

From the Team Rector...

April 2010

Dear Friends,

**ALLELUIA ALLELUIA CHRIST IS RISEN
HE IS RISEN INDEED ALLELUIA**

We shall say these great words from the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday through the celebration of Easter Day and every time we celebrate Holy Communion until the Feast of Pentecost at the end of May. The Sundays after Easter, as they used to be called, are now referred to as the Sundays of Easter. April and May will be one long celebration of the Risen Christ. The Church celebrates Eastertide for nearly two months because the message of the Cross and of the Resurrection is the good news the world needs to hear.

In the season of Passiontide all the way through until Good Friday itself we draw near to the foot of the Cross. We come to Him as sinners needing forgiveness, we come to Him as bereaved people in need of comfort, we come to Him in despair seeking hope, we come to Him on our cross and seek to identify with Him on His Cross. There we find the Christ who died in the place of the sinner Barabbas, there we find the Christ who offered hope to the companion on his own cross, there we find the Christ who offered forgiveness to those who were nailing Him to the Cross, there we find the Christ who in the midst of His pain thought of the needs of His mother Mary and His friend John. Don't miss out on the celebration of the Cross as you journey towards Easter. Christ died because we needed Him to. We need to encounter Him at the Cross if we are to be able to bear our own crosses.

The Resurrection is first of all God's yes to Christ's self offering. God raises Him to life as the vindication of all that Christ came

to be and to do. On the Cross Jesus cried out 'it is finished'. It was not a cry of defeat but a cry of accomplishment and the Resurrection shows that. Secondly the Resurrection is not about ghostly visions but about risen reality. The Biblical stories about the risen Jesus show Him eating meals with the disciples bidding them touch the nail prints in His hands. There seems to have been a continuity between what Jesus was on earth and what He was in the new reality. So for us too a Resurrection life will be about the restoration of our individuality. The scientist John Polkinghorne has suggested that our earthly bodies are indeed subject to decay but that God as it were, stores our unique code ready to restore it at our resurrection. Perhaps as we think of DNA all this may not seem so impossible?

For New Testament Christians, the Resurrection was both a future hope and a present reality. St. Paul told the Christians of Thessalonika "not to grieve as those without hope for those who rest in Him". St. Paul also speaks of his intense longing to be with Christ and to see Him. Yet the Christians of the early church also lived with a sense of awareness of the presence of the risen Jesus with them in the present, transforming their lives and enabling them to live for Him.

We are called to encounter Christ on the Cross and at the empty tomb. As we live through the events of Holy week and Easter may our lives be transformed so that we may say with joy: "Alleluia, Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed, Alleluia.

May I wish you all a Joyful Easter.

John

TEAM RECTOR'S NOTES

MAUNDY THURSDAY April 1st

10.00am

Holy Communion

11.00am Diocesan Eucharist, Blessing of Oils
& Renewal of Ordination Vows
at Chelmsford Cathedral
7.00pm Last Supper and Agape Meal
8.30pm Vigil until Midnight
Please sign list in church for our chain of prayer

GOOD FRIDAY

April 2nd

10.00am Children's Workshop – Places must be
booked
10.00am Service at URC
11.00am March of Witness starting at URC
12 noon Children's Service
2.00pm Liturgy (Communion)

EASTER EVE (HOLY SATURDAY)

11.00am Easter Pageant starting at The Library
8.00pm Easter Vigil and Fire

EASTER DAY

April 4th

Please bring flowers to decorate the flower cross
8.00am Holy Communion
9.00am Parish Communion Greenstead Green
10.00am Parish Communion and Baptism
(NO Choral Evensong)
6.30pm Songs of Praise at St. James' Greenstead
Green
Last Service of The Revd Geoff Bayliss

Toast

We set up TOAST a few years ago with the aim of reaching out to families with little or no contact with Church, to enable them to find out more about Christian belief and worship in an active, fun, "non-churchy" way. The jam doughnuts were our secret weapon! All of us involved - clergy, readers, musicians, helpers - have greatly enjoyed it.

However, it is very expensive in terms of time and work. Sadly, it hasn't grown. In fact in recent months we have had very few children and parents coming to it. So, with Geoff's departure, we have decided to "mothball" it.

