

REPORT FROM THE Center

Spring Symposium to Explore Role of Religious Freedom in Foreign Affairs

The Center's Spring 2010 Symposium will address "Faith, Freedom, and Foreign Affairs: Religious Freedom and International Relations." The role of religion in international affairs is becoming an increasingly important issue in the world today. We are used to thinking of religious freedom within the context of the U.S. Constitution, but controversies relating to religious freedom, including the relationship of religion and politics, exist worldwide. These global religious realities play an important role in international relations and U.S. foreign policy.

This Symposium will address these issues from a variety of perspectives. Speakers include nationally known experts on international human rights and religious freedom, diplomacy and statecraft, national security policy, and international

conflict resolution. These programs should offer helpful insights to anyone interested in examining how religion can make a positive contribution to international relations.

The five-part Symposium begins on Thursday, February 11, and continues weekly through March 11. Following the Center's customary practice, each program will be offered twice: once at 11 a.m. and again at 7:30 p.m. However, there is an **important change in our scheduling this year**: Morning sessions (11 a.m.) will be held in Blocker Science Auditorium at Virginia Wesleyan College; evening sessions (7:30 p.m.) will continue to be held in the Boyd Dining Center. Also note that the evening



session of the final program will take place on Wednesday, March 10.

The schedule of specific speakers and topics can be found in the Calendar of Events on page 8 and on the Center's Web site. All programs are free and open to the public; no reservations are required.

IN THIS Issue

- WORLD RELIGIONS IN HAMPTON ROADS 2
- RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE NEWS 3
- RECOMMENDED READING 5
- NEXUS HIGHLIGHTS 6
- DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES 6
- LOOKING AHEAD...& BACK 7
- CALENDAR OF EVENTS 8

REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR



New Report Details Global Restrictions on Religious Freedom

International law has affirmed the principle of religious freedom for more than sixty years. The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights stated: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or in private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance." This basic freedom has been reaffirmed in several international human rights documents since then. (The relevant language from these documents can be found in the booklet "Religious Freedom: Key Documents and Texts," available from the Center.)

continued on page 2

New Web Feature: World Religions in Hampton Roads



One of the Center's primary missions has been to nurture good relationships with and among the large interfaith community in Hampton Roads. We do this through our Nexus Interfaith Dialogue Series and in other ways. In December, the Center added a new feature to its Web site we hope will contribute to this effort: a new page we are calling World Religions in Hampton Roads. On this web page you will find a listing of congregations and community centers in our area for a wide range of faiths, including Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American, Sikh, Unitarian Universalist, and Wiccan. We hope to keep this list as complete and current as possible. If you discover errors or omissions, please let us know.

The new web page can be found by clicking on "Links" on the Center's home page, www.vwc.edu/csrf.

Report from the Center

is published twice a year by the Center for the Study of Religious Freedom at Virginia Wesleyan College.

Paul Rasor
Director

Ann Shappell
Assistant to the Director

757.455.3129

csrf@vwc.edu

www.vwc.edu/csrf

continued from page 1

Beyond these international declarations, three-fourths of the world's approximately 200 countries provide for freedom of religion in their constitutions or other basic laws, and another 20% protect at least some religious practices. Yet despite these legal protections, every country in the world, including the United States, imposes some restrictions on the practice of religion. And in many countries these restrictions are severe.

A Report released in December 2009 by the Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life entitled *Global Restrictions on Religion* now offers a quantitative study of these restrictions. This study is the first of its kind, and its findings are both interesting and significant.

The Report measures two types of restrictions: government restrictions – those imposed by law or official policy, and social hostilities – restrictions on religion that are the result of violence or intimidation by private individuals and groups, including other religious groups. The report places countries into four categories for each type according to the degree of restrictions found in these countries: very high, high, moderate, or low. Disturbingly, the Report finds that 64 countries have high or very high restrictions on religion. Worse, while this number represents about one-third of the world's countries, many of them are among the world's most populous. This means that nearly 70% of the world's population, some 4.8 billion people, live in countries that impose major restrictions on religion, most often religious minorities.

