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“Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.”

Psalm 107:19-20

URGENT: Relief for Haiti

As millions of Americans are saddened by the recent tragedy in the country of Haiti, many are searching for ways to reach out and help. Dr. Keith Wiebe, President of the American Association of Christian Schools, sent a letter to all AACCS schools urging them to challenge their students to give one dollar each towards helping this country that is in desperate need physically, emotionally, and most importantly, spiritually.

I am challenging us, as the AACCS family, to help by providing a love offering for believers in Haiti who have been affected by this terrible tragedy. CrossWorld Missions has a very active ministry and presence in Haiti through a number of churches. A man out of our church here at Grace is the overseer of a number of these missionaries and is in Haiti to give them whatever assistance he can. We can channel a gift through the CrossWorld Haiti Relief Fund that will be used entirely to help believers and their churches.

I want to challenge us to give one dollar for every student that we have in our AACCS schools. I believe this would be a great encouragement to our brothers and sisters there in Haiti. I also believe that it would help our children learn a valuable lesson about giving to those who are in need. I am suggesting that you challenge your students to bring the dollar offering and then send the check from your school directly to our AACCS office in Chattanooga, Tennessee. We will immediately forward that money to the "Haiti Relief Fund."

To be a part of this effort, please send your contribution to AACCS Haiti Relief Fund, 602 Belvoir Avenue, East Ridge, TN 37412. You can also make an online donation [here](#). All contributions sent to AACCS for the "Haiti Relief Fund" will go in their entirety to the relief work taking place in Haiti.

37th Annual March for Life

Hundreds of thousands of pro-life supporters will head to D.C. in the coming week to lobby Congress to maintain pro-life language in the health care bill, as well as to participate in the annual March for Life that occurs each year on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* (1973). This year marks the 37th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to legalize abortion, and thousands of people are making their way to D.C. to voice opposition to the horrific act. The March originally began as a small endeavor; but with the help of a massive grassroots campaign, the first March that took place on the one-year anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision saw over 20,000 people in attendance. Since then, the March has tremendously grown, with an average of over 200,000 individuals in attendance each year. After a long battle over pro-life issues this past year, an even bigger audience is expected to make the trek from the White House up through the National Mall, around the Capitol and to the front of the Supreme Court. This year's March will take place **January 22, 2010**.

Rep. Trent Franks (AZ), on the anniversary of *Roe v. Wade* last year, gave a [passionate speech](#) on the House floor, calling on his colleagues in Congress to remember why they are in Congress, using the words of Thomas Jefferson, “The care of human life and its happiness, not its destruction, is the chief and only object of good government.” He also reminded them of the words of Christ in Scripture, stating, “I hope if nothing else, that at least the President now can remember that the Bible in which he laid his hand, the pages beneath his hand had the words written in red, ‘Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it unto me.’ It is still not too late.” To watch this powerful speech, [click here](#).

Action: Schools and families are encouraged to join in the March and the events that transpire throughout the day, as well as to pray that the March will have a positive effect on our nation’s leaders.

To find more information about the March please click [here](#) or contact [Sarah Griffith](#) with the AACSLegislative Office (202-547-2991).

Students and Religious Freedom

Non-profit groups and churches around the country are preparing to educate their members on the importance of religious freedom during [Religious Freedom Day](#) on January 16, 2010. The materials promoting this day also encourage students to demonstrate their own religious freedom rights in their schools. While the 2009 school year was filled with legal cases that sought to remove students’ religious freedom rights, religious organizations and churches are hopeful that by educating students on their rights, more students will stand strong and educators will be less likely to tread on the students’ rights to publicly express their faith.

According to Gateway to Better Education, an organization promoting Religious Freedom Day, students and educators are unaware of the freedoms they have to express their faith in a public setting: “In too many instances, public school teachers tell Christian students they cannot include their faith in their homework assignments or classroom discussions. However, the U.S. Department of Education has issued guidelines explaining students’ religious liberties. Students can pray, read their Bibles, and talk about their faith at school during school hours. They can organize prayer groups and Bible studies and announce their meetings. They can express their faith in their class work and homework.”

In fact, the U.S. Department of Education’s [Guidelines](#) explicitly [state](#):

Among other things, students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, the lunch hour, or other non-instructional time to the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities.

Students may express their beliefs about religion in homework, artwork, and other written and oral assignments free from discrimination based on the religious content of their submissions.

Students may organize prayer groups, religious clubs, and "see you at the pole" gatherings before school to the same extent that students are permitted to organize other non-curricular student activities groups. Such groups must be given the same access to school facilities for assembling as is given to other non-curricular groups, without discrimination because of the religious content of their expression. Where student groups that meet for nonreligious activities are permitted to advertise or announce their meetings—for example, by advertising in a student newspaper, making announcements on a student activities bulletin board or public address system, or handing out leaflets—school authorities may not discriminate against groups who meet to pray.

Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach *about* religion, including the Bible or other scripture; the history of religion, comparative religion, the Bible (or other scripture)-as-literature, and the role of religion in the history of the United States and other countries all are

permissible public school subjects. Similarly, it is permissible to consider religious influences on art, music, literature and social studies.

Students have a right to distribute religious literature to their schoolmates on the same terms as they are permitted to distribute other literature that is unrelated to school curriculum or activities.

Teachers may, however, take part in religious activities where the overall context makes clear that they are not participating in their official capacities. Before school or during lunch, for example, teachers may meet with other teachers for prayer or Bible study to the same extent that they may engage in other conversation or nonreligious activities.

