

# **DOWN HOME: Fox-in-a-bottle outwits squirrel**

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## **DOWN HOME: Fox-in-a-bottle outwits squirrel**

Joanna noticed the dead spot first.

While everything else on our lot still shimmered brilliant green, the top eight or 10 feet of the center branch in our favorite maple in the middle of the backyard turned bitter brown.

Not golden amber or rustic crimson, like you might expect of a maple in North Texas six weeks or two months from now. Just bitter brown. Dead brown. This-branch-ain't-coming-back brown.



We craned our necks to see what had happened up there, near the top of the third-most-stately tree on our property. (I'm partial to the bald cypresses.) We saw a strip of bare, withering trunk where bark used to be.

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# **EDITORIAL: If we don't change, this is just Round 1**

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## **EDITORIAL: If we don't change, this is just Round 1**

Painful and dispiriting as it was, the Baptist General Convention of Texas Executive Board's recent vote on the 2008 budget was both secondary and inevitable.

The board voted 52-28 to recommend a \$50.1 million budget, which will be considered by messengers to the BGCT annual meeting in Amarillo Oct. 29-30.

Obviously, \$50 million is serious money. It will fund a vast array of ministries. Lives will be changed because Texas Baptists invested in them. This is substantial.



But the 2008 goal represents a decline of almost \$500,000 from this year's budget. That's a major reduction, especially when our state is growing,

needs are expanding and the cost of ministry is increasing. The 2008 budget also points to pain. It means eliminating 25 to 30 Executive Board staff positions.

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## Faith Digest

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## Faith Digest

**Game designed to foster understanding.** A mechanical engineer from Lincoln, Neb., has designed a question-and-answer game to promote interfaith awareness. John Cooper created “7th Heaven,” a game that tests players’ knowledge of Judaism, Islam and Christianity in a way intended to help people junior high school age and older enjoy learning about different religious practices. Cooper began thinking about the concept a couple of years ago after he met some Iraqi refugees while volunteering at the People’s City Mission in Lincoln. Conversations with refugees and others led him to explore common themes shared by the three faiths.

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**Insurer rejects pro-homosexual church.** A United Church of Christ congregation’s pro-gay stance puts it “at a higher risk” of litigation and property damage, a leading U.S. church insurer said in refusing to offer coverage to a Michigan congregation. Brotherhood Mutual, a Fort Wayne,

Ind.-based insurance company, turned down the business of the West Adrian United Church of Christ after learning the church publicly endorses same-sex marriage and gay clergy. "Based on national media reports, controversial stances such as those ... have resulted in property damage and potential for increased litigation among churches that have chosen publicly to endorse these positions," wrote Marci J. Fretz, a regional underwriter for Brotherhood Mutual, in a July 30 letter to the West Adrian Church. Brotherhood Mutual declined to offer a quote to the church located in Adrian, Mich. Another insurer covered the church.

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## **Use "moral imagination" in addressing global warming, expert says**

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Richard Cizik,  
vice president of  
the National  
Association of  
Evangelicals,  
talks to students  
at Hardin-  
Simmons  
University's  
Logsdon School  
of Theology  
about creation  
stewardship.  
(Photo/Victor  
Cristales/*Abilene  
Reporter News*)

## Use 'moral imagination' in addressing global warming, expert says

**By Ken Camp**

*Managing Editor*

BILENE—"Premillennial pessimism" and blind allegiance to politicians backed by big oil companies contribute to evangelicals' relative silence about the threat of global warming, said Richard Cizik, the [National Association for Evangelicals](#)' vice president for governmental affairs.

In a Hardin-Simmons University chapel address, Cizik challenged students

to use “moral imagination” in exercising stewardship of the world God created.

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# **Energy-efficient green churches have more money for ministry**

September 29, 2007

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## **Energy-efficient green churches have more money for ministry**

**By George Henson**

*Staff Writer*

WALKERTOWN, N.C.—Churches gradually are becoming more environmentally conscious about their facilities—and that green-consciousness is growing.

