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MILLENNIALS BUCKING TRENDS ON ABORTION APPROVAL

A hard-fought battle is being waged for the allegiance of young Americans on abortion, and pro-life leaders see fresh signs of hope that Roe v. Wade won’t survive the millennial generation.

Decades ago, there seemed to be no hope for the pro-life movement, yet thanks to the persistence of some pro-life leaders and development of technologies that show “the reality of the beautiful human life of the child in the womb,” the tide is turning toward pro-life, Princeton University law professor Robert P. George told about 2,000 attendees Friday at a conference of Students for Life of America.

“I see the future, and you are it,” said Mr. George, who was honored with the SFLA 2015 Defender of Life award.

The pro-life supporters were urged to stay visible, stay active and stay hopeful at the Maryland event the day after the March for Life.

“When you speak, people listen,” said Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America, which has more than 800 pro-life student groups on college campuses and in high schools.

Its annual conference — the 28th this year — is the largest pro-life youth conference in the United States, organizers said. Due to demand — SFLA has more than 100 pro-life campus groups in California — a second conference for students was held Sunday in San Francisco.

The conferences are intended to provide young adults with education, training and connections with pro-life groups and national leaders “who all know just how vital this pro-life generation is to abolishing abortion in our lifetime,” SFLA leaders said.

Abortion rights groups have been traveling to campuses and communities as part of a campaign called “All Above All” to bring their messages to young adults.

Pro-choice leaders also point to polls that show that most Americans — 70 percent — do not want to see the 1973 Roe v. Wade and Doe v. Bolton rulings, which legalized abortion in the nation, overturned. They maintain that legal abortion is now a fact of life, and that one in three women will seek the procedure at least once in their life.

But pro-life leaders cite fresh polling data from Marist College in New York as more evidence that most young Americans do not favor abortion and will not sustain the status quo. According to SFLA, the Marist poll data
on millennials shows that 59 percent think abortion is “morally wrong,” 58 percent think abortion “does more harm than good,” and 64 percent think the abortion rate is “higher than it should be.”

Singling out a young man in the audience, Mr. George said he especially liked his T-shirt because it said: “I survived Roe v. Wade. But Roe v. Wade won’t survive me.”

Mrs. Hawkins evoked cheers from the crowd gathered at First Baptist Church of Glenarden in Upper Marlboro when she recapped some events from Thursday’s March for Life, which drew hundreds of thousands of marchers.

The actions of a group of abortion rights protesters — who blocked the massive march for about 40 minutes until some of its leaders were arrested by U.S. Capitol Police — seemed a bit desperate, she said.

After all, “about 500,000 young people were about to mow you down. With love — mow you down with love!” she said with a laugh.

She also described the powerful impact that she and some 60 young people had when they went to Capitol Hill after the march to make sure certain members of Congress could see for themselves that many millennials are strongly pro-life, and passing pro-life laws will not alienate America’s youth.

“Injustice only thrives in the dark,” Mrs. Hawkins told the crowd.

Conference speakers included Lila Rose, founder of Live Action, which captures activities in abortion clinics through undercover videos, and Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic manager who founded And Then There Were None, a ministry to help abortion clinic staff leave their jobs or make peace with their past. (Contributor: By Cheryl Wetzstein for The Washington Times)

This article calls for both praise to God and ongoing intercession. Regarding the annual March for Life in Washington, DC, readers should know that for political reasons, U.S. Park police no longer estimate crowd size during an event on or near the Mall. But no matter how much the liberal press tries to ignore the impact of the March, the sheer force of nearly 500,000 people from all parts of the country could not be denied, even by pro-abortion protesters. Give thanks for the young adults (known as the “millennials”) who are taking a stand for Life. Pray that their numbers increase!

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” (Isa. 5:20-21)

U.S., INDIA REACH AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR POWER

President Obama announced a tentative agreement in New Delhi Sunday with India’s prime minister to open the country to U.S. firms investing in commercial nuclear power, a step that the two leaders said underscores improved bilateral relations.

The president and Prime Minister Narendra Modi said they reached an “understanding” on liability of U.S. companies in the event of a nuclear accident, and on U.S. insistence of tracking nuclear materials — issues that had prevented American companies from building reactors in India since an initial breakthrough agreement in 2006.
“We are committed to moving towards full implementation,” Mr. Obama said with Mr. Modi in New Delhi. “This is an important step that shows how we can work together to elevate our relationship.”

White House advisers characterized the agreement as a “breakthrough” and said Mr. Modi brought a new tone of cooperation to the talks. The impasse had its origins in the Bhopal gas leak disaster in 1984, and the 2006 nuclear accord never opened up the commercial opportunities that the George W. Bush administration envisioned.

“In our judgment, the Indians have moved sufficiently on these issues to give us assurances are resolved,” said White House Deputy National Security Adviser Ben Rhodes.

U.S. Ambassador to India Richard Verma told reporters that insurance pools will be part of the solution to industry’s concerns about the liability issue. He said the understanding is between the two governments but added that, ultimately, “it’s up to the companies what to do.”

Mr. Obama and Mr. Modi also said they had agreed to greater cooperation on clean energy and climate change, although they didn’t announce even the type of non-binding agreement that Mr. Obama reached with China last fall that set specific targets for cutting greenhouse gases.

The president is trying to build support among the world’s largest polluting nations to reduce carbon emissions prior to a global climate change summit later this year in France.

“I think India’s voice is very important on this issue,” Mr. Obama said. “Perhaps no country could potentially be more affected by the impacts of climate change, and no country is going to be more important in moving forward a strong agreement than India.”

The leaders also discussed greater cooperation on defense and counterterrorism. Mr. Modi said his private talks with Mr. Obama on a range of subjects were “very detailed,” but he said of the particulars: “Let’s keep them behind curtains.”

The two leaders gave each other a bear hug upon Mr. Obama’s arrival in New Delhi, with Mr. Modi breaking protocol to greet the president at the airport. Until last year, Mr. Modi, a onetime Hindu activist, had been denied a visa to the U.S. over his alleged role in permitting the massacre of 2,000 Muslims when he was the governor of Gujarat in 2002.

Mr. Obama lifted the ban last year after Mr. Modi took office, and the prime minister visited the White House in September.

On Monday Mr. Obama will be the first U.S. president to attend India’s Republic Day parade, an annual show of military might long associated with the anti-Americanism of the Cold War, and he will host a radio show with Mr. Modi.

Elected last May, Mr. Modi has injected a new vitality into the economy and foreign relations and, to Washington’s delight, begun pushing back against China’s growing assertiveness across Asia.

In a veiled reference to China, the leaders reiterated the “importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea.”

The White House announced that Mr. Obama will depart slightly early from India to travel to Saudi Arabia to pay his respects following the death of King Abdullah, skipping a planned visit to the Taj Mahal. (Contributor: By Dave Boyer for The Washington Times - This article is based in part on wire service reports.)
As intercessors, we are committed to pray for President Obama and other government leaders. Pray for the president's safety while traveling. Pray for divine wisdom to be given as he positions our government on the international scene. Pray for congressional leaders who must interpret his commitments and filter our nation's responsibilities through constitutional requirements.

"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." (Jas. 3:17)

FRANKLIN GRAHAM: U.S. CHRISTIANS ARE BEING PUSHED TO BACK OF THE ROOM

The Rev. Franklin Graham, head of Samaritan's Purse and son of renowned evangelist Billy Graham, feels that other religions are being brought to the forefront in the U.S. while Christianity is being pushed back.

Graham appeared on WNCN News to discuss his recent comments on Duke University's decision to end its policy on having an Islamic call to prayer at the campus' Christian chapel.

He also stated that the U.S. is a nation 'built on Christian principles and that Americans need to embrace those principles.

"I agree with diversity but what's happening with this country is all these religions are getting front row and Christians are being pushed — and we're the majority — are being pushed back to the back of the room," he said.

"This country was built with Christian principles — it was men and women who believed in God and believed in His Son, Jesus Christ, who built this country. We're the greatest nation in the history of the world. It wasn't built by Islam, and it wasn't built by any other group. It was those who supported and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Graham admitted that America's forefathers made mistakes along the way — making some aspects of the nation's history regrettable — however, that does not mean that citizens shouldn't fight to protect it.

"We're the greatest nation in the history of the Earth," he said, "and we have people today that want to destroy what we believe and what we stand for. I think the university needs to understand that the world in which we live today, we've been at war now 10 years against terrorists and the terrorists we've been fighting are people who support and believe in the Islamic faith."

He also pointed out that the only Muslims coming out against these recent attacks are those living in the U.S.

"First of all, you don't have condemnation outside this country," he said. "You'll have clerics in this country who'll condemn these acts. But these acts of terrorism are not condemned by the mullahs in Saudi Arabia or in Egypt, or Iraq or Syria."

"The reason is," he continued, "is because the Quran teaches this. And so, if they condemned it they would be condemning the Quran, and they're not going to condemn the Quran."

