

Briefly noted

News in the [June 29, 2010](#) issue

A federal judge has rejected a motion filed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury to dismiss a California lawsuit that challenges tax breaks that ministers can receive on housing. The tax write-offs have been permitted under section 107 of the Internal Revenue Code for ministers of all faiths since the 1950s. In a May 21 ruling, U.S. District Judge William Shubb stated that “plaintiffs have alleged sufficient facts which, if accepted as true, ‘leave open the possibility’ that . . . Section 107 goes too far in aiding and subsidizing religion by providing ministers and churches with tangible financial benefits not allowed secular employers and employees.” The suit was filed by the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation, which earlier this year won a court case seeking to overturn the law that sanctions the National Day of Prayer.

Former Colorado megachurch pastor Ted Haggard, who fell from grace in 2006 after a gay-sex-and-drug scandal, has announced plans to start a new church with his wife, Gayle. The couple, who incorporated St. James Church in late April, said June 2 that they would hold a “launch party” the following Sunday for the new congregation in their barn in Colorado Springs. Haggard, 53, will serve as senior pastor, and Gayle, also 53, will be copastor of the independent evangelical church. Haggard resigned as president of the National Association of Evangelicals in the wake of a scandal involving a Denver male escort. Haggard later admitted he bought methamphetamine and paid the escort for massages.