THE LAWYER® CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY

Advocates

The high cost international attorneys pay to deliver justice

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Ignoring Drowning Babies by Allison McFadden

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR





David Nammo

Executive Director

& CEO

We are blessed in America that we have a First Amendment. We fight over it and try to expand or contract it, but there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world.

In fact, most of our brothers and sisters in Christ worship in fear of persecution. The churches in Saudi Arabia must sing "quietly" so as not to get arrested. Christians in Pakistan live in constant fear of blasphemy laws and accusations (often unfounded). And, as I write this, the Christians in Syria are being slaughtered under religious persecution.

What is the role of the Christian attorney in all of this? Living, working, and sharing in the suffering side-by-side with those they represent.

I met a Pakistani attorney recently who had to flee the country while in the midst of defending clients from blasphemy charges. In court, the judge declared that "defending" clients from blasphemy charges is itself blasphemy. He boarded the first flight out of the country, and his family was right behind him. It was shocking to hear that someone could be accused of blasphemy and spend years in prison before even seeing a judge.

Recently, I had the privilege of introducing our friends from Handong University School of Law, a Christian law school in South Korea, to friends from a church in one of these countries where persecution is rampant. They have been working together to find a way to better defend religious freedom and raise up a generation of Christian attorneys to do the same.

But Christian attorneys can do much more than defend the persecuted church. For example, CLS has recently added a Christian Legal Aid clinic in Kenya to our network.

The work around the globe—gathering Christian attorneys and law students, training them to protect the church and individuals, fighting for freedom—is serious business. Our brothers and sisters in Christ who practice law in these places are amazing beacons of light. I meet them mostly through Advocates International, the sister international ministry to Christian Legal Society.

The late Sam Ericsson, my friend and the former executive director of CLS, started Advocates International in the 1990s. He had a vision of having a Chrisitan Legal Society type of organization in every country and every region. Thirty years on, because of his work, Christian attorneys have been gathering in regions, countries, and cities worldwide, making a difference on so many levels. The stories of churches, ministries, and individuals whose lives have been changed are almost too many to count. Sam always said that we live in His-Story—not history—where we play a small role in the amazing work of the Holy Spirit around the globe.

As you read the articles in this issue, please pray for the work and protection of Christian attorneys everywhere.

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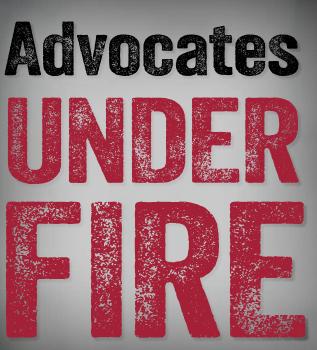


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"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves."

MATTHEW 10:16



Rescuing the Persecuted: A Fight for Freedom

BY CHARMAINE HEDDING

In many parts of the world, religious freedom is not simply restricted, it is outright criminalized. For individuals who choose to convert to Christianity, the consequences can be severe: imprisonment, torture, and even death at the hands of their own family. For most of my work, I have been directly involved in evacuations to rescue persecuted individuals, including over 9,000 people from Afghanistan, ensuring the underground church could escape targeted violence. Among those I have helped are Ayaan and Halima (not their real names), two women in Somalia who were arrested, imprisoned, and abandoned by their families simply for their faith.

The journey from persecution to freedom is long and dangerous, requiring international coordination, legal advocacy, and humanitarian aid. It is a mission filled with obstacles including government repression, legal systems that enforce religious persecution, and the immense challenge of reintegration for those who manage to escape.

Arrest and imprisonment

In 2022, I was contacted by human rights groups and advocacy organizations in Somalia regarding Ayaan, a young woman who had been arrested in Somaliland. Her crime? Converting to Christianity and allegedly sharing her faith on social media.

Ayaan's own family turned her in to the authorities, demanding she be prosecuted under Sharia law. The police arrested her without a warrant, confiscated a necklace with a cross, and interrogated her without legal representation. She was pressured to renounce her faith in exchange for her freedom. When she refused, the authorities moved forward with prosecution, charging her with "bringing the religion of the state into contempt" and other religious offenses. By August 2022, she was sentenced to five years in prison.

Her suffering in prison was unimaginable. She was forbidden from practicing her faith, denied Christian materials, and even refused basic necessities like food and hygiene products—abandoned by her family and ignored by the legal system. Worse, upon her release, she faced a deadly threat: her own uncle had vowed to kill her should she choose to continue practicing Christianity.

Halima's case followed a similar pattern. Arrested in 2023 at the age of 27, she was sentenced to seven years in prison for converting to Christianity. During her trial, she was denied a defense attorney and had no opportunity to appeal. Her family not only turned her in, but also insisted on the harshest sentence possible. Through local advocacy efforts, we were able to appeal her case and reduce her sentence, eventually securing a release for her in 2024. But her freedom did not mean safety yet—returning home was not an option.

Securing their release and evacuation

My work in cases like these is never straightforward. When I was asked to assist with Ayaan's case, I worked with international and local human rights organizations to confirm the details of her imprisonment and the dangers she faced. International pressure played a critical role, as advocacy groups, the U.S. Embassy, and the International Religious Freedom Office became involved in pushing for her release.

Once we secured Ayaan's freedom, a new challenge emerged: Where could she go? Her family had condemned her, and Somalia's legal system did not offer her protection. In a complex evacuation, we managed to get her legal documents and move her into a safe house in another country. I met with her



Charmaine on a small plane over East Africa moving people to safety.

3



With an Afghan family I evacuated to safety.

there, where we discussed the threats she faced, and planned her escape from the region. It was a long and complex process, requiring careful coordination, secure travel routes, and an immense amount of logistical planning to ensure she reached safety.

The same efforts had to be undertaken for Halima. After her release, she needed immediate protection, as returning to her family of origin or community would have meant certain death.

These cases highlight the immense difficulty of rescuing individuals who have been persecuted for their faith. It is not just about getting them out of prison; it is about ensuring they are not hunted down once they are free. The process of securing safe passage requires working around bureaucratic roadblocks, navigating diplomatic hurdles, and finding countries willing to accept refugees who face religious persecution. Even when international laws guarantee the right to asylum for those fleeing religious violence, the reality is often much more complicated.

The challenge of finding legal support

One of the greatest challenges in these cases is securing legal representation. In countries where religious persecution is state sanctioned, finding an attorney willing to defend a Christian convert is nearly impossible. Even when legal advocacy is available, attorneys often face threats themselves, and courts are biased in favor of enforcing Islamic law.

Additionally, laws in countries like Somalia are designed to criminalize religious converts. The Somali Penal Code punishes "bringing the religion of the state into contempt" with imprisonment, and Somaliland's constitution explicitly forbids conversion from Islam. There is no straightforward legal recourse for individuals like these two young women. Only through careful advocacy, engaging in international advocacy efforts, and skillfully navigating local complexities can their freedom and safety be secured.

The difficult road to reintegration

Even after escaping, survivors of religious persecution face immense hardship. Cast out by their families and unable to return home, they arrive in a foreign country with nothing—no money, no job, no support. Many carry deep trauma from imprisonment, abuse, and even torture. Reintegration is a long, difficult process requiring counseling, security, and stability. Even in Western countries, where they can practice their faith freely, they struggle with education gaps, language barriers, joblessness, and urgent needs for housing, legal status, and medical care.

In the case of Ayaan, my organization, Shai Fund, worked to ensure she had the support she needed to rebuild her life. After securing her release and safe passage, we found her a loving and caring family and community where she could heal and thrive. With the help of dedicated Christian attorneys, we were able to secure her legal status in the United States, ensuring she could live without fear of persecution. While her story is one of hope and resilience, it also highlights the urgent need for greater resources to support others like her. The demand for emergency aid, safe housing, and reintegration assistance far outweighs the resources available, making it crucial for us to continue expanding our efforts to protect and restore the lives of persecuted individuals.

As I write this, we have two more families who have suffered severe religious persecution in Sudan and are now awaiting sponsorship in the United States. Both families include Christian attorneys who were specifically targeted for their faith by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), formerly the Janjaweed, because they courageously represented Christians. Now, they themselves are being persecuted.

The RSF, a group notorious for its human rights abuses, raided their homes and issued threats against their lives. In a complex and dangerous evacuation that took months of planning, we navigated war zones, passed RSF checkpoints, and secured

their escape from Sudan. Once out of immediate danger, we placed them in a safe house in another country where they are now waiting for sponsorship in the United States.

A call to action

The stories of Ayaan and Halima are just two among many. Across the world, Christians face imprisonment, torture, and execution simply for their faith. Many remain in hiding, knowing that if they are discovered, they will be killed. Yet, in the face of such persecution, Christian attorneys and advocates have the power to make a difference, standing in the gap to defend the defenseless, fight for justice, and secure freedom for those at risk.

Rescuing persecuted Christians is not easy; it requires global support. Every case demands legal expertise, safe housing, secure travel arrangements, and, in many instances, high-risk emergency evacuations.

This work is only possible because of those who refuse to stay silent. Christian attorneys, sponsors, and advocates play a vital role in protecting the persecuted and giving them a chance at a new life. Right now, the two Sudanese Christian attorneys and their families, who risked everything to defend fellow believers, are in need of sponsorship in the United States. If you or someone you know would like to help, please reach out.

