

# Briefly noted

News in the [October 5, 2004](#) issue

**A watchdog group** that advocates church-state separation has asked the IRS to investigate a Miami church that hosted a Democratic rally in late August. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, said the rally seemed to violate federal tax law concerning participation in political campaigns by tax-exempt houses of worship. Press reports about the August 29 event at New Birth Baptist Church said it included speeches by Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe and former Democratic presidential candidate Al Sharpton. "Bush has misled us for four years and will not mislead us the next four years," McAuliffe said, according to the *Miami Herald*. "Get out to vote and we'll send Bush back to Texas." Lynn said in a letter to the IRS that the activities at the event seemed to go far beyond engaging in nonpartisan activities such as voter registration and education.

**Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary** in Columbia, South Carolina, welcomed a large contingent of Baptists to an August 26 worship service in the seminary's Christ Chapel to open the academic year and to install minister Virginia C. Barfield as director for Baptist studies. Southern, one of eight seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, entered into an agreement in February with the South Carolina Fellowship of Cooperative Baptists to provide seminary education opportunities for Baptist students. "I hope this program can provide a forum for Baptists of all types to study in an ecumenical setting and thereby realize that it is not what separates us but what unites us that is important," Barfield said.