

THIS WEEK IN CONSCIENCE & JUSTICE

WWW.CJCOUNCIL.ORG



Friday, August 22, 2025



Federal judge approves partial settlement for lost AME Church retirement funds

A district court judge granted final approval Monday (Aug. 18) to a partial settlement for clergy and staffers of the African Methodist Episcopal Church after a substantial percentage of funds from their retirement plan were discovered to be missing.

The historically Black denomination has been accused of mishandling the retirement funds, leaving many plan participants with about 30% of what they had hoped to use for retirement. The denomination accused its former retirement department head of embezzlement after discovering in 2021 that he provided “deceptive, false and grossly inflated financial statements” about the retirement plan.

Judge S. Thomas Anderson of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Tennessee approved the partial settlements for the plaintiffs – totaling some 4,500 people whose single case was previously consolidated from six – with the denomination and Newport Group Inc., a third-party administrator involved with the church’s retirement services. He said if the case was not settled, the plan participants could “face the risk of rulings adverse to their cause.”

Top News

- **Federal judge approves partial settlement for lost AME Church retirement funds**
- **Pastors Can Endorse Candidates. Should They?**
- **U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population Reached a Record 14 Million in 2023**
- **Many in middle-income countries are uncomfortable with hypothetically having a child who comes out as gay**
- **How Americans View Journalists in the Digital Age**



Continue Reading: religionnews.com

The closing worship service of the African Methodist Episcopal Church quadrennial General Conference on Aug. 28, 2024, in Columbus, Ohio. (Video screen grab)

Pastors Can Endorse Candidates. Should They?

As discussed in the May 2024 “Ask the Lawyer”, the Johnson Amendment is part of the US tax code that prohibits tax-exempt charitable organizations, including churches, from participating or intervening in political campaigns either on behalf of or in opposition to political candidates. Though rarely enforced, organizations that violate this restriction could end up losing their tax-exempt status. This restriction doesn’t apply to other types of organizations that qualify for tax-exempt status under different sections of the Internal Revenue Code, such as 501c4 or 501c6 organizations.

The rationale for restricting these types of political activities for 501c3 organizations is that in addition to being tax exempt, these organizations also allow their donors to make tax deductible contributions, which aren’t allowed for other types of 501c organizations. Because of this, the government has found that there is a compelling interest, for 501c3 organizations in particular, not to engage in partisan political activity as it is out of line with the mission of charitable organizations.

Continue Reading: lakeunionherald.org



U.S. Unauthorized Immigrant Population Reached a Record 14 Million in 2023

In the years after the COVID-19 pandemic, U.S. immigration policy changes fueled a sharp rise in both legal and illegal immigration. [Lawful admissions](#) jumped, as did encounters at the [U.S.-Mexico border](#) between migrants and U.S. authorities.

The number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States reached an all-time high of 14 million in 2023 after two consecutive years of record growth, according to a new Pew Research Center estimate. The increase of 3.5 million in two years is the biggest on record. Data from 2023 is the most recent available for developing a comprehensive and detailed estimate.

The label “[unauthorized immigrants](#)” captures a complex array of statuses, including immigrants who entered the U.S. legally. While the label is not perfect, it groups together immigrants living in the country with impermanent, precarious statuses. The term has been used for decades by researchers who develop estimates of the population and is generally used in this report.

The increase from 2021 to 2023 was driven primarily by growth in the number of unauthorized immigrants who were living in the U.S. with some protections from deportation, such as immigrants paroled into the country and asylum seekers. About 6 million immigrants without full legal status had some protection from deportation in 2023, up from 2.7 million in 2021. In 2007, when the total unauthorized immigrant population was at its previous high (12.2 million), about 500,000 had some protection from deportation.

Continue Reading pewresearch.org



Many in middle-income countries are uncomfortable with hypothetically having a child who comes out as gay

In early 2025, Thailand became one of a few middle-income countries to legally recognize same-sex marriage.

To better understand one dimension of attitudes toward homosexuality in places like Thailand, Pew Research Center asked people in 15 middle-income countries how they would feel in a hypothetical scenario where they had a child who came out as gay or lesbian. The survey was conducted Jan. 5-May 22, 2024, among more than 18,000 adults. We asked all adults about this scenario, regardless of whether they have children.

On balance, people in middle-income countries are more likely to say they would be uncomfortable than comfortable if they had a child who came out as gay or lesbian; however, sizable shares say they would be neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

Argentina is the only country we surveyed where people are more comfortable than uncomfortable if their child were to come out as gay or lesbian. Four-in-ten Argentines say they would feel comfortable in this hypothetical scenario, and 32% say the opposite.

In some countries people's answers varied by age, education and religious identity. And views are related to how important religion is in their lives.

We did not ask people why they would be comfortable or uncomfortable with having a gay or lesbian child, so their responses are not necessarily a measure of acceptance or unacceptance of homosexuality. People could be comfortable or uncomfortable with their child coming out for other reasons, such as concerns about their safety.

Attitudes toward having a gay child in middle-income countries

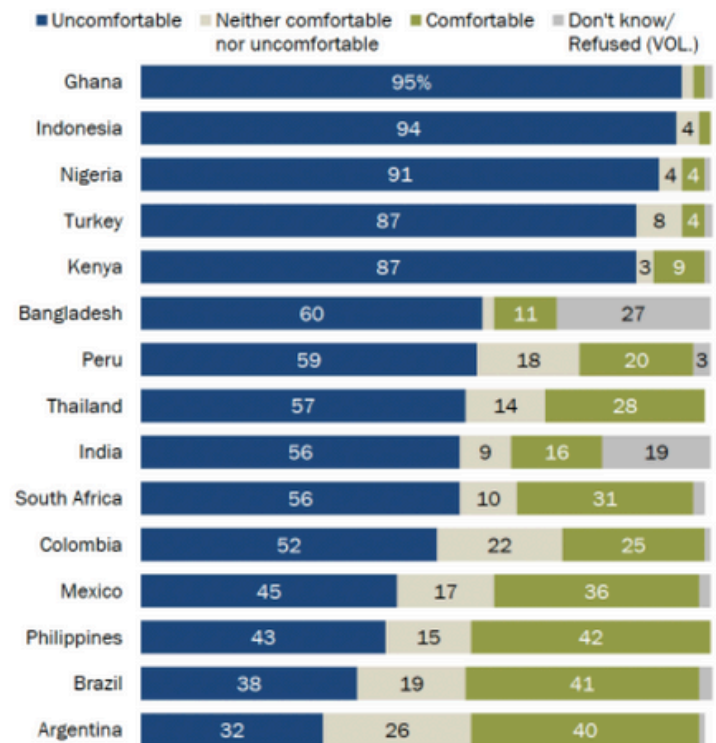
About nine-in-ten or more people in Ghana, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria and Turkey say they would feel uncomfortable if they had a child that came out as gay or lesbian. In six additional countries, at least half share this view.

But elsewhere, people are more comfortable with this possible scenario – particularly in the Latin American countries we surveyed. About equal shares of Brazilians say they would be uncomfortable (38%) or comfortable (41%) with a child who is gay or lesbian. Another 19% say they would be neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.



Many people in middle-income countries say they'd be uncomfortable if they had a son or daughter who came out as gay

% who say they would feel ___ if their child came out as gay or lesbian



Note: We asked this question of both parents and nonparents as a hypothetical scenario.
Source: Spring 2024 Global Attitudes Survey.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Continue Reading: pewresearch.org

North Dakota Democratic Rep. Collette Brown is seen on May 1, 2025, during a bill signing in Memorial Hall of the state Capitol in Bismarck, N.D. (AP Photo/Jack Dura, File)

How Americans View Journalists in the Digital Age

As Americans navigate an often-overwhelming stream of news online – some of it coming from nontraditional news providers – what it means to be a journalist has become increasingly open to interpretation.

That is apparent in several ways in a new Pew Research Center study. Who Americans see as a “journalist” depends on both the individual news provider and the news consumer, similar to the variety of ways people define “news.”

There is a lack of consensus – and perhaps some uncertainty – about whether someone who primarily compiles other people’s reporting or offers opinions on current events is a journalist, according to a new Center survey. Americans are also split over whether people who share news in “new media” spaces like newsletters, podcasts and social media are journalists.

Continue Reading: [pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org)



Hundreds of Catholic sisters walk Atlanta streets to pray for social, environmental justice

As the sun rose Thursday morning (Aug. 14), hundreds of Catholic sisters walked through downtown Atlanta as part of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious’ “Outdoor Pilgrimage of Hope.” From 7 to 8 a.m., approximately 470 participants prayed in unison along a 1.2-mile route, guided by readings, music and periods of contemplative silence.

The walkers paused at three locations, each dedicated to one of the key issues they prayed to heal – forced migration, climate change and racism.

Another 75 people joined virtually on Facebook Live from the assembly hall of the Hyatt Regency Atlanta, where the four-day conference of the association of leaders of American Catholic women’s congregations is being held this year.

With an Atlanta Police Department escort, as pilgrims paused the three times, their prayers echoed LCWR’s resolution and commitment to live out the challenges of the late Pope Francis’ “Laudato si’” environmental justice encyclical.

“This is an initiative that is happening throughout the United States as a means of welcoming a variety of people to engage in this year of Jubilee,” said Bridget Bearss, co-chair of the pilgrimage and LCWR’s associate director for transformative justice. “We are committed to deeply investing ourselves in being pilgrims on the journey on behalf of ‘Laudato si’,” the themes of ‘Laudato si’.”

Continue Reading [religionnews.com](https://www.religionnews.com)



OUR TEAM



Edward Woods III

Chairman,
Conscience & Justice Council
PARL Director, Lake Region



Jerome Hurst

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



Cryston Josiah

Secretary,
Conscience & Justice Council
PARL Director, Central States



Tony Anobile

Vice President
Church Ministries



Amireh Al-Haddad

PARL Director
Southern Union



Mark Brown

PARL Director,
Southeastern Conference



Jack Doggett

PARL Director,
Allegheny East



Dee Edwards

Pastor,
South England Conference



Everton Ennis

PARL Director,
South Atlantic



Paul Goodridge

PARL Director,
South Central



Olivia Hemmings

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



Orlan Johnson

PARL Director,
North American Division



Kerwin Jones

PARL Representative,
At-Large



Andrea Trusty-King

Regional PARL Representative,
Pacific Union



Bettina Kruse

Editor,
Liberty Magazine



Ifeoma Kwesi

Professor, School of Theology,
Oakwood University



Derek Lane

Regional PARL Representative,
North Pacific Union



Allen Martin

PARL Director,
Northeastern



Nicholas Miller

Professor of Church History,
Seventh-day Adventist
Theological Seminary



Jason C. North, Sr.

