

Briefly noted

News in the [November 4, 2008](#) issue

A Wisconsin-based group of atheists and agnostics has filed suit against President Bush over the federal law designating a National Day of Prayer. The Freedom from Religion Foundation maintains that the law violates the First Amendment's prohibition against an official establishment of religion. The suit, filed October 3, charges that the National Day of Prayer Task Force, chaired by Shirley Dobson, has ties to Focus on the Family, a nonprofit evangelical organization led by her husband, James Dobson. The task force rents office space in the ministry's Colorado Springs headquarters. A White House spokesperson said that "200-plus years of constitutional history teach that this lawsuit has absolutely no merit, and we expect the Justice Department will defend it vigorously."

Scholars and history buffs who research Baptist history now can do so in one place. The American Baptist Historical Society dedicated the Samuel Colgate Historical Library and Archives on Mercer University's Atlanta campus September 27, bringing its vast collections, previously housed at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, and Rochester, New York, under one roof. While some questioned relocating the library and archives to Atlanta, particularly since American Baptist Churches USA headquarters are in Pennsylvania, Mercer president Bill Underwood said Atlanta is the perfect location because of the city's civil rights history and because the university's founder, Jesse Mercer, contributed to Baptist publications in the North. Roy Medley, general secretary of ABCUSA, said the dedication was momentous: "It's another way in which God is healing the divisions, the scars and the wounds of Baptists in the past."

The World Council of Churches has extended the contract of General Secretary Samuel Kobia, a Methodist from Kenya who announced in February that for "personal reasons" he would not seek a second term as head of the world body. The WCC's executive committee, meeting September 23-26 at Lübeck in northern Germany, announced that Kobia, whose term expires December 31, will remain in the post until a successor, due to be elected in 2009, takes office. Some German church leaders prominent in the Geneva-based WCC indicated that they felt the council was not making its presence felt sufficiently in world affairs. Discussions at

Lübeck were “tough and difficult, but issue-focused,” according to Bishop Martin Schindehütte, a WCC executive committee member who also heads ecumenical affairs for the Evangelical Church in Germany. In recent years, said the bishop, the work of the WCC has lacked “rigor and clarity.”