Together, we can bring peace, safety, and stability to those who have lost everything, offering them hope, a future, and the freedom to live out their faith without fear.



CHARMAINE HEDDING is the president of Shai Fund, with its headquarters in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Shai Fund is leading global efforts to protect persecuted minorities, advocate for religious freedom, and provide

humanitarian aid in crisis zones. With over two decades of experience in the nonprofit sector, she has designed and implemented emergency relief programs in war-torn regions, consulted for government agencies and NGOs, and spoken at international forums on religious persecution and humanitarian response. Her work has directly impacted vulnerable communities, helping them rebuild their lives with dignity and security. She is a valued partner of Advocates International.





The Treacherous Road to Religious Freedom in Nigeria

BY SUNNY AKANNI

Early in February 2025, I had a very humbling experience on the difficult road to religious freedom in Nigeria.

I was standing in front of the multi-door courthouse in Kaduna, the capital of Kaduna State in northwest Nigeria, talking with some clients, when a lady walked up to me and greeted me. "Good day, Sir," she said, looking me straight in the eyes. I greeted her politely, adding that I could unfortunately not remember where I had previously met her. She smiled and said, "I am Mrs. Josephine Gangas." I was taken aback and embarrassed, even shocked, because I knew her well and should have immediately recognized her. I right away asked her about her husband, Rev. Jonah Gangas.

Rev. and Mrs. Gangas spent two years and eighteen days in Kaduna Prison on an allegation of abducting one Sadiya Idris, a Muslim girl who ran away from her home into the bush where she spent some days before a farmer helped her to safety and eventually brought her to the home of Rev. and Mrs. Gangas. The young girl refused to go back home again. Her parents were divorced before she was two years old, and she alleged that she had never enjoyed the love of a mother, which prompted her to run away.

The Gangas took her in and sent her to a missionary school in Plateau State where she performed brilliantly, but on finishing her secondary education and coming home to the Gangas, the couple was arrested and prosecuted for the abduction and conversion of Sadiya to Christianity.

We assisted them pro bono, with my chamber visiting them in the prison and paying for all the various filing fees of court documents and sometimes buying toiletries for them to use in the prison. On 7 March 2024, the Kaduna State High Court found Rev. and Mrs. Gangas not guilty of the allegation against them. While they were both released, Mrs. Gangas's employment with the Kaduna State Ministry of Education was summarily terminated without salary, and Rev. Gangas's church was handed over to another pastor, also with immediate termination of his salary. As a result, their dependents had to stay with relatives while the landlord threatened to throw out all their belongings for non-payment of rent.

The reason why I, embarrassingly, did not recognize Mrs. Gangas was because she looked normal—completely different than what she looked like in prison. She was very thin and malnourished, looking ghastly when I saw her there. The con-

ditions in prison were terrible. During her year out of prison, she could recuperate and started to look normal again. I did speak to her on the phone during this time but had never seen her in person.

Professor Solomon Tarfa was no different; he had also spent about one and a half years in Kano Prison when I took on his case. I managed to get him released on bail while his case was being heard at the High Court, but he was convicted and sentenced to a cumulative period of three years. I pursued his appeal at the Kano Court of Appeal, and he was eventually acquitted on the charge of running a Christian orphanage and discharged.

I often travel far at my own expense to assist in cases such as these; sometimes I must camouflage myself so that I am not recognized because there could be bad consequences if I were.

During Prof. Tarfa's time in prison, the government took away 27 of the orphans in their Du Mercy Orphanage. On her own, Mrs. Mercy Tarfa struggled to care for her family and the remaining orphans, having had to find and pay for a place to stay for the children after the orphanage burnt down.

People like these, after coming out of the prison, also need help to get their lives back on track, but all too often no help is available for them. A recent example is that of a 17-year-old girl who was forcefully converted to Islam and married off. I took her

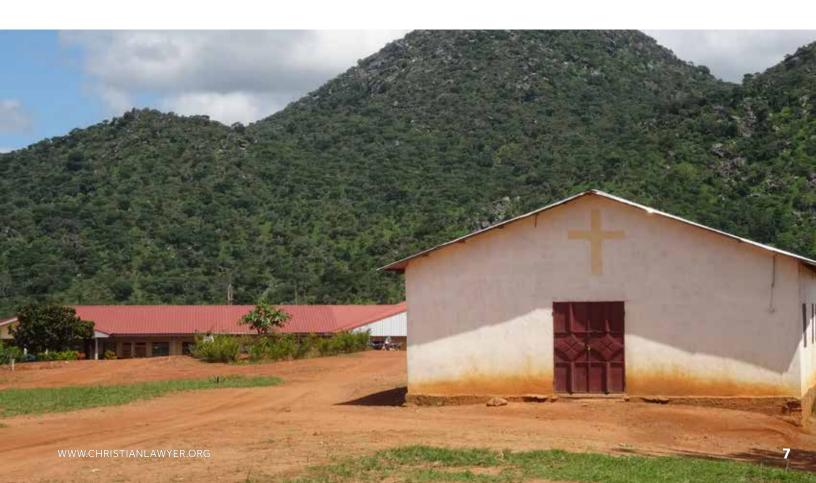
case to court and got her freed from her so-called husband but was then confronted with the challenge of her reintegration back into normal life, as she had lost her mother as a young girl. We had no option but to take her in to live with us, which certainly was not ideal because of all my travels and the fact that my children are grown up and live on their own, while my wife is a university lecturer in another city.

Pastor Monday Ayuba's case was just the same. The allegation against him was that he had defamed the governor of Kaduna State in WhatsApp communication. He was arrested and held in prison for five months until we got involved and managed to get him released on bail.

It is clear that the road to religious freedom in the north of Nigeria is a very treacherous one. The law is basically the one tool we have to help those trapped on this dangerous road, suffering religious persecution. As such, we want to raise the level of awareness of the plight of Christians arrested, or kidnapped, and the attorneys who act for them.



SUNNY AKANNI is a Christian attorney, a past president of the Christian Lawyers' Fellowship of Nigeria, and the immediate past president of Advocates Africa. He pastors Rhema Chapel World Outreach in Kaduna, Nigeria.



Christian Conciliation Training

Coaching People to Reconcile
Mediating People to Reconcile
Advanced Coaching and Mediation
Teaching a Reconciliation Seminar
Fundamentals of Christian Adjudication



The Fall and Rise of "Cultural Christianity" in the West

BY ANDREA WILLIAMS

Throughout my life, the influence of Christianity on culture has been steadily decreasing.

When I first trained as a barrister in the United Kingdom in the 1980s, it was normal for senior judges to express issues in terms of Christianity and to talk about the Christian basis for our common law. You could clearly see the impact of Christianity in all facets of public life: in our language and culture, in public acts of worship in schools, local councils, and even Parliament. Our laws were infused with Christian morality. Marriage was defined as between a man and a woman. Trading laws kept Sunday special, meaningfully different from other days of the week, making it easier for workers to go to church. Senior church leaders would occasionally speak clearly about moral issues, and people would take note.

Since the 1980s, a lot has changed in the United Kingdom. Secular liberalism has sought to remove all meaningful traces of Christianity from our culture. In its place has come the fruits of the sexual revolution, as seen in an aggressive LGBTQ ideology and, increasingly, Islam.

Laws like the Human Rights Act (1998) and Equality Act (2010) theoretically put Christians and the manifestation of their faith on an equal standing with other groups, protecting their rights to freedom of conscience and expression. But with the broader cultural trends it often seemed like these rights were just that: theoretical.

The secret of Britain's greatness, order, and prosperity was our Christian distinctiveness. When we replaced this with secularism, we did not usher in a neutral society where everyone was treated equally; we created a hierarchy of rights where aggressive new worldviews had free reign over Christians.

Losing Christianity courtside

At the Christian Legal Centre, we've been at the centre of nearly all the most significant religious freedom cases in the last 20 years. Time after time in the courts, judges seemed to find reasons why Christian freedoms mattered very little.



Andrea with social worker Felix Ngole who had a job offer revoked after the charity discovered his Christian beliefs.

Some rulings claimed that basic Christian beliefs (like the reality that we are all made male or female) were "unworthy of protection in a democratic society." Many said that the issue wasn't what a Christian believed or said, but "the way that they said it."

This was sometimes taken to plainly ludicrous levels, such as in the case of Richard Page, a magistrate who shared his belief that children do best with a mother and a father. He also served as a non-executive director of his local NHS (hospital) trust. The court upheld his removal, claiming that Richard's comments might have offended some in the LGBTQ+ community to the extent that they might not have used the services of the NHS trust.

I said at the time that law is downstream of culture—no other understanding could make sense of the judgment.

Since then, there have been many more egregious cases, like that of Felix Ngole. His would-be employer claimed service users might commit suicide if they knew a Christian, who held Christian views, was their social worker. These kinds of absurd arguments kept being nodded through by judges.



The Royal Courts of Appeal, where Higgs won after losing her job for two friends-only Facebook posts.

But what happens if culture starts to change? What if Christianity becomes plausible in the eyes of the public or even something preferable to all its alternatives?

Is the Higgs case the tipping point in the UK?

