

Briefly noted

News in the [February 26, 2008](#) issue

Presbyterians in Minneapolis-St. Paul have voted to restore the ordination of an openly gay man who has refused to pledge celibacy, in the latest test of revamped pastoral guidelines in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Paul Capetz, a seminary professor, asked to be removed from ministry in 2000 after the PCUSA voted to require that ministers be married to a member of the opposite sex or remain celibate. But changes made in 2006 to the Presbyterians' Book of Order allow candidates for ordination to declare conscientious objection to church rules. Local presbyteries, or governing bodies, then must decide whether the objection constitutes a failure to adhere to "the essentials of Reformed faith and polity." On January 26, the Presbytery of the Twin Cities voted that Capetz's objection did not violate the essentials and restored his ordination as a minister of word and sacrament.

An inmate cannot sue prison guards who, he says, took his Qur'ans and prayer rug, the U.S. Supreme Court has ruled. Abdus-Shahid M.S. Ali, a convicted murderer serving a sentence of 20 years to life, said the alleged confiscation of his religious items is part of a campaign waged against Muslim inmates since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. In a 5-4 ruling on January 22, the Supreme Court said the Federal Tort Claims Act blocks suits regarding property detained by law enforcement officers, including prison guards. Justice Clarence Thomas, writing for the majority, said the law applies to all law enforcement officers. Justice Anthony Kennedy dissented, saying, "The seizure of property by an officer raises serious concerns for the liberty of our people."