According to Graham, the Islamic holy book permits slavery, and the killing of Jews and Christians.

Graham blasted Duke University last week when the school announced that it would hold the Muslim call to prayer and use its chapel to do so. The school later reversed its decision and will no longer host the event using the Christian house or worship. (Contributor: By Vincent Funaro for The Christian Post)
Give thanks for Franklin Graham’s courage to speak out, first about Duke University’s focus on Islamic calls to prayer from its Christian chapel. (The practice was very quickly stopped, no doubt through public opinion plus Christians’ prayers.) Pray that God will continue to raise up Christians with “prophetic stature” whose collective voices will defend our faith with biblical authority. Our Scripture choice represents what a godly, prophetic voice will trumpet to the nation.

“Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow. ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” (Isa. 1:16-18)

**OBAMA TO REQUEST RESEARCH FUNDING FOR TREATMENTS TAILORED TO PATIENTS’ DNA**

President Obama will seek hundreds of millions of dollars for a new initiative to develop medical treatments tailored to genetic and other characteristics of individual patients, administration officials say.

The proposal, mentioned briefly in his State of the Union address, will be described in greater detail in his budget in the coming weeks. The effort is likely to receive support from members of both parties, lawmakers said.

“This is an incredible area of promise,” said Senator Bill Cassidy, Republican of Louisiana and a gastroenterologist. “There will be bipartisan support.”

Mr. Obama called it precision medicine, but the terms “personalized medicine” and “individualized medicine” are also widely used to describe the evolving field in which, for example, a doctor prescribes a medication that targets a specific mutation in a patient’s genes.

The money would support biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health and the regulation of diagnostic tests by the Food and Drug Administration, officials at the two agencies said.

The tests analyze the DNA in normal or diseased tissue. Doctors use that information to identify patients with cancer or other diseases who are most likely to benefit from a particular treatment — and those who would be harmed or not respond at all.

“In some patients with cystic fibrosis, this approach has reversed a disease once thought unstoppable,” Mr. Obama said in his address to Congress last week.

The gene responsible for cystic fibrosis was discovered by a team that included Dr. Francis S. Collins, who is now director of the National Institutes of Health and an architect of the new initiative. The F.D.A. has approved a drug for patients with a genetic mutation responsible for some cases of the disease, which clogs the lungs with thick, sticky mucus.

A patient taking that drug, William Elder Jr., a 27-year-old medical student in Ohio, was a guest of Michelle Obama at the State of the Union speech.

Representative Fred Upton, Republican of Michigan and chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, and Representative Diana DeGette, a Colorado Democrat who is on the committee, welcomed Mr. Obama’s proposal. After holding hearings and round-table discussions last year, they said they were drafting a bill to encourage biomedical innovations, including personalized medicine.
As a senator in 2006 and 2007, Mr. Obama offered a bill to do just that — the Genomics and Personalized Medicine Act. Senator Richard M. Burr, Republican of North Carolina, was a co-sponsor of the 2007 bill.

“Personalized medicine represents a revolutionary and exciting change in the fundamental approach and practice of medicine,” Mr. Obama said then. He cited the drug Herceptin, for the treatment of a particularly aggressive form of breast cancer, as an example.

Scientists said they now viewed breast cancer not as a single disease, but rather as a group of several subtypes, each with a distinct molecular signature. This, they said, helps explain why some tumors respond better than others to specific cancer-fighting drugs.

“Most medical treatments have been designed for the average patient,” said Jo Handelsman, associate director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. “In too many cases, this one-size-fits-all approach is not effective.”

Dr. Ralph Snyderman, a former chancellor for health affairs at Duke University, often described as the father of personalized medicine, said he was excited by the president’s initiative.

“Personalized medicine has the potential to transform our health care system, which consumes almost $3 trillion a year, 80 percent of it for preventable diseases,” Dr. Snyderman said.

Although the new tests and treatments are often expensive, he added, personalized medicine can save money while producing better results. “It focuses therapy on individuals in whom it will work,” he said. “You can avoid wasting money on people who won’t respond or will have an adverse reaction.”

The new techniques can also help prevent disease by predicting patients’ susceptibility, Dr. Snyderman said. “If an individual has a much greater likelihood of developing colon cancer, a genetically based disease,” he said, “you can begin screening at a much younger age, 30 rather than 50, for example.”

Dr. Margaret A. Hamburg, the F.D.A. commissioner, has reorganized her agency to speed the review of drugs and diagnostic tests used in personalized medicine.

