

Briefly noted

News in the [April 8, 2008](#) issue

The United Church of Christ has retained a former U.S. solicitor general to represent the church during an Internal Revenue Service investigation of its political activities. Seth P. Waxman, who represented the U.S. government before the Supreme Court from 1997 to 2001, will lead a team of attorneys working on behalf of the 1.2-million-member denomination, according to the UCC. The IRS is investigating the Cleveland-based denomination because of a speech given by church member and presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama at its synod gathering last June. Waxman's law firm, WilmerHale, will handle the case pro bono, the denomination said.

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference has picked Emory University to house its documents and archival materials, most of them dating from 1968 to 1977 during the terms of SCLC presidents Ralph David Abernathy and Joseph Lowery. Most of the pre-1968 papers, dating back to the 1957 founding of the organization by Martin Luther King Jr. and other black leaders in the South, are held by the King Library and Archives at the King Center in Atlanta.

Chaldean Catholic archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of the northern Iraq city of Mosul, who was kidnapped in late February by armed attackers, has been found dead, church officials in Baghdad have announced. "We found him lifeless near Mosul. His abductors had buried him," the Rome-based SIR news agency quoted Baghdad's auxiliary bishop, Shlemon Warduni, as saying March 13. Pope Benedict XVI condemned "an act of inhuman violence which offends the dignity of the human being." In Geneva, the World Council of Churches, saying it was "deeply saddened," called for prayers for Iraqi Christians and for an end to the war in Iraq.

A young Nepali girl worshiped by many Buddhists and Hindus as a kumari, or "living goddess," has renounced her divine role following a request from her family, an official in Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, said March 2. Sajani Shakya, 11, who was revered for nine years as the kumari of the ancient temple town of Bhaktapur, "is no more a kumari," said Dipak Pandey, a senior official. Sajani, one of the three most respected kumaris in Nepal, made international headlines last year when she paid a

39-day visit to the United States, mainly to promote a British-made documentary about the living goddesses. Human rights activists, however, say the tradition constitutes child abuse. In November 2006, Nepal's Supreme Court ordered an inquiry into whether the tradition has led to the exploitation of young girls.