

A dark blue world map is centered in the background of the page. The map shows the outlines of continents and some country names like 'RUSSIA' and 'CANADA' are faintly visible.

2026 *Global Religious Freedom Gathering*

SEPT 28-29 | DALLAS, TX



K. RANDEL EVERETT
CENTER FOR GLOBAL
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

Dallas, TX - Washington, DC

2026 GLOBAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM GATHERING

Sept. 28-29 | Dallas Baptist University

All events in the Mahler Student Center Great Hall

Monday, Sept. 28

5:30pm	Doors open; Sponsor and Partner booths available
5:45-6:30pm	Dinner in the Great Hall
6:30pm	Center Welcome and Introductions - Emily Cole, <i>DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom</i>
6:35-6:45pm	Welcome Remarks - DBU President Dr. Adam Wright
6:45-7:00pm	Worship led by Kimberly Green
7:00-7:40pm	<u>Keynote</u> : Dr. Randel Everett interviews Pastor Ezra Jin (China) (daughter Grace Jin Drexel interpreting)
7:40-7:55pm	<u>Responding to the Challenge</u> : Knox Thames, <i>DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom</i>
7:55-8:00pm	Closing

Tuesday, Sept. 29

8:30-9:00am	Registration (Coffee and light breakfast included) (Mahler Great Hall)
9:00-9:05am	Welcome from DBU
9:05-9:15am	Framing Remarks by Knox Thames, <i>DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom</i>
9:15-9:30am	Worship – DBU Chapel Worship team
9:30-9:45am	Break

9:45-10:45am

SESSION 1: Engaging the Local Church: Theology & Strategies

Moderator: Dr. Randel Everett, *DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom*

Pastors: Jordan McKinney, *Hillcrest Baptist Church*
Dr. Bill Skaar, *FBC Grand Prairie*
Dr. Dennis R. Wiles, *FBC Arlington*
Dr. Darin Wood, *FBC Midland*

10:45-11:00am

Break

11:00-12:00pm

SESSION 2: Advocacy in a Broken World: Faithful Action in Times of Conflict

Moderator: Scot Bower, *CSW*

Speakers: Wissam al-Saliby, *21Wilberforce*
Dr. Jeremy P. Barker, *Mustard Seed Foundation*
Bob Fu, *ChinaAid*
Dr. Ted Vail, *Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL)*

12:00-1:00pm

Lunch (Great Hall)

Advocacy Opportunities moderated by Emily Cole

1:00-2:00pm

SESSION 3: What Can Religious Freedom Advocates Learn? Lessons from Those Who Serve All

Moderator: Knox Thames, *DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom*

Speakers: Dr. Jeremy Everett, *Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty*
Dr. Katie Frugé, *Christian Life Commission*
John Hasse, *formerly with World Vision Zambia*
Matius Ho, *Leimena Institute (Indonesia)*

2:00-3:00pm

SESSION 4: Religious Nationalism: Global Challenges for an Increasingly Pluralistic World

Moderator: Anna Lee Stangl, *CSW*

Speakers: Gerardo Berthin, *Freedom House*

Dr. Jack Goodyear, *DBU Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences*
Nicole Bibbins Sedaca, *George W. Bush Institute*
Hannah Clayson Smith, *International Center for Law and Religion Studies, BYU*

3:00-3:15pm

Break

3:30-4:30pm

SESSION 5: “Praying for All the Persecuted” (Hybrid)

Facilitator: Ed Brown, *Stefanus Alliance International*

Prayer Leads: Mikael Jägerskog, *PMU - an organization of the Swedish Pentecostal Churches*

Ed Brown, *Stefanus Alliance International*

Knox Thames, *DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom*

Corey Jackson, *Luke Alliance*

Survivor Community Voices

1. **Ukraine: Pastor Mykhailo Brytsyn** (Zoom)

Prayer Lead: Mikael Jägerskog

2. **Sudan: Human rights lawyer Mohaned El Nour**

Prayer Lead: Ed Brown

3. **Pakistan: Family representative of Professor Junaid Hafeez, Pakistani blasphemy prisoner** (Zoom)

Prayer Lead: Knox Thames

4. **China: Pastor Ezra Jin & Grace Jin Drexel**

Prayer Lead: Corey Jackson

4:30pm

Concluding Remarks

How can we pray and take action as a community?