The Christian Legal Centre has supported Kristie Higgs for over six years. She lost her job at a school for two friends-only Facebook posts she made to raise awareness of inappropriate materials being used in schools relating to sexuality and gender.

Her dismissal was palpably unjust. But once again, our courts failed to properly vindicate her.

Until 12 February 2025. The Court of Appeal, one of our highest courts, ruled decisively in Kristie's favour, drastically reshaping the law on freedom of religion and expression in the workplace in a way that should hugely bolster Christian freedoms.

It massively shifts the burden of proof away from employees who are exercising their free speech. Employers should no longer simply be believed when they claim "it's not what you said, but the way you said it." Even if that is accepted, they will have to show that the dismissal was (a) prescribed by law, (b) proportionate, and (c) otherwise "necessary in a democratic society" for one of the purposes permitted by Articles 9 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

It was a stunning win for free speech.

Unbelievably, the judgment was written by the same judge who previously ruled against Richard Page: Lord Justice Underhill.

A swing toward acceptability

The past few years have seen a remarkable swing towards the cultural acceptability of Christianity. Some of this has happened among intellectuals and thought leaders. Jordan Peterson, Tom Holland, Douglas Murray, and Richard Dawkins are among those who have pointed out the importance of Christianity to Western civilisation. We even have some high-profile figures in these circles, like Larry Sanger and Aayan Hirsi Ali, openly declaring they have become Christians.

There can be little doubt that the cultural temperature is changing. Surveys suggest that nearly twice as many 18- to 24-year-olds now believe in God than in August 2020.

The Times of London recently wrote in a leader on the case of Kristie Higgs:

The election of Donald Trump as US president has been heralded as a "global vibe shift", where the balance of debate has firmly shifted away from ultra progressive to one that is rooted in reality. Secular liberal (typically "ultra progressive") beliefs have failed and are beginning to be exposed. On a global scale, the sense that the spread of secular liberalism would prevail through the spreading of democracy has been punctured, most notably in Afghanistan. Many European countries are voting in large numbers for parties outside the liberal consensus. In the face of all this, it is harder for governments to prioritise the next part of the progressive agenda.

On a national scale, we've seen the effects of transgender ideology utterly exposed. The damaging effects of puberty blockers on young children has been comprehensively shown, as has the need for genuine single-sex spaces. Groups like Mermaids and Stonewall who pushed LGBTQ+ ideology have started being removed from our institutions.

We are a long way from where we need to be, of course. But we rarely hear people say, "It's the twenty-first century, move with the times" anymore, as if it is an argument against Christian values.

I still sometimes get told that it's pointless fighting "culture wars." People say that there are too few Christians to meaningfully change society—that we should just give up and focus on evangelism. The idea being that once there are enough believers, the culture will heal itself.

While well-meaning, this notion shows inadequate understanding of the relationship between culture and evangelism. Wider cultural and political trends have always affected the plausibility of the Christian faith and, with that, the opportunities for evangelism. Many of those who could be described

as "cultural Christians" have not themselves professed a clear faith in Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, I am continually hearing of opportunities opening up for evangelism that have led to people—often young people—becoming Christians.

I pray that many of these public figures would go beyond simply desiring the fruit of Christianity and seek out the Root: Jesus Christ.

But the calling on us, the Church, is to regain our confidence that God's ways really are good—in fact, the best—for our nations, not just for individuals.

Attorneys, politicians, judges, business leaders, artists—whatever God has called us to, we must recommit ourselves to courageously standing and speaking for Jesus in our various fields.

We must show that it is Christ, not liberalism, that provides the answers. Where we have drifted away from a Christian heritage, we must seize this global moment to turn the tide.

And in countries where Christian foundations are still clear, we must guard our heritage with zeal, as it is a precious possession. Because it is only by God's blessing that a nation can prosper. Even "cultural Christianity" is simply not enough.

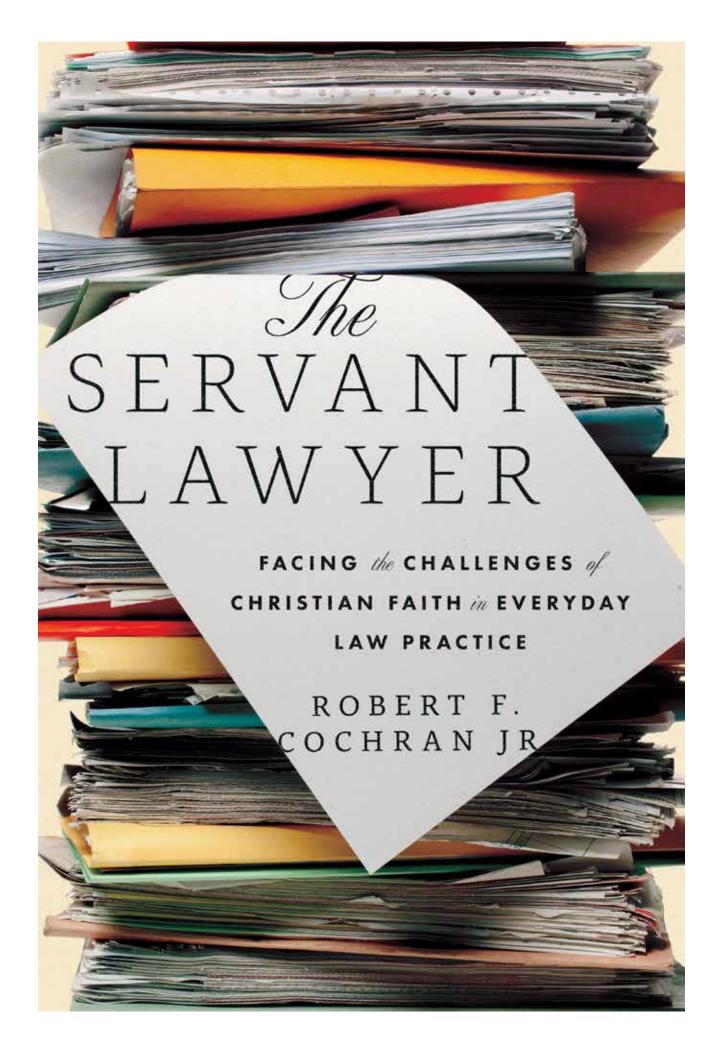
We must have Jesus Christ himself.



ANDREA WILLIAMS is the CEO of Christian Concern, based in London, and a long-time co-worker of Advocates International.



Andrea Williams (left) with Kristie Higgs after her Appeal Court victory.



Fighting for Kidnapped Girls in a Turbulent Region



A young girl is reunited with her family after a Christian attorney secured her release from brutal kidnappers.

BY ABISHAG KANDE SAMBO

Nigeria, the most populous country in Africa, is straining under an almost a 50-50 split between Christianity and Islam. I work in the predominately Muslim north. Here we find large-scale persecution of Christians. It is a very dangerous place to be a follower of Christ.

As a Nigerian human rights attorney specializing in cases of abduction, forced marriage, and child trafficking, I have witnessed the devastating impact of these crimes on individuals, families, and communities. My work takes me to the Sharia courts where I advocate for the rights of underage Christian female children kidnapped and forcibly married off to Muslim men. I will share two notable cases that highlight the dire need to fight for these children and to establish safe rehabilitation and reintegration programs after their release.

Case 1: The story of Rachel Isaac

A group of armed men abducted Rachel Isaac (not her real name), a 14-year-old Christian girl, from her village in Kaduna State in the northwestern part of Nigeria. They took her to a remote location and forced her to convert to Islam and marry a 40-year-old Muslim man. Rachel's family reported her disappearance to the authorities, but their efforts to locate her were in vain. Why? Local law enforcement were in cahoots with the Muslim extremists.

After several months of desperate searching, the family heard about my work in advocating for victims of abduction and forced marriage and contacted me. I took Rachel's case, navigating the complex Sharia court system to try and secure her release. It was tough because, according to their Sharia law, Rachel was now a Muslim and thus assigned to Muslim parents.

The conditions under which Rachel was held were dire. Her captors subjected her to sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. They forced her to perform domestic chores and denied her access to education or medical care. Not surprisingly, she became pregnant. Her captors threatened to harm her family if she refused to comply with their demands.

We battled using the constitution of our country, but still they refused. Finally, I told them bluntly they had committed the crime of kidnapping, which was punishable by law.

After several court appearances, I was able to eventually secure Rachel's release; however, her ordeal was far from over. She required extensive counseling and rehabilitation to overcome the trauma she had endured. Unfortunately, resources for rehabilitation and reintegration programs are scarce in our region, and the family struggled to access support. I also tried to solicit help, but it was a challenge.

Case 2: The story of Prudence Jacob

Muslim extremists kidnapped Prudence Jacob (not her real name), a 12-year-old Christian girl, from her school in the northern state of Kano. Her family was informed of her abduction, and they searched everywhere but could not find her. In the meantime, she was forced to convert to Islam, her name was changed to Aisha Yusuf, and she was given to Muslim "parents" who changed her age to 18. She was then forced to marry a man old enough to be her grandfather.

