

Briefly noted

News in the [January 9, 2007](#) issue

The Amish community, which inspired the world with acts of forgiveness after a Pennsylvania schoolhouse shooting, has been named the newsmaker of the year by the Religion Newswriters Association (RNA) and Beliefnet. The multifaith spirituality Web site [Beliefnet.com](#) said December 14 that the Amish community topped its list of newsmakers for demonstrating “courage, forgiveness, self-sacrifice and love” after a gunman entered an Amish schoolhouse in October and killed five girls before taking his own life. “They really taught everyone how to live our faith and values in a vivid way,” said Beliefnet editor Steven Waldman. The Amish were also rated the year’s top newsmaker in a separate poll of RNA members. The association’s nearly 150 religion journalists ranked the angry Muslim reaction to the publication of Muhammad cartoons in several European nations as the top religion news story of the year.

Following a trend of Democrats becoming more faith-friendly, Senator Hillary Clinton (D., N.Y.) has hired a Baptist “faith guru,” who is expected to work on her 2008 presidential campaign. Burns Strider, who has been the head of religious outreach for the House Democratic Caucus since 2005, will join Clinton’s campaign staff, according to *Hotline*, an online daily that is the politics arm of the *National Journal*, one of Washington’s oldest political publications. Strider, a native of Mississippi, was raised Southern Baptist. He and his family now attend Metropolitan United Methodist Church in Washington. Clinton, a lifelong Methodist, has become more open in recent years about her faith. She is part of a women’s prayer group that she joined while she was first lady. Polls list Clinton as the leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

Australia’s religious communities have united to call for action on climate change at a time when the country is facing its worst drought on record. The individual statements collected by Climate Institute Australia and were published in December in a document titled “Common Belief.” Besides Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox and evangelical traditions, Judaism, Islam and Aboriginal spirituality are also represented. The institute sought a range of voices pressuring the Australian government on global warming. Previously, the debate focused on scientific

evidence and economic impacts. The Anglican bishop of Canberra, George Browning, wrote, "Willfully causing environmental degradation is a sin." Several churches addressed the issue in light of Christian stewardship. Not all clergy embrace the project. In a speech last year, Catholic archbishop Sydney George Pell said that "pagan emptiness" motivates "hysteric and extreme claims" about global warming.