

CSCS NEWS

The newsletter of the Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality

37

Autumn/Winter 2009

CSCS is a charity (no 1070448) registered by the Charity Commission

Editorial

Anthony Woollard

Apologies once again for the long delay in issuing this edition. Your Committee has been busy! And for once I have nothing but good news to report.

I referred in the last edition to our plans to combine our AGM on 6 February 2010 with a joint conference with Inclusive Church. This has really taken off, and now also involves LGCM, Changing Attitude, and the transgender group The Sibyls, as well as local partners in Birmingham Diocese. All CSCS members should have received a flyer for the event. It is being publicized very widely and enrolments are flowing in. Please contact Daphne Cook (daphnecook@btinternet.com) if you still need further information.

“Sexuality and Human Flourishing” may not be quite as catchy a title as the original “Consuming Passions”, but it is the one preferred locally as making it clear what the conference is about. You will note that the speakers include Alison Webster who was in on CSCS, and its predecessor ISCS, at the very beginning and who will be a particularly welcome contributor. But there will be many others involved, some of them locally based but widely known such as Nicola Slee.

For some time your Committee has been struggling to facilitate a network of the many groups operating in the general area of faith and sexuality. The steering group for this conference has already shown itself to be such a network in embryo. But some dimensions are still under-represented.

- First, because of the genesis of this conference through Inclusive Church, the group has something of an Anglican bias (though the Metropolitan Community Churches are also involved). CSCS has always prided itself on its ecumenical nature. Maybe therefore it is **particularly** important that our non-Anglican members are well represented on 6 February. This conference is emphatically not only for Anglicans, still less only for Anglicans in Birmingham and adjacent dioceses. Those involved in relevant organizations in other Churches might well want to put up a marker to be involved in whatever work emerges from the conference.
- Second, there is a very proper emphasis in the conference and its steering group on sexual/gender identity and spirituality, on which themes CSCS has always majored. But there is a wide range of concerns amongst Christians on issues such as prostitution, trafficking and abuse which also play crucial parts in the debate about sexuality and faith. Group discussions at the conference will be structured around a range of themes and interests, and one of these is provisionally called “Acceptable Sex?” under which heading such matters as the use and implications

of pornography and maybe prostitution could well be addressed. For those with particular concerns in these more shadowy areas of sexuality and faith, there will thus be an opportunity to express those concerns and maybe look at ways in which we could take them forward together.

I do urge you, therefore, to sign up for this conference. It may appear to have a rather local focus – and the venue is not as easy to get to as some of our previous ones have been (though full advice is provided on bus routes and so on, and we may be able to give practical help with transport from the mainline stations). But it is precisely what CSCS, in partnership with others, ought to be doing. And as well as perhaps offering a template for similar conferences elsewhere, it provides a venue and space for our AGM – on which more below. Those of us involved in the planning have become genuinely excited. We want you all to share that.

This, however, is not the only matter on which we have been busy. Our facilitation of dialogue with, and between, theological educators continues to make good progress. We met them again at the end of September and had a most fruitful discussion about areas of concern. A further meeting is planned for early in the New Year. This seems rather unlikely to bear concrete fruit such as a how-to-do-it handbook (how to educate ordinands in issues of sexuality, I mean), but even if such a thing could be envisaged it would surely be less valuable than the highly ecumenical networking which we have been able to encourage. Theological educators, perhaps most of all from some of the more conservative or polarized denominations, feel the need to talk, and we are helping them to do that. This is no small thing in itself, but in encouraging and critiquing the work going on in colleges (much of it actually very good) it can bring much wider benefits to our Churches.

So CSCS really does have a lot to do. But do we have a future as an organization?

The responses to our questionnaires over the summer were a little ambiguous. Only a small proportion of the membership responded, and these nearly all seemed resigned to merger with another organization – though there was much less unanimity as to which organization that might be. We are not yet being flooded with new offers of help. But we do now have two new committee members – Heather Barfoot and Colin Hart – to add to Michael Moran who joined us at the 2009 AGM. That is more new blood than we have had in a decade. It means that, when we hold our AGM over lunch at the 6 February conference (don't miss it!), there will probably **not** be a motion to wind CSCS up, but a very positive report on the past year and a look forward to the year ahead, and a fairly full slate for the 2010-2011 Committee – though there is always room for more, so once again **please consider whether you can serve in this way..**

We may, however, be evolving yet again into a rather different organization. One of our original reasons for existence – the promotion and circulation of the journal *Theology and Sexuality* – has a slightly uncertain future, with the title being sold on yet again to another publisher (Equinox) and the need to negotiate for long-term retention of the favourable price of the journal to those CSCS members who wish to avail themselves of it. As

gender and sexuality studies within the context of academic theology have taken on a life of their own, CSCS has found itself progressively moving away from the academic front line, though we are still able in various ways to give support to individuals who operate there. Facilitating networking at various levels – sometimes with an academic dimension, as with the theological educators, but perhaps more often personal, existential and in part local as with the Birmingham conference – seems to be the direction in which we are being led.

