

People

News in the [October 21, 2008](#) issue

Michael Paulson of the *Boston Globe* has won the two top prizes for reporting and writing in covering religion news in 2007. The Templeton and Supple awards from the Religion Newswriters Association were presented September 20 at the RNA meeting in Washington, D.C. Among other winners, the *Salt Lake Tribune* was judged first in competition for the best religion news section, and the PBS television show *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly* swept all three television reporting awards.

Catholic priest **Miguel d'Escoto**, the feisty foreign minister of the Sandinista-run government of Nicaragua from 1979 to 1990, began a new role last month as president of the United Nations General Assembly. The 75-year-old Maryknoll priest stopped celebrating mass more than two decades ago when the Vatican suspended his priestly functions when he refused to quit the revolutionary government. The cleric became an adviser to Daniel Ortega, who returned to the Nicaragua presidency via the ballot box in 2007. While d'Escoto remains very critical of U.S. foreign policy, he said in a *Los Angeles Times* interview that the "lamentable state" of the world calls for diplomacy. "If we are going to move in a different direction, it's absolutely important that we not go with an attitude that others are to blame," he said. "We must work together."

Dean Hoge, 71, a leading sociologist on U.S. religious trends and the Catholic priesthood as well as the current president of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, died September 13 in Baltimore after a long fight with cancer. An active member of Takoma Park (Maryland) Presbyterian Church for 34 years, Hoge was on the faculty of Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., from 1974 to 2006, when he retired. Hoge, who had three graduate degrees in religion from Harvard University, led numerous studies about the changing nature of the Catholic Church and its clergy. His recent coauthored books include *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood* (2003) and *American Catholics Today* (2001).

Don Benedict, a pioneer in urban ministry who in 1995 founded Protestants for the Common Good to address issues of public policy, died September 4 in Pittsford,

Vermont, after a recent cerebral hemorrhage. He was 91. Benedict, an ordained minister, created the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York City in 1948 and similar ministries in Cleveland and Detroit in the 1950s. He headed the Chicago-based Community Renewal Society from 1960 to 1982. He helped start the Urban Training Center and aided in bringing Martin Luther King Jr. to Chicago for the Chicago Freedom Movement.

James M. Ault, 90, a leading United Methodist bishop and ecumenist during the 1980s, died September 21 in Brunswick, Maine. A former pastor, he taught at Union Theological Seminary in New York and was dean at Drew University School of Theology before serving successive terms, starting in 1972, as a bishop in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh areas. Ault was president of the UMC Council of Bishops in 1986 and 1987 and was on the executive committee of the World Methodist Council from 1981 to 1988. In 1981, he also began terms on the National Council of Churches' governing board and the World Council of Churches' central committee, serving the latter through 1991.

David Wong, former president of the Baptist World Alliance, died September 16 in Alhambra, California. He was 97. Born in Wuzhou, China, Wong moved to Hong Kong in 1949. He was the first layperson and the first Asian to be elected president of the worldwide umbrella group for national and regional Baptist denominations. He held the post from 1975 to 1980. Under his leadership, the BWA granted newer and younger member bodies equal standing with older conventions and unions.