We would love to start it - or something different with the same objective - again in the future. But we would need much more help from people in our churches if we were to do so. If that is something that grabs your imagination and you feel inspired to help revive it, please let clergy or readers know!

Viv.

The PCC has been asked to update our parish profile and to consider the kind of person **the next Team Vicar** might be, so that appropriate papers may be sent to any who are interested in the post. Brian Vidler and Jen Skingsley would welcome your insights on behalf of the PCC. He or she will come to a half-time post, which means that much of the work Geoff did outside Gosfield and Greenstead Green will need to be done by other folk if it is to continue. Are there things you could assist with?

MISSION EVENT 2010

Each of our Parishes has been asked to organise a Mission Event for 2010. Should the event be on or off Church premises? Perhaps a repeat Beer & Hymns evening? Any ideas or offers to help/organise our Mission Event for 2010 should be given to the Clergy or PCC by 26th April. Thank you.

DIARY NOTES

At our recent **Annual Parochial Church Meeting** Brian Vidler was elected to serve as Church Warden alongside David Lorkin. We are grateful to Anne-Maree Robertson as her work as Church Warden.

Anne-Maree continues with her work with the PCC. Brian formally begins his work as Church Warden at the Archdeacon's Visitation Service which takes place in Halstead on Tuesday 11th May at 8.00pm. All are very welcome to this special service.

There will be no Tuesday evening Communion Service for the time being except when it is followed by a PCC or Team Council meeting. This month there are therefore services on 20th at 7.00pm and on 26th at 7.30pm.

The monthly **TECS** will be at 6.00pm on Sunday 11th April at Earls Colne.

Contemplative Prayer Group meetings will be on Tuesdays 13th and 27th April at "Framcombe" Upper Chapel Street at 8.00pm.

EMMAUS –THE WAY OF FAITH Part 2 continues to meet at *The Lion*, High Street, Earls Colne.

April 13	Belonging to the Church
April 20	Sharing Holy Communion
April 27	

Part 3 Living the Christian Life begins on Tuesday May 18th

You will need to bring along to the meetings a pen and a Bible. If you would like to come to our *Emmaus* course, it would be a great help if you could let Viv know in advance.

The Rev'd Vivien Brooks

Tel: 01787 220347

email: vivienbrooks@googlemail.com

On Saturday 17th April at 1.00pm there will be **Lunchtime Concert** in St. Andrew's Church. Please see separate advertisement within this magazine.

There will be a **Memorial Service** at 6.30pm on Sunday 18th April in St. Andrew's Church.

The Eucharistic Visitors will meet on Monday 19th April at 7.30pm at St. Andrew's Centre.

The **Home Group** meets once a month on the third Tuesday. It will next meet on Tuesday 20th April at 7.30pm at Mallows House, Mallow's Field (Jim & Linda's) starting at 7.30pm and formally finishing at 9pm though you are welcome to stay on for chat or worship etc. All are welcome and the evenings will be led by Jim Davis.

The **Team Council** meets in the St. Andrew's Centre on Tuesday 20th April at 7.45pm, following a service of Holy Communion in church at 7.00pm.

On Wednesday 21st April there will be a meeting of the **Finance & Property Group** at 7.30pm at St. Andrew's Centre.

Mothers' Union - the monthly meetings normally take place on the third Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm at St. Andrew's Centre. The next one will be 21st April.

Our next **Taize Service** will be at 6.30pm on Sunday 25th April at St. Andrew's Church.

PCC Meeting There will be a PCC meeting on Monday 26th April at 8.00pm in St. Andrew's Centre following a service of Holy Communion in church at 7.30pm.

The first **Home Produce Stall** of this year will be on Saturday 1st May on the Market Hill.

The next service of **Evening Prayer according to the Book of Common Prayer** will be on Sunday 2nd May. You will often find this service at St Andrew's on a first Sunday of the month in 2010.

Ordination of The Revd Sally Lodge as Priest

The Revd Sally Lodge will be ordained Priest at Stansted Mountfitchet St John on Sunday the 27th June at 10.30am, together with Anne Howson (Saffron Walden TM, who came to us with fellow students at Westcott House in 2008 for our Come and See Mission), and Giles Tulk (Stansted Mountfitchet with Birchanger and Farnham). Further announcements will be made about possible places for the service.

