

Briefly noted

News in the [October 3, 2006](#) issue

Progressive Christian activists finished their four-and-a-half-month trek across the country September 3 at a church in Washington, D.C. Organized by CrossWalk America, the march started in Phoenix on Easter and covered 2,500 miles, ending with a rally at Foundry United Methodist Church. Ten people walked the whole way and more than 11,000 participated in some way, most helping with lodging and food, said Rebecca Glenn, CrossWalk's cofounder and copresident. Participants carried a copy of the Phoenix Affirmations, 12 progressive Christian principles. Glenn said that the walk raised about \$280,000 and that the money is going toward funding the walk, "getting the word out," and a documentary about the experience.

When the collection plate is passed among the pews, America's charitable but bankrupt worshipers must now abstain. A federal judge has reluctantly ordered debtors to repay their credit-card bills first. Judge Robert E. Littlefield Jr. of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of New York has ruled that charitable or religious contributions are no longer considered a necessary living expense for those filing for Chapter 13 bankruptcy. "This change effectively closes the door for debtors who are above the median income from deducting charitable contributions as an expense," Littlefield wrote in his August 28 opinion. The judge interpreted a law that went into effect in October 2005 which, in effect, deems tithing acceptable only in very limited circumstances, such as cases in which ministers must donate as part of their contract. The judge said the law trumps the Religious Liberty and Charitable Donation Protection Act, signed in 1998 by President Clinton, which allowed tithing under the bankruptcy code. More than 2 million Americans filed for bankruptcy protection in 2005 and hundreds of thousands are expected to do the same by the end of 2006, says the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys.