

Religion Story Of The Year: Anti-Muslim Bigotry In America

BY CHARLES C. HAYNES
First Amendment Center

WASHINGTON — The recent decision by Lowe's Home Improvement to pull ads from the reality TV show "All-American Muslim" caps a very successful year for the growing anti-Muslim movement in the United States.

So successful, in fact, that anti-mosque protests, anti-Shariah laws, and anti-Muslim hate crimes could easily fill any list of "top five" religion stories in 2011.

Lowe's withdrawal from sponsoring a show about the daily life of five American Muslim families was apparently in response to objections to the program from a conservative Christian group called the Florida Family Association.

Wittingly or unwittingly, Lowe's action re-enforces the message anti-Muslim groups have been propagating for years: Portraying Muslims as ordinary Americans is problematic, if not wrong and dangerous, because it may lull the rest of us into ignoring the stealth threat of Islam and Muslims to the freedom and security of the United States.

Of course, the Florida Family Association and other anti-Muslim groups hasten to tell you, there are some "good Muslims." But Islam itself, they argue, is inherently violent and oppressive — and eventually Muslims in America will subvert our laws by imposing their own.

Never mind how many studies show high levels of opposition to radical Islam and extreme interpretations of Shariah law among Muslim Americans. Never mind how much Muslim leaders and institutions in the U.S. help in the fight against extremism. Never mind the millions of Muslims who have practiced their faith freely and peacefully in America for generations — without undermining the Constitution.

No reasoned argument, no amount of scholarship, no pile of studies is enough to convince the diehard "stop the Islamization of America" crowd that they are wrong to demonize Islam and Muslims in the U.S.

In 2011, the anti-Muslim narrative migrated from the right-wing

fringe into the mainstream. It's gone so far that even an innocuous television show created to fight stereotypes loses a sponsor because it doesn't portray the very stereotypes it attempts to dispel.

Fortunately, Americans who care about religious freedom are beginning to push back. As I write this, Christians, Jews, Muslims and others are organizing boycotts of Lowe's in cities throughout the nation. And growing numbers of religious and political leaders are speaking out against intolerance and prejudice aimed at Muslim Americans.

If the decision-makers at Lowe's had hoped to avoid controversy by pulling sponsorship from the show, they badly miscalculated.

In a world plagued by extremists acting in the name of Islam, it goes without saying that Americans have every reason to be worried about homegrown terrorism. According to the polls, Muslim Americans strongly share that concern. That's why imams preach and work against extremism and Muslim Americans are actively helping law enforcement foil terrorist plots (studies support both of these assertions).

Incoherent and unnecessary laws banning Shariah, unfounded fears about mosques in the neighborhood, and ugly attempts to paint all Muslims with the terrorist brush, are all red herrings that divert Americans from our shared goal of fighting extremism (of all varieties) and securing our safety and freedom.

Ironically, Lowe's cave-in to anti-Muslim prejudice may prove to be exactly what was needed to wake Americans up to the very real dangers of Islamophobia in our country.

If we must concede 2011 to the propagators of fear and hate, let's work to make 2012 a banner year for proponents of religious freedom.

Dr. Charles C. Haynes is director of the Religious Freedom Education Project at the Newseum. He writes and speaks extensively on religious liberty and religion in American public life.



One Nation, Under Gods

BY ERIC WEINER
©2011 Los Angeles Times

Nearly half a century ago Time magazine famously asked: Is God Dead? The verdict is in. God is definitely not dead — the United States remains a highly religious nation — but God has diversified, and in ways the cheeky headline writers of 1966 couldn't have imagined. We're a spiritually promiscuous nation, increasingly so, and while this is, on balance, a good thing, it also poses certain dangers. It's one thing to explore different faiths, and something else entirely to hop aimlessly from one to another, bolting for the door when the going gets tough. (And it always gets tough.)

It's commonly believed that this spiritual restlessness is a relatively recent phenomenon, born of the cultural tumult of the 1960s, but it's a lot older than that. The 19th century transcendentalists — Emerson, Thoreau and others — borrowed heavily from Eastern thought, and we've been borrowing, and God-hopping, ever since. Today, at least a third of us will change our religious affiliation over the course of our lifetimes, according to the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. Never before have so many people been free to choose their religion, and at so little risk. "Heresy" is based on the Greek root meaning "to choose for one's self." We are all heretics now.