HOUSING/COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT

Do you know someone who may be entitled to claim Housing or Council Tax benefit but doesn't because may be (i) they are afraid to admit they need help and advice, (ii) are too proud, (iii) are not able to complete the forms, (iv) are separated or bereaved, (v) they have an illness or disability or (vi) for any other reason? If so, there is a service that is designed especially for them. An officer from Braintree District Council can visit them at home to discuss their difficulties, help complete the necessary forms and give them a personal speedy service. To receive this service, or arrange it for someone else, please do contact the Benefit Home Visiting Officer, Jo Mayne, on 01376 557885.

DIOCESAN COURSE IN CHRISTIAN STUDIES

A number of people have taken part in this course in the past – Brian Vidler and Jenny Golding for example. There is another course due to start in September of this year. The venue will be local. Please talk to Jenny or Brian if you would like any further information and let the Clergy know if you are interested in being put in touch with the course. It is a good way of growing in our Christian faith and practice. For some it is a preparation for further training in ministry for example as a reader, lay evangelist or pastoral assistant. Some have also gone on to be ordained.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH OUTREACH

This organisation provides school workers who visit our local Primary Schools and the Ramsey College and give school assemblies and some religious teaching. Our Church has donated to them from time to time. They are looking for greater involvement from the Halstead

Churches in order for them to increase their ministry to schools. It would be good to support them as they have good skills that are needed to relate to our children. Their two current needs are people to stand as Trustees and Chairman in order to give the local group guidance and to support their work. They would also be glad of significantly increased funding. If you can help with either of these, please do contact the Clergy.

Pilgrimages – We are not organising trips to The Walsingham Pilgrimage on May 31st or The Bradwell Pilgrimage on 3rd July. However people are welcome to arrange their own transport. Archbishop John Sentamu is speaking at Bradwell.

The Licensing of Revd. Geoff Bayliss will be on Monday, 17th May at 7.45pm at Tolleshunt Darcy.

Senior bishops call for civil partnerships in churches

A group of senior Anglican leaders say they will support an amendment to the Equality Act to lift the ban on civil partnership ceremonies in religious premises. The Bishops of Leicester and Salisbury and five recently retired bishops signalled their support for the amendment in *The Times* on Tuesday. Individual denominations and other faith groups would decide whether to offer the ceremonies. But coming only weeks after the Bishops of Winchester and Chichester fought the amendment in the Lords, the news is likely to cause further division within Church of England ranks.

Sources: *The Times* (23/2); *Daily Telegraph* (23/2)

Church still anxious over assisted suicide guidelines

Christian leaders have urged families not to acquiesce to requests for assisted suicide despite new legal guidelines stressing relatives' motives. Revisions to draft guidelines issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions said that the motivation of people who help loved ones to die will be the crucial factor in determining if they should face prosecution. But assisted suicide would remain a criminal offence and no case would be guaranteed immunity. Right-to-die campaigners welcomed the move but SPUC Pro-Life and the Church of England both voiced concern. SPUC spokesperson Paul Tully said the proposal 'effectively decriminalises assisted suicide in a wide range of circumstances'. The Church stressed that the 'most compassionate course is to provide love, support and the best possible medical and nursing care'.

Sources: *The Times* (26/2); *Daily Telegraph* (20/2)

URC backs ‘Robin Hood Tax’

The United Reformed Church has become the first UK denomination to give public support to a campaign calling for a global financial transaction tax on banks. The ‘Robin Hood Tax’ was launched by a coalition of charities, aid agencies, trade unions and environmental groups, petitioning UK political parties to apply a 0.05% tax on non-high street banking transactions such as currency speculation, futures trading and derivatives. The campaign argues that such a tax would raise up to £250 billion a year to protect public services and overseas poverty threatened by the global economic crisis. Revd John Marsh, moderator of the URC General Assembly, said, it would ‘go a long way to restoring public trust in financial institutions’ and would ‘shift public discourse from blame and retribution to hope’.

