

Gospel & Law

Candlemas to Lent Edition

Editor: Revd Dr Catherine Shelley
Circulation & events: Andrew Male

revdrcath@gmail.com
admin@ecclawsoc.org.uk



Welcome to what was to be the Candlemas Edition of Gospel and Law but has fallen well and truly into this year's extended Ordinary Time. The Synod News is complemented by some interesting reflections on what constitutes a faith, the scope of the Courts to consider religious belief and practice and further thoughts on the new baptismal rite. Publicity about forthcoming events is at the end of the newsletter, as usual. Happy Ordinary Time and here's hoping the floods aren't too devastating where you are...

General Synod, February 2014 –

Women Bishops – A fairly overwhelming vote of 358 to 39 in favour of expediting Diocesan consultation about women bishops, reducing the timeframe to just 3 months. It will be interesting to see if the 42 to 2 vote at Diocesan level is repeated in the latest consultation but even more interesting to see the figures in Synod this November.

Related to the Pilling report there were Private Members' Motions calling for:

- i) the Synod to affirm that "the public doctrine of Christian marriage, between a man and a woman, as set out in the Book of Common Prayer as the only basis for engagement with public policy on marriage and family life." (in the name of Andrea Minichiello Williams) and
- ii) the Synod to agree that Church of England churches become eligible to be approved as places for the registration of civil partnerships (in the name of John Ward)

These attracted almost equal numbers of supporting signatures (135 and 130 respectively) but have not yet been scheduled for debate.

Less controversial business included:

The passing of a motion from Southwark Diocese on protecting the environment and disinvestment from fossil fuels, with an amendment to ensure monitoring of progress by the Archbishop's Council.

A motion supporting those Girl Guides who want to affirm their belief in God through the form of words 'In the presence of God I make my promise'

A Motion seeking practical approaches to the implementation of the Anglican Consultative Council Resolution 15:7 on preventing and eliminating gender-based violence was passed. This seeks to affirm ongoing work by the churches in raising awareness and caring for survivors of gender-based violence, supporting measures to bring perpetrators to account and encouraging boys and men to stand against gender-based violence.

Rev Chris Hobbs' motion to amend Canon B8 and make the wearing of robes optional rather than mandatory was adjourned.

The Motion to amend the Church Representation Rules was also adjourned after amending the original Motion to reduce PCC meetings from four to two instead of one.

Alternative Baptism service – some further reflections by the Bishop of Willesden, which appear at <http://bishopofwillesden.blogspot.co.uk/>

On the alternative so-called baptismal rite - the salient questions are:

1. Why is it so semi-Pelagian when it claims to be about grace? "Will you help them?" It's wet... and not in the water sense!
2. Where is the sense of their own pilgrimage which was expressed in "walk with them in the way of Christ?"
3. Where is the truth that we are rebels against God expressed?
4. Where is repentance from sin?
5. Where is renunciation of the devil and evil? ("reject" is a much weaker word - I can reject your ideas, but I need to reject and renounce the devil and evil)
6. Where is the sense that Christ is Saviour - and that we need saving?
7. Where is submission to the rule of Christ as a disciple?
8. Where is the understanding that sin, the world and the devil are all areas where the rule of Christ needs to be affirmed and lived. Not just the obviously evil bits...
9. Why is the suggested credal interrogation the weak one - when the Apostles' Creed is the place where our faith has always been affirmed in baptism?
10. "They will need to learn the story..." No, they need to *inhabit* the story, as forgiven sinners, as praying people, as those in whom the Spirit dwells (the Spirit doesn't get a mention here...). This is crass. It's baptism lite. It will not do.



In the light of the attempts to alter the Church Representation Rules, particularly the number of meetings to be held per year, there is a **helpful reminder from Law and Religion UK** that whilst parochial church councils (indeed all charities) with an annual income of not more than £100,000 are **excepted from Registration as Charities they are not exempt from charity law**. Interesting questions are also posed about the interface between charity law and ecclesiastical law, for example in the case of an Incumbent protected by freehold.

Removing trustees: when charity and ecclesiastical laws collide? [Frank Cranmer](#)

Watch this space in the unlikely event that the President of the Mormons will respond to the summons to appear next month before Westminster Magistrates Court to answer charges of fraud in a private prosecution under the Fraud Act 2006, alleging that the churches doctrines 'might be untrue or misleading.' Besides the remoteness of the possibility that the President will leave the US to answer the summons there is also the extraordinary spectacle of a secular court trying to determine the veracity or not of a set of religious beliefs and doctrines. All good fun....

And when is a religious belief not a religious belief? There seemed to be some shock within the Daily Mail and Telegraph that for the purposes of asylum atheism could be a belief but given that the law protects conscience as well as religion and belief, it should be no surprise that an atheist holding such views in good conscience, is within the purview of the asylum provisions.

NEWS of Forthcoming Events:

The Colloquium of Anglican and Roman Catholic Canon Lawyers - Thursday 6 March 2014 - **5.00 for 5.30pm at Winckworth Sherwood, Minerva House, 5 Montague Close, London, SE1 9BB**). Speakers are **Professor Norman Doe**, Director of the Centre for Law and Religion, Cardiff University, on the genesis of the Colloquium, its methodology, and activities in its second decade. **Aidan McGrath OFM**, General Secretary of the Franciscans, on the opportunities and challenges which canon law can bring to the ecumenical endeavour and **Professor James Conn SJ**, of the Gregorian Pontifical University, Rome and the School of Ministry and Theology at Boston College, USA on the 1983 CIC and canon law in clerical formation. The panel is to be moderated by **Mark Hill**, and also present will be the other members of the Colloquium: **Stephen Slack, Will Adam and Anthony Jeremy** (on the Anglican side), and **Robert Ombres, Fintan Gavin and Andrew Cole** (Roman Catholics). The timely reservation of places for this event (via Andrew Male at admin@ecclawsoc.org.uk) is recommended, as an invitation is to be extended to members of the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland.

Ecclesiastical Law Society Day Conference & AGM 2014 – *Safeguarding* – 5th April 2014 at Vaughan House, 46 Francis Street SW1P 1QN. Cost £35 members or £70 for non-members. **Speakers include:**

Bill Jacob, Archdeacon of Charing Cross,
Elizabeth Hall, National Safeguarding Adviser to the Archbishop's Council,
Nicola Harding Joint Registrar Ripon and Leeds and
Adrian Iles, Designated Officer under the Clergy Discipline Measure.

The Conference will include updates on good practice as well as proposed developments in Church law on the matter in the light of the Chichester visitation.

Future London Lectures – also at Winckworth Sherwood

Wednesday 17th June 2014 – 5-7pm – Bishop Richard Harries
Church Schools: a new landscape

Wednesday 29 October 2014 – Professor Mark Hill QC
Judicial Deference and the Non-Justiciability of Religious Disputes

Please contact Andrew Male at admin@ecclawsoc.org.uk if you wish to attend.

The Biennial Residential Conference will be held from 17th to 19th April 2015 in Bristol. Its focus on the Funeral Project, exhumations, memorials and other grave cases will make it dead exciting.... And it is anticipated that committee meetings between now and then will be dominated by appalling puns around death... The conference will also be the final conference presided over by Bishop Christopher as our Chairman...