

Briefly noted

News in the [October 17, 2006](#) issue

In a series of nationwide protests, a number of religious leaders have risked arrest by partaking in acts of civil disobedience in an effort to inspire a mass mobilization of people of faith against the Iraq war. Among those arrested in September protests in front of the White House was James Winkler, general secretary of the United Methodists' General Board of Church and Society. According to Winkler, people of faith have not done enough to publicly oppose the war. He said that the faith community, remembering the terrorist attacks of September 11 and succumbing to "old human instincts of fear and revenge," wanted to believe that going to war with Iraq was right and consequently failed to speak out in the early stages of the war. The protests were organized by the Declaration of Peace, an initiative of more than 400 antiwar and religious groups.

John H. Thomas, the general minister and president of the United Church of Christ, spoke forcefully in a major address September 17 about the importance of Christian-Jewish relations after some Jewish groups and conservative Christians charged that the UCC has abandoned its long-held pro-Jewish positions and has sided, instead, with Arab Palestinians. "Jews and Christians remain, even in moments of deepest tension, inextricably linked to one another by the God whose covenants with each community have not been and cannot be broken," said Thomas at the fall convocation of the United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in Minnesota, one of the UCC's seven closely related theological schools. The top official in the 1.2-million-member denomination nevertheless emphasized that the church is not backing away from its longstanding commitment to the rights of Palestinians and to opposing the Israeli occupation. "From time to time a new shipment of history arrives," Thomas said, quoting a line by Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai.

The Episcopal Diocese of Newark, New Jersey, on September 23 elected a Massachusetts priest as its tenth bishop, passing over a gay candidate whose election could have further stirred up the worldwide Anglican Communion. Mark Beckwith of Worcester, Massachusetts, was elected on the third ballot, beating out five other candidates. Michael Barlowe, an openly gay San Francisco priest, finished fifth on all three ballots. Barlowe said in a statement that the Newark diocese had

found a “great bishop” in Beckwith. Still, he said, “God is calling lesbian and gay persons to be bishops, priests, deacons and lay ministers in the church, and we must never deny God’s call.”