

Briefly noted

News in the [July 29, 2008](#) issue

Unitarian Universalists ended their annual General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, last month with a call to oppose ballot measures in Florida and California that would outlaw same-sex marriages. Delegates also called for an end to what they called the “present-day slavery” of undocumented immigrants. Immigrant rights took center stage during the five-day meeting that ended June 29. Delegates voted to join the Alliance for Fair Food, which promotes “socially responsible” food purchasing, and endorsed the efforts of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a Florida-based advocacy group whose work focuses on improving the conditions of immigrant farmworkers.

The American Civil Liberties Union has asked the U.S. Naval Academy to halt its practice of expecting midshipmen to stand for a prayer at their noon meals, saying it makes some of them uncomfortable. “We believe it is long past time for the Naval Academy to discontinue the official lunchtime prayers that all midshipmen are compelled to attend,” wrote Deborah A. Jeon, legal director of the ACLU of Maryland, in a letter to a vice admiral at the academy in Annapolis. ACLU officials tied their request to a 2003 federal appeals court ruling that organized prayers before mandatory meals at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, Virginia, were unconstitutional.

Thousands of Bibles and Gospel booklets from a U.K.-based publisher will be distributed to athletes and visitors at this summer’s Olympic Games in Beijing —with the approval of the Chinese government. The Bible Society said the organization’s 180 branches worldwide are funding the project in a country whose communist government had confiscated all Bibles during the turbulent Cultural Revolution decades ago. In addition, some 10,000 complete Bibles and 30,000 copies of the New Testament in Chinese and English will be printed by the China-based Amity Printing Press for the 16,000 athletes and an estimated 2 million visitors expected for the games, which open August 8.