PARL Director,
Southwest Region



Zdravko Plantak

Professor of Religion and Ethical Studies,
Loma Linda University



Melissa Reid

Executive Director,
North American
Religious Liberty Association



Andre Michael Wang

PARL Director
North Pacific Union

**DON'T
MISS
OUT!**

25-28 SEPTEMBER



CJC2025

ANNUAL CONVENTION

OVERCOMING OPPRESSION

Biblically Dismantling Abuses of Power

SPEAKERS



AMIREH
AL-HADDAD



KENNY
ANDERSON



GINA SPIVEY
BROWN



DILYS
BROOKS



RYAN
BURGE



BISHOP MELVIN
BURTON



MICHAEL W.
CAMPBELL



MARCUS
COSBY



LISA CLARK
DILLER



MYRON
EDMONDS



PRESTON
FOSTER



TREVOR H
FRASER



OBERY
HENDRICKS



SHARRON
HENLEY



DOROTHY
HUSTON



MARQUIS D.
JOHNS



ORLAN
JOHNSON



ERICA
KEITH



ANDREA
KING



MARILYN
KING-JORDAN



BETTINA
KRAUSE



TAWNYA PLUMMER
LAUGHINGHOUSE



WILLIAM J.
LEE



ROMAN
PALOMARES



DAVID
PERSON



MELISSA
REID



DEBLEAIRE
SNELL



ANDREA
STEWARTSON



JOHN C.
YANG



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

REGISTER HERE



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



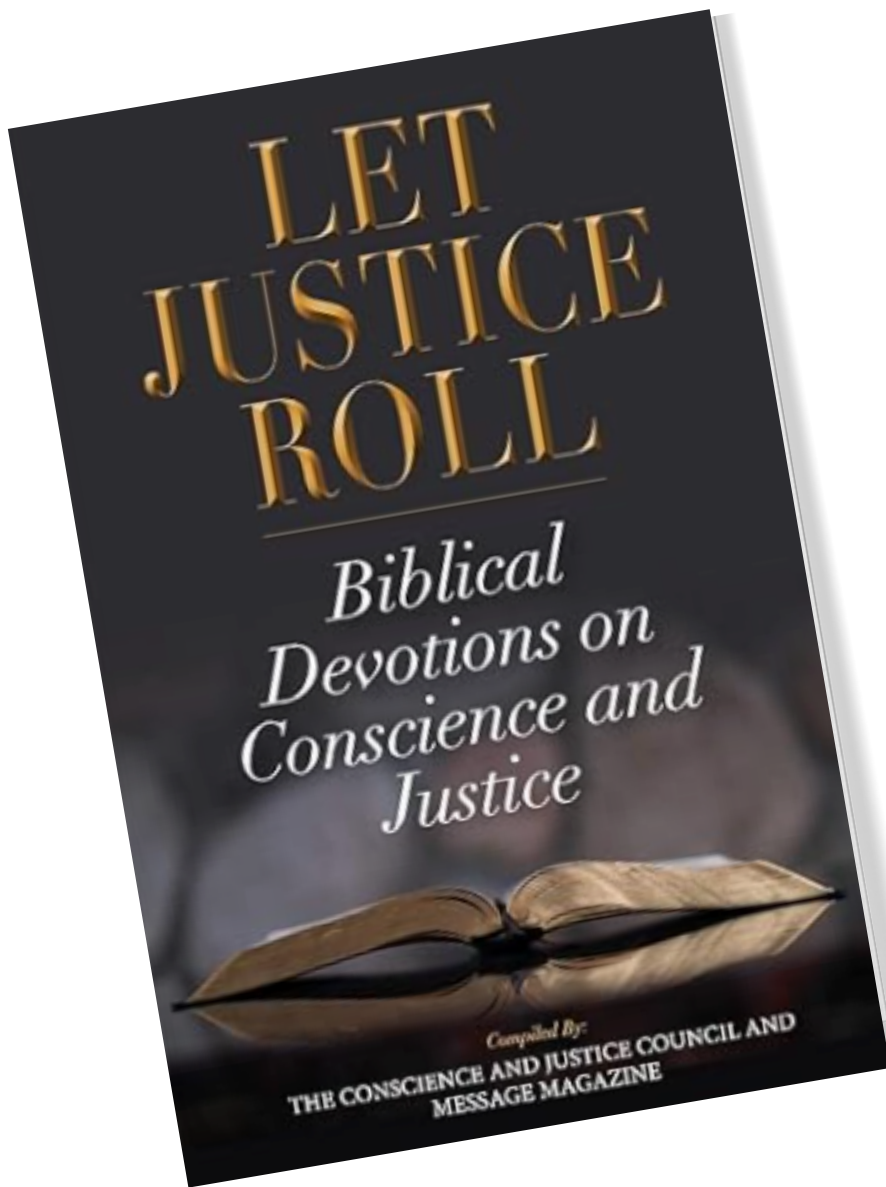
NOTE:

**Must be registered for the
Conscience & Justice Council
Convention**

KEY DATES

Submit By: September 14, 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.

LIKE » FOLLOW » SHARE