We can all remember the general who once said:

My right flank is shattered.
My left flank is collapsing.
The situation is desperate.....
And I am advancing.

Even a few months ago your Committee would have echoed those words – especially the first three lines. Now, the last line alone says it all.

Inspiring Relationships

A talk given by Martin Pendergast in a series at St Martin in the Fields on “Inspiring Community”, 12 October 2009

The theme of this series, including this session, is open to so many various interpretations, that I don’t know if I’m going to hit any chords! I therefore offer a reflection, arising from a same-sex relationship of some thirty-three years since it is out of human reality that theological reflection best emerges. For me ‘inspiration’, ‘inspiring’, ‘inspirational’ means breathing a dynamic, a power, into a reality, bringing something to life, although it’s often seen, colloquially, as responding to something ‘heroic’, or someone or something about which or whom we can wax lyrical! Indeed this might be just an opportunity to go on about one’s partner!

For believers, inspiration is an action of the Spirit, the breath of life and the breath of God. It is that Spirit who comes upon us not as personal possession but as John Bell has written:

“she weans and inspires all whose hearts are open,
nor can she be captured, silenced, or restrained.”
(Enemy of Apathy, v.3, John Bell)

It is the same Spirit who grabs hold of the prophet, and who came upon Jesus of Nazareth: The Spirit of God is upon me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to those held captive, the recovery of sight to those lacking vision, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the time of grace and justice, the *kairos* of God.

Questions are posed in this session about how our closest relationships may reflect on one hand God’s love, and on the other ‘the harrowing of hell’. Reflecting on this dual challenge, I have in my mind two people sharing a common French nationality but who

are in other ways, at least superficially, worlds apart. One is Therese of Lisieux, the Carmelite nun whose remains have just been welcomed into Westminster Cathedral, and whose prophetic yet unordained priestly message was, and is, to reflect 'love at the heart of the Church'. The other is the atheist, Jean-Paul Sartre, for whom 'hell is other people'. Therese, at times, voiced her atheism, while Sartre wrote powerfully of love and human solidarity. The spirituality which informs me is from the Carmelite tradition of quiet contemplation leading to prophetic action while that of my partner, schooled by the Jesuits, but never having lived in a vowed community, is one of Ignatian discernment.

As people who for thirty-three years have tried to express a pattern of life as 'honourably gay, and honourably Catholic', in the words of the Irish theologian Enda McDonagh, the writings of both Therese and Sartre find resonances in our life together, our life of faith, our various forms of activism, the dark and resurrection moments. When we marked the anniversary of our relationship in 2001 with a celebration for '25 years of friendship and commitment in the pursuit of justice', we were subjected to some of the most vicious vilification, truly demonic, and evidence, if any were needed, that 'hell is other people', even dare I say within the Church. Some of this sadly still goes on. At the same time, we were flooded with messages, direct and indirect, sometimes from complete strangers, which echoed 'love at the heart of the Church'.

At times, even in the higher echelons of the Church's hierarchy, we have found not a patronising support, but a recognition of the breadth of human love, rather than a narrow excluding view. In recent years, no one put this better than the late Cardinal Basil Hume, when he wrote: "... love between two persons, whether of the same sex or of a different sex, is to be treasured and respected ... To love another is to have entered the area of the richest human experience, whether that love is between two persons of the same sex or of a different sex ... When two persons love they experience in a limited manner in this world what will be their unending delight when one with God in the next. To love another is, in fact, to reach out to God who shares his lovableness with the one we love. To be loved is to receive a sign, or a share, of God's unconditional love." (April 1997)

I like to think that Basil Hume, with whom some of us had some "free and frank" dialogues at various times in the 1990's, used his experience, as a good Benedictine Abbot would, of listening not only to the gay members of his religious community, but to those lay Catholics who sought him out as a sensitive pastor. He re-emphasised the great tradition of friendship, rather than possessive power, as the foundation for all human relationships. In the idealisation of heterosexual marriage, there is a risk that the Churches ignore their centuries-old traditions of diverse patterns of human belonging, whether in vowed community living, or different types of same-sex 'sworn friendship'. It is the Church of "here comes everyone" (James Joyce) that can embrace the intense, loving but celibate friendship of John Henry Newman and Ambrose St. John.

