

washingtonpost.com

In Brief

In Brief

Saturday, April 29, 2006; B09

Interfaith leaders have called for President Bush to close the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives a week after the resignation of the office's director.

"The so-called faith-based initiative was a bad idea as a campaign promise in 1999, and it's even a worse idea today after we have seen the bureaucratic and political realities growing out of this initiative," said the Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, president of the Interfaith Alliance, speaking to reporters Wednesday in an audio news conference hosted by his Washington-based organization.

"The faith-based initiative turns houses of worship who receive its funds into contract employees of the federal government," Gaddy said.

H. James Towey, the director of the office since 2002, announced his resignation April 18. He will leave by June 2 to become president of Saint Vincent College, a Catholic school in Latrobe, Pa.

Shortly after his announcement, Towey predicted that the White House office would stay open, despite the hopes of its critics, which he described as "wishful thinking."

"The reality is this initiative has taken root in America and will carry on after the president leaves office," Towey said.

Opponents of the office are concerned about the connections it might foster between church and state. They say the office has sapped some religious groups' ability to speak out against the government.

"If you're bound to the government, it's very, very difficult to have that kind of prophetic voice," said the Rev. Jane Holmes Dixon, senior adviser to the Interfaith Alliance board of directors and a retired Episcopal bishop of Washington.

-- Religion News Service

Bishop Says Condom Use Ethical in AIDS Fight

Welcoming news that the Vatican is studying the issue of condom use by those with HIV, a South African bishop fighting the pandemic said Tuesday that the church must look beyond its teaching on sexual conduct to regard condom use as an "ethical imperative."

Bishop Kevin Dowling of Rustenburg, South Africa, in a conference call from an AIDS-prevention meeting in Washington, expressed hope that the study will relax the Vatican's 1968 ban on condoms

Advertisement



Advertisement

Going Once

- 8 once-in-a-lifetime trips up for bid
- 8 unbelievable travel packages at Cardmember-only prices

Don't let your dream trip slip away. [TELL ME MORE](#)

Terms and conditions apply.

My life.
My card.

rather than reinforce it.

"It would in fact be an ethical imperative to use condoms in order to preserve and protect life. That's what I hope will come out," Dowling said.

Dowling's comments came days after a Vatican cardinal announced that his office was preparing a document on condom use, and Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, a prominent liberal prelate, asserted that condom use could be acceptable as a "lesser evil" in preventing the spread of AIDS.

In an interview with Vatican Radio on Tuesday, Cardinal Javier Lozano Barragan, who heads the Vatican's health department, appeared to revise his estimate that a document would be released "soon."

He said the issue was being closely examined by various Vatican departments.

-- Religion News Service

Baptist Activists Seek School 'Exit Strategy'

Southern Baptist Convention activists are again asking the denomination to urge removing children from public schools, two years after a similar bid failed.

A proposal calling on Baptists to develop an "exit strategy" from public schools is co-sponsored by Texas lawyer Bruce Shortt and Roger Moran, a Missouri businessman serving on the convention's executive committee.

Shortt and Moran plan to submit their resolution to the Southern Baptists' annual meeting in June.

Their announcement Tuesday came after 56 Baptist leaders urged members to "speak positively about public education" in response to efforts promoting home-schooling and Christian academies.

The resolution proposed by Shortt and Moran says recent federal court rulings have favored public schools "indoctrinating children with dogmatic Darwinism" and have limited the rights of parents in dictating what schools can teach, including matters on sexuality.

The Southern Baptists' 2004 annual meeting rejected Shortt's resolution urging a public school pullout.

The 2005 meeting adopted another Shortt proposal asking Baptist churches to investigate whether schools were promoting acceptance of homosexuality.

A denominational spokesman noted that submission of a resolution does not necessarily mean that it will reach the convention floor for a vote.

With more than 16 million members, the Southern Baptist Convention is the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

-- Associated Press

Baptist Activists Seek School 'Exit Strategy'

Southern Baptist Convention activists are again asking the denomination to urge removing children from

public schools, two years after a similar bid failed.

A proposal calling on Baptists to develop an "exit strategy" from public schools is co-sponsored by Texas lawyer Bruce Shortt and Roger Moran, a Missouri businessman serving on the convention's executive committee.

Shortt and Moran plan to submit their resolution to the Southern Baptists' annual meeting in June.

Their announcement Tuesday came after 56 Baptist leaders urged members to "speak positively about public education" in response to efforts promoting home-schooling and Christian academies.

The resolution proposed by Shortt and Moran says recent federal court rulings have favored public schools "indoctrinating children with dogmatic Darwinism" and have limited the rights of parents in dictating what schools can teach, including matters on sexuality.

The Southern Baptists' 2004 annual meeting rejected Shortt's resolution urging a public school pullout.

The 2005 meeting adopted another Shortt proposal asking Baptist churches to investigate whether schools were promoting acceptance of homosexuality.

A denominational spokesman noted that submission of a resolution does not necessarily mean that it will reach the convention floor for a vote.

With more than 16 million members, the Southern Baptist Convention is the nation's largest Protestant denomination.

-- Associated Press

© 2006 The Washington Post Company