Closing Prayer and Song

- KEYNOTE SPEAKER -



Pastor Ezra Jin Mingri

Founding Pastor of Zion Church and recently freed from prison in China

Pastor Ezra Jin is the founder of Zion Church, one of China's largest underground house-church networks. In October 2025, Pastor Jin was arrested at his home in Beihai, Guangxi, as part of a sweeping crackdown on independent Christian worship that also targeted dozens of pastors and church members across China.

In July 2026, Pastor Jin was released from prison following direct intervention by the White House.

Interpreting



Grace Jin Drexel, Pastor Ezra Jin's daughter, is the Director of Advocacy at Luke Alliance. She spoke out publicly to advocate for her father's release and continues to do so for countless others detained by the CCP for their faith.

Grace was previously a National Security Research Analyst on a Senate leadership committee and a professional staff member at the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC), a commission tasked with documenting human rights abuses in China.

She holds an M.A. in human rights and transnational justice from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and a B.A. in political science from UCLA.

- PLENARY SPEAKERS -



Knox Thames

Executive Director, DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom

Named as the inaugural Executive Director in April 2026, **Knox Thames** is an international human rights lawyer, advocate, and author, who spent 20 years in key U.S. governmental positions advocating for religious freedom abroad, including at the State Department and two foreign policy commissions. Known for his expertise and nonpartisan approach, both the Obama and Trump administrations appointed Knox as the Special Advisor for Religious Minorities in the Near East and South / Central Asia at the State Department.

Since leaving government service in 2020, Knox has written extensively on human rights and religious freedom in USA Today, TIME, Newsweek, The Dispatch, Christianity Today, the Harvard Human Rights Journal, and other publications. Knox's book, *Ending Persecution: Charting the Path to Global Religious Freedom*, was published by Notre Dame Press in 2024 and explores strategies to combat religious oppression worldwide. He also produced the graphic novel, *Blood & Water: The Life and Martyrdom of Shahbaz Bhatti*, published in March 2026 by Ignatius Press.

After leaving the State Department, Knox served as a Senior Visiting Expert on strategic religious engagement, religious freedom, and peacemaking at the U.S. Institute of Peace

from 2020 to 2025. In 2026, Knox was named a Research Fellow at Regent's Park College, University of Oxford.

Originally from Kentucky, he grew up Baptist and attended a Baptist college. He and his wife, Shelley, live in the Washington, DC, area and are the parents of two teenage sons—one a sophomore at Virginia Tech and the other a high school senior.



Dr. Randel Everett

Founder and Senior Fellow, DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom

Dr. Randel Everett accepted the position of Senior Fellow for Religious Freedom at Dallas Baptist University after retiring as Founding President of 21Wilberforce.

He spent four decades as pastor of churches in Florida, Virginia, Arkansas, and Texas before founding 21Wilberforce in 2014 to focus attention on religious persecution abroad and the enduring importance of religious liberty in the United States.

Everett was the Founding President of the John Leland Center for Theological Studies in Falls Church, Virginia and served as the Executive Director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Throughout his career, Everett has traveled to nearly 50 countries, meeting with religious and government leaders and witnessing first-hand the ravages of persecution.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Ouachita Baptist University in Arkansas and Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Dr. Everett also has an honorary Doctor of Divinity from the University of Richmond and Doctor of Humanities from Dallas Baptist University.

He and his wife Sheila live in Pensacola, Florida. Their son Jeremy and his wife Amy, live in Waco and have three sons: Lucas, Sam and Wyatt. Their daughter, Rachel, and her husband Eric, live in Orlando with their daughter Klara.

- PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS -



Jordan McKinney, Senior Associate Pastor
Hillcrest Baptist Church

Jordan McKinney's heart for the church of this generation mirrors his own journey into pastoral ministry.

After graduating from DBU, Jordan was called to serve as a youth pastor in a small "one stoplight" town, where he learned to have eyes to see the Kingdom call of the Church to be in and for its city. From there he was invited to join Highland Baptist Church in Waco as youth pastor, a church that had nearly doubled in size under the leadership of Pastor John Durham. Then, after eight years in Waco, Jordan responded to a call to the city of Cedar Hill and the congregation of Hillcrest Baptist Church, a multi-generational church with a substantial senior adult membership. As Senior Associate Pastor, Jordan leads the ministerial staff and the congregation in executing the vision of Hillcrest to expand the Kingdom.

