

Conferences

CSCS Annual Conference

A Dialogue Between the Churches on Sexuality Issues

An ecumenical perspective from
The Rt Revd John Gladwin, Bishop of Chelmsford
The Revd Roberta Rominger, URC North Thames Moderator
The Revd John Simmonds, Methodist Minister

Saturday 11 February 2006
 St John's Church Waterloo
 10.00 to 16.00

£25 waged, £20 unwaged inc lunch, tea and coffee
 Bookings to: Mrs Daphne Cook, 61 Newport Drive, Alcester,
 Warwickshire B49 5BJ Cheques payable to CSCS

**Evangelical Fellowship for Lesbian and Gay Christians
 Spring Conference**

Que(e)rying faith': An introduction to queer theology and an exploration of what it might mean to our faith

Speaker Dr Nicola Slee
 31 March – 2 April Holland House near Worcester
 Residential fee £110 for the whole weekend,
 £40.50 for Saturday only

For further details please contact:
 John Blowers; tel 01245 252214, e-mail johna.blow@virgin.net

**Modern Churchpeople's Union Conference
 Passion for Justice
 global and faithful perspectives
 on human sexuality**

Tuesday 11—Friday 14 July 2006
 High Leigh Conference Centre, Hoddesdon, Herts
 Full fee £175, Reductions £100, day rate available
 Booking details from: Mrs E Darlington, 1 The Woods, Grotton,
 Oldham, OL4 4LP, Tel: 0161 633 3132
 Email: conference@modchurchunion.org

Coming In

Discovering how God within empowers us in our relating with the world and with each other

July 16-21 2006
 Iona in the MacLeod Centre
 A week for lesbians, gay men & their friends, integrating spirituality and sexual identity through a range of creative media in a safe space with Urs Mattmann, author of the book 'Coming In' & Cass Howes, National Coordinator of OUTCOME
 All are welcome, book through Iona

Web Site

Phil Gardner from Leeds has taken over as web master for the Changing Attitude web site. He has completely redesigned the site and made it much easier to navigate and more logical in the display of news and information.

Group convenors and contacts will in future be able to change their own details, update information and news of future meetings and publish group reports direct to the site. It is close to completion and when it goes online, the news will be published in the lesbigayanglican chat group.

Changing Attitude Australia

Before Christmas we were contacted by a student at Trinity College, Melbourne. With a group of friends, he is hoping to start a new group with aims and ethos similar to ours, and therefore to become a new Changing Attitude group or network. They are planning to hold a first meeting in February.

This is an exciting development. It raises questions about the identity and structure of CA as we expand in new countries, with the possibility of more to come. Davis hopes to encourage groups to form in other West African countries. These developments shift the focus from where the idea started, in England. The web site may need to reflect this growing network, and become an international site with links to or space for national networks.

Changing Attitude Trust

How to get in touch with us

Office address:
 12 Lavender Gardens Clapham Junction London SW11 1DL
 Telephone: 020 7738 1305 Fax: 020 7738 0584

Director: The Revd Colin Coward
 Email: colin@changingattitude.org
 Tel home office: 01380 724908
 Mobile: 07770 844302

Colin is in the London office on Tuesday and at the home office on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday

Development Worker South: The Revd Sally Rogers
 Email: sally@changingattitude.org
 Tel: 020 8531 4992

Sally is usually in the office on Tuesday and can be contacted at home from Tuesday to Thursday

Development Worker North: Nigel Greenwood
 Tel: 07908 633279
 Email: nigel@changingattitude.org

Office Manager: Brenda Harrison
 Email: brenda@changingattitude.org

Web Site: www.changingattitude.org

Trustees: Jenny Clark, Irene Cowell, Susannah Izzard, John James, Sanjay Kumar, Jean Mayland, Barry Naylor, David Page (chair), Sr Rosemary CHN, Andrew Woodward (treasurer)

Patrons: Revd Canon Marilyn McCord Adams, Rt Revd Paul Barber; Rt Revd Michael Bourke, Bishop of Wolverhampton; Rt Revd Michael Doe; Rt Revd Richard Holloway; Revd Bill Kirkpatrick; Sister Una Kroll; Rt Revd Richard Lewis, Bishop of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich; Rt Revd Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hulme; Revd Jean Mayland; Rt Revd John Oliver; Christina Rees, Rt Revd John Saxbee, Bishop of Lincoln; Rt Revd Dr Peter Selby, Bishop of Worcester; Rt Revd Robin Smith; Rt Revd Alan Smithson; Revd Dr Anne Townsend; Rt Revd Roy Williamson

Changing Attitude Trust is a Registered charity No. 1076808 and a Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 3765699

Changing Attitude New Zealand

Jeremy Younger can be contacted by email:
 jeremyyounger@clear.net.nz

Changing Attitude Network Nigeria

Davis Mac-Ilaya can be contacted by email:
 davis@nigeria.changingattitude.org

Changing Attitude Scotland

You can contact Kelvin, who maintains the website and network, by e-mailing mail@changingattitudescotland.org.uk or by telephone - 01786-832368
 www.changingattitudescotland.org.uk



WORKING FOR GAY, LESBIAN,
 BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER
 AFFIRMATION IN THE
 ANGLICAN COMMUNION

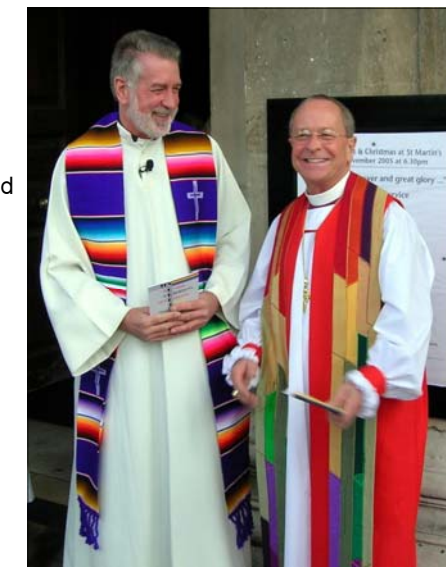
NEWSLETTER No 34

January 2006

£1.00

10th Anniversary Celebration

**We had a wonderful weekend!
 What a celebration!**
 Hundreds came to Trafalgar Square and Stockport and filled the churches of St Martin-in-the-Fields and St Elizabeth's Reddish. We enjoyed two inspiring services, the address from Bishop Gene, and two very different receptions. We were inspired by a bishop who happens to be gay (and isn't the only gay bishop to have been in the UK!) and were reminded that we are here to preach the gospel and tell our story of Good News. For LGBT Anglicans, Bishop Gene restored our sense of being healthy, Christian people, called by God because we are LGBT people, to reveal something to the church—the diversity of God's creation and God's gift to humankind of sexuality—rich, exciting, creative, love-filled, challenging, intimate, HOLY!



The work of Changing Attitude is assisted by grants and donations from

the NR foundation
 THE NORTHERN ROCK FOUNDATION

COMIC RELIEF **OUR MEMBERS**

The Newsletter sent free to supporters, bishops, college and course principals, social responsibility officers and directors of ordinands

London and Stockport—Bishop Gene's address

Bishop Gene received a standing ovation for his address in each church. He spoke of how he had faced prejudice in his role. "I'm here to encourage you to talk about God. I am not here to talk about a social agenda. I am not here to grind any axes, I am here to do the thing that Christians do, that is to witness to the goodness of God."

His home state in the US is "the one place in the world where I am not the gay bishop - I'm just the bishop... it is a wonderful feeling". He said homosexuals would eventually be fully welcomed in the church but warned that it may take some time. "This is going to end with our full inclusion; we won't live to see it, but it's going to happen."

