Vermont to continue her immigration detention in that state while a judge there decides whether to release her on bail.

The Trump administration has one week to comply with the transfer, a three-judge panel of the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled.

"The District of Vermont is likely the proper venue to adjudicate Öztürk's habeas petition because, at the time she filed, she was physically in Vermont," the panel wrote in its ruling.

Öztürk has been detained at a federal facility in Louisiana after being arrested on the street in Somerville, Massachusetts on March 25 by six federal plainclothes immigration agents. The Department of Homeland Security later accused her of engaging "in activities in support of Hamas."

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

## The story behind Asian Pacific American Heritage, and why it's celebrated in May

May marks Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, which celebrates the histories of Americans hailing from across the Asian continent and from the Pacific islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

This year's theme, selected by the Federal Asian Pacific American Council, is "Advancing Leaders Through Opportunity," which builds on a leadership advancement theme series that began in 2021.

Cynthia Choi, co-executive director of Chinese for Affirmative Action and co-founder of Stop AAPI Hate says the month is a time to speak out, share stories and debunk myths about Asian communities, she said. But it's not the only time to celebrate Asian culture or diversity.

"Our history is also filled with incredible stories of resilience, of persistence, of determination, to fight for our basic rights," Choi told NPR. "This is a celebration of our history, of our culture ... and all the different ways in which our community has really demonstrated that we're not only here to stay, we are a part of this fabric — a part of this country."

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



Students walk past a display for Asian Pacific American Heritage Month at Farmington High School in Farmington, Conn., on May 10, 2021. Jessica Hill/AP

# OUR TEAM



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Conscience & Justice Council  
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Vice Chairman,  
Conscience & Justice Council  
PARL Director, Allegheny West



**Cryston Josiah**  
Secretary,  
Conscience & Justice Council  
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**Amireh Al-Haddad**  
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**Mark Brown**  
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Southeastern Conference



**Jack Doggett**  
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**Dee Edwards**  
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**Everton Ennis**  
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**Paul Goodridge**  
PARL Director,  
South Central



**Olivia Hemmings**  
Chair, Henry & Sharon Fordham  
Department of Religion,  
Washington Adventist University



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PARL Director,  
North American Division



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At-Large



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Regional PARL Representative,  
Pacific Union



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Oakwood University



**Derek Lane**  
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Theological Seminary



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**Melissa Reid**  
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North American  
Religious Liberty Association



**Andre Michael Wang**  
PARL Director  
North Pacific Union



**DON'T  
MISS  
OUT!**

**SAVE THE DATE**



[WWW.CJCOUNCIL.ORG](http://WWW.CJCOUNCIL.ORG)

**25-28 SEPT.**

# **CJC2025**

## **ANNUAL CONVENTION**

### **OVERCOMING SYSTEMS OF OPPRESSION**

**EMBASSY SUITES**  
800 Monroe Street, SW  
Huntsville, AL 35801



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

**REGISTER HERE**



[cjcouncil.org](http://cjcouncil.org)

**NEXT FRIDAY!!!**



**100 DAYS LATER:**  
**ANALYZING CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE**

**KEITH BURTON**  
GRADUATE FACULTY OF RELIGION  
ADVENTHEALTH UNIVERSITY

**PRESTON FOSTER**  
PROFESSOR  
HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE  
OAKWOOD UNIVERSITY

**OLIVE HEMMINGS**  
PROFESSOR  
THEOLOGY, ETHICS, AND CULTURE  
WASHINGTON ADVENTIST UNIVERSITY

**COURTNEY RAY**  
CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST  
ARRAY PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSESSMENTS

**HOSTS**

**PASTOR CRYSTON JOSIAH**  
PARL DIRECTOR  
CENTRAL STATES CONFERENCE  
CJC SECRETARY

**EDWARD WOODS III**  
PARL DIRECTOR  
LAKE REGION CONFERENCE  
CJC CHAIRMAN

**FRIDAY MAY. 16** | **8:00 PM EDT**  
**7:00 PM CDT**

**LIVE STREAM**  
YOUTUBE FACEBOOK  
@CONSCIENCEANDJUSTICECOUNCIL

**TUNE IN TO  
PANEL  
DISCUSSION!**



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BEST PRACTICES EXPO

# CALLING ALL PASTORS WITH A HEART FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT!

SEPTEMBER 28, 2025  
HUNTSVILLE, AL

*Present your innovative ministry  
initiatives and **WIN** a \$10,000  
mentoring scholarship!*

