

Too few minority ethnic clergy now - but more in training

The minority ethnic population is under-represented among the clergy of the Church of England, a survey has revealed, but efforts to attract more people from minority ethnic backgrounds to train for the priesthood and other vocations are bearing fruit. Only 2.2 per cent of clergy were from minority ethnic backgrounds in 2005, compared with 7.9 per cent of the working population in the 2001 census and 3.2 per cent of electoral roll members in 2002. In 2005, 4.7 per cent of all those recommended for ordination training were minority ethnic candidates.

Ethical Investment - A challenging year

The annual report of the Church of England's Ethical Investment Advisory Group has been published, setting out a challenging year for the body, which carries out research on behalf of the Church of England's three main investment and trustee bodies, the Church Commissioners for England, the CBF Church of England Funds, and the Church of England Pensions Board.

The Group reports that the call on the Church to disinvest from Caterpillar, the US manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, was the dominant ethical investment issue of the last twelve months. Major reviews of the ethical aspects of investment in gambling and in newspapers also formed key parts of the past year's work.

Call to strengthen religion mandate in BBC Charter

The Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church called for a stronger mandate for religion in the BBC Charter and Agreement in a joint letter to Tessa Jowell MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, ahead of a debate in Parliament last month. The letter states: "The religious dimension of life is right at the heart of how people see themselves and what motivates their actions. It is unthinkable that this is not fully and properly reflected in the BBC's output."

Archbishop's sermon for Queen's 80th birthday

Described by the Times as 'stonking', the Archbishop of Canterbury's sermon at the 80th Birthday service for HM Queen has drawn widespread praise. A widely-quoted extract: "... the British monarch is not an absolute ruler demanding mindless loyalty, but the one who guarantees space for the rest of society to argue and negotiate and change, as mature citizen-societies must, who 'defends our laws' as the National Anthem puts it."

Church puts its money where its mouth is to connect with youth

The Church of England has launched a £1 million national initiative to connect young people with the Christian message, with the support of a number of charitable trusts. Following a successful pilot last year, the Archbishops' Council has given the go-ahead for the Church of England's Youth Evangelism Fund, a key part of its Youth Strategy. The Chair of the Fund's steering group, the Rt Revd David James, Bishop of Bradford, has announced that eight dioceses (Durham, Bradford, Newcastle, Sheffield, Wakefield, Southwell and Nottingham, York and Birmingham) will be covered by the first year of the initiative, each receiving around > £25,000.