It's easy to dismiss all this God-hopping as the spiritual equivalent of consumerism run amok — a sort of Black Friday of the soul. That may be true in some cases, but overall I think it is a healthy phenomenon. No longer are we shackled to the religion of our birth or our community. We are free to choose, and remarkably we tend not to choose the easiest path. The most popular religions are not faddish cults that preach an anything-goes hedonism but, rather, those that make great demands on their followers. Calvinism, for instance, is enjoying a resurgence. Buddhism is also hugely popular, and it can hardly be described as easy, as anyone who has tried to still their mind for five minutes can attest.

When much is asked, much is given.

Another result of this "theodiversity" is that while we may live in political silos — apart and rarely mixing — we do not live in religious ones. Few Americans have religiously homogenous families, friends and neighbors, according to David Campbell of Notre Dame University. "If you add to your friends someone of another faith, you become warmer toward that faith," he says, and, crucially, warmer to people of all faiths. Tolerance breeds tolerance.

We also cross religious lines much more easily than political ones. More than a third of Americans in the Pew survey say they attend religious services at more than one place, and sometimes at a different faith from their own.

Not only are we a religiously fluid nation, we're also a porous one. Beliefs, for instance, once considered exclusive to the New Age movement have seeped into the mainstream. Twenty percent of Christians, and slightly more of the public overall, say they believe in reincarnation, according to Pew. An equal percentage believe in astrology and in yoga — not only as exercise but as a spiritual practice.

The point is not that we've all gone Shirley MacLaine but, rather, that religions are constantly borrowing from one another, whether they acknowledge it or not. There is no such thing as a "pure" religion. All faiths are hybrids, to one degree or another, and we are better off for it. We recognize familiar themes in religions otherwise alien to us and are more likely to be accepting of the "other."

Amid this landscape, many people are looking for a faith that fits, though not always finding it. The fastest-growing religious group is the "nones," those who refuse to claim any affiliation. The "nones," are not, for the most part, atheists. They are the religious equivalent of political undecideds. They have yet to hear a compelling argument for one faith or another but would love nothing more than to be swept off their feet.

For St. Augustine, it was the words of a child — "pick it up and read it" — that trans-

formed his life from one of degradation to piety and bliss. Leo Tolstoy and John Bunyan are other examples of the sudden conversion, prompted by a personal crisis.

The more common type of conversion — and the one more likely to stick — is the gradual variety. In Katmandu, I met one such convert, James Hopkins. Born into a traditional Presbyterian family, he never felt like he fit in. His religion didn't speak to him. In Augustinian fashion, he stumbled across a book about Buddhism, but it took years of study — and questioning — before he converted. Buddhism, he told me, has made him a better person. He's less angry, more compassionate. Consciously or not, he adheres to Pragmatism, a philosophy that skirts sticky ontological questions and concludes simply that, as William James put it, "Truth is what works."

With so many choices out there, though, it's easy to get "lost in the jungle of possibilities," as one Hindu holy man put it. And choosing a religion, of course, is not the same as choosing a new car or a calling plan. The stakes are higher. And so is the cost. Seekers must be willing to sacrifice. Otherwise, their seeking is reduced to just another form of narcissism. The worst kind, perhaps, because it is disguised as something noble.

Carl Jung, something of a God-hopper himself, saw the risks inherent in this excess of spiritual possibilities. "Modern man tries on a variety of religions and beliefs as if they were Sunday attire, only to lay them aside again like worn-out clothes." Or, to put it another way: We have commitment issues. When one path proves incompatible, we switch to another (and there is always another).

God-hoppers are, at their worst, spiritual dilettantes. At their best, they are experimenters, in the tradition of Gandhi. He took an almost scientific approach to his spiritual experimentation, carefully noting the effects of a certain practice, such as fasting or meditation, then making adjustments, then repeating. Gandhi also borrowed liberally from Christian theology, unapologetically plucking grains of wisdom wherever he found them.

In that sense, he was very American.

