

Briefly noted

News in the [May 5, 2009](#) issue

Lutherans, Jews, Muslims and others seeking to cling to their faith in a time of tragedy came together for a prayer vigil April 4 at Redeemer Lutheran Church (ELCA) in Binghamton, New York. The church is located a few blocks away from the American Civic Association, where 41-year-old Jiverly Wong shot and killed 13 people before taking his own life. Michele C. Fischer, pastor of Holy Nativity Lutheran Church in Endicott, New York, along with other clergy and a representative from the Broome County Council of Churches, led the vigil, which was attended by about 130 people. In addition, pastor Thomas G. Olson of Christ Lutheran Church in Norwich, New York, spoke at a funeral service April 5 for two Muslim women who died in the shooting. The funeral took place at a mosque in Binghamton. "It was a privilege and blessing to be invited to speak by the imam," said Olson, an ELCA pastor. "We are all one with God. We need to find ways to be together in community, especially in times like these."

The most severe drought in a decade is fueling a food crisis in Afghanistan that threatens millions of people with starvation, humanitarian agencies have warned. "Unless the international community responds to the issue of hunger in Afghanistan, we will not be able to fulfill any other promises we are making to the Afghan people," said Marvin Parvez, Asia and Pacific regional coordinator for Church World Service, a group that is part of Action by Churches Together. "In Afghanistan, the heroin trade, suicide bombings and the 'war on terror' has put the humanitarian agenda on the sidelines," said Parvez in a March ACT report distributed from Geneva, Switzerland.