

# Briefly noted

News in the [November 13, 2007](#) issue

**For decades**, the Akron City Council opened its weekly meetings with the Lord's Prayer. Council president Marco Sommerville said the practice "goes way, way back." Recitation of the prayer was most likely meant to show citizens of the Ohio city that council members looked for outside guidance, he said. But after Americans United for Separation of Church and State threatened litigation, council members decided October 15 to instead pray privately before meetings. They're also working on finding a nonsectarian prayer to replace the Christian prayer. The American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio applauded the move. "Government is there for people of all faiths and people of no faith," a spokesperson said.

**Worldwide membership** in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has increased to 15.4 million, according to statistics announced at an international gathering in Silver Spring, Maryland. Membership totaled 15,435,470, a net increase of 681,448, or 4.62 percent, as of June. During the meeting on October 14, Matthew A. Bediako, secretary of the international church, also provided figures that show how many members have left the denomination, Adventist News Network reported. For every 100 members who joined the church in the 12-month period, 24 left. He called this year's retention rate of 76 percent "healthy." Since 2000, church officials have sought membership audits to determine more accurate figures for membership.