Prudence's family contacted me several months after her abduction. I worked tirelessly to locate her, following a trail of leads that took me to various parts of the state. Eventually I found her and secured her release through negotiations with community leaders and the head of the village where she was

The Church can play a vital role in supporting victims of abduction and forced marriage. By providing safe spaces for rehabilitation and reintegration, the Church can help victims heal and rebuild their lives. The Church can also advocate for policy changes and legislation that protect the rights of victims and hold perpetrators accountable.



Prudence with her family after release.

living. This only happened after many appearances at the Sharia courts.

Prudence's experience was particularly horrific. She was subjected to forced labor and sexual and physical abuse and was being indoctrinated by Muslim extremist ideology. Her captors forced her to participate in speaking abusive words over Christian communities. After her release, she was rejected by her family, further traumatizing her.

Upon her release, Prudence required immediate medical attention and counseling. The lack of rehabilitation and reintegration programs in Nigeria, however, meant relying on informal networks of support, which were totally inadequate to meet her needs.

The challenges of advocating for justice

As a female attorney advocating for victims of abduction, conversion, and forced marriage in a predominantly Muslim region, I face numerous challenges. I must often travel long distances, at my own expense, to reach remote locations where my clients are being held and then relocate them to an undisclosed location to go into hiding, again at my own expense. The roads in those areas are generally unsafe, and I have faced threats and intimidation from Muslim extremists who are vehemently opposed to my work.

I've had to study and become an expert in Sharia law to be properly equipped with a deep understanding of the complexities of Islamic law and its application. This enables me to navigate the Sharia court system and advocate effectively for the rights of Christian female children.

The need for rehabilitation and reintegration programs

Rachel and Prudence are just two of many of the cases I have handled that highlight the dire need for safe rehabilitation and reintegration programs for victims. These programs are essential for helping them overcome the intense trauma they have endured and reintegrate them back into their communities.

After release, the community must feel safe and secure for the girls or women to live in; they need to feel welcomed and accepted and then be reintegrated. Often, they were away for a long time—months and even years. We try to organize counseling with a clinical psychologist to talk to them including discovering how they were lured into thinking Islam is better than Christianity.

Often during abductions, captors will give these young girls palm dates to entice them or certain perfumes that make them drowsy and cause temporary memory loss. In the latter case, by the time they recover, they can find themselves in the home of their captors. After being freed, they desperately need counseling to help them process what they have been through.

Unfortunately, the resources are scarce in our region. Many victims are left to fend for themselves, without access to counseling, medical care, or education. They are traumatized, and yet, because of forced sex (rape) and forced conversions, amongst others, they are often stigmatized and treated as social outcasts.

They need help to receive healing, rebuild their lives, and fully become part of their communities again.

The role of the Church and Christian organizations

The Church can play a vital role in supporting victims of abduction and forced marriage. By providing safe spaces for rehabilitation and reintegration, the Church can help victims heal and rebuild their lives. The Church can also advocate for policy changes and legislation that protect the rights of victims and hold perpetrators accountable.

Despite the challenges, I remain committed and resolute to fight for justice for victims of abduction and forced marriage. It's hard, but I feel compelled to continue my work as a Christian human rights attorney, especially for vulnerable female children who have been kidnapped and suffered horrific abuse.

ABISHAG KANDE SAMBO is a member of Christian Lawyers Association of Nigeria (CLASFON) and the Advocates International network.

ENDNOTES

The following articles provide more information about the situation in Nigeria regarding the persecution of Christians and the situation pertaining to the kidnapping of female children, also discussing their need for rehabilitation and reintegration programs after their release:

- $. \quad https://global christian relief.org/christian-persecution/stories/\\ what-you-need-to-know-about-the-persecution-of-nigerian-christians/$
- https://www.christianitytoday.com/2024/12/ boko-haram-chibok-girls-10-years-nigeria-church/
- https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/nigeria-agnes-trauma/



Prudence being counselled by a social worker.

The Daniel Project Combats Religious Persecution in Africa

BY DENNIS CRUYWAGEN

The list of atrocities committed against Christians in Africa is long, according to the 2025 World Watch List¹ issued by Open Doors, and makes for harrowing reading. Just following Jesus Christ in some parts of Africa can result in imprisonment, physical and verbal abuse, torture, forced marriage, kidnapping, murder, and having one's property destroyed.

According to Open Doors, there are 13 countries in the world where Christians face extreme persecution.² Five are in Africa: Eritrea, Nigeria, Somalia (second on the global ranking), Sudan, and Libya.³

Other African countries where religious persecution is high are Mali, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Mauritania, Central African Republic, Niger, Ethiopia, Tunisia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).⁴ To be a Christian in some parts of Africa requires an ardent commitment, bravery, and a deep faith.

tion. Sexual violence and forced marriage are used as tools of intimidation and control, aiming to prevent them from practicing their Christian faith. Consequently, there is a pressing need for legal representation for these women and girls, especially in regions where they have limited recourse against persecution. We are grateful to the Lord that there are already several lawyers within the Advocates International network who are deeply committed to representing these vulnerable individuals.

The injustices inflicted on Christians in Africa have been under reported. Those who suffer the cruelty of their persecutors often feel abandoned. Attorneys from the Advocates Africa network regularly represent persecuted Christians pro bono, often without specialized training, to defend the right of religious freedom.

Grave violence and injustice

In August 2024, Advocates International reported on its social media platforms that, according to a study commissioned by Open Doors, the persecution faced by Christian women and female children was becoming consistently more complex and multifaceted than was faced by men and boys. This is especially true for female Christian converts.

This intimidation is intricate and often hidden. It involves sexual abuse, forced marriages, and insidious abuse behind closed doors. The persecution of men and boys tends to be more direct and calculated including targeted physical and lethal attacks, as well as state and economic pressures. Marginalized Christians, especially women, can be particularly vulnerable in insecure contexts, such as settings of conflict, forced displacement, and criminal violence.

Advocates International also reported that:

Christian women and girls were confronted by five key pressure areas: forced marriage, sexual violence, physical violence, psychological violence, and abduc-

Launching a better way

Something had to be done in a more structured and organized way to legally assist, defend, and support the persecuted across Africa. In 2023, Advocates Africa launched the Daniel Project. The name comes from the biblical character, Daniel, who functioned effectively in the court of Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon, being well-versed in the laws, procedures, and customs of his environment. The Daniel Project aims to train attorneys to effectively defend victimised Christians because of their religious beliefs.

The Daniel Project also endeavours to raise up attorneys committed to advancing God's kingdom agenda in Africa. Such attorneys will need to be God-fearing, uncompromising, wise, quick to understand, and familiar with the language and culture of the regions in which they will bring their legal skills, being competent, courageous, and fearless in court.

Fellowships with Advocates Africa currently include South Africa, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Ghana, and Ethiopia. Attorneys from these countries mostly volunteer their services. Through them we want to train like-minded attorneys to:

- fight religious persecution in their own and neighbouring countries.
- serve as a safety net for frontline workers.
- partner with other organizations to represent and release religious prisoners.
- obtain and maintain accurate and dependable information about religious freedom in all African countries.

Working toward an effective international organization presence

A crucial component to successfully advancing this mission is to engage the African Commission of Human and People's Rights, the Interfaith Dialogue Forum, and the African Union. Without their participation, preventing violent extremism and resolving religious conflict in Africa will get bogged down.

Africa's first-ever International Religious Freedom Summit is scheduled for June 16, 2025, in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. The Summit will be jointly hosted by Kenya's judiciary and Pepperdine University. This groundbreaking gathering comes at a perilous time as the curtailing of religious freedom in Africa continues to advance.

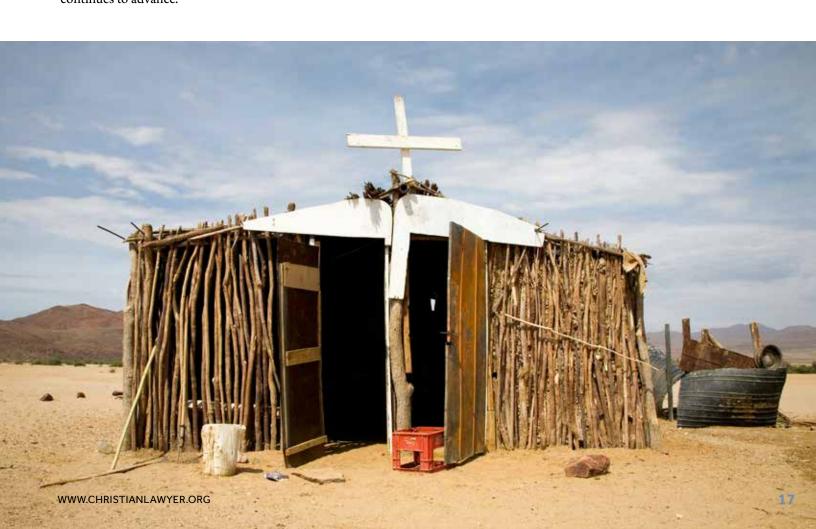
When announcing the Summit, Kenya's Chief Justice Martha Koome placed her finger on a mushrooming crisis in Africa. Last year, according to the Open Doors survey, 3,100 Christians were killed in Nigeria alone. "I take this wonderful opportunity to invite all of you, and I hope you will support our efforts to ignite this movement in Africa," Koome said. The Summit would be part of building "a coalition of faith who will bring transformation across the continent."

