

COMMENTARY: What if Jesus had not come?

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COMMENTARY: What if Jesus had not come?

By Marcus Norris

At Christmas, we celebrate the birth of Christ. However, when you have been doing something for over 2,000 years there is a risk of losing the reason for and vibrancy of the celebration. So, in an effort to remind us “why” we celebrate his birth, consider what life would be like if there had been no babe in a Bethlehem manger.

An empty manger would mean:

- No angelic announcements.

DOWN HOME: Wanted: Yard-art Christmas Chicken

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DOWN HOME: Wanted: Yard-art Christmas Chicken

The nightly news stirred a strong sense of deja vu a couple of weeks ago. A correspondent stood in front of a local hospital, droning in somber sincerity about two unfortunate men who lay similarly incapacitated in similar rooms.

They're both paralyzed after falling off extension ladders as they strung Christmas lights on the roofs of two-story houses.

I sympathized with those men and hoped for their healing.

But I also empathized with their plight.



EDITORIAL: A peace-full gift for a war-weary world

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Let us celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace.

Do we ever need peace now.

If you doubt it, fly on an airplane. You'll ponder peace—or the possibility of its polar opposite, violence—as you fulfill all the requirements to board a plane in safety: From double- and triple-checked identification, to X-ray machines, to metal-detectors, to drug-scanners, to pat-downs and delays, such is the time-consuming price of peace in the airways.



Since Cain murdered Abel in the first case of religion gone wrong, the world has experienced precious little peace. The prophets railed against heart-wickedness that produced cold malice and perversity, and they predicted military annihilation as divine punishment. I just read a fascinating article about the revolt of the Jews against [Antiochus Epiphanes](#), a vile dictator who sought to impose Greek religion on the whole world and sacrificed a pig in the Temple in Jerusalem. Led by the brilliant general [Judas Maccabeus](#), the Jews rose up and won a measure of victory. It was one of their finest hours. And it was bloody.

Evangelicals apply the ‘good news’ in diverse ways

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Dave and
Veronica
Commire
attend a
thriving
megachurch
and proudly
call themselves
evangelicals.
(RNS photo by
Dave
Rackowski/*The
Grand Rapids
Press*)

Evangelicals apply the ‘good news’ in diverse ways

By Charles Honey

Religion News Service

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich.—If you want to serve me, Dave and Veronica Commire heard God saying, paint this guy’s house.

So, the couple rounded up about 15 of their church friends and beautified the home of a neighbor who had lost a son and was angry at God. Telling him about Jesus had not worked; painting his house did.

Report highlights legal wrangling over Bush's faith-based initiatives

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Report highlights legal wrangling over Bush's faith-based initiatives

By Robert Marus

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (ABP)—In a year when President Bush's "faith-based initiative" faced considerable public-relations challenges, it also continued to raise challenging legal and institutional questions, a new report from an independent group revealed.

Several lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of various aspects of the faith-based program have moved forward in federal and state courts, producing a significant victory for the program's opponents.

Green named interim president at BUA

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Green named interim president at BUA

By Brad Russell

Baptist University of the Americas

SAN ANTONIO—[Baptist University of the Americas](#) has named Jack Green—a veteran institutional leader and lifelong South Texan—interim president of San Antonio-based theological university.

Green served as president of [South Texas Children's Home](#) in Beeville from 1973 to 1998. He assumes his duties Jan. 1, concurrent with the departure of President [Albert Reyes](#), who is leaving BUA to become president of [Buckner Children and Family Services](#).

Jack Green

Dallas homeless choir hits all the right notes

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Choirmaster
Chris
Snidow
(right)
accompanies
members of
the homeless
choir at the
Austin
Street
Centre in
Dallas. From
left to right
are (front
row) Mike
Ricker,
Heather
Butler and
Rufus
Barnes;
(back row)
Debbie
Whiddon,
George
Alexander,
Ronald
Butler and
Harold
Baker.
(Photo by
Marcia
Davis-Seale)

Dallas homeless choir hits all the right notes

By **Marcia Davis-Seale**

Religion News Service

DALLAS (RNS)—It's Wednesday morning at the [Austin Street Centre](#). The bell in the tower clatters harshly against the cold wind, beckoning people from the streets for a pious word or two, a prayer, perhaps a cracker crumb dipped in the Communion cup.

Up in the low-ceilinged chapel loft, Chris Snidow is shifting gears from psychiatric nurse to choirmaster as his proteges straggle in for a midweek worship service. Sun streams through beveled cuts of glass, splashing stains of hot color against the smooth white walls.

‘Low food security’ masks hunger in U.S.

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‘Low food security’ masks hunger in

U.S.

By Rebecca U. Cho

Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The [U.S. Department of Agriculture](#) has decided Americans who go without food are no longer hungry. Instead, they possess “very low food security.”

In an annual report that measures Americans’ access to food, the word “hunger” was omitted in favor of what the department has decided is the more scientifically accurate term.

Violence deters Nuevo Laredo missions

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Violence deters Nuevo Laredo missions

By John Hall

Texas Baptist Communications

SAN ANTONIO—The number of Texas Baptist mission trips to [Nuevo Laredo](#) is down significantly this year, due in large part to violence between

drug cartels there.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas [Border/Mexico Missions office](#) facilitated fewer than 10 mission trips to Nuevo Laredo this year, down from nearly 30 in 2005.

Child learns early lesson about selfless giving

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Megan Simmwell, age 7, sits among the 100 arts and crafts supplies she received for her birthday. Simmwell donated all the gifts to children served in STARRY's emergency shelter program.

Child learns early lesson about selfless giving

By Miranda Bradley

Children at Heart Ministries

ROUND ROCK—Most adults find it hard to be selfless, no matter how many sermons they hear about it being “more blessed to give than to receive.”

But Megan Simmwell, age 7, learned the lesson early—and has become hooked on giving.

Recently, she gave her own brand-new birthday presents to children served by STARRY's emergency shelter program. STARRY is a community-based agency of [Children at Heart Ministries](#) that serves children, teenagers and parents in crisis.

Protestants decide there's something about Mary

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Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem in <i>The Nativity Story</i> .
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Protestants decide there's something about Mary

By Sarah Price Brown

Religion News Service

LOS ANGELES—Scot McKnight, a religious studies professor, was teaching several years ago when he had an “aha” moment.

McKnight had just read aloud the Magnificat, the Virgin Mary’s hymn of praise from the Gospel of Luke.

Growing church family finds room for expansion

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Growing church family finds room for expansion

By George Henson

Staff Writer

ODESSA—As families grow, the need for a larger home often follows. Primera Iglesia Bautista in Odessa has found what seems to be a perfect fit for its growing family of believers.

More than twice as many people have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ in 2006 than in 2005 at Primera, Pastor Mario Martinez said.