CHURCH SCHEDULES

Abundant Life ABUNDANT LIFE MINISTRIES, 517 Burleigh, Lawrence and Barbara Hladky, pastors. 665-0889. SAT 7pm Praise and worship celebration. SUN. 10am Worship. WED. 7pm Worship. Teens prayer daily 10am.	Baptist YANKTON BAPTIST CHURCH, SBC, Pastor Matt Green, 607 East 15th St., Yankton, 665-7587. SUN. 9:30am Bible study, SS; 10:45am Worship. WED. 7pm Midweek service.	Catholic ST. BONIFACE CHURCH, rural Freeman. DECEMBER WEEKEND Mass Sundays 9:00 a.m. or call Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly. (605)583-4318. Christmas Eve Mass Dec. 24th 5pm.	Church of Christ CHURCH OF CHRIST, 1114 West 12th, Yankton, 665-6379. SUN. 9:30am Bible study; classes for all ages. 10:30am Worship.	Lutheran Martinus Lutheran Church, Utica. Pastor Dean Schroeder Sunday Divine Service 10:30am (605)589-3195 www.MartinusLutheran.org	Non-Denominational GLORY CHRISTIAN CENTER, 901 E 11th St. Yankton. Gail Ryken, pastor, 665-2369. SUN. 10am Service. WED. 6pm Prayer. GC School, call (605)665-1988.	United Methodist FIRST UNITED METHODIST, Yankton. Rev. Ron Johnson Pastor. 665-2991. Sunday, Contemporary Worship 9:00; Trad. 10:30. Childcare 8:45-11:45. 8:30 AM Hour, KYNT.
Alliance of Renewal Churches LIVING WATER CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, Sun. 10am Yankton Middle School (2000 Mulberry) Weds. 7pm Prayer. David Olson, pastor. (605)260-2138.	Bible Church GRACE BIBLE CHURCH, Call Pastor Joel Finck for meeting times an locations. Regular meetings: Sunday morning 10:30am; Wednesday Bible Study 7pm. (605)760-4701.	ST. COLUMBA CHURCH, rural Irene. DECEMBER WEEKEND Mass, Sundays 10:30 a.m. or call Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly, (605)583-4318. Christmas Eve Mass: Dec. 24th 7pm.	Church of Jesus Christ CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST LATTER-DAY SAINTS, 2300 Douglas, Yankton. Randy Campbell, (605)565-2016. Family History Ctr 665-0901. SUN. 10am Sacrament meeting.	OUR REDEEMER LUTHERAN, rural Irene. 263-3724. SUN. 9am Worship.	Presbyterian PEACE PRESBYTERIAN (PC/USA), 206 E. 31st. 665-0448. Rev. Dr. Nelson Stone & Rev. Marilyn Stone. Sun-10am worship, Coffee to follow. SS for kids 10:30am. Aired at 8pm Fri. on Ch. 3 & 98.	WAKONDA, IRENE, VIBORG, UNATED METHODIST, Pastor Mark Gronseth. SUN. 8:30am Worship at Wakonda; 9:45am Worship at Irene; 11am Worship at Viborg.
Assembly of God ASSEMBLY OF GOD, 801 W. 25th, Jeff Mantz, pastor. 665-6362 (office). SUN. 10am Worship Celebration. WED. 6:30pm Midweek service and Bible study for all ages.	Catholic HOLY FAMILY CHURCH OF CEDAR COUNTY (Immaculate Conception), St. Helena, NE. Rev. Eric Olsen. (402)357-2400. Mass: Saturday 5pm.	ST. GEORGE CHURCH, Scotland, SD. Rev. Mathew Vazhappilly. DECEMBER WEEKEND Mass Saturdays 4:30p.m. or call (605)583-4318. Christmas Eve Mass Dec. 24th 8pm. Christmas Day Mass: Dec. 25th 9:30am.	Episcopal CHRIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, 517 Douglas, Yankton. Rev. James Pearson, (605)665-2456. Sunday 9:00 am Serenity 10:15 am The Holy Eucharist Wednesday Noon The Holy Eucharist.	OUR SAVIOR'S LUTHERAN, LCMC/NALC, Menno. Interim Past 9:00am with brunch to follow; Sunday School 10:20a.m. Questions call (605)387-5256	Reformed RIVERVIEW REFORMED, 17th St. & Burleigh, Rev. Rodney Veldhuizen, pastor. 665-9204. SUN. 9:30am Worship, 10:15am SS. WED. Youth group & adult choir.	KYNT 1450 AM Radio KYNT 1450 AM Radio SAT. 10:30am "Saturday Morning Live." SUN. 8:30am United Methodist Hour. 9:05am "God's Good News." 9:30am St. John's Lutheran Church
