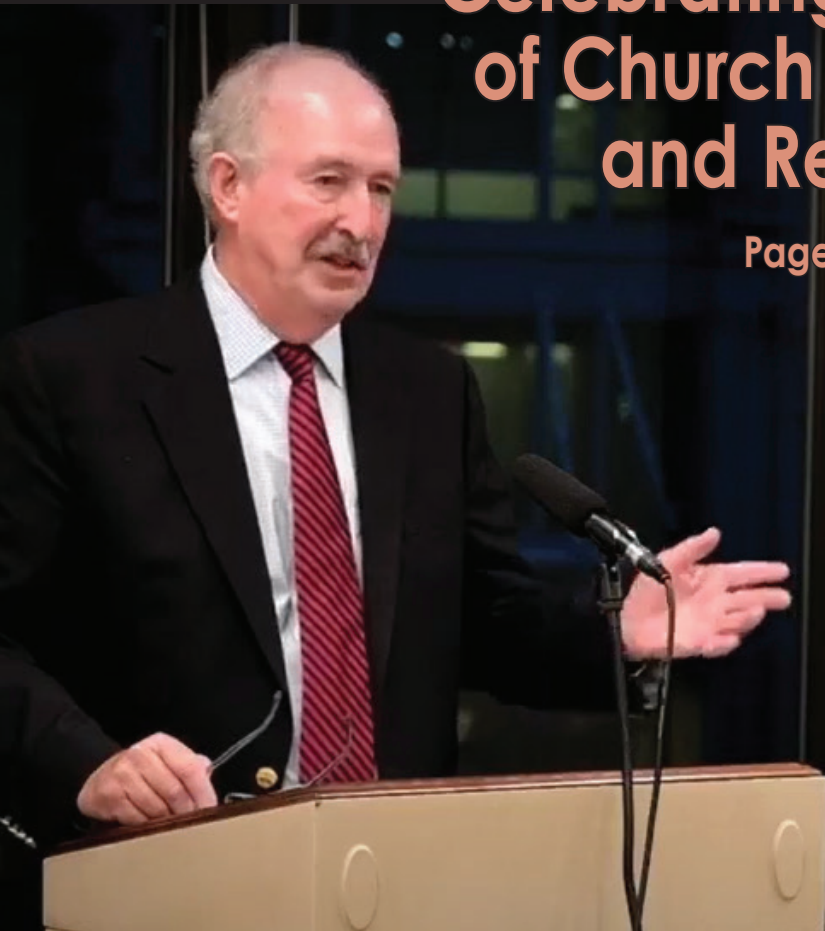




Celebrating 40 Years of Church Renewal and Reform

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Dean Curry speaking to the 11th annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture on the 40th anniversary of the Institute of Religion & Democracy's founding. The text of his address begins on page 8. (Photo: Mark Tooley / IRD)

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Cover: Dr. Dean Curry served as a longtime board member and eventual Board Chair of the Institute on Religion & Democracy. Here he speaks to the 11th Annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture on the 40th anniversary of the IRD's founding. (Photo: George Goss / IRD).

Christianity Sí, Denominations Non

This past summer there was lots of conversation about **Russell Moore** quitting not only as head of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) public policy agency but the convention itself, joining a nondenominational church associated with the Acts 29 “network.” This Calvinist network baptizes babies, a taboo for Baptists! Moore is a lifelong Southern Baptist.

Public response has focused on Moore’s estrangement from some in the SBC’s rightwing. But perhaps more indicative of our times is his leaving a denomination to which he’s belonged for a lifetime, in which he served in senior leadership, including at its flagship seminary, and became its most prominent national spokesman.

Another prominent Southern Baptist, **Owen Strachan**, recently announced his move from Midwestern [Southern] Baptist Theological Seminary to a nondenominational Bible seminary. Several black Southern Baptist clergy and their congregations recently have quit the SBC, including prominent writer and preacher **Thabiti Anyabwile** of Washington, D.C.’s Anacostia River Church, which was planted by a prominent mostly white Southern Baptist congregation.

Strachan came from the convention’s conservative side. Departing black pastors have complained they no longer feel welcome amid the convention’s polarization.

The SBC, America’s second largest denomination after Roman Catholicism, has been declining in membership for nearly 20 years. It is now losing members at a faster rate than the much more liberal United Methodist Church, which has been declining continuously in the U.S. for nearly 60 years, and which is on the verge of formal schism.

Most of America’s historic denominations, including all of its liberal ones and many conservative ones, are declining. Nondenominational Christianity seems to continue to grow. The age of large denominational agencies, publishing houses, and national leaders who speak to the nation seems to be ending.

The retreat of the great denominations is not per se a retreat for Christianity in America. Overall professed church membership is declining but active regular church attendance not as much. Many nondenominational churches don’t stress formal membership. There are also millions of American Christians who don’t regularly attend formal worship yet practice their spirituality individually, online, or sometimes through small devotional groups.

Yet the decline of great denominations is a tremendous loss for American Christianity with national social, cultural, and political ramifications. The denominations underpinned much

of America’s civil society and informed much of its public discourse. Leaders in their local churches were typically community leaders interwoven with local government, industry, and schools. National leaders of these denominations were until relatively recently also national public voices. Denominations offered national networks including millions of people that compelled a more universal and less parochial outlook.

Now Methodist and Episcopal bishops, once prominently quoted in major newspapers on public topics, are largely ignored. Russell Moore may be the last head of the SBC’s public affairs

agency to routinely appear in national media. SBC presidents, who are elected annually, have sometimes been national figures. **Albert Mohler**, president of what may be America’s largest seminary, might become the SBC’s new president later this month. He already is and will remain a national voice. But will his successors be?

The SBC and United Methodist publishing houses were once among the largest in America, and they directly influenced millions. But with their denominations’ decline, and with Christians no longer very loyal to denominational

traditions and seeking their devotional material outside denominational channels, these publishing houses don’t have very bright futures. The future is especially dire for the United Methodist publisher, as post-schism traditional Methodism will likely depend on or develop other publishing outlets. The SBC publishing house at least can market its materials to a much wider universe of evangelicalism.

Many SBC preachers and writers will continue to have cachet beyond their denomination through their books and videos. Popular speaker **Beth Moore** recently disaffiliated from the SBC, although



Russell Moore, Thabiti Anyabwile and Beth Moore.

Continued on page 11

Mark Tooley



Mark D. Tooley is the President of the Institute on Religion and Democracy

UMC Pastors Allege 'Handmaid's Tale' Scenario in Texas

Two United Methodist pastors recently donned outfits evoking *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel and TV series upon which it is based in which women are enslaved, to protest Texas' recently passed anti-abortion bill. Pastors **Stephanie Arnold** and **Katie Gilbert** lead First United Methodist Church of Birmingham, Alabama, and staged their September 2 protest on TikTok, a social media platform for sharing brief video clips.

Texas' "heartbeat" law functionally bans most abortions after 6 weeks, when a baby's heartbeat can be detected. Rather than criminalize abortions, the law enables individuals to file civil lawsuits

against those who provide or facilitate abortions. A recent Rasmussen poll showed slightly more American likely voters favoring than opposing such a pro-life law.