Among the world's 25 most populous countries, the most restrictive overall is Iran, followed by Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and India. The least restrictive high-population country is Brazil, followed by Japan, the U.S., Italy, and South Africa. China, the world's most populous country, ranks approximately in the middle of this group. It is among

the worst offenders in terms of government restrictions, but ranks quite low in terms of social hostilities. Similar patterns are found in other countries; only one country, Saudi Arabia, appears in the "very high" category for both government restrictions and social hostilities. Other countries with very high government restrictions include Iran, Burma (Myanmar), and Eritrea; countries with very high social hostilities include Afghanistan, Somalia, and Israel.

When all countries are considered, the United States falls roughly in the middle. In terms of government restrictions, the U.S. is in the "low restrictions" group, as we might expect, though it appears 88th on the list of 119 countries in this group, roughly on a par with Nicaragua, Djibouti, and Argentina. On the social hostilities index, however, the U.S. fares far worse, falling into the "moderate" group alongside Vietnam,



Australia, and the Republic of Macedonia. The main reason for this difference is the large number of religious hate crimes reported in nearly every state against many different religious groups. In other words, in the U.S., as in most other countries, there is a significant gap between the legal protection for religious freedom and the actual tolerance of religious difference in practice. This is one reason the work of the Center is so important.

As noted on the first page of this newsletter, the Center's Spring 2010 Symposium will examine the importance of religious freedom in international relations, including the conduct of diplomacy. This has become an increasingly important topic in recent years. Advocacy of religious freedom has been an official part of U.S. foreign policy since the passage of the International Religious Freedom Act in 1998. This Act created an Office of International Religious Freedom in the State Department and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Though their roles are somewhat different, both the State Department office and the Commission are charged with monitoring religious freedom around the world and making annual reports and policy recommendations. These reports have become major resources for tracking religious freedom in the world today.

The speakers in the Center's Spring 2010 Symposium include the first Director of the State Department office, Dr. Thomas Farr, and the current Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou. This Symposium offers Virginia Wesleyan College and the Hampton Roads community a unique opportunity to explore these important issues. ■

The full text of the Pew Forum Report is available online at:

<http://pewforum.org/newassets/images/reports/restrictions/restrictionsfullreport.pdf>.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

in the News

Director's note: The 2009 holiday season, as usual, generated many controversies over the public display of religious symbols. The following stories are taken from the Religion Clause Blog unless otherwise noted. Italicized comments are by Center Director Paul Rason.

In This Year's Christmas Wars, More Cities Eliminate Religious Displays

This year's "Christmas Wars" seem to be taking a different shape. In past years, typically a government entity permitted a religious display which was then challenged in court. This year, in a number of cases a governmental entity, after researching the law, has changed past practice and removed, or not included, a religious component. One recent example of this arose in Maryville, Tennessee. According to the *Knoxville News*, the city of Maryville ended its 22-year tradition of having a local radio personality read the Christmas story from the book of Luke as part of the annual "Illumination of the Greenbelt" festivities. The city attorney concluded the reading was not allowed after an inquiry from a concerned resident.

'Tis The Season for Battles over Holiday Displays on Public Property

In Ashland, Oregon, dozens of parents were upset when an elementary school principal removed a holiday tree after a family complained that it was a religious symbol. The principal also created new guidelines for school displays that effectively bar holiday trees, Santa Claus figures and dreidels, that courts generally classify as secular. However, under the new guidelines, wreaths, candles, candy canes, snowflakes and snowmen are permitted.

Some residents of Mesquite, Nevada, boycotted the mayor's tree lighting ceremony on Tuesday because a notice of the event she sent out referred to it as a "holiday tree." The event included a prayer by a Presbyterian pastor, a plea from the mayor to remember the message that accompanied the birth of Jesus Christ, and City Council singing *We Wish You a Merry Christmas*. The town's mayor said she had to use the term "holiday tree" because of the potential for lawsuits from the ACLU and others.

On the other hand, government entities that allow private individuals to erect displays have to be careful. A city may open its public spaces to the display of private religious messages, but it must make that space available to all. It must also be careful to avoid the appearance that the government itself is promoting a religious message or adopting a particular religious symbol as its own.

