

Briefly noted

News in the [June 28, 2005](#) issue

Former president Jimmy Carter has called on the U.S. to shut down its prison at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and two dozen other secret detention centers to demonstrate the nation's commitment to human rights. Carter made his comments to reporters June 7 in Atlanta—about a week after the Pentagon reported five confirmed incidents of intentional mishandling of the Qur'an at the Guantánamo prison. The incidents included a guard kicking a detainee's Qur'an, a water balloon fight among guards soaking detainees' Qur'ans, a two-word English obscenity written in a Qur'an, and an interrogator stepping on a detainee's holy book. The Council on American-Islamic Relations renewed its call for the prison facility to be shut down.

Alabama United Methodists have made a symbolic gesture to demonstrate their repentance for past support of segregation in their state. William Willimon, bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church, led a walk in Birmingham to the steps of one of the denomination's former landmark churches June 6 for a service to repent of racial injustice and to pledge to be more inclusive. Willimon stood on the front steps of the former McCoy United Methodist Church, which closed in 1993. In recent decades, dozens of largely white United Methodist churches have closed as neighborhoods around them became predominantly black. Outside the former church, the Methodists recited a prayer that included harsh self-analysis: "We hereby repent of our sins as a church. Forgive our self-centered, defensive, cowardly ways."

Maine's Bangor Theological Seminary, faced with declining enrollment, will close its ten-acre downtown campus and move to nearby Husson College. The 190-year-old seminary is one of seven theological schools affiliated with the United Church of Christ. The Bangor seminary board made the decision in late May inasmuch as the present enrollment includes only 20 full-time students living on campus and another 130 seminarians, most of them part-time, who are commuters.