"Texas is leading us to become more and more like Gilead every day," says the text in the TikTok video, referencing the fictional dystopian society. "Unjust, patriarchal laws strip women of their agency and rights. As people of faith, we believe in reproductive rights." The video ultimately ends with the two pastors throwing off their Handmaid's Tale inspired garb and a call to action for viewers to sign a petition on the Texas Planned Parenthood website. ✚



Pastors from First United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, don costumes from *The Handmaid's Tale* in protest of Texas' heartbeat law banning most abortions (Photo: First Church UMC / TikTok)

Methodists to Start Counting 'Non-Binary' Members

The United Methodist Church General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA) in its membership counts will for the 2021 collection year start including a category for "non-binary" church members and clergy who identify as neither male nor female. The change will only affect the denomination's data collection in the U.S. At least one deacon, who is biologically female, identifies as non-binary.

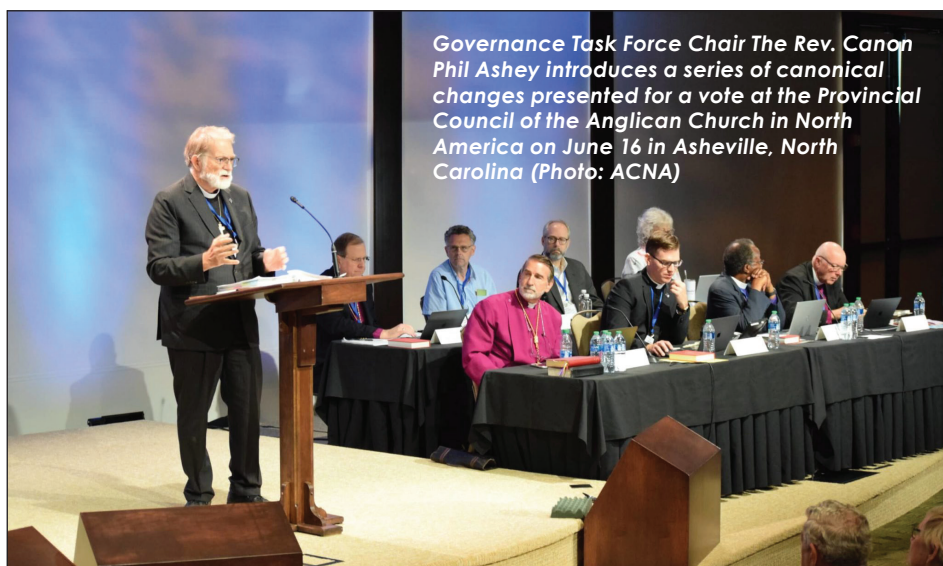
The denomination's governing *Book of Discipline* does not acknowledge the status of non-binary. Absent a specific prohibition, the GCFA board voted 17-1 to move ahead, effectively aligning with transgender ideology, which claims gender is self-selected instead of biological.

"I'm appreciative of the recognition of all God's people, but I am also cautious that we are making a decision that appears to affect less than half our global constituency," said the Rev. **Steve Wood**, lead pastor of Mount Pisgah United Methodist Church in Johns Creek, Georgia, and the lone vote against the change.

"I'm just wondering if we are creating more angst than we are creating benefits, so I have to speak against it." ✚

At right: The Rev. **M Barclay** was ordained as the first non-binary deacon in the United Methodist Church. (Photo: Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church)





Governance Task Force Chair The Rev. Canon Phil Ashey introduces a series of canonical changes presented for a vote at the Provincial Council of the Anglican Church in North America on June 16 in Asheville, North Carolina (Photo: ACNA)

Contra Expectations, Anglican Numbers Hold Steady

Anglicans are reporting better-than-expected numbers for 2020. The Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) kept the same number of congregations from 2019 to 2020 (972) and only saw slight declines in membership and attendance.

Membership dipped from 127,624 in 2019 to 126,760 in 2020, a loss of 864 persons (0.68%), while attendance dropped from 84,310 in 2019 to 83,119 in 2020, a loss of 1,191 (1.4%). In-person attendance was measured during the months of January and February due to COVID restrictions that limited in-person church services for much of the remaining year. A larger drop had been expected, explained ACNA Director of Communications the Rev. Canon **Andrew Gross**, as the customarily well-attended holy days of Christmas and Easter were not included.

The numbers were made available at the annual ACNA Provincial Council held at the Billy Graham Training Center in Asheville, North Carolina, June 15-16.

ACNA continues to experience widely varying numerical changes across dioceses, with some reporting gains in membership and attendance, including the large Diocese of Churches for the Sake of Others which added 1,046 members (10%)

and 1,907 attendees (11.7%). Some dioceses declined, including the Missionary Diocese of All Saints, among the smallest of ACNA jurisdictions; it experienced a 302 person (23.4%) drop in membership and a 194 person (24.9%) drop in attendance.

Unlike in the Episcopal Church, ACNA dioceses geographically overlap and transfer congregations from one to another, which can result in a one-time increase or decrease. ✚



DC Settles Baptists' COVID Lawsuit

The District of Columbia has settled a legal challenge brought by a prominent Baptist congregation against restrictions effectively forbidding worship services amid COVID-19.

In a settlement between the parties this July, the administration of Mayor **Muriel Bowser** agreed to pay \$220,000 to Capitol Hill Baptist Church (CHBC) lawyers at WilmerHale and the First Liberty Institute.

"The District agrees that it will not enforce any current or future COVID-19 restrictions to prohibit CHBC from gathering as one congregation" in the district, according to the settlement.

The church won a preliminary injunction against the city's COVID-19 restrictions last fall.

A legal complaint filed by CHBC noted that large anti-racism rallies had taken place outdoors without restriction. Churches were not permitted to meet in groups of more than 100, indoors or outdoors.

"CHBC's membership reluctantly voted to initiate this lawsuit to reclaim their most fundamental of rights: the right to gather for corporate worship free from threat of governmental sanction," the complaint read.

CHBC is associated with the Calvinist resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention. According to church officials, the average age of its 850-person membership is 31. The congregation has a record of successfully planting and "re-seeding" older churches throughout the area. ✚

At left: District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser participates in a Black Lives Matter protest amid COVID restrictions while preventing churches like Capitol Hill Baptist from gathering outdoors (Photos: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP and Dhousch/Wikimedia Commons)

Witnesses Tell of Continued Uyghur Genocide

Ongoing human rights violations and genocide of Uyghur Muslims by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP) were central at the annual International Religious Freedom Summit July 13-15 in Washington, D.C.

“[Chinese President] **Xi Jinping’s** genocide includes the forced disappearances of millions of Uyghurs into concentration camps, the forced sterilization of Uyghur women, forced abortion of their precious babies, and state abduction of Uyghur children into orphanages far from home to be reared with non-Uyghur upbringing,” said Congressman **Chris Smith** (R-NJ) at a summit plenary session.

Tursunay Ziyawudun described her first-hand experience of an inhumanity characterizing everyday life for millions of Chinese Uyghurs in concentration camps. It left “indelible scars

Chinese law, sometimes they taught us Chinese ‘red’ songs, and sometimes they made us swear oaths of loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party,” explained Ziyawudun, who also described systematic rape of Uyghur women.