He met wife Paytyn while a student at DBU, and the two have three children together.

For more on Hillcrest Baptist Church, visit their [website](#).

For more about Jordan's vision in ministry, read DBU's campus [news story](#).



Dr. Bill Skaar, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church Grand Prairie

Dr. Bill Skaar is the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Grand Prairie, where he has served since June of 1999, over 27 years.

Bill graduated from Humble High School in Humble, TX, and received a BBA from Baylor University in 1981. He has two degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. A M Div in '87 and a D Min in '92. Bill's pastorates have all been in churches, which were the "First Baptist Churches" of their area. All had been in long-term numerical decline like many First Baptist Churches across Texas, and he been used to lead turnarounds at all of them.

Since August of 2015, First Baptist has added over 900 new members with over 300 coming through baptism, most of whom are adults. The church is heavily involved in missions locally and beyond its borders. In the past two weeks, Bill traveled to Kyiv, Ukraine to visit with and encourage Baptist pastors there. First Baptist has partnered with Bethlehem Baptist Church in Dunaivtsi, Ukraine as part of the Healing Path Initiative through the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Bill is active in the Grand Prairie Community and currently serves on the boards of the Grand Prairie YMCA, the Grand Prairie United Charities and the Baylor Scott and White Hospital of Irving. Bill has also served on the Executive Board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and as Chairman of the Missions Funding Committee of the Convention. He also is an Adjunct Teacher in the Graduate School of Ministry at Dallas Baptist University where he teaches classes in Christian history and Preaching.

Bill has been married to Pamela Wimpee Skaar for over 44 years. They have two children, Melissa and Brad. They also have two grandchildren through Melissa and her husband, Jonathan.

For more on FBC Grand Prairie, visit their [website](#).



Dr. Dennis R. Wiles, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church Arlington

In August of 2001, **Dr. Dennis R. Wiles** was called to be the Senior Pastor at First Baptist Arlington. Dr. Wiles began his pastoral ministry at Jimtown Baptist Church in Jimtown, Oklahoma. He also has served as pastor of First Baptist Church of Mertens, Texas, Southside Baptist Church in Tyler, Texas, Calvary Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, and First Baptist Church in Huntsville, Alabama.

He served for 9 years as a Regent at Baylor University and continues to serve as an Adjunct Professor at Truett Seminary.

Together, he and his wife Cindy have led churches to answer the call of The Great Commission. They established a new church-based mission sending ministry known as Restore Hope in 2006. Cindy is the Executive Director of Restore Hope and Dr. Wiles serves on the Board of Directors. Through Restore Hope, numerous churches have missionaries serving in various places around the globe.

Dr. Wiles also has led in the effort to establish the new Ascent Movement, a collective of churches, seminaries, denominational networks, and mission organizations working together to re-evangelize North America. He currently serves as Chair of the Ascent Council.

In addition to a B.A. from UAB, Dr. Wiles earned both a Master of Divinity and a Doctor of Philosophy at Southwestern Seminary. His PhD is in the field of Church History with a concentration in American Christianity.

Cindy and Dr. Wiles have two children and six grandchildren.

For more on FBC Arlington, visit their [website](#).



Dr. Darin Wood, Senior Pastor
First Baptist Church Midland

Dr. Darin Wood is the pastor of FBC Midland, TX where he has served since 2016. He is a proud DBU graduate (class of 1990) and holds a Master's degree in Divinity from Southwestern Seminary. Darin also is a PhD in New Testament, specializing in New Testament textual criticism.

Darin and his wife Julie are proud parents to their son Josh, a sophomore at Midland High School. Darin also serves as the chairman for the board of directors for the Midland Chamber of Commerce.

For more on FBC Midland, visit their [website](#).



Scot Bower
CEO, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Scot Bower is from Sheffield, UK, and serves as the CEO of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). He has worked in INGO leadership roles sector for over 20 years and has been at CSW for the last 10.

He is captivated by the life and words of Jesus and lives his life at the intersection between prayer and justice, turning tables and loving the poor wherever he can.

Hear more from Scot at CSW's podcast *Free to Believe*, [here](#).

Visit CSW's [website](#) and follow their advocacy work by region.