But it is the same Church which can still instrumentalise heterosexual marriage as being primarily for procreation, in spite of a rhetoric about the sacredness of human relationships, reflecting that of Christ and the Church. Too often this relationship of Christ and the Church is determined by a medieval, or even 19th century model of

opposite-sex marriage, rather than the other way round: human relationships, with or without the presence of children, reflect the spousal bond of Christ with the Church, a bond of unity and grace.

That is why I believe it is perfectly possible for Church hierarchies to embrace forms of human relating which vary from heterosexual marriage, but make up a great tapestry of personal belonging, one to another. They have the history and wit, but lack the will. This is what so many of us strive to do in being inspirational for and with each other, breathing life and vigour into each other, when life and work get tedious, when faith and ecclesial communion are challenged, or we feel undervalued, de-skilled, marginalised. Creativity, being open to creation, is more than but may include a biological and emotional capacity to nurture children.

Because the Word has become flesh, it is the sense of human communion which makes the Communion of the Eucharist holy indeed. That is why when challenged by fearful ecclesiastical authorities, sometimes with more than a lurking whiff of homophobia, we have never allowed them, nor ourselves, to use the Eucharist as a weapon, challenging lovingly but truthfully whenever, wherever, and in whom the temptation arises. To ‘use’ the Eucharist in this way is to instrumentalise liturgy, word, and sacrament, for an ultimately narrowing, exclusive end, rather than they becoming a foretaste of the inclusive banquet of God’s realm. We claim our place at the Table not through political strategy, but by a free gift of grace.

I was asked at a civil partnership celebration of two Catholic lesbian women, why we weren’t angry at being denied a celebration of the Eucharist in our parish church at the time of our own civil partnership in 2006, and why our two friends, more recently, could not use a church building, including I hasten to say an Anglican church, for their Mass of Thanksgiving. The strength of communion, with a small ‘c’, we experience as Church, as domestic Church, home Church, underlines the belief that “we are Church”; “where the Spirit is, there is the Church”, as St. Irenaeus noted, and this propels us into the wider ecclesial community and its wobbly structures. It is this sense that we share with so many sisters and brothers that has enabled the creation of a vibrant and nurturing community such as that which has grown in the Soho Masses Catholic LGBT community over the past ten years, still exploring its way ahead within a Catholic parish and diocesan context, to offer a new way of being a welcoming and inclusive Church.

It is relatively easy to be consumed and dehumanised by rage, but I think my partner and I have both learned that while it may be harder, it is more prophetic, in the tradition of Isaiah 61 and Luke 4, life-giving and in-spiring to our relationship, to claim our place in the Church with all our baptismal rights, to speak truth, love and justice to power, sometimes paying the cost. We live this out in promoting models of human and faith community and hospitality, still pursuing justice, building places

“where all are named, their songs and visions heard,
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,

prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.”
(All are welcome, v. 5, Marty Haugen)

Wall or white knuckle ride?

Jean Mayland

I wrote an article for WATCH recently reflecting on the fall of the Berlin Wall. For me it can never be separated from the ordination of women.. The day I came out of Church House Westminster rejoicing that we had received provisional approval for the Ordination of Priests Measure was the very day the wall was breached and the evening papers carried pictures of people dancing on top of it.

In 1981 I had been to a World Council of Churches (WCC) Central Committee in Dresden. Going through ‘Checkpoint Charlie’ was quite an ordeal- even with a special WCC letter. As the end of that Central Committee meeting some of us sang ‘We shall overcome’ at 3 am in the car park of our student hostel as we held hands in a circle with students before boarding the ‘bus to go to the wall once more on the way back to the airport. ‘See you in England’, we said. ‘When we are old aged pensioners’ they replied. That November day I knew that the students would be able to visit the West long before they were pensioners. I also felt that soon women in England would be able to be priests. Well we did become priests and East Germans poured into the West - although many of them like Angela Merkel went back again.

