

## Memo

January 2010

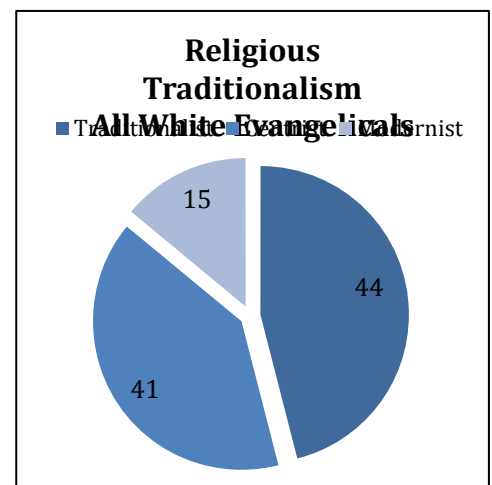
**TO:** Interested Parties  
**FROM:** Dr. Robert P. Jones, President, Public Religion Research; Visiting Fellow in Religion, Third Way  
**RE:** Quick facts about the Emerging Evangelical Center

This memo serves as a guide to understanding the emerging evangelical center using data from the Faith and American Politics Survey, conducted by Public Religion Research and sponsored by Faith in Public Life.<sup>1</sup> It supports Third Way's initiative to find common ground between evangelicals and progressives on divisive cultural issues ("Come Let Us Reason Together," <http://www.comeletusreason.org>).

### Quick Facts:

#### The Size of the Evangelical Center

- Forty-one percent of evangelicals are centrists, and 15% are modernists (or more progressive), while 44% are traditionalists (or more conservative).
- The evangelical center (41%) is nearly as large as the group of evangelical traditionalists (44%).
- A centrist/modernist evangelical coalition represents a majority (56%) of evangelicals.
- Younger evangelicals (age 18-34), are more likely to be centrists (45%) and modernists (19%), and less likely to be traditionalists (36%).



#### Differences between Centrist/Modernist Evangelicals and Traditionalist Evangelicals

- *Abortion.*
  - A majority of centrist/modernist evangelicals (54%) say that political leaders can stay true to their core beliefs while working to find common ground on abortion, compared to only 42% of traditionalist evangelicals.
  - About 7-in-10 (69%) centrist/modernist evangelicals say they would still consider voting for a candidate who disagreed with them on abortion, compared to only 48% of traditionalist evangelicals.
- *Gay and Lesbian Issues.* A solid majority (63%) of centrist/modernist evangelicals support employment discrimination protections for gays and lesbians in conjunction with a broad religious exemption for religious organizations, compared to 51% of traditionalists. A majority of all evangelicals (58%) support these protections.
- *Torture.* Fifty-two percent of centrist/modernist evangelicals say that torture can often or sometimes be justified, compared to 56% of traditionalists. When the issue of torture is put in the context of the Golden Rule (i.e., that the U.S. should never use methods against its enemies that it would not want used against American soldiers), two thirds (66%) of centrist/modernist evangelicals oppose the use of torture, while traditionalists are more evenly divided with a bare majority (51%) opposing it.

<sup>1</sup> The Faith and American Politics Survey was conducted by Public Religion Research between August 28 and September 19, 2008. The survey was sponsored by Faith in Public Life (<http://www.faithinpubliclife.org/content/faps/>) and was based on a nationally representative sample of the U.S. adult population (age 18 and older) and an oversample of 974 respondents ages 18-34. The religious orientation categories were calculated using a methodology developed by political scientist John Green.