He described much of what he has surmounted on his journey, the death threats and body armour told with a humour ("My security guards were gorgeous") and ascribed everything to his trust in God's calling and his acceptance of it which, he said, made him like the still eye of a hurricane.

Bishop Gene ended with some advice

1. While you work for your inclusion in the Church, and that of other LGTB people, remember that you are already part of the body of Christ by virtue of your baptism. No one can exclude you.
2. Act normal; not 'straight' but as the normal you; act like being gay is normal and others will believe it too.
3. Work on your own stuff - coming out is only the beginning. Like the Hebrews coming out of Egypt, keep growing, don't give up and hide away when you feel you're in the wilderness.
4. Offer your gifts to the church as an active, working member.
5. Have other issues besides sexuality in your life. The fall of Sodom was caused by the peoples' neglect of the poor and needy. Care about the issues of the world; work to ease them; gently, quietly and firmly teach others to disregard your sexuality and concentrate, as you will be doing, on God's priorities.
6. Gently, quietly, firmly, teach people who don't understand. 'Hate sin love the sinner' still feels like hate. What does 'practising' homosexual mean? – how come it has been defined in a narrow way, when practising is a matter of being, not doing.
7. Make connections to other '-isms' – racism, sexism. Speak up for other oppressed groups, together the oppressed make up a majority.
8. Be in it for the long haul – it will end with our full inclusion but we won't live to see it. Be prepared to pay the price. Until now, the church (and the world) has been controlled by straight white men. That time is now over as ethnic peoples, lesbians and other women, gay and other men are claiming their rightful places. The once exclusive and excluding 'table' to which only Christians and others - a chosen few - were welcome is now growing larger and larger. Some day, beyond our time, this injustice will end and everyone will be equal.
9. Do your own spiritual work, prayer, worship, discerning God's activity in your life, preach the good news.
10. Talk about God. Spread the good news. Do your own spiritual work - prayer work - worship work, in ways you know. Keep focussed

Tenth Anniversary celebration

on the mission. It's not about sexuality. Bring people to Jesus Christ. We who have been marginalized know about God's love. People are hungry for real spirituality, it's our responsibility to tell them. Live lives joyfully so that others ask how we can live that way, and tell them that Jesus makes all the difference.

Questions

In the Question Time at St Martin's, Bishop Gene exhorted us to read the Bible. He reminded us of the story of the lame man lying at the entrance to the Temple begging for alms. Peter and John came along. Looking fixedly at the beggar, Peter explained that he had no money only the name of Jesus. Taking the beggar by the hand, Peter told him to get up. The beggar did so. Leaping and dancing and praising God, he followed Peter and John into the temple. Gene explained that we are like the beggar. We have been sat at the door, but in the name of Jesus Christ we too can walk and leap and dance. And go into the Temple, where we belong. Joyfully, we can tell our story. Jesus is alive for us.

He ended by commenting that New Hampshire is the only State in the Union where sexuality is not an issue!

Meeting with Dr Rowan Williams

The Archbishop of Canterbury met Bishop Gene Robinson privately soon after he had arrived in the UK on Thursday morning, 3 November. The meeting was described in a brief press release as friendly but candid and involved the two discussing the range of problems that have arisen following Bishop Robinson's consecration. The encounter came as part of the Archbishop's commitment to listen to the voices of all concerned in the current challenges facing the Anglican Communion. Bishop Gene declined to discuss what had been said in the meeting, but said: "It was a good meeting, a very, very cordial one."



Bishop Gene before the service at St Martin in the Fields

London conservatives objected

Some Anglican conservatives had called for the St-Martin-in-the-Fields church venue to be changed to a secular one. The London Diocesan Evangelical Fellowship, which includes senior lay and clergy members, had urged the Archbishop of Canterbury to move the Bishop's talk to a secular venue to prevent "damaged relations" between sections of the church.

Oxford Union debate

Bishop Robinson spoke at an Oxford Union debate on Thursday on whether gay men could become bishops. He said the Bible was misinterpreted in order to reject gay people from the Church. The "Sin of Sodom" had nothing to do with homosexual sex but was a "failure to care for the poor, the widows and the orphans", he said.

The motion was won by an overwhelming majority. Richard Kirker, General Secretary of LGCM, spoke with Bishop Gene in support of the motion and they were opposed by Bishop Colin Buchanan and the Revd Andrew Goddard, Tutor in Ethics at Wy-cliffe Hall.

Speaking to BBC

Speaking to BBC News, Bishop Robinson said it was inevitable the Church would have an impassioned debate over moral issues and even differences but did not need to split. "From time to time the Church has always attempted to define itself and, if you will, find its soul yet again as it faces each new issue that presents itself," he said. The bishop said there should be no such thing as "irreconcilable differences" in the Church. But he said the issue of gay and lesbian people within the Church had to be addressed. "Scripture is not as plainspoken as some would have us believe. "The issue has to be faced because gay and lesbian people have to be faced," he added. "I believe that the acceptance of gay and lesbian people into the life of the church is something that is going to happen. It may not happen in my lifetime, but that is all right. It will happen in God's own time. "What I will say in the short run is that no one is asking any other province of the Anglican Communion to raise up gay and lesbian people and to ordain them as priests or consecrate them as bishops. "We are only asking that we be allowed to do this in our own context, which is admittedly different to that of most of the world."

Thank you!

A very big thank you to everyone who contributed to the services.

In London, to Professor Marilyn McCord Adams who presided the Revd Wilma Roest for creating the liturgy; to the musicians: Andrew Charity, organist, who arranged the music, Richard Coward who also played the organ; Paul Collier and the brass ensemble; and Richard Lloyd-Morgan and Alison Young who sang so beautifully; to Giles Goddard and the stewards; to the Revds Nick Holtham and Liz Russell, clergy at St Martin's, for helping, advising and participating

In Reddish to Bishop Stephen Lowe who presided, the Revd Nigel Hawley for hosting the service; Clive Larsen, Jean Mayland and the team who created the liturgy; and Ursula Hay for stewards and so much else.

And finally, to Sally Rogers, Nigel Greenwood, and star of the preparations, Brenda Harrison, who worked many, many additional hours to keep the show on the road!

Tape and CD of Bishop Gene's address

St Martin-in-the-Fields recorded most of the service and Bishop Gene's address. We hope to have tapes and possibly CDs available for sale at a truly crazy £5 each, including p&p.

If you would like to order a copy, please send your money to the National Office, indicating whether CD or tape is preferred.

Anglican Latvian priest dismissed by Lutherans

The Rev Dr Juris Calitis is an Anglican priest and vicar of the Church of England chapel of St Saviour's in Riga, and was also pastor of the city's Reformation Evangelical Lutheran Church. Because he conducted an ecumenical service following the march celebrating "Riga Pride 2005" on July 23, he was removed from the ranks of the clergy of the Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church [LELC] on November 16.

The march had turned ugly when the approximately 100 marchers were pelted with eggs and tomatoes and threatened with violence during the country's first gay pride march by several thousand onlookers. The march had concluded at St Saviour's with an ecumenical prayer service led by Dr Calitis, who later said the atmosphere outside the Church reminded him of the anti-Jewish pogroms of the war years.

The LELC hierarchy, led by Archbishop Janis Vanags, condemned the ecumenical service and directed Dr Calitis to explain himself by November 16. Dr Calitis declined, and was "excommunicated". A statement from his Lutheran parish charged Latvia's Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches with being "central in provoking thousands of lynch-willing protesters to come out to the streets" in opposition to the gay-pride march, prompting Dr Calitis to offer his support.

