

People

News in the [January 27, 2009](#) issue

A longtime official of evangelical organizations is the new president of the American Bible Society. **R. Lamar Vest**, the current executive vice president of Global Scripture Ministries for the New York-based society, was chosen by the society's trustees to begin duties on January 1. Vest, 68, succeeds Paul Irwin, whose contract with the society ended in June weeks after news reports that an Internet contractor that had received millions of dollars from the society had previous ties to the pornography industry. Vest, a onetime executive of the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), has been chair of the National Association of Evangelicals and of the American Bible Society's board of trustees.

In a new reflection on his leadership, the **Dalai Lama** says the movement he has led for nearly five decades should now be guided by the prime minister of the Tibetan government-in-exile. "I have grown old and already taken semiretirement. It is better if I retire completely and get out of the way of the Tibetan movement," he told reporters on December 17 in Dharamsala, India, where he has lived since fleeing Tibet in 1959. "The future course of the Tibetan movement will be decided by the elected government under Prime Minister Samdhong Rinpoche," the 73-year-old Buddhist leader added. His complete retirement would strengthen democracy in Tibet, he said a month following a key conclave of nearly 600 exiled Tibetan leaders. Earlier the iconic Buddhist leader had said he was not thinking of retirement and was committed to the cause of Tibet "till death."

Robert J. Marshall, a pastor and biblical scholar who once headed the former Lutheran Church in America, died December 22 in Allentown, Pennsylvania, at age 90. After teaching stints at Muhlenberg College and Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary, Marshall was elected president of the Illinois synod in 1962, then president of the LCA in 1968, a post he served in for a decade. During that time, he helped lay the groundwork for that church's merger with the American Lutheran Church and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches in 1987 to form the present Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Marshall was "one of those giants among Lutheran leaders in the 20th century," said ELCA presiding bishop Mark S.

Hanson. The Iowa-born Marshall's first pastorate began in 1944 at Grace Lutheran Church in Alhambra, California; one of his confirmands there, H. George Anderson, would become the ELCA's second presiding bishop. "He led, he taught, he challenged," Anderson told the ELCA News Service. During the 1980s, Marshall taught Old Testament at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, South Carolina, and served in posts with the Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief and the commission that formed the ELCA.

Paul Weyrich, 66, a major figure in galvanizing conservative Christian political advocacy, died December 18. Weyrich cofounded the now-defunct Moral Majority with the late Jerry Falwell and served as the first president of the Heritage Foundation, a Washington-based conservative think tank. "He was the key behind the scenes in establishing the religious right," said Jerry Falwell Jr., who succeeded his father as president of Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. Weyrich, a deacon at Holy Transfiguration Melkite Greek-Catholic Church in McLean, Virginia, used various coalitions to keep abortion and other faith issues prominent in Republican circles. Family Research Council president Tony Perkins said Weyrich was a Washington fixture despite his battle with diabetes, which led to amputation of both of his legs. Interfaith Alliance president Welton Gaddy, a liberal who often differed with Weyrich, said they shared a concern for the proper role of religion in U.S. politics. "The nation has lost a patriot. And I have lost a friend," said Gaddy.