But Senator Cassidy said he was still skeptical. To fulfill the promise of personalized medicine, he said, will require “a much more nimble federal bureaucracy.”

On Friday, federal officials released a proposal under which Medicare would cover genetic tests of tumors in some people with advanced lung cancer. The tests could help identify Medicare beneficiaries who would respond favorably to particular cancer drugs.

“This is a watershed event,” said Dr. Bruce Quinn, a health-policy specialist at the law firm Foley Hoag. “It means that policy makers now believe these tests are worth paying for.”

Mr. Obama’s budget will also propose increased federal spending to combat antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The plan would nearly double spending from its current level of $450 million a year.

White House officials described antibiotic resistance as a threat to public health and national security. They said at least 23,000 people in the United States die each year as a result of infections caused by such drug-resistant germs. (Contributor: By Robert Pear for The New York Times)

Certain diseases have continued to resist medical research for a cure, such as cystic fibrosis, ALS (or “Lou Gehrig’s Disease), and, of course, the ever-threatening puzzle of cancer. Personalized or
specific medicine could bring a breakthrough in several areas. Pray for divine wisdom for research teams. Pray also that the search for new cures will not succumb to political manipulation.

“[That] hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, and attaining to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 2:2-3)

ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO US CALLS NETANYAHU ADDRESS A ‘SACRED DUTY’

Israel's ambassador to the United States forcefully defended Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to address a joint session of Congress next month, describing the move as a "sacred duty" for the Israeli leader in a critical period for the "survival" of the state.

The current agreement under consideration by world powers and Iran, Ambassador Ron Dermer said on Sunday night, would leave Iran a "threshold nuclear power"—an outcome Israel cannot, and will not, accept.

"The prime minister’s visit to Washington is intended for one purpose, and one purpose only," Dermer told an audience in Florida: "To speak up while there is still time to speak up. To speak up when there is still time to make a difference.”

Earlier this week, Democratic leadership criticized the political nature of Netanyahu's upcoming address—and his invitation to deliver it, after House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) offered the Israeli leader the opportunity without consulting the White House.

The Obama administration called it "unusual," and promptly announced its decision not to receive Netanyahu during his visit to Washington, citing the visit's proximity to national elections in Israel.

The speech is widely expected by the Obama administration to be a repudiation of the president's policies on Iran.

"The prime minister’s visit here is not intended to show any disrespect for President Obama," Dermer told the crowd; nor is it "intended to wade into your political debate."

Dermer compared the controversy over Netanyahu's upcoming address to recent criticism over his visit to Paris, where he partook in a march against terrorism and in solidarity with the victims of recent terror attacks there.

Alongside leaders of the free world— and leaders of a world less so—Netanyahu was cast as a political actor by his critics for highlighting the Zionist ethos in a shaken French Republic: Its Jews were welcome in Israel, he said, by the thousands, to defend themselves by themselves.

Anti-Semitism in the form of radical Islam in Europe threatens its Jewish communities, requiring Israeli leaders to remind the world of Israel's founding purpose, Dermer argued. So too is the depth of the threat from a nuclear Iran, forcing the prime minister to speak—"fearless" of the political repercussions.

In his State of the Union address this month, President Barack Obama said his goal with regards to Iran was to "negotiate a comprehensive agreement that prevents a nuclear-armed Iran, secures America and our allies— including Israel— while avoiding yet another Middle East conflict."
But the Israeli government has expressed dismay in recent months over the negotiating position of the US-led team in the talks. They have granted Iran the right to retain an enrichment program, they say, and have softened demands that it dismantle large swaths of its infrastructure.

Israel fears that the deal will be generous, that inspections for its enforcement will be weak and that the agreement will sunset in a decade, allowing Iran to walk into the nuclear club shortly thereafter.

"Today, the international community stands at the precipice of forging an agreement with Iran over its nuclear program," Dermer said on Sunday. "The agreement that is being discussed today is not an agreement that would dismantle Iran’s nuclear weapons capability, but rather one that could leave Iran as a nuclear threshold state."

"That is an agreement that could endanger the very existence of the State of Israel," he said.

Negotiators from Iran and the US, United Kingdom, France, Russia, China and Germany hope to seal a political framework agreement by March 30, and a comprehensive nuclear accord by June 30. (Contributor: By Michael Wilner for The Jerusalem Post)

Give thanks for Speaker Boehner’s invitation and for Prime Minister Netanyahu’s acceptance to speak to a joint session of the U.S. Congress next month. Pray for Mr. Netanyahu’s safety and for a favorable outcome, despite negative comments from a White House spokesman about “protocol.”

