

Religion writers name evangelicals in election as last year's top story

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WASHINGTON (RNS)—The nation's religion writers considered political grappling of evangelicals for a GOP presidential candidate the top religion story of 2007.

Members of the Religion Newswriters Association named their Top 10 list of religion stories for the year.

1. Evangelical voters ponder if they can support the eventual Republican candidate due to questions about the leaders' platforms and/or faith.

2. Leading Democratic presidential candidates make conscious efforts to attract faith-based voters after acknowledging their failure to do so in 2004.

Democrats
tried to
attract
faith-based
voters.

3. The role of gay and lesbian clergy continues to be a deeply divisive issue, with the Episcopal Church's pledge of restraint on gay issues failing to halt the number of congregations making plans to leave the denomination.

4. Global warming increases in importance among religious groups, with mainline leaders considering it a high priority and evangelical leaders divided over its importance compared to other issues.

5. Religious groups and leaders debate illegal immigration, with some taking an active role in affirming undocumented immigrants.

6. Thousands of Buddhist monks in Myanmar lead a pro-democracy protest that is harshly put down after a week.

7. Some conservative Episcopalians in the United States realign with Anglican bishops in Africa and other parts of the "Global South," setting off church property legal disputes.

8. The Supreme Court rules in favor of conservative positions in three major cases—upholding a ban on partial-birth abortions, permitting schools to create some limits on students' free speech and denying a challenge to the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives.

9. Deaths among prominent evangelical leaders included Jerry Falwell, Rex Humbard and D. James Kennedy, as well as Ruth Graham, wife of evangelist Billy Graham, and Tammy Faye Messner, ex-wife of disgraced

televangelist Jim Bakker.

10. The cost of priestly sex abuse to the U.S. Roman Catholic Church exceeds \$2.1 billion, with a record \$660 million settlement involving the Archdiocese of Los Angeles and earlier settlements in Portland, Ore., and Spokane, Wash.

The survey polled active RNA members via electronic ballot Dec. 7-13. With 80 people responding, there was a 27 percent response rate.

News of religion, faith, missions, Bible study and Christian ministry among Baptist churches, in Texas, the BGCT, the nation and around the world.