According to Koome, a coalition of chief justices, judges, and judicial officers from across Africa have committed themselves to bringing efficiency and effective access to justice across the continent. The Nairobi Summit is a hopeful indicator that key players are taking seriously the appalling record on religious freedom in Africa.

Intolerance of religious freedom is a growing global problem. The Daniel Project plans to expand to all regions in the Advocates International network.

ENDNOTES

- https://www.opendoors.org/en-US/persecution/countries/.
- 2 Id
- 3 *Id*.
- 4 Id.



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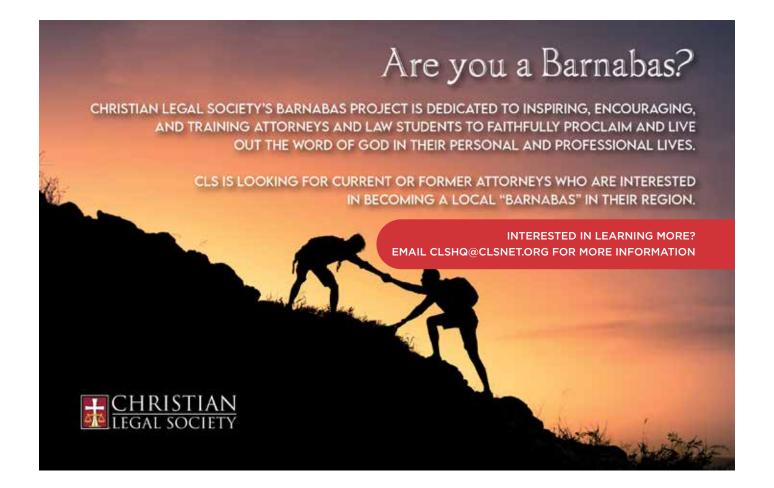
WHO ARE ALLIED ATTORNEYS?



Allied Attorneys are Christians committed to using their God-given legal skills to keep the doors open for the Gospel. They are essential to Alliance Defending Freedom's ability to respond to requests for legal help, litigate critical cases, and take on strategic projects. Allied Attorneys have played active roles in the landmark *Dobbs* case, defended cake artist Jack Phillips, guarded parental rights in state courts, and so much more. Alliance Defending Freedom provides training and resources to equip Allied Attorneys to engage in this meaningful freedom work.

"Someone needs to stand in the gap to protect religious liberty. If not us, who? If not now, when?"

ALLIED ATTORNEY SEAN GATES





BY JOE RUTA

You'd expect this magazine to recommend that Christian attorneys ought to meet around a table and connect. But, let's say the quiet part out loud: Have you seen my schedule? I barely keep up with my billable hours. I routinely feel guilty for the late hours that cheat family time. I don't sleep enough, and I think the light at the end of the tunnel is an oncoming train.

I've been in this space for more than 30 years keeping up with my practice, my family, and my faith. I've said some of these same things yet found that my decision to join my fellow attorneys has been a difference maker. Let me explain.

Christian attorneys experience the same professional and personal struggles as their non-Christian counterparts. A 2019 law review article paints a stark picture of the mental health in our profession:

The legal profession is in the throes of a mental health crisis. State bars across the country continue to be rocked by the tragic loss of their lawyers to suicide and accidental drug overdose. Recent studies have also shed further light on the severity and scale of lawyers' long-recognized struggles with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other indicators of psychological distress.¹

Why is the mental health crisis in our profession so pronounced? One contributing factor is the increasing hostility and division in society, particularly in politics. More than 50 percent of U.S. Senators are attorneys. There was a time when they could engage in heated debates on the Senate floor yet maintain friendships outside the chamber.

Perhaps you've heard something about the friendship between the late Supreme Court Justices Antonin Scalia and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The famously conservative Scalia and progressive Ginsburg families spent Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve together—a testament to their close friendship despite their ideological differences. Unfortunately, this kind of camaraderie between individuals with opposing views has largely disappeared, even within families.

Declining ethics and civility

Additionally, the legal profession itself has changed. Susan Daicoff noted in her review of empirical research on attorney professionalism that it has declined dramatically as measured by "an increase in unethical or uncivil behavior among lawyers and judges, frequent lapses of appropriate ethical and professional conduct and increasingly aggressive, competitive, and money-oriented legal battles, fought with a 'win at all costs' approach." She wrote that in 1997! Let's add to that the immense pressure to bill hours and deliver results—often without adequate training. It takes a significant toll on all of us, whether new to lawyering or partners.

The pressure and stress leaves attorneys craving positive interaction or mentorship from more experienced colleagues. One solution to this crisis for Christian attorneys is to gather with others who share the faith.

Finding Christian attorneys in NYC

When I graduated from law school, I was a believer but was not particularly invested in the practices of the faith like prayer, Bible study, or belonging to a small group through a church. I worked at a small law firm with no meaningful relationships with other Christian attorneys. In December of 1992, after a series of events in my personal life, I concluded to take my faith seriously.

One of the first things I did was reach out to an attorney who had told me about Christian Legal Society (CLS) during law school. I attended the next NYC CLS chapter meeting, and a group of incredible attorneys welcomed me. I experienced an immediate sense of community. More than 30 years later, I am still friends with many of those attorneys.

At that time, I needed fellowship more than I even realized. These attorneys supported me during my first year of practice when I was overwhelmed by how much there was to learn. I could always call them for guidance. When I was laid off after a little over a year of practice, they encouraged me. When I decided to start my own practice just 18 months after being admitted to the bar, they mentored me, found me office space with other Christian attorneys, and provided invaluable support. This local community of CLS attorneys made a profound difference in my life. In fact, I met my future law partner at a Bible study in the shared office space we occupied. All of this happened before I attended a single CLS retreat or national conference!

Expanding my relationships at retreats and conferences

My first regional retreat introduced me to CLS CEO David Nammo, who was then the CLS Attorney Ministries director. We have been friends ever since. I have only missed one regional retreat in 25 years. Whether playing broomball in the Catskills (attorneys vs. law students on ice with sneakers) or beach volleyball or having late-night conversations, these experiences fostered genuine connections. They allowed us to be real with each other, sharing both professional struggles and personal challenges. They are a highlight of my year.

I attended my first CLS National Conference in 2008 and have not missed one since. The speakers and content at these conferences are excellent, but I really keep coming to continue cultivating new and old friendships across the country.

The legal profession is among the most stressful fields, and I firmly believe that our greatest asset in managing that stress is the ability to support one another—in person. Christians of all types rightfully attend churches on Sunday. I sure do! Yet, it can be difficult to connect when others have no way to identify with the unique stressors of our work. Like combat veterans or divorce recovery groups, CLS has provided me a place to more easily process my own struggles while encouraging others who are just starting out like I once did.

Community among Christian attorneys is a lifeline where we stop isolating and find encouragement, wisdom, and the strength to navigate the challenges of law and life.

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matthew 18:20).

JOE RUTA has been an attorney in New York City for 30



years. His practice deals with civil litigation, corporate, employment, real estate, bankruptcy, and nonprofit matters. He serves as outside general counsel to more than 30 companies and also currently serves as a

Barnabas Fellow with CLS.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Cheryl Ann Krause & Jane Chong, Lawyer Wellbeing as A Crisis of the Profession, 71 S.C. L. Rev. 203 (2019).
- Susan Daicoff, Lawyer, Know Thyself: A Review of Empirical Research on Attorney Attributes Bearing on Professionalism, 46 Am. U. L. Rev. 1337, 1344 (1997).



BY ALLISON MCFADDEN

At some point in their first year torts class, law students read the "drowning baby" case: if a bystander walks by a baby drowning in a puddle, he can shield his eyes and walk on by. They learn that, in common law, there is no affirmative duty to help someone in need if you did not engender that need. Some students are appalled. Some recount the case over dinner, as entertainment. Most are indifferent.

Besides pointing out that a few states have overridden this default rule by statute, the American legal education system is content to stop there. Seldom is it also discussed that the American legal system evolved with a sense of its own limits, that jurists constrained opportunities for liability because they believed that a democratic society required a limited form of government. The point was to make room for the moral will of man and his other associations, like the church.

For Christians who follow the divine law of God, the bar is much higher than what the American legal system requires. In a scenario that parallels the "drowning baby" case, Jesus tells the story of a Samaritan who comes across a Jewish man beaten, robbed, and left lying on the side of the road. The Samaritan does not shield his eyes. He heaps the man onto his donkey, treats his wounds, and pays for his bed in an inn. In God's Kingdom, Jesus reminds His followers there is an affirmative duty to help one's neighbor.

Modern readers are tempted to trivialize the teachings of Jesus. Bible studies on that passage in Matthew descend into discussions of what the scope of our generosity actually ought to be, whether our "neighbor" is really any hurting person we pass on the road. Surely God did not mean that we were to give our wallet's contents to every homeless person we pass on the sidewalk. The verbal sayings of Jesus are so radical we subconsciously dismiss them as aspirational.

Of course, the divine law of God is encapsulated not "merely" in the teachings of Jesus but in the entire gamut of his laws, testimonies, guidance, ways, and in the man Himself. In seeking to understand the gravity of Jesus' teaching in the "Good Samaritan" parable, then, we might read back in time. In fact, in the law given to the ancient Israelites, there is one riffing on the

theme of passing by someone in need: "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him" (Exodus 23:4).