Wissam al-Saliby
President, 21Wilberforce

Wissam al-Saliby, a Lebanese Baptist with experience advocating for human rights and international religious freedom, was appointed as president of 21Wilberforce Global Freedom Center in May 2024. 21Wilberforce is a Christian-led non-profit founded in Texas in 2014 working to equip the church to support persecuted communities, challenge repression, and expand freedom of religion and belief for everyone.

Prior to his appointment at 21Wilberforce, al-Saliby was the Director of the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland for the World Evangelical Alliance, a network of 140 national alliances representing 600 million evangelical Christians. Al-Saliby holds a master's degree in international law with a specialization in Protection and Human Security. He is married with three kids.

Wissam's interview *How can Christians respond to persecution and defend religious freedom?* is available from the Denison Forum, [here](#).



Dr. Jeremy P. Barker

Associate Vice President, International Strategies, Religious Freedom Institute

Jeremy P. Barker serves as Director of Programs for the Mustard Seed Foundation, based in Erbil, Iraq. He also serves as Associate Vice President for International Strategies with the Religious Freedom Institute, where he has worked since 2016 on international religious freedom research and programs in the Middle East and North Africa.

Since 2010, he has worked in rights-based relief, development, and advocacy in the Middle East, spending nearly a decade based there and the remainder in Washington, D.C. His work sits at the convergence of religion and international affairs: advancing religious freedom, strengthening principles of equal citizenship, and countering persecution in conflict-affected societies.

He holds a B.A. in History and M.A. degrees in Cross-Cultural Studies and International Relations. He is a Ph.D. researcher at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, where his research examines how humanitarian actors engage with religious diversity dynamics in conflict-affected communities, using post-2014 Iraq as the primary case study.

To learn more about the Mustard Seed Foundation, visit their [website](#).



Bob Fu
President, ChinaAid

Bob (Xiqiu) Fu is one of the leading voices in the world for persecuted faith communities in China. Fu was born and raised in mainland China and was a student leader during the Tiananmen Square demonstrations for freedom and democracy in 1989. Fu graduated from the School of International Relations at the People's (Renmin) University in Beijing and taught English to Communist Party officials at the Beijing Administrative College and Beijing Party School of the Chinese Communist Party from 1993-1996.

Fu was also a house church leader in Beijing until he and his wife, Heidi, were imprisoned for two months for “illegal evangelism” in 1996. Bob and Heidi fled to the United States as religious refugees in 1997 and subsequently founded ChinaAid in 2002 to bring international attention to China's gross human rights violations and to promote religious freedom and rule of law in China. As president of ChinaAid, Fu has testified before an array of government agencies and international human rights commissions.

Fu regularly briefs the State Department and Members of Congress, including Members of the International Religious Freedom Caucus, on the status of religious freedom and the rule of law in China.

To learn more about ChinaAid, visit their [website](#).



Dr. Ted Vail

Chairman, Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL)
Global Vice President for the Foursquare Church USA

Dr. Ted Vail and Pastor Dawn Vail have been adventuring together for over 30 years, and they have three adult children. Prior to becoming the global vice president for the Foursquare Church, Ted served in many roles, including being director of Foursquare Missions International (FMI), founding director of Foursquare Disaster Relief (FDR), director of Urban and Multicultural ministries, and senior pastor of two churches in Colorado, Hispanic divisional superintendent, and area missionary worker to North America.

Ted earned a master's degree in global leadership and a doctorate in intercultural studies from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. Ted is a regular participant of the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF), vice chair of the World Missions Commission (WMC), and the chair of the Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty (PCRL). Ted is a team builder, people includer, and expansionist.

To learn more about the work of the PCRL, visit their [website](#).



Dr. Jeremy Everett

Founder and Executive Director, Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty

Dr. Jeremy Everett is the founder and executive director of the Baylor University Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, where he leads efforts to integrate research, policy, and practice to address food insecurity. Under his leadership, the Collaborative has grown to nearly 80 staff, interns, and researchers and a network of more than 28,000 partner organizations, helping communities secure hundreds of millions of additional meals through evidence-based innovation. Since joining Baylor, Dr. Everett has raised more than \$300 million to support research, public service, and policy initiatives focused on hunger and poverty.

