

# Study results leave experts still questioning if prayer heals

BY MARY KENNEY  
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The healing power of prayer is a tenet of many world religions including Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Now, empirical research might indicate that prayer could play a role in the medical field.

Candy Gunther Brown, IU associate professor of religious studies, worked with colleagues in a study in Mozambique and Brazil to measure the effects of prayer on patients suffering from visual and audio problems.

Patients came to Brown's team and were given tests to measure their sight and hearing. The patients were prayed for and encouraged to pray for healing. After a period of time, the patients were given the same assessments by Brown's team.

"One of the distinctive things about our study was that we did not rely on self-reports," Brown said.

The amount of change Brown's team saw was surprising.

"Even though we had a relatively small number of sub-

jects, the results were large and consistent enough that they are statistically significant," Brown said.

Dr. John Peteet, an associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, is one of the critics of the study.

He said the results of Brown's study are still preliminary because no effects were found for the results and there was no follow-up.

"Other research suggests that prayer in medical settings is very common, and experienced by pa-

tients as helpful," Peteet said. "I don't think we know enough about what these findings mean to say yet what they imply for medical staff."

Rev. Bill Breeden of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington said although Unitarian Universalists have their own beliefs about prayer, there is a common prayer in the church's services.

"I can only speak for myself," Breeden said. "I think prayer is important not because of who is listening, but because of who is

praying."

Brown said no one should draw the conclusion that prayer needs to be added to medical care. She said it is rare that a study is conclusive, and this one is no exception.

"It's not appropriate to draw religious conclusions from empirical findings," Brown said. "It's an indication that further studies should be done."

Peteet said personally, he believes that some prayers for healing are answered by whoever they are addressed to.

"There are psychological reasons such as suggestion and caring that probably account for some effects, but the findings in this study don't seem so easily explainable on this basis," Peteet said.

Prayer can often unlock healing in one's body, Breeden said, whether or not any deity hears it.

"Prayer is an expression of our deepest joys and sorrows and, as such, has therapeutic values regardless of whether or not anyone else is listening, be they human or other," Breeden said.

## YOUR ONLINE COMMENTS:

### Should there be satellite voting in Monroe County?

Yes, there should

"Voter turnout was massive on campus in 2008, and the only logical reason anyone would stand in the way of it this time is party loyalty. The money is already there. The issue is absolutely and undeniably partisan. It's no coincidence that the head of College Republicans is against satellite voting. It makes me sick how afraid they are of a true and fair election. They can't take away my vote, so they took away my ballot box instead."

-Nicholas

"Voting should be made as easy as possible for people. This isn't only for students. Faculty would also use the IU site. As an IU student I can tell you that I have no idea where the Curry Building is or where Morton Street is. Does this mean that I shouldn't be able to vote? NO! In 2008, Democrats and Republicans came together to get satellite voting. Now the Republicans are afraid that some people won't vote for them, so we shouldn't make it easy for them to vote."

-Easy Access = Freedom

"The County Council had already approved the funding for the satellite voting sites, so making a claim that there is not enough money is completely false.

Clearly, early voting on campus is extremely important because it allows students, faculty and staff the flexibility to vote when it is convenient for them. Every U.S. citizen has the right to vote and there is no reason why it should be difficult for a citizen to exercise this right."

-Dan

### No, there shouldn't

"If you can't vote on Super Tuesday then just do absentee like I do. No need to pay for another temporary government job. Democrats just can't energize their base to vote one day a year."

-Steve

"Voting is already ridiculously easy. If going to one of the current voting locations is too much trouble for you, then don't vote — you're probably an idiot. If you truly have an impediment to showing up to a poll, then vote absentee."

-Rufus

"Let's keep one thing in mind: There are places in the world where people have to dodge bullets and bombs to get to their polling places. Go visit Tehran or Baghdad and see how easy voting in those places is. I have nothing against student voting, but I have a huge problem with students wanting the voting system to bend over backward to make it easier for them."

-Alumniinohio

## ONLINE ONLY: COMMENTS

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ALEX FARRIS | IDS

### The lights they are a-changin'

Bloomington maintenance worker John Wilbur wraps new Christmas lights around a tree Monday near the Monroe County Courthouse. The city performs maintenance on the lights every year. This is Wilbur's second time replacing the lights.

## Monroe Co. seeks to extend early voting poll hours

### Voter accessibility still debated

BY MARY KENNEY  
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Voter accessibility has been the hot topic for the Monroe County Election Board this fall, and partisan views continue to generate heated debates.

Satellite voting sites were shot down by the board in three separate meetings, and the new topic for debate is an extension of hours to vote early in the Curry Building.

One of the reasons the board rejected satellite voting sites was because voters can vote early in the Curry Building at 238 W. Seventh St.

The Curry Building is open from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. It will also be open until 8 p.m. on Oct. 8 and from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 23 and Oct. 30.

The board has recently discussed extending these hours to evenings and weekends.

Democrat Jan Ellis, election board chairwoman, said the current hours make it difficult for those with 9-to-5 jobs to vote early.

Republican Jim Fielder, also an election board member, said he wanted to wait to see the turnout of the extended hours on Oct. 8 before deciding whether to extend hours regularly.

"It's hard to understand not setting evening voting hours from the beginning," said Rick Dietz, Monroe County Democratic Party chairman in a press release. "Indiana is widely recognized as having some of the most restrictive election day voting hours in the nation."

Republican Steve Hogan, Indiana House of Representatives candidate for District 60, criticized Democrats for using voter accessibility debates for political gain.

"Indiana is widely recognized as having some of the most restrictive election day voting hours in the nation."

Rick Dietz, Monroe County Democratic Party chairman

He said Republicans are by no means against voter accessibility and want a good turnout as much as Democrats.

He said there are many opportunities to vote early and on election day.

Justin Kingsolver, IU College Republicans president and IDS columnist, agreed with this during the last debate of satellite voting sites. He said that he has registered 200 voters for November.

But Ellis criticized Republicans for limiting accessibility. She said rejecting satellite sites and extended hours will reduce the number of voters.

"They say they want to provide voter access, but they are not doing it," Ellis said referring to Republicans. "They are actually refusing to take measures that would."

Dietz said this issue should not be sparking the same level of partisan debate that satellite voting did.

He said board members do not need a test to determine whether extended hours would be an efficient change and that Fielder, who also serves as Monroe County clerk, should extend the hours now.

"It's time to cut through the Tea Party rancor and do what's best for Monroe County," Dietz said. "If we can't do that with satellite voting. ...then at least we should have regular evening hours for early voting."

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\*Additional dates include Jan. 26-28.

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