

# Baptist Briefs

December 13, 2007

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## Baptist Briefs

**Three of ten recent SBC seminary grads are Calvinist.** Nearly 30 percent of recent Southern Baptist Convention seminary graduates now serving as pastors identify themselves as Calvinists, according to findings by LifeWay Research and the North American Mission Board Center for Missional Research. In the SBC at large, by contrast, the number of pastors who affirm the five points of Calvinism is about 10 percent, said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research.

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**Pastor's name found on hit list.** Suspected terrorists included a Baptist pastor on what appears to be a hit list, the Baptist World Alliance reported. Ertan Mesut Cevik, pastor of a Baptist church in Izmir—Turkey's third-largest city—received increased police protection after his name was found on a list carried by three suspected terrorists. The three, who have been arrested, are suspected of planning wide-scale attacks after a large cache of weapons was found in their possession. Cevik has been under police protection since April, after he hosted a funeral service for one of three Christians who was killed in Turkey. After the funeral, a Turkish newspaper article accused Cevik and his church of engaging in "coercive evangelism" by using money and drugs to attract young people. The church denied those charges.

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# Cartoon

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## **DOWN HOME: Topanga's lucky tree wasn't aglow**

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### **DOWN HOME: Topanga's lucky tree wasn't aglow**

You almost have to be a hurdler to get around our house these days.

Blame the dog. Or the Christmas tree.

We should've seen this coming when we got a new puppy last spring. But we were in love with our little flicker of fur and gave no heed to the morrow—or at least to the Christmas season.

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Topanga made herself right at home from Day One. Very soon, Joanna and I understood what the breeder meant when she told us, “This dog wants to be a person and sees no reason why she shouldn’t be a person.”

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## **EDITORIAL: The gospel in one stunning eyeful**

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### **EDITORIAL: The gospel in one stunning eyeful**

Christmas pageants often remind us Baptists of something we’re all too prone to forget: Worship can engage all the senses. The Baptist branch of the Christian family tree grows mighty close to the huge Protestant Reformation branch, which rejected the Roman Catholics’ statuary and the Orthodox’s icons, so precious few visual elements remind us of the God we worship and the Christ we adore. We also don’t go in for all that incense, which just might cause us to think of the Holy Spirit, whose pervasive presence we desperately need. Since most Baptists long ago substituted juice for wine and unleavened chicklets for bread, we gave up on the sense of taste in worship. And with screens flashing songs and Scripture, many of us don’t even enjoy the tactile sensation of holding a hymnal and caressing a Bible anymore.



Maybe an ear should be the Baptists' symbol for worship. We're all about listening to fine singing and good sermons. But you could check your eyes, nose, tastebuds and fingertips in the foyer of most Baptist churches and get along in worship just fine.

Except at Christmas. One of the best things about our Christmas pageants is they remind us worship should be a sensory experience. If your church is anything like ours, this is the one time of year when you can go to a worship service and enjoy a sensory feast. Even if your shepherds don bathrobes and your wise men drape themselves in bedsheets, a Christmas pageant is a celebration for all the senses. (OK, unless your pageant's "actors" include a donkey, sheep, goats and/or a camel or three, your sense of smell probably isn't stimulated.) Often, after the music has ceased, we recongregate in the fellowship hall to enjoy Christmas goodies. Let's hear it for the tastebuds.

Our church's 2007 Christmas pageant certainly did not disappoint. We're blessed with a terrific choir and an excellent orchestra, so music always floods our sanctuary with vibrant, joyful reminders of the splendors of this season. This year was no exception. Truly superb.

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# Christian website offers YouTube alternative for wary Baptists

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## Christian website offers YouTube alternative for wary Baptists

**By Grace Thornton**

*The Alabama Baptist*

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (ABP)—Move over, YouTube. Baptists have video cameras. And they're using them, now that they have a "safe" place to share their videos online, said Bill Nix, CEO and president of Axletree Media.

Axletree's E-zekiel, a website builder and host used by churches and other nonprofits around the world, has come out with a video counterpart to its popular web service: E-zekiel.tv, which launched in early November.

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# Faith Digest

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## Faith Digest

**Court rejects faith-based prison program.** An Iowa prisoner rehabilitation program run by evangelicals oversteps church-state boundaries and should not receive government funds, a federal appeals court has ruled. InnerChange Freedom Initiative runs a program “dominated by Bible study, Christian classes, religious revivals and church services,” according to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit. While participation in the program was voluntary, prisoners who signed up got better cells, were allowed more visits from family members and had greater access to computers than other inmates, the court found. The prison program, affiliated with Chuck Colson’s Prison Fellowship Ministry, received state funds from Iowa beginning in 2000. Part of that money must be returned to the state, the court ruled, but it reversed the decision of a lower court that would have required InnerChange to repay the entire \$1.5 million it received in government funds.