The Mosaic law was, among other things, a kind of "incarnation"—God's infinite law in finite legal terms, crystallized for an ancient Near East community. Thus a "Good Samaritan" principle in that time and place entailed the most common situation in an agrarian society where someone might need the help of a stranger: when engaged in the laborious, dangerous task of moving heavy loads with his livestock, potentially stranded miles from home. And the duty of the Good Samaritan was as strict as it could get: he was required to help not just anyone, but everyone—including one "who hated him."

Seeing this example of the Good Samaritan principle worked out in real life, the question shifts from "How can we make an impossible demand more palatable?" to "How do we come as close as possible to realizing it in the particularities of our everyday life?" The question is particularly intriguing to the law student who becomes sensitized to the "incarnational" exercise of embodying policy aims in black-letter statutes or of applying law to new facts. In theory, the legal profession positions Chris-

tian attorneys to think incisively about how to live out God's divine law. For this very reason, I became obsessed with the Mosaic law after going through law school, and I know I'm not the only legally trained Christian who enjoys reading Leviticus.

The countervailing forces of the legal profession

Yet, in practice, the opposite pans out. I find that the profession disarms us attorneys from faithfully obeying God's commands. Why? God commands radical other-centeredness, and in this profession we rehearse patterns of self-interestedness.

There are two reasons the profession breeds self-interestedness. First, it sensitizes us to the self-interestedness of others. Second, it teaches us to hedge against that self-interestedness to protect our client's interests. In our adversarial system, the interaction between parties is often a zero-sum game where the attorney's goal is to help his client come out on top. Othercenteredness, in contrast, requires a willingness to give despite an intimate awareness of the self-interestedness of others; in other words, it invites the giver to knowingly "lose" the game.

The profession sensitizes us to the self-interestedness of others because we put man's evil nature under a microscope. Reading



court cases in the civil context, we are inundated with disputes at their worst—two parties in court because they cannot resolve their disagreement without state power. By that point, the facts are dramatic and disquieting: "He did what?" "She responded how?" No one has the other's interests in mind. Give an inch, and the other will take a mile. Armed with this canon of cases, we're trained to "issue-spot"—to pour over our own client's situation and identify opportunities for other parties to exhibit self-interested behavior.

We then hedge against this self-interestedness. In the negotiation room, we avoid risk and try to pass the same allergy onto our clients, counseling them conservatively. In court, we anticipate and rebut every potential argument of the opponent's, taking no prisoners. Any point conceded is a point lost. Thrust into an environment where there is no social cost to battering the opponent, our hearts ice over into loveless rationalism: what the everyday human being calls the courtesy of "kindness," we scoff at as a mark of weakness.

Most importantly, because the legal profession is client-centered, we are blind to how this trains our spirits to be ruthless and self-centered. Client-centered work misleads us into thinking we are generous in spirit because we are advancing another's interests as part of our fiduciary duty. A good advocate must be a shield for the client and a sword towards others. But what happens when our own interests are on the line? Do we lower the shield and sheath this sword so that we might allow ourselves and our resources to be given to others?

Resisting the profession for the faith: a testimony

I write this in part to solidify my own resolve and resist the character-eroding forces of my profession. Recently, God brought a direct conflict between the instincts I'd developed as an attorney and His calling in His divine law. My husband and I planned to move down from our home in Upstate New York to my parents' home in New Jersey for a couple months to give birth to our child and engage in intergenerational child-rearing. Upon hearing that our house would be empty, a couple in our church small group looking to escape a difficult housing situation asked if they could stay at our place for three months.

Alarm bells went off. There was the issue of whether they would care for our belongings, which we wouldn't be able to pack up before we left. There was the issue of whether they would prevent their cat from tearing up our furniture. There

A good advocate must be a shield for the client and a sword towards others. But what happens when our own interests are on the line?

was the issue of whether they were incentivized to minimize wear and tear; they stated they could not pay a security deposit or rent. We were doing them a favor and receiving little in return—someone to mow the lawn once or twice a month—and that hurt my lawyerly self down to my core. I had become too Machiavellian to be taken advantage of. Every fiber of my being wanted to say "no."

It was a simple issue, scripturally. Along the lines of the Good Samaritan principle, Proverbs states: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,' when you have it with you" (Proverbs 3:27-28; see also James 2:16). There are a litany of verses raising the bar for how to treat fellow members of the church: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10 ESV). "Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality" (Romans 12:13 ESV).

I would have said "yes" to the house-sitting request just two years ago—before I started law school. Yet, my inclination towards generosity then rested on a false premise: I had naively thought that my neighbors, especially Christians, would reciprocate my generosity. Only sometimes is that true. The challenge, then, is to recognize the stakes of other-centeredness and engage it in it anyway, to find Christ's other-centeredness so fulfilling and alluring that one cannot help but mimic it.

We said "yes" to the couple who asked to move into our home. Two weeks later, they backed out, saying that moving was too much of a hassle for them. I laughed with God, humbled by the fact that they didn't end up needing my "hard-won generosity." It seemed God had had a different goal in mind from the start.



ALLISON MCFADDEN is pursuing her J.D. at Cornell Law School. She graduated *magna cum laude* from Princeton with an A.B. in history. She and her husband attend Bethel

Grove Bible Church.



Our Religious Freedoms Are Still Not Safe from the New Congress

BY STEVEN MCFARLAND

A Roman Catholic pharmacist loses his job because he refuses to fill a prescription for contraception. An evangelical family law attorney is sued for refusing to represent a same-sex couple in an adoption case. A Presbyterian doctor is disciplined for refusing to provide sex-selective services for IVF patients who ask. Sounds both familiar and crazy. Familiar because you might remember that the right to refuse certain services stemming from sincerely held religious views was won in U.S. Supreme Court cases involving the Little Sisters of the Poor and Hobby Lobby. Crazy because how could this come up again? It is settled, right?

Not so fast. We live in unsettling times because new Congresses seek to pass new laws in response to the pressures of the moment, and they have a frustrating habit of "carving out" exceptions to secure a "win." Sometimes, this is good as there are plenty of laws that can burden religious believers. But what if the carve-out comes for one of those foundational pillars?

The hypotheticals above have not happened (yet), but they illustrate why we need the most important federal religious freedom law in this nation's history—the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), which Congress passed near unanimously in 1993, and President Clinton signed into law. RFRA prohibits the federal government from "substantially burden[ing]" a person's

religious exercise unless doing so is the least restrictive means of furthering a compelling governmental interest. RFRA is threatened by every Congress, including the new 119th Congress. By God's grace, CLS hopes to preserve RFRA from being turned into Swiss cheese by federal bills that would carve out exceptions to it, meaning that RFRA could never be raised as a defense in certain cases, no matter how bad a burden the government places on believers by that legislation.

When the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Free Exercise Clause

Prior to 1990, our pharmacist could defend himself against criminal prosecution by appealing to the first 16 words of the Bill of Rights: "Congress shall make no law regarding the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Surely, government cannot force a Roman Catholic to provide contraception? That he is a pharmacist should not matter.

But the Supreme Court, in arguably its worst religious freedom ruling in this nation's 250 years, gutted the protective power of the Free Exercise Clause. In *Employment Division v. Smith*, 494 U.S. 872 (1990), the Court majority held that, going forward, the freedom of religion would not apply to—could not be invoked against—a government burden on religion as long as the challenged law or action applied to everyone and did not obvi-

ously target just religious persons. No matter how devastating an effect that law had on religious freedom, the Free Exercise Clause no longer applied.

So, in the examples above, the laws apply to all pharmacists, attorneys, and doctors—not just those with religious objections. Under *Smith*, a state could hold liable—even criminally—the pharmacist, doctor, and attorney because the laws are "neutral and generally applicable," and the First Amendment would have nothing more to say about it.

RFRA holds back the lingering effects of *Smith*

Smith continues to hurt religious exercise in all-too-real cases. For example, Judge Hensley, a local Texas judge, politely declined to officiate same-sex weddings (a discretionary function, not an official duty) and created a quick and easy referral service to help same-sex couples marry promptly and with no additional expense. The state judicial commission publicly disciplined her, saying her decision cast doubt on her capacity to act impartially to persons appearing before her as a judge based on sexual orientation. Under Smith, generally applicable laws without exemptions coerce individuals and cause them to suffer for their faith. For Judge Hensley, this meant choosing between solemnizing same-sex marriage rites in violation of her religious faith and forgoing a ministerial function of her job that she sincerely valued. Thankfully, Texas has a state RFRA (TRFRA) in place, and the Commission's censure of Judge Hensley violated the TRFRA by substantially burdening her religious conscience without a compelling governmental interest in doing so.

That is why after *Smith*, CLS immediately became a co-leader in a broad coalition that drafted and successfully lobbied for passage of the aptly-named Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (42 U.S.C. 2000-bb et seq). RFRA restored the strict scrutiny the Court had applied under the First Amendment Free Exercise Clause for decades: if our pharmacist could show that the requirement to supply contraception placed a substantial burden on the way he practices his faith, then some prosecuting attorney would have to persuade a judge that firing him was the "least restrictive" means of accomplishing a "compelling government interest"—here, that interest would be in providing widely available contraception. Obviously, the state has no interest, let alone a "compelling" one, in forcing doctors or attorneys to violate their faith by providing services that are otherwise available from practitioners without objections.