In some cases, business people in churches have seen the economic benefits that come with energy efficiency at work. Some members have heard news coverage about global warming and the need to conserve natural resources. Other congregations have members interested in the creation care movement that teaches God gave people responsibility of caring for the environment, and it is time to do a better job.

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    - [10 steps to help save the world](#)
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# Some evangelicals go green, but skepticism lingers

September 29, 2007

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## Some evangelicals go green, but skepticism lingers

**By Adelle M. Banks**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—When Harry Jackson saw melting glaciers and devastated forests on a recent trip to Alaska, he decided global warming should be a higher priority on his list of key issues for evangelicals.

“I thought the globe was warming, but I thought that there was a whole lot of hype attached and there were not a lot of practical solutions presented,” said Jackson, pastor of a megachurch in Beltsville, Md.

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Rob Bell is pastor  
of Mars Hill Bible  
Church in  
Grandville, Mich.

He says  
evangelicals need  
to take greater  
action on the  
environment.

(RNS  
photo/Zondervan)

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# 10 steps to help save the world

September 29, 2007

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## 10 steps to help save the world

**By Hannah Elliott**

*Associated Baptist Press*

NEW YORK (ABP)—With all the talk of global warming, environmental degradation and increase in pollution-caused disease, it's easy to get overwhelmed. But experts say changing just a few daily habits can help alleviate some of those problems. And if enough people make those changes, it'll benefit the whole world.

Here are 10 simple things everyone can do to go green—and improve their own quality of life in the process.

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# Providing clean water is life-giving work, biologist says

September 29, 2007

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## Providing clean water is life-giving work, biologist says

**By Melissa Browning**

*Cooperative Baptist Fellowship*

ATLANTA (ABP)—When Darrell Smith explains the development work he does in Macedonia, he often tells the story from Luke's Gospel of Jesus cleansing the lepers.

"Jesus healed them simply because they asked," said Smith, a mission worker with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. "They did not have to listen to a sermon. They were not required to do anything in order to receive healing. In fact, Jesus knew that 90 percent would never say thank you or give him a second thought. But he healed them anyway."

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By working  
to provide  
clean  
water,  
Darrell  
Smith is  
able to  
share about  
the faith in  
Christ that  
motivates  
his work.  
(Photo/CBF)

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# It's not easy being green

September 29, 2007

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## It's not easy being green

**By Hannah Elliott**

*Associated Baptist Press*

This isn't your mother's environmentalism.

Footage of polar bears on shrinking glaciers and hummingbirds in sparse

rainforests used to have a prominent place in films about the need to “go green.” But now some Christian environmentalists are engaging believers with a new message: Humans actually suffer the most when economic exploitation afflicts the environment.

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# “In God We Trust” motto still mints controversy after 50 years

September 29, 2007

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## ‘In God We Trust’ motto still mints controversy after 50 years

**By Adelle Banks**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON—Fifty years after “In God We Trust” first appeared on U.S. paper currency, those four little words have proven to be the source of big debate in the courts.

Michael Newdow, the California atheist known for trying to strip “under God” from the Pledge of Allegiance, has asked the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to declare “In God We Trust” an unconstitutional mingling of

church and state. In Indiana, the American Civil Liberties Union has gone to district court, arguing it's unfair for the state not to charge administrative fees for "In God We Trust" license plates when a plate advocating for the environment carries extra fees.

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# State Department reports Iraqi insurgency hurts religious freedom

September 29, 2007

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## State Department reports Iraqi insurgency hurts religious freedom

**By Adelle Banks**

*Religion News Service*

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The continuing insurgency in Iraq is significantly harming the freedom of worship in that country, the State Department said in its [2007 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

The recently released report lists Iraq among 22 countries it notes for either particular abuses or positive steps related to religious freedom.

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# Couple brings joy to nursing home, children's hospital patients

September 29, 2007

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## Couple brings joy to nursing home, children's hospital patients

**By Jessica Dooley**

*Communications Intern*

PAIGE—John and Dianne Jones have no easy answer for why they launched a ministry that serves patients in nursing homes, Alzheimer's facilities and children's hospitals in a three-county area of South Central Texas.

"I have no clue why we started, except God led," Jones said.