A spokesman for the Bishop in Europe, Dr Geoffrey Rowell, said the Church of England supported Dr Calitis, who remained in place at St Saviour's, but declined further comment.

"Listening Process" appointment

The Secretary General of the Anglican Communion, the Revd Canon Kenneth Kearon, announced on 2 November that the Revd Canon Philip Groves has been appointed as the facilitator of the "Listening Process" for the Communion. Canon Groves will fulfil the task defined by the 1998 Lambeth Conference, as setting up "a means of monitoring the work done on the subject of human sexuality in the Communion".

Canon Groves was Team Vicar in Melton Mowbray. He was a Tutor at St Philip's College, Kongwa, Tanzania from 1993 - 1998 and is a Trustee of the Church Mission Society, a Council Member at St John's College, Nottingham and a Canon of All Saints Cathedral, Mpwapwa, Tanzania, married and has 3 children.

In a letter to the Primates of the Anglican Communion Canon Kearon said, "[the] Listening Process, which has been requested on many occasions, can now begin in earnest. I am sure [Canon Groves] will wish to contact each of you shortly."

Changing Attitude has written and asked for a meeting with Canon Groves to offer our resources and experience of 10 years of listening in CofE dioceses.

No Lambeth invite to ECUSA and Canada

Dr Tom Wright, Bishop of Durham, in a letter to the Church Times, maintained the US and Canadian Churches cannot expect to be invited to the next Lambeth Conference unless they repent, arguing that they "can hardly claim the right to be part of a body that they have so obviously disregarded".

The Church in Wales Bishops' statement on homosexuality

The Bishops of the Church in Wales recognise that its members hold a wide range of views on a variety of ethical, social and theological matters. One such issue is the Church's approach to homosexuality.

For some time, we have recognised that there are honest and legitimate differences on this subject. The church needs to engage prayerfully in this debate with humility, generosity of spirit, reflection on biblical witness, mature thought and careful listening. The harsh and condemnatory tone, which at times has coloured this debate, is unacceptable.

We uphold the traditional Anglican emphasis on Scripture read in the light of reason and tradition. We recognise that the interpretation of Scripture is in itself an area of divergence among Christians. We are at pains to emphasise the need to respect one another and remind the Church that everyone is created in the image and likeness of God. Sexuality is only one aspect of a person's humanity.

As with many issues there, exists a wide range of Scriptural interpretation within the Christian church. On same-sex relationships we acknowledge that the following fairly reflect the range of views held within the Church in Wales.

Some people, reading the Scriptures with integrity, reach the conclusion that the only proper context for sexual activity is marriage between a man and a woman in life-long union. Homosexual practice of any kind is therefore rejected.

Others, reading the Scriptures with integrity, adopt a more sympathetic understanding of homosexuality, but would not at present wish the Church to sanction homosexual practice.

Others, reading the Scriptures with integrity, conclude that orientation and practice are to be distinguished and that the Church can welcome same sex relationships provided they are celibate.

Others again, reading the Scriptures with integrity, conclude that the Church cannot dismiss as intrinsically disordered permanent and committed same-sex relationships; they believe that through their internal mutual-ity and support, these bring creativity, generosity and love into the lives of those within them.

Others, reading the Scriptures with integrity, conclude, in the light of a developing understanding of the nature of humanity and sexuality, that the time has arrived for the Church to affirm committed homosexual relationships.

The challenge and call of our discipleship is to live, worship and work together in all our diversity. Rejecting all forms of stigmatisation we commit ourselves to listening to people whose sexual orientation may be different from our own.

he was gay. "I have loved the Anglican Church all my life," Mr. MacIyalla said. "The church leaders can try to claim that we don't exist, but we gay Anglicans of Nigeria will stand up to say we are here."

Church of Nigeria Press Release

And then, in the week after Christmas, Canon Akintunde Popoola, Director of Communications, dropped his bombshell. He published two linked press releases on the Church of Nigeria web site attacking the reputation of Davis Macllyalla.

The first warned the general public of the activities of some fraudulent personalities who exploit Christian love and the good name of the Church in a bid to defraud people, especially foreigners of money. The warning was linked directly with Davis, describing a situation where "a supposed knight collects money to organise homosexual meetings that only take place on sponsored news reports." There are three fallacies here. Davis is not a fraudulent personality but a real person, he is a real Knight of the Church, and the General Meeting really took place.

The second release warned specifically of the activities of Davis Macllyalla and made a claim and a series of allegations:

- That Canon Popoola has searched the records of more than 10,000 local parishes for the past two years and found that Davis is not registered in any of them and that over 6000 priests had been contacted and none recognised him as an active member their parish.
- Davis is the same person who defrauded the then dying Bishop of Otukpo under the guise of marrying his daughter.
- Davis closed down his own C & S church and took up an appointment with his then proposed father-in-law
- Davis fraudulently obtained some church documents from the Bishop on his death in mid 2003.
- Davis broke off the engagement and stole large sums of money including staff salaries.
- Davis uses the pretence that he was sacked and victimised for his homosexuality as a guise to further defraud unsuspecting foreigners.

Canon Popoola closed with a warning: anyone relating to Davis Macllyalla does so at his or her own risk.

Evidence

Changing Attitude has evidence to satisfy us that the details of Davis's life which Canon Popoola questions are, as Davis has maintained, true. We have put each of the allegations to him and he has denied each one of them. Canon Popoola has made the very serious allegations on a public, international web site. We have asked him to provide the evidence on which the allegations are based and he has thus far failed to do so. A page dedicated to countering the accusations, with pictures, is now available on our web site. We are consulting a firm of solicitors in London with a view to taking action against the Church of Nigeria on a no win, no fee basis.

The story is continuing to develop as we go to press. Canon Akintunde Popoola telephoned and spoke with Davis Macllyalla on 19 January 2006. He said it was the people in Otukpo who had given him the information on which his allegations were based, and he wanted Davis to go to Otukpo and clear his name. The Diocese claimed that Davis left with something approaching a million Naira. Davis continues to deny this outright.

Canon Popoola would like Davis to stop the Changing Attitude Network and stop the members coming out as gay. He said the Church is not interested in persecuting Davis.

And finally ... Congratulations!

To Davis Macllyalla, for his courageous work and for celebrating his 34th birthday on 19th January.

Archbishop Rowan R5 live interview

Rowan Williams was interviewed by Simon Mayo on Radio 5 live. In a long interview, Archbishop Rowan was asked about the reports of the Changing Attitude Network in Nigeria. He said:

Rowan: There are all sorts of complicated questions about the ethics of same-sex behaviour. What I think there is no question about, is the right of homosexual people to tolerance, civil rights, and public respect, from Christians as from everybody else. And it's very difficult when the questions - these complex questions of ethics - get tangled in with a whole set of cultural prejudices. I hope we can pull those apart a bit.

Simon: So your message to these gay Anglicans in Nigeria would be: 'Hang on, keep talking'? Because it doesn't sound as though Archbishop Akinola even is prepared to accept that they exist.

Rowan: My message, I think, would be: 'They have a right to be listened to, to be respected as human beings, as in any culture.'

Council of Anglican Provinces of Africa

The Third Anglican Global South to South Encounter took place at Ain El-Sukhna by the Red Sea in Egypt from 25-30 October 2005.

The final communiqué was lengthy, referred repeatedly to the supreme authority of Scripture and attacked parts of the Anglican Communion "weakened by unchecked revisionist teaching and practices which undermine the divine authority of the Holy Scripture. The supreme authority is the whole Word of God and the boundary of family identity ends within the boundary of the authentic Word of God."

