

Briefly noted

News in the [March 6, 2007](#) issue

The American Jewish population is 20 percent higher than previously reported, according to a new study released by the Brandeis University Steinhardt Social Research Institute. The institute estimated that there are 6 million to 6.4 million Jews living in the United States, along with another million people with Jewish ancestry. The estimate was based on survey data collected by a range of government, academic and private foundations. The report disputes the 2000-2001 National Jewish Population Study, which recorded a total of 5.2 million American Jews. The telephone-based survey had underestimated the number of non-Orthodox Jews and those under age 55, the new study concludes.

A study released by the Geneva-based World Health Organization has noted the key role of faith-based organizations in HIV prevention and care, but says greater collaboration is needed between them and public health agencies. Such cooperation will be necessary, the WHO said, if progress is to be made toward the goal of universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and care by 2010. The report, "Appreciating Assets: Mapping, Understanding, Translating and Engaging Religious Health Assets in Zambia and Lesotho," was released last month at Washington National Cathedral and made available in Geneva (www.who.int/hiv).

Polish parliamentarians have voted to allocate money from their country's state pension fund for a new Roman Catholic church in Warsaw that is being built in thanksgiving for the collapse of communism and for the pontificate of Pope John Paul II. The Polish Press Agency said the donation of \$13.44 million for the Divine Providence basilica was approved by 329 votes to 65 in Poland's lower legislative chamber, with support from the Law and Justice Party of the twins who are the country's president and prime minister, the brothers Lech and Jaroslaw Kaczynski. The vote was, however, deplored by the opposition Democratic Left Alliance, which said it would worsen a security fund's existing debt and violate Polish laws that require "religious neutrality" from public authorities and bar the use of state money for places of worship.

Swedish churches in Bangkok, Melbourne and Los Angeles will in the future get tsunami warnings by mobile telephone and will therefore be among the first to know when such critical situations occur. "This is a way of making sure that we are even better prepared to be there for Swedes who will be affected by crises and emergencies while they are abroad," said Klas Hansson, director of the Church of Sweden Abroad. Normally, there will be only two or three warnings a year that will reach the Uppsala-based Church of Sweden in this way. Tsunamis are ocean waves triggered by massive earthquakes like that with a 9.3 magnitude off Indonesia on December 26, 2004, which killed more than 200,000 people and left more than 1.5 million without homes or livelihoods. Places such as Bangkok, Melbourne and Los Angeles are considered to be at risk from tsunamis.