Opening Grounds to Displays gives County Problems on how to Choose

In Leesburg, Virginia, earlier [in 2009] the Court's Grounds and Facilities Committee banned all displays on courthouse property this year. However after a request to put a Christmas tree on the courthouse lawn, the Board of Supervisors voted to overturn the ban on displays. Now the county

continued on page 4

finds itself faced with requests to allow seven different displays, including a nativity scene, an interfaith display, a sign honoring the solstice and, most troubling to county officials, a suggestive parody of the *Twelve Days of Christmas*. The county Board of Supervisors scheduled a meeting to create rules to help county staff decide which displays to permit.

The National Christmas Tree, however, was lit as usual:



Obama Lights National Christmas Tree

On December 3, 2009, President Obama and his family lit the National Christmas Tree – a 40-foot Colorado blue spruce growing on the Ellipse just south of the White House. *AP* reports that the ceremony featured celebrity entertainers,

Santa and Mrs. Claus, and Michelle Obama reading *The Night Before Christmas* to a group of children. In his remarks, President Obama said in part:

Tonight, we celebrate a story that is as beautiful as it is simple. The story of a child born far from home to parents guided only by faith, but who would ultimately spread a message that has endured for more than 2,000 years – that no matter who we are or where we are from, we are each called to love one another as brother and sister. While this story may be a Christian one, its lesson is universal. It speaks to the hope we share as a people. And it represents a tradition that we celebrate as a country – a tradition that has come to represent more than any one holiday or religion, but a season of brotherhood and generosity to our fellow citizens.

For more information on these and other stories, visit the CSRF Web site at www.vwc.edu/csrf.

As was the National Menorah:

Rahm Emanuel Lights National Menorah

On Sunday, December 13, 2009, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel lit the National Menorah on the Ellipse in front of the White House. The event was sponsored by Chabad. According to the *Associated*



Press, Emanuel, who is Jewish, stood in a cherry picker that lifted him up to light the menorah in front of about 1000 onlookers. The ceremony marked the 30th anniversary of the first National Menorah lighting, attended in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter.

Hanukkah commemorates the rededication of the Jewish Second Temple in Jerusalem in 164 BC after its desecration by the Syrian-Greeks.

President Obama also sent a Hanukkah message, which read in part:

The Hanukkah story...reminds us that faith and perseverance are powerful forces that can sustain us in difficult times and help us overcome even the greatest odds. Hanukkah is not only a time to celebrate the faith and customs of the Jewish people, but for people of all faiths to celebrate the common aspirations we share. As families, friends and neighbors gather together to kindle the lights, may Hanukkah's lessons inspire us all to give thanks for the blessings we enjoy, to find light in times of darkness, and to work together for a brighter, more hopeful tomorrow.

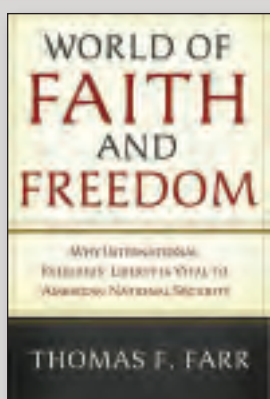


BORROWING POLICY

All books in the CSRF collection are included in the college library's online catalog, and most are available to VWC faculty, students, and other interested users. If you would like to borrow a book, simply come to the Center offices, located in Clarke Hall 108, during normal college business hours. If you are unable to come to the Center during these hours, please call the office at 455-3129, and we can make other arrangements. Specific policies can be found on the Center's web site, <http://www.vwc.edu/academics/csrf/education/library.php>.

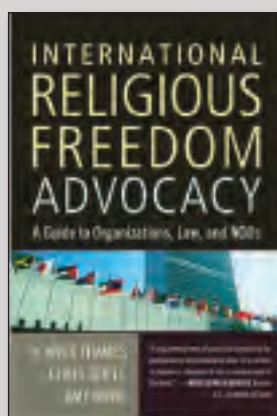
RRR Rasor's Recommended Reading

Several of the Center's Spring 2010 Symposium presenters have written books that address the issues raised by the Symposium.
See the story on page 1 and the calendar on page 8.