Questions to Dr Rowan Williams

The delegates were joined by the Archbishop of Canterbury for some of the time. Following a lecture, Dr Williams answered questions from the conference in a number of areas.

Same-sex unions

On sexuality, he affirmed that the church had not been persuaded of the acceptability of same sex unions. These questions, though, would not go away. "Theologians will go on discussing this and it will not be possible to stop them."

Canonical authority

On the question of authority within the Anglican Communion, he said that he had no desire to assume further powers: "Since I do not have canonical power outside my own province, my freedom is limited. I do not have authority over the canons and constitutions of another province... I don't want to be a kind of pope, solving the problems of every province."

Windsor report

On the Windsor report, he said that it was too early to come to a judgement as to whether or not the responses of ECUSA and the Anglican Church of Canada satisfied the terms of the report: "I don't think we could say that they have satisfied in a simple and direct way what Windsor asked because that process is still continuing and will continue. Archbishop Eames gave an optimistic reading of this; I'm waiting to see."

Networks of dissenting parishes

On the status of the networks of dissenting parishes in the United States and Canada, he said that he was happy to recognise them as part of the Anglican Communion: "There is no doubt in my mind that these networks are full members of the Anglican Communion; that is to say that their bishops, their clergy and their people are involved with the Communion which I share with them, which we all share with them."

Financial Challenge

Changing Attitude has reached another critical moment in its life. We have just successfully celebrated 10 years of achievement. We have a vision for the future which we set out in the last newsletter.

For the last 3 years we have received very generous grants from the Big Lottery (which ended on December 31) and Comic Relief and Northern Rock (which end on May 31). No major funding bodies are now prioritising lesbian and gay issues. We are making applications for specific projects to funders, but alone they will not give us enough to employ staff.

We have enough money to pay Brenda and Nigel until the end of May. Sally is being paid until the end of March, to implement a strategy for self-support among the diocesan groups and contacts. There is no money to pay Colin. The subscriptions and donations from supporters, plus gift aid recovered, should generate £14,000 in 2006. Last year we spent £137,000.

The strategy

The Trustees have a strategy for fund raising from grant-making bodies, an increased supporter base, donations and funding for our international work in the Communion. We are all, staff and trustees alike, committed to the future of Changing Attitude and believe we can contribute in a unique way to the future of a church, fully inclusive of LGBT people.

We have a bottom-line strategy for the future. The groups will continue, but without the same level of support and resources available at present. Colin is willing to support himself from his own resources for at least the next 3 years if necessary to promote our work in England and in General Synod and to respond to our Communion-wide responsibilities (but he would prefer to be paid!). Brenda has offered to volunteer one day a week to maintain the office. Nigel is happy to offer half a day each week to support diocesan groups beyond the end of his contract, on a voluntary basis. Further offers of help from volunteers would enable us to retain more of our current resources.

That is the worst-case scenario. Our appeal to bishops resulted in one donation of £1,000 and a total of £2,000. In January, two new members donated £500 on joining, equal to an earlier donation of £500. Gifts at this level make a huge difference to our ability to continue engaging the Church in the most creative way, doing what Changing Attitude has learnt to do so well at General Synod, Diocesan and grass roots level. We ask you to consider adding a generous donation to your annual subscription.

We have retained subscriptions at the same level for 3 years. We never want to exclude anyone from involvement with Changing Attitude for financial reasons. We will be making specific appeals for projects during the year, and you may want to send additional money in response to them.

The challenge to you

If every supporter could encourage one more person to join, that would double our direct income. If diocesan groups could encourage more local members to become national supporters, that would more than double our income. We have the potential to become much more self-sufficient. That was our goal for the end of Big Lottery funding, and we didn't achieve it. Now that we have reached a moment of crisis, the challenge to you becomes acute and direct.

Please commit yourself to give what you can afford so that together we continue to transform our Church. You will find a subscription renewal form with this newsletter.

Civil Partnerships

Anglicans do it!

Supporters of Changing Attitude and LGCM, lesbian and gay, lay and ordained, have been among the first couples announcing their intention to register.

We extend our congratulations to Sigrid and Sylvia Rutishauser-James who were the first to make history in Macclesfield Register Office at 9.30am on 21 December 2005 when they registered their partnership and celebrated with 60 guests afterwards. Sylvia is a past trustee of CA, and they have both been key participants in evangelical lesbian and gay circles for many years.

Sylvia and Sigrid first met while working in Uganda 40 years ago and have lived together for 25 years. Sylvia said: "Nothing has changed but everything has changed! You could say the law has caught up with us because we made our vows to each other decades ago – now we get to do the legal bit. I have always had to fill in forms and tick a box but my box has not been there. I can now fill in a form and it gives me a validated place in society." Sylvia added: "In the therapy world, in which I work, a sense of belonging is held to be absolutely fundamental to an individual's well-being and their ability to be creative. The paradox is that belonging actually sets you free and for me that sense of belonging has far too often been elusive."

Sigrid and Sylvia were followed by Christopher Wardale and Malcolm Macourt. Both, I think founder-members of LGCM, they were also among the first to register their civil union in Newcastle on December 21, and followed the civil registration with a church service of blessing at which the former bishop of Durham, David Jenkins spoke. Chris is vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Darlington, Co Durham and he and Malcolm have known David Jenkins for over 10 years, so praying and celebrating with them was very personal for Bishop Jenkins. He said beforehand: "I will of course be condoning anyone who gives a blessing." He is an Honorary Assistant Bishop of Ripon and Leeds.

By the time you receive this newsletter, David Page, Vicar of St Barnabas, Clapham Common and chair of CA Trustees, will have registered his partnership with his partner of 30 years, a retired teacher and priest. In a Church Times interview, David said: "Of course, we asked ourselves the questions: do we want a big public ceremony, and would a political act be helpful? In the end, we decided it would not help a great deal. We also decided that we could not ask from the Church something it could not give — as officially it cannot bless same-sex relationships. We will have the ceremony, and then let everyone know, including the Bishop, that it has happened."

Apart from the practicalities David said that it also involved the public perception: "There will be an enormous difference to how people generally perceive gay couples." The Bishop of Southwark, Dr Tom Butler, and the Bishop of Kingston, are both aware of David's registration.

Paul Collier, CA supporter, Anglican chaplain at Goldsmiths College and member of General Synod, has also set a date for his civil-partnership ceremony. He and his partner plan a quiet ceremony at the register office, probably followed by a private event at home with some kind of blessing. He said: "It means a huge amount to have that kind of official acknowledgement of a relationship."

Stephen Coles, CA member and Vicar of St Thomas's, Finsbury Park, and also a member of General Synod urged priests like himself, who might be considering entering a civil partnership, to proceed in a thoughtful way. "We need to try and hold together what we have in England and the Communion." Stephen said

that he is on record as stating that if a bishop asked him about whether he was celibate, he would go straight to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Revd Giles Goddard, Team Rector of St Peter's, Walworth, and secretary of Inclusive Church, told Church Times that he might consider entering a civil partnership in the future. He saw the legislation as a milestone: "I woke up and thought: 'We are there now.' Giles foresaw problems, particularly for priests openly in civil partnerships who wanted to move dioceses. He hoped that the Bishops' statement was a work in progress, that the celibacy requirement would be dropped, "and the Church could stop obsessing about sex".

Bishops react

Several bishops made statements or issued letters to clergy.

