

Briefly noted

News in the [July 10, 2007](#) issue

Massachusetts lawmakers June 14 voted to kill a proposed constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, leaving opponents of such marriages discouraged. The state legislature, meeting in a joint session, voted 151-45 to block the proposed amendment from being placed on the 2008 ballot. The citizens-backed measure needed five more votes, 50 in all, to make the ballot. Governor Deval L. Patrick, a Democrat who took office in January, said the vote was a victory for equal rights. "In Massachusetts today, the freedom to marry is secure," Patrick told a cheering crowd of supporters at the statehouse after the vote.

Trinity Broadcasting Network has become the new owner of the Holy Land Experience, a biblical theme park in Orlando, Florida. "This marriage will bring an unprecedented synergy to both ministries, and the production that is done there will be seen by a worldwide audience," said Paul F. Crouch Jr., vice president of administration for the Santa Ana, California-based TBN. The network last year acquired Orlando's WGTL-TV Channel 52. TBN already owns 34 TV stations in the U.S. and nearly 400 stations or affiliates abroad. The *Orlando Sentinel* reported that the tourist attraction has experienced financial troubles and declining attendance.

A senior Vatican official has said Catholic organizations and individuals should withhold donations from Amnesty International because of the human rights group's recent decision to support abortion rights in certain cases. Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, told the *National Catholic Register* of its recommendation. Amnesty International, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977 for its work defending human rights around the world, maintained a neutral stance on abortion until April of this year. The organization now backs access to abortion in cases of rape, incest or grave threat to the health of the mother. Kate Gilmore, AI deputy secretary, told the Reuters news agency: "This is not about abortion as a right but about women's right to be free of fear, threat and coercion as they manage the consequences of rape and human rights violations."