One witness, a Uyghur forced to flee, described the plight of Uyghurs in his homeland. “Tens of thousands of publicly respected clerics have either been tortured to death in prison or have disappeared without a trace in the last five years, and their bodies were not even returned back to their families,” he said.

In 2019, *The New York Times* revealed leaked internal CCP documents and speeches showing the extent of human rights violations. Under the guise of combating religious extremism, President Xi instructed government insiders to “show absolutely no mercy” and that “The weapons of the people’s democratic dictatorship must be wielded without any hesitation or wavering.”

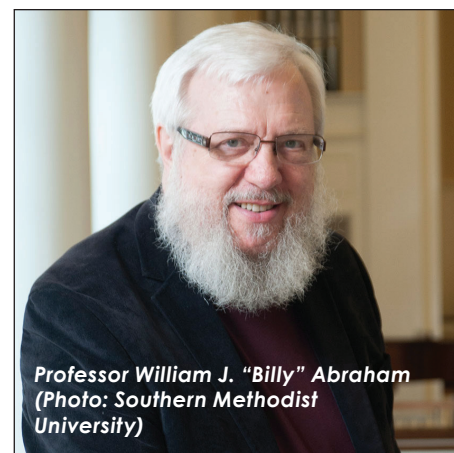
Also at the IRF summit, former U.S. International Religious Freedom Ambassador-at-large **Sam Brownback** condemned the genocide.

“I so admire the Uyghurs that will stand up and speak because every one of them pays with family members going

into concentration camps,” the former U.S. Senator, Kansas Governor and State Department official said, alluding to the Chinese practice of targeting family

members of those who speak out against the genocide.

Brownback called China’s actions “the most egregious violation of religious persecution of a group in the world today,” and he encouraged people to “please keep speaking out because it won’t end unless we really put the pressure on China.” ✝



Professor William J. “Billy” Abraham
(Photo: Southern Methodist University)

William J. “Billy” Abraham 1947-2021

One of global Methodism’s most prominent thinkers has unexpectedly died. **William F. “Billy” Abraham** was, remembered IRD President **Mark Tooley**, “a tireless and courageous voice for Christian orthodoxy with Wesleyan distinctives.” He passed away October 7.

Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1947, Abraham graduated from Asbury Theological Seminary in 1973. He taught

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An image purportedly showing Uyghur prisoners bound and blindfolded at a train station in China (Photo: SkyNews)

on my heart,” Ziyawudun said of her internment.

“Sometimes they showed us propaganda films, sometimes they taught us

classes at educational institutions all around the world and was a fixture at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University where he served as the Albert Cook Outler Professor of Wesley Studies at the Perkins School of Theology. Shortly before his retirement from Perkins he received the Faculty Achievement Award.

Abraham had a playfully contrarian impulse, never shying from debate but also maintaining friendships across theological divides especially at Perkins,

where most faculty didn't share in his fierce defense of scriptural authority and participation in the Methodist renewal movement. In 2013, he gave the IRD's annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture examining Just War, Terrorism and Christian Ethics.

In 2020, Abraham was named the Inaugural Director of the Wesley House at Baylor University's Truett Seminary in Waco, Texas. He advocated for a division of the United Methodist Church, pronouncing it "ungovernable" and instead

advocating for the emergence of a new global Methodist Church.

"Deep down, I believe that there is enough honesty and even good will across the church to hope for a constructive conversation about the way forward," Abraham wrote in 2019 following the denomination's specially called General Conference. "We can, if we really desire, make the transition as economical and efficient as possible. The mountain is there to be climbed; and the future view from the top will be terrific when we get there." ✚

Baptists Probe Setbacks and Opportunities Amid Afghan Collapse

Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is "one of the greatest setbacks for international religious freedom that we've lived through," according to a professor of international affairs addressing the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) on August 26.

"We all know what the Taliban are and that they will not respect religious freedom or any human rights," warned **Paul Miller** of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Open Doors, which supports persecuted Christians around the world, already ranked Afghanistan as the second most dangerous country in which to be a Christian pre-Taliban takeover. The situation now is even more tense as Christians across the country have gone into hiding.

However, the situation is not all dark as SBC International Mission Board Executive Vice President **Todd Lafferty** expressed: "There's great opportunity for the church to rise up and minister and serve during these crisis opportunities."

Miller and Lafferty spoke at an ERLC-hosted discussion, "Baptists and the Nations: Religious Freedom Challenges Around The Globe."

Entering Afghanistan can be extremely difficult for Christians. "This gives us an opportunity as a church to reach the nations," Lafferty proposed. "We

need to pray that Christians here would receive them [Afghan refugees] with open arms and see this as God's appointed time, maybe a 'kairos moment' in history, where we actually have an opportunity to minister to people that we would never be able to touch because they're behind closed borders and hard to reach places."

ERLC Acting Director of Public Policy **Chelsea Sobolik** urged fellow Christians not to be despondent.

"It can be tempting when we see these images and videos to feel utterly, utterly

helpless, but we're not," Sobolik stated, emphasizing the importance of praying for Afghans. "As Christians, we can get on our knees and pray on behalf of vulnerable people in Afghanistan and around the world who are facing persecution. We can also pray that those persecutors, the Taliban, that people would share the gospel with them, that they would come to know Christ as their savior."

Sobolik referenced the conversion of Saul, who by the grace of God stopped persecuting Christians when he became one. ✚



Christians in Lahore, Pakistan demonstrate following a 2017 attack on an Easter worship service. A Taliban faction, Jamaat-ur-Ahrar, claimed responsibility for the suicide attack that killed more than 70 and wounded hundreds, mostly children. (Photo: Fayaz Aziz / Reuters)

The IRD at 40: An Autobiographical Journey

by Dean Curry

The 11th Annual Diane Knippers Lecture

Diane Knippers worked for church renewal and reform across nearly two dozen years at the Institute on Religion & Democracy, eventually serving as President. She passed away from cancer in 2005.

*This October the Institute on Religion and Democracy celebrated our 40th anniversary with the annual **Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture** delivered by Dr. Dean Curry, former IRD board member and professor emeritus at Messiah University.*

Good evening. It is indeed an honor for me to be with you tonight to deliver this year's Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture. And I am delighted that Ed [Diane's widower] is here to share this occasion.

My relationship with Diane went back to the early days of the IRD and through the years I remember her not only—in today's lingua franca—as an *influencer* of major importance, but I also remember Diane as a wonderful human being. In reflecting on her life and life's vocation, **Alan Wisdom** has said it well: “She set an example of faithful Christian witness: She was firm in her conviction of God's truth, and that firmness enabled her to show a great serenity and warmth towards others.” She remains deeply missed.

Much of Diane's life calling overlapped with the formation and maturation of the Institute on Religion and Democracy and she—as much, if not more—than anyone was responsible for its success. On this 40th anniversary of the IRD I would like to reflect back on seminal episodes in its history as well as remind us why the vision and mission set forth by the IRD's

founders, and those who have guided and served it since, remains as vital today as it was four decades ago.