St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Changing Attitude patron Richard Lewis, Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich told the East Anglian Daily Times that gay clergy "are amongst the best we have, and I am daily thankful for them. Instead of bickering about what is thought to be wrong in terms of human relationships, for men and women and same-sex couples, it would be good if there was some affirmation of the things that are good and worth celebrating." He backed the civil-partnership legislation and urged people to affirm gay clergy. "Gay people are a very important part of the Church, and the Church actually needs them if it is to understand and relate to the world at large."

The law on civil partnerships was correcting an injustice: "There's a real sense of putting something right, and I welcome that. I support the civil partnership because it does affirm a human relationship, and gives rights in terms of next of kin, financially, that was not possible before. The thing that really sticks in the throats of a number of people is coming to terms with the fact that, for many gay people, entering into civil partnership is about a long-term committed and loving relationship. Whether people find that understandable or acceptable actually is their problem," he said.

Durham

In his letter to clergy, Bishop Tom Wright of Durham said: "I shall be very sorry if members of the clergy, by holding services of blessing or near equivalent, force me to make disciplinary enquiries. If clergy decide to enter a civil partnership they are thereby putting me in a new situation in which my own integrity as diocesan bishop, and my collegial position within the House of Bishops, strongly suggest that I should follow the process thus recommended." But he concluded: "I fully understand that some people feel bound in conscience to disobey the clear and official teaching of the Church on these matters."

Lichfield

Jonathan Gledhill, Bishop of Lichfield, issued advice to clergy and churches in the diocese in relation to the Civil Partnerships Act which first highlights the key points from the House of Bishops Pastoral Statement. Jonathan writes that, "it is clear that the media are very happy to misreport Civil Partnerships as being equal to marriage. Even the BBC are sometimes using the terms as if they are interchangeable." What will be news to Jonathan is that many gay and lesbian couples are equating it to marriage, describe their ceremony as a marriage and believe themselves to be living as Mr and Mr or Mrs and Mrs.

Jonathan Gledhill continues: "The House of Bishops decided that, given the ambiguity in the concept of civil partnerships, it would not be right to produce an authorized public liturgy in connection with their registration. It is the ambiguous nature of Civil Partnerships which guided the House of Bishops in the statement's attitude to clergy. And the way this section of our statement has been reported in the media confirms the way in which Civil Partnerships are being viewed. The House of Bishops has NOT said

that: "gay clergy can marry so long as they remain celibate". What we have said is that entering into a Civil Partnership is not intrinsically incompatible with holy orders. This is because Civil Partnerships are NOT marriage."

Rochester

The Bishop Of Rochester issued a letter to clergy the day before the new Changing Attitude group held their launch meeting (see group news, p 7). It is highly critical of the House of Bishops statement.

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali criticised the studied ambiguity of the Bill with its "careful mimicking of marriage" which undermines "the distinctiveness and fundamental importance to society of the relationship of marriage." The Church's response should have been, in terms of the Human Rights Act, to derogate from the legislation on the grounds that its ambiguity was not consistent with fundamental Christian teaching on marriage.

Because of the ambiguity in the legislation, the House of Bishops "has been unable to say that civil partnerships entered into under this legislation would be inconsistent with Christian teaching. This is, and will continue be, a recipe for confusion."

He says the "Statement has given bishops the task of ensuring that clergy who enter into these partnerships adhere to church teaching in the area of sexuality without giving the bishops the clear means to do so. In the days to come, this step will both severely test the Church's discipline and stretch pastoral relationships to breaking point."

By "declaring that lay people who enter such partnerships should not be asked about the nature of their relationship, it has compromised pastoral discipline at the local level." He said this 'not wanting to exclude from the fellowship of the Church' flies "in the face of clear biblical teaching and the unanimous practice of the Church down the ages." He "will continue to support clergy and other ministers who seek to bring the fullness of the faith to bear on the pastoral situations they encounter. I know they do this with the greatest sensitivity and care."

Who is in control of our lives?

Given the statements issued by Jonathan Gledhill and Michael Nazir-Ali, there is understandable caution in their dioceses, and in others where bishops have expressed similar views, on the part of lesbian and gay clergy who would like to register their partnership. The bishops, as Jonathan and Michael's anxiety in restating or challenging the House of Bishop's line reveals, are not in control of the situation. Gradually, lesbian and gay Anglicans are taking control of our lives and destinies. We know we have waited for this moment for years (many of us) and we are not going to be intimidated by bishops who think they know better than us what is good for us, good for the Church and acceptable to God. We have known all our adult Christian lives, through prayer and listening to God, what we have long desired, and we are not ultimately going to be thwarted by anxious bishops.

I write this knowing that Jonathan and other bishops may well read it, given the newsletter is sent to all bishops. I was amazed at the way the media reported the new ceremonies on December 21. I hadn't expected such an overwhelming and positive response. I have conducted my first ceremony following a civil registration. The couple described their ceremony as a marriage. That reflected their level of commitment and the highest of values they put on registering their partnership.

(Report compiled by Colin Coward)

Changing Attitude issued a "Rough Guide to the Civil Partnership Law" on our website: www.changingattitude.org

Changing Attitude Nigeria

The dramatic developments since Christmas for the CA Network in Nigeria have attracted attention around the world.

General Meeting

Changing Attitude Network (Nigeria), (CAN) held its first General Meeting in the Moca Hall of the Arts and Culture Centre in Abuja, the capital of Nigeria and where the headquarters of the Anglican Church are located. CA England had been providing Davis Macl-yalla, director of the Network, with assistance in organising a first General Meeting for the group.

The three-day event began on Friday 25 November 2005. The organising group chose the theme, "Coming out of our closet", to encourage their members to go back and begin to tell their families about their sexuality. More practically, the meeting was aimed at devising strategies that would enable the group to create the necessary impact within Nigerian society. Davis Macl-yalla, the director of CAN, said the meeting was to enable members deliberate on how to come out of their closets and let the members of their various families know who they are.



Among those who attended the meeting were Dare Odumoye, CEO of Alliance Rights, Mr. Okey, President of Support Project in Nigeria (SPIN), Bisi Alimi, the first openly gay man to appear on a National Television Authority (NTA) network programme and Joel Nana, another gay activist, as well as CAN members and group leaders. Members were drawn from all parts of the country, including Lagos, Ibadan, Calabar, Enugu, Jos, the North, Port Harcourt and FCT.

In his address to the meeting, Davis Mac-lyalla expressed surprise at the number of those who responded to the clarion call to attend. He disclosed that he refused to concede to the pressure to hold the meeting at night because they are not "the people of the dark," adding that Archbishop Akinola was not a better Christian than any of them.

Dare Odumoye, founder of Nigeria's first gay rights organization, Alliance Rights, commented that homosexuality is relatively common in Nigeria, particularly in the military which dominated the country's politics for decades. "It has always been in our culture in Nigeria," he said.

A message of goodwill from the Rt Rev Gene Robinson, Bishop of New Hampshire, was read, and a message from the Revd Colin Coward, Director of Changing Attitude England.

Nigeria Sun Report

CAN had arranged for a reporter from the Nigeria Sun to attend the meeting and for a report to be published. On Monday December 5, 2005, under the headline 'Amazing Nigerian gays and lesbians hold extraordinary meeting', they began the article 'You may turn your nose up in scorn or shrug in shock. But it's real:

Gays and lesbians are not only here, they have vowed to establish a firm foothold in the country, daring anyone to stop them if they can'.

Composition of the gathering

The Sun report said the group comprised mainly young men and women. Some even came in exotic cars, while a few rode on Okada (commercial vehicle). The majority of them were simply dressed in jeans and T-shirts. They welcomed one another with a hug and sometimes with a kiss. Some even felt excited at the sight of any of their long-lost loved ones. In fact, the same way a boy would welcome his lover-girl was the same way they welcomed one another. They all felt excited about the meeting and praised Mr. Macl-yalla for putting the event together, a meeting that gave them the opportunity, for the first time, to converge at a venue.