Though the U.S. Department of Education's guidelines express clearly the rights of a student to exercise his faith in a public setting, many teachers, educators, administration, and local school boards fail to acknowledge these rights. For example, in the [case](#) at Wilson County School District in Tennessee, when students passed out literature and hung posters throughout the hallway promoting a "See you at the pole" event, the local school board censored the posters hanging in the hallways by covering up the phrase "In God we Trust" as well as the phrase "pray with us." Alliance Defense Fund Senior Counsel Nate Kellum argued in defense of the students, "Christian students shouldn't be censored for expressing their beliefs. It's ridiculous as well as unconstitutional to cover up these references to God and prayer--one of which is the National Motto itself--on posters announcing a student-led activity."

While a federal court ruled in favor of the students' rights to freely express their faith in this case, other cases continue to pop up throughout the country that directly attack a student's right to religious freedom. The Religious Freedom Day serves to educate students and educators on what is constitutionally acceptable in expressing and exercising religious rights in school.

D.C. Pastors Demand a Vote on Marriage

Since the DC City Council legalized same-sex marriage in Washington, DC, without a vote by the citizens of DC, [groups are rising](#) in opposition, claiming that the rights of the citizens have been usurped by a handful of people on the city council. On Wednesday, January 13th, a press conference was held by the Stand for Marriage DC Coalition, an organization of 100 African American, Hispanic, and other ministers from across America concerned about marriage.

During this press conference, members of the coalition called on the DC City Council to allow a vote on the same-sex marriage bill and appealed to Congress, which has a thirty day window to intervene. This press conference followed a Pastor Summit which took place on Monday where attendees were challenged regarding how they can best take a stand in their own communities. The coalition did not call same-sex marriage a civil right; instead they gathered to defend traditional marriage.

Bishop Harry Jackson, Chairman of the [High Impact Leadership Coalition](#) and a pastor of the Hope Christian Church in the DC area, opened the press conference with more than twenty ministers lined along the wall behind him. Jackson stated the coalition's primary message, "Let the people vote."

Jackson said that the city council has acted arrogantly by not allowing DC residents to vote and continuing to blatantly refuse a vote. Asserting that marriage is a critical, nonpartisan issue, Jackson urged Congress to intervene to allow DC residents to express their values.

In support of traditional marriage in DC, Representatives Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) and Steve King (R-IA) have [introduced](#) the DC Referendum of Marriage Act of 2010, a bill that will allow DC residents to vote on same sex marriage in their district. Rep. Chaffetz, the bill's sponsor, said that the DC City Council is not allowing a vote because they already know the outcome. Thirty states have already demonstrated that the American people

value traditional marriage by a vote supporting marriage between a man and woman. Rep. King, the cosponsor, said, "Marriage is the foundation stone into which we pour everything."

At the close of the press conference, Bishop Jackson gave a passionate reminder that DC, because it is not a state, does not have the right to pass a law that contradicts the Defense of Marriage Act, signed into law by President Clinton.

By Drew Meadows, AACS intern

Prop 8 En Route to the Supreme Court

The court case *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* over the lawsuit challenging California Proposition 8 is now one week under way. Despite apprehensions from same-sex marriage experts that this battle is coming too early, Theodore Olson and David Boies have taken the case. Olson intends to use US Supreme Court precedents to demonstrate that Proposition 8 is [unconstitutional](#) because of discrimination against gays. "We consulted and researched in depth," Olson said to *Time* magazine. "We concluded that we had/have a reasonable chance of success."

Andy Pugno, General Counsel for ProtectMarriage.com, is leading the defense to uphold Proposition 8. "I have no doubt that the final outcome of the *Perry* case will conclusively determine the [future of marriage](#) for the entire United States," Pugno said.

During the first day of testimonies, the two plaintiff couples (Kristin Perry and Sandra Stier, and Paul Katami and Jeffrey Zarrillo) described how being restricted from the right to marry has damaged their lives. After the couples testified, they were followed by a series of experts whose testimonies and cross-examinations covered the rest of the week. Harvard history professor Nancy Cott stepped up at the end of Monday and described the history of marriage without allowing the definition to include one man and one woman. When the defense cross-examined her on Tuesday, they were able to reveal that she was a supporter of same-sex marriage and that her logic only presented more problems. Cott conceded that she does not know where same-sex marriage will progress.

After Cott, Yale history professor George Chauncy testified about the history of discrimination against gays in America; but, upon cross examination, Chauncy admitted to the defense not only that such violent discrimination is largely in the past but also that he also was a gay rights supporter.

Following Chauncey, UCLA social psychology professor Dr. Letitia Peppau took the stand. She testified that heterosexual and homosexual couples are indistinguishable from one another. When the defense cross-examined her testimony, she had to concede that some studies prove otherwise.

While the court proceedings still have several weeks before a final ruling, the defense is encouraged both by the current progress and by Wednesday's Supreme Court ruling that barred broadcasting the trial. "All in all," said Pugno, "Wednesday was a successful day for our legal team, the integrity of the judicial process and the supporters of Prop 8."

Neither side has assumed victory; and no matter the outcome, an appeal to the US Supreme Court is expected.
By Drew Meadow, AACS intern

In Case You Missed It:

[Churches Called to Promote Religious Freedom](#)

[Testimony of a Christian School Student](#)

[Texas' Education Board Debates Social Studies Standards and the Role of Faith in our Heritage](#)



Editor: Maureen Wiebe
Staff Writer: Sarah Griffith
Legislative Office, 119 C Street SE, Washington, DC 20003
Phone: 202.547.2991 • Fax: 202.547.2992