We women also continued our struggles. Sadly in our own church, the time since 1989 has been used to build another wall between those who accept women priests and those who will not. In 1992, after a nail biting debate, General Synod did give final approval to the Measure making it legal to ordain women and in 1994 many of us were ordained and it was wonderful. Yet all was overshadowed by the Act of Synod which set up the system of Flying Bishops which has entrenched divisions in our Church.

As we seek now to have women bishops the struggle has broken out again with renewed bitterness and the image of a roller coaster may be more accurate than a wall. First of all in July 2008 General Synod debated how to move forward in the process of allowing women to be made bishops, a step which they had already approved. A proposal was brought to General Synod that this should be done by a Code of Practice. WATCH wanted a simple one Clause Measure relying on women bishops graciously to invite male bishops to serve in parishes which would not receive a woman’s oversight or sacramental ministry. That would not do for the opposition, and the amendment was duly defeated. Amendments to compel women bishops by law to transfer powers by law were also defeated . The compromise of making provision by Code of Practice was upheld and passed with large majorities and a provision that it must be a statutory Code of Practice We all sighed with relief at this strong compromise – but then the draft Code was published. Once, more it seemed designed to entrench divisions in the Church of England

The most unacceptable part of the proposed Measure was Clause 3 which stated that

‘The archbishop of each province shall from time to time, nominate one or more suffragan sees in his or her province from which the holders (being men) may be selected by diocesan bishops of that province to exercise, in relation to parishes in their dioceses whose parochial church councils, have on grounds of theological conviction, requested arrangements to be made and in relation to the persons mentioned in section 4(3), Episcopal functions specified in section 4 or in a code of Practice issued under section 4’

These Bishops would have to be consecrated by other male bishops who have never laid hands on women. Ordinary male bishops could attend the service but not lay on hands. All this is bound up with issues of taint and aimed at preserving a special line of bishops with a woman free pedigree; as someone said in General Synod - a kind of ecclesiastical Crufts. Our hearts sank but once more we took a deep breath and many of us have sent in amendments to the Revision Committee

Worse was to follow - the roller coaster lurched even lower. On 8 October the Revision Committee issues a press Release which stated that the Revision Committee has voted to amend the draft legislation so as *‘to provide for certain functions to be vested in male bishops by statute rather than by delegation from the diocesan bishop under a statutory code of practice’*.

This went entirely against the decision of the General Synod and stunned many of us. WATCH described itself as ‘very disappointed’, Inclusive Church was ‘deeply disturbed’ and MCU published a theological article about the nonsense of legislating to have four kinds of bishops.

We nearly sank into despair and many of us began to feel we would never live to see women bishops.

Then suddenly another Press release on 14 November set our hearts rejoicing and moved the roller coaster to the heights of the track. The Revision Committee on Women in the Episcopate announced that it had decided that legislation for women bishops would no longer include proposals for the mandatory transfer of authority - the vesting of particular functions by law – in bishops who would provide oversight for those unable to receive the Episcopal and/or priestly ministry of women.

WATCH expressed delight, MCU still continued to express theological concerns and the Church Times announced that the Revision Committee had changed its mind yet again.

A member of that committee explained to the WATCH AGM on 21 November that the Committee had not actually changed its mind. It went through a whole set of proposals as to how to bring about the mandatory transfer and all were defeated. They realised it was impossible and now return to the issue of what kind of provision. Is a Statutory Code of Practice possible or do they come back to the idea of a single clause Measure?

Time is of the essence and the time table is tight. Can the Committee be ready to bring something to the General Synod in February and can it be sent to the Dioceses in July 2010? It is still nerve racking and nail biting time. There are now only 2 meetings of General Synod a year and if the legislation did not receive Provisional Approval in July 2010 it would have to wait for a new General Synod and that would greatly set back the time table.

The white knuckle ride continues – but you can still help by writing to the Revision Committee. You can also ‘gen yourself up’ by reading the occasional papers on the WATCH web site and studying carefully Jonathan Clatworthy’s brilliant theological paper on the MCU web site and above all KEEP ON PRAYING – especially for all those on the Revision Committee

The Cutting Edge Consortium

A unique coalition of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered groups, political social justice activists, people of all faiths and none, trades unions and professional associations, was launched at the House of Commons on Tuesday, 24 November 2009. **CUTTING EDGE** will be inviting all Parliamentarians to be briefed on why it believes faith opt-outs from the Equality Bill must be rejected, as the Bill makes its way to the House of Lords.