Nigerian Sunday Vanguard Report

The Sunday Vanguard published a double-page report by Emmanuel Ulahi on Sunday 4 December 2005 under the headline 'Gays, lesbians unveil selves: We want society to accept us'. The editorial attitude was hostile to lesbian and gay people and began with a restatement of 'traditional' Christian teaching.

The report was mostly about the background to the meeting. They reported that Archbishop Peter Akinola has acquired a worldwide reputation as one of, if not the most virulent critic of the involvement of homosexuals in the clergy. But despite condemnation from religious institutions and Nigerians, the country's constitution does not condemn or state that people with such sexual interest cannot exist. The problem is the disposition of the society to such sexual behaviour.

The Vanguard said their investigations show that all this might be likely to change soon as recent developments indicate that gays and lesbians are ready to come out from their shells and be known and appreciated by society as they are in the western world. However, only time can tell if they will succeed. Further investigation revealed that such people have already made up their minds to live their normal lives notwithstanding the disposition of the society to their plight.

In an interview, Davis Macl-yalla said Archbishop Akinola has been dishing out tissues of lies to the Nigerian government and the outside communities that gays and lesbians do not really exist in Nigeria. He stressed that contrary to Akinola's claims, most of those gathered at the General Meeting were born into the Anglican Church and that some of their parents held responsible positions in the church.

New York Times report

The New York Times published a report of the General Meeting on 18 December written by Lydia Polgreen and reprinted in the weekly digest of world news published by the Telegraph.

Having visited a grandiose church event in one part of Abuja, she said that at the other end of town, in a small clubhouse behind a cultural centre, a decidedly more downscale and secretive gathering of Anglicans got under way: the first national meeting of a group called Changing Attitude Nigeria. Its unassuming name, and the secrecy accompanying its meeting - the location was given to a visitor only after many assurances that it would not be revealed to anyone else - underscored the radical nature of the group's mission: to fight for acceptance of homosexuals in the Anglican Church in Nigeria.

Mr. Mac-lyalla said he started the group after being fired from his job as a teacher at an Anglican school when the principal learned

St Edmundsbury & Ipswich

Convenors: Julie Clifford, 28 Coplestone Road, Ipswich, IP4 5HB
tel: 01473 718055 email: julie.clifford@ntlworld.com
Rev Andrew Dotchin
The Rectory, 176 Fircroft Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP1 6PS
tel: 01473 741389
email: andrew.dotchin@stedmundsbury.anglican.org

Next meeting:
Saturday, 11 March – public launch event, details to be confirmed

Southwell

Contacts: Rev David Swain TSSF, 77 Trent Boulevard, West
Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 5BE
tel: 0115 983 1222 email: dnswain77@aol.com
Sr Rosemary CHN tel: 0115 978 5101
email: rosemarychn@yahoo.co.uk

There are now plans to form a group for the diocese and arrangements are going ahead for an initial meeting in February. Please contact David or Rosemary for further details.

Wakefield/Bradford

Convenor: The Revd Chris Bullimore,
The Rectory, 14 Grange Drive, Emley, Huddersfield, HD8 9SF
tel: 01924 849161
email: JCBullimor@aol.com

Two joint meetings have been scheduled with the Ripon & Leeds Group for 2006:

Thursday, 19 January, 7.30pm at Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds, when the Revd Ray Gaston (Vicar of All Hallows) will lead a discussion on "What is an Inclusive Church?"
Tuesday, 16 May, 7.30pm at Dewsbury Minster, when the Revd Dr Kevin Ward from the Department of Theology & Religious Studies at Leeds University will speak on "African Theology & Tradition".

It is also hoped to arrange a further joint meeting in the summer to consider issues in human sexuality from the Roman Catholic perspective.

Worcester

Convenor: Rev. David Rogers, St. Leonard's Vicarage, Beoley,
Redditch, B98 9AR Tel: 01527 63976
email: davidrogers@santiago.plus.com

York

Convenors:
Rev Jean Mayland, Minster Cottage, 51 Sands Lane, Barmston,
E Yorks, YO25 8PO
tel: 01262 468709 email: jean.mayland@fish.co.uk
Rev Ashley Wilson, St Oswald's House, West Rounton, Northalerton,
DL6 2LW tel: 01609 882401 email: ashley@dunelm.org.uk

On the Way Forward Together

Changing Attitude has been invited to participate in a conference at St George's House, Windsor, being hosted by the Bishops of Liverpool and Chelmsford, from 18 to 20 June 2006. Individuals are being invited from different traditions in the Church to engage with people of different and opposing views about the issue of "Human Sexuality in the Church".

Diocesan Contacts

Carlisle

Contact: Neil Steadman, 9 Newlands Road, Carlisle, Cumbria CA2 4JB Phone: 0122 8 546229

Chichester

Contact: Barry North, Diocesan Church House, 211 New Church Road, Hove, East Sussex, BN3 4ED
Tel: 01273 421021 email: barry.north@diochi.org.uk

Exeter

Contact: Dr Deryck Laming
The Elms, Crabb Lane, Exeter, Devon EX2 9JD
Tel: 01392 273774 Email: geodev@eclipse.co.uk

Peterborough

Contact: Dr Natalie K Watson, 125 Mayor's Walk, Peterborough, PE3 6EZ Tel: 01733 561158
Email: nkwatson@fish.co.uk

Portsmouth

Contact: Peter Watkins, 7 Crofton Way, Swanmore, Southampton SO32 2RF Tel: 01489 894789
Email: peterrwatkins@peterrwatkins.fsnet.co.uk

Salisbury

Contact: Colin Coward
6 Norney Bridge, Mill Road, Marston, Devizes SN10 5SF
Tel: 01380 724908 Email: colin@changingattitude.org

Sheffield

Contact: Mike Wagstaff, Diocesan Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham S6 1BL Tel: 0170 9309 136

Southwark

Contact: Chris Hansen, Tel: 07899 908660
email: chrishansenhomes@btinternet.com
The group is no longer meeting, but Chris Hansen remains the contact person.

International Events

Changing Attitude hopes to be represented at a number of international events this year.

March 27 to April 3 2006
The world conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association ILGA, being held in Geneva.

May 25 to 28 2006
European Forum of Lesbian and Gay Christian Groups meeting in Riga, Latvia. Davis Maclyalla representing Nigeria and Chris Sen-teeza representing Uganda have also been invited to attend and speak.

June 13 to 21 2006
75th General Convention of the Episcopal Church of the United States meeting in Columbus, Ohio

Changing Attitude Diocesan Groups

Birmingham

Convenors:
Catherine Bennett email: c.a.bham@blueyonder.co.uk
Dr Nicola Slee tel. 0121 441 1130
email: nicola_slee@hotmail.com

Nicola has taken over from Stephen Barton as co-convenor of the group. Many thanks to her, and to Stephen for all his hard work and support.

Next meetings:
Thursdays, 21 February, 23 March, 27 April
Tuesdays, 23 May, 27 June, 18 July all at
7.45pm in St Philip's Cathedral, Colmore Row, Birmingham.

Bradford

See Wakefield on page 8

Bristol

Convenor: James Wilson
St Gregory's Vicarage, Filton Road, Horfield, Bristol, BS7 0PD
Tel: 0117 969 2839 email: revjameswilson@aol.com

A number of supporters met with Sally on Wednesday, 13 July, to review the current situation and plan for the future. They agreed to contact existing and potential supporters with a view to organising a public event, and James agreed to be the convenor for the time being.

