

# Briefly noted

News in the [November 3, 2009](#) issue

**Members of Westboro Baptist Church**, the antigay church in Topeka, Kansas, that protests military funerals, won a court victory September 24 when a federal appeals court overturned a \$5 million judgment against it. The father of a marine killed in Iraq in 2006 sued Westboro pastor Fred Phelps and his church after they protested his son's funeral with signs saying, "Thank God for dead soldiers" and "God hates America." Judge Robert B. King of the Fourth U.S Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia, writing in the majority opinion, said the signs were "utterly distasteful" but addressed matters of public concern. "Notwithstanding the distasteful and repugnant nature of the words being challenged in these proceedings, we are constrained to conclude that the defendants' signs and [statements on the church's Web site] are constitutionally protected," King said. The father's lawyer, Albert Snyder of York, Pennsylvania, said he would seek to appeal to the Supreme Court.

**Oral Roberts University formally installed** its new president September 25, two days after announcing that it had cleared its books of long-term debt. Mark Rutland, president of South eastern University in Lakeland, Florida, succeeded Richard Roberts as president of the charismatic Christian school in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Roberts resigned after being embroiled in a scandal related to lavish spending. Oral Roberts, the university's founder and father of Richard, helped conduct Rutland's installation. The board of trustees said \$55 million in long-term debt was eliminated with the help of more than 15,000 donors.

**A Canadian Roman Catholic bishop** has been charged with possessing and importing child pornography just weeks after his Nova Scotia diocese reached a \$15 million settlement with Halifax parishioners who had been sexually abused by priests as children. Bishop Raymond Lahey, 69, stepped down as bishop of the Nova Scotia diocese of Antigonish on September 26, four days before the charges were made public. In a letter to his diocese, he said he had submitted his resignation to Pope Benedict XVI "for personal reasons" and had already left the diocese. Ottawa police said Lahey was detained at the Ottawa airport on September 15 as he tried to reenter Canada. Border Services agents searched his laptop computer and found

images “that were of concern,” said police.