The Cutting Edge Consortium, building on ground-breaking 2007 & 2009 Conferences on Faith, Homophobia, Transphobia & Human Rights (reported in previous issues of *CSCS News*), held an open meeting, *EQUALITY BILL: OPT IN vs OPT OUT*, to discuss religious exemptions to legislation on sexuality and gender identity in the Equality Bill. Creating a cutting edge by opening up new possibilities of dialogue between a huge diversity of interests and activist positions, CEC has carved out a challenging space to voice support for the Equality Bill.

Hosted by Clare Short MP, speakers included Sarah Bourke (Tooks Chambers), Andrew Copson (British Humanist Association) Maleiha Malik (Muslim Women’s Network), and Michael Rubenstein (Equal Opportunities Review).

Founder-member Maria Exall said: *It is vital that progressive faith and secular voices are heard loud and clear supporting the Equality Bill and equal rights for LGBT people.*

The Consortium continues the debates from its 2009 conference, grounded in its 2007 Conference Statement: *The Faith, Homophobia, & Human Rights Conference, gathered in London on 17th February 2007, calls on all people of goodwill, of whatever faith or none, to affirm and celebrate human equality in all its dimensions and particularly to work for the elimination of any faith-based homophobia and institutionalised prejudice towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people.*

We reject the activities of certain religious leaders, seeking exemptions from equality legislation, and attempts to base this on the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, such a right being for all, not just for some. We deplore the internalised homophobia within religious institutions that fails to confront prejudice and hate. We

encourage and support those faith organisations, which express their commitment to diversity and equality in practice and policy. We believe that full civil rights for LGBT individuals are not only consistent with the right to religious freedom, but are rooted in the best and fundamental teachings of all major faiths; love, justice, compassion, and mercy, such values being shared by all who seek the common good.

We call for further progressive public policy that will deliver comprehensive and effective anti-discrimination legislation, including positive duties, on the basis of race, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, and belief. We call on the newly formed Commission for Equality and Human Rights to listen to the experience of LGBT faith networks and those who have suffered homophobia from and within religious organisations.

Today, the alliance of over fifty faith and secular organisations supporting this conference affirms and celebrates the values of human equality and social justice, rooted in the best of faith traditions, and shared by all who are committed to a fully human vision of a transformed society.

The Cutting Edge Consortium includes the Lesbian & Gay Christian Movement, Interfaith Alliance UK, British Humanist Association, Muslim Education Centre Oxford, Liberal Judaism, Trades Union Congress, and A:Gender, **Centre for the Study of Christianity & Sexuality**, Progressive British Muslims, Ekklesia, Inclusive Church, LGBT Consortium of Voluntary & Community Organisations.

The Cutting Edge web-site, including presentations from the 2007 & 2009 Conferences and other key resources, will be launched shortly

Cutting Edge Consortium Enquiries:

cuttingedgeconsortium@googlemail.com

Simon : 07906 445695 - Maria: 07714 206404

Here are some notes that Martin Pendergast made at the open meeting:

Maria Eagle [*Minister of State at the Government Equalities Office and Ministry of Justice*] said that, despite the wording of the Bill, the Government INTENTION is that religious exemptions should apply ONLY to priests: NOT, for example, to accountants working for organisations claiming a religious ethos. She added that tribunals DON'T always interpret the law correctly: so she urges claimants to appeal if they get a raw deal from the first ruling.

Sarah Bourke, a barrister on yesterday's panel of invited speakers, warned that the Christian Legal Centre has issued a briefing on European equality measures, which it describes as "cultural genocide". The briefing is aimed NOT at the UK, but for consumption in central and eastern Europe. [I don't know when this was written, and can't immediately find it on their website: www.christianlegalcentre.com]

Maleiha Malik, a reader in law on the panel of invited speakers, pointed out that litigants such as Lilian Ladele [the Islington registrar], are not simply individuals aggrieved that

their personal freedom is being infringed: they are frequently funded by the American Religious Right.

Dr. Evan Harris mentioned that extending the offence of harassment to OUTSIDE the workplace was opposed by Stonewall: although *School's Out*, *OutRage!*, and even the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, wanted to include this. Stonewall's opposition was subsequently cited by the Government as justification for excluding it. However someone suggested that many cases of "harassment" can already be prosecuted as direct or indirect discrimination.