Canterbury

Acting Co-ordinator: Tony Crowe
9 Park Avenue, WHITSTABLE, Kent, CT5 2DD
Tel: 01227 273046 email: ailsaandtonyc@aol.com

Nine of us, four men and five ladies, met at the Caffe Uno in Canterbury on Friday, 24 November, for a pleasant evening meal.

Our **next meeting** will be at Gill & Sue's at Littlebourne Mill on **17 February 2006, 7-9pm**, for a shared supper. We will be bringing suitable fillings for baked potatoes!

Tony Crowe

Chelmsford

Convenor: The Rev'd John-Francis Friendship,
119 London Road, Romford, Essex, RM7 9QD
Tel. 01708 741256
email: francis.jon@btopenworld.com

Ten of us gathered on Saturday, 10 December, for a Eucharist at St. Andrew's Church, Romford, before lunch at The Rectory. After brief introductions we recognised that we prefer to meet for specific reasons and, whilst we are in a supportive role to each other, we primarily exist to help change the attitude of the churches in our Diocese as we work for Lesbian and Gay affirmation. It was also realised that many gay and lesbian people exist in isolation and fear.

Sally spoke of developments nationally and announced that some major funding would cease early next year. Her position would not continue after the Spring. She will be seeking to discuss with Groups as to how they will continue.

The main points to come out of our discussions were as follows:

- 1 We would work towards hosting a Diocesan Event on 'Civil Partnerships and the Local Church'. This will in-

volve setting out the legal, theological and sociological aspects of such Partnerships and seek to prepare people to deal with the effects of such Partnerships in the local context. It was agreed that we would spend our next Meeting working on this with the intention of holding such an event in the early Summer. It was suggested that we invite, amongst others, the Rev. Andrew Knowles, Diocesan Canon Theologian to our next Meeting as well as seeking someone who is familiar with the legal aspects of CP's.

Such an event would also enable us to circulate all the clergy and PCC Secretaries in the Diocese as well as alerting the Diocese to our existence and activities.

- 2 It was agreed that we would write to our Diocesan asking for a meeting with him in order to discuss our contribution to the life of the Diocese.
- 3 Chris spoke of a number of national and International initiatives and introduced IDAHO Day (International Day Against Homophobia), the initiative of Louis-Georges Tin. IDAHO Day was launched in 2005 and is observed on May 17th. For more information visit: www.idahomophobia.org

It was generally felt that Saturday was a good day to meet and it was agreed that we would alternate celebrations of the Eucharist with different priests presiding.

John-Francis Friendship

Next meetings:
Saturday, 25 March, 2006, 12 noon – 2pm, starting with the Eucharist at St Andrew's, Romford, and then at the Rectory, 119 London Road, Romford.
Saturday, 8 April, 10.30am – meeting with the Bishop of Chelmsford
For further information, contact John-Francis Friendship.

Chester

Convenor: Irene Pendleton, 55 Carlton Close, Parkgate, Neston, Cheshire, CH64 6RB
tel. 0151 336 5566 email: imp@fish.co.uk

Next meetings:
Wednesday, 18 January, 7pm – post-Christmas party at Chester Retreat House, Abbey Square, Chester. All welcome. Contact Irene if interested.
Saturday, 1 April, 10am-4pm – Learning to hear, listening and hearing others. Speaker: Tricia Munn, Chester. Venue tba.

Durham

See Newcastle, p 7

Guildford

Convenor: Brenda Harrison
"Lanza", Portesbery Road, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 3TD
Tel: 01276 24893 email: brenda@changingattitude.org

Leicester

Convenor: Barry Naylor, 1 Kirby Road, Leicester, LE3 6BD
tel. 0116 299 9828 or 0116 262 0788
Email: barry99@btinternet.com
Sally Beazley, tel: 0116 286 6395

We are looking forward to a meeting with the Bishop of Leicester in January which will focus on pastoral issues. In March we welcome Jeff Heskins to discuss partnership blessings and the experience of gay clergy in partnerships following the publication of

his book "Face to Face". More details of both meetings are available from the convenors.

Lichfield

Convenor: Jenni Latham 2 Fireclay Drive, St Georges, TELFORD, Shropshire, TF2 9UH email: jaljen@hotmail.com tel: 01952 614136; mob 07879 233488 (Honorary Chair): Sally Chapman, 2 Foley Church Close, Streetley, Sutton Coldfield, B74 3JX tel: 0121 580 8303 email: sally@hennypenny.fsife.co.uk

Lincoln

Convenors: Tracey Byrne, 157 Carholme Road, Lincoln LN1 1RU tel: 01522 532034 email: traceybyrne@connectfree.co.uk Jonathan Thacker, St George's Vicarage, 87 Ferry Road, Scunthorpe, North Lincolnshire, DN15 8LY tel: 01724 843328 email: jon@han195.freeseve.co.uk

The group has continued to meet monthly, and has welcomed a number of new members over the autumn. On 10 September, David Margaron led an excellent morning session on touch and Indian head massage, drawing on his experiences on retreat in Spain earlier in the summer, and exploring the theology of touch in a range of different contexts. This was followed by a chance to try out some 'hands on' head massage, which finished the morning on a high note and led us nicely into lunch in Lincoln.

On 22 October members met for a social film evening, watching 'In and Out' together. The evening was greatly enhanced by one member's unexpected flair with the ice cream scoop, and another evening is planned in January - see below.

Tracey and Max have been working with Lincolnshire's registration service to develop a range of ceremonies for civil partnerships. This has been a really enjoyable opportunity to work together, and to discover just how much shared ground we have with people who would probably consider themselves to be 'outside' the church. Max drew on his experiences at Stonewall in leading a morning on civil partnerships on 12 November, explaining how the legislation developed through parliament, and how we have arrived at the current position. This opened a wider discussion about the House of Bishops' response, and the difficult position in which a number of members of the group found themselves. At the same time, others in the group were keen to acknowledge the support they felt they had received from our own diocesan bishop.

The year finished with an Advent Eucharist at Edward King House on 10 December, written and led by Pat McCulloch. It was a real treat to be able to enjoy some advent material, especially for those who felt overwhelmed by an early Christmas in their home parishes. Pat encouraged us to reflect on themes of waiting and preparation, and what advent means to us as LGB people, yearning for change and justice and fulfilment. The liturgy was followed, in traditional Anglican style, by a buffet supper and it was good to see around 30 members and friends, especially given the very dispersed nature of our diocese.

As we enter the new year, we are exploring the way ahead for the group. The 'party manners' are beginning to wear off as people get to know one another, and to enjoy spending time together, and given the inevitable isolation within a diocese like ours, it feels important to continue to provide space for social and networking events. At the same time, we don't want to lose sight of the purpose of the group - to bring about change - and so we have been planning the most effective use of our time and talents. We are planning to produce a leaflet to distribute to parishes, to raise the profile of the group, and also to use 'Frankly Speaking', the excellent resource produced by Sheffield diocese, with parish and other

groups. We had hoped to launch this at a whole day event in February, but this has been pushed back slightly to allow more careful and considered planning, and to utilise the excellent new diocesan newspaper to promote the day. We are excited about the opportunities this will provide for people to engage in considered discussion in a non-threatening environment, and also to reach people across the diocese who may not be in a position to attend our meetings.