Before founding the Collaborative, Dr. Everett served in international and community development as a teacher, pastor, community organizer, and farmer. He has served on the Congressionally appointed U.S. National Commission on Hunger and currently chairs Bread for the World's Board of Directors. Dr. Everett is the author of *I Was Hungry: Cultivating Common Ground to End an American Crisis* and several contributing works on hunger and justice, with his next book, *The Litmus Test: Hunger, Power, and the Moral Reckoning of a Divided Nation*, forthcoming from Baylor Press in 2027.

He holds degrees from Samford University, Baylor University, and Duke University and has received numerous honors, including the Congressman Brooks Hays Christian Citizenship Award and recognition as the 2022 Waco Tribune-Herald Person of the Year.

To learn about the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, visit their [website](#).



Dr. Katie Frugé

Director, Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission

Katie Frugé, M.Div, Ph.D., serves over 5,000 Texas Baptist churches as the Director of the Christian Life Commission for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. In this role, she equips pastors and ministry leaders to navigate complex cultural, moral, and political issues with biblical faithfulness and wisdom. Specializing in the *imago Dei* and human dignity, Dr. Frugé's work addresses questions of human flourishing and faithful witness, informed by her personal journey as a stomach cancer survivor and parent to children with special needs.

She is married to her college sweetheart; together they are raising three daughters in Fort Worth, Texas.

To learn more about the work of the Christian Life Commission, visit their [website](#).



John Hasse

Former National Director and CEO of World Vision Zambia

John Hasse is a global nonprofit executive and Christian leader with more than two decades of experience advancing the well-being of vulnerable children and families around the world. Throughout his career, he has led large, mission-driven organizations across Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, combining strategic leadership with a deep commitment to helping children reach their God-given potential.

Most recently, John served as President and CEO of Family Legacy Missions International, where he led a team of more than 700 employees serving over 11,000 vulnerable children in Zambia through education, health, spiritual formation, and emotional wellness programs. Prior to Family Legacy, he served as National Director and CEO of World Vision Zambia and previously as National Director of World Vision Haiti. He also held leadership roles with World Vision U.S., overseeing international teams and developing programs focused on food security, child protection, and disaster response.

Before joining World Vision, John served at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), where he helped oversee global food security initiatives and programs across Africa and Central America. His passion for serving children began while living and ministering in a children's home outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti. His professional experience also includes leadership roles in the private sector, public service, and his family's business.

John holds a master's degree in International Development from American University and bachelor's degrees in English and Psychology from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. He and his wife, Aubrey, live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and are the proud parents of four children.



Matius Ho

Executive Director, Leimena Institute (Jakarta, Indonesia)

Matius Ho is the Executive Director and a co-founder of the Leimena Institute. He has led the development of the Cross-Cultural Religious Literacy program, which aims to strengthen social cohesion in a diverse society. He has been invited to speak on religious literacy and social cohesion at various international forums across 20 countries. He authored the chapter on Indonesia in *The Routledge Handbook of Religious Literacy, Pluralism, and Global Engagement* (2021). Previously, he worked as a technology and management consultant at Accenture in Indonesia and Singapore.

He holds bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Wisconsin–Madison (USA). The Henry Martyn Institute: International Centre for Research, Interfaith Relations and Reconciliation (HMI) in Hyderabad, India—established in 1930—awarded him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity for his contributions towards building a peaceful and harmonious society.

To learn more about Leimena Institute, visit their [website](#).



Anna Lee Stangl

Advocacy Director, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Anna Lee Stangl sits on the Senior Leadership Team and is joint Advocacy Director at Christian Solidarity Worldwide. She joined CSW in 1999, as its European Union Liaison Officer, advising members of the European Parliament, and civil servants in the European Commission External Action Service and the Council of Ministers on freedom of religion or belief issues around the world. Under her leadership, the work of the CSW EU office in Brussels played a key role in the adoption of the EU Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Early in her time at CSW, she also took on the Latin America Research and Advocacy portfolio, developing CSW's work on the region. In 2012, she relocated from Belgium to establish a permanent presence for CSW in Washington, DC. Alongside her position as joint Advocacy Director, she continues to directly manage the Americas Team.

In her spare time, she writes. Her debut novel will be published in March 2027.

She holds a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Randolph-Macon Woman's College (Virginia) and a Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution from Lancaster University (UK).

Follow Anna Lee's work in Latin America, plus CSW's broader efforts around the world, at their blog *ForB in Full (Freedom of Religion or Belief in Full – A Blog by CSW)*, accessible [here](#).