Baptist ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH, 221 W. 3rd, Kevin Caskey, pastor, 665-0066. SUN. 9:30am Sunday School, 10:45pm Preaching Service, 4pm Afternoon Service. THU. 7pm Preaching & Prayer Service.	HOLY FAMILY CHURCH OF CEDAR COUNTY (Sts. Peter & Paul), Bow Valley, NE. Rev. Eric Olsen (402)357-2400. Mass: Sundays 11am.	ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC, Lesterville. SUN. 10:30am Mass.	Evangelical Cornerstone Evangelical Church, Pastor Oliver Omanson, Stewart Elementary School; Morning Service 10:30 a.m. Wednesday College Bible Study 1306 Maple Street. Mike Stevens 665-8750.	South Dakota Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, MAIN STREET LIVING television program, 10a.m. (CST) on KDLT-NBC; and 11a.m. (CST) on KAUTN-PAX; and 10a.m. (MST) on KKRA-PAX.	Seventh-Day SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST, 722 Locust St., Yankton, 665-1032. SAT. 9:30am Sabbath School, 11am Worship. 665-4496, 665-4881. Pastor George Shaver Home phone (605)369-5496.	WNAX 570 AM Radio WNAX 570 AM Radio. Lutheran Shows-6:30am, 8am, 11am. Wings of Healing-7:30am. Words of Hope 8:30am. Prov. Ref. Church-8:45am. Voice of Prop.-9:30am. Hr. of Hope 10am.ChristianCrusaders-10:30am.
BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH, 303 Ohio St., Wakonda. Mike Lindsay, pastor, (605)759-5020. SUNDAY Worship, 11:00a.m. evening 6:00pm WEDNESDAY Bible Study 12Noon.	MOUNT MARTY COLLEGE, Peace Chapel, MMC campus. SUN. 10am Mass with the Sisters in the Bishop Marty Chapel. Public is welcome to attend.	ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, Constance, Neb., Fr. David Fulton, pastor. SAT. Mass: 7:30pm.	Lutheran CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH: 305 W. 25th, Yankton, 665-8848. Rev. Dani Jo Ninke. SUN: 8:30am & 10am Worship, SS-9:45am.	PRINCE OF PEACE, Wisconsin Synod, 201 East 25th St., Pastor Werre, 665-4793. Sat. 6pm Worship.	United Church CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Newcastle, Neb., 303 Highway 12, Rev. Gary Kimm, pastor. SAT. 6PM Church school, 7PM Worship. Second THUR. 2PM Ladies Aid.	MIX 106 FM Radio CLASSIC HITS 106 KVHT FM Radio SUN.-THUR. 10:05PM "Family Radio Rosary" with Bishop Robert Carlson.
CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, SUNDAY: 9:00 Sunday School for all ages. 10:30 Worship Service. MONDAY: Service broadcast 7:30pm Channels 3 & 98. WEDNESDAY 6:30pm AWANA, 7-8th Grade Youth Group: 7:00pm 9-12th Youth Group, Adult Bible Study. Pastor Jon Cooke, Associate Pastor Rick Slattery, Youth Pastor Jeremy Nelson, Children's Min Dir Laura Kotalik. www.cbchurch.com 2407 Broadway, (605)665-5594.	ST. AGNES PARISH: SIGEL, rural Utica. SUN. 9am Mass, confessions 1/2 hour before Mass.	ST. PATRICK'S CATHOLIC, Wakonda, Rev. Scott Trayner, 624-2697. SUN. 8:30am Mass.	FAITH UNITED LUTHERAN, 44874 303rd St., Volin SD 57072. (605)267-2277. SUN. Worship Services 9:30am. Children's Education 9:30am. (WOW) 6:30-7:30pm.	