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# Religion & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY

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The worldwide financial crisis, the election of America's first African-American president, and Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the U.S. were just a few of the big news stories of 2008. What major religion and ethics stories are expected to garner national attention in the New Year? Based on a studio discussion hosted by Bob Abernethy and featuring guest panelists John Allen with the *National Catholic Reporter*, E.J. Dionne from *The Washington Post* and Kim Lawton, managing editor at *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, below are some of the top news topics expected to make headlines in 2009. For more on this discussion, go to: [www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics).

- ***The New Administration***  
How will President Barack Obama and his new administration handle domestic issues such as abortion and immigration, health care and education? And how will it tackle the diplomatic challenges abroad, particularly peace efforts in the Middle East and the relationship with the Muslim world?
- ***The Catholic Church and Africa***  
The Vatican is turning its attention to Africa in an attempt to mobilize the global conscience and social justice. What impact will that have on peace and development in this Third World nation?
- ***U.S. Episcopal Church***  
Will the differences over homosexuality, theological issues and the consecration of a gay bishop result in a permanent split between the U.S. Episcopal Church and the worldwide Anglican Communion?
- ***Impact of Young Evangelicals***  
What role are younger evangelicals going to play in the shaping of the evangelical churches and in the public image of evangelicalism?

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MUTUAL OF AMERICA

# Religion as a Force for Good

Despite a divided view of America's impact on the world, the vast majority of Americans believe the U.S. is morally obligated to be engaged on the international stage, according to a recent survey conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc. for **Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly** and the United Nations Foundation. The September 2008 survey, which polled 1,400 adults, found that nearly a quarter of Americans say the U.S. should be very actively engaged in world affairs and 70% believe America should be at least moderately involved. Most believe the nation should be actively involved in world affairs because of an explicit responsibility or moral obligation to take a leadership role in the world. At the same time, nearly eight-in-ten Americans agree that sometimes U.S. involvement in world affairs causes more harm than good. Overall, Americans are equally split about whether the U.S. has a positive or negative impact on the world.



The survey also found that 68% percent of Americans who attend religious services at least once a week say the U.S. has a moral obligation to be involved in world affairs, compared to 54% who attend less frequently. According to 55% of those who attend religious services each week, America's influence in the world has been positive, compared with the attitudes of churchgoers (44%) who attend less frequently. Furthermore, Americans view their country as a nation set apart from others.

Approximately 61% believe God has uniquely blessed the nation and a similar number (59%) believe the U.S. should set the example as a Christian nation to the rest of the world.

See more survey results at:  
[www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1207/survey.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/week1207/survey.html).

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