As each of us know, throughout the past forty years the IRD has been accused by its critics of being a right-wing dupe. However, what is striking about the IRD's founding is that so many of its founders had impeccable liberal, even left-wing credentials. The individual whose initiative gave birth to the IRD—**David Jessup**—was a high-level AFL-CIO official, a member of the Berkeley Free Speech movement while a 1960s Berkeley graduate student, and a member of the Social Democrats, USA. **Penn Kemble**, the IRD's early organizational, financial, and leadership guru, was also a socialist, a founding member of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority, and a speechwriter and advisor to **Daniel Patrick Moynihan**. (As an aside, for those of you looking for a writing project, there is a biography of Penn Kemble just waiting to be written!) And, of course, **Richard John Neuhaus** and **Michael Novak** established their liberal/left—even radical—*bona fides* in the 1960s and 1970s Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War peace movements. The IRD's first dedicated staff researcher—**Kerry Ptacek**—was a university member of the Students for a Democratic Society. While I can't say for certain, I suspect that there were more Democrat Party members among the IRD's early board than Republicans. Founding board

chair, **Ed Robb**, for example, was a conservative Democrat.

What united and brought together this diverse group of Christian educators and intellectuals was a shared understanding that the American democratic project was both a gift and a task, and this gift was in danger of being subverted with the help of some within the mainline American religious establishment. The April 1981 news release announcing the formation of the IRD stated that the organization was being founded “to promote democratic values within mainline Christian Churches.” This was necessary—the news release went to say—because of the “confusion in many of the [mainline] denominations, official agencies, and boards” which led to the funding and supporting of policy groups unsympathetic to democratic values.

However, from its founding day, the IRD's foundational vision was not to be just another Washington-based political interest group. Indeed, the IRD's mission was rooted in the twofold conviction that the witness of the Church was a necessary democratic anchor, and that the authentic witness of the Church was only possible when grounded in the dual affirmations that (1) Jesus Christ is Lord, and (2) the first political task of the church is to be the church.

Protecting the witness of the church, therefore, involved the IRD in the task

Continued at top of next page

of Church renewal. And while the IRD's original focus on renewal was targeted at the Protestant mainline, the IRD's mission was always an ecumenical one, embracing evangelicals as well as Catholics, as evidenced by the early presence on the IRD board of **Carl F. H. Henry**, **George Weigel**, and Michael Novak.

Defending democracy and Church renewal were the centerpiece of the IRD's founding mission. The IRD's founders—and especially the influential trio of Neuhaus, Novak and Weigel—were confident that American churches had a key role to play in the defense of democracy against late 20th century totalitarianism. Richard Neuhaus, in the IRD's founding statement—*Christianity and Democracy*—put it this way:

“Communal allegiance to Christ and his Kingdom is the indispensable check upon the pretensions of the modern state. Because Christ is Lord, Caesar is not Lord.

“While our first allegiance is to the community of faith and its mission in the world, Christians do not withdraw from participation in other communities. To the contrary, we are called to be leaven and light in movements of cultural, political, and economic change. History is the arena in which Christians exercise their discipleship. Because our hope is eternal and transcendent, Christians can participate in society without despair or delusion.”

While the IRD's mission was certainly shared by its founding board, there is evidence of at least some *early* strategic disagreements. One original board member, for example, left the board because he wanted the IRD to model a more irenic Christian witness while a majority of the board was comfortable with the IRD raising its voice in the public square.

My involvement with the Institute on Religion and Democracy began in the spring of 1983 after reading a *Time* magazine article describing the IRD-directed “counter-revolutionary civil war” with the “old-line liberal Protestant churches.” The previous couple of years had seen a transformation in my own political thinking and I was drawn to the IRD's agenda as well as its David versus Goliath story. While established in 1981, it

was a January 1983 *Reader's Digest* article and subsequent *60 Minutes* segment that brought the IRD to national prominence.

In March or April of 1983, I made contact with the IRD and invited Ed Robb to Messiah College, where I was a young professor, to give a luncheon presentation to a small group of faculty. I still have a clear recollection of that event and of welcoming Ed and meeting Diane, who accompanied Ed. A few weeks later, I reconnected with Diane in Pasadena, California at “The Church and Peacemaking in the Nuclear Age” conference. This May 1983 conference was arguably a signal event in the political reawakening of American evangelicalism, and it was the beginning of my formal connection with the IRD. **George Weigel** and I were the same age and we had similar interests, so Diane arranged a meeting. I met up with George in his hotel room and we got acquainted over some good Mexican food, and I'm sure a couple of margaritas.

I spent a good part of the summer of 1983 living in Washington while working on my first book, an evangelical response to the 1983 American Catholic Bishops Pastoral Letter on war and peace. This book, too, was an outgrowth of the Pasadena conference. For me, the summer of 1983 was a time of establishing professional and personal relationships that have lasted through the present. And a good chunk of my free time during that summer was spent hanging out in the IRD offices with IRD staff.

Sometime between 1983 and 1986 I joined the IRD board of advisors.

As a contextual aside: The decade of the 1980s as well as the 1990s were exhilarating and satisfying years for those committed to mainline Protestant renewal, the revival of an American evangelical public witness, and the emergence of a Catholic-evangelical partnership.

Through the mid-1980s, the IRD did not have a president; rather, Penn Kemble was the organization's de facto CEO. In 1986 Penn invited me to lunch and asked

if I would be interested in being the IRD's first president. I declined, but recommended **Kent Hill** for the position. At the time, Kent was a Seattle Pacific University history professor. Kent and I had gotten to know each other while working on the National Association of Evangelicals *Peace, Freedom, and Security Studies* program, yet another child of the 1983 Pasadena conference. Parenthetically, George Weigel—who by this time had joined the IRD board—was also a consultant to the NAE's PFSS program.

Kent Hill was subsequently appointed IRD president and served in that role until 1992. His academic expertise in Rus-



IRD President Mark Tooley welcomed visitors to the 11th annual Diane Knippers Memorial Lecture on the 40th anniversary of the Institute of Religion & Democracy's founding. (Photo: George Goss / IRD)

sian affairs was well suited to addressing issues connected to the final years of Soviet Communism. Diane succeeded Kent as IRD president in 1993 and served until her passing in 2005. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, Diane's years as president became a time of adjustment and redefinition of the IRD's mission. Diane's passing in the spring of 2005 left a major leadership void as well as uncertainty in terms of the IRD's identity. The twenty-five years from the IRD's founding until 2005 had seen dramatic changes in American religious

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Dean Curry is a politics professor specializing in international relations with a passion for religion and public life.

The IRD at 40: An Autobiographical Journey

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and political life. To address these challenges, the full IRD board held a two-day retreat at the U.S. Postal Retreat Center in May of 2005 to discuss Diane's replacement as well as the future direction of the IRD. Among other things, this deliberation resulted in the eventual appointment of **Jim Tonkowich** as IRD president in 2006. Following Jim's three-year tenure, **Mark Tooley**, who had joined the IRD staff as United Methodist director in 1994, was named the IRD's fourth (and current) president in 2009.