The international level of anti-Semitism is rising, including in the U.S., where President Obama appears to be favoring Iran’s persistent march toward nuclear arms. Our Scripture speaks of a future day, after Israel turns to the Lord, having recognized Jesus as Messiah.

“Comfort, yes, comfort My people!” says your God. Speak comfort to Jerusalem, and cry out to her, that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned…” (Isa. 40:1-2)

CUSTOMER FILES COMPLAINT AGAINST BAKERY FOR REFUSING TO MAKE ANTI-GAY CAKE

If bakeries can be compelled to make wedding cakes for same-sex marriages, can they also be forced to create anti-gay cakes?

That’s the question before the Colorado Civil Rights Division after a customer filed a complaint against Azucar Bakery in Denver for refusing to write anti-gay messages on a Bible-shaped cake.

Owner Marjorie Silva told 9News in Denver that she received a complaint alleging religious discrimination from the state Department of Regulatory Agencies after she declined in March a customer’s request for cake with a depiction of two men holding hands with an X over them.

She said the customer handed her a piece of paper with his request. “After I read it, I was like, ‘No way,’” Ms. Silva said. “‘We’re not doing this. This is just very discriminatory and hateful.’”

She said she had no problem creating a Bible-shaped cake — she does so frequently — but told him that she would not write the messages he requested.

In what is probably not a coincidence, the episode occurs while another Colorado baker, Jack Phillips of Masterpiece Cakeshop in Lakewood, is fighting a ruling from the Colorado Civil Rights Commission that found him guilty of discrimination after he declined to bake a wedding cake for a same-sex couple.
The man who filed the Azucar Bakery complaint has been identified as Bill Jack, founder of the Worldview Academy in Castle Rock, which is a “non-denominational organization dedicated to helping Christians think and live in accord with a Biblical worldview,” according to the website.

Mr. Jack issued a statement to 9News saying, “I believe I was discriminated against by the bakery based on my creed. As a result, I filed a complaint with the Colorado Civil Rights division. Out of respect for the process, I will wait for the director to release his findings before making further comments.”

Ms. Silva posted a photo of herself Monday on Twitter holding a white sheet cake with the message, “Stop the hate. Don’t discriminate,” written in pink frosting.

In the Masterpiece Cakeshop case, Mr. Phillips was ordered by the commission in May to “re-educate his staff that Colorado’s Anti-Discrimination Act means that artists must endorse all views, compels him to implement new policies to comply with the commission’s order, and requires him to file quarterly ‘compliance’ reports for two years,” according to a press release from the Alliance Defending Freedom, which represents him.

Mr. Phillips, who offered to bake the couple another kind of cake but said baking a same-sex wedding cake would violate his Christian beliefs, has filed an appeal with the Colorado Court of Appeals.

The two complaints against Colorado bakeries have prompted interest in legislative action. Republican state Rep. Gordon Klingenschmitt said Thursday he is working on a bill that would allow merchants such as bakers and photographers to refuse to provide services that violate their faith.

“There is a flaw in the Colorado state statute,” Mr. Klingenschmitt said. “The Colorado Constitution protects the baker’s right to opt out. The First Amendment protects the baker’s right to opt out, but the Colorado discrimination statute does not protect the baker, and forces the baker to repeat speech that the baker disagrees with.”

A former U.S. Navy chaplain who opposes same-sex marriage, Mr. Klingenschmitt said he visited Ms. Silva at her bakery and supports her decision to turn down the customer’s request.

“I believe the Bible, but I also believe the First Amendment and Supreme Court case law protects every person’s right to disagree and not be compelled by the government to repeat the government’s favorite words,” said Mr. Klingenschmitt.

Kerri Kupec, legal communications director for Alliance Defending Freedom, said the organization supports Ms. Silva’s refusal to create the cake.

“It was clearly within her right to refuse to promote a message with which she disagrees,” said Ms. Kupec. “Same with Jack Phillips. At the end of the day, this is about speech.”

She said those at the conservative legal advocacy group will be watching to see how state officials handle the complaint against Azucar Bakery.

