



Buckle Up Journalists! (Part Five)

2024 may be a 'wild ride'

By

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We are ‘leaping’ as it were into a new year of big news stories. I’m sharing thoughts about some of them each Tuesday during January. You can read previous news topics [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). Let’s move next to **Religion, Pro-Choice/Pro-Life, LGBTQ+, Artificial Intelligence, Other Technology, and Climate Change.**

Religion

Religion is another big story in local communities. Some religious groups are growing, while others are losing members. Pastors and other leaders are leaving the ‘ministry’ at increasing numbers. Thousands of churches are closing across the U.S. and the world every year. More people are becoming ‘Nones,’ meaning they have no religious affiliation.

Since the 1990s, large numbers of Americans have left Christianity to join the growing ranks of U.S. adults who describe their religious identity as atheist, agnostic or “nothing in particular.” This accelerating trend is reshaping the U.S. religious landscape, leading many people to wonder what the future of religion in America might look like. [Pew Research](#)

Many religious groups are seeing splits in relationships because of issues like blessing same-sex marriages, anti-semitism, and social-justice issues. What’s happening in your coverage area? Talk with pastors, priests, and the ‘people in the pews.’ How are these stories impacting their lives? What challenges do they see for 2024 and beyond?

Another big issue in multiple countries across the world is ‘religious persecution.’ Tens of millions of Christians are being persecuted for their beliefs in countries like China, North Korea, Iran, Sudan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. The number of countries that are either ‘hostile’ to Christians or ‘restrict’ Christians from practicing their faith is growing.

Jews are also facing persecution on a scale across the world not seen for many years. Much of that persecution comes from the war between Israel and Hamas, but anti-semitism was growing long before the war began in October of last year. Other religions also face persecution, especially in countries where they are a small minority.

Consider doing some special coverage of religion in your community. Profile families with different religious worldviews. Talk with religious leaders about where they see their religion going in your area in the future. A religious ‘town hall’ might also be a good way for people of various religions to share their views with your viewers, listeners, or readers.

Pro-Choice/Pro-Life

Pro-Choice/Pro-Life is another big story to watch this year, especially since the Supreme Court decision concerning *Roe v. Wade*. Many people believe it will become a [hot issue again in 2024](#), especially with [elections in the offing](#). Where do the presidential candidates stand on the issue? Here's a recent story from [ABC News](#).

The annual [March for Life Rally](#) in Washington D.C. was held on January 19th. Did people from your community attend? If so, do a story with them about what they saw and heard, and what they think about the importance of this issue in the 2024 elections. Also talk with people who attended any counter rallies across the country (Pro-Choice). What's happening in your community? Get all sides of the story, stay neutral, and tell your stories through the lives of real people.

LGBTQ+

LGBTQ+ will continue to make headlines this year in light of elections — local, state, and federal. One Republican state governor [has already vetoed a bill](#) that would have ‘prohibited gender-affirming care for trans and nonbinary youth’ The governor said, ‘Ultimately, I believe this is about protecting human life.’

Where do the [presidential](#), gubernatorial, and congressional candidates stand on this and other LGBTQ+ issues?

What about the LGBTQ+ community plans for 2024? They have a theme this year titled ‘Creating Change’ —

Through Creating Change and other advocacy programs, the National LGBTQ Task Force is training and mobilizing thousands of activists across the nation to deliver a world where you can be you. [The Task Force](#)

The 'Through Creating Change Conference' was held January 17-21. Did anyone from your community attend? If so, do a story with them about what they saw and heard, and any plans the local LGBTQ+ community has planned for your coverage area in 2024.

Get all sides of the story, stay neutral, and tell your stories through the lives of real people.

Artificial Intelligence and Other Technology

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will continue to be big news as we have entered into a new year. As we've written in the past, the expansion of AI is exponential and will become more involved in the lives of people across the world this year and in the years to come.

In addition to OpenAI, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, and Meta, many experts believe 2024 could see even more AI startups -

"In 2024, I expect the momentum we saw from this past year only to increase," Samuel Mangold-Lenett, staff editor at The Federalist, told Fox News Digital. "Corporations have found solid footing, startups are learning how to customize it to fill various niches, and the public has realized that in some critical ways AI technology is a net positive."

