

Briefly noted

News in the [December 27, 2005](#) issue

Church World Service officials say the Paul Simon Water for the Poor Act, which President George W. Bush signed into law December 2, will bolster the humanitarian agency's efforts to decrease global poverty, sickness and death by increasing access to safe water for poor people in developing countries. A longtime advocate for universal access to safe and affordable drinking water, Church World Service applauded the president for signing a bill the agency said "demonstrates that the United States takes seriously the idea that access to water should be contingent on need, not on the ability to pay." CEO John L. McCullough of CWS said that the signing is critical to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. That campaign, endorsed by major ecumenical councils and agreed upon in 2000 by nearly 200 heads of state, seeks to reduce by half the number of people worldwide without clean water and adequate sanitation by the year 2015.

American legal groups defending religious liberty say they are pleased with the acquittal of a Swedish pastor who had been charged with a hate crime after calling homosexuals a "cancerous tumor" in society. Pastor Ake Green was acquitted November 29 by Sweden's Supreme Court. Green had received a one-month jail sentence for his statement in a sermon about gays and lesbians. An appeals court first acquitted him in February, saying his preaching was not an attack on gays and lesbians because it was a personal interpretation of the Bible, and the Supreme Court agreed. The case had attracted international attention, with the Washington-based Becket Fund for Religious Liberty filing a brief urging the high court to affirm the appellate decision. "The issue before the court was neither homosexuality nor society's perception of homosexual conduct. The issue was religious liberty," a spokesman said.