Sources: *Reform* (Mar/10); *robinhoodtax*

Irish Catholicism crisis prompts ‘total reformation’ call

Ireland’s Roman Catholic Church is experiencing a collapse parallel to the crisis in the banking system because it had been built on the same, flawed authority models, a priest has said. In the wake of the Church’s clerical abuse scandal, Fr Harry Bohan, founder of the Clare-based Céifin Centre, urged the Church to break with ‘top-down, command-control’ structures based on ‘authority structures of the world’. Fr Bohan said Jesus stressed servant leadership and would be shocked by the Church’s hierarchical model. He said nothing short of a total reformation of structures and ministry would restore the Church’s servant purpose and called for lay participation ‘at a very serious level’.

Source: *The Universe* (28/2)

Christian vote could swing General Election

The results of the next General Election could be determined by which party can appeal to the Christian vote.

best to Christians, theology think-tank Theos has claimed. Current forecasts suggest 'We're in hung parliament territory,' Theos director, Paul Woolley, said. And while a survey showed that support for Conservatives had risen from 21 to 34 per cent since 2005, among Christians it has only crept up from 38 to 40 per cent. The survey revealed Christians almost evenly split with 21 per cent thinking the Conservatives have been sympathetic to them and 20 per cent feeling this about Labour. 'Labour is in a position where it could benefit from reaching out especially to Christians,' Mr Woolley said. 'Attendance at the ballot box is usually strong – with 48 per cent saying they are 'absolutely certain' to vote. And 81 per cent of 18- to 24-year-old Christians told an Evangelical Alliance survey they would be making use of their first vote.

Sources: *Church of England Newspaper* (26/2); *Church Times* (26/2)

China adopts Christianity as its own

Despite occasional clampdowns on unregistered churches, China's support for Christianity is now official, the deputy of the country's leading seminary claims. Revd Dr Gao Yuhua, president of Nanjing seminary said, 'China doesn't resist Christianity any more. We no longer call Christianity a foreign religion because it has been moulded into our blood and bones.' Chinese government records reckoning there are some 28.6 million Christians in its registered churches, Dr Gao admitted that her 220 students are a drop in the ocean in the face of the church's growth. Every year some 880 apply but the shortage of teachers and premises prevents China's theological education from keeping pace. Kua Wee Sen, general secretary of the Bible Societies' China Partnership has worked with the Amity Printing Company to produce 50 million Bibles for the Chinese church. 'This is a time of opportunity,' he said. </p> Source: *Reform* (Mar/10)



Churches could be sued for refusing civil partnerships

A late-night Lords vote to lift the ban on civil partnerships in religious venues could lead to church prosecutions, a bishop has warned. The Bishop of Winchester, Rt Revd Michael Scott-Joynt, said 'I regret enormously the vote'. Lord Alli, sponsor of the amendment, said the move would permit but not compel premises to host the ceremonies. But Bishop Scott-Joynt feared it would open 'individual clergy to charges of discrimination if they solemnise marriages but refuse to host civil partnership signings'. Don Horrocks of the Evangelical Alliance said, 'religious groups must not be forced to betray their consciences' because 'other liberal religious groups have the freedom to follow theirs.'

Source: *The Times* (4/3)

Scottish Church unimpressed by Labour's 'shrink-wrapped' faith

The head of the Scottish Episcopal Church has described Labour attempts to woo Scotland's Christian vote as a 'grave disservice' to religion. Rt Revd David Chillingworth was responding to promises made by Scottish Secretary, Jim Murphy, that religious concerns would be reflected in Labour policies. Mr Murphy illustrated this by mentioning voter concerns over benefit claimants, immigration levels and 'the importance of public services'. Mr Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane, labelled these attitudes the 'regressive', 'outdated' 'politics of the supermarket checkout'. The bishop lamented Murphy's lack of 'bigger visions' and said he did a disservice to faith by 'suggesting that religion should be shrink-wrapped to fit the manifesto' of a political party.

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (28/2)

Bishops' electoral challenge to politicians

The Catholic Bishops of England and Wales have issued a wide-ranging statement to the Parliament to reverse the breakdown of trust in society. *The Catholic Herald* sees *Choosing the Common Good* as 'a major intervention ahead of the general election'. The 10-page statement admits that the Catholic Church has itself had to learn harsh lessons in safeguarding trust. But it also focuses on the parliamentary expenses scandal and the mistrust of highly-rewarded bankers responsible for taking the economy to the brink. The bishops stress the restoration of trust and service as prerequisites if society is to change for the better. Observers also saw the bishops' call for politicians to 'recognise and support marriage' as offering some support for Conservative plans to give tax breaks to married couples.