At the invitation of Diane, I transitioned from the board of advisors to the board of directors in the late-1990s and retired from the board in the spring of 2011. During that time, I served in numerous board capacities, including board chair. I will go out on a limb here and state that no non-profit board in America has had a more illustrious and capable board membership than the Institute on Religion and Democracy and this is a major factor in the IRD's success. As a board member, and even before that, I considered it a great privilege to get to know and serve alongside individuals such as Richard Neuhaus, Michael Novak, George Weigel, **David Stanley**, Carl Henry, **Tom Oden**, **Ira Gallaway**, **Mary Ellen Bork**, **John Boone**, **Helen Rhea Stumbo**, **Terry Schlossberg**, **Graham Smith**, and many others, including, at my count, six members of the current IRD Board of Directors.

But the IRD's success cannot be explained solely in terms of its presidential and board leadership. For forty years the IRD has employed an extraordinary and dedicated staff of remarkable men and women. Besides the current staff, this legacy includes Kerry Ptacek, Alan Wisdom, **Faith McDonnell**, **Jerald Walz**, **Walter Kansteiner**, **Lonnie Smith**, and **Larry Adams**, among others. The list of IRD interns has also been impressive and I will be shameless and mention just one, my former student **Amy Sherman**. Indeed, many of those associated with the

IRD later moved into impressive careers elsewhere. **Walter Kansteiner**, for example, served as an Assistant Secretary of State in the **George W. Bush** administration and Kent Hill held high level positions at World Vision, A.I.D., and the Templeton Foundation.

Looking back over the past forty years, the IRD has remained steadfast in engaging the vision of its original founders. Like all human enterprises, the IRD has encountered its share of bumps along the way; nevertheless, there can be no doubt that the IRD remains as vital and relevant in 2021 as it was in 1981.

Throughout its history, the IRD has encountered external developments that disrupted and required a recalibration of its mission. The first disruption, which I referenced in the context of Diane's presidency, was the demise of Marxism-Leninism as a world historic force.

As the IRD enters its fifth decade it faces two contemporary disruptions. The first is the death of the renewal movements within the Mainline denominations (with the exception, of course, of the United Methodist Church which is headed toward schism). Because of this, the IRD has become more generically evangelical focused in recent years. Unfortunately, there is on-going evidence that the boundaries of orthodoxy within American evangelicalism itself are becoming more and more porous. The question of whether American evangelicalism will remain the bearer of Christian orthodoxy in the coming years is an open one.

The second current disruption is the crisis of democracy associated with the national conversation about "the end of liberalism." Recent years have seen those on both the right and the left attack the putative wreckage of liberal democracy whether manifested in inequality, human deviance, unrestrained state power, or any other number of cultural, political, and economic pathologies. In this regard just last Thursday the University of Virginia's Center for Politics released a very



Board Member Jim Robb recalled the early years of IRD as the organization's first employee (Photo: Mark Tooley / IRD).

sobering—and, frankly depressing—report that reveals just how precarious the state of American democracy has become. However, as George Weigel reminds us, "there is no plausible real-world alternative to the institutions of liberal democracy for those interested in a humane future." Rather than "dynamiting liberalism"—to cite **Barton Swaim's** memorable dramatic characterization—the project of democratic renewal requires, in **Jenna Silber Storey's** words, the recovery of "the preconditions of liberalism's success."

The good news is that since its founding, the Institute on Religion and Democracy has been in the democracy and Christian renewal business and remains well positioned today to assist in the recovery of a democracy sustaining political and religious culture. The work of the IRD is needed as much today as it was in 1981, and under Mark Tooley's leadership, and via its impressive array of publications and programs, the IRD is ready to meet the challenges of our particular historical moment.

Fifteen years ago, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the IRD, Richard Neuhaus described the IRD as "one small, but significant, Christian effort ... to retell the American story relative to God's providential purpose and most specifically to God's creation of human beings wired for freedom." The history of the IRD has always been a story of David versus Goliath, and we all know how that story turned out.

Thank you. ✚

U.S. Goal to 'Save Afghan Women' a 'Lie of White Saviorism' Says Presbyterian Group

by Kennedy Lee

The Presbyterian Peace Fellowship (PPF), a Presbyterian Church (USA)-affiliated network that condemns any and all military action—and touts its 1940s origins as an organization that provided shelter to “conscientious objectors” to World War II—has thoughts on Afghanistan.

In a statement released August 31, the day of U.S. President **Joe Biden's** self-imposed withdrawal deadline of U.S. forces from Afghanistan, PPF referenced gruesome images of Afghans holding onto planes taking off from Kabul, interpreters and their families hiding in fear, and bombings by ISIS-K as a “direct result of imperialist occupation by the United States.”

Although the statement seemingly blamed ISIS-K attacks on U.S. imperialism, the statement went on to take a jab at Biden, who has consistently defended the undisputedly heartbreaking crises that unfolded throughout the last three weeks as “inevitable.”

On the contrary, the statement asserts: “The crisis in Afghanistan right now as the United States pulls out after two decades of war is only inevitable (as President Biden has said it is) if we think war is inevitable.” It then goes on to remind readers that PPF condemns any and all military action by any party, and regards all military action as “always contrary to the Christian gospel.”

Meanwhile, an estimated 10,000–12,000 Christians remain in Afghanistan—almost all of whom are converts from Islam—and most of whom are now in hiding from the Taliban. As Afghan Christians began to feel safer and more forthright about their faith in recent years, thanks to the institutions built since U.S. involvement in the country and the Taliban's fall in 2001, they are surely prime targets of the ascendant Taliban.

The PPF statement goes on to criticize Christian Realism and those who adhere

to Just War teaching, billing PPF's solutions as derived from “Christians who believe that the realism of Jesus is more compelling than the so-called realism that attempts to justify war.”

Perhaps the greatest cause for concern is the statement's inclusion of an August 27 message from the Rev. **Ben Daniel**, Pastor of Montclair Presbyterian Church in Oakland, California, in which he asserted:

“And while a concern for the wellbeing of Afghan women or ethnic and religious minorities played exactly no role in the United States' decision to invade the Central Asian nation known to be the ‘graveyard of empires’ after the terrorist attacks of September 11, the military mission dragged

on for twenty years in part because the United States saw itself as the savior of Afghan's downtrodden population, especially women and girls.”

Daniel further asserts that “the American military has committed far more crimes against humanity than it has prevented.” His list of assertions of American military crimes against humanity includes U.S. assistance to Afghan mujahideen in Afghanistan during the 1979–1989 Soviet invasion.

The PPF-affiliated pastor deems this “a period of ten years when Afghan women had more freedoms than they've ever had before or since,” which is absurd.

With admitted flaws, the post-2001 mission of the U.S. and new Afghan government made improving the lives of Afghan women and girls a central focus. Moreover, the 2004 Afghan constitution contained provisions specifically guaranteeing

women's rights and quotas to ensure their participation in the political process.