South Dakota Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, MAIN STREET LIVING television program, 10a.m. (CST) on KDLT-NBC; and 11a.m. (CST) on KAUTN-PAX; and 10a.m. (MST) on KKRA-PAX.	FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, 301 W. Franklin, Hartington, NE, (402) 254-6563 or 664-5310, Rev. Gary Kimm, pastor. SUN. 8:15am Church school, 9am Worship.	ESPAN Radio 1570 ESPN RADIO 1570 SUN. 10:30AM Trinity Lutheran Church, Vermillion, worship.
HARVEST INDEPENDENT BAPTIST, 100 W. 3rd, Mission Hill. Pastor Nathan Martin, 668-0708 (ch.) 665-1481 (home). SUN. 9:30am SS. 10:30am Worship. 5:30pm Worship. WED. 7:00pm Worship.	ST. ANDREW'S CATHOLIC CHURCH, Bloomfield, NE. Fr. Michael Schmitz SUN. Mass: 10:30am; TUE. Mass: 8am; THUR. Mass: 7pm. Confessions: THUR. 6:30-6:55pm.	THE HOUSE OF MARY SHRINE, 6-mi. W. Yankton, Hwy.52. Masses: Monday 8:30 through October. Masses Saturday 9:00 every Saturday. Rosary Sunday 4:00. Rosary 4:00. Open 7 days a week for prayer. thehouseofmaryshrine.org	FIRST AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH, AFLC 300 S. Carpenter St., Tripp. (605)935-6941 9:30am Sunday School; SUN. 10:45 Worship firstthope@santel.net	TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH, Hartington/Crofton, NE, Justin Wiese, interim pastor; (402)254-6606. SUN. 9am Worship (Hartington), 10am SS (Hartington), 11am Worship (Crofton).	UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, Crofton, Neb., 412 W. Main St., (402)388-4124, Pastor Les Parmenter. SUN. 10:00am Worship.	KNOLOGY. MON. 6:30pm St. John's Lutheran; 7:30pm Calvary Baptist. TUE. 6:30pm Trinity Lutheran. WED. 6:30pm Antioch Baptist; 7:30pm Grace Bible. THUR. 8pm Assembly of God. FRI. 7pm United Church of Christ; 8pm Peace Presbyterian.
YANKTON DAILY PRESS&DAKOTAN Yankton Printing Company 319 Walnut, Yankton, SD • 665-7811	ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST CATHOLIC, Fordyce, Neb. Rev. David Fulton. SUN. 10:30am Mass.	Charismatic YAHWEH-SHALOM CHARISMATIC, St. Benedict Catholic Church. MON. 7:30pm prayer meeting	GAYVILLE-BERGEN LUTHERAN Pastor Ralph Egbert. (605)267-4342 (church) Sunday: SS-10:15am GLC SS- 9:15am, GLC Worship-10:30am.	TRONDHJEM LUTHERAN CHURCH (AFLC), rural Volin. 263-3841. SUN. 9:15am; 10:30am Worship.	United Methodist GAYVILLE-VOLIN UNITED METHODIST, Rick Pittenger, pastor. 624-2179. 9am Worship Service. 10:00am Sunday School.	Koranda Well Company, LLC Well Drilling & Repair Pure Water Distillers 605-463-2244 42719 307th St., Tabor

WINTZ & RAY FUNERAL HOME and Cremation Service, Inc.
Garden of Memories Cemetery
2901 Douglas • Yankton • 605-665-3644

LEADER CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION INC.
Basements • Bunkers • Manure Pits
Residential & Commercial
Call Larry Leader
Yankton • 665-2717

Larry's Plumbing Service
703 Burleigh St.
665-4322

Simpson Sharp Shop
For All Your Sharpening Needs
Don & Helen Simpson
31051 430 Ave.
Tabor, SD • 665-5448

TOPKOTE, INC.
Asphalt Maintenance
43439 SD Hwy 50 • Yankton
(605) 665-8106

HEATING KAISER COOLING
Commercial & Residential
Call Doug or Chris
(605) 665-2895

Koranda Well Company, LLC
Well Drilling & Repair
Pure Water Distillers
605-463-2244
42719 307th St., Tabor