Sources: *The Universe* (7/3); *Catholic Herald* (5/3); *The Times* (27/2)

Algerian Christians on fault line of Muslim–Christian tensions

Algerian Christians speaking in London last week revealed their increased vulnerability under 2008 government restrictions. Although at least 80,000 Algerian citizens are known to be Christians, the new laws have led to regular harassment, the banning of many churches, impounding of Bibles and reduction in safety. Algeria has found itself at the centre of Saudi Arabian and Egyptian pressure to quash Christianity because of fears that the church growth there could spread to other Arab countries. Algerian leaders spoke of 'amazing growth' especially among the Kabyle people. The Kabyle are non-Arabs who embrace the freedom given by Christianity to worship in their mother tongue and feel disenfranchised by Islamic authoritarianism, the *Church of England Newspaper* reported.

Source: *Church of England Newspaper* (5/3)



newswatch

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Dear John



This week in the world press:

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This week in the world press:

Nigerian Christians flee as 500 killed by Muslims

After around 500 of them were massacred by Muslims last weekend, terrified Christians in central Nigeria have been leaving their villages. Threats of new attacks have convinced many to move out. Soldiers were stationed in the villages near the city of Jos in Plateau State but failed to prevent the slaughter. Troops shot dead two people as tensions rose. The acting President of Nigeria has fired the National Security Advisor, as this killing

is just the latest in a series of attacks. But critics, including the Archbishop of Jos, say the root cause needs to be tackled – weak local government and military incompetence has allowed extremism to flourish among the Muslim Fulani group.

Sources: *The Times* (8/3, 10/3); *Daily Telegraph* (8/3); *The Guardian* (8/3); *Church Times* (12/3)

- <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>
- <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>
- <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>
- <http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/>

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Devil is at work in the Vatican, says top exorcist

The Roman Catholic Church's own leading exorcist has blamed the Catholic child abuse scandals on demonic influences. Father Gabriele Amorth also implicates the devil in the attack on Pope Benedict on Christmas Eve by a woman with mental problems, the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II, the deaths of two Swiss guards and a woman in the Vatican in 1998, plus some 'cardinals who do not believe in Jesus and bishops who are linked to the demon'. Father Amorth told an Italian newspaper that 'The Devil resides in the Vatican and you can see the consequences'. Amorth, chief exorcist for 25 years, also said the Pope supports his work and that he has dealt with 70,000 cases of demonic possession.

Sources: *Daily Telegraph* (11/3); *The Times* (10/3)

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>
- <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>

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Local protests scupper plans for Sandhurst mosque

The proposal for a huge mosque with two 100ft minarets overlooking the Sandhurst military academy has been rejected after strong public opposition. The local council approved the plans in January, despite fears of a security threat posed by the mosque towering over the nearby parade ground at Sandhurst, often visited by senior members of the Army and the Royal Family. But over 6,500 locals signed a petition against the mosque, and the application was refused at a special council meeting. Churches in Camberley were not opposed to a suitable mosque but were against such a huge building because it would create 'division and discord' and make 'not so much a symbol as a powerful cultural, or even political statement.'

Sources: *Daily Mail* (12/3); *The Times* (10/3)

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>

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Pope's brother slapped kids but denies knowledge of sex abuse

The elder brother of Pope Benedict XVI used corporal punishment while choirmaster at a Catholic school but claims ignorance of the head teacher's sex abuse. Former pupils say the head was a sexual 'sadist', but Georg Ratzinger, 86, claims he knew nothing about that while at the Regensburger Domspatzen in Bavaria, and believes the allegations came from before his tenure. Ratzinger expressed regret and asked forgiveness for slapping boys himself, saying it was just a 'normal' form of discipline at the time, from 1964 to 1971. Regensburger is the latest in a series of Catholic abuse cases recently exposed in Germany, Austria and the Netherlands. The German Bishops' Conference is investigating the 170 allegations that have so far been made.

