

Briefly noted

News in the [July 26, 2005](#) issue

After two years of acrimonious debate, Canada's House of Commons on June 28 passed a controversial same-sex marriage bill. If approved as expected by Canada's Liberal-dominated Senate this month, the bill will allow same-sex couples to marry, making the country only the fourth in the world to recognize homosexual marriage. (Spain became the third on June 30.) For many, passage of the legislation was merely a formality, as courts in eight provinces and two northern territories had already struck down prohibitions against same-sex marriage over the past two years. Government officials in favor of the bill stressed that no religious denominations will be forced to offer same-sex wedding ceremonies. MPs also agreed to an amendment that would protect the charitable status of any religious institution that refuses to perform same-sex marriages.

The script of *Hotel Rwanda* has been honored with a Humanitas prize for being a spiritually driven Hollywood screenplay. Based on the heroics of a hotel manager during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, *Hotel Rwanda* brought a \$25,000 prize to screenwriters Keir Pearson and Terry George at the awards luncheon June 29 at Universal City near Hollywood. (George also directed the film.) They competed against writers of scripts of two other 2004 films, *Millions* and *Finding Neverland*. In addition, NBC television producer John Wells won a \$15,000 prize for his *West Wing* script about the importance of applying U.S. diplomacy to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Founded in 1974 by the late TV producer and Catholic priest Ellwood "Bud" Kieser, the Humanitas awards each year honor scripts thought to have uplifted the human spirit with dignified film and TV characters.

The Council of Churches in Zambia is supporting the use of condoms in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Alongside the Roman Catholic Church, the council opposed condom use for many years since the pandemic arrived in the early 1980s. General Secretary Japhet Ndhlovu emphasized that the council would promote the use of condoms only to prevent the further spread of the disease. Ndhlovu also noted that being HIV positive does not mean the end of marriage. "The church encourages such couples to stay together and use the condom." When he addressed the media in Lusaka about the issue June 16 with Norwegian Lutheran bishop Rosemary Kohn,

Ndhlovu said the church would always promote “safe sex.” Kohn supported Ndhlovu, saying: “We will encourage the use of condoms in order to stop the spread of the disease. If we don’t encourage this, we will be blamed for not saving lives.”