So why is any of this a concern today? Because RFRA is under attack, again.

On February 5, congressional members of the House and Senate re-introduced the Right To Contraception Act (H.R.999 and S.422). If passed (it already has over 200 co-sponsors and needs only 218 to pass the House), this legislation would *guarantee* women a federal right of access to contraceptives. And it would explicitly prevent a religious pharmacist from asking under RFRA to be excused from filling a prescription for a drug or device the pharmacist considers violative of his or her religious convictions. This would be the first carve out of RFRA in the 32 years since it was passed.

A clear and present threat

The Center believes that once Congress passes a bill with a RFRA carveout, it will not be the last. The Rubicon will have been crossed. RFRA could soon have so many carveouts as to render it effectively useless—at least where it is most needed.

What is the Center doing to protect RFRA? We are co-leading the religious groups who recently signed a letter to Congress and the White House urging that no bill contain a RFRA carveout. The Center is lobbying in person on the Hill, seeking to persuade House members who might be on the fence and feel that excising the RFRA carveout in the contraception bill would be seen as anti-women. Essentially, the Center is seeking to convince congressional leadership to not bring to the floor any bill with a RFRA carveout in it, no matter which party proposes it.

Smith has inflicted real-world injury to religious freedom, and RFRA is a much-needed remedy, at least until the Supreme Court reverses the Smith decision (CLS' top priority in the courts). If even a single RFRA carveout passes, it will shove RFRA down a very steep and slippery slope. Not on our watch.



STEVE MCFARLAND practiced employment, commercial, and religious freedom litigation in Seattle; has directed the religious freedom and pro-life advocacy of

Chistian Legal Society (1991-99) and again currently; was the first executive director of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a federal agency; worked on prison reform at Prison Fellowship International and in the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice; and served World Vision/USA as its chief legal officer (2009-23).



BY ERIN HALL

In a world fractured by injustice, the call to "love your neighbor" takes on profound practical implications. Legal barriers, complex systems, and lack of resources create insurmountable hurdles for many, trapping them in cycles of poverty, abuse, and despair. The Church—the body of Christ—has a unique and powerful role to play: legal aid needs the Church, and, by extension, legal aid needs you.

The time has come to revolutionize how the world views legal advocacy as a vital Christian vocational ministry alongside established global medical and educational ministries. The gospel resonates with the advocacy of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26-27) and advocacy on behalf of others by those who have faith (Matthew 25:40). Christian Legal Aid offers powerful examples, such as the grace received through criminal record expungement. Alongside an advocate, individuals like Rachel often find liberation from the stigma of prior offenses, often in the same courtrooms and before the same judges, now celebrating their success. This echoes the transformative power of forgiveness and second chances found in Christ.

Legal lifelines offered with grace

Rachel's story exemplifies this transformation. Addiction left her homeless, separated from her son, and stripped of everything. A divine intervention led her to the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic (Clinic) in Indianapolis, Indiana. The Clinic's attorneys provided comprehensive legal support, from filing back taxes and navigating bankruptcy to securing the expungement of her record. The Clinic offered not just legal expertise but genuine care and belief in Rachel's potential. The expungement symbolized freedom, enabling Rachel to secure employment and provide for her son.

Christian Legal Aid also saves lives. Luis's story is a testament to the life-saving impact of legal aid. Fleeing paramilitary threats, Luis arrived in the United States destitute after being threatened at gunpoint for his youth program. Led to the Clinic after learning his wife was pregnant with twins, he slept outside the building hoping for legal assistance. Luis testifies, "After talking with one of the Clinic's attorneys, I saw a little bit of light. . . . They told me that I could apply for asylum; I was

almost out of time. The Clinic put my application together in six days! I almost missed my chance, but I believed that it was all God taking care of me. I was able to get a work permit and a job." After a three-year wait, Luis's asylum was granted. An attorney on the case reports, "The moment we found out we felt incredible relief! The judge was so moved by Luis's story that he asked if opposing counsel would object to asylum and suddenly Luis's long nightmare was over and I mean, that's why you do this work! We want to help people build their new lives and experience hope through Christ."

Working in the desert

Christian Legal Aid is about holistic transformation. Legal challenges intertwine with spiritual, emotional, and social needs. This approach sets Christian Legal Aid apart. It can remove barriers within a church community that offers discipleship to sustain freedom.

The need for legal aid is growing, but resources are scarce. Indiana faces an attorney shortage; many counties are "legal deserts" with less than one attorney for every 1,000 residents. Low-income individuals are disproportionately affected: 80 percent face a legal challenge each year, and 96 percent of low-income Hoosiers receive no legal representation according to the 2019 Indiana Civil Legal Needs Study. Church-legal partnerships can provide holistic support, yet, according to administerjustice.org, less than 0.1 percent of U.S. churches provide legal help to the vulnerable. Christ engaged in advocacy and justice (Luke 4:18-19), yet churches are often sidelined from legal matters impacting their communities. Church support is critical:

- Extending Compassion: The Church is called to be a refuge for the vulnerable. Christian Legal Aid provides a tangible way to extend compassion and offer practical help to those facing legal crises. It's not just about addressing the legal issue; it's about showing the love of Christ in a concrete way.
- Mobilizing Volunteers: The Church is a vast reservoir of talent and passion. From attorneys and paralegals to administrative staff and prayer warriors, the Church can provide the human resources necessary to support and expand legal aid services.

Many counties are "legal deserts" with less than one attorney for every 1,000 residents.... 80 percent [of low-income individuals] face a legal challenge each year.

- Providing Holistic Support: Legal problems rarely exist in isolation. They intersect with other challenges like poverty, addiction, or family issues. The Church, with its vast networks, can provide a holistic approach to addressing the root causes of these challenges and empowering individuals to rebuild their lives.
- Raising Awareness: The Church has a powerful platform to raise awareness about the needs of the vulnerable and the importance of legal aid. Church partnership offers legitimization to legal aid ministry in a powerful way.
- **Financial Support:** Providing quality legal representation is expensive albeit far less expensive than retaining private counsel. The Clinic estimates its cost to provide legal aid is less than 40 percent of the cost of hiring an attorney.

The Church and legal aid are natural partners. Together, we can bring hope and healing, offering not just legal representation, but the transformative power of faith and love.



ERIN HALL received her B.A. in writing from Taylor University in 2001 and her law degree from IU McKinney School of Law in 2006. A lifelong resident of Indianapolis,

Indiana, Erin worked in public service for the State of Indiana, most recently serving as the director of legal operations for the Indiana Department of Transportation before accepting the call to serve as the executive director for the Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic (est. 1994) in Indianapolis, in June of 2022. Erin serves as a deaconess at Redeemer Presbyterian Church where she has been a member since 2006 and attends regularly with her daughter.



2025 CLS REGIONAL RETREAT HIGHLIGHTS

During the first few months of each year, CLS hosts multiple regional retreats to encourage, connect, mentor, and grow attorneys and law students in their faith. We also have fun whether taking a walk on the beach, touring ice sculpture festivals, or enjoying a great meal out with old friends and new. This year more than 300 attendees gathered at 5 amazing venues. One student described her time this way: "I know that if God enables me to pass the bar that these are the people I want to be around for the rest of my life."



CLS Midwest Regional Retreat

CLS Northwest Regional Retreat



CLS Southwest Regional Retreat

CLS Northeast Regional Retreat



CLS Southeast Regional Retreat

ATTORNEY CHAPTERS

CLS attorney chapters provide the opportunity for regular fellowship activity, mentorship, resources, and so much more. Each of our chapters listed below holds monthly or regular meetings that will help you integrate your faith and the practice of law while establishing healthy relationships with Christian attorneys in your community. An asterisk below indicates an inactive chapter (attorneys are not currently meeting). If you are interested in restarting this chapter, please send an email to clshq@clsnet.org. To learn more about your local chapter or for current contact information, visit our website at christianlegalsociety.org.

ALABAMA

Birmingham

ARIZONA

Phoenix Tucson

CALIFORNIA

Inland Empire

Los Angeles

Orange County

Sacramento

San Diego

COLORADO

Colorado Springs

Denver

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

FLORIDA

Central (Orlando)

Jacksonville

Miami

West Palm Beach

GEORGIA

Atlanta

HAWAII

Hawaii

ILLINOIS

Chicago

INDIANA

Indianapolis

KANSAS

Topeka

Wichita

LOUISIANA

New Orleans*

MARYLAND

Baltimore

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston*

MINNESOTA

Minnesota

MISSISSIPPI

Central Mississippi*

MISSOURI

Kansas City

Springfield

St. Louis

NEBRASKA

Lincoln

NEVADA

Nevada

Las Vegas*

NEW JERSEY

Cape May County

NEW YORK

New York City

Upstate New York

NORTH CAROLINA

Wake County

OHIO

Northeast Ohio*

Central Ohio

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City

Portland/Salem

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia*

Western Pennsylvania

PUERTO RICO

SOUTH CAROLINA

Greenville

TENNESSEE

Chattanooga

Memphis

Nashville

TEXAS

Austin

Dallas

Houston

San Antonio

Williamson County

VIRGINIA

Leesburg

Richmond

Virginia Beach

WASHINGTON

Seattle

WISCONSIN

Madison

View complete chapter information by scanning the code below:



Connect with a Christian Legal Aid clinic in your community.

