

People

News in the [February 21, 2006](#) issue

James Lawson, a retired United Methodist pastor and civil rights leader whose expulsion from Vanderbilt University caused a national furor 46 years ago, will return to the university as a distinguished professor. The Nashville university announced the one-year appointment in mid-January. Lawson, pastor emeritus of Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles, where he served for 25 years before retiring in 1999, said: "This is for me an unexpected, even momentous personal instant in my journey." Lawson helped organize sit-ins by black students that led to the desegregation of lunch counters in downtown Nashville. He also was active in civil rights struggles in Alabama and Mississippi.

Shaw Clifton, a British veteran of the Salvation Army who has served as far afield as Zimbabwe, the United States, Pakistan, New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga, on April 1 will succeed General **John Larsson**, a Swede who is retiring, as new head of the London-based church body, famed for its relief and development work. Clifton, 60, and his wife, Helen, have shared leadership in the 1.5-million-member church, most recently in the United Kingdom, as is customary for married couples in the denomination. Senior officers made the announcement January 28 in England.

More than a million people lined up along the road late last month in the southern Indian state of Kerala as the body of Malankara Orthodox Syrian church leader **Baselios Marthoma Mathews II** was taken on a 12-hour journey to his burial place. The Orthodox leader, who died January 26 at age 90, had retired just last October. Christian leaders, including Pope Benedict XVI and General Secretary Samuel Kobia of the World Council of Churches, joined Indian church and political figures in mourning the death of Mathews II, who held the title of Catholicos of the East.

Former German president **Johannes Rau**, who died at 75 on January 27 after a long illness, was hailed as a prominent Protestant who promoted social justice and worked for reconciliation with the victims of the Holocaust. Rau was involved from his youth in the Confessing Church, which opposed Hitler's interventions in church life. A member of the left-leaning Social Democratic Party, Rau served as the federal

president of Germany from 1999 to 2004, but he was sometimes referred to as “Brother Johannes” because of his church, ecumenical and interfaith commitments. In 2000 he became the first person to speak German in the Israeli parliament, where he pleaded for forgiveness for the Holocaust.