Gerardo Berthin
President, Freedom House

Gerardo Berthin is president of Freedom House. He previously served as vice president of international programs at Freedom House. Berthin has nearly three decades of experience working on democratic governance, anticorruption, human rights, and civil society strengthening. He has worked in over 50 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe.

Previously, he was director of the Latin America and Caribbean programs at Freedom House. Prior to joining Freedom House, he was a senior associate at Tetra Tech's Democracy and Governance sector, where he managed large USAID-funded projects. From 2009 to 2014, he was the governance and decentralization policy advisor at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Regional Service Center for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama. He has done consultancies for the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the Swedish Agency for Development Cooperation, among others.

Berthin holds master's degrees in political science from the University of Chicago and from Georgetown University in Latin American studies, and a B.A. in international affairs from George Washington University. He is a certified trainer from the UN Staff College in Turin, Italy, and has a certificate from Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government on leadership in development to manage political and economic reform.

Learn more about Freedom House by visiting their [website](#).



Dr. Jack Goodyear

DBU Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Dr. Jack Goodyear currently serves as Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and as a Professor in Political Science at Dallas Baptist University. He has been full-time at DBU since January 2008. Prior to coming to DBU, Dr. Goodyear served as a minister in churches in Arlington, Texas and Tampa, Florida.

Dr. Goodyear holds a PhD in Religion, Politics, and Society from Baylor University. His studies focused on the historical, philosophical, theological, and sociological interaction between religion and politics and the church and state, paying special attention to the impact of evangelicals in American politics and culture. He also earned a Master of Divinity with Biblical Languages degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His Bachelors is from Baylor University in Political Science.

Learn more about DBU's College of Humanities and Social Sciences [here](#).

Read Dr. Goodyear's article, *Religion, Politics, and Civil Discourse: Thoughts for Christian Leaders* (2023), [here](#).



Nicole Bibbins Sedaca

Senior Fellow, George W. Bush Institute

Nicole Bibbins Sedaca is the Kelly and David Pfeil Fellow at the George W. Bush Institute. Bringing her expertise on American foreign policy, US and global democracy issues, religious freedom, human rights, and leadership, Bibbins Sedaca writes and speaks on behalf of the George W. Bush Institute and serves as faculty in our various leadership programs.

Previously Bibbins Sedaca served as the executive vice president and interim president at Freedom House, as well as a Professor and Chair for the Global Politics and Security Concentration at Georgetown University's Master of Science in Foreign Service. She served for ten years in the United States Department of State, working on democracy promotion, human rights, human trafficking, religious freedom, refugees, and counterterrorism. Following her governmental service, she opened and directed the International Republican Institute's local governance program in Ecuador and taught at the Universidad de San Francisco de Quito (Ecuador). Ms. Bibbins Sedaca has served on numerous academic and non-profit boards and currently serves on the Board of Directors of the International Justice Mission, More in Common – US, and Georgetown University's MSFS program.

To learn more about the Bush Institute, visit their [website](#).



Hannah Clayson Smith

Senior Fellow, International Center for Law and Religion Studies, BYU

Hannah Smith specializes in appellate and religious freedom matters at Schaerr Jaffe LLP. She has contributed to over 25 briefs at the US Supreme Court and has represented diverse religious parties in federal courts around the country, including Anglicans, Assemblies of God, Baptists, Catholics, Hindus, Hutterites, Jews, Lutherans, Muslims, Russian Orthodox, Santeros, Sikhs, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Hannah previously served for a decade as Senior Counsel at The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty. While at Becket, she represented the winning parties in four landmark religious freedom SCOTUS victories: *Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC* (2012); *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* (2014); *Holt v. Hobbs* (2015); and *Zubik v. Burwell* (2016).

Hannah served as a law clerk to two U.S. Supreme Court Justices: Justice Clarence Thomas and Justice Samuel A. Alito, Jr. She graduated from Princeton University (majoring in the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs) and BYU Law School (Order of the Coif). She served as Executive Editor on the Law Review.

Hannah has testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee in support of then-US Supreme Court nominee Neil Gorsuch and has briefed policymakers at the White House, U.S. Capitol, and State Department, among others.