Alas, the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship's general statement on Afghanistan



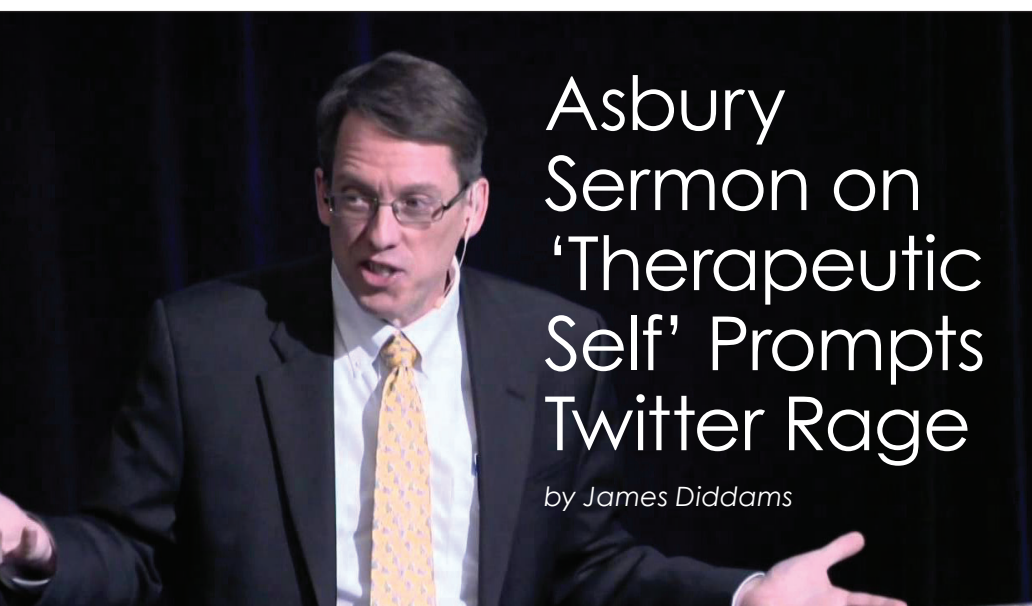
U.S. Marines with the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit process evacuees as they go through the Evacuation Control Center at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan, Aug. 28, 2021 (Photo: Staff Sgt. Victor Mancilla / U.S. Marine Corps)

lauds Daniel's polemic, and even goes a step further, making the claim that “the United States used the lie of white saviorism—that we were going to ‘save Afghan women’—to justify the violence of war.”

It's odd that an organization whose mission “urges the abolition of war and encourages our sisters and brothers to enact peace in the midst of our broken world” seems to gleefully cheer the “end of U.S. imperialism” instead of lamenting the ascent of a militant organization actively on the hunt for Afghanistan's Christian minorities. ✚



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Asbury Sermon on 'Therapeutic Self' Prompts Twitter Rage

by James Diddams

Asbury Theological Seminary President Dr. **Timothy Tennent** recently faced a social media backlash for preaching a solidly orthodox sermon at Asbury's September 7 convocation for the 2021-22 academic year.

Titled "The Restoration of Personhood," the sermon referenced a conversation between Tennent and the late Asbury theologian Dr. **Dennis F. Kinlaw**. Tennent, as he explained, asked Law what the most pressing theological issue of the age was. Kinlaw, instead of a long-winded answer, responded with one word: personhood.

Tennent proposed that the overarching problem with the spirit of the age is that it has a severely misguided notion of what it means to be a human being. In particular, he referenced the work of Grove City College professor **Carl Trueman**, author of *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution*.

Trueman wrote *Triumph of the Modern Self* out of his curiosity that statements such as "I'm a woman trapped in a man's body" have gone from seeming nonsensical several generations ago to being "not only regarded as meaningful and authentic, but to deny it is stupid or immoral or an irrational phobia." As Trueman argues, the 1960s saw the rise of a new kind of individualism, one radically different from what had come before. Canadian Philosopher **Charles Taylor** called this shift "expressive individualism."

The Asbury Seminary president described some features of this new individualism. Firstly, "this new vision of human personhood has created a seismic dualistic separation or fracturing of the human will from the physical body. In this twist of Neopaganistic dualism our bodies become moldable, like plastic contingent instruments which must be conformed to the intuitions, feelings and what other social constructions we may dream of in order to conform to our understanding of ourselves."

"This new vision of human personhood has moved us as a culture and society from what Charles Taylor calls a transcendent frame to an immanent frame," Tennent continued. "Our society has fully jettisoned any transcendent moral... boundaries to our existence or our decisions which refer or defer to God or any other authoritative source... The immanent frame refers to the solitary, socially constructed self leading to a whole new view of human personhood. It renders us forgetful of the image of God in us as that frames our dignity and our identity.... In a culture where all that's left of personhood is the atomized self, ethics becomes merely a function of feelings, what [Scottish philosopher **Alasdair MacIntyre** calls *emotivism*.

"This new vision of human personhood marks the rise of the therapeutic self," he went on. "The once particular language of therapy has now become the common language of common discourse... the very notion of personhood today has become a socially derived psychological

Asbury Theological Seminary President Dr. Timothy Tennent delivered a sermon message at the school's convocation which drew ire from an LGBT student and social media (Photo: Asbury / YouTube)

construction." The result of these shifts has been the elevation of sexual satisfaction to the apex of our culture and making sexual identity our deepest source of self-knowledge. He concluded with an account of how Christianity enables a proper sense of identity; one rooted in the transcendent law of God instead of authentic individual expression.

While everything Tennent said aligns with the theological tenets held by Asbury Seminary, some who attended or live-streamed the convocation were unimpressed.

"Hey @AsburySeminary, maybe don't make your entire convocation sermon from the president centered on lambasting LGBTQ people," tweeted one student named Elijah. "You're doing worse than just making it dangerous for me to be on campus."

This was followed by his apparent early exit from the chapel because Tennent's words caused him to take offense.

More than a hundred other tweets were issued in response to Tennent's speech, many of which were highly critical of him for the manner in which he spoke about LGBTQ+ topics. Elijah, the seminarian, identifies as a "Side B" celibate gay Christian and many of the responses to his criticisms urged him to transfer to a seminary that affirms homosexual behavior.

The ultimate point of debate seems to be what language should be used around issues of gender and sexuality. "Side B" Christians try to live in accordance with orthodox Christian faith, and while they don't seem to want to fundamentally alter Christianity, some still have problems with the way these issues are addressed in the church. Tennent has not yet responded to the Twitter-storm around his sermon. ✚



James Diddams is a theology and politics research associate at the Institute on Religion and Democracy.

Church 'Tethered to Supremacy Culture' Alleges Duke Divinity Professor

by Paulina Song

“Everything is militarized, from police to surveillance to border patrol and beyond. The war machine is all around us,” warned Dr. **Robyn Henderson-Espinoza**, consulting professor at United Methodist Duke Divinity School and founder of the Activist Theology Project, an initiative that seeks to blend politics and faith and “bridge radical differences.”

The Boston University School of Theology, also United Methodist, invited Henderson-Espinoza to speak for the Spring 2021 Lowell Lecture on April 21, a day after Minneapolis Police Officer **Derek Chauvin** was found guilty of the murder and manslaughter of **George Floyd**. Named one of the “10 Faith Leaders to Watch in 2018” by the Center for American Progress, a progressive policy institute, Henderson-Espinoza identifies as non-binary, trans, queer, and Latinx, and uses the pronouns “they/them.”

The topic of Henderson-Espinoza’s talk was “Composting Supremacy Culture: Stewarding Life-Affirming Systems in the Face of Today’s Norms.”