One common example of indirect discrimination is that many Christian organisations, following the recommendation of the Christian Institute, have a policy which states that they do NOT discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation: but ALSO have a Code of Conduct, enabling them to fire anyone for sexual relations outside marriage. Although this can apply to straights, it does NOT apply equally, as marriage is not available to lesbians or gay men.

Keith Porteous-Wood [National Secular Society] explained that the exemption just struck down by the European Commission was originally inserted into legislation at the behest of the Archbishops' Council, demonstrating how religious bodies exert influence beyond their already excessive statutory powers: and that it had then taken years of campaigning before the European Commission issued its ruling last week.

A member of the audience observed that David Cameron has been getting increasingly vociferous about his religious credentials over the past year, as we near the General Election. This does not bode well for LGBTIQ rights under a Tory Government. [Is anyone surprised?]

Concern was expressed that trans children are excluded from the current Bill. A trans member of the audience stated that the mean age for developing awareness of trans identity is age seven: but the modal age is just five years. [For nonstatisticians: most children realise at five: though a few who realise later skew the arithmetic mean to age seven.] Around 25% of trans people apparently attempt suicide: and a further 25% consider suicide.

Book review

Jim Cotter, *The Service of my Love*, Cairns Publications 2009. ISBN 978 1 870652 45 2. Hardback, 114pp. £10.00.

Anthony Woollard

This book arrived just as this edition of the Newsletter was about to go to press. In the time available, I am not sure that I can do it justice. But three facts speak for themselves. First, that it comes from Jim Cotter. Second, that it is about the celebration and blessing of civil partnerships – described as “a pastoral and liturgical handbook” and including a

number of relevant liturgical forms as well as much wise pastoral thinking. And, third, that it has had to be privately sponsored and in effect privately published.

The saga of private sponsorship is itself worthy of mention. Jim approached a number of people and organizations looking for help. Even amongst organizations which were broadly supportive, not all felt able to sign up. Most of the signatories are individuals and a number of couples, both straight and gay. They include our own Martin Pendergast and his partner as well as myself and some other members of CSCS. Most of those who read the list are likely to recognise some names – and to be profoundly encouraged by their number and variety. If I may be permitted a very personal observation, I saw one name there of a woman in whom I was once rather interested; the fact that she now has a same-sex partner makes me realize that there may well have been nothing personal in her negative response to my advances, and after 25 years that in itself is something of a revelation.

The liturgical material itself is what we have come to expect from this author: a rich and imaginative use of words – though perhaps at times a few too many of them. It is always good to follow Jim Cotter’s thought patterns, whether in prose or in poetry/liturgy, because they lead one constantly back to a re-evaluation of the body and sexuality, and of friendship and love. But to undergo one of his very rich liturgies without due pause for reflection would be rather like bolting a whole Christmas pudding. That aside, there are resources here which could be used, not just for the blessing of same-sex partnerships at different stages in their life-cycles, but also for use in worship and prayer more generally amongst those (no doubt including most of my readers) who share Jim’s underlying values.

The tragedy, of course, as the prose commentary points out, is that the likelihood of any tailor-made liturgies to bless same-sex relationships being authorized any time soon is remote. The theology behind this is teased out a little (perhaps just teased might be a better word!) and the inconsistencies made clear. As one good priest once said to me, “I’ll bless anyone or anything if it stands still long enough”, and it must seem exceedingly odd to outsiders that the Church has in the past (albeit maybe less readily nowadays) blessed nuclear submarines, manifestations of human fear, yet is unable to bless manifestations of human love. More work needs to be done on what “blessing” really means; Jim only starts this.

Finally, a marketing criticism! The book claims to be available via the Cairns website (www.cottercairns.co.uk). But when I checked the site it was not yet listed as an available publication! I hope it is by now, because there could, and should, be a heavy demand for it.

This Newsletter is produced for CSCS
The Centre for the Study of Christianity and Sexuality
Chair and principal point of contact:
The Revd Canon Jane Fraser
The Campanile
Church Lane
Stoulton
Worcestershire
WR7 4RE
Tel: 01905 840266
e-mail: cscs@revjane.demon.co.uk
Website: <http://www.cscs.co.uk>

The next issue is expected in Spring 2010 – contributions invited by
1 March

Please send any enquiries about/contributions to the Newsletter to:
Anthony Woollard
1 Chestnut Walk
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON
CV37 6HG
Phone/fax: 01789 204923
e-mail: awoollard@joyousgard.org.uk.