Hannah received BYU's Alumni Achievement Award, the JRCLS's Women-in-Law Leadership Award, and the Center for Constitutional Studies' James Madison Award. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Religious Freedom Institute, the Board of Advisers for her Law School alma mater, and as a Senior Fellow at the International Center for Law and Religion Studies.



Ed Brown

Secretary General, Stefanus Alliance International

Ed Brown is Secretary General of the Stefanus Alliance International, a small Norwegian NGO focused on promoting and protecting Freedom of Religion or Belief for everyone and strengthening the presence of the church in areas of the world where there is extensive discrimination and persecution on the basis of religion or belief.

Ed's work includes a wide range of engagement and strategy, from working with grassroots religious leaders living in communities marked by persecution and conflict, to conversations with parliamentarians, diplomats, and senior political leaders shaping policy at the highest levels. Over the course of his career, he has served as a pastor, human rights advocate, teacher, facilitator, and international leader. He has worked with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, led the Norwegian Secretariat of the International Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief, and even briefly served as a soccer missionary in various parts of the world.

He has been working in the field of freedom of religion or belief since 2001 and has led the work at Stefanus Alliance International since 2005. He has studied Psychology, Education, Religion and Christian Theology, as well as Human Rights.

Learn more about the work of Stefanus Alliance on their [website](#).



Corey Jackson

Founder and President, Luke Alliance

Prior to Luke Alliance, **Corey Jackson** founded and served for 15 years as the Senior Pastor of Trinity Park Church in Cary, NC, a multi-cultural church that is home to Christians from over 25 cultural backgrounds. Corey lived in China from 1998-2005, speaks Mandarin, and has served as an advisor for a large urban house church movement in China for the past 13 years.

He has been instrumental in advocating at the highest levels in Washington, D.C., and globally for arrested Chinese house church leaders, their families, and for others around the world experiencing persecution. He remains deeply connected to the unregistered church movement in China and to constituents in Washington, D.C. and in Europe.

Originally from Birmingham, Alabama, Corey has a B.A. from Auburn University and a Master of Divinity from Reformed Theological Seminary in Orlando. He has been quoted as a human rights advocate by the New York Times and BBC, and his pastoral articles have been highlighted by The Gospel Coalition and published in Christianity Today.

Learn more about Luke Alliance on their [website](#).



Mikael Jägerskog

PMU – the relief and development organization of the
Swedish Pentecostal Churches

Mikael Jägerskog has over 20 years of experience in international advocacy, diplomacy, political dialogue, and faith-based engagement within multilateral systems. He represents the Pentecostal World Fellowship (PWF)—a global network of 130 million members—in key international arenas, including the United Nations, G20, and EU institutions.

As PWF’s lead UN contact, Mikael contributes to high-level platforms such as the UN Climate Conferences (COP), UNGA, UN CSW, and major human rights dialogues. For example, he played a leading role in coordinating the multi-faith statement for the UN Summit of the Future (2024) and has served on boards such as UNEP’s Faith for Earth Coalition, the Coalition for Faith-Based Solutions, and PCRL (Pentecostal Commission on Religious Liberty).

At PMU, the Swedish Pentecostal Churches’ relief and development organization, Mikael leads global advocacy on ODA, FoRB, and EU-Africa relations, engaging donors, governments, and civil society. He is an experienced speaker, facilitator, and advisor on policy, sustainability, and religious freedom.



Emily A. Cole

Director of Research and Partnerships, DBU Center for Global Religious Freedom

Appointed as the Director of Research & Partnerships for the Everett Center in April 2026, **Emily Cole** oversees the Center's campus engagement and works with students to consider matters of religious freedom in a global context. A lawyer by training and former Fulbright scholar to Ecuador, she has experience advancing human rights efforts across Latin America, including engaging the Organization of American States, supporting human rights lawyers in Venezuela, and training religious leaders and civil society on international standards. Fluent in Spanish, she conducts research on issues intersecting with freedom of religion or belief as well as community engagement with law through imagination.

Emily has spent the last few years mentoring law students through the Christian Legal Society and has taught undergraduate students in both Ecuador and the U.S. As a former collegiate soccer player, she's also used soccer to engage young people on matters of faith and language learning in countries such as Honduras, Ecuador, and Zambia.

Emily received her J.D. from the University of Wisconsin Law School and B.A. in Political Science and Spanish from Eastern University, where she also studied in Spain.