ALABAMA

Montgomery
Faulkner University Law
School Legal Clinics

ARIZONA

Tucson

Christian Legal Society of Tucson Christian Legal Aid Program

CALIFORNIA

Auburn 3R Ministries

Los Angeles

Pepperdine University Legal Aid Clinic

Los Angeles Metro Area
Christian Legal Aid of Los Angeles

Oakland

Pope Francis Legal Clinic

Sacramento

Love & Wisdom (LAW) Clinic

San Diego Metro Area San Diego Christian Legal Aid

Santa Ana

Christian Legal Aid of Orange County Trinity Law Clinic & Mobile Legal Clinic

COLORADO

Denver

Justice and Mercy Legal Aid Center

Denver Metro

Christian Legal Clinic of Metro Denver Triage Legal Clinics

- Denver Rescue Mission Clinic
- · Broomfield FISH Clinic
- Samaritan House Clinic
- Salvation Army Clinic
- Providence Network Clinic
- More Life Center Clinic
- · Life Center Clinic
- SECOR Clinic
- The Rising Church Clinic
- · Dry Bones Clinic
- Arvada Covenant Church

Fort Collins

Serve 6.8 Legal Clinic

Loveland

House of Neighborly Services Clinic

DELAWARE

Wilmington

Sunday Breakfast Mission Legal Aid Clinic

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Christian Legal Aid of the District of Columbia

- · Central Union Mission
- · DC Dream Center

FLORIDA

Jacksonville

CLS Pro Bono Project

Jacksonville Metro Area
CLS Pro Bono Clinic

Miami

City on a Hill Legal Ministry Redeemer Christian Legal Aid Ministry (ReCLAliM) Inc.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Cabrini Green Legal Aid

INDIANA

Indianapolis Metro Area Neighborhood Christian Legal Clinic

KANSAS

Wichita

Wichita Christian Legal Aid

KENTUCKY

Lexington

Merciful Justice Legal Clinic

Louisville

Access Justice

LOUISIANA

Shreveport

Christian Legal Aid of North Louisiana

MARYLAND

Baltimore

Good Samaritan Advocates

· City of Refuge

Montgomery County
Good Samaritan Advocates

- · Covenant Life Church
- Montgomery County Correctional Facility
- The Salvation Army Center

MICHIGAN

Detroit Metro Area

Christian Legal Aid of Southeast Michigan

Detroit

The Joseph Project

Grand Rapids

West Michigan Christian Legal Aid

Kalamazoo

Christian Legal Aid of Southwest Michigan

Lansing

Christian Legal Aid of Lansing

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

Park Avenue Walk-in Legal Clinic

MISSISSIPPI

Jackson

Mission First Legal Aid Office

MISSOURI

St. Louis Metro Area

New Covenant Legal Services

NEW JERSEY

Newark Metro

Immigrant Hope

NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque

New Mexico Christian Legal Aid

Las Cruces

Catholic Charities of Southern New Mexico

NEW YORK

New York City
Open Hands Legal Services, Inc.

NORTH CAROLINA

Greensboro
Wilberforce Center for Justice
and Human Rights

Raleigh
Campbell Community Law Clinic

OHIO

Cleveland
Scranton Road Legal Clinic

Columbus Metro (Westerville)
Vineyard Immigration Counseling Service

Richland County
Richland County Legal Aid

Christian Legal Collaborative

Delaware
Delaware Dream Center

OKLAHOMA

Oklahoma City Metro Trinity Legal Clinic

- Crossings Community Center
- Cross and Crown Mission
- · City Rescue Mission
- Living Faith Ministry
- OKC First Church of the Nazarene
- Salvation Army—Norman

Tulsa

Tulsa University College of Law CLS Christian Legal Aid Clinic

OREGON

Portland

Union Gospel Mission of Portland Christian Legal Aid Clinic

Salem

Christian Legal Aid of Marion and Polk Counties

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

Christian Legal Clinics of Philadelphia

- West Philadelphia Legal Clinic
- · Hunting Park Legal Clinic
- · South Philadelphia Legal Clinic
- Chester Legal Clinic
- Germantown Legal Clinic
- Kensington Legal Clinic
- Chosen 300 Legal Clinic
- North Philadelphia Legal Clinic

Pittsburgh

Christian Legal Aid of Pittsburgh

TENNESSEE

Nashville Metro Compassionate Counsel

TEXAS

Houston

Restoring Justice

Houston Metro (Cypress) Houston Legal Aid Center

Houston Metro (The Woodlands) Community Christian Legal Aid

VIRGINIA

Arlington

Restoration Immigration Legal Aid

Northern Virginia

Good Samaritan Advocates

- Columbia Baptist Church
- · Reston Bible Church
- The Lamb Center

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Open Door Legal Services

Spokane

Union Gospel Mission of Spokane Christian Legal Aid Clinic

WISCONSIN

Milwaukee

JC Legal Resources Center Inc.

INTERNATIONAL

Toronto, Canada CCM Toronto Legal Clinic

Nairobi, Kenya

Africa Justice and Restoration Kenya

For contact information and other details for the Christian Legal Aid clinics, view the full clinic directory at ChristianLegalAid.org.







Life Legal is dedicated to upholding the sanctity

robust advocacy, and comprehensive education.

Our mission is to defend the rights of the unborn, protect vulnerable individuals, and promote a

of human life through passionate litigation,

culture that values life at every stage.

LifeLegal.org 707.224.6675 info@LifeLegal.org

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ADVOCATE

We provide a voice for unborn

children and vulnerable patients

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Josh Grosshans President & Chairman of the Board

Don't you want to turn it all off? Every day our news outlets bombard us with stories of suffering and tragedy around the globe. The darkness is thick, and it often leaves me feeling overwhelmed and helpless. J.R.R. Tolkien captures the sentiment well in *The Lord of the Rings* when Elven Queen Galadriel observes, "Through the ages of the world, we have fought the long defeat."

Sometimes it is easier to ignore it all and focus just on my own community. Perhaps you feel the same way. And yet, as I read this edition of *The Christian Lawyer*, I am encouraged by the work Christians are doing in every corner of the world. I'm also challenged to revisit what part I should play in fulfilling our Savior's call to be His witness "to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

I am proud of the role CLS plays in piercing the darkness, not just in our own nation, but wherever the shadows may fall. For decades. CLS and its members have responded to the call to carry the gospel beyond our own borders. At times, that means partnering with those already engaged in the mission. Other times, it means going.

Several years ago we invited Leah—a friend through CLS—to speak at our local chapter about her work with African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries (ALARM). Shortly thereafter, Floridians were following her to Africa. They returned to us changed. We draw strength from these brothers and sisters who pause their lucrative careers and give their time to press against the shadows.

Similar efforts to spread the Kingdom's light sing across the pages you hold. Many of the articles were penned by authors connected with Advocates International. What you may not know is that Advocates sprung from the CLS family tree, largely due to the vision of our friend, Sam Ericsson. Sam joined CLS in 1982 as the director for the Center for Law & Religious Freedom and became the executive director of CLS in 1985. In the wake of communism's fall, Sam felt a call to expand Attorney Ministries on an international scale and left CLS in 1991 to "go global." The next year Sam launched Advocates. Today, Advocates has grown into a network of more than 32,000 Christian attorneys, judges, law professors, and law students spread over 142 countries.

Psalm 107:13-14 gives us the prayer, oft repeated, of those in bondage:

They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart.

As we often see in the Scriptures, the Lord uses His people as the answer to those crying in the darkness. This is the mission of our friends at Advocates.

Advocates and CLS remain close allies. In fact, if you were at the 2024 CLS National Conference, you may have met Teresa Conradie, the energetic South African who serves as Advocate's executive director. It is inspiring to see what the Lord grows when we say "yes" to His call, both here and abroad. And as the partnership between CLS and Advocates shows, we need not labor alone. What a joy to embark on these journeys together! But where do we start?

If you're not already involved with your local CLS chapter, make the time to do so! Not only are the chapter gatherings a time of great encouragement, but you will also hear about the work that our members and partners are doing. Perhaps there is a place for you. If you are already involved in a local CLS chapter and are engaged in an international ministry, encourage your chapter to highlight its work. I also hope you'll consider joining us at the 2025 CLS National Conference in New Orleans on October 9-12! There you'll meet our friends from Advocates and other organizations who are fulfilling Christ's call all over the world. And if you do come, please track me down and say hello. I'm the big guy who is being loud because I'm having too much fun.

Finally, I'd ask that you offer a word of prayer for those brave warriors standing in the front lines; our incredible staff at CLS, our friends with Advocates, and others you know in vocational ministry.

I know it sometimes feels easier to ignore the plight of people outside our own community, but I hope this edition of *The Christian Lawyer* will challenge you to look for opportunities to be a witness "to the end of the earth" and to press back against the darkness. Who knows where the Lord will take us as we listen for His call.

CHRISTIAN LEGAL SOCIETY

NATIONAL CONFERENCE





OCTOBER 9-12, 2025

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