FARR, Tom, *World of Faith and Freedom: Why International Religious Liberty is Vital to American National Security* (2008)

SEIPLE, Chris, *International Religious Freedom Advocacy: A Guide to Organizations, Law, and NGOs* (2009)



JOHNSTON, Douglas, *Faith-Based Diplomacy: Trumping Realpolitik* (2003)



CENTER BOOKS RELATED TO SYMPOSIUM

The Center's library contains several books on the international dimensions of religious freedom. Here is a sampling:

ANDERSON, John, *Religious Liberty in Transitional Societies: The Politics of Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

BOYLE, Kevin, and Juliet SHEEN, *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A World Report* (New York: Routledge, 1997)

Brackney, William H., ed., *Human Rights and the World's Major Religions* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2005) (5 volumes)

BROYDE, Michael, and John WITT, eds., *Human Rights in Judaism: Cultural Religion and Political Perspectives* (Northvale, NJ: KTAV Publishing, 1996)

CHOUDHURY, Tufyal, *Muslims in The UK: Policies For Engaged Citizens* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2005)

DANCHIN, Peter G., and Elizabeth A. COLE, eds., *Protecting the Human Rights of Religious Minorities in Eastern Europe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002)

DAVIS, Derek H., and Gerhard BESIER, eds., *International Perspectives on Freedom and Equality of Religious Belief* (Waco, TX: J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies, Baylor University, 2002)

DRINAN, Robert, F., *Can God and Caesar Coexist? Balancing Religious Freedom and International Law* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004)

EVANS, Carolyn, *Freedom of Religion Under the European Convention on Human Rights* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001)

EVANS, Malcolm D., *Religious Liberty and International Law in Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

HILL, Mark, ed., *Religious Liberty and Human Rights* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002)

LERNER, Natan, *Religion, Beliefs, and International Human Rights* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000)

TAHZIB, Bahiyyih G., *Freedom of Religion or Belief: Ensuring Effective International Legal Protection* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 1996)

TAYLOR, Paul M., *Freedom of Religion: UN and European Human Rights Law and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

THIERSTEIN, Joel and Yahya R. KAMALIPOUR, eds., *Religion, Law, and Freedom: A Global Perspective* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000)

THOMAS, Scott M., *The Global Resurgence of Religion and the Transformation of International Relations: The Struggle for the Soul of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005)

NEXUS

Highlights

SERIES CONTINUES

RELIGION and SEX:

An Interfaith Exploration of Current Issues in Sexuality and Religion

Human sexuality has posed a range of difficult challenges for all religious traditions. The **2009-2010 NEXUS INTERFAITH DIALOGUE SERIES** will explore diverse responses to several current challenges facing religious institutions and individuals from a range of faith perspectives. Panelists from different faiths will be invited to reflect on questions such as the following as they consider these issues:

- *Are there religious doctrines or teachings that speak directly to these matters? To what extent are these authoritative or binding on individuals?*
- *What guidance is available in scripture? What interpretive issues are involved in the relevant passages?*
- *How has your faith's understanding of human sexuality changed or been reinterpreted over the years?*
- *Have sexuality issues caused division or controversy within your faith community?*
- *What is the relationship between religious teaching and social custom on issues of sexuality and gender?*
- *How has your personal experience affected your view of your faith's response to these issues?*



Specific program themes are as follows:

- | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Feb. 8 | Gender Roles in Religion |
| March 8 | Sexuality and Spirituality |

DIRECTOR'S ACTIVITIES

Center Director Paul Rasor had the following off-campus speaking engagements and other activities during the fall:

October 24: Presented the **Rumi Forum Peace Award** to Dr. Jeffrey Spence, recently retired President and CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, at the annual Rumi Forum awards dinner in Norfolk, VA.

November 6-10: Presented a peer-reviewed paper entitled "**The War Discourses of William Ellery Channing: Pacifism and Just War in Ante-Bellum Religious Liberalism**" at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion in Montreal. At this meeting, Dr. Rasor was also named to the national steering committee for the AAR's Liberal Theologies Consultation.

November 21: Delivered the ninth annual Willard M. Kiplinger Lecture on Ethics in American Society at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Bethesda, MD, entitled "**Militarism, Morality, and War.**"

LOOKING AHEAD...AND BACK



The Walidanes and Life Force Band performing at 2009 festival

SUPPORT THE CENTER

*The Center
for the Study
of Religious
Freedom needs
your support.*

You can support the Center in many ways: by attending Center programs, by sharing news of the Center's work with others, and by your financial contributions. Please share this newsletter with your family and friends, and encourage them to come to Center events.