Sources: *BBC* (8/3); *The Guardian* (9/3); *The Times* (10/3; 11/3)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/>

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Supreme Court turns down Christian registrar's appeal

A registrar who lost her job after refusing to officiate at civil partnerships won't be allowed to take her complaint to the Supreme Court. The Court decided that Lillian Ladele's case is not of sufficient 'general public importance'. Last December, the Appeal Court ruled that she had broken the Sexual Orientation Regulations, which make it illegal to refuse service to someone on the basis of their sexuality. Miss Ladele believes homosexual rights have compromised her religious freedom, and she must now decide whether to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights. The Christian Institute, which is backing Miss Ladele, said Christians will feel let down by the decision and is urging them to fight for religious freedom.

Sources: *Daily Telegraph* (9/3); *Christiantoday* (10/3)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/>

<http://www.christiantoday.com/>

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This week in the Church press

Militants kill six charity workers in Pakistan

An attack on the offices of Christian charity World Vision in Pakistan has left six staff dead. It is thought the assailants were Taliban militia. The charity, which was the victims of the 2005 earthquake, called the attack 'brutal and senseless'. Seven others were wounded in the attack in Oghi town, 40 miles north of Islamabad, which is thought to have involved either a bomb or grenades, as well as gunfire. David Thomson of World Vision, announcing a suspension of operations in the country, said: 'These are dedicated staff who have been serving their people in Pakistan for a number of years, seeking to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children affected by poverty, injustice and disaster.'

Sources: *Premier Radio* (10/3); *Los Angeles Times* (11/3); *Church Times* (12/3)

<http://www.premier.org.uk/>

<http://www.latimes.com/>

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/>

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Free churches want more protection for migrant workers

The Baptist Union, Methodist Church and United Reformed Church have given their support to a range of groups concerned about the 3.5 million workers who slip through employment legislation loopholes. Along with the Muslim Council of Great Britain, the Citizens Advice Bureau and various charities, unions and pressure groups, the churches are lobbying for agency staff and people on informal contracts, who are mostly immigrants, to enjoy the same legal protection as other employees. A meeting with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has been arranged, following correspondence with the churches. Methodist President Revd David Gamble first raised the problem with union leaders at the TUC Conference last September.

Sources: *Ekklesia* (8/3); *Methodist Recorder* (11/3)

<http://www.ekkleisia.co.uk/>

<http://www.methodistrecorder.co.uk/>

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CCFON campaigns to prevent 'gay weddings' in church

Christian Concern For Our Nation is urging Christians to put pen to paper to oppose same-sex partnership ceremonies in churches. The pressure group wants believers write to Gordon Brown and Harriet Harman to ask them to reverse the Equalities Bill amendment that will allow gay couples to make their vows in church. CCFON believes new legislation will effectively make civil partnerships no different to marriage, and the flood gates' for homosexuals to apply for ceremonies, leading to churches being closed if they deny permission. There is also an online petition. CCFON Director Andrea Vignoli says the amendment was 'a disgrace', having only been debated in the Lords for less than an hour, when most Peers were absent.

Source: *Christiantoday* (10/3)

<http://www.chrariantoday.com/>

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Bishop questions traditional view of homosexuality

The Bishop of Liverpool claims that homosexuality should be tolerated within the Anglican Communion. Speaking at his diocesan synod, the Rt Revd James Jones said that sexual orientation is not a choice but a given, 'in Christian terms, a grace'. He believes that homosexual Christians have 'theological, ethical and spiritual insights' that need to be recognised and that views on homosexuality should not prevent those on both sides of the debate from drinking 'openly from the same cup of salvation'. His speech attracted negative comments from some conservative evangelicals, including Anglican Mainstream Executive secretary Chris Sugden denounced it as 'false teaching', saying Bishop Jones had 'learned to accommodate himself to the secular pressures of England'.

Source: *Church Times* (12/3)

<http://www.churchtimes.co.uk/>

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Culture watch:

Think tank estimates family break-ups cost £42 billion

New research indicates that family breakdown takes £41.7 billion per year out of the economy. In 'Counting the Cost of Family Failure', the Relationships Foundation says it works out at £1,350 for every taxpayer. The think tank writes: 'It is an unpopular truth that choices have consequences and costs, and that these are not always borne by the choice-maker... Relationships cost a great deal more than money, but the escalating financial and broader emotional costs should motivate policy-makers to increase their support for relationships.' The report shows that 'functioning families... provide social and support worth £73 billion a year'. The Foundation says the cost of broken families is now 'unsustainable'.