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**Religion website acquired by Fox.** Beliefnet.com, one of the country’s leading websites devoted to religion and spirituality, is under new management as part of Rupert Murdoch’s News Corp. and the Fox Entertainment Group. The acquisition adds to News Corp.’s \$64 billion media empire, including the 20th Century Fox film studios, the Wall Street Journal, MySpace, the Fox Faith film division, and HarperOne and Zondervan, two of the biggest names in Christian publishing.

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# GodTube offers Christian alternative to YouTube

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## GodTube offers Christian alternative to YouTube

**By Heather Donckels**

*Religion News Service*

DALLAS (RNS)—Chris Wyatt and the Internet have something going.

In the late '90s, the young television producer helped start Communities.com, the world's first social networking website. The site exploded into the Internet's largest pre-MySpace network.

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## Does ["Compass"](#) point kids

# in the wrong direction?

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## Does 'Compass' point kids in the wrong direction?

**By Heather Donckels**

*Religion News Service*

NEW YORK (RNS)—The holiday season means it's time for another Hollywood wintry blockbuster with a cast of talking animals, witches and an earnest child to point the way to truth and justice.

But some Christians who applauded the Christian allegory in *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *The Lord of the Rings* now worry that *The Golden Compass*, the recently released silver screen adaptation of Philip Pullman's book, will poison kid's minds with atheism.

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Nicole  
Kidman  
(Mrs.  
Coulter)  
and  
Dakota  
Blue  
Richards  
(Lyra)  
star in  
The  
Golden  
Compass.  
Some  
critics  
complain  
the film  
may  
steer  
children  
toward  
atheism.

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**Practical tips on helping the**

# homeless

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## Practical tips on helping the homeless

**By Heather Donckels**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Steve Burger, former executive director of the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions, urges Americans not to give money to homeless people on the streets.

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**‘Can you spare some change?’ Many Christians unsure how to respond**

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**‘Can you spare some change?’**

# Many Christians unsure how to respond

**By Heather Donckels**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Every day, Lawaune Stockton stands with her cup in front of a downtown McDonald's, jingling the change inside as customers come and go. She cinches the strings on the hood of her sweatshirt to keep out the damp air.

Stockton, who's only been homeless four months, knows some passersby think homeless people ask for money to buy drugs and alcohol, but the stereotype doesn't stop her.

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## Laredo ministry seeks to offer children in need a healthy start

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## Laredo ministry seeks to offer children in need a healthy start

**By Haley Smith**

## *Baptist Child & Family Services*

LAREDO—Imagine going 24 hours without electricity or running water. Consider what it would mean to someone in an emergency if they had to walk blocks to meet an ambulance because it would not cross the county line into their neighborhood.

Cristina De Bosquez doesn't have to imagine. She works daily with people who live in exactly those situations.

Vibrant smiles, like this young girl's, are both the aim and the reward for staff members in the Healthy Start Laredo program of Baptist Child & Family Services.  
(Photo/Martin Olivares/BCFS)

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# **Texas Baptist Forum**

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# Texas Baptist Forum

## God & science

Too often, Christians believe science is an enemy of the Bible. On the contrary, the sciences magnify the glory of God.

- [Jump to online-only letters below](#)

Letters are welcomed. Send them to [marvknox@baptiststandard.com](mailto:marvknox@baptiststandard.com); 250 words maximum.

## **Out ((Loud))**

*“The coldest of seasons, winter is like the 4-year-old crashing a birthday party. No matter if it’s his or not, all of him says, ‘I’m here, and I’m taking over.’”*

### **Don Newbury**

President emeritus of Howard  
Payne University

*“I had a wedding or a funeral, I can’t remember which. Anyway, I don’t pre-empt a wedding or a funeral for a presidential candidate. Because I’m a pastor.”*

### **Leith Anderson**

President of the National  
Association of Evangelicals,  
describing how he reacted when  
contacted by a presidential  
campaign to meet with a  
candidate (Associated  
Press/RNS)

*“Health care should be part of  
foreign policy; it makes friends.  
Does God have favorites? Yes he  
does; he loves the poor.”*

### **Rick Warren**

Pastor/author/poverty advocate  
(RNS)

In the Old Testament, Joshua 10:12-14 can be explained through science. Astronomy tells us Earth revolves around the sun. Physics tells us that if Earth were to stop turning, it would be the end of all life on earth. Phenomenology tells us we experience physical life through the phenomenological perceptions of our senses; therefore, we can understand this Scripture reference was inspired in the terms of the writer's phenomenological understanding. Through science, we know the sun did not actually stop, but Earth stopped turning for about a full day, and the moon held its place. The magnitude of this miracle demonstrates the awesome power of God.

This is a compact example of how the church can—from behind the pulpit and in Sunday school classes—make Holy Scripture relevant in today's culture. "The very core of the secular culture in the United States today is their view of knowledge through the senses ... they see any thing outside the realm of the senses as a matter of how one feels about it ... a dangerous philosophy," notes J.P. Moreland of Biola University.