If you would like to make a financial gift to support the Center, you may use the form below, or you may make a gift through our web site, www.vwc.edu/csr/f.

Your gifts allow us to improve our programs, strengthen our library and other resources, and continue our work of promoting religious freedom.

An evening of music, poetry and sharing.

The One Love Festival, co-sponsored by the Center, the Hampton Roads Network for Nonviolence, and several local faith communities, has become an annual tradition. Every fall since 2006, more than 200 people of all faiths came together in Boyd Dining Hall for a special evening of music, poetry and sharing. The goal of these events is to demonstrate unity in diversity and to foster a closer interfaith community. The next One Love Festival will be held on Saturday, October 23, 2010, at Virginia Wesleyan College. Check the fall Newsletter, available in September, for details.



Financial Gift to The Center for the Study of Religious Freedom

☐ \$1,000 ☐ \$500 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$50 ☐ Other \$_____

Name(s) _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Home Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please designate my gift for:

☐ Program Enhancement Fund ☐ Publication Fund ☐ Catharine Cookson Endowed Visiting Scholar Fund

Enclosed is a check for \$_____ payable to Virginia Wesleyan College. (Note fund on memo line of check.)

OR Charge my credit card \$_____ ☐ MasterCard ☐ VISA Card# _____

Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

My gift is ☐ in honor of ☐ in memory of _____

Please notify _____

Name and Address

Please mail to: College Advancement, Virginia Wesleyan College, 1584 Wesleyan Drive, Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

Calendar OF EVENTS

FEBRUARY

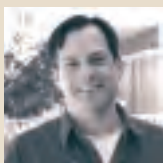
Monday, February 1, 2010

Nexus Interfaith Dialogue: Religion and Sex: Gender Roles in Religion

7:30 – 9 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

Thursday, February 11, 2010: *Symposium session*

Wear and Tear: Tensions within the Institutional



Protection of Religious Human Rights
What role do international institutions and documents play in protecting religious freedom?

Brett Heindl, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Political Science, Virginia Wesleyan College

Thursday, February 18, 2010: *Symposium session*

Faith-Based Diplomacy and the Conduct of Statecraft

Is there a place for faith-based international diplomacy? What role can or should religion play in the conduct of statecraft?

Douglas Johnston, Ph.D., President and Founder of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy



Thursday, February 25, 2010: *Symposium session*

Global Religious Liberty and American National Security

How can the United States strengthen its security by fostering religious freedom around the world?



Thomas Farr, Ph.D., Visiting Associate Professor of Religion and World Affairs and Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs, Georgetown University

Symposium Sessions: 11 a.m., Blocker Science Auditorium • 7:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

All events are free and open to the public. For more information, call 757.455.3129.

MARCH

Thursday, March 4, 2010: *Symposium session*

Religion and International Conflict



How might religion make a positive contribution to international relations and become part of the solution? Can religious commitments be expressed in ways that help increase international cooperation?

Chris Seiple, Ph.D., President of the Institute for Global Engagement

Monday, March 8, 2009

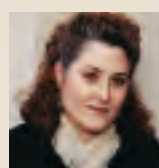
Nexus Interfaith Dialogue: Religion and Sex: Sexuality and Spirituality

7:30 – 9 p.m., Boyd Dining Hall

Wednesday, March 10, 2010: *Symposium session*

7:30 p.m., Boyd Dining Center

Thursday, March 11, 2010: *Symposium session*, 11 a.m., Blocker Auditorium



The Impact of American Foreign Policy on International Religious Freedom

How do American institutions such as the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom fit into this global picture? What are the challenges of advocating for international religious freedom as a representative of the U.S. Government?

Elizabeth H. Prodromou, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of International Relations and Faculty Coordinator of the Master's Program in International Relation and Religion, Boston University; Vice Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom



Center for the Study of Religious Freedom

1584 Wesleyan Drive, Norfolk, VA 23502-5599

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Norfolk, Virginia
Permit 27