“They punished Jack Phillips for acting according to his conscience,” said Ms. Kupec. “It will be interesting to see how they act here.” (Contributor: By Valerie Richardson for The Washington Times)

This is more of the same but with a twist, as the complaining customer wanted an anti-homosexual message on a Bible-shaped cake, which the owner refused to produce. Was Charles Spurgeon being prophetic when he wrote the following in 19th century London? “As for the true Christian, he expects to have his reward in the next life, and to endure hardness in this. The promise of the old covenant...
was prosperity, but the promise of the new covenant is adversity.” Please pray that God will bless and protect those whose economic welfare is being threatened because of moral convictions.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matt. 5:10-12)

FAITH OF CHRISTIANS IN NIGER GROWS STRONGER IN FACE OF UNPRECEDENTED VIOLENCE

Christians in Niger are joyfully meeting in homes under police protection as they plan to rebuild church buildings and houses after attacks last weekend (Jan. 16-18) that were unprecedented in scale.

“Nothing of this magnitude has ever happened in this nation,” wrote one missionary couple in the capital, Niamey. “Nearly every church in the capital city of Niamey was burned or looted, along with some schools and orphanages and several other churches and Christian homes throughout the nation.”

Muslims protesting the depiction of the prophet of Islam in the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo destroyed 72 church buildings and killed at least 10 people in attacks that began in Zinder on Jan. 16 and hit Niamey the next day, according to Christian support organization Open Doors. A church leader today put the total of ruined church structures at 68, and a final count remained uncertain.

Analysts suspect a growing amount of Islamic extremist preaching, coupled with political rivals fanning flames of furor over Niger President Mahamadou Issoufou participating in a unity march in Paris against the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo offices, contributed to the scale of the attacks. More than 170 people were reported to have been injured.

“Last night the church members met for prayer as the pastor, who lost everything, encouraged them by flashlight to not only stand strong, but to move forward and to know that this attack will grow the church,” wrote the missionary couple to concerned partners. “The room was dark on the outside but illuminated by the fire in the hearts of His people, even as stones were being thrown on the roof.”

Christians in Niger praise God in spite of church building gutted in attacks in Niamey. (Christi Childs courtesy of Christian Aid Mission) In spite of the violence, so many present at the church meeting were eager to share testimonies of God’s faithfulness during the attacks that they were asked to wait until Sunday, they added.

“Our two churches in Niamey, along with the pastors’ homes, were destroyed,” they wrote. “We also have three Bible schools that sustained various amounts of destruction. The overall damage was extensive, and there is much loss. Now begins the process of rebuilding and restoring what was lost.”

The Rev. Mai’ai Kadaidai, president of the Evangelical Church in the Niger Republic (EERN), told Morning Star News by phone that attacks on Christians and churches were spread across five regions and the capital.

“This is the first time we are witnessing violence of this magnitude against the church and Christians,” Kadaidai said. “In all, 68 churches were destroyed across five regions of Agadez, Damagaram, Diffa, Maradi, Zinder, and in our country’s capital city of Niamey. The Muslim rioters destroyed five of our [EERN] churches, destroyed four homes of our pastors and many of our members were adversely affected.”

Abubakar Shekau, leader of extremist group Boko Haram in neighboring Nigeria, released a video after the unrest saying attacks in Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Cameroon would continue. Native Christian workers in
Niger aided by Christian Aid Mission, which assists ministries based in the country, said there were signs that more attacks could follow.

“There have been rumors of people going around marking Christians’ houses for further attacks,” a ministry leader native to Niger wrote on Tuesday (Jan. 20), according to Christian Aid Mission. “Later in the night, we received several phone calls from local Christians and missionaries that confirmed that their houses were marked. Please continue to pray for the very insecure situation in Niger.”

A Christian leader in Niamey said 46 Protestant church buildings and 15 Catholic worship sites in the capital were burned, according to Christian Aid Mission. At least three Christians killed in the attacks were trapped inside church buildings.

Attacks began on Jan. 16 in Zinder with the destruction of several church buildings and Christian-owned homes. Several other towns suffered damages as the violence spread to the capital by the next day, with angry Muslims also looting shops, attacking police stations, bars and hotels, and ransacking businesses that were either of French origin or owned by non-Muslims.

Charlie Hebdo had published a cover cartoon of Muhammad carrying a sign with the slogan (“I am Charlie”) that signified solidarity with free speech and the 12 victims of the shooting deaths by two Islamic terrorists at the magazine’s offices on Jan. 7. Depictions of Muhammad are forbidden in most branches of Islam, and prominent schools of Islamic jurisprudence prescribe death for defaming him.

Muslims make up about 98 percent of Niger’s population and have lived in relative peace with the country’s miniscule (0.3 percent) Christian minority. In spite of growing Islamic extremist elements within the country, few in Niger expected to hear the chants of “Kill the infidels, kill the Christians,” as protestors ransacked the nation. Niger was unranked on Open Doors’ 2015 World Watch List of the worst persecutors of Christians.