Mangold-Lenett also believes 2024 will be the year that, like other technologies, AI will become much more customizable to individual users. [Fox News](#)

The World Economic Forum (WEF) is also warning that AI could be involved in massive ‘disinformation’ that could lead to the potential of a ‘global catastrophe’ —

Humanity faces a perilous future, marked by an explosion of disinformation turbocharged by artificial intelligence and the devastating effects of climate change.

The gloomy outlook comes from an annual survey by the World Economic Forum (WEF) of people paid to identify and manage global risks.

According to the report published Wednesday, nearly two-thirds of respondents expect an “elevated chance of global catastrophes” in the next decade. About 30% expect the same in the next two years. [CNN](#)

Many technology experts are thrilled with the growth of AI. However, others are deeply concerned about what could happen in the coming years. While many call 2023 a [‘landmark year’ for AI innovations](#), 2024 may be even bigger. I’ll be writing about the ‘Good and Bad of AI’ throughout the year as warranted. I suggest you keep your eyes on this story as well — not just the innovations, but how AI will affect your audience.

2024 may also see [other technological concerns](#) — including privacy issues and community disconnection. Another example is called ‘Resurrection Biology.’ That’s where scientists are attempting to bring molecule strings and even more complex organisms back to life. Some in the scientific community are concerned about stirring what they call [‘zombie viruses’](#) that have been dormant for thousands of years.

What about AI's future in space?

Billionaire Elon Musk took to social media to express his agreement with a fellow tech leader's prediction that there will be about 1 billion humanoid robots on Earth in two decades.

Musk took to X, formerly Twitter, to concur with the prediction made by David Holz, the founder of artificial intelligence (AI) research lab Midjourney. Holz said in a post last week that "we should be expecting a billion humanoid robots on earth in the 2040s and a hundred billion (mostly alien) robots throughout the solar system in the 2060s."

Musk replied, "Probably something like that, provided the foundations of civilization are stable."

Tesla, one of the companies Musk founded, has developed a prototype humanoid robot that the billionaire may view as contributing to humanity reaching that lofty prediction two decades from now. [Fox News](#)

Keep your eyes open, journalists. AI may be a 'wild ride.'

Climate Change

Many climate experts predict 2024 will be the hottest year on record —

The Met Office outlook for global temperature suggests 2024 will be a further record-breaking year, expected to exceed 2023, which is itself almost certain to be the warmest year on record. [Met Office UK](#)

The Met Office also says the shift to an ‘El Niño’ climate pattern could lead the world to ‘breach 1.5°C of warming’ for the first time in 2024.

Some climate experts even believe the world is in the middle of a ‘mass extinction’ —

... caused not by a city-size space rock but by the overgrowth and transformative behavior of a single species— Homo sapiens. Humans have destroyed habitats and unleashed a climate crisis.

Calculations in a September study published in the journal PNAS have suggested that groups of related animal species are disappearing at a rate 35% times higher than the normally expected rate. [CNN](#)

Is this true? Is the world on the brink of extinction? Many groups are calling on President Biden to declare a ‘climate emergency.’ Some current and former [presidential candidates](#) are skeptical that there is a ‘real climate emergency’. Some people even believe a climate emergency is a ‘hoax.’ Which is it? Truth, hoax, or somewhere between? If it’s true, why do some deny it? Why do [many scientists](#) claim there is **no** ‘climate emergency’ when many other scientists say there **is** a ‘climate emergency?’ How can people know who to believe?

Talk with experts from all perspectives. Journalists should be searching for ‘scientific evidence’ for the issue of a climate ‘emergency’ and the potential for world-wide climate calamities. Also, talk with people in your community to find out what they think about the issue? Are they concerned? If they are, what are they doing about it? If not, why not? Do they think ‘climate’ will be a hot issue this election year?

These are just ‘some’ of the big stories you will cover as a journalist in 2024. If you cover local news, you’ll be attending government meetings, news conferences, crimes, fires, accidents, and weather-related stories. That’s a big part of what local journalists do. However, don’t forget how national and world stories affect your audience. Look for ways to bring ‘local angles’ to those stories as well.



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