



**CHURCH STATE COUNCIL**  
A Religious Liberty Ministry of the Pacific Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists\*

proclaiming religious liberty throughout the land

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## Overcoming Religious Intolerance

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April 15, 2017

Hayward Seventh-day Adventist Church

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### Religious Liberty Ministry?

- Legal Services:
  - Sabbath problems
  - People of all faiths
- Legislative Advocacy
- Education

To give people their lives back

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### KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

How do we respond  
as Christians to the pervasive  
religious intolerance,  
global and domestic?

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## Religious Intolerance is Widespread

76% of the global population  
live in nations with little or  
no religious freedom

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## Sheik Abdul Aziz bin Abdullah, the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia, called for the destruction of all churches in the region in March, 2012



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## Who do we speak up for?

First they came for the Socialists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Socialist.  
Then they came for the Trade Unionists, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Trade Unionist.  
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out— Because I was not a Jew.  
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.

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## Nigeria

... in the last four years alone, approximately 1,000 Christian churches have been destroyed by Boko Haram and its Muslim sympathizers in a nation that is approximately half Christian half Muslim.

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### Beheading of Christians



A spectator sport. Notice the child.

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Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Christ.

(Source: U.S. Department of State)

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### Persecution of Yazidis



Yazidis are a Kurdish speaking group in northern Iraq who are victims of genocide at the hands of ISIS. Their religion has both early Christian and Islamic influences.

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### Ethnic cleansing of Burma's Rohingya (Muslims)



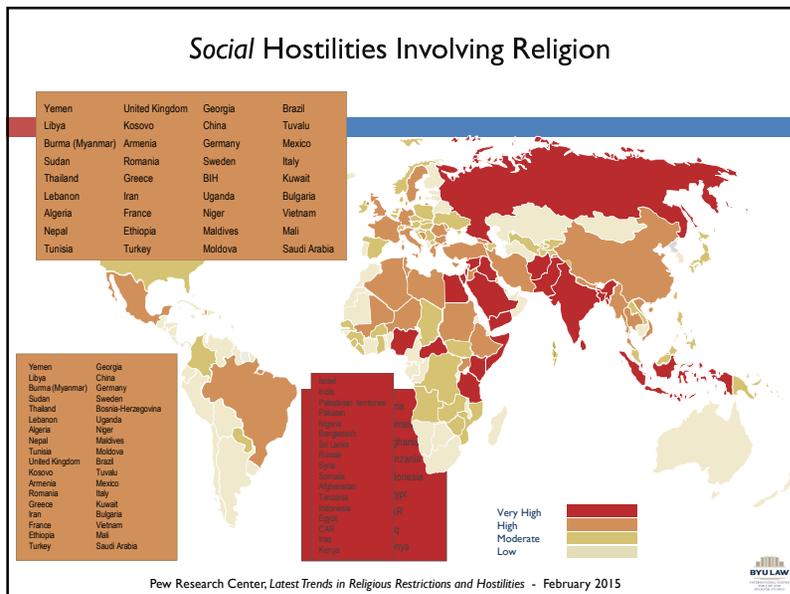
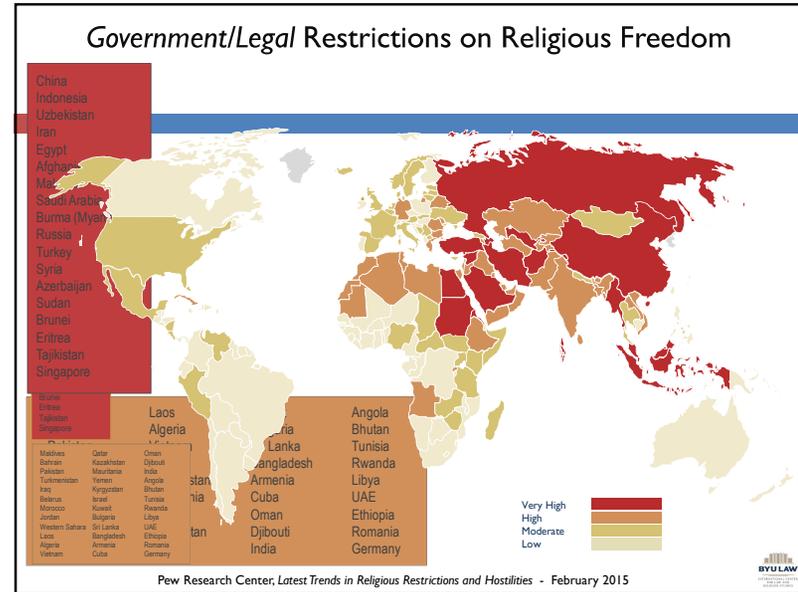
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## Jewish Exodus, 20<sup>th</sup> century

- 900,000 Jews left Arab nations and Iran in 20<sup>th</sup> century, with only about 20,000 remaining.
- Factors: push and pull, persecution, anti Semitism, political upheavals, poverty, the pull of Israel and the freedom of the west

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## Prophetic implications?