Henderson-Espinoza deliberately uses the term “composting,” a type of recycling that involves decomposing food waste into organic matter to be used by other living things, as a metaphor for systemic change. According to Henderson-Espinoza, composting in an academic context “takes a holistic perspective and invites the whole of the system, whatever the system is, and doesn’t just dispose of the waste or the negative qualities, but uses all of what the system is comprised of and transforms it into something beneficial.”

The Duke Divinity School professor denounces academia and the “institutional church” as systems “tethered to supremacy culture” that need composting. Henderson-Espinoza defines supremacy as “the state or condition of being superior to all others in authority, power, or status.” Race, economics, and

“the military war machine” make up the three pillars of supremacy culture.

Overcoming supremacy culture means “becoming imperceptible,” gaining “a sense of being free” and “not having to mask ourselves,” in relation to things like surveillance and racial profiling. Henderson-Espinoza takes this concept



Robyn Henderson-Espinoza (Photo: Iliff School of Theology)

of imperceptibility from the work of **Félix Guattari** and **Gilles Deleuze** in their book *Nomadology: The War Machine*.

“Becoming imperceptible is the peak... of our search for liberation or being released from that which seems to be so good at dominating, confusing, and capturing our potential energy and capacities,” said the activist. “We are all up against the militarized war machine.”

Henderson-Espinoza advocates for a “hard pivot” away from today’s systems rooted in “violence, supremacy, and accelerated harm,” and instead towards “life-affirming systems.”

Referencing a passage from Acts 2:44-45, which states that the believers had all things in common, Henderson-Espinoza questioned why Christians today do not do the same. “We often hear things like holding all things in common as a model, proud to lean into a different system, and I want

to suggest to us as Christians and as people of conscience, we might want to consider actually holding all things in common, not just as a useful metaphor, but our real pragmatic and ethical orientation that composes the bulls*** we’re all facing and returns to some of the roots of our lineages.”

Henderson-Espinoza claimed that many Christians do not desire to hold all things in common, the reason being because “Whiteness and the culture of White supremacy breeds scarcity and breeds a kind of selfishness....”

Henderson-Espinoza noted that a culture of “White supremacy and capitalism and violence” harms everyone, not just people of color: “White folks are also victims of White supremacy.”

The violence embedded in Henderson-Espinoza’s idea of supremacy culture comes from an inability to properly relate to two things: power and freedom.

“As a result of not knowing how to be in relationship with those things, we don’t know how to be responsible agents in the world, which is why we get evangelical theology where a White man can have a bad day and go kill a handful of people,” Henderson-Espinoza asserted.

The activist called attention to the spiritual side of the war machine as well. “This is spiritual warfare. We have to be clear minded about this, and we have to have a discerning spirit to swim in these unclean waters.”

Henderson-Espinoza stressed the importance of building models of life-affirming systems. “When we steward ethical practices, we are composting the bulls*** otherwise known as supremacy culture.” ✚



Paulina Song was a summer 2021 intern with the Institute on Religion and Democracy. She is studying international politics at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

Why Harvard's Atheist Chaplain Matters Less, and More, than You Think

by John Lomperis

Much outrage has recently been expressed over staunch atheist **Greg Epstein** becoming the new president of Harvard University's chaplains.

But Christians who seek to follow the One who IS the truth should be *much* more careful to be accurate than several rushing to comment have been.

As someone who was very involved in evangelical campus ministry while earning my three-year master's degree at Harvard, I'd like to clarify realities that some headlines and hot takes, from Christians as well as others, miss.

First of all, Harvard *isn't* a Christian school.

We at IRD have raised concerns about questionable chaplaincy hires at United Methodist universities. But this is categorically different. Harvard makes no claim to be Christian.

Yes, many note the university's founding by Puritans in the 1600s. But such commentaries skip developments such as Harvard's ties with the Unitarian movement, beginning before the university started its Divinity School in 1816.

Epstein's election, by the consensus of his fellow chaplains, does *not* represent a new shift and is unlikely to be consequential for Harvard.

Secondly, the campus ministry at Harvard is multi-faith. This does *not* mean that chaplains affirm the truth claims of each other's religions. But as a secular university, if the administration lets evangelical ministries operate on campus, it will offer the same access to non-Christians.

Harvard's 43 listed chaplains include evangelical Protestants, but they are less than one third of the total.

Thirdly, Harvard having an atheist chaplain is *not* new. I realize "atheist chaplain" may sound oxymoronic.

There are now essentially humanist congregations where atheists seek to mimic what religious congregations provide in terms of social community, regular gatherings for lectures and discussion, and community-service volunteering—

difference between liberal Protestants, Unitarian Universalists, and liberal atheists/humanists.

During a campus event I attended, I recall Epstein being challenged about the broadness of declaring that no God can exist, given the range of ways people may define "God." In response, Epstein pivoted to deny that there could be "a god who is *relevant*." God doesn't seem terribly relevant when he is redefined by liberal Protestants to remove all history and possibility of His supernatural intervention.

Fourthly, being named president of the Harvard Chaplains is *not* a big deal.

While Harvard's chaplains do not "support" each other's religions, they do seek to maintain good relations. I am told reliably that Epstein is no exception. The largely honorific position of president is rotated between constituencies. This latest rotation was *not* a matter of Epstein and atheism triumphing over the other chaplaincies. It was simply his turn, likely to last for only a year or two.

The chaplains' presidency involves convening meetings and serving as a liaison between the chaplains and the university administration, for which the president receives a nominal university stipend.

But this does *not* amount to being Harvard's "chief chaplain," as the *New York Times* headline declared. No such role exists. The president is *not* the boss of other chaplains.

I expect that Harvard's Christian and other campus ministries will continue much as before.

Harvard chaplains, including Epstein, generally raise their own salaries through their respective communities, rather than paid by Harvard. As I recall



Widener Library at Harvard University. Harvard's atheist chaplain has recently received renewed scrutiny. (Photo: Wikipedia.org)

all while trying to keep God out of it. Humanist chaplaincies at universities now seek to similarly offer godless alternatives to traditional student ministry.

Epstein has *already* been a chaplain of the Harvard Community of Humanists, Atheists, and Agnostics. Harvard's humanist chaplaincy began *decades* before in 1974.

Epstein is *not* the first non-Christian to hold the largely honorific title of president of the chaplains, and will not be the last. After a humanist student ministry has been established for decades, is it *that* big a deal for the humanist, rather than another openly non-Christian chaplain, to take a brief turn with the title "president"?

Let's be honest: In terms of values and the most consequential parts of their worldviews, there is not *that* much

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from my time there, some focus on full-time jobs as pastors of nearby churches, and the extent of their work as “Harvard chaplains” is limited.

Only a minority of Harvard’s students or faculty are devout, practicing, Bible-believing Christians.

When I was there, one theologically conservative, inerrantist, complementarian Harvard chaplain memorably lamented how we evangelicals sometimes spend too much energy getting angry at seeing non-Christians acting like... non-Christians.

On the other hand, Epstein’s prominence as Harvard’s atheist chaplain reflects wider realities, which American Christians ignore at our peril.

Attention showered on Epstein is an important *reminder* that whatever we may want to argue about the supposedly

“good old days,” biblical Christian faith is more marginal in American culture today than we sometimes want to admit. Our faith competes in an arena of worldviews. Centers of cultural power that previously reinforced many of our values became indifferent or hostile. This is *not* limited to Ivy League campuses.