The president of Niger called several Christian leaders together to give him counsel on how to restore calm after the devastation on Saturday (Jan. 17), pastors said.

The amount of damages has yet to be calculated, but the missionary couple said rough initial estimates of repairs needed for their ministries would total more than $45,300.

“Our first priority is to take care of the needs of our pastors and their families,” they wrote. “They both lost almost everything.”

Preliminary estimates of damages to their pastors’ properties were $23,000; church properties, $16,000; and Bible school property, $6,300. Further building repairs were yet to be determined. “The estimates are still coming in, and in a country considered one of the poorest in the world, the rebuilding task seems insurmountable,” they wrote. “But Jesus told us that nothing is impossible to him who believes.” (Contributor: Morning Star News and Christian Headlines)

Pray for these Christians in Niger. Many in the West must reference a map even to locate Niger, though it is not the smallest country in West Africa. This report touches Christians’ hearts. These believers are extra thankful for the little they have and are still ready to trust God and to rebuild their structures, homes, and their lives, though the cost in US dollars is virtually astronomical. We can learn much from these saints. Often, those with the least are the most grateful. May God teach us from their example of faith and trust in God’s providence.
“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’” (Rev. 21:4-5)

UNION MEMBERSHIP RATE FALLS TO 100-YEAR LOW

New information from the federal government suggests workers’ interest in unions continues to fall, with union membership reaching its lowest rate in 100 years.

According to data released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics today, the union membership rate fell to 11.1 percent, with just 14.6 million wage and salaried workers maintaining membership.

In 2013, the union membership rate was 0.2 percentage points higher, at 11.3 percent.

The rate of union membership has been on a steady decline over the past three decades. It grew slightly from 12.1 percent in 2007 to 12.4 percent in 2008. During President Obama’s first year in office, however, it fell once more.

Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO, said in a statement today that though there has been job growth over the past 58 months, many of the jobs created do not provide fair wages.

“A strong recovery must be built on family-sustaining, not poverty-level jobs,” he said. “Today’s news confirms what most of us already knew: workers are finding good union jobs despite political ideologues—and jobs are coming back as the economy slowly rebounds, but neither are nearly enough.”

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of union membership for public-sector workers last year was 35.7 percent, compared to just 6.6 percent for the private sector.

Of those working in the public sector, government had the highest union membership rate.

James Sherk, a labor economics policy economist at The Heritage Foundation, told The Daily Signal that the drop in the rate of union membership can likely be attributed to the antiquated union model.

“They’re selling a product that hasn’t changed that much since the 1930s when America’s labor laws were founded,” he said. “Today’s workers simply aren’t that interested in purchasing what unions have to sell.”

Sherk said that unions have failed to modernize over time and noted that workers are moving away from joining because their contracts are no longer relevant.

Trumka disagreed.

“Today’s release of the annual union membership numbers by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that in this economic recovery, people are either seeking out good union jobs or taking matters into their own hands by forming unions to raise wages and ensure that new jobs are good jobs,” he said in his statement.

(Contributor: Melissa Quinn for The Daily Signal)

Being pro- or anti-union is not, by itself, a spiritual principle. The statistics on decreasing union membership indicate that workers are finding it less desirable. With individual choice, one can refuse or accept a job requiring union membership. Intercessors are more likely watching this trend as an overall economic indicator of employment vs. unemployment, which is part of the picture of our
nation’s strength and health. Work is good and was in God’s plan from the beginning. Those who follow these trends will pray accordingly.

“Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.” (Gen. 2:15)

“Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.” (Eph. 4:28)

**BOMB THREATS NATIONWIDE FORCE PLANES TO REROUTE, ISOLATE UPON LANDING**

Two planes that had just touched down on Sunday afternoon at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport were immediately isolated, reportedly due to multiple bomb threats.

A third plane, a Delta Airlines flight originally scheduled to fly on Sunday afternoon from Los Angeles to Orlando, was diverted to Dallas due to “a security concern.”

Two of the flights arrived into Seattle from Long Beach, California and Phoenix, Arizona. The Long Beach flight, JetBlue Airways #1006, arrived into Seattle at approximately 7:15 P.M. EST. The plane was reportedly isolated some 2,500 feet from other jets, the Seattle Times reported.

Twitter user Tiffany Lits tweeted photos of police and their K9 units going through the JetBlue passengers’ luggage:

The second flight was Delta/SkyWest #4741 from Phoenix. The pilot said he had heard of three bomb threats, according to NorthWest Cable News reporter Jenna Luthman, who said the threats were described as having “low credibility.”