Source: *LifeSiteNews* (9/3)

Pope will hold open-air services in British state visit

It is expected that Pope Benedict XVI will address 500,000 Catholics when he leads Mass in Glasgow and a prayer vigil in London later this year. The open-air events will be reminiscent of John Paul II's 1982 visit, but crowd sizes will be restricted due to health and safety considerations. Benedict's tour will be the first official papal state visit to the UK. Between 16 and 19 September the pontiff will meet the Queen in Edinburgh and the Archbishop of Canterbury in London, make a 'major speech' at Westminster Hall and announce the beatification of Cardinal John Henry Newman in Coventry. However, it is feared that the child abuse scandal will overshadow the historic visit. A website for the visit has been created: www.thepapalvisit.org.uk.

Sources: *Daily Telegraph* (17/3); *The Times* (17/3)

. Anglican Church criticises condom adverts before watershed

The Church of England believes the new rules that relax the ban on TV condom advertising before 9.00 pm, or 7.30 pm on Channel 4, are a negative step. The primary vehicle for sexual health education should be Government campaigns, not advertising. A spokesman continued: 'The Church supports the sensitive use of media to offer unbiased and authoritative information to young people, but educational and commercial objectives should not be muddled.' The Church praises other areas of the new advertising code that should mean better protection of children from detrimental advertising, but is disappointed that condom companies can now target advertising at under-16s. The Catholic Bishops' Conference has joined in the criticism.

Sources: *The Guardian* (16/3); *Premier Radio* (18/3)



Free churches say BNP should be banned

The United Reformed Church, Baptist Union and Methodist Church are suggesting British National Party (BNP) should not have the right to participate in the democratic process. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has judged that the BNP's constitution remains racist, despite altering its whites-only membership rule, and the churches agree that several of the party's policies are racist. Baptist spokesman Graham Sparkes says: 'If people want to make our laws, first of all they must comply with the law. We would therefore question whether the BNP should be allowed to stand as a party in the next General Election.' But Ekklesia think tank director Simon Barrow says banning the party would be 'politically and morally counter-productive'.

Source: *Ekklesia* (13/3)

Investment report criticises executive pay

A Christian investment group has produced a report on the wide gap between pay at the top and bottom of businesses. It recommends that no executives should be paid more than 75 times the level of the lowest earners. The ecumenical Church Investors Group has commissioned two theological professors to write 'The Ethics of Executive Remuneration'.

A Guide for Christian Investors', in response to public distaste for the high salaries and bonuses paid to bankers despite the economic crisis. The report advises that Christians should consider withdrawing their investment if the worst-offending companies don't change their pay policy, and they should find out how much the lowest-paid workers are paid before investing in any business.

Sources: *The Church Times* (19/3); *BBC* (17/3)

Survey highlights worries about UK religious freedom

A survey has revealed that nearly a third of Brits (32 per cent) believe that religious freedom has declined in the last ten years. The research by ComRes for religious think tank Theos coincides with debates on humanist publications in the House of Lords. The think tank's own latest report exposes the erosion of religious rights in Britain today. Philosophy professor Roger Trigg warns that pushing religious expression out of the public square 'undermines democracy', and that religious rights are being compromised when they are seen through the lens of secular agendas. Trigg also writes that we 'betray our heritage and make our position precarious, if we value freedom but think that the Christian principles which inspired the commitment of many to democratic ideals are somehow dispensable.'

Sources: *The Telegraph* (18/3); *Theos* (18/3); *christiantoday.com* (18/3)

Expert says English law is muddled about marriage

Bar Standards Board Chairman, law professor and top family lawyer Baroness Deech says our laws are no longer clear on marriage. Deech believes that changes in society and the legal rights given to gay couples have undermined the concept of marriage as a 'till us do part' union between a man and a woman. She also thinks that the way human rights legislation is developing, it will soon be illegal to prevent homosexuals from marrying, rendering civil partnerships redundant. However, she herself maintains that there are some differences between civil partnerships and marriages, and attacks the Government's legislation that has allowed gay couples to be described as parents on birth certificates, excluding the physical father.

Source: *Daily Telegraph* (16/3)