America has seen an alarming rise in hostility to religious liberty. This prompts Christians to ask why neighbors can’t simply take an attitude of “I strongly disagree with your Christian belief in this matter, but I will defend your right to believe it, declare it, and live your life according to it!”

Such protests are unlikely to succeed if we do not clearly, strongly, and sincerely also defend the freedom of conscience of non-Christian neighbors to promote and live according to religions with whose beliefs we strongly disagree.

This is a basic matter of Christ’s Golden Rule of treating others as we want to be treated, by defending the same freedom of conscience for others that we want respected for ourselves. None of this diminishes our obligation to also share the Gospel.

Christians concerned or upset by news of Harvard’s atheist chaplain should channel that energy constructively, by supporting evangelical campus ministers on the front lines of witnessing for the truth of the Gospel, discipling new believers, and faithfully navigating rapid cultural shifts on secular college campuses. ✚



John Lomperis directs the UMAction program at the Institute on Religion & Democracy.

From the President: Christianity Sí, Denominations Non

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she did not quit her SBC congregation, and likely her speaking engagements and publications will churn forward unabated. Few of her fans likely care whether she personally identifies with the SBC. California SBC megachurch pastor **Rick Warren** has been in recent years one of America’s highest profile preachers and authors, although few knew of his SBC affiliation. His Saddleback Church does not advertise its Baptist ties. Increasing numbers of SBC congregations don’t, following a wider trend of churches that disguise denominational affiliations to be more welcoming or from indifference to denominational labels. Almost certainly many post-schism traditional Methodist congregations, and maybe some liberal ones, will avoid confusion or controversy over whether they are liberal or conservative by simply removing “Methodist” from public view.

Meanwhile, greater numbers of Americans who are practicing or at least self-identifying as Christians move freely across denominations and congregations, including many Catholics. Multi-generational loyalties to denominations are ending. Lutherans now marry Catholics and become Southern Baptists before attending nondenominational Bible churches.

Supposed church and Christian decline in America gets lots of press, but much of the dust is actually a great churning in which lifelong denominational ties are replaced by decades of church shopping interspersed by long sabbaticals away from formal church altogether. Some of this church churning is premised on a sense of victimization. Conservatives leave liberal denominations believing the Gospel was withheld from them. Liberals quit conservative denominations thinking they were brainwashed or ideologically held captive.

This unfolding post-denominational American Christianity is a tribute to the entrepreneurship of nondenominational churches and parachurch ministries that are birthed and thrive without denominational resources. In some ways they recall the dynamism of the Early Church or of current often persecuted Chinese Christianity, which is entirely nondenominational and yet seems mostly to thrive. These nondenominationals also recall America’s Tocquevillian spirit of creating new associations to meet contemporary needs.

The sadness about the post denominational world is that it is often ad hoc and individualistic. Great traditions that accrued across centuries are set aside and

sometimes forgotten altogether in favor of some purportedly new and improved alternative. Post denominationalism often stresses personal choice. Sometimes although not always it is personality-driven. Its ecclesiology is almost always congregationalist, so there is little accountability—if any—to a wider community.

Leaders from post denominational Christianity become national figures through their social media prowess, book sales, online broadcasting, or their public controversies, just like secular celebrities. Post-denominationalism may feed national polarization in that its participants, when looking outside their congregations, rely on self-chosen and sometimes self-segregating social media and news sources. This post denominationism tends to create inward subcultures that do not identify with a national culture, as churches previously did through their large and historic denominations.

Russell Moore quitting the SBC to affiliate with *Christianity Today* magazine will possibly expand his influence and fan base. His departure may reveal less about Southern Baptist divisions and more about how denominations are becoming irrelevant. ✚

IRD Diary:

Evangelical Christianity on Georgetown's Campus

by Elijah Martin

It was 3 a.m. in my dorm. I'm always asleep at this time—but not tonight. Friends and I were engaged in hour four of conversation about Jesus. That night, the power of God was working. It was that power that made this the best night of my summer, that gave me renewed hope for the kingdom of God on campus, and that yes, kept me up until 3 a.m. Despite significant obstacles and resistance, God is visibly moving in the lives of students on my campus and campuses across the globe.

When I decided to attend Georgetown University, mentors warned me about the pressure of being a Christian at a largely secular—though nominally Catholic—school. Most days I feel on edge, as on the surface it seems that religion is at best a social group and at worst derided. Yet, God has let me dive beneath the surface. My prayer leading up to school was that God would provide a ministry field at Georgetown. He has since blessed me above and beyond with opportunities to see the roots of spiritual revival here.

This is not to say that there aren't obstacles to evangelical Christianity at Georgetown. While many students want to explore Christianity, the campus climate can make that search difficult. From my experience, the official Georgetown Protestant ministry's main goal is to broadly serve as many students with varied belief systems as possible. This is an admirable goal. However, this strategy can make it difficult to connect with a specific community that can be a secure refuge from the pressures Christians face here.

A prime example was last month when Georgetown held its annual club fair. The front lawn was filled with all the different faith traditions—except one. Almost all the tables reserved for evangelical ministry groups were left

vacant. The Georgetown-run Protestant ministry had asked them not to show up for undisclosed reasons. While there is a multitude of well-equipped evangelical ministry groups, students were unable to learn about them. Instead of warm faces and informational flyers, searching students were left with bare tables and lingering questions.

Another challenge is the accessibility of Protestant churches. Many students, especially spiritual seekers or new Christians, aren't keen to wake up early and pay for an Uber or bus. A recent trip with seven students to my local church, barely two miles away, cost us close to \$60. Many churches do provide funding or rides to students to get them to church, a tremendous blessing to the student body. However, the distance requires significant planning, which many students can find overwhelming especially as they first arrive on campus or if they are new to the faith.

It is a blessing, though, that we serve a God who isn't hampered by people. I've been amazed at the deep spiritual yearning here at Georgetown. The one evangelical ministry table that did participate in the club fair, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, received over 30 connection cards in just a couple of hours. This group, along with groups like Campus Outreach and Anchor, are enthusiastically working for evangelical students at Georgetown. In my personal life, the conversation I mentioned is just the beginning. One friend, because of that talk, turned from atheist to theist. A few weeks ago, a coworker I barely knew mentioned that she's begun reading *Mere Christianity*. I was able to take her to church for the first time ever the next week. Even on the night I moved in, I spent about 20 minutes talking to two drinking friends about church, God's justice, and purity, all questions they raised (yes, while intoxicated).

I am increasingly convinced Georgetown knows it is lost. To paraphrase James, students are tossed to and fro by the winds of this world. It is in this place that they become open to Christ's beautifully loving heart, expressed in Matthew 9: "...he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless..." College students are harassed by trials and feel helpless as we



Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

transition from one stage of life to the next. It is here that Christ meets us. He is moving on campuses, no matter what student administration, government, or people stand in His way.

I urge you to pray for college students you know. Pray that they will see their need for Christ. Pray that they find solid faith communities. Most of all, pray, as I did, for a fruitful ministry opportunity at campuses across the world. God is faithful. He will answer. ✝



Elijah Martin is a student at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., and an autumn intern with the Institute on Religion and Democracy.



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