Adventists expect religious persecution prior to the return of Christ?

Do we need to wait any longer?

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**Does God see? Does God care?**

Then the Lord said “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them...”  
(Exod. 3.7-8).

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**Overcoming Religious Intolerance:**

**What is the Christian response to intolerance?**

**Building walls or bridges?**

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**Great Wall of China**



The Great Wall: Some 13,000 miles long and built over a period of about 1,500 years. All in all, about a mile a year. Is this the solution for the United States? For us as Christians?

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Or do we build bridges?

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### Matthew 5: 43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

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### Matthew 5: 43-48 (continued)

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The measure of perfection is how we treat those who are not like us, not of our own people.

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### How can we love our enemies?

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

Romans 5:10

We can't, not humanly. Christ loves our enemies already, so it is His love that must dwell in our hearts.

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### The Good Samaritan



When Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan, the question, “Who is my neighbor?”, was a legitimate theological issue.

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## Luke 10

<sup>25</sup> And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” <sup>26</sup> He said to him, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” <sup>27</sup> And he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, “You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live.”

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## Luke 10

<sup>29</sup> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

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## Leviticus 19

<sup>17</sup> “You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. <sup>18</sup> You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

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## Leviticus 19

<sup>33</sup> “When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. <sup>34</sup> The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God.

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## The Good Samaritan



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## Who are the Samaritans?

Samaritans believe that their worship, which is based on the [Samaritan Pentateuch](#), is the true [religion](#) of the ancient Israelites from before the [Babylonian captivity](#), preserved by those who remained in the [Land of Israel](#), as opposed to Judaism, which they see as a related but altered and amended religion, brought back by those returning from the Babylonian Captivity. The Samaritans believe that [Mount Gerizim](#) was the original Holy Place of Israel from the time that [Joshua](#) conquered Canaan (Israel).

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## Who is my neighbor?

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## Sweatshop Stats

- An estimated 250 million children ages 5 to 14 are forced to work in sweatshops in developing countries.
- Products that commonly come from sweatshops are clothing, coffee, shoes, toys, chocolate, rugs, and bananas.
- The price increase to the average consumer if sweatshop salaries were doubled is 1.8%.

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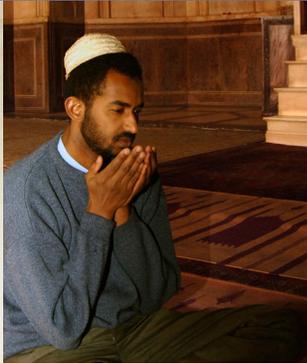
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**Who is my neighbor?**

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**Who is this Jesus knocking?**

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me

Jesus is a gentleman.  
He does not enter without an invitation.

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**Who is this Jesus knocking?**

<sup>31</sup> “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup> Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Matthew 25:31-34

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**Whom does Jesus regard as “the least?”**

And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

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## Who is this Jesus knocking?

- The immigrant?
- The Muslim, Sikh, Buddhist?
- The Millennial sporting a tattoo / purple hair?
- The lesbian, gay, transgender?
- The disabled?
- The homeless?
- The drug addict?

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## Must the “least” repent before they can come to Jesus?

The Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28) It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance... We can no more repent without the Spirit of Christ to awaken the conscience than we can be pardoned without Christ. {Steps to Christ, p. 26}

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## How are we judged?

By our attitude and conduct toward those we look down upon as “the least.”

This may include those who differ from us in their politics, religion, national origin, race, sexual orientation, or even their musical tastes

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## Overcoming intolerance?

We fear what we do not understand

We are afraid of people we do not know

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## Overcoming intolerance?

We overcome intolerance by  
making the stranger  
our neighbor and our friend

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## Overcoming intolerance?

- We are afraid of those we do not know
- We overcome intolerance by making the stranger our neighbor and our friend
- The best way to destroy your enemy....  
is to make him your friend

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We have new opportunities to build bridges.

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## The Trump era:

A time of crisis and opportunity !  
First rule of success: SHOW UP!  
Make friends before we need them

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**“Where is the World?”**  
**Kayla Mueller** (ISIS hostage and victim)



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