Plans for January therefore reflect a mix of the social & practical:

On **Saturday 14 January** we will be holding another film evening, this time to watch *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

On **Saturday 28 January from 10.30am in Lincoln** we will be holding a planning meeting to map out activities for the next six months. In particular we need to decide:

- 1 format and production of a leaflet for the group, and the best way to get this into churches etc
- 2 how to proceed with a launch for 'Frankly Speaking': Bishop John has indicated that he would be interested in supporting us and lending profile to this excellent resource for use by groups in the diocese.

Please remember that we are hoping to support our friends in Sheffield diocese in producing 'Frankly Speaking 2' and would welcome personal stories from those who feel able to share in this way. Please let me know if you'd like to be involved and I can give you Nancy Johnson or Mike Wagstaff's email details. I can also send copies of Frankly Speaking if you don't already have one.

Again **please let us know if you are planning to attend so we can confirm a suitable venue**; if there is only going to be a small group from around Lincoln, then it may be more appropriate to meet one evening during the week, but clearly we would want as many people as possible to feel able to attend if they wish.

At the Advent evening, it was suggested that we organise a visit to Jim Cotter's church at Llandecwyn in Wales, during the summer, for a quiet day and time together exploring the hills and coast. It would be good to have an idea of potential numbers to help with planning.

Tracey Byrne

Liverpool

Convenor: Rev Irene Cowell, The Rectory, Water Street, Thornton, Liverpool, L23 1TB tel: 0151 931 4676 email: irene@rectory.fsnet.co.uk

London

Convenors: Andrew Henderson, 178 Lancaster Road, London W11 1QU tel: 020 7229 6790 email: andrew.henderson4@virgin.net Ann Clarridge, 80 Greenford Gardens, Greenford, Middx, UB6 9NA tel: 020 8578 7025 email: clarria@lsbu.ac.uk

Next meetings:

Wednesday, 11 January, 2006, 7.30pm in St Anne's Rectory
Thursday, 6 April, 7.30pm in St Anne's Rectory
 St Anne's Rectory is at 55 Dean Street, Soho (please contact Andrew for directions)

Manchester

Convenors: Charles Clapham, Tel: 0161 794 2464 33 Moorside Road, Swinton, Manchester, M27 0EZ email: charlesclapham@lineone.net

Ursula Hay, 2 Lea Bank Street, Levenshulme, Manchester, M19 3DU, Tel: 0161 225 4643

On 27 October Robin Gamble, the Manchester Diocesan Evangelist, spoke at Holy Innocents on 'Evangelism Among Gay and Lesbian People'. Trish writes, "Much of what he said was very personal, and the discussion afterwards was more for 'personal consumption' than for a newsletter - all I could say is that we had a very interesting evening, with a discussion following Robin's talk based on 'Come unto me all you who are heavy laden and I will give you rest', with the emphasis on ALL, i.e. God's love is available to all therefore ALL are welcome by God, irrespective of their sexuality."

On 1 December Christine Holt of FFLAG (Families and Friends of Lesbian and Gay People) spoke at Holy Innocents on the theme 'Help! My child is gay!' There will be notes from this talk in a future Newsletter.

On Sunday, 6 November, we hosted Bishop Gene Robinson as part of the 10th Anniversary celebration of CA. Please see the report elsewhere in this newsletter. (Many thanks to the Manchester planning group for their hard work and success in putting on such a wonderful event. Ed)

Speakers for Deanery Synods and PCCs

To remind you again that there is a team of Changing Attitude members willing to speak at Deanery Synods and PCCs. They will 'tell their stories', rather than initiate a discussion on Biblical texts.

Henry Mayor writes:

I would be grateful for your prayers for my trip to Kenya for 2 months beginning Thursday, 2 February. I was born and brought up in Kenya and have made two trips there in the last 11 years, making new friends and renewing old acquaintances in the Anglican Church.

I felt that I was in a position to say something to those whom I know in Kenya about the homosexuality debate in the Anglican Communion, and this is the main purpose of my visit. I want Kenyan Anglicans, who have mainly been brought up to take the Bible literally, to know that there are faithful Christians like myself who take a wider view of the Bible, and so see the acceptance of LGBT people as fully compatible with the gospel. In the present adversarial climate, it's difficult to know whether anyone in Kenya will want to hear me, even my friends. So I would be grateful for any prayer support that you are able to offer.

Ursula Hay

Next meetings:

Thursday, 16 February, at Holy Innocents - to make plans with Inclusive Church supporters for our joint presence / visibility at Manchester Gay Pride during August Bank Holiday Weekend 2006.
Thursday, 27 April - we are hoping to give attention to gay Inter Faith issues (any suggestions of people who might be able to speak would be appreciated).

Saturday, 3 June (Pentecost weekend)- Jim Cotter has been booked to speak at 2 seminars at St Agnes Church, North Reddish, Stockport. Recognising that people's Saturdays are precious, Jim suggests a Saturday with 2 distinct parts so people can come to one or the other or both. Jim will also preach at St Agnes for Pentecost at 10.15am.

Newcastle/Durham

Convenors: Stephen Griffith, The Vicarage, Dunblane Crescent, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE5 2BE tel. 0191 267 2058 email: denton.vicar@btopenworld.com Jenny Lancaster, 2 Heathdale Gardens, High Heaton, Newcastle

upon Tyne, NE7 7QR tel. 0191 240 1612 email: jenny.lancaster@gmail.com

Oxford

Convenors: Kate Prendergast, 4 Newton Road, Oxford, OX1 4PT tel: 01865 727139 Mobile: 07810352607 email: kate@brodgar.fsnet.co.uk Tony Phelan, 64 Staunton Road, Headington, Oxford, OX3 7TP tel: 01865 764685 email: anthony.phelan@keble.ox.ac.uk

Ripon & Leeds

Convenors: Maureen Browell, 4 Upper Folderings, Dodworth, Barnsley, S75 3EE tel: 01226 208391 (mob 07930 194421) email: maureenbrowell@surefish.co.uk Nigel Greenwood, 47 Broomfield, Adel, Leeds, LS16 7AD Tel: 07940 587618 email: greenwoodnd@aol.com

The group met with Bishop John Packer in November to hear about the latest thinking from the House of Bishops on human sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, leading to a wide-ranging discussion on related issues. As was expected, this meeting was exceptionally well-attended!

Two joint meetings have been scheduled with the Bradford & Wakefield Group for 2006 (details below). It is also hoped to arrange a further joint meeting in the summer to consider issues in human sexuality from the Roman Catholic perspective.

Our group plans to meet separately during March for an informal social evening and conversations on current issues (date to be arranged).

Nigel Greenwood

Next meetings (jointly with the Bradford & Wakefield group):
Thursday, 19 January, 7.30pm at Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds, when the Revd Ray Gaston (Vicar of All Hallows) will lead a discussion on "What is an Inclusive Church?"
Tuesday, 16 May, 7.30pm at Dewsbury Minster, when the Revd Dr Kevin Ward from the Department of Theology & Religious Studies at Leeds University will speak on "African Theology & Tradition"..

Rochester

Convenors: Chris Bunce, 07815 041852 email: christopherbunce@hotmail.com Sue Brewer, 01322 292335 email: suec@brewer86.freeseve.co.uk

Launch meeting:

The **launch meeting on Saturday, 14 January, 4-6pm** at St John the Evangelist, Bexley, was very successful, with an attendance of 55 and 45 staying on for Holy Communion. Colin spoke as Director of Changing Attitude, and answered questions from participants. We look forward eagerly to further developments.

St Albans

Interim contact: Rev. Richard Watson, The Rectory, 136 Church Hill Road, East Barnet, Herts. Tel: 020 8368 3840 email: rf.watson@btopenworld.com