The Seattle Times reports that the last time a similar event occurred, when a plane was isolated from the rest of the fleet at Seattle-Tacoma International, was on September 11th, 2014.

It remains unclear whether the three Sunday bomb threats are connected. Sunday’s threats come just one day after NORAD scrambled two fighter jets to escort two flights to Atlanta. On Saturday, airline officials received a “credible” bomb threat via Twitter, prompting the partial shutdown of Hartsfield Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. (Contributor: Jordan Schachtel for Breitbart)

Bomb threats, like suicide threats, must be taken seriously, which is what officials did in these three cases. However, bomb threat hoaxes are both frightening and expensive. The fear climate in America is tense, and international terrorism is trying to get a foothold in our cities. The U.S. is vulnerable in part because border security is lax, and the new Congress seems reluctant to handle the issue. Will God continue to protect our nation, especially in its severe spiritual decline? Pray as you are led for widespread awakening in the Church and revival.

“And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places…. ” (Matt. 24:6-7)

**DO VOTERS BACK REPEAL OF OBAMA CARE? FOR SURE, SAYS HERITAGE**
A health policy analyst suggests that legislation to repeal ObamaCare’s individual mandate is a no-brainer.

According to the federal government, most people living legally in the United States must have some form of health insurance. Those who do not have health insurance will most likely pay a fine.

Now two dozen U.S. senators, led by Senate Finance Committee Chairman Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-TN), are pushing the American Liberty Restoration Act. The bill repeals the individual mandate.

Moffit tells OneNewsNow: “… I've looked at surveys going all the way back to 2010 - huge majorities when people are asked, ‘Should you be required to buy a federally approved health insurance plan or pay a fine?’ Overwhelmingly Americans opposed the individual mandate. So I think frankly, as a political matter, it's a no-brainer.”

Congress has never had the chance to send an individual mandate repeal to the White House, Moffit says, because the now-former Senate Majority leader, Harry Reid, stopped any such bill from reaching the President's desk.

"That's going to change with Hatch," says the Heritage spokesman. (Contributor: By Chris Woodward for One News Now)

While IFA does not take sides politically, we agree that the Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) has not proven to be a good or honest law. We do believe, however, that even with the conservative majorities in both House and Senate provided by last November's elections, and with due respect for Senators Hatch and Alexander, getting the bill repealed will be difficult. Intercessors are inquiring of God and praying for His will and what is best for the country. Pray accordingly.

“Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.” (Ps. 51:6).

“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” (Phil. 4:8)

OK STATE SENATOR AUTHORS BILL TO ALLOW BIBLE AS CLASSROOM SUBJECT

An Oklahoma state senator has introduced a bill that would protect public schools from lawsuits when the Bible is taught as history.

Mustang Public Schools shelved the idea of teaching the Bible as history after two atheist groups claimed that would be unconstitutional.

The class would be an elective and not mandatory.

Sen. Kyle Loveless says the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that’s not unconstitutional and his bill would protect public schools from lawsuits.

“The class on the Bible that deals with its historical and literary effect on our nation and world is perfectly permitted under the First Amendment," he claims, adding that it is not a violation of church and state.
A religion professor quoted in the story told the Post he objected to the curriculum because it views the Bible through a "Christian lens" and because the textbook insists that what the Bible states is true.

The professor also told the liberal website that "you cannot make sense of Western art or American literature without basic biblical literacy."

The Huffington Post reported in a story last year that a Massachusetts public school was teaching middle-school students about Islam. After a Christian parent pulled his son from the class, the superintendent told the website that the school was "teaching history, not religion," and said understanding religious faith was important to understanding history.

Loveless says there is a great deal of interest among students, saying 20 spots were available and more than 200 students wanted to be in the class.

"So the demand is there," he says.

The textbook is "The Book: The Bible's History, Narrative and Impact."

That's the same textbook that the Green family, who founded Hobby Lobby, hoped to introduce into Mustang's public schools. (Contributor: Bob Kellogg for One News Now)

At least one Supreme Court case in our nation's 238-year history should have given the justices a clear opportunity to state what all readers of The Informer know about the First Amendment, which is that the words "separation of church and state" do not appear in the U.S. Constitution. Jefferson wrote the words in a letter reassuring Baptists the Church was protected from government intrusion. The absence of an historical ruling years ago, when the question first arose, almost defies belief. Perhaps such a ruling will come if or when the Bible as literature becomes a Court case. Intercessors should follow this bill and pray as led. Let us not forget the intrinsic power of the Bible to reveal God.

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Heb.4:12)