## WHO SHOULD APPLY?

- Pastors active in community outreach
- Ministries with innovative local programs

## THE FORMAT

- 7-minute presentation
- Q&A with judges

## JUDGING CRITERIA

- Mission alignment
- Impact
- Innovation
- Sustainability



***Apply Here:***

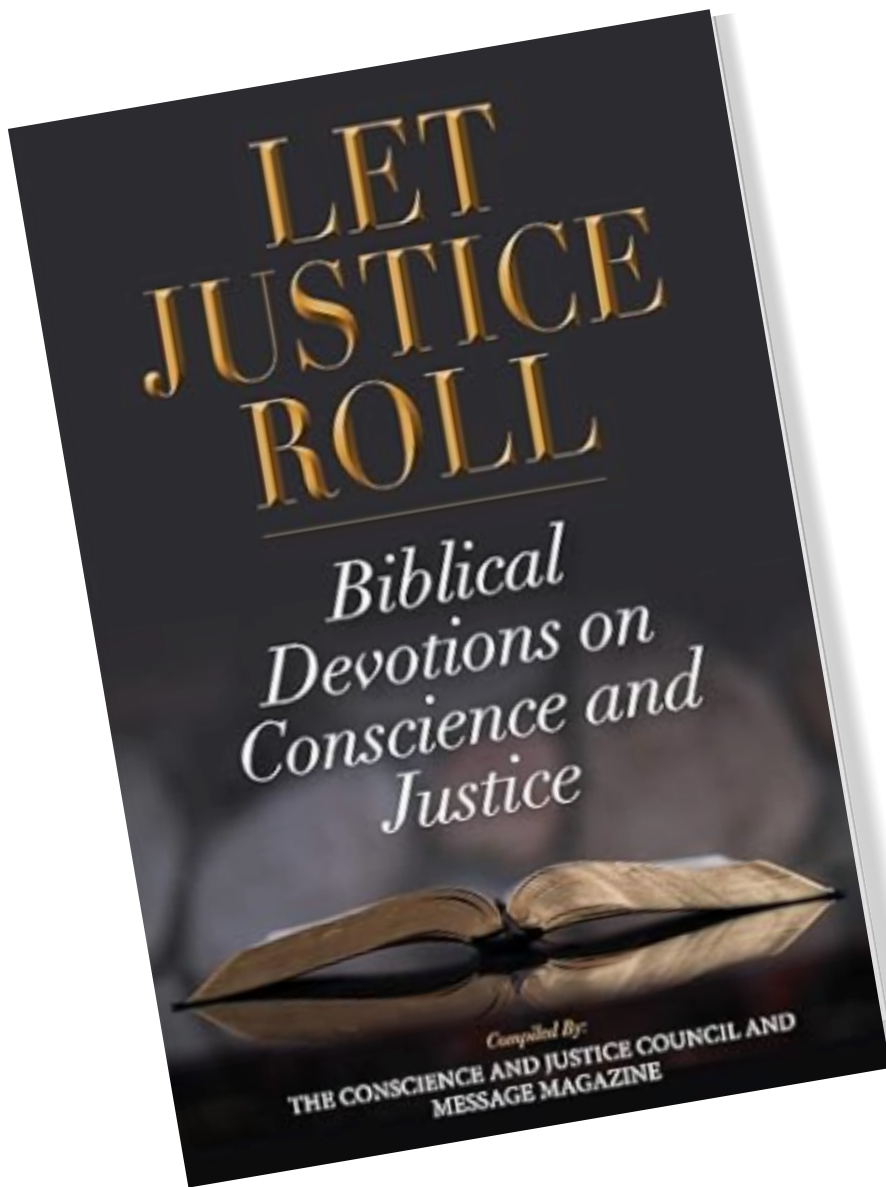
[communitychange@andrews.edu](mailto:communitychange@andrews.edu)  
or [www.communitychange.world](http://www.communitychange.world)

## KEY DATES

**Apply By:** August 1st, 2025

**Submit By:** August 31st, 2025

**Expo:** September 28th, 2025



## 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.

Order your copy [HERE](#)



## 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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