

Briefly noted

News in the [August 10, 2004](#) issue

The Bush administration asked a federal appellate court July 12 to reconsider its spring decision to uphold Oregon's assisted-suicide law. It would like the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals to set aside its May ruling that backed the only law in the country that permits doctors to assist patients in hastening their deaths, the Associated Press reported. The Justice Department said the case, decided 2-1, should be reheard by a panel of 11 judges. The three-judge panel determined that U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft cannot hold Oregon physicians criminally liable for prescribing overdoses under the voter-approved Death with Dignity Act. The administration believes federal drug laws bar doctors from dispensing medication that would be used to end the life of a patient. Eli Stutsman, a lawyer who represents a doctor and pharmacist in the case, said the federal government does not have authority over the state assisted-suicide law.

The Interdenominational Theological Center, a consortium of African-American seminaries, is no longer on probation, the Atlanta-based school has announced. The school received word in late June that its accreditation was reaffirmed by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The ITC had been placed on probation in 2002 for employing two professors who had not completed their doctoral degrees. The consortium of six denominational seminaries was founded in 1958 and currently enrolls about 480 students.

A group of Baptist professors wants the Baptist World Alliance to recite a creed describing the basics of the Christian faith when members gather at a centennial meeting in England next year. Four professors recently crafted a short document, titled "Confessing the Faith," to voice their support for repeating the recitation of the Apostles' Creed that occurred at the global group's first congress in 1905. The request, endorsed by 28 theologians and educators, came after the Southern Baptist Convention voted to withdraw membership and funding from the alliance, which it has accused of having a "leftward drift." The professors say such a recitation would "show the shrills on the extreme to be wrong" and "move us toward unity for which our Lord prayed and which we seek."

South Africa's Dutch Reformed Church, once ostracized for its theological justification of apartheid and white-majority rule, has rejoined the South African Council of Churches. The move, announced July 13 during the ecumenical organization's triennial meeting in Johannesburg, ended more than 40 years of antagonism between the denomination and the ecumenical agency, and was hailed by South African media and church leaders as something of a milestone in the country's ongoing process of reconciliation. Willie Botha, a spokesman for the Dutch Reformed Church, told the SACC that the 3-million-member denomination—having apologized for its past—had been “humbled” by its reception in reentering the council.