

People

News in the [June 13, 2006](#) issue

The American Bible Society has appointed **Paul G. Irwin**, an ordained United Methodist minister who has taught at the Boston University School of Theology, as president of the New York-based organization after serving as its interim head for nearly a year. Lamar Vest, chair of the society's board of trustees, said Irwin is prepared to "energetically push forward" the ABS mission as the society prepares to mark its bicentennial in 2016. The society's stated mission is "to make the Bible available to every person in a language and format each can understand and afford."

Richard N. Ostling, a religion news specialist for the Associated Press since 1998 and for nearly 30 years reporter and religion editor for *Time* magazine, has been named the 2006 recipient of the Religion Newswriters Association's lifetime achievement award. Ostling will leave AP in July as a full-time writer but will continue his weekly Bible column for the news service. Ostling wrote 20 cover stories for *Time* after joining its staff in 1969. In later years, while working as a print journalist, he also reported on religion for CBS radio and for PBS's *MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour*. He will receive the achievement award at the RNA annual meeting in September.

John R. (Jack) Fitzmier, a specialist in American religious history who has served as teacher and administrator at Vanderbilt and Claremont seminaries, has been selected as the new executive director of the American Academy of Religion, the world's largest body of religion scholars. On July 1, Fitzmier, elected to a five-year renewable term, will succeed **Barbara DeConcini**, who held the top executive position in the 10,000-member, Atlanta-based association for 15 years. For the past year, Fitzmier has been a professor at Claremont Graduate University and Claremont School of Theology. For the previous six years, he served the latter school as vice president for academic affairs and dean. An Episcopal layperson, Fitzmier coauthored *The Presbyterians* with Randall Balmer and wrote a second book, *New England's Moral Legislator: Timothy Dwight, 1752-1817*. The AAR is known for its large joint annual meetings with its office neighbor on the Emory University campus, the Society of Biblical Literature, but the AAR decided three years ago in a controversial decision to meet separately starting in 2008. "I do not have plans to

overturn that decision,” Fitzmier said in an interview, “but that does not mean we will not work together. I am sure there are a lot of things we can do together.”